



# The Leader Within

Learning Enough About Yourself to Lead Others

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## Rating

9 Importance  
8 Innovation  
9 Style

## Focus

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## Take-aways

- All we need to do is think about our own experiences with people who managed us to understand how important the leader-follower relationship is to our organizational well-being, and therefore, how crucial a good leader is to follower satisfaction.
- Lack of know-how and lack of commitment to use that know-how are the two primary reasons for lack of effective leadership.
- A great deal of fault lies at the feet of the leaders. Poor leadership results not from conscious malice, but from inadequate leadership knowledge, values, and behaviors.
- Good leadership results in creating new realities for others to follow, or for others to be allowed to create.
- Family, social, and cultural norms create certain realities that define what is and is not; what is good and bad; and what the self can and cannot be.
- People are multilayered, can and do experience discomfort when involved in self-examination, and may not view leadership as service to others.
- Good leadership starts from the inside of an individual leader, and then is demonstrated outwardly. Good leadership is founded in a state of being, not just doing. Good leadership is about your outlook, your orientation, your character, and your inner thoughts and emotions.
- A journey of self-understanding begins at the inner layers, and then moves outward to the layer of observable leader behaviors.
- It will take courage to make mistakes, and to feel and be vulnerable as you lead others.

- The main course of organizational life is the organization's purpose and those who accomplish that purpose. Leadership ultimately provides a service, much as the onion does to the stew. Leadership "allows" the way for the main body of people to accomplish the purpose.

## Relevance

In this summary, you will learn

- 1) How leadership style reflects personality
- 2) What It Takes to Be a Good Leader

## Summary

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### Leaders and Change

*"One's self is at the base of everything. Every action is a manifestation of the self. A person who doesn't know himself can do nothing for others."* - Eiji Yoshikawa

### LEADERS

#### *The Importance of Leadership*

We all know the importance of effective leadership. Leaders not only make a difference in the results of their organizations, they also make a difference in the satisfaction levels of the people working within the organizations. The relationship between follower satisfaction and lower absenteeism, lower turnover, and higher productivity has been clearly substantiated.

Getting along with the boss is the number one factor affecting job happiness, according to a recent national survey. All we need to do is think about our own experiences with people who managed us to understand how important the leader-follower relationship is to our organizational well-being, and therefore, how crucial a good leader is to follower satisfaction.

#### *Why don't more people lead others more effectively?*

There are several reasons. Lack of know-how and lack of commitment to use that know-how are the two primary reasons for lack of effective leadership. However, we do not believe that leaders get up in the morning and go to work with the intent to mismanage or mislead those with whom they are charged to work. Instead, we are optimistic that the intent to effectively lead others is behind most

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leaders' behavior.

### *The Abetting System*

Such “leaders” work and act within organizations that permit or even foster this kind of ineffective behavior. Organizations, through the individuals that head them, too often promote the Bobs and Antonios into positions of power and control. Thus, poor leadership begets more poor leadership because poor leaders often select managers who possess the same traits they themselves demonstrate. Because human issues are not valued as much as the bottom line, effective corporate leadership continues to be evaluated solely on how it appears to affect shareholder value. Human issues take longer to “fix”.

There is more competition than collaboration among executives. Too often, short-term issues displace long-term future considerations. Too often, focus on profits supersedes the relationship with employees and customers, efficiency is substituted for genuine quality, and rationality drives out joy in the workplace. This lack of leadership is exacting a dreadful toll.

### *The Leadership Vacuum*

A great deal of fault lies at the feet of the leaders. Poor leadership results not from conscious malice, but from inadequate leadership knowledge, values, and behaviors. Many leaders we encounter do not fully realize that the biggest competitive edge they have lies more in the people they lead and less in technology, capitalization, or market share.

People in leadership positions do not know themselves well enough to escape the “disease of me.” This lack of leader self-knowledge results in organizational systems, policies, practices, and stories that do not create energizing environments of true hope and worth for those who work in them.

Those in positions of authority are the products of the very systems that need to be changed. Too often, those who are technically proficient, politically astute, or have a strong desire for power or wealth are in charge. The succession processes of many corporations seem to sift out those who are not politically aware and driven toward power and bottom-line results. The process of natural selection reinforces a culture of “self”-oriented individuals.

Corporate leaders often lack the self-knowledge necessary to act effectively for themselves, their followers, or the long-term, overall positive welfare of their organizations. Those in authority lack an appreciation of the nature of leadership. They often dwell on concepts that divide and separate people, rather than on concepts that reflect the interconnectedness and commonality of people. They become forgetful of purpose and values that explain why and what for. They have very little awareness of the context of their office or the external environment that frames whatever it is they are responsible for. They seldom see themselves as learners who are creating new realities for themselves and others.

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## ONIONS

What do onions have to do with leadership? It is a metaphor that can help you understand yourself, the leader you are, and the leader you wish to become. Think of the qualities and characteristics of an onion. The main characteristics of the onion are its layers, strong and undeniable aroma, and striking taste that enhances the flavor of other foods. In most cases, the onion is commonly used to spice up the main course.

### *The Leadership Onion*

The self consists of multiple layers, from complex inner layers to more simple outer layers. The layers of importance are: (1) the core unconscious self, (2) the dispositional layer, (3) the values layer, (4) the persona, and (5) the leadership skin.

