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## We the Leaders: In Order to Form a Leaderful Organization

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# We The Leaders: In Order to Form a Leaderful Organization

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## We The Leaders: In Order to Form a Leaderful Organization

### **Abstract**

This article endeavors to develop an emerging paradigm of leadership for our organizations known as "leaderful practice." Leaderful practice constitutes a direct challenge to the conventional view of leadership as "being out in front." It is submitted that in the 21st Century organization, everyone will need to share the experience of serving as a leader, not sequentially, but concurrently and collectively. In other words, leaders co-exist at the same time and all together. In addition, each member of an organization will be encouraged to make a unique contribution to its growth, both independently and interdependently with others. In this sense, organizational members will aspire to become fervently collaborative, which in turn is derived from their compassion toward other human beings. Their well-developed sense of self permits them to develop a deep consideration of others. Thus, the article makes the case that the only possible way to lead ourselves out of trouble in management is to become mutual and to share leadership.

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Amanda's Yukon team was really humming now. Not only had they nailed down a major Korean contract because of their superior customer service, but conditions seemed bright with a media and communications giant. Working together was a joy. Team members each had a specific functional role - market research, promotion, sales support, etc. - but seemed able implicitly to support each other when warranted. Any one of the team members could speak for the entire team. Moreover, Amanda couldn't afford to spend much time with Yukon since there was general turmoil in one of her other teams due to staffing irregularities. An old friend, Josh Monroe, an operations analyst with Yukon, comforted Amanda: "Don't worry about us. We can handle things ourselves. I

guess we're a leaderless group." "Josh," Amanda replied. "Fortunately for me. You're not leaderless. You're leaderful!"

This article is about becoming leaderful like Amanda, Josh, and the members of the Yukon team. Notice that Josh and the other members of the team are included under the leaderful umbrella, nor is Amanda excluded. They all share the leadership in a "community," namely, any setting where people congregate to accomplish work together. It is leaderful because it is a community not deprived of leadership but full of leadership since everyone shares the experience of serving as a leader, not sequentially, but concurrently and collectively.

To be leaderful, then, one need not be the designated position leader of the community. Anyone who works with others in any capacity is capable of exerting leadership. One doesn't have to be the CEO or top gun. Why? We're in an age of lean operations, of doing more with less. Many managers feel overwhelmed by technology or by contractors out to replace them. Meanwhile, for employees, life isn't any easier. They're given assignments that are nearly impossible to accomplish in a specified time by supervisors who have far less understanding of the problem than they do. Admittedly, the leaderful process may require executives to give up some control. But they'll gain far more. They'll release community members from a suffocating dependence, allowing them to contribute their natural leadership abilities.

### **Introducing Leaderful Practice: An Emerging Concept of Leadership for the 21st Century**

This article introduces an alternative paradigm of leadership known as "leaderful practice." It constitutes a direct challenge to the conventional view of leadership as "being out in front." In the 21st Century, it is argued that all members of the community need to contribute to the growth of that community, both independently and interdependently with others. Compared to empowerment models that have become popular in recent years, leaderful practice is not merely a consultative model wherein leaders in authority allow "followers" to participate in their leadership (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958; Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). It is not equivalent to

stewardship approaches that see the position leader stepping aside to allow others to take over when necessary (Block, 1993). Nor is it a self-directed team approach that often elevates supervisors to represent, coach, protect, or set boundaries on the team (Wellins, Byham, & Wilson, 1991; Fisher, 1993; Kirkman & Rosen, 2000; Langfred, 2000). Although such practices as self-directed work teams are an important ingredient to mobilize the transition to the profound democratic mindset espoused by leaderful practice (Clifford & Sohal, 1998; Druskat & Wheeler, 2004), the model proposed here is inherently mutual throughout all levels of practice: individual, group, and organization. In its operation, it transforms leadership from being an individual property into an emerging paradigm that redefines leadership as a collective practice.

