

# Leadership in Context

## The FIVE “Cs” of Leadership; An overview of the attributes of leadership

### Overview

We all know people who are “natural leaders,” but is there really any such thing? What is it about people who are recognized as effective in their own particular context that makes them stand out? Leaders come in many varieties and are found in many settings. Often the most influential people in the particular context have no official status or title, but have a certain *something* that makes them the person who gets things done, sets the priorities, and influences others disproportionately. What makes someone a leader? We all know managers who are reasonably good functionaries, yet, in reality, have few management skills. Likewise, we all know individuals who, with or without a formal title, can inspire others and stimulate results well beyond the norm. The focus of this article is to look at those factors that contribute to leadership: leadership in context.

Outside of a formal title or official positions, what is leadership? The leadership acumen of people in even top-level positions, such as the President of the United States, or top military generals, is often questioned. Did the President exert adequate influence to bring the parties together for a successful legislative outcome? Have the “top brass” of the military adequately set the tone for gender equality? Of course, there are many other examples of similar questions illustrating that we view leadership as something quite separate from position or rank.

What, therefore, are the key attributes of people who are effective at what they do and successful in leading others to share in and benefit from effective change? Perhaps more books and articles have been written about leadership than any other business- or community-related topic. So, to prepare this article I reviewed the library of leadership books and articles to see what common threads emerged. Interestingly, I found that most leadership articles and even complex models seem to focus on many duplicate and overlapping attributes.



## The “Five C’s” of Leadership

What I found from researching and comparing the various models of leadership was that the best leaders have a balanced leadership score card, which includes:

- ◆ Commitment
- ◆ Connection
- ◆ Competence
- ◆ Communication, and
- ◆ Caring

I will review a number of the leading models for discussing leadership in the workplace context – and, for that matter, in *any* context, and then return to my model of “Five C’s.” The reason for my approach will become more clear after the review.

## Models of Leadership

### Bradford & Cohen, *Managing for Excellence*

I reviewed a range of leadership books, their focus, and the models that many of them expounded. Some were simple and direct. For example, the time-tested, outstanding work by David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen in their 1984 book, *Managing for Excellence*, focuses on some fundamental criteria which, to this day, have proven to be essential elements for effective leadership. Naturally, their work contains much more, but two key aspects that are beautifully articulated are:

- ◆ *Heroic versus Post-Heroic Leadership, and*
- ◆ *The leader as a Technician or as a Conductor.*

The “**Heroic Leader**” is one who believes that he or she must:

- Must know all the time what is going on in detail within the work unit;
- Must have more technical expertise than any subordinate;
- Is responsible for solving every problem that arises within the work unit; and,
- Is the primary person responsible for how the department is working.

Bradford and Cohen discuss two different leadership approaches labeled as the **leader as a technician** or the **leader as a conductor**. Ostensibly both approaches to leadership have their utility. The technician leader approach can be effective when the leader truly **does have** greater knowledge than the subordinates in *every facet* of the work. This can sometimes be true at the production level or the bench level where the tasks are well-defined and there are people coming in to perform them



that must be mentored. However, in today's climate of more complex working structures, it is difficult to impossible for the leader of multi- or cross-disciplinary working units to honestly have the deepest knowledge in all aspects.

These more complex working structures or expanded scope of management responsibility within the hierarchy, call for leaders who approach the work as a "conductor." The *conductor* manager views their role as accomplishing the work through others. They focus on setting the goals and priorities, and ensuring that workers are supported and resources, but make no pretenses of being the lead technician.

In the three decades that I have worked with leaders as an organizational development, and conflict resolution consultant, I have seen more leaders flounder because they have failed to make the transition from heroic, technician leader to a conductor leader as they were placed in positions of higher responsibility. Ironically, even today, many workers in complex, diverse workplace settings, still expect and attempt to demand of their leaders the somewhat mutually exclusive expectations that the leader should be most experienced technician, *and* a conductor. I recently worked with a group of professionals working in an extremely diverse setting that called for deep expertise in many complex areas. The staff complained in the same breath that they were "micro-managed" yet at the same time expected that their leader should be able to demonstrate to them that he had the deepest professional expertise in each of the many highly complex areas of the work. The incongruence of their expectations did not occur to them until I walked them through the paradox and helped them explore just what they truly valued in a leader within their organization.

### Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*

In Malcolm Gladwell's best-selling book, *The Tipping Point*, published in 2000 the former *Washington Post* and now *New Yorker* writer reviews, among other fascinating topics, why some people are capable of wider impact and influence than others. He points to three critical factors that seem to distinguish those capable of deeper influence and leadership:

- ◆ Connectors;
- ◆ Mavens; and,
- ◆ Salespeople.

