



The Essentials of **LEADERSHIP** in Government

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

By Len Garis, Colette Squires & Darryl Plecas



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By Len Garis
Colette Squires
& Darryl Plecas



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University of the Fraser Valley

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Foreward

I am sure that if you are reading this, you have sometimes wondered what it takes to truly make a difference and be a good leader. *The Essentials of Leadership in Government—Understanding the Basics* is the ‘X’ that marks the spot for being a great map and accurate compass, the perfect companion as you navigate your career in civil service and strive to make positive and effective change.

In your ever-so-precious times of learning, you can use this book as an excellent map to guide you through the “BASICS”, described and explained by the authors in a clear and straightforward manner, to build your leadership skills. What makes this book unique is that it can also be a trusted compass that will help you through the troubled waters of ambiguity and moments of doubt. By using the knowledge described in this book, you will be better equipped to ignore the fog, trust your inner core, and get the job done, the right way.

Reading this book you will discover that the authors start with, and keep coming back to, the need for leaders to be guided through their inner core. The authors write as though it is the most important characteristic of leadership, and in my humble opinion they are exactly right!

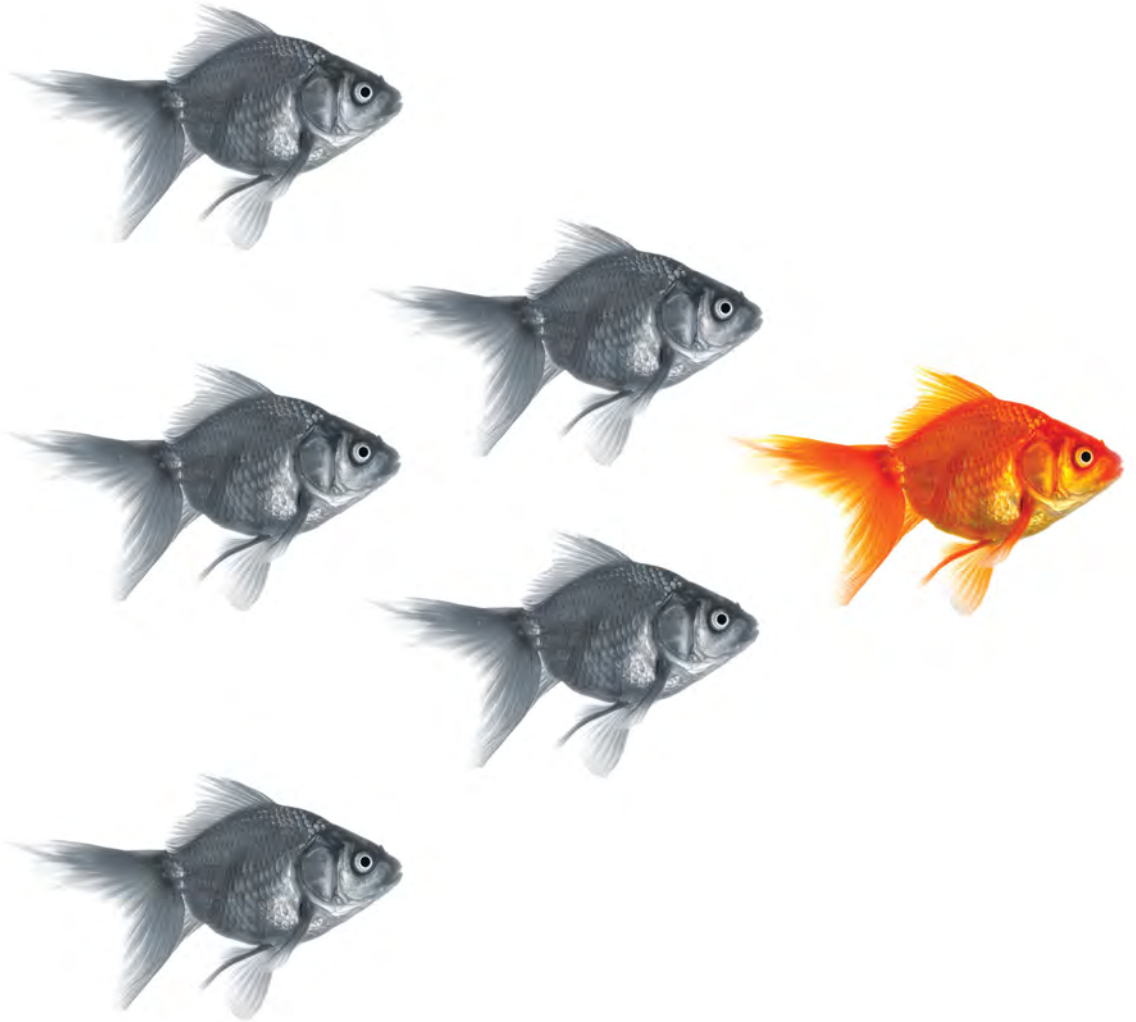
Situated in the heart of Metro Vancouver, with its proud and diverse half-million citizens, the City of Surrey is a great place to live and work. Surrey has the particular challenge of being one of the lowest taxed jurisdictions in the region while also delivering a very ambitious agenda. This feat is accomplished every day in our civic government by the leadership qualities of individuals who follow their inner core and the BASICS of leadership to contribute to Surrey’s success.

The City of Surrey is aware that we are not unique in our quest for continuous improvement in leadership at all levels of our civil service. The City of Surrey has an Emerging Leaders Program which we are very proud of. *The Essentials of Leadership in Government—Understanding the Basics* is an excellent tool that we will use to form leaders of today and tomorrow.

Garis, Squires and Plecas have brought you a concise, easy to read and thought-provoking reference on leadership in government. I trust you will appreciate their focus on the unique characteristics of leadership in a government setting in order to meet the challenge of the public interest.



Vincent Lalonde, P.Eng.
City Manager, City of Surrey





Introduction

Why is a Good Leader so Hard to Find?

Being a leader, even a so-called successful one, is not necessarily anything to be proud of. Being a “good” leader, however, is a much different thing.

Anyone who has studied leadership knows there is no shortage of information available on what it supposedly means to be a good leader. Discussions on leadership are everywhere. A quick scan of the internet will produce an untold amount of material—some scholarly, some from the business world, and some from a variety of companies designed to help organizations improve their leadership capacity. Professional development courses and degree programs are also available to help people become effective leaders.

Despite all the resources available on leadership, it seems we are still experiencing a leadership vacuum. The concepts of good leadership, it appears, are not getting through. Over many years the authors have asked a variety of people informally to identify five exceptional leaders they have come across: individuals who truly exemplify effective and admirable leadership. Most people cannot complete the task. Some struggle to identify a single individual they know, whom they respect as a truly excellent leader. Almost without exception, those individuals considered as possibly good leaders are identified as having one significant deficit or another. At the same time, the people we questioned did not struggle to come up with examples of truly bad leaders. And they were not very forgiving in their assessments. This phenomenon of the bad leader and the horrible boss is so prevalent that it inspired a Stanford professor to write about them. Dr. Robert Sutton’s *The No Asshole Rule* became a New York Times bestseller, and created such a response that he wrote *Good Boss, Bad Boss* to continue the discussion.

It is hard to fathom how bad leaders and bosses can survive in a world filled with volumes of leadership advice, but they do. That there are so many poor leaders tells us we still have much to learn on the leadership front. The truly horrible leaders and bosses that Sutton describes are only one contribution to the leadership vacuum: there are others.

Our intent, however, is not to continue the critique of bad leaders. Our agenda is a more positive one, and this is to continue the search for good leaders, and what it takes to become one. Specifically, this book is our attempt to identify the things a person should attend to if they want to be a truly effective leader. In detail, it may seem like a long list, but the items we identify and discuss fall under six domains we refer to as the BASICS, an acronym we will explain later in this chapter.

There are other approaches to the leadership issue, with one guru after another usually referring to some magic number of traits that a person needs to be a good leader. Those lists, however, are usually made with reference to leaders in the private sector. Our framework, and this book, is directed to people who work in the public sector. We would argue that leadership for these individuals is often more complicated and thus requires a comprehensive discussion, which we consider to fall under the BASICS.

We would also argue that there is a very practical reason to think in terms of the detailed structure we provide here. Sometimes you can only know whether someone has a particular characteristic by the presence of an associated collection of other related characteristics. Before getting into the BASICS, though, it is important to ensure we agree about what constitutes good leadership. Accordingly, we will first discuss what we mean by leadership, the purpose of leadership, what is so special about leaders in government, and why the BASICS are important. Furthermore, we will discuss why we keep coming back to our central idea of *the inner core of a good leader*.

What is Leadership?

When we look at the various definitions and ideas about leadership, it is not hard to conclude that the concepts of leadership are all over the map. For example, some adherents uphold concepts of *servant leadership*. Others talk about *visionary* leaders. Other terms, such as *transformational leadership*, also show up in the literature. And there are lots more.

There are also definitions that draw a distinction between leadership and management, with some displaying a sense that being a leader is somehow superior to being a manager. In reality, most leaders engage in some form of management, and all managers should demonstrate leadership. Even employees who are not in management display leadership among their colleagues and teams.

For us, one way to see the difference is this: We *lead* people, but we *manage* tasks. Management relates to the processes that keep an organization functioning, such as planning, budgeting, defining roles, and resourcing and measuring performance.¹ Leadership is about aligning people with the vision, inspiring them, motivating them, and providing effective communication. Leadership is about relationships.² Leadership is also about influence. As one leadership guide³ notes:

When your management hat is on, you are focusing on how you are going to complete the tasks that are necessary to get the job done. You see the deadline looming, and you organize yourself to meet it. When your leader hat is on, you are influencing the others on your team to do their part to meet—or exceed—that deadline or any other performance expectations you might have.

Our concept of good leadership includes both leadership and management as expressed above.

“Management is doing things right;
leadership is doing the right things.”
Peter F. Drucker

Then there are those who work from the perspective that leadership is accessible to everyone, as the natural expression of a fully functional personality.⁵ It has also been noted that some forms of work require one to shift into leadership mode when the need arises, even though the person is not normally considered a leader. An example here might be flight attendants on an airplane: most of their time is spent serving their passengers, but in an emergency, they immediately switch into a directive, leadership role to ensure every passenger's safety. In the public sector, police officers and fire fighters also have this dual role. In one sense they exist “to serve and protect,” but they also provide strong leadership in crisis situations. So much so, that many people believe that every officer is a leader.⁶

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- 1 Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25). *Worried that you might not be a natural leader? Developing your leadership style with the Kouzes and Posner leadership framework*. Leading Figures. Retrieved from www.leadingfigures.com/worried-that-you-might-not-be-a-natural-born-leader/
 - 2 Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25) MTD Training. (2010). *Leadership Skills*. MTD Training & Ventus Publishing ApS. Retrieved from <http://bookboon.com/en/leadership-skills-ebook>
 - 3 MTD Training. (2010), p. 19.
 - 4 Haden, J. (August 4, 2014). 75 Inspiring motivational quotes on leadership. Retrieved from www.inc.com/jeff-haden/75-inspiring-motivational-quotes-on-leadership.html
 - 5 Anderson, T. (1998). *Transforming leadership: Equipping yourself and coaching others to build the leadership organization*, 2nd ed. Boca Raton, FL: St. Lucie Press, and CRC Press LLC.
 - 6 Anderson, T., Gisborne, K., & Holliday, P. (2012). *Every officer is a leader: Coaching leadership, learning, and performance in justice, public safety, and security organizations*. 2nd ed. USA: Trafford Publishing.

While we appreciate what we can learn from these different understandings of leadership, this book is not intended to advance one leadership theory over another. What is important, in our view, is for people who have responsibility for getting a job done (or part of a job done) to have certain skills, abilities, and aspirations that help them get that job done well. Not only that, good leaders must also be able to facilitate the effort and commitment of their colleagues, employees, and stakeholders to achieve the task. We recognize that even those who have lead roles in getting a job done are often commonly reporting to someone else or working with an outside party. Our premise is that all workers in an organization, despite differences in position or title, are fellow workers and colleagues. We also acknowledge the important role of internal and external stakeholders for government. Getting any job done involves individuals or groups who may not be involved in accomplishing the task or providing the service, but may have an interest in the process or outcome. That interest needs to be respected.

The Purpose of Leadership

Obviously, leadership needs to be more than simply working with others to get a job done. If that were the only purpose, we would have to say that many people who have senior roles in the Mafia, drug cartels, and terrorist organizations are good leaders. Certainly, many of them have good track records of getting the job done. But in getting the job done, they disrespect people, they deceive people, they hurt people, they break the law, and they generally work in a dictatorial manner. Likewise, history has shown us time and time again that someone can rise to become the leader of a country, be successful at staying the leader for some time, and be referred to as a leader, but that does not mean they have any significant admirable leadership characteristics. They can lead by positioning themselves as powerful bullies. In short, they can be successful in getting a job done without having genuine leadership skills.

The purpose of leadership involves more than just getting a job done. It involves getting it done in a certain way.

As we note, the purpose of leadership involves more than getting a job done. It involves getting it done in a certain way—a way that shows a genuine respect and concern for the well-being of everyone who has a stake in completing the job or task at hand. To do that, one needs consistently to behave in a certain way. Further, prospective leaders need to have a certain set of aspirations and skills behind those behaviours, and they need to hold strong information, communication, and sustainability commitments.

Good Leaders

With the above in mind, being a nominal leader, even a so-called successful one, is not necessarily anything to be proud of. Being a “good” leader, however, is a much different thing. A good leader is someone who embraces and consistently demonstrates a broad range of leadership attributes as a foundation for the way in which they work to get a job done. They understand that it is not just about meeting a mandate or achieving a stated goal, but that it is equally about the process of working with people and their interests to get there. Importantly, they understand that the process of working with people requires credibility, consistency, and sustainable buy-in. Most importantly, a good leader understands the characteristics and attributes needed to be a good leader, works to develop those attributes in themselves and those who report to them, and appreciates how consistency helps to define the working culture of an organization.

What then are the attributes of a good leader? In this book, we have tapped into extensive research from a wide variety of sources in business, academia, government, and the larger public sector. Many of these sources have a particular focus or a favoured set of attributes that they claim makes a good leader. However, we want to look specifically at what is needed for those working in various levels of government. Therefore, we have adapted what is coming from elsewhere to be relevant to this unique context.

Leaders in Government

When we refer to leaders in government, we are not talking only about elected officials. Even though much of what we are discussing is relevant to them and leaders outside of government, we are directing this book to government workers and civil servants. This book is for government employees at any level who have a lead role in the delivery of government programs, products, and services. This includes everyone from charge hands, foremen, and unit supervisors, to managers, directors, and senior executives—typically anyone who supervises the work of others and is otherwise responsible for a service or program delivery mandate in government.

Leaders in government are different from leaders in the private sector in several ways. To begin with, unlike leaders in the private sector, the work of leaders in government is commonly not measured by a bottom line. While governments are accountable for how they spend their tax revenue, they do not have competitors, profit margins to be concerned about, or shareholders to answer to with respect to operating efficiently and effectively. Instead, we trust that our leaders in government accomplish their work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Granted, we have elected officials who can use budgets, cost benefit/comparison analysis, the consideration of privatization, and taxpayer tolerances to help keep costs from going out of control, but that does not necessarily equate to issues of efficiency and effectiveness—especially when no comparisons are possible. At some level we still need to trust that government leaders will get work done in a way that represents good value for taxpayers. Government leaders, in accepting this trust, become guardians of the public purse.

Government leaders are also different from leaders in the private sector due to their obligation to work in “the public interest.” They are expected to operate in a way that respects and honours what is in the best interests of the public. They need to work with a sense of social responsibility, non-partisanship, and a heightened sense of good citizenship. They cannot be driven and motivated by self-interest.

We have developed a simple acronym that will guide us through this discussion of what it takes to be a good leader in government. This will shape the chapters that follow.