Readers might question how such a concept of leadership can possibly work. Would there not be chaos if we let everyone in a community go off on their own tangents leading in any way they wish? Further, people are needed who are committed to action to accomplish the goals of the community, not just their personal goals. Fortunately, leaderful leaders are not interested in going off on tangents. Their leadership is not a guise for abdicating responsibility for action. True, they are given enormous freedom to develop themselves and their community to the fullest potential, but they are also interested in working with and within their community to accomplish a mission. They develop sufficient trust in others to make leadership a shared and yet very powerful tool for action and responsibility.

### **What is Leadership**

Before describing the leaderful model, it is important to start with what leadership itself represents. From this point, a baseline may be established to determine if leaderful practice can accomplish leadership as effectively, or more effectively, than traditional leadership practice. A good place to start is to review four critical processes that are mobilized by leadership. These processes are based on what famed sociologist, Talcott Parsons, considered to be the four functional

prerequisites of organizations. Although credited to Parsons, the prerequisites were derived from his collaboration with Robert Bales and Edward Shils (1953). Bales, in particular, observed how groups went through these phases as they coped with any material problem. Parsons then applied the framework to larger social institutions (Mayhew, 1982). The model depicted in Figure 1 below is iterative, so an explanation may begin with any of the processes, but for the sake of clarity, we will begin with setting the mission.

-----Insert Figure 1 about here-----

This first critical process defines the outcome to which the community becomes dedicated. A mission becomes a stabilizing force in the face of pressure from forces both inside and outside the system to change it. Though subject to change from the “respond to changes” process, the result of which may cause occasional shifts in the mission, the mission gives any system a consistent boundary for a period of time (Pearce, 1982; Campbell, 1992).

The interest among major corporations to define strategic direction is testimony to this essential process (Falsey, 1989; Ireland & Hitt, 1992). Wal-Mart, for example, makes its mission very simple: “To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same thing as rich people.” Other companies are more specific. ABN AMRO portrays its mission as creating “maximum economic value for our shareholders through a constant relationship focus on the financial services needs of our chosen client segments and a strict adherence to our financial targets. We are operating in three principal customer segments, aiming to maximize the value of each of these businesses as well as the synergies between them. Excellence of service to our clients and leadership in our chosen markets are of paramount importance to our long-term success.” In either instance, members of these corporate communities obtain a good sense of where their company is going.

The second critical process, actualizing goals, is concerned with how a community organizes itself to extend social and political energy and shape its economic performance. Members of a

community engage with one another to work on behalf of their mission. Failing to engage in the requisite tasks to accomplish a mission typically results in mission failure itself, no matter how noble the mission.

The third critical process, sustaining commitment and cohesiveness, addresses the need of work units and constituents to come together in a mutual adjustment process to support the community as a whole. Facing any community as it grows in size is the need to coordinate its parts. This can be accomplished by structuring processes, but only in part. Leadership is also required to see that people are engaged and supportive of one another, that there is complementarity of expectations, and that conflicts are brought out into the open and managed for the good of the whole (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

The fourth process, responding to changes, is a boundary function that links a community with its environment. Any organization not only has to organize itself internally but must be prepared to change in response to changing environmental conditions. Hence, communities cannot become overly cohesive or overly committed to any course of action without being prepared to shift direction when necessary. Although not always active, a repertoire of available resources and actions should be available should there be a need to change course (Starbuck & Dutton, 1973; Janis & Mann, 1977).

In order to remain adaptable, leadership is required from everyone in the organization. Indeed, many of the most adaptable responses arise from regular employees or from those in the organization who listen to their customers. Microsoft's Internet applications are due as much to students and new hires who were inveterate web surfers as to Bill Gates. Starbucks' Frappuccino came from a store manager in Los Angeles, and most franchise operators, like McDonalds, tend to report that the best ideas come from the franchisees in the field rather than from headquarters.