The dispositional layer is divided into wired and acquired preferences. The values layer is made up of various programmed and developed values. The values and dispositional layers combine to form a values/dispositional layer, a persona, which also shapes your leadership behavior over time. The persona is the self you want to present to others, while the leadership skin is the outward behavior others can observe.

### *The Layered Self*

Like an onion, there are “layers” of the self. The layers, in the form of your disposition, values, and resultant leadership “skin,” give shape and substance to you as a leader. Each layer can and must be clearly understood before you can “transform” your leadership character.

A journey of self-understanding begins at the inner layers, and then moves outward to the layer of observable leader behaviors. Your leader behaviors rest on the often less visible and less examined inner layers of self, which are formed through the self’s evolutionary interaction with your life’s events. The development and expansion of your leadership character will come from understanding each important layer.

### *Peeling the Onion*

Peeling the onion implies that you are accountable for your own development. You must assume responsibility for your own experiences and must possess the courage to recognize both your glorious functionality and the adaptive potential of your dysfunction. Peeling the onion requires you to have the courage to intentionally move away from your existing comfort zones, confront your not-so-successful self, and, in reflective tolerance, face the harsh realities of self-change.

Too many individuals believe that to lead means to take charge, provide the energy, motivate, be responsible for, and control, rather than to attribute meaning to an already energetic, motives-

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driven workforce that seeks satisfaction through their work and enriched responsibility. Not enough potential or existing leaders see themselves in the service of those who follow. The mindset of a servant-leader means others' needs must come before yours. It means serving their hopes and dreams.

## CHANGE

Accept the idea that people are multilayered beings who sometimes experience discomfort with self-examination. View leadership as service to both organizational purpose and those who carry out organizational purpose. Remember that inherent in the process of leadership is the requirement that other people change and grow. With such attitudes, you can go about the business of validating, improving, or re-creating yourself and your approach to leadership. But, to reinvent or re-create yourself will require your constant desire to change and grow. How can you ask others to grow and develop without your being open to change and growth?

### *Fear and the Shadow Self*

Like the onion seed, you start less developed but, at least, relatively whole. Your experience is seamless and whole—whole in the sense that your experience of existence is not limited by concepts or notions that are segmented, parted by time, divided into good, bad, future, present, past, self, or others. You are whole, in the sense that you contain a myriad of untapped response possibilities that allow you to express your humanness. Whole also means that you are capable of responding with flexibility to environmental requirements, using a wide range of behaviors.

As you develop, the world changes: Objects, experiences, and people become separate. You begin to judge and divide everything you experience into good and bad. You select what is acceptable to your significant others, group, or society. You learn what thoughts, emotions, and behaviors must be suppressed or put away. You begin to create your shadow self. Of course, some of this sorting is necessary for societal functioning, but that which is “put away” does not go away. The nonacceptable (according to others or society) parts of yourself take on a life of their own—your shadow self. Your shadow self is the unfulfilled, illegitimate, and almost despised parts of yourself.

Through language, experience, and association with others, you form beliefs concerning what is true and not true, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what is possible and impossible. You learn what not to do in order to be loved; you learn what to do in order to not be rejected. To be unloved or constantly rejected is painful. Pain produces fear of future pain. Gradually, you associate fear with certain behaviors and learn to fear certain socially unacceptable parts of yourself. Often, you become what you least fear becoming. Often, what can and does happen, through a trained incapacity, is that you develop a less flexible self, a less understood self, and a less self-accepted person.

### *Change and Failure*

It is essential for leaders to understand the multilayered self as it is brought to the moments of influence and within the context of furthering the organization's social purpose. Your personality as "it" seeks to meet the requirements of the situation (as you see it) will result in the demonstration of your character. Each moment of leadership can be either well met or poorly executed. All great leaders fail at times, so why not allow yourself that possibility? An examination of the lives of great leaders, such as Gandhi, Henry Ford, Winston Churchill, Golda Meir, and others, confirms the early failures of those we know changed history.

Your challenge is to know yourself well enough to change yourself. You must learn to "read" the situation and sometimes use behaviors with which you may not be comfortable, if you want to meet the requirements needed to be more effective.

Corporate leaders are often physically out of shape and emotionally blocked. In the worst cases, they are spiritually starved executives who live terribly imbalanced lives chained to corporate titles, responsibility, and, of course, large financial payoffs. These executives are workaholics. They are the "respectable addicts" of an imbalanced system and, more often than not, they create or allow environments that produce dysfunctional employees.

Executives are often driven by personal aims. From executive boardrooms to the small entrepreneurial offices of most organizations, there can be found a group of ego-driven, personally myopic, provincially interested people competing for power and energy with almost everyone else. In most instances, that drive results in pain, dissatisfaction, broken marriages, dissolved partnerships, and disintegrated personal relationships. For many, the "road to the top" is a relentless grind in which an individual must choose to make the supreme sacrifice of personal fulfillment on an altar of organizational power and influence.

### **CONCLUSION**

People are multilayered, can and do experience discomfort when involved in self-examination, and may not view leadership as service to others. People create and live in their own realities. They cling to these realities because they fear their shadow selves and tend not to look for alternatives. But change is possible, with self-understanding and growth.

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