



The Extraordinary Leader

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Author's bio: John H. Zenger, D.B.A, is the vice chairman of Provant, the world's largest performance improvement company. One of today's most authoritative voices on the topics of performance and leadership, he is the author or coauthor of six books, including Results- Based Leadership – honored as the best book of 2000 by the Society of Human Resource Management. John Folkman, Ph.D., is managing director of Novations Group, Inc., a Provant company. He is the author of three books.

Author's Big Thought: The ability to lead, far more than just a natural gift, is a concrete and learnable skill – one that can be acquired by studying and applying specific proficiencies and attitudes. The Extraordinary Leader draws on data from over 200, 0,000 individuals who have rated over 25,000 leaders to show how leaders can go from good to great, from being average to being extraordinary. This was done to define the skills that comprise effective leadership, and then provides a systematic and innovative program for attaining, developing, and implementing those skills.

Chapter notes:

Introduction

The authors had three primary objectives in writing this book.

1. Simplicity – providing a clear, understandable message. They present 20 insights, many of them new ideas, about leadership. These create the framework of the book.
2. That the contents be actionable.
3. That the book be empirical. That it be based on hard data, facts, and statistical analysis with every conclusion grounded in objective data.

Chapter 1. Demystifying Leadership

- The two basic questions that are answered in this book are whether leaders are born or made and how that is done.
- They took an enormous amount of data collected about and from leaders and, through careful analysis and observation, began to unravel the mystery of leadership.
- The complexity of defining and describing leadership – there are 16 variables described.

1. There are differences in the leadership behaviors and practices required at different levels of the organization.
 2. Leadership occurs in extremely diverse environments.
 3. Different skills are required at different stages in a person's career.
 4. Leadership is driven by major events.
 5. The activities of leadership are not all the same. For example, not all leaders are required to "lead change".
 6. We confuse success and effectiveness as the general benchmark of leadership.
 7. We lack agreed-upon measures, so it has been frustratingly difficult to get agreement on who is a good leader and who is not.
 8. We have not taken into account the evolving nature of leadership. Most has been done looking in the rear-view mirror.
 9. There has been no way to define the different constituencies of the leader.
 10. Still another variable is whether the leader is operating alone versus acting as part of a leadership team.
 11. The impact of technology.
 12. A new dimension of leadership is one of geography.
 13. The wide variety of leadership styles used within different organizations to motivate and inspire the frontline.
 14. We have been unclear regarding who is in the best position to evaluate leadership effectiveness.
 15. Several companies of leadership effectiveness have clouded the issue. These include intelligence (IQ), physical characteristics such as height, emotional or personality characteristics (EQ), and biochemical characteristics such as testosterone levels.
 16. Language has an impact.
- This book examines the leader as seen through the eyes of those being led (subordinates), and influenced (peers), those who manage the leaders (bosses) and the leaders themselves. This process has become known as 360-degree feedback, because of its comprehensive view of a leader's behavior, looked at from above, the side, and below.
 - Of those three perspectives, they conclude that the best way to understand leadership is to examine the impact leaders have on the people they lead.
 - The authors began their analysis by identifying the top 10 percent of managers as seen through the eyes of their subordinates, peers, and bosses and compared them to the bottom 10 percent. The top 10 percent, with the highest aggregate scores, became a high performing group, and the 10 percent with the lowest aggregate scores were placed in the bottom group.

The Leadership Tent – A Conceptual Framework

Their empirical factor analysis of huge amounts of data collected on leaders' competencies reveals that all vital and differentiating leadership competencies can be grouped into five clusters.

- *Character* – the core of all leadership effectiveness.
- *Personal Capability* – this describes the intellectual, emotional, and skill makeup of the individual. It includes analytical and problem-solving capabilities, along with the technical

competence the person possesses. It requires the ability to create a clear vision and sense of purpose for the organization.

- *Focus on Results* – describes the ability to have impact on the organization. It means being capable of getting things accomplished.
- *Interpersonal Skills* - includes all of the people skills.
- *Leading Organizational Change* - the highest expression of leadership involves leadership through change.

An Overview of Important Ideas in This Book

There are 20 insights presented in this book.

1. Great leaders make a huge difference, when compared to merely good leaders. We have found effectiveness in a variety of desirable business outcomes such as profitability, turnover, employee commitment, customer satisfaction, and intention of employees to leave.
2. One organization can have many great leaders. Greatness should be defined against a standard rather than merely comparing people against each other.
3. We have been aiming too low in our leadership development activities.
4. The relationship between improved leadership and increased performance outcomes is neither precisely incremental nor is it linear. The lack of incremental movement of leadership and performance makes it difficult for people to make the jump to extraordinary performance. And so most choose to be satisfied with good performance rather than to move forward to higher levels.
5. Great leadership consists of possessing several “building blocks” of capabilities, each complementing the others. The five clusters of competencies consist of several sets of behaviors.
6. Leadership culminates in championing change. The highest expression of leadership involves change, and the highest order of change is guiding an organization through a new strategic direction, changing its culture, or changing the fundamental business model.
7. All competencies are not equal; some differentiate good from great leaders, while others do not. If people seek to be perceived as great leaders, it behooves them to know which competencies really make a difference in their organization.
8. Leadership competencies are linked closely together. Becoming good at one competency appears to make people better at another. This is the “cross-training” effect”. The second way they are linked appears to be from “attribution” or the creation of the “halo effect”.
9. Effective leaders have widely different personal styles. There is no one right way to lead. Their data support the conclusion that effective leadership is incredibly complex and diverse. Providing one simple key to leadership is just not workable. Their inability to find these universal issues was in many ways one of their most profound findings.
10. Effective leadership practices are specific to an organization. Leaders must fit the organization.
11. The key to developing great leadership is to build strengths. Most leadership development processes result in leaders developing an action plan that focuses primarily on weaknesses. Their research has led them to conclude that great leaders are not defined by the absence of weakness, but rather by the presence of clear strengths. Of the 16 competencies that they discovered, great leaders did not have the same four strengths. It was clear that the greater the number of strengths you have, the more likely you are to be considered a great leader. It is far

better to magnify strengths, or create strengths out of these characteristics that are in positive territory but not fully developed.

12. Powerful combinations produce nearly exponential results. In general, leaders are most effective when they possess strengths in each of the major clusters of competencies.
13. Greatness is not caused by the absence of weakness. Their data reveal that a large percentage of leaders, approximately 84 percent, do not possess any severe weakness, and yet they are not perceived as strong leaders.
14. Great leaders are not perceived as having major weaknesses.
15. Fatal flaws must be fixed. While our focus will be on developing strengths, there are some circumstances when a focus on weaknesses is warranted.
16. Leadership attributes are often developed in non-obvious ways. Many behaviors and practices come together to create the perception on the part of subordinates that their leader is motivational and inspirational. Understanding the competency companions gives the leader additional ways to improve that perception.
17. Leaders are made not born.
18. Leaders can improve their leadership effectiveness through self-development.
19. The organization, with a person's immediate boss, provides significant assistance in developing leadership.
20. The quality of leadership in an organization seldom exceeds that of the person at the top.

Chapter 2. Great Leaders Make a Great Difference

Great vs. Good leaders

- In examining the relationship between leadership effectiveness and desirable outcomes, the consistent finding in all the authors' research was the impact of the best and worst leaders on achieving bottom line results. There is a dramatic change involving leaders at both the top and the bottom of the rankings. The results in the middle are nearly flat.
- The important characteristic of the middle deciles is that results remain relatively consistent from the 30th to the 70th percentiles. Making small incremental improvements in leadership effectiveness for a leader at the 50th percentile is clearly not going to have much of an impact on employee commitment.
- In order to achieve the next level of impact on employee commitment, a leader would have to move to the 70th, 80th, or 90th percentile.