## The Traditional Leadership Model

When it comes to the concept and practice of leadership, there is a cultural presumption, or an implicit model, that suggests that its meaning is so widely accepted that there is no apparent need to question its prevailing connotation. In other words, its qualities have become commensurate with leadership itself (Meindl, 1990). Although disputable, proposed here are four tenets that describe the Western historical tradition in leadership (Raelin, 2003):

- a. Leadership is serial. Once one achieves the office of leadership, that position is retained at least for the duration of the term of office. Only when one completes his or her term, or vacates or is forced to leave the office, does leadership thereupon transfer to the next leader, though it may return at times to the original leader. Leaders are thus always in a position of leadership and do not cede the honor to anyone else. Once acquiring power, most leaders attempt to sustain or increase it. Giving up or sharing power with others would be seen as abdicating one's responsibility.
- b. Leadership is individual. That a leader is individual signifies its solitary role. There is only one leader of an enterprise and normally such a person is designated as the authority or position leader. It would weaken or minimally confuse leadership to talk about having more than a single leader or to share leadership because there would not be a concrete end-role for making decisions and directing actions.
- c. Leadership is controlling. The conventional leader believes it is his or her ultimate duty to direct the enterprise and engender the commitment of community members. To ensure smooth coordination of functions, the leader is the spokesperson for the enterprise. The subordinate role is to follow the guidance of the leader and to help him or her successfully accomplish the mission of the enterprise. Leaders may choose to share their deepest beliefs but only with their closest associates.



d. Leadership is dispassionate. Although the leader recognizes that people have feelings, the leader's function is to make the tough decisions for the enterprise in a dispassionate manner. Tough decisions may result in not satisfying (or may even hurt) particular stakeholders, including employees, but accomplishing the mission of the enterprise must come first. Leaders are also the authoritative source when facing problems in the operation and tend to exude a confidence that they are in charge and that subordinates can rely upon them to handle any challenge facing the enterprise.

Leaderful practice offers an alternative approach to this traditional model, which tends to paint the leader with heroic imagery. Where has the heroic paradigm come from? To start, we might trace back to the historical roots of the concept of leadership. The Anglo-Saxon *lédan* – for leadership - has the meaning of "going forth" or "standing out in front." Moving to the Nineteenth Century, Thomas Carlyle insisted that the one certainty that defines history is what "Great Men" have accomplished (MacMechan, 1901). Perhaps this is why the pull toward the heroic model of leadership persists even though there is much verbiage extended toward the need to include other members of the community within the leadership umbrella. Though the value of democratic leadership may be advocated, the drive to have a spiritual leader whom we can love and who can save us sneaks back into our consciousness just as we prepare to assert our own worth and independence (Klapp, 1949). Part of the reason for this is that North-American culture, in particular, seems to value, even revere, individualism while preaching teamwork. Whatever the walk of life, be it a corporate setting, a professional sports team, or an opera, there tends to be a focus on the star performer even when he or she may be entirely dependent upon the team to achieve prominence. Just listen to any advertisement about a sports contest and you will likely hear a reference to the competing teams' stars over the teams themselves.

Another reason for our fascination with the heroic paradigm is what Jean Lipman-Blumen (1996) refers to as "existential uncertainty," an immutable reality that the future is unpredictable and

largely outside of our control. Even though much of human existence is becoming increasingly understood due to advances in science and technology, many people remain at times in a state of fear regarding what the future will bring. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, only serve to heighten the fear. Under a cloud of uncertainty, individuals may look to a hero or surrogate parent figure for psychological comfort in order to reduce their stress and anxiety. Such a leader might be able to turn the uncertainty of his or her followers into a vision of opportunity and success.