The **B** ehaviours

A spirations

S kills

I nformation Commitments

C ommunication Commitments

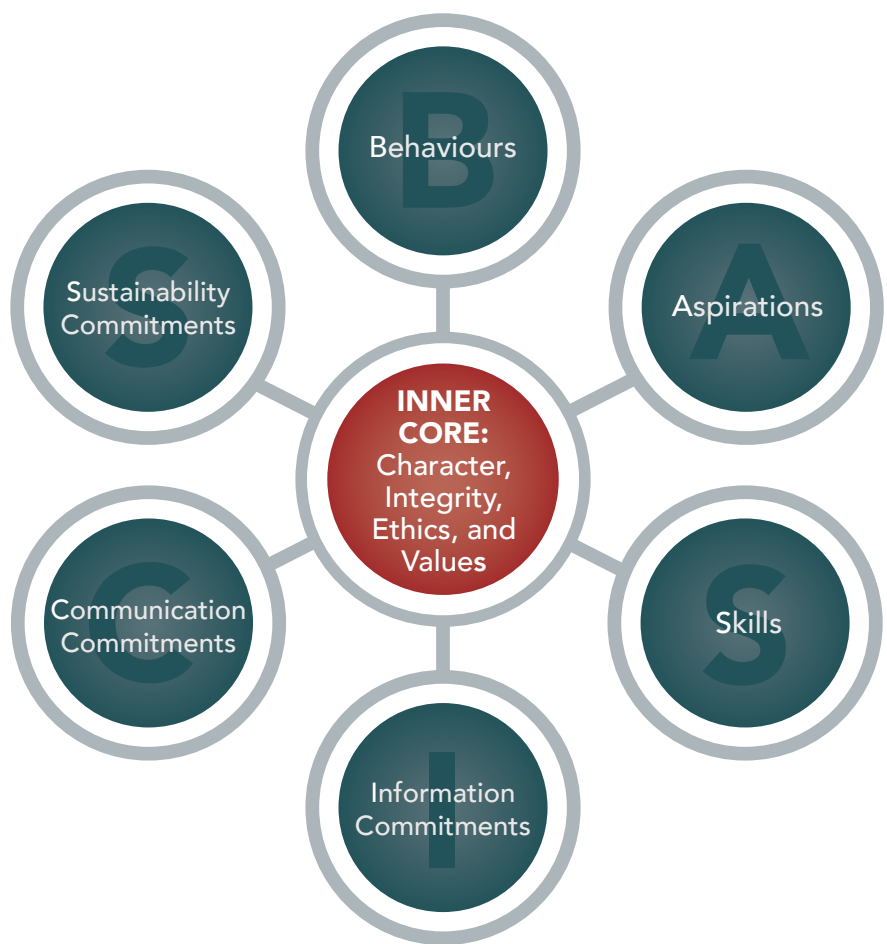
S ustainability Commitments

of Good Leadership in Government

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, we have developed a list of attributes that we consider to be the BASICS of good leadership, and each of those is linked to a letter of our acronym. Each chapter will explore these in turn. However, you will also learn that the six letters—Behaviours, Aspirations, Skills, and Information, Communication and Sustainability commitments—are all generated from and supported by the inner core of the good leader. This inner core is the part of a person’s character that relates to ethics, integrity and values. To help anchor this concept, the diagram below displays this with the inner core as the centre of the wheel. You will notice that in each successive chapter, the centre of the wheel remains constant. That is because, for every area, the inner core of a good leader has a role to play.

Diagram One: The BASICS Model

Diagrams throughout the book break down the six attributes of good leadership into their respective components.



As we think about these concepts, it is important to note that we are not encouraging people to become *perfect leaders*. We realize that as people we are all fallible, and no one can get it right all the time. We all have limitations. While it may not be possible for us to attain perfection, it is quite reasonable to aspire to be a *good leader*. That is realistic and it is doable. It is within the reach of every person to learn how to be a good leader.

But here is the key. Good leadership is only possible if it flows from a strong inner core of good character and ethical thinking. More than ever, organizations are crying out for leaders who are responsible, principled, ethical, and have the courage to do the right thing. Our world is fraught with environmental challenges, issues of social responsibility and justice, and deep needs that affect how all of us live—now and into the future. We need government leaders who not only have the skills and behaviours of good leadership, but who guide their work with a moral compass and an ethical, principled core. The BASICS of good leadership in government is based on this premise.

In Chapters One and Two, you will see how the behaviours of good leaders are anchored in and expressed through this strong inner core. These behaviours of good leaders are expressed in various domains relating to how we work with others, how we create and express vision, how innovative and courageous we are, and how we achieve results. In Chapter Three we see how aspirations differ from behaviours. These are within the heart and mind of a leader, and link with the longer-range goals and hopes we have for our own growth as a leader. Aspirations help us move from where we are to where we want to be. Aspirations link with our values, beliefs, principles, and ethics. In Chapter Four we explore the skills that are needed to do the job in everyday settings. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, we look at the commitments that good leaders make. A commitment is more than an aspiration; it is a decision and promise you make within yourself to behave in a certain way, in a consistent and dedicated manner. This is about consistency, and living out certain principles and values in a way that affects the outcomes as well as the organizational culture. These commitments show up in three key areas: information, communication and sustainability. In these chapters we will look at the ways that a strong inner core will affect our leadership.

Before we get there, though, let us start with a deeper exploration of the inner core of a good leader. As we have said, the behaviours, aspirations, skills, commitments of good leaders flow from this inner core, and it is impossible to become a good leader without it.



Chapter One

The Inner Core of a Good Leader

Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.⁷

Norman Schwarzkopf

Public administration and the civil service is a unique and challenging world. As we just mentioned in the introduction, leaders within the civil service at any level of government are guardians of the public purse and the public's trust. At the higher levels they are held accountable by elected politicians and the voting public, but they function in day-to-day ways that are largely unseen and frequently misunderstood by the general population. The government worker recognizes the challenging reality that overall direction and government mandates are set by politicians and parties who come and go at the decision of the voting public. Meanwhile, decades of entrenched bureaucratic practices may stifle innovation and change within government departments.

Civil servants, hired by merit and for the long term, are an important stabilizing force in the shifting winds of politics. However, this strength can also become a liability. Those who work in government and those who observe it are familiar with the challenges of an environment governed by law, regulation, rules, policies, and seemingly endless red tape. On the one side, civil servants provide stability, consistency, and institutional knowledge and memory. On the other, there are layers of administration, territorialism, turf protection, and hierarchical government structures that may have been slower to respond to new visions of leadership emerging elsewhere in the private and charitable sectors.

⁷ BrainyQuote. (2018). Norman Schwarzkopf quotes. Retrieved from www.brainyquote.com/quotes/norman_schwarzkopf_163145

These realities can create a baffling situation for emerging leaders in the public sector. What is needed to become a good and effective leader in this environment? Throughout these chapters we will be exploring ideas about leadership that come from many different domains, from business, from research, and from the public sector. Ideas that, together, make up the BASICS of good leadership in government.

In this chapter we examine the behaviours that research and practice suggest are associated with a leader's effectiveness. However, behaviour is really a reflection of our mindset, the values and principles that guide us, our sense of ethics and integrity, and our personality and character. It has been said that doing flows from being. In other words, our actions reflect who we are, and the kind of character we possess. To strengthen our behaviours, we must first look inside ourselves to examine what motivates the way we work and behave towards those around us. Many of the behaviours associated with good leadership connect to the inner reality of who we are and what we are committed to. Once we have examined and explored the *inner core* of a good leader in this chapter, then we can look at the successful behaviours that align with how we get the work done.

What is at the Core of a Good Leader?

Whether we have given it much thought or not, each of us is guided by a world view, belief system, or code of values that influences our decisions, how we meet our needs, and how we interact with others. Researchers have observed that the most effective leaders are guided by a strong set of principles, ethics, and a moral framework that enables them to function with integrity, transparency, honesty, compassion and consistency.⁸ In fact, this inner core of ethics and integrity is an essential component of being seen as an authentic leader—one whose inner values visibly align with their behaviour in a way that inspires trust and confidence and commands respect.⁹ These leaders *walk the talk*. This is especially important in times of crisis, when maintaining the public trust is vital.¹⁰ However, trust and respect are most often earned in the hard grind of daily operations when a leader shows consistency, good judgment, and principled character day to day.¹¹

8 Mihelič, K., Lipičnik, B., & Tekavčič, M. (2010). Ethical leadership. *International Journal of Management & Information Systems*, Fourth Quarter, 14(5), 31-42.

Monaghan, K. (2012). A review of the literature concerning ethical leadership in organizations. *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 5(1), 56-66. Regent University School of Global Leadership & Entrepreneurship.

9 Monaghan, K. (2012).

10 James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011). Crisis leadership and why it matters. *The European Financial Review*, December-January, 60-64. Retrieved from <http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/lpwooten/PDF/TEFR%20dec-jan%202011%20Crisis%20Leadership.pdf>

11 Folkman, J. (2010). *Top 9 leadership behaviors that drive employee commitment*. Orem, Utah: Zenger Folkman. Retrieved from <http://zengerfolkman.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ZFA-9-Behaviors.pdf>

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The older I get, the more I understand that leadership is all about one word: Trust. If you have the trust of your colleagues and the people you are leading, then and only then, can you accomplish great things. But trust needs to be earned each and every day. In my experience, you build that trust in three simple ways: first, listen carefully; second, do the little things right; and finally, do what you say you will do.¹²

Glen Clark

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The boss or supervisor who is in the “horrible person” category probably does not have many of these attributes and behaviours. In contrast, researchers have also observed that an ethical leader will not only behave ethically, but they will influence, consciously and unconsciously, followers to behave honestly and ethically as well.¹³ This helps create an ethical work culture, in which these values and principles are embedded in how the work is done. Functioning daily in an ethical, professional way is not just about judgement and decision-making. It also includes a regard for others, including intentionally helping and respecting the rights of others, an awareness of social obligations such as respecting cultural norms and values, as well as performing duties appropriate for a given social position, and it involves recognizing personal responsibility.¹⁴

This seems like a pretty tall order. In a culture that is becoming more and more individualized, subjective, and less concerned about traditional or moral absolutes, it can be challenging for emerging leaders to determine what it means to be ethical and how to develop that aspect of who they are. However, given that the work of government has a direct effect on the lives of people, it is an essential exercise for those who work at any level of government.

.....

12 Glen Clark is President, Chief Operating Officer and a Board Director of The Jim Pattison Group. He served as Premier of British Columbia from 1996-1999 and as MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway / Vancouver East from 1986-1999, during which time he held several cabinet posts.

13 Mihelič, K., Lipičnik, B., & Tekavčič, M. (2010) and Monaghan, K. (2012).

14 Thiel, C., Bagdasarov, Z., Harkrider, L., Johnson, J., & Mumford, M. (2012). Leader Ethical Decision-Making in Organizations: Strategies for Sensemaking. *Journal of Business Ethics* 107, 49-64. doi 10.1007/s10551-012-1299-1

Here is an example from the health care system. Dr. Eileen Morrison,¹⁵ a professor of health administration who teaches ethics to government health professionals, points out that administrators are the stewards of the resources that society has invested in health care, creating structure and support for the health care system. Stewardship involves the careful and responsible management of resources entrusted to one's care, and is an important component of ethical leadership. Morrison teaches that leaders in health care must not only excel in the tasks of administration, but they need a deeper understanding of the principles of ethics and appropriate behaviour from an individual, organizational, and societal perspective.



She encourages leaders to develop their ethical framework to help them know individually what is right and what is wrong, and to develop it at the organizational level, to ensure there is an appropriate code of conduct and standard for acceptable behaviour for all. She also speaks of the importance of an ethical framework that goes beyond the organization to include higher-order, societal perspectives. What Morrison is saying applies to other government departments as well, and her work (along with others) can help us explore and define our ethical framework.

In the specific world of health care, what might this look like? Let us take an example of how ethics on an individual level can also translate to the organizational and societal level. In North America and other parts of the world, a

component of a physician's ethical practice is to *first do no harm*. That will guide the physician (and other medical practitioners) to ensure they only act in ways that are in the patient's best interest, and will not cause harm to the patient in their efforts to help or treat. That will influence how they intervene—or do not intervene. However, on an organizational level in an increasingly over-burdened health care system, how do we implement the philosophy of *first do no harm* with organizational and systemic problems such as long wait times or overcrowded emergency rooms? We know that long wait times and overcrowded emergency rooms can increase the potential harms for patients.

15 Morrison, E. (2016). Foundations in ethics. In *Ethics in health administration: A practical approach for decision makers*, 3rd ed. Jones & Bartlett Publishers. Retrieved from http://samples.jbpub.com/9780763773274/73274_Morrison_Ch01.pdf

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Ethics should be ingrained in each and every pore of organizational life.¹⁶

Mihelič, et al.

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What about situations where people with greater financial resources are better served than those without? What about the pressure to treat and manage conditions in ways that generate more revenue for pharmaceutical companies, or profits for practitioners? And as society's values shift and change, how do we preserve medical ethics that may run counter to the requests of special interest groups? Or, as needs grow but resources are limited, how do we respond to the conflict between providing care and meeting the budget? Good leaders need to think through the implications for the individual, for the organization and for broader society, to ensure that their branch of government is providing service that meets ethical standards at both the individual and the collective level.

Ethical dilemmas can be found in virtually every area of government service, in addition to health care. Leaders, with their greater degree of influence and responsibility, are generally held to higher standards of moral accountability. Anyone who intends to influence others to act in a specific way to achieve an identified objective is morally accountable for the way in which the influence was exercised, and its foreseeable consequences.¹⁷ For police and fire services, which have paramilitary hierarchies, it is understood that rank or position increases one's responsibility exponentially.¹⁸ Accountability and moral responsibility increase with a promotion to a higher level of authority and responsibility for others, a reality that good leaders take seriously.

Accordingly, good leaders guide themselves with a firm commitment to respect others and preserve human dignity, with a commitment to justice and human rights. This can help prevent abuses and unfair treatment. They also have a broader view that takes the needs of society into account. What does this look like? In some departments of government, it may mean they will not allow pollution to go unchecked. In others it could mean taking steps to prevent corruption from tainting the relationship between government and business, where there may be incentives to behave unethically in how contracts are awarded. It could also mean ensuring two-way communication with those directly affected by government action.

16 Mihelič, K., Lipičnik, B., & Tekavčič, M. (2010), p. 34.

17 Anderson, T., Gisborne, K., & Holliday, P. (2012). *Every officer is a leader: Coaching leadership, learning and performance in justice, public safety, and security organizations*. 2nd ed. USA: Trafford Publishing.

18 Anderson, T., Gisborne, K., & Holliday, P. (2012).

Organizational ethics also demonstrate themselves in how the people within the organization have collectively agreed to conduct themselves. More and more, organizations are enhancing their mission and vision statements with a set of core values that serve as a guide for how the work is done. Organizational values say, “Here’s who we are and what values are important to us. This is how you can expect us to behave.” However, it is up to each individual worker to exemplify those values, and to undergird them with their own inner strength of character and ethical thinking. Without an ethical and moral framework, this is difficult to accomplish. Ethical leadership also requires an understanding of the values and norms of society. Without this, some leaders in government have made serious errors that have harmed others, tarnished their own reputations, and have jeopardized the relationship of trust that exists between government and the public. In summary, the inner core of a good leader must be grounded in ethical thinking and a strong moral anchor.

Social Responsibility: Our Values Go Public

More than ever, the public is looking to business and government leaders to demonstrate greater concern for others and less concern for their own self-interest. For most people, this is another dimension of ethical leadership. Businesses are also concerned about being good corporate citizens, and many have made great contributions to the communities that support them. Increasingly, successful businesses are focusing on what has been dubbed the *triple bottom line*, where concern is given to a company’s economic value as well as its social responsibility and its environmental impact.¹⁹ But what does social responsibility mean when you work for government? And how does it connect with this idea of the inner core of the good leader?

Even though the work of government is essentially all about working for the people, public cynicism and disenchantment with politicians and the government still abounds. This should encourage leaders in the public service to seriously consider how they can help change that perception. Social responsibility is enhanced when leaders combine effective listening and communication with concern and respect for the needs of others. Social responsibility contributes to the organization’s reputation, culture and positive perception, both internally and externally. It conveys that the organization values fair practices within its sphere and at the locations where it operates.²⁰

19 Elkington, J. (1998). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Also see, Savitz, A.W. and Weber, K., (2006) *The Triple Bottom Line: How Today’s Best-Run Companies Are Achieving Economic, Social and Environmental Success—and How You Can Too*. Jossey-Bass.

20 Leadercast. (2015). *Leader management principles: 14 Principles of management for effective management styles*. Retrieved from www.leadercast.com

Philanthropic community service is often the public face of a private corporation's social responsibility strategy. This speaks to the need to look beyond the walls of the organization to what sort of contribution the organization is making to the larger world. For government, though, they are already concerned about serving the public. This means that government-focused social responsibility goes beyond community service (their primary reason for existing) to include relationship integrity and ethical practices such as transparency in financial reporting, ethical treatment of employees, clients and stakeholders, practising conservation, renewal and sustainability efforts, and fiscal prudence to ensure tax revenue is used responsibly. Social responsibility means making the choice to do the right thing.²¹ Good leaders are socially responsible, function ethically and take good care of people and resources inside and outside their organization, as an extension of their personal integrity, their ethics, and their values. They genuinely care about the negative impacts of practices and decisions on people.

For leaders who work for government, this means they care about people who work for them and the people whose lives will be affected by decisions governments make. This requires a principled and compassionate approach, to ensure that the process of achieving goals and objectives does not create harm to those internal or external to the organization. This may involve how human resources are managed within government; it might also be about government programs that have a significant impact on people's lives, the environment, or how funds are allocated. The inner core of the good leader will drive the leader's aspirations, ensuring that they achieve positive results in ways that are principled and attuned to the needs of others, not just for their own personal goals or agenda.

“

Leaders with a strong sense of character and humility have a sense for doing the right thing because it is the right thing, not because they expect something in return.²²

Ken Blanchard

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21 Leadercast. (2015).

22 The Ken Blanchard Companies Research Findings. (n.d.) *Critical leadership skills: Key traits that can make or break today's leaders*. San Diego: The Ken Blanchard Companies. Retrieved from www.scribd.com/document/44824347/PDF-Critical-Leadership-Skills p. 3.