Leadership Has an Impact on the Bottom Line

- Poor leaders have a substantial influence on an organization's success. They consistently achieve less effective results, create greater turnover, discourage employees, and frustrate customers.
- Good leaders will achieve good results. A good leader will have fewer turnovers, higher profitability, and more employee commitment.
- Extraordinary leaders will consistently achieve results that far exceed those of the good leaders. They will create even less turnover, motivate employees to a much higher degree, and satisfy customers to a much higher level.

- These studies clearly demonstrate the significant difference an extraordinary leader makes on bottom-line results and confirm that leaders can move from the “good” level to the “extraordinary” level at a reasonable cost to the organization, the return on that investment will be substantial.

What Causes Good Leaders to be Unchallenged to Change?

1. When you mention that there is a leadership effectiveness problem, many people automatically believe that the problem is poor leaders. Blaming bad leaders is a simple solution. It is much more difficult to accept that the problem with leadership is the need for everyone to undertake some level of improvement. Those who are good could have a substantial positive impact on the organization if they go from good to great.
2. Most supervisory and management training courses are designed to develop basic leadership skills. The focus is on acquiring and understanding the fundamental skills required in a leadership role. Only a handful of corporate development programs are targeted specifically to make good people great.
3. Many 360-degree leadership assessments compare leaders’ results and show how they compare to the average. By contrasting results to a mean average, the message communicated is, “The goal is to be better than average.” Contrasting results to levels of extraordinary leaders shows people the distance that they need to achieve in order to move to a higher level.
4. Good leaders often fail to appreciate and understand the differences between good leadership and great leadership. In order for people to improve their leadership ability they need to become astute observers of leadership. They need not only to understand some basic concepts and be reasonably well read, they need to be able to judge everyday interactions and understand what is missing.
5. Many good leaders believe that extraordinary leaders are prodigies. The bar set to achieve extraordinary leadership seems too high to achieve, and the path to develop extensive skills is not clear. One implication of this research is that some great leaders are not born with, but acquire at an early age, the desire to make things happen with other people. The authors believe that other leaders can acquire increased leadership ability with practice at any age. The real key is that they engage in intense practice.
6. Leaders are only willing to be as effective as those who in turn lead them. Leaders cast a significant shadow in the organizations where they work. Managers with a large shadow showed the exact same list of strengths and opportunities for improvement as their direct reports. This “shadow” can cut both ways. If you work with an extraordinary leader, the tendency is that your leadership effectiveness will be close to your leader’s. On the other hand, if your boss is an ineffective leader, the tendency is that you won’t be much better. Bosses set the standards, high or low. Imagine the impact on any organization if 20 percent of the good leaders could move on to become excellent.

Good versus Bad Thinking

- The research is clear regarding the impact of leadership on desirable outcomes. Good leaders are substantially more effective than bad leaders, but great leaders make a great difference.

- In this chapter the authors have presented a new philosophy about leadership. This philosophy expands a person’s thinking from “leaders are either good or bad” to leaders are bad, good, and great.” This small philosophical difference can have a huge impact on the success of both individuals and organizations.
- For individuals, this philosophy should help good leaders understand that good is not great. Good is good, but the ultimate target is extraordinary leadership. For organizations this philosophy ought to clarify the competitive advantage of great leadership.

Chapter 3. Simplifying Leadership

The Tent Concept

- A picture of leadership is represented by a large tent, with the three dimensional space under the canvas representing the leadership effectiveness of the individual. The best leaders have the greatest number of cubic yards of space under their tent.
- The distinguishing characteristics of this model are:
 - Leader’s behaviors are clustered into five areas.
 - Strength in a cluster becomes a “tent” pole that lifts the leadership of that person to a higher level.
 - Effective leaders possess skills in each area; so multiple poles are necessary to lift the tent.
 - Statistically significant correlations exist between most of the important competencies (the canvas is in one piece).
- The key to lifting more of the tent (becoming a more effective leader) is to get multiple poles high in the air. The poles in their metaphor represent key “strengths” of the individual leader, especially those that have been shown to make a difference in separating the great from the good. The canvas represents all of the behaviors and competencies possible to be displayed by a leader.

Making a Leader

The five major elements of leadership attributes are:

Character – The Center Pole of Every Leader

- This is the component that is at the core.
- Here are some of the ways character gets defined:
 - Making decisions with the organization paramount in their mind, versus allowing a personal agenda to influence decisions
 - Keeping commitments that are made
 - Practicing self-development; constantly learning
 - Being receptive to, and specifically asking for, feedback from others
 - Being approachable by everyone
 - Treating everyone the same
 - Treating the waitress and bellhop with dignity
 - Trusting other people
 - Working collaboratively with others
 - Not acting in an arrogant manner toward others
 - Being tenacious and not giving up because something is difficult

- Having emotional resilience

Personal Capability

- The second important tent pole of leadership is the personal capability the individual possesses. This cluster of abilities comprises skills or competencies that are absolutely crucial for people to be highly regarded by peers, subordinates, and bosses.
- Some of these individual capabilities are technical knowledge, product knowledge, problem-analysis and problem-solving skills, professional skills, innovation, initiative, and effective use of information technology.
- One of the most useful frameworks by which to understand how people contribute in their careers is the four stages model, originally developed by Gene Dalton and Paul Thompson. This model describes the four stages of career growth through which people may move.
- The four stages are:
 - Stage I: depending on others
 - Stage II: contributing independently
 - Stage III: contributing through others
 - Stage IV: leading through vision

Focus on Results

- Focus on Results and Interpersonal Skills, require that Character and Personal Capabilities be in place, but it appears to make no difference which of these two components comes after that. There exists a remarkable relationship between these two components of leadership.
- Producing results is a key outcome of effective leadership. Here are some of the ways leaders focus on results:
 - Establish stretch goals for their people
 - Take personal responsibility for the outcomes of the group
 - Provide ongoing feedback and coaching to their people
 - Set loftier targets for the group to achieve
 - Personally sponsor an initiative or action
 - Institute new programs, projects, processes, client relationships, or technology
 - Focus on organization goals and ensure that they are translated into actions by their department
 - Operate with speed and intensity; accelerate the pace of the group
 - Champion the cause of a customer
 - Balance long-term and short-term objectives

Interpersonal Skills

The companion set of skills to Focus on Results required for effective leaders is “people skills” or Interpersonal Skills.

- Here are the competencies:
 - Communicating powerfully and prolifically
 - Inspiring others to high performance
 - Building positive relationships with others
 - Developing the skills and talents of subordinates

- Working in a collaborative manner with others
- Being an effective team member
- Recognizing and rewarding the contributions of others
- Being open and receptive to new ideas
- Responding positively to feedback
- Effectively resolving conflicts within their own department, and with groups outside
- Influencing people upward in the organization, in addition to peers and subordinates
- Building the self-esteem of others, giving positive indications of their ability to succeed
- Teaching others in a helpful manner.
- Data shows, however, that if leaders are good only at interpersonal relationships, they again have a fairly low probability of being in the top 10 percent of all leaders in a firm.

The Power of Combinations

In a study, they looked at managers who were in the top quartile on Focus on Results but were not on the top quartile on Interpersonal Skills. The likelihood of being perceived as a great leader was 13%. Contrasting people in the opposite position there was a 9% probability of being perceived as a great leader. When they found leaders who were good at both Focus on Results and Interpersonal Skills, the likelihood of that person being perceived as one of the top 10 percent leaped to 68%.