Yet, it is precisely at this point that followers are particularly susceptible to charismatic salvation. They find themselves in a dependent state and look to their leaders to satisfy their needs. Charismatics are all too willing to comply by offering them hope and direction. Admittedly, the ambition of the charismatic may be entirely altruistic. He or she may only have the best interests of the followers in mind. Using the term, “transformational,” such writers as James McGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard Bass (1985) explain that such a leader can be characterized by high moral and ethical standards. Using coaching and mentoring, the transformational leader can challenge followers to engage in shared goals and undertakings and in a search for higher meaning and moral maturity. However, unlike leaderful practice, transformational leadership relies on an appointed or self-designated position leader to mobilize salutary outcomes among others in the organization who are called followers. It does not sufficiently recognize that the context or other members of the community may likewise participate in the enactment of leadership (Manz and Sims, 1993; Pearce and Sims, 2002).

### **The Four C's of Leaderful Practice**

Leaderful practice offers an alternative approach to traditional leadership. It is proposed here that as an integrative model that has been in the making for some time (though, unfortunately, not in a coherent form), it can accomplish the four processes of leadership in more settings and with more pervasive effectiveness than the traditional approach. This contention can be explained by

considering how the four tenets of traditional leadership can be replaced with what might be labeled, the four c's. Leaderful managers are concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate.

Figure 2 displays these two approaches as a set of continua. The reason for the continua is that few individuals are completely settled in one approach or the other. The vestiges of traditional leadership are gradually eroding as managements experiment with more participative processes, such as employee involvement (EI) and empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Laschinger et al., 2004; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004). Nevertheless, there will be variance in leaderful tendencies across the tenets. For example, someone may be a compassionate leader but believe firmly that leadership of the enterprise should gravitate to him as the ultimate single decision maker. Or, a manager may find that she embraces leaderful practice only under particular circumstances, such as when her colleagues eventually fall in line with her view after an extensive period of consultation.

-----Insert Figure 2 about here-----

The first tenet of leaderful practice, that leadership is concurrent, is perhaps the most revolutionary. What is being suggested is that in any community, there can be more than one leader operating at the same time, so leaders willingly and naturally share power with others. Indeed, power can be increased by everyone working together (Tannenbaum, 1968). Since leaders perform a variety of responsibilities in a community, it is pointless to insist that there be only one leader operating at any one time. For example, an administrative assistant, who "knows the ropes" and can help people figure out who is knowledgeable about a particular function, may be just as important to the group as the position leader. However, this same position leader does not "stand down" nor give up his or her leadership as members of the community turn their attention to the administrative assistant. The two of them as well as many others can offer their leadership to the community at the same time.

Leaderful leadership is not only concurrent, but is also collective. Since a community can have more than one leader operating at a time, it can be concluded that people might be operating as

leaders together; in other words, that leadership is a plural phenomenon. The collective view purports that leadership does not derive from individual influence as it does from the process of people working together for a common purpose (Drath & Palus, 1994). The community is not solely dependent on one individual to mobilize action or make decisions on behalf of others. Included in this assertion is the role of the position leader. This "authority" may have formal power conferred on him or her by the organization, but formal authority is not necessarily the most valuable to the operation (French and Raven, 1960). Decisions are made by whoever has the relevant responsibility. Leadership may thus emerge from multiple members of the community especially when important needs arise, be they preparing for a strategic intervention, creating meaning for the group, or proposing a change in direction. Although someone may initiate an activity, others may become involved and share leadership with the initiator. Consider a team temporarily stymied in its attempt to solve a problem. Feeling disconsolate, members wonder if they will ever find a solution. Then, all of sudden, some member offers an idea, typically not a mainstream idea but one that has an immediate appeal, which engages the community's imagination. Soon, everyone begins throwing out additional thoughts and tactics to build on the original idea. For a time, there is almost a breathless quality to the team's functioning as it becomes absorbed in this all-encompassing solution process. The team is experiencing collective leadership; it is not dependent on any one member, not the position leader, not the idea initiator; everyone is participating in leadership.