Summary

The effective leader is a transparent and consistent person, whose inner strength is based on ethics, integrity and honesty. They walk their talk. They make ethical decisions guided by a strong moral compass. They are socially responsible. They ensure their organization or department is guided by values and a code of conduct. They understand and respect the societal values and norms that are relevant to their work. This forms a foundation for other leadership behaviours that reflect the heart and mind of the leader. Building on that inner core of an ethical, moral framework, good leaders are motivated by a concern for others, and have a desire to serve in a way that empowers, supports, and inspires those who follow.²³ As the name suggests, the civil servant is there to *serve*. This implies service to the public, to key stakeholders, to those in authority, and to those entrusted to the leader's care. This may seem counter-intuitive, when it seems the workers are there to serve the requirements of the leader. However, leadership theory demonstrates that good leaders also serve those who work for them, through a variety of key mechanisms. What does this look like? The following chapter examines several visible behaviours that are grounded by an inner core of good character. As we will see, these are essential strengths for the successful, good leader.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders:	
1.	demonstrate integrity (that is, a strong moral compass, very ethical, trustworthy)
2.	are committed to social responsibility
3.	have an attitude of selfless service toward others

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23 Goleman, D. (2004). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review: Inside the mind of a leader*. January, 83-91. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader>

Newton, C., & Maierhofer, N. (2005). Supportive leadership and well-being: The role of team value congruence. In Katsikitis, M., ed. *Proceedings 40th Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference*, 208-212, Melbourne. Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au>

Folkman, J. (2010).

Sensenig, K. (2011). Results-oriented leadership. *Training*: Fri 01/14/2011. Dale Carnegie and Associates: Learning and Organization Development. Retrieved from www.dalecarnegie.com/assets/1/7/Results-Oriented_Leadership_Sensenig_trg.com.pdf

Gabruch, D. (2014). *Compassionate leadership: A model for organizational well-being in the workplace*. Alberta: Athabasca University. Unpublished paper in partial fulfillments of the MA in Integrated Studies.

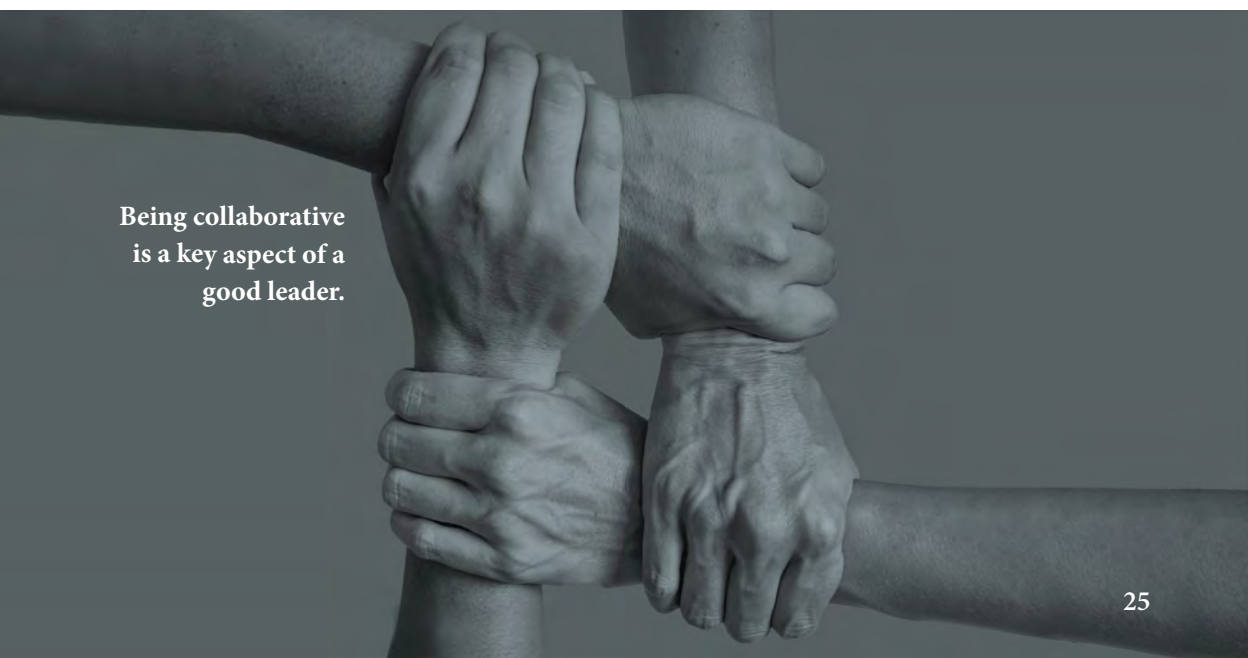


Chapter Two

The Essential Behaviours of Good Leaders

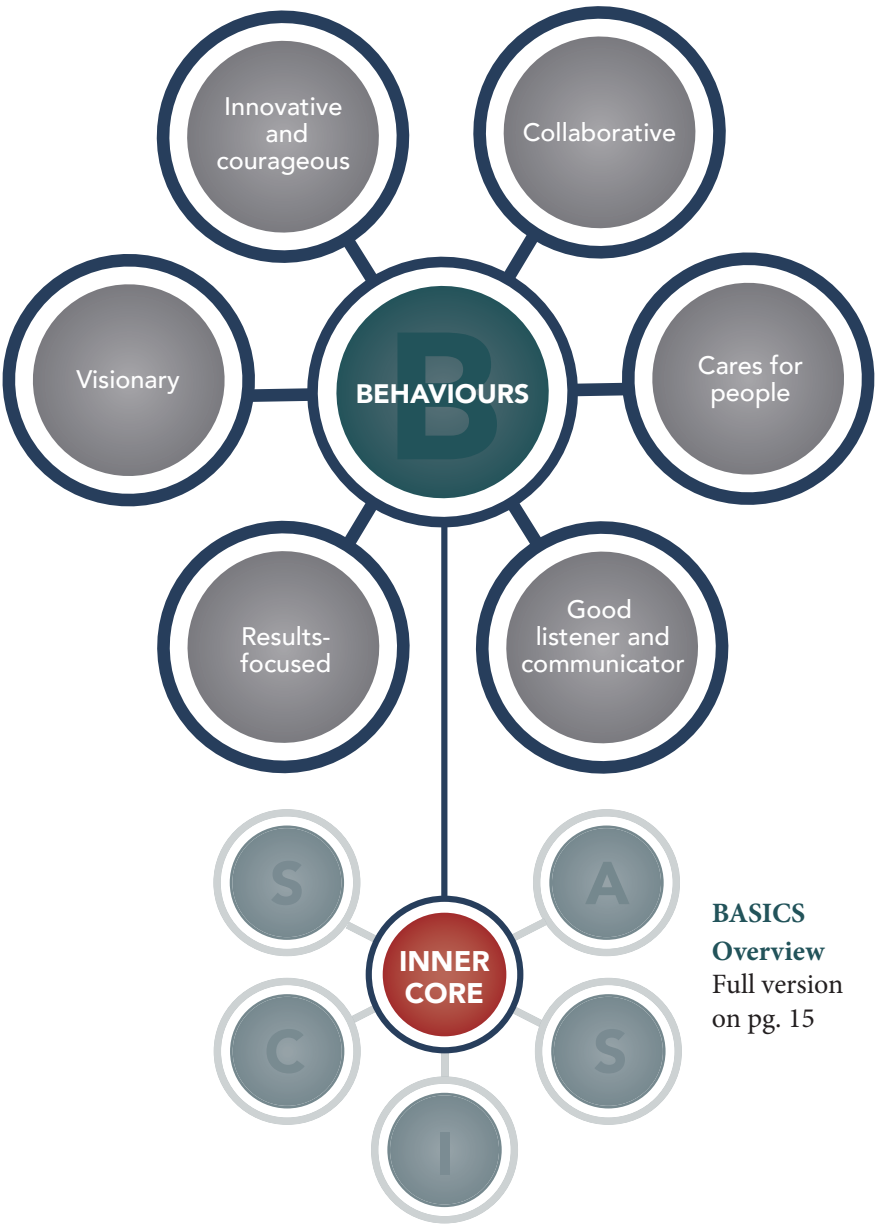
What is the test of good leadership? To do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason, in the right way. It's not enough to know what to do; it also matters how and when you do it, and what motivates you.

In Chapter One we talked about the strong, inner core of ethical thinking and moral character that is at the centre of good leadership. In this chapter we are going to look at the principle that doing flows from being—the idea that our behaviours flow from and are generated by the values, principles, morals, and ethics that guide our actions and choices. There are many behaviours that are associated with good leadership, and we have clustered them into six areas. From our perspective, good leaders are collaborative, they care about people, they are good listeners and communicators, and they are results-focused, visionary, innovative and courageous. This is illustrated in the diagram on the next page.



Being collaborative
is a key aspect of a
good leader.

Diagram Two: Behaviours Associated with Good Leadership



Unlike traditional models of authoritarian or ‘command and control’ leadership, the outer circle represents a new trend in leadership, in which vision and direction are set by a leader who also empowers, supports, and listens to those who follow that vision. It is a *collaborative model* of leadership that empowers and engages the workforce, inspiring them to follow. For this reason, being collaborative is near the top of the wheel.

Behaviours Associated with Good Leadership

Behaviour #1: Foster Genuine Collaboration

Collaboration and community engagement are dynamic practices taking hold in all levels of government and throughout the not-for-profit and charitable sectors. We also see that alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, collaborative resolution processes, inclusive approaches, and team-based structures are becoming more and more the norm in business, the social sector, and in certain areas of government. It only makes sense for the civil service to respond in kind, adopting and adapting practices that have yielded success in other sectors of our society.

To become a collaborative leader, one must first embrace the values that undergird a collaborative approach:

- inclusion
- empowerment
- fairness
- balance
- creativity
- a desire to work effectively and cooperatively with others to solve problems and accomplish goals

According to the Ohio Community Collaboration Model,²⁴ collaboration requires new types of leadership styles and structures, in which power, authority and responsibility is distributed across the group. Healthy collaboration fosters shared commitments, helps resolve conflicts, facilitates lasting relationships and stimulates effective action. It requires new structures and team approaches rather than individual approaches. Team members collaborate and organizations (and departments) develop partnerships in support of this new way of doing business. It is characterized by give-and-take, trust, and shared responsibilities.

Not only that, collaborative processes encourage consensus-building, conflict resolution mechanisms, shared information systems, and shared decision-making systems. This can be very challenging in a work environment that is hierarchical by nature, or where departments have functioned independently of each other and of the community at large.

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24 Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement. Collaboration and collaborative leadership: Implementation guide, version 2. Retrieved from <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community-Engagement/Models-for-Family-and-Community-Engagement/Collaboration-and-Collaborative-Leadership.pdf.aspx>

However, the benefits of collaboration are well documented and worth considering:²⁵

- improved communication among participating organizations
- increased job and life satisfaction for professionals
- increased resources and better utilization of them
- improved service integration, coordination and delivery
- improved access to and faster delivery of services
- increased cost efficiencies, through reducing duplication or fragmentation of programs

An effective leader must be committed to building the relationships necessary to sustain the collaboration. This involves listening to the partners, encouraging open and ongoing communication, clarifying needs and interests, and developing a strategic action plan that will be evaluated and renewed in an ongoing way.²⁶ This sounds like a lot of work, and it is. However, trust is a natural outcome when there is effective communication between partners, when people keep their promises, and when conflicts are addressed and reframed as they occur.²⁷ Collaborative processes are finding favour in all levels of government in a variety of places. As one example, the Government of Canada has identified collaboration as a key component of engaging and mobilizing people, organizations, and partners.²⁸

“ A good compromise is one where everybody makes a contribution.”²⁹
Angela Merkel

25 Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement.

26 Svendsen, A., & Laberge, M. (2007). *“FOSTERing” collaborative stakeholder relationships*. Notes for Practitioners Series: CoreRelation Consulting, Inc. Retrieved from <http://masterfulfacilitation.com/articles/fostering.pdf>

27 Svendsen, A., & Laberge, M. (2007).

28 Government of Canada. (2016). *Effective Behaviours*. Retrieved from www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/professional-development/key-leadership-competency-profile/effective-behaviours

29 Ettus, S. (January 23,, 2015, updated December 6, 2017). *Inspiring quotes from 100 extraordinary women*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/samantha-ettus/100-quotes-from-100-extraordinary-women_b_6483622.html

“ Leaders must be focused on results and relationships.³⁰ ”

Ngang

Behaviour #2: Demonstrate a Genuine Concern for the Well-being and Success of Colleagues and Associates

Behaviour #3: Invest in People, Ensuring They are Supported and Developed

Research demonstrates that effective leaders are not just collaborative, but they have a cluster of “people skills” that enable them to lead with compassion, empathy, and concern for others.³¹ This supportive approach is grounded in showing respect for the ideas, experiences and contributions of others, and with the humility needed to invite input, both positive and constructively critical.³² These soft skills are a key component of building trust with followers, who need to feel respected, included, empowered, and heard.³³ Realistically, it is not always possible to be collaborative—it depends on the needs of the situation. While the effective leader knows when to collaborate and when to make an executive decision, those executive decisions will be easier for followers to accept if the day-to-day culture is respectful, supportive, and where appropriate recognition is given to the ideas and contributions of other people.³⁴

30 Ngang, T. (2012). Leadership soft skills. *Sociology Study* 2(4), 261-269.

31 Goleman, D. (2004).

Newton, C., & Maierhofer, N. (2005).

Folkman, J. (2010).

Gabruch, D. (2014).

Porath, C. (2015). The leadership behavior that's most important to employees. *Harvard Business Review*: May 11, 2015. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2015/05/the-leadership-behavior-thats-most-important-to-employees>

Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25).

32 Van Quaquebeke, N., & Eckloff, T. (2009). Defining respectful leadership: What it is, how it can be measured, and another glimpse at what it is related to. *ERIM Report Series: Research in Management*, May 2009. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Erasmus Research Institute of Management, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

Ballantyne, S. (2012). Leadership decision-making utilizing a strategic focus to enhance global achievement. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 11, 1-6. Retrieved from www.aabri.com/manuscripts/121161.pdf

Porath, C. (2015).

33 Van Quaquebeke, N., & Eckloff, T. (2009).

Boekhorst, J. (2014). The role of authentic leadership in fostering workplace inclusion: A social information processing perspective. *Human Resource Management*, March-April 2015, 54(2), 241-264. Doi: 10.1002/hrm.21669

34 Van Quaquebeke, N., & Eckloff, T. (2009).

Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25).

There are benefits in behaving this way. Leader support is associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, well-being, and lower levels of intention to leave.³⁵ In a study of more than 1,400 leaders, managers, and executives, effective communication and people management were identified as the top two skills needed, followed by empathy and emotional intelligence as the third most important skill set for leaders.³⁶ These soft skills really matter. The leader’s ability to put others before themselves, to empathize, to seek to understand, to build rapport, and to show concern, allows them to build positive connections with their direct reports and others.³⁷

In contrast, it is helpful to note the top five things that leaders most often fail to do when working with others. Interestingly, most of these also relate to the use of soft skills.³⁸

1. Failing to provide appropriate feedback (praise, redirection)	82%
2. Failing to listen or to involve others in the process	81%
3. Failing to use a leadership style that is appropriate to the person, task, or situation (over-supervising or under-supervising)	76%
4. Failing to set clear goals or objectives	76%
5. Failing to train and develop their people	59%

The business world depends on leaders with soft skills because these leaders attract and retain top performers, and they motivate employees to contribute to the organization. They know that improving quality and motivation of human capital increases the company’s competitive advantage.³⁹ Government also needs to attract and retain top talent to handle the complexities of government administration. Generous salaries, benefits and pension plans are one way to improve retention, but those elements on their own do not create a workplace culture that enables workers to thrive and perform with excellence. Good leaders do that. Employees need leaders who invest in them, encourage their growth and development, and give them opportunities to shine.⁴⁰

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35 Newton, C., & Maierhofer, N. (2005).
Ince, E., Jelley, R., & MacKinnon, S. (2016). Leadership’s effects on employee well-being: Synthesizing the qualitative evidence. *Workplace Review*, April 2016, 3-18.

36 The Ken Blanchard Companies Research Findings. (n.d.)

37 The Ken Blanchard Companies Research Findings. (n.d.)

38 The Ken Blanchard Companies Research Findings. (n.d.)

39 Ngang, T. (2012).

40 Cripe, E. (2002). 31 Core competencies explained. *Workforce Magazine*. From Cripe, E & Mansfield, R. *The Value-added employee*. Retrieved from www.workforce.com/2002/09/03/31-core-competencies-explained/
MTD Training. (2010).

“ Research indicates that the number one reason leaders succeed is the quality of their relationships... In other words, people do not leave organizations, they tend to leave leaders.⁴¹ ”
Chalmers

Behaviour #4: Demonstrate a Commitment to Getting Results

Repeatedly, the research literature stresses the importance of being results-focused.⁴² After surveying 189,000 people in 81 diverse organizations, the McKinsey's Organizational Health Index identified four key behaviours associated with leadership effectiveness:⁴³

- solving problems effectively
- operating with a strong results-orientation
- seeking different perspectives
- supporting others

The researchers noted that “leadership is not only about developing and communicating a vision and setting objectives, but also about following through to achieve results. Leaders with a strong results orientation tend to emphasize the importance of efficiency and productivity and to prioritize the most important work.”⁴⁴

A results-oriented approach in business is ultimately about the bottom line: is the company producing a profit? Governments have a different focus, and define their success in different terms.