Leading Organizational Change

The competencies are:

- Has the ability to be a champion for change in the organization
- Lead projects or programs, presenting them so that others support them
- Is an effective marketer for his or her work group's projects, programs, or products
- Has a strategic perspective
- Knows his/her work relates to the organization's business strategy
- Translates the organization's vision and objectives into challenging and meaningful goals for others
- Takes the long view: can be trusted to balance short-term and long-term needs of the organization
- Connects the outside world with internal groups
- Represents work group to key groups outside the group or department
- Helps people understand how meeting customers' needs is central to the mission and goals of the organization

How These Five Elements of the Model Interrelate With Each Other

- Character is at the heart of their model, and everything radiates out from it. It ties strongly to Interpersonal Skills.
- Personal Capability links to Interpersonal Skills. The respect and esteem with which anyone in the organization is viewed begins with his or her Personal Capability.
- Personal Capability links to Focus on Results. One of the key roles any leader plays is that of role model.

- Focus on Results is linked to Interpersonal Skills. Focusing on results and setting stretch goals have multiple links to the interpersonal skills of “inspiring and motivating to high performance” and to “collaboration and teamwork”.
- Character links to Leading Organizational Change. Organizations follow a leader who is perceived as being of high character.
- Focus on Results links to Leading Organizational Change. A focus on results is a necessary balance to the longer-term emphasis on strategic change.
- Interpersonal Skills links to Leading Organizational Change. Whether it is an attempt to change the culture or to implement a major new initiative, trust from others and the communication skills of the leader are absolute requirements for success.

Chapter 4. The Competency Quest

- The most prevalent approach to leadership development in recent years has been the competency movement. The premise is to identify and define the competencies of effective leaders in a specific organization. Then, when selecting leaders, choose people who possess those competencies because they will have a much higher likelihood of success. If you want to develop leaders in the organization, design activities that directly expand or strengthen those competencies for the leaders in the organization.
- It has been estimated that at least 80 percent of companies have created such competency lists.
- The authors think that the competency movement brought greater rigor than previously existed and helped them to improve the hiring process. For the past two decades, companies have focused their people development efforts around these defined competencies.

Why Hasn't It Worked?

The authors think the competency movement had several major flaws:

1. It was too complex
2. It was based on some faulty assumptions
3. It produced several unintended consequences
4. It suffered from poor execution

Their objective is to help the reader understand how this basic approach can be fixed and made more effective

Correcting the Assumptions

- Assumption 1. *Competencies are unique to each organization*

Fact: despite the efforts to create distinctive lists of competencies, there is a remarkable sameness about them from one company to another.

The authors have felt that the differences between people within any one organization are certainly as large as or larger than those between organizations in the same industry, and probably between all organizations.

- Assumption 2. *Competencies are unique and distinctive traits or qualities possessed by an individual.*

Fact: One of the most dramatic discoveries of their analysis is the massive linkage between competencies. Rather than being separate and distinct, each organization's competencies were like a three-dimensional spider web, in which any place you touch is linked to countless other strands in the web.

- Assumption 3. *The more congruence there is between the organization's defined competencies and the individual's, the greater is the likelihood of success.*

Fact: Data confirmed that leaders whose profiles were compatible with the high performers in the organization were more likely to be highly rated than those who were not.

- Assumption 4. *All competencies have roughly the same importance.*

Fact: There were huge differences between competencies' importance. They identified 16 competencies that actually separated the high and low groups. If you want to work on improving your leadership capabilities, they advocate focusing on behaviors that truly make a difference.

- Assumption 5. *Competencies are best developed by a direct focus on that specific competency.*

Fact: Their research suggests that one competency is developed in the process of developing another.

The Unintended Consequences of the Competency Movement

- The largest drawback of the competency movement was some of the implicit messages that were sent to leaders. These include:
 - Competencies are a checklist, and the leader's objective is to check each one of them off
 - Everyone needs to be adequate in any given competency
 - The emphasis has been exclusively on those competencies on which you were perceived as being most deficient.
 - No emphasis has been given to taking a relative strength and making it "off-the-chart" strong.
 - It has driven out other powerful and practical techniques for developing people.
 - Rigidly define competencies also may have the unintended consequence of creating cookie-cutter people inside the organization.

Poor Execution of the Competency Model

- Most large organizations have decided that it's too complicated and expensive to create competencies for each department or section of the organization.
- Competencies are focused on past requirements for effectiveness, and not what future will require of leaders.
- To the extent that competencies are used for developmental purposes, then the competencies should reflect abilities and behaviors required in the future, not in the past or present.

Why Competencies are Linked Together

The authors present four plausible explanations

1. Strength in one competency creates a powerful "halo," so that colleagues, whether subordinates, peers, or bosses, perceive the individual as being effective in a number of areas because of strength in one.

2. In the process of developing any one strength, the individual develops other skills.
3. Self-confidence is increased when any skill is acquired and produces success.
4. Aspiration level increases when people succeed in any one dimension.

Sixteen Behaviors (Competencies) that Make a Difference in How Leaders are Perceived by Others

The author's research showed that raters noticed some competencies much more than others. Their research confirms that a real impact on employee turnover, customer satisfaction, and profitability occurs only when leadership is perceived as being extremely bad or exceptionally good.

In order to create a change in the Gestalt (general impression) people need to make noticeable changes.

Character

1. Displaying high integrity and honesty

High performers:

- Avoid saying one thing and doing another
- Act consistently with their words
- Follow through on promises and commitments
- Model the core values
- Lead by example

Poor performers:

- Are threatened by others' success
- Make themselves look good at the expense of others
- Blame failures on others

Personal Capability

2. Technical and professional expertise

High performers:

- Are sought by others for advice and counsel
- Use technical knowledge to help team members troubleshoot problems
- Have credibility because of their in-depth knowledge of issues or problems

Poor performers:

- Have become technically out of date
- Fail to understand the technology profession well

3. Solving problems and analyzing issues

High performers:

- Exercise a high degree of professional judgment
- Make good decisions based on a mixture of analysis, wisdom, experience and judgment
- Encourage alternative approaches and new ideas

Poor performers:

- Fail to anticipate and stay on top of problems
- Do not consider an appropriate range of alternatives before making a decision

4. Innovation

High performers:

- Encourage alternative approaches and new ideas
- Consistently generate creative and resourceful solutions to problems
- Constructively challenge the usual approach of doing things and find new and better ways to do the job
- Create a culture of learning that drives individual development
- Work to improve new ideas rather than discourage them
- Encourage people to find innovative ways to accomplish their goals

Poor performers:

- Have a “one right way” mindset
- Are afraid to challenge existing systems, processes, or approaches
- Feel that new or innovative approaches will cost too much to implement or cause disruption
- Shoot down new ideas or approaches

5. Practicing self-development

High performers:

- Make constructive efforts to change and improve based on feedback from others
- Seek feedback from others to improve and develop themselves
- Constantly look for developmental opportunities

Poor performers:

- Seem unconcerned about any kind of self-improvement
- Are content with their current skills and abilities
- Fear that others might perceive their development of new skills as a sign of incompetence or weakness

Focus on Results

6. Focus on results

High performers:

- Aggressively pursue all assignments and projects until completion
- Do everything possible to meet goals or deadlines

Poor performers:

- Fail to achieve agreed-upon results within the time allotted
- Fail to achieve the goals set for the work

7. Establish stretch goals

High Performers:

- Maintain high standards of performance
- Set measurable standards of excellence for themselves and others in the work group
- Promote a spirit of continuous improvement

Poor performers:

- Fail to build high commitment among all employees to team goals and objectives

8. Take on responsibility for outcomes/initiatives

High Performers:

- Take personal responsibility for outcomes
- Can be counted on to follow through on commitment
- Go above and beyond what needs to be done without being told

Poor performers:

- Blame failures on others
- Lose interest before projects are completed and fail to follow through

Interpersonal Skills

9. Communicating powerfully and prolifically

High performers:

- Are skillful at communicating new insights
- Provide the work group with a definite sense of direction and purpose
- Help people understand how their work contributes to broader business objectives

Poor performers:

- Do a poor job of communicating plans to people who help implement them
- Fail to explain the purpose and/or importance of the assignments

10. Inspiring and motivating others to high performance

High performers:

- Energize people to go the extra mile
- Have the ability to get people to stretch and reach goals beyond what they originally thought possible

Poor performers:

- Fail to inspire commitment, high energy, and a winning attitude

11. Building relationships

High performers:

- Are trusted by work group members
- Balance concern for productivity and results with sensitivity for employees' needs/problems
- Are approachable and friendly
- Handle difficult situations constructively and tactfully

Poor performers:

- Are difficult to get along with
- People don't feel free to take their complaints to them

12. Developing others

High performers:

- Are genuinely concerned about the development of others' careers
- Give individuals an appropriate balance of positive and corrective feedback
- Give honest feedback
- Take interest in the work of others
- Support others' growth and success

Poor performers:

- Wait too long to give others feedback
- Try to keep good people rather than allowing them to take on developmental opportunities

13. Collaboration and teamwork

High performers:

- Have developed cooperative working relationships with others in the company
- Promote a spirit of cooperation with other members of the work group
- Ensure that the work unit works well with other groups and departments

Poor performers:

- Do not work well with people who have different backgrounds and perspectives
- Promote a spirit of competition with other work groups

Leading Organizational Change

14. Developing strategic perspectives

High performers:

- Know how work relates to the organization's business strategy
- Translate the organization's vision and objectives into challenging and meaningful goals for the others
- Can take the long view; can be trusted to balance short-term and long-term needs of the organization

Poor performers:

- Get caught up in the "day-to-day" and fail to take a longer-term, broader perspective on business decisions

15. Championing the change

High Performers:

- Become champions for projects or programs, presenting them so that others support them
- Are effective marketers for work groups, projects, programs, or products

Poor performers:

- Tend to follow the lead of others in change efforts

16. Connect internal groups with the outside world

High performers:

- Have demonstrated ability to represent the work groups to key groups outside the groups/department
- Help people understand how meeting customers' needs is central to the mission and goals of the organization

Poor performers:

- Make day-to-day decisions based on internal needs rather than the needs of customers
- Do not have a broad network outside their own work group

Chapter 5. Leaders Must Fit Their Organization

Keys to Success and Failure

- Rather than identifying a consistent profile or style that always worked for every person, what the authors found was a tremendous variety in the style, approach, and makeup of extraordinary leaders.
- The only commonality they could find in extraordinary leaders is that they are extremely effective at only a few things.
- Their research reinforces the notion of individuality and the power of developing individual talents and gifts.

The Leadership Paradox

- Leaders are both unique and alike. They are unique in that each one has a different set of competencies that ideally fit the organization in which he or she works.

- They are alike in that, to be highly effective, they need to have at least one strength in the different sections of the tent.

The COP model

- Sandholtz and Ron Cutadean came up with a model that describes the primary drivers of a “career best” experience which is the high point in a person’s career.
- The authors have adapted that model and call it the COP model, where C= Competencies, O = organizational needs, and P = passion. Picture a Venn diagram with three intersecting circles.
- A leadership sweet spot occurs where there is an intersection of competencies (e.g. skills or behaviors a person performs well) organizational needs (e.g. outcomes that an organization values), and passions (e.g. activities people love to do).
- Contrasting people who are experiencing the sweet spot against others in the organization reveals substantial differences in both performance and attitude.
- Those who are in the sweet spot:
 - Add more value than their colleagues
 - Are ranked as higher performers
 - Generally work more hours per week
 - Are not looking for another job
 - Are more engaged and motivated
 - Are learning and developing new skills
 - Are having fun... and are fun to work with
- Barriers that get in the way of finding your sweet spot include:
 - Competency plus organizational needs but no passion
 - Organizational needs plus passion but no competence
 - Competence plus passion but no organizational need
- When your competence and passions intersect with organizational needs, the outcome is always positive for the individual and the organization.
- When there is an intersection of competence and passion with an organizational need, this creates an opportunity for an individual to show extraordinary leadership.
- An implication of the COP model is that in order to be successful in an organization, people need to combine their competencies with their passions and then find an organization that needs what they have to offer.

Organizational Profiles of Prized Competencies

Based on 2 different organizations, the authors found 13 profiles of competencies that may be valued by an organization. The opportunity here is to judge the “goodness of fit” between what your organization truly values and your on pattern of competencies.

- *Technology emphasis* – in a technology organization people thrive on technical knowledge and expertise.
- *Excellent execution*- in this organization there is a substantial need to drive forward and achieve results, to get things done on time, to stay in budget and always make your numbers. Goals are always aggressive and challenge everyone’s abilities.

- *Avoiding mistakes* – in this organization there is a critical need to do things right. Excellence, quality, and conformance to standards are the organizational bylines. The reward for taking on a new project or taking some initiative is not as great as the punishment for making a mistake.
- *Customer emphasis* – leaders are totally focused on satisfying customer needs and responding to their requests. Customer interests are often placed before those of the employees or the shareholders.
- *The genteel organization* – leaders in this organization focus on developing a kind and considerate organization. Confrontation never occurs. Serious issues are generally swept under the carpet. Performance reviews are avoided or couched in extremely gentle terms.
- *The candor organization* – leaders in this organization “tell it like it is.” Typically there is a strong feedback culture, in which feedback flows rather freely both up and down the organization.
- *The learning organization* – in a learning organization, people learn from mistakes rather than hiding them. Development of skills and talents is valued, and people are constantly looking for different or unique learning opportunities. There is typically a strong value for innovation.
- *The high-integrity organization*. Doing the right thing is valued by leaders in high-integrity organizations. There is a very strong emphasis on honesty and ethical behavior. Many voluntary organizations focused on noble causes have this strength.
- *The fair organization*. Organizations that have developed fairness as a key strength have figured out how to create an organization relatively free from bias. Leaders who have a strong desire to treat people with fairness learn to pay careful attention to their biases.
- *The political organization*. Often referred to as a “good old boys” club, politics and connections are among the most critical factors in determining who will be promoted and who will get a raise. For those who know the rules and how to play the game, this organization can be a reasonably good place to work.
- *Celebration organization*. This type of organization is built on individual efforts and opportunities for rewards.
- *The bureaucratic organization*. The bureaucratic organization has established strong bureaucratic processes and procedures and sticks to them.
- *The virtual organization* is a new type of organization that is emerging. The organization attempts to leverage the power of the group, but each person acts as an independent.

Implications

- It is critical for leaders to understand their individual areas of competency, the things that bring them passion, and the needs of their organization.
- The “leadership sweet spot” that is the intersection of these three elements holds great promise for both the individual and organizational success.
- The key to success for leaders is to find their own individual “sweet spot.”

Chapter 6. Great Leaders Possess Multiple Strengths

Philosophies of Effectiveness

- There is a pervasive belief that one should eliminate weaknesses, and by so doing become a more effective person. In work situations, performance appraisals most often search for some deficiency.

- Most people are more concerned with eliminating any perceptions of weakness than they are focused on developing strengths.
- This approach is reinforced by organizational practices that punish people for either weaknesses or rough edges but frequently fail to encourage people to develop strengths.