Leaderful leadership is also collaborative. All members of the community, not just the position leader, are in control of and may speak for the entire community. They may advocate a point of view that they believe can contribute to the common good of the community. Although they might be assertive at times, they are equally sensitive to the views and feelings of others and consider their viewpoints to be equally valid. They thus seek to engage in a public dialogue in which they willingly open their beliefs and values to the scrutiny of others (Raelin, 2001). They

also understand the difference between collaborating as a pretense versus becoming fully involved. In pretentious involvement, people quickly discover that all the critical decisions seem to be made when they're not around. Collaborative leaders realize that everyone counts, every opinion and contribution sincerely matter (Block, 1993).

Finally, leaderful managers are compassionate. By demonstrating compassion, one extends unadulterated commitment to preserving the dignity of others. Stakeholders' views are considered before making a decision for the entire enterprise (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Each member of the community is to be valued regardless of his or her background or social standing, and all viewpoints are to be considered regardless whether or not they conform to current thought processes. In practicing compassion, leaders take the stance of a learner who sees the adaptability of the community as dependent upon the contribution of others. Members of the community, not necessarily the position leader, handle problems as they arise. Compassionate leaders recognize that values are intrinsically interconnected with leadership and that there is no higher value than democratic participation (Heifetz, 1994; McLagan & Nel, 1995). When people who have a stake in a community venture are given every chance to participate in that venture – including its implementation – their commitment to the venture will be assured (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1961; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The endowment of participation extends to the wider community affected by the actions of a given organization (Preston & Poston, 1975; Carroll, 1981; Waddock, 2002). If building a new corporate complex will affect the existing ecology or serenity of a neighboring property, the compassionate leader will include the neighbors in deliberations concerning the construction. Not every stakeholder will have his or her position accepted but all positions will be validated. That means that they will be thoroughly reviewed and potentially incorporated into the final decision.

## **Why Do We Need to be Leaderful**

There are a number of institutional forces that are requiring a change in the nature of leadership. From a structural point of view, new forms of organization are beginning to break down bureaucratic authority as the organizing principle behind the design of mid- and large-size enterprises. These newer “post-bureaucratic” forms are emphasizing lateral relationships across functions, business units, and geographic regions and are making more liberal use of alliances, outsourcing, and teams (Snow, Miles, & Coleman, 1992; Schneider, 2002). Cross-functional teams are given a relatively high degree of autonomy to determine how to carry out their mission, be it customer service, project selection, or plan integration.

At Harley-Davidson, for example, a circle structure is used that doesn't require managers per se; rather each circle has a "coach," someone selected by the circle not for his/her authority but for "acute communication, listening, and influencing skills." Responsibility for carrying out the work of the team and communicating with others teams is not only the job of the coach; any team member may perform such a requisite role when needed. In the words of former CEO Rich Teerlink and executive consultant Lee Ozley, "we did not expect a single individual to emerge as the leader of the circle. Instead, we anticipated that leadership would be a shared responsibility" (Teerlink & Ozley, 2000; p. 133).

Organizational boundaries are becoming more fluid and permeable. In order to unlock the knowledge of our workforce, virtual and network structures have even begun to challenge the conventional notion of what is "internal" and what is "external" (Halal, 1994; Vicere, 2002). In such organizations, clear boundaries that distinguish the employees inside from customers, suppliers, and even competitors outside are breaking down. At Home Depot, for example, one might find a clerk who looks like a Home Depot clerk but who actually works for Georgia-Pacific. Why? By collecting detailed point-of-sale information, Georgia-Pacific expects to contribute to

lowering prices and reducing out-of-stock shelves while cutting inventory (McDougall, 2001). Customers, meanwhile, be they businesses or individual consumers, now have greater leverage in consumer markets owing to the access they can have to corporate units through information technology. As a result, they expect to work with corporate representatives who can streamline decisions and actions. They don't wish to be kept waiting for clearance from some corporate executive with whom they've had no contact.