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⁴¹ Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25).

⁴² Meier, W. (2003). *Results-based management: Towards a common understanding among development cooperation agencies*. Ottawa, Canada: Results-Based Management Group. Retrieved from www.managingfordevelopmentresults.org/documents/Results-BasedManagementDiscussionPaper.pdf

Feser, C., Mayol, F., & Srinivasan, R. (2015). Decoding leadership: What really matters. *McKinsey Quarterly, January 2015*. McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/leadership/decoding-leadership-what-really-matters>

⁴³ Meier, W. (2003).

Feser, C., Mayol, F., & Srinivasan, R. (2015).

⁴⁴ Meier, W. (2003).

Feser, C., Mayol, F., & Srinivasan, R. (2015).

Results-based management has been adopted by Western democratic governments to provide greater accountability and transparency regarding taxpayer contributions.⁴⁵ Designed to measure performance by results, it improves performance through making changes to how the organization operates so results will improve. Stakeholders are included and involved in defining realistic, expected results, in assessing risk, in monitoring progress, in reporting on performance and in integrating lessons learned into management decisions.⁴⁶ For many government organizations, this is often about designing and implementing programs that achieve certain goals or create certain benefits for the public. Clearly, being results-focused needs to be anchored and balanced by the other key components of ethical decision-making, concern about people, and effective communication to ensure that results are achieved without collateral damage. The end does not justify the means! Good leaders strive for excellent results without compromising their values and other people in the process.

The soft skills of leading people and the task-oriented skills associated with results-focused leadership are complemented by the final component that includes vision, innovation, and courage.

“ If decision-making is a science,
judgment is an art.⁴⁷ ”
Zimmerman & Kanter

45 Meier, W. (2003). *Results-based management: Towards a common understanding among development cooperation agencies*. Ottawa, Canada: Results-Based Management Group. Retrieved from <http://www.managingfordevelopmentresults.org/documents/Results-BasedManagementDiscussionPaper.pdf>

46 Meier, W. (2003).

47 Zimmerman, P., & Kanter, R. (2012). *Decision-making for leaders: A synthesis of ideas from the Harvard University Advanced Leadership Initiative Think Tank*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Advanced Leadership Think Tank Series. Retrieved from http://advancedleadership.harvard.edu/files/ali/files/decision_making_thinktank_final.pdf



Behaviour #5: Have Vision

Behaviour #6: Encourage Innovation

Not everyone is fortunate to have a charismatic, dynamic personality, but effective leaders do have a sense of vision. They see possibilities and strategic opportunities, and use those in innovative ways. They create a compelling vision of the desired future for the organization and communicate it in a way that others can follow.⁴⁸ Specifically, this involves translating their vision and goals into the language of each person, and then integrating it into their everyday job.⁴⁹

Ideally, the mission and vision then become the worker's personal goals.⁵⁰ Their daily efforts become a means of bringing the mission and vision to life. However, the more layers of administration or bureaucracy there are between the visionaries at the head of an organization and the front-line employees who deliver the actual services, the more difficult it is to see the mission and vision translated to the employees.⁵¹ This requires that leaders at every level of the organization have the capacity to articulate the vision and successfully influence the performance of their team while making the mission and vision relatable to their team members on a personal level.⁵² In summary, a successful leader has a clear sense of vision that can be translated into goals and an action plan, and who has the listening and people skills needed to provide effective guidance, support and recognition.

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48 Conger, J. (1991). Inspiring others: The language of leadership. *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(1), 31-45.

49 The Ken Blanchard Companies Research Findings. (n.d.).

50 MTD Training. (2010).

51 MTD Training. (2010).

52 MTD Training. (2010).

Kouzes & Posner⁵³ determined five complementary behaviours that were effective at defining good leadership practice:

1. **Model the way.** Lead by example, and make certain that people adhere to agreed-upon standards. Follow through on commitments and build consensus around the organization's values. Ask for feedback on how your actions affect people's performance.
2. **Inspire a shared vision.** Describe a compelling image of the future, noting trends that influence the work. Appeal to others to share the dream; paint the "big picture" of group aspirations. Speak with conviction about the meaning of the work.
3. **Challenge processes.** Search outside the organization for innovative ways to improve, and challenge people to try new approaches. Ask, "What can we learn?" Make certain that goals, plans and milestones are set; experiment and take risks.
4. **Enable others to act.** Develop cooperative relationships; actively listen to diverse points of view. Treat people with dignity and respect; support decisions other people make. Give people choice about how to do their work and ensure that people grow in their jobs.
5. **Encourage the heart.** Praise people for a job well done and express confidence in people's abilities. Creatively reward people for their contributions and recognize people for their commitment to shared values. Find ways to celebrate accomplishments and give team members appreciation and support.

These five behaviours demonstrate how a commitment to vision integrates well with the leader's character, task-focused skills, and interpersonal skills. They also show the importance of courage and innovation in the leader's thinking.

“Power isn't power at all—power is strength, and giving that strength to others. A leader isn't someone who forces others to make him stronger; a leader is someone willing to give his strength to others that they may have the strength to stand on their own.”⁵⁴

Beth Revis

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⁵³ Kouzes & Posner, in Chalmers, T. (2016, October 25).

⁵⁴ Haden, J. (Aug 4, 2014).

Behaviour #7: Lead with Courage

Vision needs to be supported by innovation and courage to bring it to fruition. Frequently, having vision means challenging the status quo. Nevertheless, having the courage to revisit “sacred cows” and suggest better paths toward the future can be difficult. Taking action on performance issues also requires courage. The effective leader confronts reality head on. Only by knowing the true state of your organization can you lead it to a better place.⁵⁵ Courageous leaders face the facts, seek feedback and listen, and say what needs to be said.⁵⁶ They also encourage push-back: constructive dissent and healthy debate often reveal that in the tension of diverse opinions lies a better answer.⁵⁷ When it is needed, they take action on performance issues and prevent toxicity by reassigning or exiting underperforming employees, for the sake of the team and the organization.⁵⁸ Effective and courageous leaders lead change, and they communicate openly and frequently. They make decisions, move forward, and give credit to others along the way. And finally, they hold themselves and others accountable, and model the behaviours they expect.⁵⁹

At some point, every organization or government will face a crisis of some magnitude. These are prime examples of complex situations that tax the capabilities of even the most effective, courageous leaders, so it is worth talking about them. Unfortunately, it is often the handling of a crisis that leads to more damage than the crisis event itself.⁶⁰ Crisis leadership is more than managing corporate communication and public relations; while these are necessary, they are not enough to lead an organization through a crisis.⁶¹ Crisis leadership is about building a foundation of trust within the organization and with key stakeholders as well, and leveraging the crisis situation as a means for creating organizational change and innovation.⁶² Establishing trust is often done by taking full responsibility and making an apology, with a description of the actions taken to make things right. Truthful communication supported by value-laden actions helps the leader restore public confidence, because open, honest leaders are more believable in a crisis.⁶³ Once again, this speaks to the importance of a strong inner core of ethics, principles, and a strong moral compass.

55 Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15) *10 Traits of courageous leaders*. Forbes: Leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susantardanico/2013/01/15/10-traits-of-courageous-leaders/#7b075cbb4fc0>

56 Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15).

57 Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15).

58 Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15).

59 Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15).

60 James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011).

61 James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011).

62 James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011).

63 James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011).

Leading with courage in a crisis also requires the ability to see beyond the negatives to the opportunities in the situation. Good leaders apply lessons learned to ensure the organization will be revitalized and improved after the trauma of the crisis has subsided. Even though it is difficult to weather the storm, a crisis can bring issues to the attention of the leadership that have been overlooked or neglected. It presents opportunities for innovation and system improvements, which will benefit the organization in the future. Adopting this positive approach helps courageous leaders move from feelings of anger, anxiety, guilt and despair to optimism and hope.⁶⁴ A leader who adopts this approach will be able to apply these principles to less stressful situations as well.

Summary

As we consider the BASICS of leadership in government, we have seen that it involves internal qualities and commitments, and external behaviours and skills. Simply put, the leader is concerned about people and concerned about the work. Guided by vision, ethics and values, with a commitment to being socially and personally responsible, the leader guides and influences others toward achieving the goals of the organization. The leader is results-oriented, making sound, well-informed decisions because they listen, gather information, ask questions, foster dialogue, and take input. Strategic analysis and effective task management are accompanied by a strong concern for the people on the team. Effective leaders invest in their people, ensuring they are supported, developed, respected, included and recognized. Working collaboratively with others, they harness creative energy and foster innovation, with enough toughness and courage to ask the hard questions and challenge the status quo.

Good leadership in government involves both internal qualities and commitments, and external behaviours and skills.

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⁶⁴ James, E., & Wooten, L. (2011).

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders:	
1.	foster genuine collaboration
2.	invest in people , ensuring they are supported and developed
3.	have a genuine concern for the well-being and success of colleagues and subordinates
4.	commit to getting results
5.	encourage innovation
6.	have vision
7.	are courageous : they are able to make really tough decisions





Chapter Three

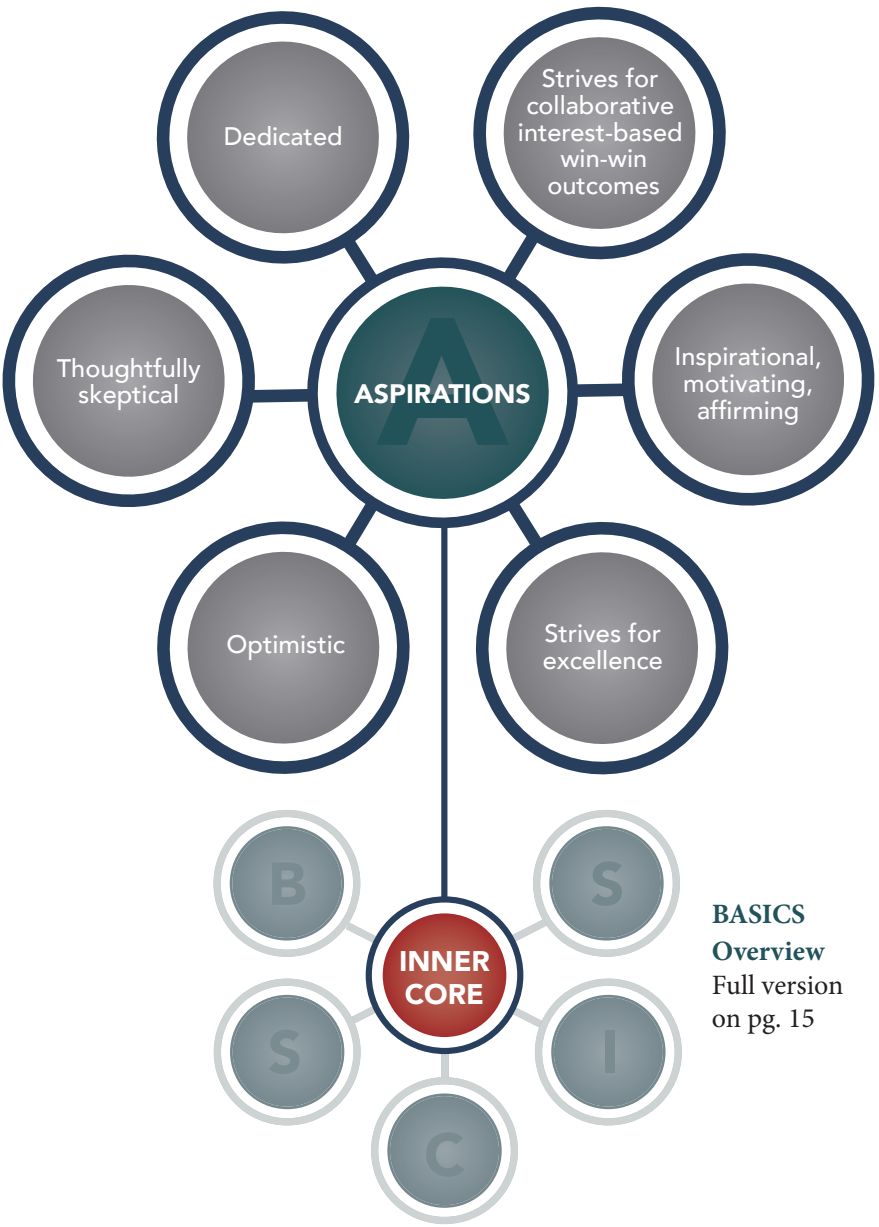
The Aspirations of a Good Leader

The aspirations of good leaders link closely with their values, and express themselves in their goals and in their choices.

While Chapters One and Two are focused on the inner core and behaviours of the good leader, now we are going to think about what good leaders aspire to be. The aspirations of good leaders link closely with their values, and express themselves in their goals and in their choices. Aspirations relate to what we hope to achieve as a leader, what we personally aim or strive for. This is not about organizational development—these are personal aspirations we carry with us no matter what job we are doing. Our aspirations give us personal goals to keep striving for, to focus our professional growth and development. Our aspirations will influence our daily actions and behaviours, yet in another sense, they remain ahead of us, always a little out of reach.

You'll notice that in our BASICS model for this chapter, the inner core remains the same. As always, the inner core of ethics and moral principles will guide the leader and shape their behaviour, their aspirations, how they use their skills, and how they respond to their information, communication, and sustainability commitments. The outer ring refers to the aspirations that we will be discussing. Starting near the top of the wheel, the good leader thinks in terms of “getting to yes.” They understand that successful negotiations involve exploring and striving to meet the needs of all affected parties to the best degree possible. Even though it might not always be possible, they still aspire for win-win solutions and outcomes because those work best to meet needs and preserve relationships. Building bridges between groups, finding solutions that work, and striving to build on common ground—these are so important in government that we have placed this circle near the top of the wheel. This builds on our earlier discussion of the importance of collaboration in the behaviours of good leaders. Following that are aspirations that are expressed daily in the attitudes, values, and behaviours of good leaders. Before we look at those, though, let's consider further how character and ethics relate to a leader's aspirations.

Diagram Three: The Aspirations of a Good Leader



BASICS
Overview
Full version
on pg. 15

How Does a Good Leader Create an Ethical, Values-based Work Culture?

It is not enough for a leader to be personally principled and ethical; good leaders establish a principled, ethical workplace with a code of conduct and a system of moral principles and values that are implemented across the organization. This enables them to lead with a moral compass. It is the ability to transform, direct, and guide culture that is the essential element to ensuring the organization continues to function within its ethical guidelines.

Part of creating an ethical, values-based culture begins with the leader's own moral compass, defined as "*a set of moral principles, informed by a sound conscience, reinforced by repeatedly acting in accord with those principles.*"⁶⁵ Moral leaders are people who:

"live by a deep moral code which has been slowly nurtured over a lifetime, and consistently demonstrate moral leadership by the way they navigate the challenges life throws at them. Such a code of moral behaviour is guided by a cultivated conscience which is aligned with timeless human values, rather than a set of social codes of 'moral' conduct as articulated by a particular faith group or culture."⁶⁶

However, moral relativism has made it difficult to articulate and define these timeless human values, being more concerned about the rights of the individual, and the subjective and individualized sense of what is right and what is not. This exposes governments, business, and society at large to significant moral risk.⁶⁷ This can be mitigated by the recruitment and cultivation of leaders with a strong inner code and moral compass, and processes that help establish the principles, values and moral code that will guide the workplace. Leaders with a strong moral compass will not only do the right thing, but they will also call others to moral action. Good leaders aspire to uphold high principles and values, and guide others around them to upholding those values as well.

65 Howard, A. (2012). *It is time for moral leadership*, p. 5. The Confidere Group. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59acebc346c3c480db2f4574/t/59b294e0f14aa1ef98b2eacf/1504875957018/its-time-for-moral-leadership.pdf>

66 Howard, A. (2012), p. 8.

67 Howard, A. (2012), p. 9.

“ Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal. Great leadership works through the emotions.⁶⁸ ”

Daniel Goleman, on “Primal Leadership”

Aspirations #1 & 2: Demonstrating a Commitment to *Getting to Yes*, with a Commitment to Seeking Win-Win Solutions

In Chapter Two we discussed the importance of a collaborative leadership style, pointing out the many benefits of working in collaboration with others to achieve organizational goals. In this chapter, we want to look deeper at this, in terms of the aspiration of the leader to “get to yes” with others in a way that is collaborative, interest-based, and focused on win-win outcomes. Where did this idea of “*getting to yes*” come from?

In 1981, Roger Fisher and William Ury⁶⁹ published an influential book that changed the way we understand conflict and negotiation all around the world. Even those who have never heard of them or their book have heard the expression “getting to yes,” without knowing the source. Much of the alternative dispute resolution field has been built on their ideas, and mediators today frequently use the interest-based, collaborative approach Fisher and Ury first wrote about so persuasively. Personnel from government and the private sector frequently take conflict-resolution workshops that contain ideas that originally came from Fisher and Ury’s *Getting to Yes*. Significant global conflicts have been reduced when negotiators have adopted this way of addressing the issues.