Among his many examples, Gladwell shares the contrasting stories of Paul Revere and William Dawes. Unknown to many, *both* Dawes and Revere were tasked with a "midnight ride" to warn of the coming of the British. Why then do we remember



and glorify Paul Revere and not know anything of Dawes? Gladwell explains the difference. Paul Revere was a gregarious person who connected with many people and was well known and well liked in the community. When he set out in his ride he knew individually many people in the townships that he contacted. He made his contacts, and people liked and trusted him and responded. Dawes? Dawes was an ordinary guy. Dawes made the ride sure enough, but he really had no idea who to contact. Thus he rode through the deserted boroughs of New England and encountered few people, and even fewer responded.

Gladwell also identifies two additional key attributes of influence: The “**Mavin**,” who is someone who has deep knowledge of a relevant area and serves as a mentor and resource to others. He also identifies the “**Salesperson**,” who is someone with acute communication and persuasion skills. We will have much more to say about communication skills in future posts.

### Mark Sanborn, “You Don’t Need a Title to be a Leader”

In Mark Sanborn’s *“You Don’t Need a Title to be a Leader*, Sanborn describes is model with focuses on “*ROI*,” *Relationships, Outcomes, Improvements*. He describes six attributes of leadership, which he believes are key:

- Self-Mastery,
- Focus,
- Power with People,
- Communication,
- Execution,
- Giving.

Simply stated, **self-mastery** boils down to managing your “self-mastery matrix,” which measures the promises you make versus the promises you keep.

**Focus** involves the ability to set an agenda, to identify your priorities, and to essentially, “**live intentionally.**”

Sanborn characterizes **power with people** as stemming from **character, competence, and connection**. For example, being honest and saying “I don’t know” when someone asks you something that you honestly don’t know. Being good at what you do, and having the orientation to build people up and to motivate them.

**Communication**, as Sanborn uses it, refers to a person’s ability to build connection and create rapport with the ultimate goal of shared understanding. Effective communication results in an effective ability to positively influence others.



**Execution**, as Sanborn describes it, relates to one's "IQ." In this instance IQ does not refer to intelligence quotient, but to **implementation quotient**. Effective leaders have proven abilities to envision an outcome and to *achieve it*.

Finally, Sanborn posits that effective leaders are **giving**. Effective leaders give because it is satisfying and fulfilling to them. They don't expect recognition, and yet they are recognized and appreciated by those who work with them.

As the postings on leadership continue, I hope you begin to see the common themes that emerge. My next posting will discuss two more books that focus on the attributes of leadership. In my final posting will describe the Business Excellence Solutions model of leadership, which is based on the Five C's of Leadership.

### John Kotter's *Leading Change*

John Kotter is a Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus, at the Harvard Business School. In his 1996 book, *Leading Change*, he describes an eight-stage process for change leadership.

The eight stages he discusses are:

#### 1. ***Creating a sense of urgency***

Kotter explains that a major barrier to implementing change is complacency. He gives examples of organizations, which even in the face of collapsing profits maintained a leisurely pace and focused on marginally relevant issues, while ignoring the many indexes of poor performance or downright failure. The sources of complacency, Kotter explains, are many and complex. Kotter believes that organizations caught in this syndrome, can rarely break the complacency cycle, unless individuals within the organization *raise the level of urgency* relative to necessary change – even to the point of driving the situation to crisis in order to generate support for change.

#### 2. ***Building a coalition***

Because major change is difficult to sustain, Kotter, believes that driving it through the energies of one dynamic leader, can be create a tenuous situation. To sustain change, Kotter recommends building a guiding coalition composed of the right balance of power, expertise, influence, credibility and Leadership. He describes pitfalls to building this coalition and cautions that there are types of individuals who are not good fits – principally those with large egos, and those who create mistrust through their behaviors.



### **3. *Developing vision & strategy***

Vision is essential to change; yet an ill-crafted, poorly communicated vision is less likely to motivate support. Kotter explains that, to be most effective, the vision shared can't not come across as autocratic or highly authoritarian. Neither can it come across as mind-bogglingly detailed or micro-managing. The most effective change visions are clear, simple, and the advantages are communicated simply, and directly. Likewise they are easy for others to see.

### **4. *Communicating the change vision***

Kotter explains that the real power of a vision comes when most of those involved have a clear understanding of the goals and directions. Thus, an effective approach to communicating the goals and directions is essential. Kotter describes what he sees as the key elements of effective communication of vision:

- *Simplicity;*
- *Effective use of metaphor and analogy;*
- *Multiple approaches and forums;*
- *Repetition;*
- *Leadership by example;*
- *Clarification; and,*
- *Reasonable give and take in the communication.*

### **5. *Empowering broad-based action***

For change to take root, broad support is required. People must be empowered to act. Barriers to empowerment should be identified and eliminated. Assuming that employees understand the vision and are committed to it, barriers such as structural impediments, lack of necessary skills, lack of staff or information, and resistance from senior personnel must be addressed.