Managers, meanwhile, are finding themselves increasingly without authority to direct the tasks of others; rather, they can do no more than guide cooperation toward task accomplishment. According to Russ Ackoff (1993), there has to be a change from “power over,” suggesting authority or command, to “power-to,” suggesting the ability to implement. Every organizational member needs to be equipped with the necessary tools to not only run his or her immediate work function but to also see how that function connects to the rest of the organization, not to mention how it operates across organizational boundaries. People have access to information that was once the exclusive domain of top management. As workers become more connected to one another, the entire enterprise becomes much more interdependent than in the past. Salespeople are being encouraged to communicate customer preferences to systems designers. Nurses and dietitians are now part of the same team. Expertise has become as much a function of the cross-functional unit operating together as intelligence professed by one single individual.

Each worker is also likely to possess knowledge that may exceed that of his or her superiors. Take as an example the emergence of military forces which are becoming digitally networked, supported by unmanned spy planes and robotic sensors. This new technology in order to achieve its objectives of speed and agility pushes information down the line to the lowest-ranking troops. The strategy, though, can only succeed if officers in the field are able to act on the available information without waiting for orders from command headquarters (Jaffe, 2001).

Leadership, then, becomes operative as a collective property, not the sole sanctuary of any one (most important) member. Organizations, be they in the corporate, public, or civic sectors, still require leadership but such leadership may now need to arise from within, not from an ultimate authority imposed from the top. But are regular employees capable of participating in leadership? Most are increasingly part of the formally educated, knowledge workforce. They are more competent, more independent, and more intrinsically motivated than workers of an earlier era. They tend to respond well to open communication, fair treatment, and challenging work (Amar, 2002; Chalofsky, 2003).

So, what is the role of executives or line managers in a leaderful organization? Have they become dispensable since leaderful practice calls for the leadership of everyone? How does one square the seeming call in this era of Sarbanes-Oxley for more centralized control and personal responsibility within the executive suite (Schwarzkopf and Miller, 2005) with distributed models of leadership?

Especially because of legal and regulatory requirements, if not symbolic expectations about the need to represent the face of the organization, we still need authority in today's bureaucracies. However, authority and leadership are not to be confused. Leadership focuses on behavior and processes whereas authority is associated with position. Sarbanes-Oxley, for example, can produce executive practices that consolidate control more exclusively within a few corporate officers *or* it can lead to a more transparent process of corporate reporting that fully involves a host of stakeholders, including internal financial and operating staff as well as board members. Those participating in collective leadership certainly understand when a legal process requires that one among them may have to interact with outside institutions.

In a similar vein, though line managers are often held accountable for short-term performance, their units are not necessarily going to perform best when the managers engage in a



process of individual direction and control. Although placed into accountability for their unit, they are likely to be successful when they empower those who are capable and who have the willingness to assume leadership in the moment in relationships with peers, team members, customers, suppliers, and other organizational partners (Rost, 1991; Wheatley, 1992; Pearce & Conger, 2002; Raelin, 2003; Robertson & Swan, 2003).

Line managers are also increasingly given responsibility to run their operations as they see fit. Further, they face ambiguity in many instances as much as do executives at higher levels. Here's how Rene McPherson, former CEO of the Dana Corporation, puts it (1998):

Let people manage their assignments. Whatever risk we may find inherent in this idea is due primarily to the insecurity of management. Frankly, it is much easier for managers to rule with the force of total authority than to share with their people the challenge of accomplishing a task. I much prefer ... placing operating and decision-making authority where it best belongs – as far away as possible from headquarters (pp. 91-92)

Recognizing that leaderful organizations rarely emerge on their own, the preferred role of the line manager might be that of the leaderful change agent. Acknowledging the value of collective participation in leadership, the manager may initially propose the idea that leadership can become shared as long as everyone is willing to pitch in to "cover" the leadership of the unit. The unit can be an operating unit within the business lines or can be the top management strategy unit within the executive ranks. The manager would likely have to convince the team members that he or she is not abdicating leadership by this assertion. Given the relative degree of experience with democratic teams, the members may or may not agree with the leaderful offer of sharing leadership in the first instance. Thus, this manager may need in the beginning to assume more of a traditional role including some of the functions associated with standard supervision, such as calling meetings, setting agendas, coordinating tasks and schedules, and the like. Once members become more

comfortable with the notion of sharing leadership, they can begin to see the value of distributing a variety of leadership roles and functions among themselves.