Roger Fisher is now Williston Professor of Law Emeritus at Harvard Law School; he has practiced law in Washington and served as a consultant to the Department of Defense. He consults widely with other governments, corporations and individuals and has published numerous books.

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68 Goleman, D. (n.d.) On “*primal leadership*”. Retrieved from www.danielgoleman.info/topics/leadership/

69 Fisher, R., & Ury, W., (1981). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. 1st ed. New York: Penguin.

William Ury is a co-founder of Harvard's Negotiation Program and Distinguished Fellow of the Harvard Negotiation Project. He has served as a mediator and advisor in negotiations ranging from wildcat strikes to ethnic wars around the world. Like Fisher, Ury was also a consultant to the White House, and has published numerous books that continue to shape this dynamic and growing field. These two know what they are talking about.

What are their key ideas and how are they especially useful for those in government?

Now in its third edition, Fisher and Ury's book describes what they call the "negotiation revolution."⁷⁰ A generation ago, the prevailing view about decision-making was hierarchical. Those at the top made the decisions; those lower down followed their orders. Today's world is characterized by flatter organizations with less hierarchy, faster innovation, and the connectivity coming from the internet. We are now linked and connected to many other people over whom we have no control at all. To accomplish our work and to meet our needs, we cannot simply rely on giving orders. To get what we want, we are compelled to negotiate. They have observed that the "pyramids of power are shifting into networks of negotiation."⁷¹

For most people, negotiation evokes the idea of winners and losers. After generations of heated labour disputes, positional bargaining sessions, legal battles, and strikes, that view is not surprising. To reach an agreement in this style of negotiating, someone has to give in. Fisher and Ury have helped re-define what negotiation can look like by encouraging a cooperative approach that creates benefits for both sides. In their view, "there are cooperative ways of negotiating our differences and that even if a 'win-win' solution cannot be found, a wise agreement can often be reached that is still better for both sides than the alternative."⁷²

This approach harmonizes well with what we have already discussed about the importance of collaboration. When people work together collaboratively—looking out for the interests of the other as well as their own interests and striving to find mutually-agreeable solutions to the best degree possible—conflict is reduced.

Fisher and Ury's approach is not to eliminate conflict; in contrast, they suggest that conflict is an inevitable and useful part of life. It often leads to growth in insight, new perspectives, and positive change. Few injustices are addressed without conflict. And conflict is at the heart of the democratic process, where the best decisions are made by exploring differing points of view and searching for creative solutions.

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70 Fisher, R., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to Yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. 3rd ed. New York: Penguin Group, USA.

71 Fisher, et al. (2011). p. xii.

72 Fisher, et al. (2011). p. xii.

We discussed earlier that good leaders encourage debate and healthy dissent, and this is why they do so. You need to hear all those differing perspectives to be able to really understand the needs, interests and values that are at stake. Then you can explore, together with the affected parties, what a good outcome would look like and why.

This issue is not whether conflict arises; the leadership challenge is how to handle it when it does. For Fisher and Ury,

“The challenge is not to eliminate conflict but to transform it. It is to change the way we deal with our differences—from destructive, adversarial battling to hard-headed, side-by-side problem-solving. We should not underestimate the difficulty of this task, yet no task is more urgent in the world today.”⁷³

As Fisher and Ury put it, the challenge for good leaders is to be “soft on the people” while remaining “hard on the problem.” This is difficult: our human nature inclines us to stick with people who agree with us or support our views, and we do not tend to like people who disagree with us. It is annoying to be in a conflict. That frustration can lead us to mistreat people, rather than deal with the real underlying issues.

Understanding Positions and Interests

The reality is that each day is full of decisions and moments when we can choose to act alone in a directive manner, or we can choose to cooperate and collaborate with others. While making the executive decision is appropriate in many situations, it is increasingly important for leaders to take input from a variety of sources, and use that information to guide their decision-making. When issues become contentious, it is extremely important for leaders to be able to discern what is NOT being said, as well as what is on the table.

When issues become contentious, it’s extremely important for leaders to be able to discern what is NOT being said, as well as what is on the table.

What do we mean by this? Generally, people put their *positions* out first, e.g., “We need a raise” or “We have to cut the budget.” The positions people hold are the judgments, opinions, or solutions that they feel best meet their unspoken, underlying needs and interests. These positions can become very inflexible and entrenched, as is evident in many labour conflicts. Two parties trying to negotiate their positions usually do not find a win-win.

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73 Fisher, et al. (2011). p. xii.

Underneath the visible, spoken positions are the often unspoken *needs, interests, values and beliefs* that have shaped their positions. This is really the heart of the matter, and a wise leader knows to explore these thoroughly before negotiating a solution. People are very reluctant to make agreements that force them to compromise or jeopardize their needs, interests, values or beliefs. The best agreements represent creative solutions that meet these underlying needs for both parties to the greatest degree possible. Stephen Covey, the well-known author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*⁷⁴, called this “and” logic, describing it as the foundation of win-win agreements. Instead of one side winning at the expense of the other, with “either-or” outcomes, this is “a way of thinking and interacting that seeks constantly for mutually and maximally beneficial, creative, third-alternative solutions.”⁷⁵ It balances the needs of one with the needs of the other, seeing through the lens of “and” rather than “either-or”.

The Iceberg Metaphor: Shifting from Positions to Interests

The diagram on the next page creates a picture of what conflict or disagreements often look like. As we know, icebergs sit deep in the water, with only a small portion of the ice showing above the waterline. It is very difficult to tell how big an iceberg is if you only look at it from above. However, as we know from the tragic story of the Titanic, it is what is below the waterline that sank the ship. In other words, our positions, solutions, opinions, emotions, and judgements are like the ice showing above the water. This is what catches one’s attention. Below the water are all the needs, interests, values, beliefs, fears and hopes that have caused us to form our proposed solution to the problem. This is a much larger but unseen portion of the iceberg. What is under the water holds up what is above the waterline, but it is largely invisible to those looking at the iceberg from a distance.

Effective communication involves uncovering those hidden interests. As people share these needs and values, it becomes possible to shift away from their demands or solutions to a deeper understanding of why the conflict really matters, and what it is truly about. Once these interests, needs and values are revealed, it becomes easier to look for common ground, and shared needs and values. You can then also identify the differences that exist. Meaningful discussion is now possible to allow for a collaborative spirit of brainstorming to find the options and solutions that are the best fit for both parties.

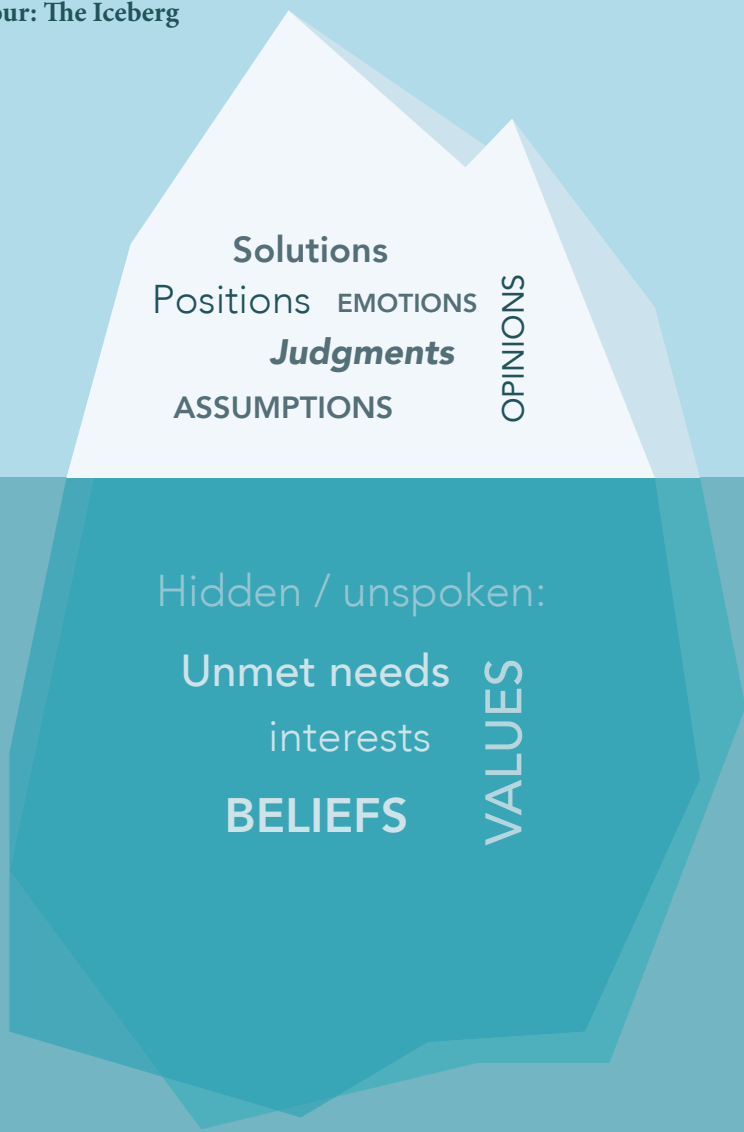
.....

74 Covey, S. (2013). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change*. 25th anniversary edition. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

75 Covey, S. (reprinted 2000). Win-win leadership: making it work for you. *Priorities Magazine*. p. 23. Retrieved from www.mind-like-water.com/Rogue_Investor/RI_Articles/Higher_Pursuits/winwinleadership.html

The communication skills used in this kind of exploration involve open questions, use of empathy, identifying issues in a neutral way, and the use of skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, and reframing. Many leaders develop these specific skills through negotiation and communication training offered as professional development. However, it is not enough just to develop the techniques of interest-based negotiation. Skills development must be balanced with a mindset that truly values this collaborative approach, with a genuine concern for the needs of others. Otherwise, the leader will appear insincere or half-hearted in the desire to find those win-win solutions and outcomes.

Diagram Four: The Iceberg



Aspiration #3: To Inspire, Motivate and Affirm

In Chapter Three, we talked about visionary, innovative, and courageous behaviours that are part of good leadership. The aspirations of a good leader include the desire to inspire others, to motivate them to excel, and to affirm them for their efforts. This is part of creating a *winning culture*⁷⁶ in which people not only know what to do, but they know *why* they should do it. Companies and organizations with successful, high performing workplace cultures recognize that their values need to be embraced at every level, and that workplace culture is first established and modelled by the leadership.⁷⁷

Good leadership ensures that the vision and values are clearly articulated so they can be easily followed, building on the example set by the leader. In terms of productivity, a good leader inspires followers to excel over and over again. Their energies are focused on external customers and competitors, rather than on internal issues of politics or “turf.” Transforming workplace culture takes time and focused energy, but a good leader knows in the end the most persuasive results of creating a “winning culture” will be seen on the frontline.⁷⁸ This requires not just motivation, but also affirmation and encouragement from the leader to ensure the successful behaviours of the team will be repeated.

Good leaders communicate with the followers in mind: they speak in ways that connect with followers, they collaborate, they listen and they engage their followers to align with the organization’s goals and vision.⁷⁹ They also support their employees, which is a significant factor that increases employee well-being and productivity.⁸⁰ The aspirations of the good leader will include the desire to inspire, motivate and affirm others through a supportive, collaborative approach.⁸¹ Research indicates this is positively associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, well-being and workplace productivity.

A good leader will aspire to create a “winning culture” in which people not only know *what* to do, but *why* they should do it.

76 Rogers, P., Meehan, P., & Tanner, S. (2006). Building a winning culture. Bain & Company, Inc. Retrieved from www.bain.com/Images/BB_Building_winning_culture.pdf

77 Rogers, et al. (2006).

78 Rogers, et al. (2006).

79 Trudeau Poskas, D., Messer, C., Horntvedt, J., & Vitcenda, M. (2013). *Exploring the impact of charismatic leaders in communities*. University of Minnesota Extension. Retrieved from www.extension.umn.edu/community/leadership/charismatic-leaders/case-study/docs/learners-guide.pdf

80 Ince, et al. (2016).

81 Ince, et al. (2016).

Aspiration #4: To Strive for Excellence

Good leaders inspire their followers, but to what end? One of the aspirations of the good leader is not only to strive for excellence on a personal level, but to inspire their followers to strive for excellence as well. In Chapter Two we talked about the results-focused leader, who sets objectives and achieves results. The aspirations of the good leader define those results in terms of achieving excellence, whether that relates to the quality of programming provided, the nature of service delivery, or how the particular branch of government fulfills its mandate. For government, this can also include streamlining processes and reducing red tape, reducing wait times, increasing efficiency to benefit the public, or ensuring an excellent experience at each touchpoint with taxpayers and society at large. Excellence is linked with the values associated with the work. One cannot do excellent work without knowing first what matters, and having a sense of an external standard or guide. Good leaders want their organization or unit to be second to none. They want the product or services they provide to be second to none as well. This requires setting a high standard, and inspiring staff through a positive approach to achieve it.

Aspiration #5: To be Optimistic and Positive

Having an optimistic outlook is one of the attributes of a likeable, emotionally intelligent leader. Research data shows that optimistic, positive, approachable leaders are seen in a more positive light by those who work for them than leaders who possess other innate attributes such as intelligence.⁸² What is the good news? The attributes of a likeable leader are under the leader’s control, and can be cultivated by anyone. You are not necessarily born with them. According to Dr. Travis Bradberry from Talentsmart⁸³—an organization that studies and specializes in emotional intelligence—the 10 key attributes of leader likeability include numerous points that relate to positivity and optimism. Talentsmart’s research shows that a likeable leader is relational, approachable and humble, and maintains a positive outlook. There is a positive energy and enthusiasm about them that is infectious. People enjoy being around other positive people. In contrast, negativity drags people down. Positive, likeable leaders appreciate the potential in those around them. They see the best in others, and they help others to see the best in themselves. They are encouraging. They draw out people’s talents so that everyone is bettering themselves and the work at hand. They see opportunities where others see challenges; they remain hopeful even when the going is tough. They also possess the interpersonal skills to develop good relationships and inspire employees.⁸⁴

82 Bradberry, T. (2015). 10 Habits of ultra-likeable leaders. Talentsmart, Inc. Retrieved from www.talentsmart.com/articles/10-Habits-of-Ultra-Likeable-Leaders-2147446623-p-1.html

83 Bradberry, T. (2015).

84 Juarez, F., & Contreras, F. (2012). The influence of optimism and socioeconomic characteristics on leadership practices. *International Journal of Psychological Research*, 5(2), 18-29.

Optimism is not only good for those around the leader, but an optimistic outlook has direct benefits for the leader, too. Not only do optimistic people tend to earn more than their pessimistic peers,⁸⁵ optimistic people also enjoy an array of positive health outcomes, improved levels of subjective well-being, better health, and more success.⁸⁶ Optimistic people have better coping mechanisms for handling and recovering from stress.⁸⁷ In short, it is good for both your health and your career to be optimistic.

Humour and laughter seem to flow right alongside those who have a positive, enthusiastic outlook on life. It is not always easy to see the lighter side of things but it certainly is helpful. Optimism serves as a social lubricant that lightens up the mood and generates positive, good feelings among others. Laughter has its own health benefits: it increases heart rate and blood flow, with similar benefits to exercise.⁸⁸ Endorphins are released through laughing, which help to relieve pain, reduce cravings and stress, and slow the aging process.⁸⁹ Laughter can help to reduce blood sugar levels, improve the immune system, and increase our antibodies that fight disease.⁹⁰ The optimistic, positive leader knows that times of laughter and fun in the workplace contribute to creating positive energy and happy employees.

Researchers have learned that emotions generally are infectious—just like the common cold. You can “catch” an emotion just by being in the same room with someone, through a subtle, non-verbal process.

“Since emotional leads tend to flow from the most powerful person in a group to the others, when the leader is angry or depressed, negative body language can spread like a virus to the rest of the team, affecting attitudes and lowering energy. Conversely, happy and buoyant leaders are likely to make the entire team feel upbeat and energized.”⁹¹

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85 Warrell, M. (September 19, 2012). *See the glass half full or empty? Why optimists are happier, healthier and wealthier!* Forbes Leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2012/09/19/see-the-glass-half-empty-or-full-7-keys-for-optimism-in-tough-times/#5528d744767f>

86 Forgeard, M., & Seligman, M. (2012). Seeing the glass half full: A review of the causes and consequences of optimism. *Pratiques psychologiques* 18 (2012), 107-120. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S126917631200003X

Juarez, F., & Contreras, F. (2012).