Rethinking the Personal Development Plan

- When looking at the scores in a 360-degree feedback report, rather than drilling into the less positive scores and attempting to elevate them to a higher level, they strongly recommend selecting three of the higher scores and striving to push them to the highest quartile. Doing that will propel a person's career forward far more sure-footedly and rapidly than trying to fix the lower scores.

What is a key strength?

- In their research the authors found a dramatic effect that strengths could have on a leader's effectiveness.
- Leaders with a variety of competencies that were positive but with none that stood out did not show that same impact on overall leadership effectiveness.
- In a relative sense they have defined strengths in most of their studies on leadership as a skill or competency at the 90th percentile.

Impact of strengths

- In their studies the authors found that leaders who had no perceived strengths were, on average, rated at the 34th percentile. They may not be ineffective at anything, but they are also not effective at anything.
- Leaders with one strength move from on average the 34th percentile to the 64th percentile. Imagine a 30% increase just for possessing one strength!
- Leaders with three strengths are at the 81st percentile on average.
- To be at the 90th percentile simply required a leader to be highly skilled at five competencies. This seems achievable to most aspiring leaders,
- Research indicates that people can only be successful at change if they focus efforts on change in a few areas. They recommend a maximum of three areas of improvement at any one time.

Powerful Combinations

- When considering strengths and the impact of combinations of strengths on leadership, the authors were interested to see if the most effective leaders had consistent combinations of competencies. There is a perception that a strength being pushed too far becomes a weakness. They found that while skills are valuable and lead to success, the combination of being excellent at more than one skill together, such as focus on results and interpersonal skills, substantially increased the probability of overall effectiveness. This research led to the conclusion that it is not strengths that hurt a person's effectiveness, but strengths standing alone without counterbalance.

- The secret to building success as a leader is to be excellent at powerful combinations of skills.

The Powerful Combinations

1. Having the ability to provide performance feedback and also being trusted by others is a powerful combination. Another closely related powerful combination involves trust and the ability to persuade others.
2. A second example is a combination of the competencies of interpersonal skills and listening.
3. A third example combines the competency of inspiring and motivating others with technical knowledge; a powerful combination was the “ability to influence” combined with “being well informed”.
4. A fourth pair combines competency in connecting with the outside world and inspiring and motivating others. Those with a clear understanding of the outside world and knowledge of what customers want can combine that knowledge with the ability to influence others and thus leverage their leadership ability.
5. A powerful combination is innovation combined with strong technical expertise.
6. Another powerful combination with innovation is the combination with strategic perspective. Those who combine a clear strategic perspective with innovative ideas create better strategies.
7. Combining the ability to develop others with the ability to build a strong and unified team creates a developmental environment for everyone. This creates a positive organizational environment.
8. A powerful combination involves the ability to communicate powerfully and prolifically combined with the ability to focus on results.
9. A powerful combination is team work combined with high standards and stretch goals. The combination creates a team on a noble mission.
10. A powerful combination is combining strategic perspective with problem-solving ability.

The Halo effect

- A halo effect occurs when our perceptions of others are distorted either positively or negatively.
- The important issue for leaders is to get this effect to work for them rather than against them. The key to getting the halo effect to work positively is to build a few profound strengths.
- The implication of the halo effect is that when strengths are pushed to higher levels, the halo effect tends to push up competencies that are not as positive. Rather than trying to incrementally improve a few less positive issues, focusing efforts on substantial improvement in a few key strengths will create a positive halo effect in the way a person’s manager perceives him.
- The extraordinary strengths are the keys to guaranteeing promotions, bonuses, stock options, and high performance appraisals for two reasons. First, those strengths help to produce tangible results. Second, they create a powerful “halo” that settles in around the person

Chapter 7. Fatal Flaws Must Be Fixed

In many cases, focus on a weakness is absolutely the correct thing to do. Those cases involve a category of attributes the authors call *fatal flaws*.

Fatal Flaw Profile

- In their research they found that when people with this profile improve their behavior on one item, they will experience a dramatic improvement overall in the way their subordinates perceive them. The extremely poor performance in one competency drags down the perceptions on all other competencies.
- An analysis of their data reveals five patterns of behavior that consistently lead to a failure in leadership. Possessing one or more of these makes it impossible for a person to be perceived as an effective leader.

Five Fatal Flaws that Consistently Lead to Failure in Leadership

1. *Inability to learn from mistakes.* There is an extremely interesting body of research on derailed executives by Morgan McCall Jr., and Michael Lombardo. Derailed executives made about the same number of mistakes as those whose careers continued onward and upward, but derailed executives did not use setbacks or failures in an assignment as a learning experience. They hid their mistakes from others, not alerting colleagues to the consequences of how their mistake would affect the colleagues' activities. They did not take immediate steps to rectify what they had done. Finally, they tended to brood about the mistake, constantly reliving it for years afterward.

Those whose careers continued to soar did exactly the opposite. They readily acknowledged what happened to those about them, alerted colleagues to the potential consequences, did their best to fix it, and then proceeded to forget about it and move on in their career.

2. *Lack of core interpersonal skills and competencies.* This failure comes from two sources – sins of *commission* and sins of *omission*. Sins of commission – When leaders are abrasive, insensitive, browbeating, cold, arrogant, and bullying, this is a sure pattern that leads to failure on today's world.

Sins of omission include things like:

- When you talk to people, look them in the eye
 - Learn and use people's names
 - Sincerely inquire about others' ideas and activities
 - Praise others' hard work and efforts in furthering a good cause
3. *Lack of openness to new or different ideas.* The third cause of failure is rejecting suggestions from subordinates or peers, insisting on doing things the same old way, and being generally closed to new thinking. It produces two negative consequences.
 - One is the impact on subordinates. People feel ignored, their ideas unappreciated and their contribution undervalued.
 - A second consequence is that good ideas and solutions fail to get implemented. The organization misses out on improvements that come from accepting new ideas from multiple sources.

The one thing worse than a leader who constantly says "no" is the leader who pretends to listen, and then does nothing about it. Pretending to listen raises the hopes of the employee, and these hopes are dashed when no action is taken.

4. *Lack of accountability.* The leader who does not assume complete responsibility for the performance of a work group is bound to fail. One of the key qualities that sets a leader apart

from others is mindset. The leader moves beyond feeling responsible only for his performance and productivity and is concerned about the performance of the work group.

Accountability or feelings of responsibility can be defined in four major categories: Behavior with subordinates, behavior with upper management, behavior with other groups and personal attitudes and values.

Being accountable describes the appropriate behavior when the performance of the work group is going well and when it goes badly.

5. *Lack of initiative*. The fifth “fatal flaw” is the failure to make things happen. It is the lack of producing results, driven by the fact that the leader does not initiate action.

One measure of a leader’s effectiveness is the number of initiatives he or she personally champions. The leader with initiative stops to consider the current reality and asks questions that keep the momentum going. Then the leader with initiative takes steps to make those things happen.

What the five fatal flaws have in common

- First, each is extremely obvious and is observable by anyone. Everyone close to these leadership behaviors feels their impact (or in this case, their lack of impact). No one is immune. They have a huge influence on the organization because the leader has an enormous “ripple” effect on the organization.
- Second, these fatal flaws tend to be mostly “sins of commission”. Each case is marked primarily by an inability to do something.
- Third, the five fatal flaws are not intellectual deficiencies, but much more on the “emotional intelligence” side of the equation.