This developmental approach recognizes the facilitation role of the line manager - one which raises awareness of the natural dynamics of groups and organizations so that members may realize the challenge but also the benefit of mutually developing their team. This approach suggests that based upon such variables as the foreknowledge members have of each other, their degree of sophistication regarding working in groups, or their collective orientation and interest, teams will vary in how quickly they can transition into leaderful practice (Carew, Parisi-Carew, & Blanchard, 1990; Koslowski et al., 1996). In time, the manager can relinquish authoritative control and replace it with distributed power that increases everyone's control as a non-zero sum process (Tannenbaum, 1968).

### **Preparing for Leaderful Practice**

Leaderful practice may not always be specified as the first leadership behavior to be exhibited within any community. There is a case (Fisher and Fisher, 1998) of a hospital unit team which, having put up with a heavy-handed supervisor for 15 years, got a chance to try out a self-directed team approach once the supervisor left the hospital. The team members chose as their team leader someone who had strong interpersonal skills and who was considered to be a much kinder and gentler person. Originally, the team was excited about performing some of the administrative functions that the former manager had previously handled. The new team leader now worked right along with the other staff in the unit sharing administrative responsibilities. Over time, however, the team members began to push a lot of the shared responsibilities back onto the team leader. They reverted to their old ways and began to insist that the new team leader take on many of the responsibilities of the former manager. What happened to the self-directed team concept?

This case brings up again the developmental nature of leaderful practice. Communities are not generally standing by ready to assume leaderful behavior. They need to be developed; they need to evolve both an appreciation for and an ability to adopt leaderful practice. In some instances, there may be institutional forces at play that mobilize communities to learn as they grow; in other instances, particular individuals may need to emerge to serve as agents of change (Senge, 1990).

It may be advisable to begin the process of “leaderful” development with the self. Individuals either by themselves or with the assistance of a coach or mentor can learn how to adopt self-leadership. In self-leadership, each member of the community learns to self-set goals by responding to natural rewards that foster self-development (Manz & Sims, Jr., 2001). Achieving personal learning goals outside of one’s comfort zone can produce greater self-efficacy along with heightened states of autonomy, meaning, and responsibility (Callahan et al., 2003; Cameron & Pierce, 2003).

Coaching and mentoring can help people explore the social, political, and even emotional reactions that might be blocking their own operating effectiveness. Otherwise confidential issues, be they working relationships with other community members, strategic business issues, or the individual’s own growth and development, can be given a forum for open consideration (Kram, 1985; Hargrove, 2003). Once one masters a sense of personal freedom, one can begin to model self-leadership in others. It is important to note that self-leadership does not prescribe achieving individual goals at the expense of the community (Langfred, 2000). People do learn to take care of themselves but they also are encouraged to take care of each other.

Preparing an organization to embrace leaderful practice requires efforts at the organizational or institutional level. It is possible that some organizations might become receptive to it over time as a result of their everyday social practices, such as their cultural artifacts, stories, rituals, and reward structures (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004). Consider the unusual experiment in leadership

characterizing the W. L. Gore company, the maker of Gore-Tex. Gore calls itself an "unmanaged" company because it has no hierarchy, no structure, and no titles except for what is required for incorporation purposes. Its founder, Bill Gore, was proud at one point to have declared that "leadership is defined by what you do, not who you are." As a result, it comes as no surprise that at Gore in annual surveys conducted by the human resource department, they've never had a year when less than 50 percent of associates, as they are called, answered yes to the question, "Are you a leader?" (Anfuso, 1999).