87 Warrell, M. (September 19, 2012).

88 Warrell, M. (September 19, 2012).

89 Warrell, M. (September 19, 2012).

90 Warrell, M. (September 19, 2012).

91 Goman, C. K. (July 11, 2012). Great leaders are positively infectious. Paragraph 3. Forbes Leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolkinseygoman/2012/07/11/great-leaders-are-positively-infectious/#6409275178cc>

Like negativity, positive energy is infectious. People watch their leaders, and body language says more than we realize. Effective leaders pay attention to their non-verbal signals, and use positive motivation to inspire their workers. In contrast, negativity significantly diminishes problem-solving abilities and narrows rather than expands creative thinking.⁹²

Seeing the glass half full, rather than half empty, is an aspiration of the good leader because of how it expands opportunities and possibilities, and spreads positive energy and motivation to others. Good leaders also know that emotions influence decision-making. Even though we like to believe we make decisions based on reason and logic, neuroscience has revealed that no one makes decisions based purely on logic alone. Our emotions influence our thoughts more than we often recognize, and logical reasoning is linked with emotional choices more than we like to admit.⁹³ For leaders, this matters because the emotions of the leader will have an impact on decision-making, which is a central activity of leaders. Good leaders have a centred, balanced emotional nature that is generally positive and optimistic, enabling the leader to remain resilient despite challenges and have the self-confidence to persevere.⁹⁴

“ Even in undeniably negative situations, likeable leaders emanate an enthusiastic hope for the future, a confidence that they can help make tomorrow better than today.”⁹⁵
Travis Bradberry

92 Goman, C. K. (July 11, 2012).

93 Goman, C. K. (July 11, 2012).

94 Horwitch, M., & Callahan, M.W. (June 10, 2016). How leaders inspire: Cracking the code. Bain & Company. Retrieved from www.bain.com/publications/articles/how-leaders-inspire-cracking-the-code.aspx

95 Bradberry, T. (2015). 10 Habits of ultra-likeable leaders. Talentsmart, Inc. Retrieved from www.talentsmart.com/articles/10-Habits-of-Ultra-Likeable-Leaders-2147446623-p-1.html

Aspiration #6: To Be Realistic and Thoughtfully Skeptical

We have just explored why an optimistic outlook is such an essential part of good leadership. You may be wondering if this aspiration seems a contradiction of the previous one, and that is a reasonable question. However, healthy optimism is not a naïve denial of the facts or the inclination to ignore reasonable evidence to pursue one's own preferred course of action. Realistic optimism involves an optimistic and realistic view of the future—if there are *good reasons* to feel that the future will bode well.⁹⁶ In contrast, unrealistic optimism can have very negative results, causing us to engage in behaviours or plans that will be to our detriment because we are not seriously considering the factors that can affect us.⁹⁷ Thoughtful skepticism spurs us to look deeper, to ask hard questions, to explore beyond the surface. Realism causes us to consider what we have learned from the past and the world around us, to pay attention to patterns of cause and effect. Realism and thoughtful skepticism enhance optimism to ensure that decisions made will be prudent and wise, while also seizing on opportunities that others may not see. A good leader utilizes realistic optimism to acquire resources, to pursue goals, and to be persistent,⁹⁸ with a realistic assessment of what can or cannot be achieved in a situation.⁹⁹ However, unlike pessimism, this realistic and thoughtfully skeptical approach is balanced by positive perspective, emotions, and motivation.¹⁰⁰

Aspiration #7: To be Dedicated and Committed

Although it may seem rather obvious, it is worth noting that good leaders are dedicated and committed to their work, to their organizations, to the people they serve, and to the people who work for them. This strong sense of loyalty and support is part of what inspires loyal followership, and also translates into a strong sense of public service. Once again, it is worth repeating that those who work for government are *servants*—they are there to serve the public, not themselves, and to create mechanisms of excellence to ensure that service is provided in a way that will uphold the values and intentions of a government designed to take care of its people. Sadly, we hear too much about governments and political situations in which the public pays the price for self-serving government practices.

96 Forgeard, M., & Seligman, M. (2012).

97 Forgeard, M., & Seligman, M. (2012).

98 Forgeard, M., & Seligman, M. (2012).

99 Juarez, F., & Contreras, F. (2012).

100 Juarez, F., & Contreras, F. (2012).

A good leader, guided by a strong ethical and moral compass, will not be *blindly loyal* to a system that needs to be changed. There is a time and a place for speaking up, for questioning the status quo, and for indicating there is a better path. Good leaders not only encourage discussion and allow for different perspectives, they also have the confidence and integrity to speak up when needed. Healthy dedication to one’s work involves dedication to principles, ideals and values that are part of that workplace, not blind loyalty when ethical missteps occur. Good leaders manage this delicate balance: demonstrating appropriate loyalty while also demonstrating moral courage and integrity.

Summary

The aspirations of a good leader are guided by social responsibility and a strong moral compass. The good leader is strongly committed to a collaborative approach, aspiring to “get to yes” with others through a win-win approach. This is supported by the aspiration to motivate and affirm others through an inspiring approach, with a strong commitment to excellence in every aspect of the organization. The good leader is optimistic, using a positive approach to motivate others and to see opportunities along with the challenges. This optimism is balanced with thoughtful skepticism, ensuring decisions are grounded in realism as well as the leader’s vision. The good leader is dedicated to their team and devoted to their work, with a strong sense of loyalty and support for the organization as well as those who work for them. That sense of dedication is guided by their ethical and moral compass to ensure their loyalty and their integrity are not in conflict.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders:	
1.	are committed to getting to yes
2.	seek win-win situations
3.	inspire and motivate others
4.	are committed to excellence
5.	are optimistic and positive
6.	are thoughtfully skeptical
7.	are dedicated and committed



Chapter Four

The Skills of a Good Leader

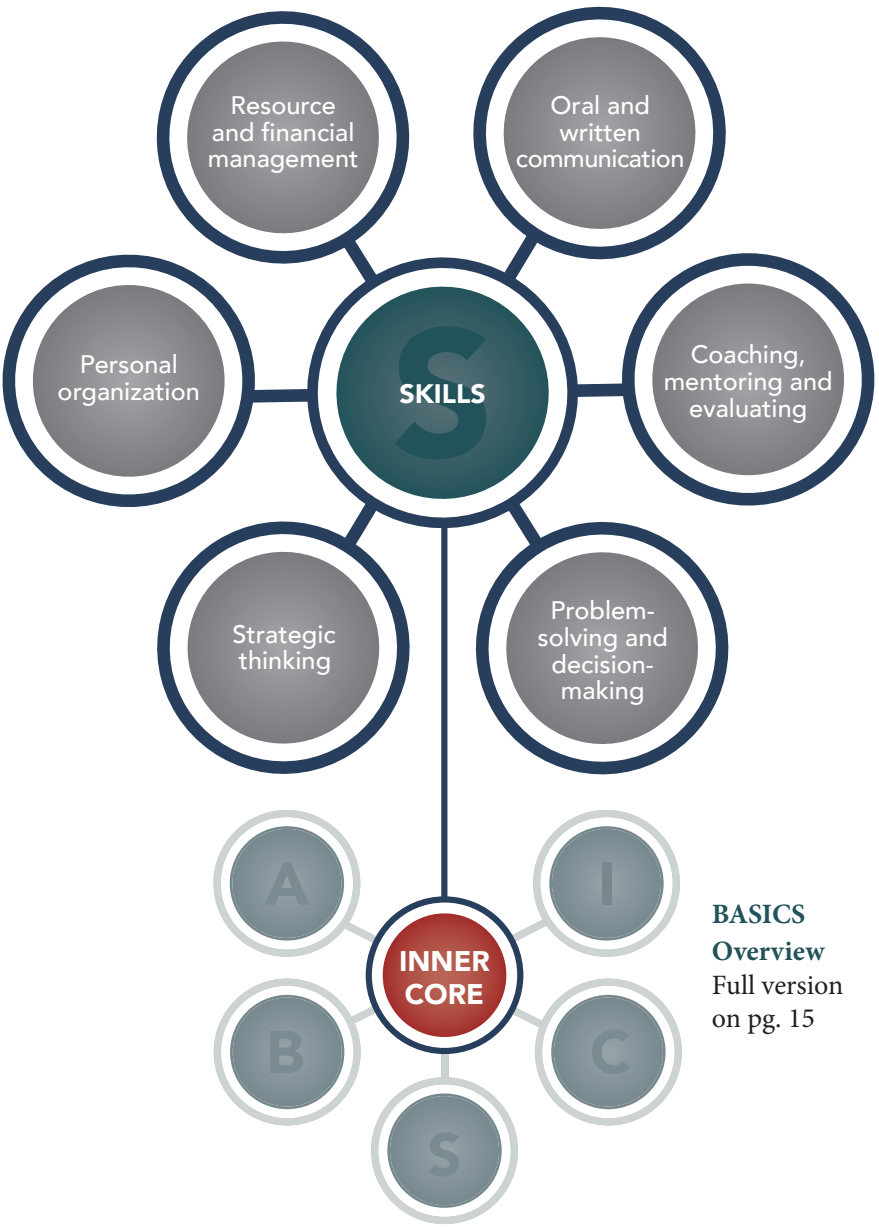
Leaders can develop and cultivate skills to increase their success, but how they apply those skills will always be shaped by their inner values.

In our earlier chapters we talked about the inner core, behaviours and aspirations of a good leader. As we have said before, who we are at the deepest part of ourselves will shape our behaviours and aspirations. That is why we continue to stress the importance of a strong inner core that will anchor the aspirations, behaviours, skills and commitments of a good leader.

In this chapter, we will explore more deeply some of the specific skill areas that can be developed and cultivated to increase a leader's success. Clustering around the principled and ethical core, these skills shape how the leader communicates; how they handle conflict; how they coach, mentor and evaluate personnel; how they build and lead teams; how they strategize and make decisions; and, how they manage practical operational realities such as financial management and organizational tasks.

It is worth considering once again that “doing” flows from “being.” How we do things and how we apply our skills will always be shaped by our inner values and what we hold to be important. For that reason, we continue to put the strong inner core of the good leader in the centre of the circle. The skills we are going to discuss form the outer ring. These skills cluster around three themes: *communication skills*, *interpersonal skills*, and the skills needed for *strategic management*, *decision-making*, and *administration*.

Diagram Five: The Skills of a Good Leader



How Do Good Leaders Communicate?

It is important to look at the overarching principles and behaviours associated with effective leadership through communication before we explore specific communication skill sets. It has been said that “knowledge is power.” It is also true that withholding or misusing information can create climates of distrust, and problems for the leader. Transparency balanced with appropriate discretion and disclosure is a starting point. Successful leaders provide clear, consistent and continual communication among peers, employees, and stakeholders, whereas poor communication hinders relationships and can cause leader derailment.¹⁰¹ We are constantly communicating with each other through a variety of media; clear communication should be a fundamental component of the organization’s culture.¹⁰² This includes sharing organizational vision and values up front and often, and supporting a culture of open interaction.¹⁰³

Communication is also about receiving information, and the effective leader is a good listener. This requires openness, patience, and a willingness to encourage healthy debate, so that all views can be heard and explored.¹⁰⁴ Respect, empathy, and a supportive approach enhance listening; asking clarifying questions and using good analytical skills will help the leader refine and use that information. It is especially important to create mechanisms to hear directly from the public and frontline service providers, as they often have direct experience and insights that can increase effectiveness and create cost efficiencies. This conveys accountability and a service-focused attitude.

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101 Leadercast. (2015).

102 Leadercast. (2015).

103 Leadercast. (2015).

104 Ballantyne, S. (2012).

Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15)

Kerpen, D. (2013, January 28). 11 *Simple concepts to become a better leader*. Linked In: Leadership & Management. Retrieved from www.linkedin.com/pulse/20130128162711-15077789-11-simple-concepts-to-become-a-better-leader

Leadercast. (2015).

Sherman, L. (2016). The rise, stumble and future of Lululemon: Take off and turbulence. BoF Professional: January 25, 2016. Retrieved from www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/the-rise-stumble-and-future-of-lululemon

Weiss, D., & Cadsby, T. (2017, January). *Decision-making for complex situations*. Rotman School of Management. Retrieved from <http://weissinternational.ca/images/File/Decision-Making%20for%20Complex%20Situations%20-%20By%20Weiss%20and%20Cadsby%20in%20Rotman%20Magazine%20www.weissinternational.ca.pdf>

Effective leaders also recognize that not all conflict is negative; often tension arising from differing perspectives can be leveraged to foster creative solutions and collaboration.¹⁰⁵ The effective leader hears the other person's concerns, positions or demands; they also can discern and explore the underlying needs, interests and values driving those concerns, positions and demands. This enables them to build options that meet those underlying needs in mutually beneficial ways.¹⁰⁶ Fisher and Ury developed this collaborative problem-solving approach in their seminal book *Getting to Yes*.¹⁰⁷ Their approach to collaborative negotiation is discussed more deeply in Chapter Three: Aspirations.

We have discussed the behaviours that flow from our inner selves: behaving ethically because we are guided by ethics, a moral framework, and a commitment to social responsibility. This includes treating others with respect and compassion because how we treat people matters. Good leaders also communicate effectively and listen to others because they value the contributions of those around them, and they strive to inspire others to uphold and follow the vision and values of the organization of which they are part. These values-based behaviours provide an excellent foundation, and they are supplemented by task and skill-focused behaviours that enable the leader to ensure that goals are accomplished effectively and strategically. Good leaders foster growing self-awareness and self-management to ensure that there is consistency and integrity between their inner core values and the way they function. This helps to ensure they are on a path of growth in how they handle their strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and behaviours.¹⁰⁸ Building on a strong inner core and good communication, collaboration, and people skills, we will now look at the specific communication skills that are essential components of good leadership.

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105 Ballantyne, S. (2012).

Tardanico, S. (2013, January 15).

Kerpen, D. (2013, January 28).

Leadercast. (2015).

Sherman, L. (2016).

Weiss, D., & Cadsby, T. (2017, January).

106 Fisher, et al. (2011).

107 Originally published in 1981, it is now in its third edition. Fisher, et al. (2011).

108 Goleman, D. (2004). See also:

Anderson, T. (1998).

Avolio, B., & Gardner, W. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, 315-338. Gallup Leadership Institute, College of Business Administration, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001

University of Victoria. (2011). *Description of the ten core competencies*. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program and Career Services.

Ngang, T. (2012).

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I know of no single formula for success. But over the years I have observed that some attributes of leadership are universal and are often about finding ways of encouraging people to combine their efforts, their talents, their insights, their enthusiasm and their inspiration to work together.¹⁰⁹

Queen Elizabeth II

”

Skill #1: Verbal and Presentation Skills

The ability to communicate effectively in a variety of settings is an essential skill for leaders. We have discussed already the importance of emotional intelligence, and the ability to interact with others in a way that is relational, supportive, and collaborative. Good leaders also make verbal presentations, write reports, prepare proposals and engage in a host of other tasks in which they need to communicate effectively. It is not only important to have the technical skills to communicate well, but to do so in a way that is inspirational and persuasive, so that others will engage with the leader's ideas around how to achieve big-picture organizational goals.

What takes a presentation from the mundane to that magical place where people are moved to respond? Good leaders have cultivated a sense of rhetoric—a mastery of language that touches people at cognitive and emotional levels—creating a compelling effect. While some people have a natural inclination for this, it is a skill that can be learned. Many leaders have, on their own time, received training in effective, compelling public speaking.

Throughout history there have been powerful examples of individuals who have mastered this art of persuasion so effectively that their legacy lives on, long after their lives have ended. The great orators of the ages are part of this group. What made their speaking so powerful? What can good leaders learn from their example?

109 BrainyQuote. (2018). Queen Elizabeth 2 quotes. Retrieved from www.brainyquote.com/authors/queen_elizabeth_ii

Inspiring others is the language of leadership.

American civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. is an excellent example of an effective oral communicator. As a Baptist preacher he was well trained in how to deliver an effective sermon: it needed clear points, effective metaphors and analogies, and eloquent, flowing language that had a somewhat rhythmical, musical effect on the ears of those listening. His 1963 speech “I have a dream” is an iconic example of his mastery of rhetoric. Very few of us can imagine ourselves being as influential and persuasive as Martin Luther King, but it is interesting to read or listen to his speech and note his repetition of key phrases, his use of powerful metaphors and word images, and the rising crescendo to his final emphasis on freedom, repeated again and again. Repetition focuses the listener on the key ideas and drives them home, and King used this technique with extraordinary mastery.

Jay Conger from McGill University noted that *inspiring others* is the *language of leadership*.¹¹⁰ According to Conger, effective leaders have the ability to skillfully craft the organization’s mission, and to communicate that mission in ways that generate great intrinsic appeal. These leaders can detect opportunities in their environment, and describe them in ways that maximize their significance. They can articulate an organization’s mission and communicate it in ways that inspire. Inspiring leaders use stories and anecdotes that connect with the imaginations of their listeners, engaging them and fostering their interest; stories that convey the values and behaviours that are important to the organization. They gear their language to their audience, and strategically use everyday language to communicate in down-to-earth ways. They have mastered their tone of voice and body language to create a confident, credible and compelling presence. Former USA President Barak Obama and his wife Michelle both have this confident, down-to-earth communication style that is compelling, but enables them to be easily understood. Oprah Winfrey’s acceptance speech for the Cecil B. De Mille Lifetime Achievement award at the 2018 Golden Globe Awards is an excellent example of masterful public speaking: not only was her content carefully knit together to create persuasive flow, but her delivery was dramatic, compelling and skillfully paced to ensure maximum impact on the emotions of the audience.

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110 Conger, J. (1991).