Fixing fatal flaws

- If a leader possesses one or more of these characteristics, action should obviously be taken to remedy that deficiency, make that weakness irrelevant, or move that person back into a role of being an individual contributor where that behavior is less necessary. People can overcome these characteristics,
- The authors contend that the organization owes it to the leader to provide developmental experiences that will provide a positive path to remedy dysfunctional behavior. These may include external or internal programs, or a coaching/mentoring relationship that provides ongoing feedback to help change the leader.

Prescription: Massive Doses of Feedback.

- This is a perfect use of the 360- degree feedback process.
- The setting of a clear expectation for change, and the creation of a powerful sense of urgency about it, is the most likely way to erase fatal flaws.
- Feedback in the form of coaching, team discussions or 360-degree surveys provides “disconfirming information”. The messages conveyed would be contrary to this leader’s self-perceptions. This creates a dilemma and forces some action. The leader now has one of several choices to make.
 - She can deny the information.

- The leader can choose to change her self-concept.
- She can change her behavior. For most people faced with a barrage of disconfirming information, the easiest course of action is to change the behavior. That is the power of feedback.
- People respond differently to feedback. They fall into two camps in their fundamental orientation on how they regulate their behavior.
 - Those with a promotion orientation are highly motivated by positive feedback and devastated by negative feedback. They pull back and become deflated by criticism.
 - The second group of people have a “prevention orientation.” Their objective in life is to prevent negative outcomes. Any information that alerts this person to an impending problem or difficulty would be sought after and greatly appreciated. This group is not enthralled by positive feedback.
- This research on feedback gives us better ways to understand the different reactions to the same feedback, and also provide a good template for a better approach to giving feedback.
 - First examine the nature of the individual and whether positive feedback or negative feedback will be of most value.
 - Second, whatever the person is like, keep feedback focused on the behavior or process the person is using, and not on him or her as a person.

Chapter 8. New Insights into Leadership Development

- Plans for change are classically linear. A linear plan is defined as one which plots a straight-line development path from the current performance to a desired future state.
- Linear plans work well especially when people can identify a problem to be solved or poor performance on a competency.
- Since almost all developmental plans are linear, the authors looked for a technique to help people understand alternative development paths.
- They believe that the competence companions provide excellent clues about an alternative way to develop important leadership skills, and to improve the likelihood that you will be perceived by those about you as possessing an important, differentiating competence.
- For example, there is a relationship between technical expertise and interpersonal skills. It relates to the “stars” way of communicating about technical issues. They have observed that the most able technical people have sufficient confidence to express complex ideas in lay terms, and not hide behind jargon. To be perceived as being highly technically competent demands a person who can communicate effectively about their discipline to many groups.
- Having strong interpersonal skills does not help people become any smarter, but it does help them share the knowledge that they have, influence others effectively, communicate the things that they know, and build collaborative, trusting relationships with others.
- In most people’s perceptions, the qualities of technical competence (scientific and intelligent) and high standards of excellence (persistence and skillful) are also linked together.
- By championing extremely high standards for every activity, one can subtly cause others to have an elevated view of one’s technical competence.

Competency companions

- Competency companions (or behavioral buddies) are simply best friends who go everywhere together.
- Competency companions provide excellent clues for making significant improvements on a differentiating behavior. People need to examine their level of competence on a differentiating behavior and then review each competency companion.
- Looking for situations or past experiences where two behaviors might have been linked will help people identify a competency companion that may be the key to developing extraordinary talent on a differentiating behavior.
- The following is a list of six mechanisms that best explain the competency companion phenomena.
 1. The competency and the competency companion fit together in people's perception systems. Improving one helps create the perception that the other is more positive.
 2. Competency companions facilitate the expression of another competency. The impact of interpersonal skills on technical ability seems to be that it facilitates the communication of technical knowledge and enhances the appreciation other people have of a person's technical skills.
 3. Achieving a high level of skill in one behavior helps develop a related behavior. If leaders learn to develop their own careers, that will be an invaluable start to assisting others with the same process.
 4. One competency is a building block or a core element of the other competency. A strong companion behavior to integrity is concern and consideration for other people. Those perceived with high integrity have a high level of concern and consideration for others, and those perceived with low integrity lacked consideration for others.
 5. Competency companions change the context in which we operate. They found a strong relationship between a person's ability to communicate and the extent to which a person is trusted.
 6. Developing a competency companion changes the person. Strengthening a competency has the capacity to change a person's perspective, attitudes, and outlook on life.
- For each competency there are six to eight competency companions.

Character – the center pole of the leadership tent.

- Improving integrity – they found that those rated as high in integrity were also rated high on assertiveness. Those high on integrity were very effective at stepping forward and addressing difficult issues, confronting conflict, being direct, and facing up to difficult conversations.

Personal Capability – the second pole lifting the leadership tent

- Becoming a better problem solver – people perceived as being good problem solvers and highly analytical were also perceived as taking a great deal of initiative
- Self-improvement - A key skill for all successful leaders is the ability to continuously improve themselves.
- Their research pointed out the importance of continuous self improvement in order for leaders to become exceptional. People who were viewed as highly competent in terms of developing themselves were also viewed as being extremely honest and straightforward.

- Honesty is a striking feature of the relationship between self-development and integrity. People who are good at self-development have the ability to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses honestly and to acknowledge their strengths in behavior A and that they are less effective in behavior B. Being absolutely honest with one's self and refusing the opportunity for self-deceit is a key skill for extraordinary leaders.
- Becoming more innovative – Innovative leaders were also good at learning from both their successes and failures. A key to being innovative is increasing one's ability to learn.

Focus on Results

The ability to set stretch goals is a critical piece of motivating people to achieve exceptional results. The first step in setting stretch goals is for you to believe in the stretch capacity of people.

- They found that leaders who were effective at setting stretch goals were also effective at risk taking. It appears that leaders who are willing to challenge the status quo and take risks also have the ability to convince their work groups that they can achieve an almost impossible goal. People who play it safe, carefully analyze what is possible, and take reasonable steps forward will never be very effective at setting stretch goals.
- One of the key competency companions to taking responsibility for outcomes is taking action toward achieving results. If people begin to act, it conveys to others a great deal about their attitude. The best way to convince others that we are responsible people is by our actions.
- Their analysis found that leaders who were effective at focusing on results were also effective at giving others feedback and providing coaching. Leaders who only push people to perform better typically focus on the outcome but don't help people much with the journey.

Interpersonal Skills

One of the strongest competency companions for communicating powerfully is involving others.

- Those who were viewed as powerful communicators asked people for their input, encouraged alternative approaches and new ideas from other others, and made sure that they were in agreement.
- Leaders who were effective at developing others tended to be interested in their own self-development, while those who were ineffective at developing others had little interest in developing themselves.
- One of the best ways to get managers interested in developing others was to make sure these managers had a good development plan themselves.
- A good solution for making an organization more developmental is to make sure that managers and leaders feel they have a clear career path and developmental opportunities in their future.
- Having trusting relationships is strongly associated with good teamwork. Those leaders who were trusted also had the following characteristics:
 1. Consideration for others - balancing the need to get the job done with sensitivity for others needs and problems demonstrates true consideration
 2. An open, friendly style

3. Non-competitive. A key transition for leaders is moving from viewing others as competitors to viewing others as team members. Leaders show support for their team members by backing them up when they make an honest mistake and accepting blame for failures of the group rather than criticizing the performance of individual team members.
 4. Others have confidence in the leader's abilities and knowledge
 5. Careful listening. Listening to others in a way that shows a person is interested in what they have to say builds trust
 6. Candor. Being frank and honest in dealing with other people is critical to building trusting relationships
- Leaders who were rated as highly inspirational were also rated as having positive expectations of others. It appears that inspirational leaders have faith in the people with whom they work.
 - Another competency companion of inspiring others is getting people the resources they need to do the job.