It is more often the case that organizational and institutional change needs to be mobilized by internal or external change agents who can encourage the endorsement of a culture of learning and participation within the organization (Senge, 1990; French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2000). In a leaderful culture, there needs to be openness to dialogue about such "undiscussables" as unpopular views, defensive routines, conflicts of interest, or intellectual property rights (Pedler, 2002). In addition, change agents may need to help the community mold structures and systems to tolerate dissent and encourage open communication.

### **Conclusion: The Value of Leaderful Practice**

It may be time to bid "adieu" to the old paradigm of leadership. Traditional leadership served an important role in its day. But the times now require a form of leadership that can develop the capacity to take mutual action and can ignite the natural talent in people to contribute to the productiveness and growth of their own communities.

In this way, leaderful practice can affect the bottom-line of our organizations either indirectly through a number of intervening processes or directly on its own. Consider an example of its indirect effects. If workers feel empowered and fairly treated, they will feel better about their jobs, which, in turn, will likely reduce the rate of turnover and absenteeism. The link to performance and productivity from reduced costs associated with lowered turnover and absenteeism

becomes obvious. As another example, if leaderful conditions result in having the people who implement decisions gain access to all the knowledge available guiding these decisions, then decision making as a whole should become more effective (Miller & Monge, 1986).

Bottom-line results notwithstanding, leaderful practice can have its own redeeming effects as an inherently virtuous process. It inspires genuineness among its community members so that they can bring their whole person to work. Employees don't need to fragment their work and their personal selves. Many if not most of important social relationships are formed at work, and it would be desirable if these relationships were genuine. People shouldn't have to play a role within their own community. Leaderful practice also elevates the value of trust within the community. As a service-oriented approach, it expresses a humility that seeks to serve others, that does not seek power for its own sake. People learn to count on others because they have learned that each member, even the weakest, will be kept in mind as decisions are made and as actions are taken (Nair, 1996).

Although no longer a strange idea nor one that hasn't seen exemplars and applications in everyday practice, leaderful practice requires courage to implement within a culture that still applauds the individual pioneer. Yet, let us begin, simply but unequivocally, in the day-to-day behaviors that people of good will extend to one another. Everyone can be a party to leadership. Although it helps to have a sympathetic position leader to get the ball rolling, people shouldn't have to wait for the go-ahead. There can be acts of compassionate leadership in every step we take. As soon as one begins to value another's interest, collaborative leadership may ensue. Leadership can become collective and concurrent when people decide to proactively enlist their teammates to forge a leaderful identity.

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**Figure 1: Four Critical Processes of Leadership**

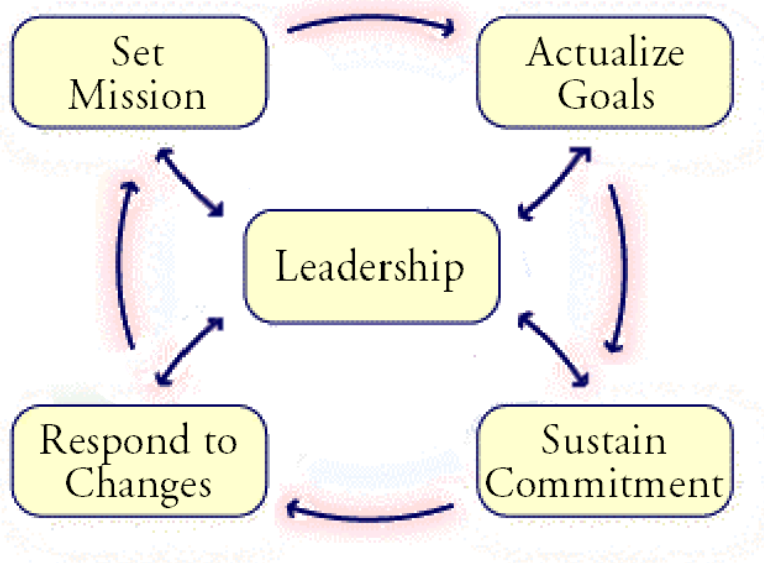


Figure 2: Tenets of Leadership