Skills and Techniques of Master Communicators

What are the skills and techniques we can learn from these and other master communicators, if we want to improve our ability to make persuasive oral presentations?¹¹¹

1. **Frame the organization's mission around intrinsically appealing goals and draw upon values and beliefs that have positive, culturally-important meaning for your organization.** Draw appealing links to the broader societal contributions of the organization and sincerely endorse and incorporate these. The leader's true beliefs in the organization's purpose are a cornerstone to becoming inspirational and are achieved only after significant periods of exploration, reflection, and effort.
2. **In describing the organization's goals, incorporate the positive values that are deeply held by the organization and society at large.** Use stories to illustrate these guiding values in action within the organization and the marketplace.
3. **Highlight key belief categories when framing your description of the mission.** Specifically, highlight the significance of the mission, why it arose in the first place, key antagonists, and assumptions about why it will succeed.
4. **Employ more metaphors, analogies, and stories.** Keep your message simple and focused. Repeat it consistently.
5. **Experiment with various rhetorical techniques.** Seek out coaches; get feedback.
6. **Allow your emotions to surface as you speak.** Are you excited about the vision and mission of your organization? If so, show it! Are you deeply concerned about competitive threats? Show it.

Be mindful that persuasive public speaking can have a dark side. Adolf Hitler was a powerful communicator whose gift for persuasion brought about war, misery and loss of life for millions. History demonstrates that the persuasive oratory of a powerful leader can be co-opted for manipulative and coercive purposes, and this can play out in smaller ways in your organization just as it played out in larger ways in global conflict. As ever, all our skills and aspirations need to be subordinated to our inner character, our ethics, and the principles and values that keep us from harming others or the world around us.

111 Conger, J. (1991). p. 43.



Skill #2: Written Communication

Excellent leaders have also mastered other forms of communication, including the written word. Not every leader is gifted with a talent for writing! Avail yourself of staff who can help you with editing, and who provide an extra set of eyes to spot typos, spelling mistakes and grammatical problems.¹¹² It goes without saying that any document that will reach the public needs a robust proofreading and editing process, and wise leaders adopt a similar approach to any document of importance that will be landing on someone else's desk. Your standards for excellence should extend to how the written and spoken word are delivered.

According to *The Advisor*, a resource for supervisors, managers and HR personnel, good leaders consider which form of communication will be most effective.¹¹³ Although email has become the quickest and easiest way to connect with others, wise leaders choose verbal communication for any message with emotional content, or with the potential for creating confusion on the part of the recipient.

112 Delvis, D., ed. (2014). *Communication: A key to leadership*. The Advisor: Resources for Supervisors, Managers, and Human Resources Personnel. Retrieved from <http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/LifeMatters-leadership-communication-2014.pdf>

113 Delvis, D., ed. (2014).

The Advisor also suggests that announcements that will have a significant impact on employees are best delivered in a meeting, and concerns about performance issues and other sensitive information are best handled one-to-one and privately. Written communication, including email, is often helpful in providing operational or technical instruction.

In summary, tailor your message to your audience, keeping in mind their knowledge, expertise and experience. If your internal sense is causing you to feel cautious before you click “send” then ask a trusted colleague to look it over before you send it on.

Tips on Communicating Effectively

Here are some more helpful tips from *The Advisor* on communicating effectively:¹¹⁴

1. **Keep it simple.** Use plain language to make your point, and use an economy of words. People receive a lot of information every day, so less is more.
2. **Choose your words carefully.** If you are upset, take a timeout before deciding how you will respond and which communication mechanism to use. If you will be speaking on a difficult subject, consider having talking points to guide you.
3. **Be aware of body language and tone of voice.** People react more to these than to the words you use.
4. **Listen.** Encourage the other person to do most of the talking. You will learn more and it builds rapport. You can gain a lot from casual, indirect conversations.
5. **“Communicate, or else!”** Withholding information creates an opportunity for employees to make up their own version of what is going on, and it will usually be incomplete or incorrect. Give as much information as is reasonable and appropriate.
6. **Do not make promises you cannot keep.** It may undermine your team’s faith in you, and they may see you as a liar. “I don’t know” or “I am unable to discuss it at this time” are fair responses if you cannot answer a question.
7. **Solve problems.** When someone presents a concern, listen carefully, ask questions, and discuss possible solutions. This sends the message that you are someone they can turn to when problems arise.

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114 Delvis, D., ed. (2014).

Making presentations, creating proposals, and delivering persuasive speeches may be high points in a leader's working life... or terrifying moments, if the leader is not comfortable in the public realm. Often, much of a leader's time is spent in interpersonal communication with their team, their subordinates, and with internal and external stakeholders. We have already discussed the importance of a leader being supportive, affirming, and encouraging. Leaders do well when they can empower their teams with a positive approach. However, good leaders are also equipped to handle performance issues and various conflicts that will inevitably arise.

What are the skills that enable good leaders to succeed in these scenarios? First, the conflict-resolution skills that are linked with "getting to yes" are a helpful beginning. Second, it is important to know when providing coaching or mentoring to staff may be an effective way to increase productivity and improve departmental success. Let us look at these in turn.

Skill #3: Active Listening and Conflict-management Skills

Good leaders are good listeners. If the leader has encouraged an environment in which ideas can surface and innovation is encouraged, then it goes without saying that differences (and sometimes serious differences) will also emerge. This is normal and necessary if you want to foster an environment in which creativity and good ideas can flourish. When these differences arise, a good leader uses an open mind and a curious, non-judgmental approach. The principles of active listening and collaborative problem-solving are helpful here:

- Stay open, stay curious and avoid judgmental language.
- Manage your emotions, your tone, and your body language.
- Ask open-ended questions to gather more information.
- Use neutral language to avoid triggering the other person. For example, "what" and "how" questions tend to be easier to accept, whereas "why" questions can sound interrogative or judgmental. Shift "why" to "what" or "how." Ask, for example, "What led you to that decision?" rather than, "Why did you do that?"
- Explore their underlying needs, interests, beliefs, fears, hopes and concerns. Remember that you are trying to "get underneath the iceberg," as we discussed in the Aspirations chapter. People share their positions, suggestions, and demands first—what is motivating those is usually under the surface until people are given the right setting to speak more openly.
- Work toward solutions that best meet the needs of all affected parties and organizational goals.
- Help people save face, and preserve their dignity even when differences are on the table.
- Get coaching or take courses in conflict resolution and collaboration to help you increase skills in this area.

Conflicts often arise in workplaces when people are competing for resources, or when ideas, decisions or actions relating to the job oppose each other. Sometimes conflict is triggered when communication is poor, or when people do not get along easily with each other. Strong emotions can develop if conflict is not managed quickly and effectively, and it can be difficult and frustrating for leaders who are happier working at a higher level, and do not want to get embroiled in day-to-day frustrations. Good leaders know that leadership involves defining and communicating an organization's long-term vision and mission, while conflict requires resolving the situation at hand. A leader has to do both.¹¹⁵

“By communicating what you want to accomplish, providing support for talented subordinates, overcoming obstacles, exploiting opportunities, demanding excellence, behaving ethically, you set a good example for your organization. An effective leader builds teams that work well together. As a leader you facilitate the resolution of conflicts that distract team members, decrease productivity, destroy motivation and lead to frustration and anger. Leaders also should recognize that some conflict is natural and necessary to produce innovative solutions to problems, encourage meaningful communication between team members, and leads to clarification and cooperation.”¹¹⁶

Flatter structures and less hierarchy produce more potential for conflict.¹¹⁷ When a leader is also a project manager for a team, there may be conflicts to manage that relate to the challenges of having team members from different departments with competing interests, or scarce time and resources to accomplish the team's work.¹¹⁸ However, conflict in work groups is not necessarily bad. Healthy conflict includes the freedom to talk openly about differences that come from different expertise, knowledge or experiences. It can include discussion of various ideas, employing a cooperative approach that leads to creative solutions and outcomes. Moderate levels of this sort of conflict can be functional because it stimulates discussion and debate. Dysfunctional conflict emerges when there is confusion about roles and responsibilities, when there are conflicting values and attitudes, when personal issues get in the way, or when negative emotions surface or quarrels ensue. Confusion about the task or the process also leads to conflict, as do differences in power, leadership style, and how the reward and recognition system works—or does not work.¹¹⁹

115 Kazimoto, P. (2013). Analysis of conflict management and leadership for organizational change. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences* 3(1), 16-25. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c4dd/75436d03f5fb835300ff3766c9c296f020f2.pdf>

116 Kazimoto, P. (2013). p. 18.

117 Simões, E. (2014). Leadership and negotiation skills. ISCTE Business School, Lisbon. Retrieved from www.researchgate.net/publication/273202297_Leadership_and_Negotiation_Skills

118 Simões, E. (2014).

119 Simões, E. (2014).

Effective leaders use active listening and “sense-making” to help change the meaning of the situation, thereby helping shift the perspectives of each party before attempting to resolve differences.¹²⁰ This helps transform the opposition of interests into a problem to be solved, by adopting a constructive view of the conflict, and using personal values of wanting cooperation and understanding between people.¹²¹

“Communicating effectively helps individuals in conflict to explore the views of both parties and to change accusations into feelings, guilt into causes, “truths” into “perceptions.”¹²²

Eduardo Simões

What is Your Conflict Style?

Be aware of your natural conflict style. Do you tend to be directive or competitive by nature, striving to have it your way at the expense of what the other person needs? Are you conflict avoidant, just hoping secretly it will go away if you leave it alone? Are you a compromiser, wanting to just split the difference in your haste to deal with it? Are you a harmonizer who accommodates the demands of others to avoid damaging the relationship or to stay on people’s good side? Much has been written about conflict in the workplace and how our natural styles help or get in the way.

While all these styles can be problematic in certain settings, they have their usefulness as well. Let us look at five common conflict styles and the strengths and weaknesses of each. You will notice that there is a strong correlation between our conflict style and our innate leadership style.

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120 Harkins, P. (2014). *10 Leadership techniques for building high-performing teams*. Burlington, Massachusetts: Linkage Inc. Retrieved from www.scribd.com/document/265750292/10-Leadership-Techniques-for-Building-High-Performing-Teams

Simões, E. (2014).

121 Harkins, P. (2014).

Simões, E. (2014).

122 Simões, E. (2014).

Style	Strengths	Weaknesses
Directive, Competitive	Effective when time is limited, in emergencies, and when an executive order is appropriate. It helps you attain your goal or get what you want. “I win and you lose.”	Disempowers and silences others. Does not meet the needs of other parties. Can feel like a power move, and can cause resentment. You quickly get what you want at the expense of relationships.
Accommodation, harmonizing	Effective when preserving the relationship is more important than getting what you want. Also, necessary when given specific direction by a superior. A helpful tool to keep the peace, and show you can be cooperative. A useful approach when the issue is not that important to you and you can empower others. “You win, I lose.”	Can produce resentment if one is required to constantly accommodate others. Real needs and concerns are not expressed for the sake of maintaining approval or to keep the peace. Ultimately bad for morale if overused. Can be exploited by highly competitive others who want you to “give away the farm.”
Compromising	Each party gives up something they want for the sake of getting an agreement. Effective when time is short and neither party is giving up too much of what is important. Shows that the person can give way to others when appropriate. “We each win a bit, we each lose a bit.”	Problematic if people are required to make concessions when values or principles are at stake. Can be used too quickly and too often when people do not have the skills to collaborate. A quick fix that misses the opportunity to find win-win solutions.

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123 Adapted from Thomas, K., & Kilmann, R. (2002). *Conflict mode instrument*. USA: Xicom Inc., subsidiary of CPP, Inc. and Kraybill, R. (2010). *Style Matters, 3rd ed.* Harrisonburg, VA: Riverhouse E-press. Available online at www.riverhouseEpress.com and at www.conflictstylesmatter.com

Style	Strengths	Weaknesses
Avoiding	Can provide a strategic timeout, rather than dealing with an issue when people are upset. Can give you time to ponder how to best proceed, or to consult with others. It gives time for lower-level issues to resolve themselves. It provides no solution; it does not address the issue. “I lose and you lose.”	Problem may increase if not addressed. Leaders who do not deal with issues lose the respect of their subordinates; frustration increases. A climate where everything is swept under the rug will produce morale problems. This strategy should only be used when there is agreement that the issue will be addressed at a future point.
Collaborating, Cooperating	Process includes the exploration of perspectives, needs, concerns, and underlying interests to find win-win solutions and agreements that best meet the needs of all parties. An inclusive, respectful approach. “I win, you win.”	The process takes time. All sides need to be heard, and discussion is needed to determine how to move ahead. Not appropriate if the leader is expected to make the decision, or if time is very limited. People have to be willing to participate in a collaborative, problem-solving way.

Skill #4: Coaching and Mentoring Others

Coaching and mentoring can also be helpful strategies that build the capacities of the worker, while also helping to reduce conflict. But, how are coaching and mentoring different, and when should you use them?

While both coaching and mentoring are ways of encouraging and supporting someone to achieve a goal, address a challenge, or develop or acquire a skill, they differ in how they are implemented.

According to expert coach Jackie Arnold,¹²⁴ coaches are skilled in methods and processes that enable their “coachees” to develop in positive ways. A coach is a non-judgmental listener and reflector of the issues that arise; they do not put forward their own ideas or suggestions during the coaching session. Instead, they ask powerful, probing questions that cause inner reflection. Coaching is based on the premise that the person being coached has untapped potential within them, and the coach encourages them to discover and explore hidden areas and to build on their inherent ability for development. Coaching focuses on the present situation and future possibilities.¹²⁵ Coaching focuses on increasing strengths and building on them; it is not just focused on addressing weaknesses. *Proactive coaching* focuses on coaching people for success, developing their capabilities, and equipping them with the tools and skills they need to face challenges successfully.¹²⁶ Frequently, the coach is an outside professional or consultant hired by the organization to provide confidential, private support to the employee, and in other cases, the employee may contract a coach using their own resources.

Coaches encourage and challenge people to explore their own untapped potential, while mentors take a more hands-on, less neutral approach.

Mentoring is a more hands-on, less neutral way of supporting growth. The mentor acts as a guide who assists an individual to learn faster and more effectively than they might do alone. The mentor uses a range of skills and techniques to allow an individual to obtain a clearer picture of an organization and their role in it. They may give advice and direction, and they are usually experienced in the mentee’s work. They encourage questions and they help their mentees think further about their career development.¹²⁷

124 Arnold, J. (2009). Coaching skills for leaders in the workplace: How to develop, motivate and get the best from your staff. Oxford, UK: How to Books Ltd. Retrieved from <https://books.google.ca/books?id=vIXwBQAAQBAJ&pg=PT2&lpg=PT2&dq=%22how+to+books%22%2B%22coaching+skills+for+leaders%22&source=bl%ots=MQd4K9v8IH&sig=EGFbSaSoPNRvV1mzGbgagwkMlv8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewi9kZq89e7VAhUb22MKHYTwBjIQ6AEITzAl#v=onepage&q=%22how%20to%20books%22%2B%22coaching%20skills%20for%20leaders%22&f=false>

125 Arnold, J. (2009).

126 Concelman, J. (2006). The 7 people leader imperatives. Development Dimensions International, Inc. Retrieved from www.ddiworld.com/resources/library/white-papers-monographs/the-7-people-leader-imperatives

127 Arnold, J. (2009).

The Difference Between Coaching and Mentoring¹²⁸

A Coach...	A Mentor...
Creates space to think	Advises and suggests
Is non-judgmental	May need to make judgments
Gives ownership	Leads by example
Challenges	Helps to develop
Need not be an expert	Is usually more experienced
Stands back	Stands close
Gives responsibility back	Can feel responsible
Challenges beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours	Shares knowledge and experience
Asks, “What decision?”	Guides to a decision
Draws out examples and ideas	Gives examples and ideas
Works within a set timeframe	May work over a longer period
Focuses on specific development areas	Takes a broader view

Good leaders will use their interpersonal and communication skills to create a positive climate, reduce conflict and manage it when it occurs, and will provide coaching or mentoring support (through their own efforts or through accessing the assistance of others) to build capacity and promote a productive, harmonious workplace.

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128 Arnold, J. (2009).

Skill #5: Communication and Team Building

Communicating, preventing and managing conflict, and building effective teams are interlocking skills for good leaders. Teams that really “click” usually have a leader who creates the environment and establishes the operating principles and values that are conducive to high performance.¹²⁹ While some conflict is inevitable, a lot can be prevented by using the strategies of effective leaders who are successful at leading teams:¹³⁰

1. Defining clear goals or a vision in accordance with the overall organizational aims (the “big picture”)
2. Creating blueprints for action to achieve those goals
3. Using language to build trust, encourage forward thinking and create energy within the team (“powerful conversations”)
4. Getting the right people involved (“passionate champions”)

It is interesting that teams are highly touted as an effective way to accomplish creative work in today’s business world, but there are lots of reasons why many teams fail. According to Coutu in the *Harvard Business Review*,¹³¹ quite often people are not good at teamwork, and often they do not even agree on what the team is supposed to be doing. That is why it is essential that the leader provide not just the goals and vision, but clarity in other areas as well:

- Clear boundaries of who is on the team and who is not;
- Clear and compelling direction, and clear norms of conduct with clearly defined tasks;
- Manageable size, as small as you can get away with. Coutu suggests no double digits, and often six is an ideal size;
- Assurance that the organization will be supportive: the reward system, the HR system and the information system must facilitate teamwork; and
- Expert coaching: teams need coaching as a group in team processes, at the beginning, mid-point and at the end of a team project. The coaching provided by the leader focuses on team processes and performance.