### **6. *Generating success***

Change builds momentum when its supporters can demonstrate tangible advantages, real improvement, and measurable gains. These gains demonstrate that the discomfort of change is worth it and it undermines resistance and critics.

### **7. *Consolidating gains and building on them***

Kotter explains that resistance is always waiting to reassert itself, and that change must be consolidated. The real challenge comes when trying to implement change in highly interdependent systems. It pays to eliminate



unnecessary interdependencies and to constantly reinforce the improvements.

### **8. *Anchoring the approaches in the culture***

Anchoring the changes deeply into the organizations culture is critical. If the change process rests on a current group of individuals, and is not integrated into the norms of the organization, it is highly likely that, when key players depart the organization, others will revert to the old and the familiar. Key to sustaining the change is understanding, as Kotter puts it, that culture change comes *last, not first*. Sustainability also depends on demonstrated results, constant reinforcement, potential removal of key change resisters, and succession planning that anticipates the need for sustaining the change momentum through staff transitions.

The challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will require adaptability to a rapidly changing environment brought on by technology and volatile social conditions. The organizations that are most effective at responding to change and, in fact, inducing it and capitalizing on it, will be the organizations to thrive.

### **John Maxwell's The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader**

Before discussing the themes that develop in reviewing many of the popular works relating to leadership, our final review is of John C. Maxwell's 1999 work, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. This book identifies – you guessed it – 21 qualities that his research shows maps to good leadership. Mr. Maxwell devotes a tidy chapter to each of the following attributes and provides interesting and enlightening anecdotes to illustrate what he means by each of the traits he discusses. Because Maxwell's list is broken into far more individual characteristics than most of the other authors, I will not go into detail relative to each trait. The traits, as he characterizes them are fairly straightforward and, thus, more explanation on my part is not really necessary. The traits identified by Maxwell in his work are:

- Character
- Charisma
- Commitment
- Communication
- Competence
- Courage
- Discernment



- Focus
- Generosity
- Initiative
- Listening
- Passion
- Positive Attitude
- Problem-solving
- Relationships
- Responsibility
- Self-Secure
- Self-Disciplined
- Servanthood
- Teachability
- Visionary

### Summary and Themes

We have now reviewed five leading researchers and authors whose work in the field of leadership is widely recognized for their significant contributions. Having recently re-read each of these writer's works, themes became clear to me in the process. After reviewing the writer's works that I have discussed in this series, I found that I could sum up the qualities of someone who is an effective leader in five words.

The effective leader is someone who is:

- **Capable** – they are good at what they do and have the proper balance of depth and breadth of subject-matter expertise to enable them develop a vision and a properly-scoped focus, execute on that vision, generate gates and be self-assured and self-confident without being arrogant.
- **Committed** – the best leaders have a strong sense of self-mastery. They demonstrate character and courage, initiative and passion. Their passion and courage is balanced by their sense of responsibility to something larger than themselves and a sense of self-discipline.
- **Connected** – they like people and value relationships. They have a natural power with people, charisma, and an ability to create coalitions. They value their connectedness with others and tend to have extensive and diverse networks that they draw on for their support. Because of their connectedness, they have built in support and a greater, more natural opportunity to anchor new approaches among the larger community.
- **Communicative** – effective leadership demands effective communication. The most effective leaders are dynamic communicators who can sell their





vision effectively to others and generate excitement in the process. However, effective communication goes well beyond just the ability to be highly persuasive. The best leaders demonstrate that they are also great listeners, who allow themselves to be influenced by the thoughts and inputs of others. They are teachable, and in the process they garner wider support and shared ownership for their vision and strategy because others, likewise, feel ownership.

- **Caring** – finally, effective leaders have a strong sense of servanthood. They are recognized as giving to their community and being generous in sharing their time, expertise, personal support, and positive attitude to further something larger than themselves.

I have mapped the traits that the leading authors identified into the table below to illustrate how the “**Five C’s of Leadership**” really do emerge, as one reviews the literature.

### The Five “Cs” of Leadership

The Five C’s of Leadership				
Capable	Committed	Connected	Communicative	Caring
Maven	Self-mastery	Connector	Sales people	Giving
Focus	Create a sense of urgency	Power with People	Persuasive	Empowering Broad-based action
Execution	Character	Create a coalition	Communicate the Change Vision	
Vision & Strategy	Commitment	Anchor New Approaches in Culture	Listening	Generosity
Generate Gains	Courage	Charisma	Teachable	Positive Attitude
Consolidate Gains	Focus	Relationships		
Capable	Initiative			Servanthood
Discernment	Passion			
Problem-solving	Responsibility			
Self-security	Self-discipline			
Vision				



## Conclusion

I hope that those of you who are interested in the field of leadership training and development find this series of postings interesting and helpful. In the near future, I will post the entire article on our Articles section on the website. Please feel free to post a comment or to contact me with questions, challenges, additional thoughts, or other comments!

Bruce MacAllister – June 2011