Leading Organizational Change – the final tent pole

- The authors found that leaders who were good at creating change were perceived as excellent role models. Some change agents argue that it is virtually impossible for an organization to change its culture until its leaders' behavior is consistent with the values of the culture.
- One key differentiating behavior that distinguished extraordinary leaders was their ability to connect their organization to the outside world. A broader perspective helps leaders to recognize the interrelationships among various events and their impacts on technology, society, and government.
- Leaders who were viewed as having excellent strategic perspective were also rated as having high self-confidence. The relationship there seems to be that in order to get others to believe in you, you have to exhibit strong belief in yourself.

Chapter 9. A Case Study in Leadership Development – The U.S. Marine Corps

- A question that continues to linger on most people's minds is "Can you really develop leaders?" Aren't they born that way?"
- The authors devoted a chapter describing the work of the U.S. Marine Corps in order to put that question to bed by describing an organization that successfully develops leaders.
- It is the authors' conclusion that the Marines have come to utilize some extremely powerful leadership development practices. In addition to the fundamental principles, the Marines have developed practical methods through which to make these things happen.

Lessons from the Marine's Approach

Over the 226 years of the Marine Corp's existence, the Corps has learned a great deal about developing leaders. Their experience has shaped their views as to the real requirements of leadership, as well as the optimum ways to select and develop their leaders. Their experience in developing leaders appears to have shaped their culture, just as their strong culture has molded their practices of leadership development.

- Development begins with understanding the unique leadership tasks required. The Marines' emphasis on teams cascades through their leadership development. They pair a highly seasoned noncommissioned officer with a newly appointed lieutenant and allow the two of them to work together for several months. This eliminates many mistakes. The new officer has a sounding board with whom to think about strategies or tactics.
- Everyone is on the team. Enlisted men and women and officers alike are expected to express concern about questionable decisions and orders, and one of the biggest mistakes an officer can make is to ignore or squelch such questioning.
- Leaders must be able to cope with rapidly changing leadership patterns. Part of their training involves planning a complex mission, and then shortly before executing it, having the roles and responsibilities of the group changed. Circumstances change rapidly and everyone must be prepared to deal with rapid change.
- Leadership requires the use of peer discipline and pressure. The Marines have a high level of commitment and loyalty. They emphasize group discipline. Their primary motivation is to protect their comrades. Discipline ensures a deep commitment to the organization, the unit, and to comrades. Thus, the strongest motivational forces come from within each person, and from colleagues.
- Leadership involves planning and performing under intense time pressure. The Marines train people to plan a mission down to the smallest detail, but the planning process is often compressed into a few hours. Speed is of the essence in the Marine world. They prefer the benefits of a 70% solution that, while imperfect, can be reached immediately.
- Leadership demands reducing complexity to manageable simplicity. The Marines are dedicated to a "rule of three." They organize using this principle. The same principle is applied to strategies and tactics. When confronted by a situation with seemingly infinite alternatives, the leader is taught to narrow them down to three plausible alternatives. Having defined three reasonable scenarios, the task is then to analyze these and select the best one. Then the Marines are taught to pause, to determine the team's strengths and potential weaknesses in carrying out the mission, to state clearly the assumptions that are being made, and to define the actions they must not take and the information they need to execute the mission.

The Processes and Tools of Leadership Development.

The Marine Corps' techniques for developing leaders provide several valuable lessons.

- People development requires a significant commitment of time from many in the organization. The Marines invest enormous amounts of time and organizational resource in their leadership development process.
- Leaders need to find their natural strengths, and not be forced into an unnatural mold created by the organization. Marines understand that there are many effective leadership patterns. Leaders are encouraged to magnify their strengths.
- Leadership is best developed with highly engaging learning methods. Nearly everything the Marines do in their leadership development process is highly involving, not merely academic. Leaders make plans under severe pressure, and then execute them. Some methods are physical, other assignments are more cerebral. At the conclusion of a project the group engages in an "after action review" that focuses on what went well and how it could have been

improved. This is one of the most powerful learning devices the Marines and other military services use. It is a perfect example of team-based leadership. Everyone is involved in a mission comes together and psychologically takes off their stripes, and then conducts a totally open candid discussion of what went well and what could be improved.

- Leadership development requires information and knowledge about leadership. The Marines have approximately 100 books on a recommended reading list. The aspiring leaders are required to read them, and these books are discussed in a serious manner in more academic sessions.
- Leadership versatility is developed by cross training in areas outside one's area of expertise.

Who is responsible for Leadership development?

- Everyone assumes responsibility for leadership development.
- Leadership development is most successful when conducted by the most effective senior members of management.

Leadership Development both Shapes and Reflects the Culture of the Organization

- Leadership development must be taken seriously by the entire organization, not just a few people in a development function.
- Leadership development includes everyone, not just a few elite, so called high-potential people.
- Continual improvement in the quality of the workforce occurs through development, not elimination.
- Diversity should be encouraged, not discouraged.
- Everyone should be trained to be an effective leader.
- Leaders should be held accountable for the level of commitment and morale of their people.
- Leadership requires a feedback-rich environment that emphasizes learning from failure, rather than punishment for mistakes.
- Leadership development occurs best in an egalitarian culture.

What Individuals Do to Become Great Leaders

- "The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born – that there is a genetic factor to leadership. Myth asserts that people simply either have certain charismatic characteristic qualities or not. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born." – Warren Bennis
- There is no doubt that some people come into the world endowed with self-confidence and a keen intellect. That is clearly an advantage. But of that group, only a small number move on to remarkable achievements as leaders. The difference appears to be hard work, thoughtful and tenacious effort, zeal for learning, and a willingness to extend beyond one's normal comfort zone.
- Following are 25 suggestions for ways in which leaders can improve the attributes or behavior that are vital in producing those results. These suggestions of things to develop your own leadership abilities are meant to convey the message that all leaders can do a great deal on their own. Do not rely on the organization to make you an even better leader. There are

extensive and powerful steps you can take to move you well down the path to becoming a great leader.

1. Decide to be a great leader. The first decision is to see that being a leader in an organization is important and worthy of your continued effort. The second decision is to be great, rather than just mediocre at the role of leadership. To become a highly effective leader requires real dedication to that task and a willingness to act with the intensity and focus that characterizes great athletes.
2. Develop and display high personal character. A leader must be willing to take charge and make certain the group performs well. Counsel to all leaders is to maintain an attitude of humility. Be willing to laugh at yourself. Do not flaunt the authority you have. Humility will make you approachable. It opens the door to building relationships. The leader needs to find some mirror from which can be learned the way others perceive your character. Be cautious in the commitments you make, and then always deliver. People make their attitudes and ultimately their character conform to their behavior. The place to begin is with behavior. Thus participating in powerful skill-building programs designed to improve interpersonal skills will have a decided effect on attitudes of the participants. When people learn and practice new behavior, there is a remarkable transformation of attitudes and ultimately their character.
3. Develop new skills. Enroll in developmental experiences. The key is for leaders to move outside their comfort zone to do something that will provide some real development. Leaders must be willing to invest in themselves.
4. Find a coach. Many organizations are hiring professional coaches to work with their key executives. They find the investment in someone who is capable of providing objective, constructive feedback be well worth the investment. The higher people move in the organization, the less apt they are to hear the truth from people about them, so the value of coaches may increase as people move to higher levels in the organization. What is especially effective is the coach who calls on a regular basis and discusses the leader's success in taking some agreed-upon action steps. This process builds strong accountability and produces remarkable behavioral outcomes.
5. Identify your strengths. An emphasis on expanding strengths is far more valuable and productive than slogging away at trying to remedy weaknesses. Strengths build confidence, and that confidence spreads like yeast in a lump of bread dough and everything rises.
6. Identify your weaknesses and then find ways to make them irrelevant. Through delegation, the use of outside resources, or reallocation of work assignments, ways can be found to make weaknesses irrelevant.
7. Fix fatal flaws.
8. Increase the scope of your assignment. The key is that the new assignment is broader and different from those previously held, and above all, an increase in responsibility.
9. Connect with good role models. Through careful observation, leaders gain business acumen and hone important interpersonal skills. Sometimes the lessons are "what not to do."
10. Learn from mistakes and negative experiences. A healthy attitude toward mistakes and negative experiences is crucial to growth and improved performance. Mistakes are part of the learning process.

11. Seek ways to give and receive productive feedback and learn to absorb it in an emotionally healthy way. The learning and development process relies heavily on feedback to sustain it. There is often a huge gap between how leaders see themselves and how subordinates perceive them. The best way to close that gap is feedback. Accept feedback as the valid perceptions of others, and first seek to understand the meaning.
12. Learn from work experiences. It is useful to make notes of what is expected to be achieved and in what time frame. Then the leader can periodically see how the actual results are tracking with the original expectations. That way, every activity and project becomes a learning experience.
13. Study the current reality the organization faces. Step away from your organization and look at it through the eyes of a security analyst, then as a competitor, as a supplier, and as a customer. Being brutally frank with yourself, and encouraging total candor from others, is the best safeguard to keeping in touch with your organization's current reality.
14. Learn to think strategically.
15. Communicate with stories. Learn to recount important messages with powerful stories that connect emotionally with those about you.
16. Infuse energy into every situation.
17. Allocate specific time to people development. A powerful tool in your own development process is to become involved in the development of people who report to you. Taking the time to develop people is an important behavior of a leader, not only for what it does for the recipient, but equally for the impact it has on the leader. Developing others moves you from being an independent professional person, concerned only with yourself, to the role of the true leader who creates organizational capacity and builds people.
18. Weld your team together. A strong cohesive team becomes a powerful development tool aiding leaders to constantly improve. A good team-building exercise is one of the most powerful learning experiences for the leader.
19. Build personal dashboards to monitor leadership effectiveness. Good overall measure of leadership does not usually exist in most organizations. Measures will obviously differ by organization and functional responsibility, but some measures that would frequently be used include:
 - Retention data
 - Customer satisfaction measure
 - Productivity measures
 - Performance against budget
 - Results from organizational climate surveys
20. Plan and execute a change initiative. A powerful development activity for any leader is to define a change that should appropriately be made, and then undertake to make that change happen. Whatever the change, a powerful development process involves planning the change, defining the outcomes that will result from the change, then implementing the change, and finally evaluating the results.
21. Become a teacher/trainer. Nothing cements a body of information inside someone more than teaching it. In addition to personal growth, it brings the instructor into contact with many people with whom she would never have had contact. It educates the instructor on the challenging issues the organization is facing, and how people are reacting to those challenges.

22. Study the high performers and replicate their behavior with others. Through observation and interrogation, find out what that person is doing that makes him or her so effective. See which elements of what that person does could be integrated into your own activities.
23. Volunteer in your community.
24. Practice articulating your vision for the firm and your group. The leadership lesson is that communication of complex messages must be repeated over and over again. Some have said that people really do not take a message seriously until the seventh time they hear it.
25. Prepare for your next job. Think ahead regarding the skills you will need.

Chapter 11. The Organization's Role in Developing Leaders

- The author's strongly contend that most organizations are tapping only a fraction of the potential of the people currently in its employ. They believe that people in general have the capacity to rise to much higher levels of performance if the organization creates the proper climate.
- Jon Katzenbach of Peak Performance believes that the development of people at all levels, and the equal opportunity given to people regardless of where they are perceived to be on the "bell-shaped curve", will define the most successful organizations of the future.
- Their research revealed an interesting though not surprising fact. The leadership skills possessed by the most senior people in an organization become the leadership ceiling.
- This strongly argues for continued development of the senior people, so that the leadership tent is lifted, making room for others to grow. Maybe it is their example that is so important, or it could be their coaching and mentoring that is needed. Whatever the reasons, great leaders at the top are necessary for great leaders to develop at any level in the organization.
- Some organizations make a distinction between leadership development and management development.
- Few people have the luxury of functioning only as a leader or a manager. Most everyone in a position of any authority whom they have observed is pressed into both leadership and management activities.

Define The Results You Seek from Leaders and How Those results Link to the Strategy of the Organization

- Leadership is not an end, but a means to an end. If an important part of being a good leader is to produce excellent results, then those results must be clearly defined so that leaders will know when they are succeeding.
- Those results must flow from the organization's broader strategy. Helping leaders to understand that strategy, and how to think about the main strategic alternatives their organization faces, is a valuable element of a leadership development process.
- Some of the most useful development for any leader is to develop crystal clarity regarding what is expected in the way of outputs.

Set Extremely High Expectations for Leaders

- For research purposes they arbitrarily set the 90th percentile as the cutoff point for being “great” in some capacity.
- They urge helping the best of your current group of leaders to become even better.
- Within a firm everyone benefits by helping the strong to set even higher goals. They set the bar to a new height, and many who are currently in the tier below will adjust their performance to the new expectation. On any team, the presence of one or two people who are putting forth Herculean effort, and working to their highest intensity, raises the performance of the entire group.
- Focus development efforts on strengths – every leadership development program should contain time and vehicles to ensure that the leaders thoroughly and accurately understand their strengths.
- Use powerful learning methods that change behavior. If our objective is to build great leaders, our developmental processes must undergo major transformation, and be built on a radically different mindset.
- Emphasize action learning projects – work on projects that matter.
- Create a culture of feedback. A variety of mechanisms that are highly useful are:
 - 360-degree feedback procedures
 - Frequent performance discussion between bosses and subordinates
 - Team-building sessions
 - Coaching relationships
 - Skip-level meetings
- Transform complexity into simplicity. The job of the leader is one of constantly dealing with complexity and ambiguity. Leadership processes must help them to deal with that.
- Involve your leaders as teachers.
- Make development a long-term process, not an event
- Build accountability into the development process
- Plan developmental experiences for leaders
- Celebrate success
- The success of all the above recommendations hinges on the bone-deep beliefs of the senior leaders of the organization.
- For the organizations that make this commitment, the rewards are very high. For those who choose not to, the future is highly questionable.
- This approach promises greater success in developing leaders.
 - First, a focus on developing great leaders rather than merely on “leadership development” gives a new perspective to what we do. It raises our sights and creates a different mindset for measuring our success. Many of the leaders currently in the “good” category seem satisfied with their current level of effectiveness.
 - Second, an emphasis on strength is more palatable than looking for blemishes and weaknesses. It is much easier for a leader to find ways to magnify strengths than it is to overcome weaknesses. It comes more naturally.
 - Third, people are more willing to practice skills they are good at.

- Fourth, by measuring the perceptions of subordinates and peers, we have a tool for the immediate and objective measurement of leadership. Frequent and precise measurements are possible and relatively economical.
- Fifth, change need not take forever. If you wait, nothing happens. To believe that change will show up years after an executive process is contrary to all evidence.

Reader's recommendation:

This book is informative because of its rich and thorough content, and it is useful because it contains ideas with impact, which will help leaders become seen as extraordinary by their associates. It links perceptual data with hard, quantitative business results, including unit profitability, retention statistics, and customer satisfaction and employee commitment measures.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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