It is an unfortunate reality in many government settings that staffing can seem like a revolving door with personnel coming and going, some taking on temporary “acting” roles because of other staff moves, temporary leaves, or promotions, with a general transience becoming the norm. This does not bode well for the success of teams.

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129 Harkins, P. (2014).

130 Harkins, P. (2014), p. 1.

131 Coutu, D. (2009). Why teams do not work. *Harvard Business Review*, May 2009. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2009/05/why-teams-dont-work>

In contrast, the most effective teams have been together long enough to get past the initial adjustments of working together, and have achieved a high level of trust, comfort and confidence in how they work together. They know each other well, and have learned how to work together.

According to Coutu,¹³² interesting examples of this emerge from the aviation industry, where new team members can be a real liability. Team members need to know each other well and trust each other, and they need to have worked together for a while. In crews that flew commercial flights, 73% of safety incidents occurred on a crew's first day of flying together. At NASA, fatigued crews that had a history of working together made fewer mistakes than crews of rested pilots who had not flown together before.¹³³ Similarly, research and development teams (R & D) do need new talent from time to time to ensure the flow of new ideas, but only one new person every three or four years has proven to work best.¹³⁴ Clearly, transience has a negative effect on the success of teams. This creates serious issues for leaders in government settings who need to accomplish team-based work when personnel may be in a regular shuffle of comings-and-goings.

Despite these challenges, there is much a leader can do to foster effective teams.

Tips for Fostering Effective Teams¹³⁵

- Ensure team members are clear on their roles and tasks, and how they will be coordinating those with other team members;
- Define the team goals, provide clear direction, and ensure processes will work;
- Assess the team's requirements, to ensure the team has the information and resources it needs to get the job done;
- Foster team learning, and encourage self-reflection and collective evaluation throughout the process and at the project's conclusion; and,
- Ensure the timeline for the project will mesh with team member availability.

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132 Coutu, D. (2009).

133 Coutu, D. (2009), p. 6.

134 Coutu, D. (2009), p. 6.

135 The following list is from Zaccaro, S., Rittman, A., & Marks, M. (2001). Team leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 12(2001), 451-483.

Ideally, the results of a team will be better than the individual contributions of the members because they can bounce ideas off each other and arrive at the best solution more quickly. That is why teamwork is often considered a good strategy for developing better products and services. A good leader will promote behaviours that lead to effective teamwork, will recognize the different strengths of team members, and will combine them in a way to gain the maximum amount of value to help meet organizational goals.¹³⁶

Skill #6: Evaluating Performance and Providing Feedback

Leaders, managers and supervisors also have the challenging task of providing performance reviews, which can include having to provide constructive but negative feedback on an employee’s performance. Good leaders know how to assess and give feedback on behaviours and competencies, so this is an important skill to develop.¹³⁷ An annual performance review is a time to celebrate successes and to reflect on and reinforce the staff member’s good work so that their good performance will continue. From time to time, though, you may be in a situation where you need to provide feedback in areas that need to change or improve. In a formal review, it is important to balance the constructive criticism with generosity about everything that is going well. It is wise to remember that feedback should never be used as a weapon—instead, use it as a gift. It is your job to support your team member’s growth and success, so consider how you can bring your concerns in a way that is positive and future-focused, giving them the clarity they need regarding the changes they need to make.

Feedback should not just occur within the annual performance review. Good leaders provide informal feedback along the way: noticing and affirming the good, appreciating and encouraging the worker, and providing guidance when changes need to be made. Whether you are providing positive feedback or developmental feedback (when change is needed), it is important to use a process that creates a positive, coaching experience for the person being evaluated. In contrast, poor leaders will often be silent when things are going well, and reserve performance reviews only for times when they have criticisms to raise.

The following pages offer managers helpful tips on how to give feedback to employees, from the University of South Australia.¹³⁸

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136 O’Brien, J. (2013, January 23). *Root cause analysis*. Retrieved from www.fixsoftware.com/blog/5-whys-simple-root-cause-analysis/

137 Concelman, J. (2006).

138 The following section is from University of South Australia. (2012). *Providing quality feedback: A manager essentials guide*. Retrieved from http://w3.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/guides/good_practice_guide_to_providing_quality_feedback.pdf

Providing Positive Feedback

The purpose here is to encourage the staff member to talk about their good work and for you to reinforce it so they will continue their good performance. Say little, but listen a lot. Ask a range of open-ended questions.

Positive Feedback: the Process ¹³⁹	
1.	State and describe in specific terms what the staff member did well. Describe specifically the actual behaviour and actions.
2.	Indicate the positive impact of their behaviour or actions.
3.	Ask them for their input, with open-ended questions like: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you believe contributed to the positive performance?• What do you believe you did particularly well?• What did you learn that could be applied to other work or projects in future?• How can you share your experience/learning with others in the team?
4.	Explore and reinforce their suggestions. Set some goals and describe the positive consequences that will result from them following through on their goals.

Providing Corrective Feedback

If something has developed that you feel needs to change, here are some tips on how to lead the process as a positive, coaching experience where you show interest in rectifying any performance issues to the benefit of the individual as well as the broader team or organization.¹⁴⁰

First, consider consulting with your Human Resources department to ensure you are aware of their preferred practices, and the mechanisms they have in place for performance evaluation. Tell them your concerns and ask what resources they provide to help improve an employee's behaviour.

Second, schedule a private meeting in an appropriate setting. In this private conversation you have with your employee, you will describe the *behaviour* clearly and specifically, remembering that your intent is not to blame, judge, or accuse.

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139 University of South Australia. (2012), p. 7.
140 University of South Australia. (2012), p. 7.

Your purpose is to raise the person’s awareness and understanding of the issue in a way that helps them take responsibility for making improvements. You want them to commit to a change in behaviour and to commit to taking action to improve their performance. You also want to consider if this is something that can be improved through additional training, mentorship, or professional development.

Here is a road map for this process. Sit down together with a clear statement regarding what you want to talk about. “I’ve noticed that you have been late a number of times now for team meetings and I’m concerned about how that is affecting the team’s productivity.” Describe the behaviour and describe the negative effect it is having. Here are the University of Australia’s suggestions for this step and those that follow:¹⁴¹

Corrective Feedback: the Process	
1.	State and describe the concern in specific and objective terms. Focus on actual behaviours or actions, not the person. This is not an assessment of their character.
2.	Ask for their perspective on it. Give them the chance to share their thinking on why the problem exists.
3.	Indicate the negative effect on them, others and the organization, resulting from the negative behaviours/actions.
4.	Describe what you would like to see instead.
5.	Problem-solve ways to improve the performance to meet those expectations. Ask for, and listen, to their ideas.
6.	Propose a solution with them and set some goals.
7.	Coach them to help them achieve the goals.
8.	Review (at a later date) the achievement of goals and acknowledge improvements.

This last point is important: following up on a discussion like this is an essential part of the process. Be sure to set a time or date when you will meet again to review how things are going, and to acknowledge what has improved.

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¹⁴¹ University of South Australia. (2012).

This is a time to cheerlead and encourage them, and to affirm the good behaviours you want them to keep using. If performance standards are still not met, this provides you with the opportunity to repeat the process, or to consult with HR to explore other next steps. It is likely you would need their involvement or guidance if disciplinary actions are under consideration.

Given that most people find it stressful to receive negative feedback, ensure you have balanced your review by celebrating everything you can that has been going well. This assures the employee that you see them with a balanced perspective, and if there are areas of growth needed, those are only part of the picture. As we have talked about already, good leaders are affirming and encouraging—this should also be the case when giving people evaluations. You also want to align their individual goals with organizational goals, setting performance expectations for *what* they will do and *how* they will do it.¹⁴² Remember: evaluating employees and providing feedback is an important opportunity to recognize and affirm their strengths and everything they are doing right.

Good leaders also hire well. This means that you need to hire the right person for the right job. That eliminates from the start a lot of potential problems, and enables you to have many more opportunities to celebrate achievement, and fewer moments when behaviour is a problem. Recruiting and selecting motivated, talented and engaged employees helps ensure productivity and effectiveness, and enables you to raise the bar for superior performance.¹⁴³

The research is clear that supportive, affirming leaders make a positive difference. Employees who feel supported by their leaders often feel more comfortable and committed at work, and generally, have better overall well-being.¹⁴⁴ Negative interactions have been found to relate to employees' decreased commitment to the organization, lower job satisfaction, lower life satisfaction, and increased psychological stress and depression.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, it makes sense for good leaders to use a positive and emotionally intelligent approach to handling their employees' behaviours, to ensure that the work environment remains supportive, empowering, and helpful to employee growth. In contrast, "compromise, quid pro quo, and score-keeping are the outcomes of politics; they do not produce buy-in or commitment. Influential leaders keep the needs of both their coworkers and the organization front and center as they move people to action."¹⁴⁷

142 Concelman, J. (2006).

143 Concelman, J. (2006), p. 8.

144 Ince, E. et al. (2016).

145 Ince, E. et al. (2016), p. 4.

146 Concelman, J. (2006), p. 7.

147 Hughes, R., & Beatty, K. (2005). *Becoming a strategic leader: Your role in your organization's enduring success*. Centre for Creative Leadership. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series. p. 9.

“

Successful leadership is directly attributable to the stimulation a leader brings to mobilizing an organization.¹⁴⁸

”

Craig James

Skills # 7 & 8: Strategic Thinking, Problem-solving and Decision-making

The next two spheres in our diagram of leadership skills relate to strategic thinking, problem-solving and decision-making. Even though strategic thinking has its own sphere, they are interconnected.

Leaders and managers are expected to make decisions and solve problems; it is helpful to know when decision-making is considered “strategic” and when it is not. “Individuals and teams enact strategic leadership when they think, act, and influence in ways that promote the sustainable competitive advantage of the organization.”¹⁴⁹ The focus is on the enduring success and sustainability of the organization, and its ability to thrive in the long-term.

How Does Strategic Leadership Differ from Leadership in General?

According to Hughes & Beatty,¹⁵⁰ strategic leadership is exerted when the decision and actions of leaders have strategic implications for the organization. It is broad in scope; the impact is felt over long periods. It often involves significant organizational change. Broad scope requires seeing the organization as an interdependent and interconnected system of multiple parts, where decisions in one area provoke actions in other areas.¹⁵¹ The time frame is far-reaching; the strategic leader keeps long-term goals in mind while working to achieve short-term objectives. In contrast, good operational leaders manage day-to-day functions effectively and are skilled at working with people to ensure that short-term objectives are met. This is necessary work, but does not involve the long-term perspective that strategic leaders need to have. Strategic leadership also results in significant change.¹⁵² Effective operational leadership does not always involve organizational change, but strategic leadership does.¹⁵³

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148 Craig James, Clerk, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

149 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 9

150 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 9.

151 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 12.

152 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 12.

153 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 13.

Hughes and Beatty have noted that effective leaders engage in strategic thinking, strategic actions, and strategic influencing.¹⁵⁴ An effective leader will think strategically, scanning the environment for forces and trends that could impact the organization's ability to deliver on its mission. Strategic thinking is seeing things in new and different ways, seeing patterns and relationships between seemingly disparate parts, and coming up with original or creative ways of responding. It involves analysis of data, trends, and facts.¹⁵⁵ It also involves being able to anticipate, challenge, and interpret.¹⁵⁶

Strategic actions link with decision-making and problem-solving, and they become strategic decisions when they impact the long-term well-being of the organization. Strategic influencing requires accurately assessing and navigating the political landscape without limiting your credibility, developing a compelling vision, creating enthusiasm and understanding for that vision in the hearts and minds of others, and creating champions throughout the organization to further your project or cause.¹⁵⁷

What about Problems and Decisions that Are Not "Strategic"?

As mentioned, good operational leaders make lots of important decisions that are vital to the well-being of the organization, even though they do not have the long-term impact and breadth of scope that strategic planning and decision-making involves. Good problem-solving skills are also part of a good leader's repertoire. In an approach used by the Ivey School of Business, developing leaders are encouraged to define the problems and issues that are important, gather information related to the issue, develop new ways to understand each issue, and then develop unique, first-of-its-kind alternatives for solving the problem or issue.¹⁵⁸ Social judgment is also part of good problem-solving, since most issues involve people. Understanding how people think and function is important when making decisions, and being able to work with others to lead change, solve problems, and make sense out of issues is also important.¹⁵⁹

Good problem-solving requires critical thinking skills and the ability to make clear, reasoned judgments. Leaders with these skills are able to think clearly and rationally, solve problems systematically and make the right decisions quickly.

154 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 216-218.

155 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 216-218.

156 Schoemaker, P., Krupp, S., & Howland, S. (2013). Strategic leadership: The essential skills. *Harvard Business Review*, January-February. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/01/strategic-leadership-the-essential-skills>

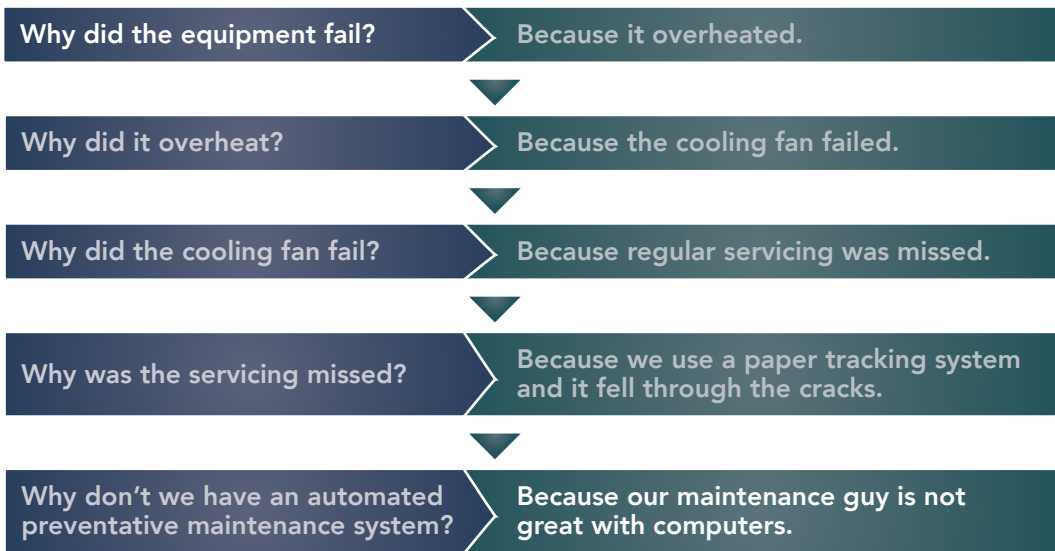
157 Hughes & Beatty. (2005), p. 218.

158 Rowe, W.G., & Guerrero, L., eds. (2015). Leadership skills approach. In *Cases in Leadership*, 4th ed., 81-99. Sage Publications.

159 Rowe & Guerrero. (2015).

They process information quickly and make fast and effective decisions. They look at all the evidence, interpret the data, evaluate all the alternatives, prioritize and form a judgment that delivers the most effective solution in the quickest time possible.¹⁶⁰ Even when time is limited and they do not have all the information they would like to have, good leaders usually know when they can take a strategic risk and make the decision anyway.¹⁶¹

One of the most interesting challenges associated with problem-solving is determining the real cause of the problem. Often what appears to be the problem is not actually the true cause. Analysing the root cause of a problem requires thoughtful investigation and questioning, as explained in the “5 Why’s of Root Cause Analysis”. A simple example shows why continuing to probe is important:¹⁶²



This simple example demonstrates that if the team just replaced the cooling fan, the issue would re-occur. Continuing to ask why exposes that there is a deeper issue at work here that relates to a process failure and a training gap. Leaders using this simple process need to be careful not to turn it into the 5 Who’s, and unwittingly create a culture of blaming.

160 O’Brien, J. (2016). Do you fit the bill? 8 Skills of successful maintenance managers. *Uptime*, Feb/March 2016. Retrieved from www.fiixsoftware.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/uptime-magazine-8-manager-skills.pdf

161 Concelman, J. (2006).

162 The following list is from O’Brien, J. (2013, January 23).

In contrast to that, a problem-solving culture builds trust when it is grounded in collaboration and the needs of people.¹⁶³ Working together and approaching problems objectively creates a more positive environment in which people can collectively solve shared problems. Good leaders also leverage the strengths of their team. Knowing what people do well and building on past successes can reveal shortcuts to solutions, as well as prepare a team to take on more and bigger problems. A problem-solving culture also encourages innovation and measured risk. When people are encouraged to try new things and when earnest mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn, then creative problem-solving becomes the rule and not the exception.¹⁶⁴ When leaders empower and inspire their people, and combine their efforts with effective processes, then it is easier to create a problem-solving environment that produces results.¹⁶⁵

The final two skill areas relate to personal organization habits, and financial management.

Skill #9: Personal Organization... Where the #9!* Are My Socks!!!

One of the ironies of being a big picture visionary is that it is sometimes a challenge to be good with the details. For some reason, these attributes rarely come in the same package, meaning the inspirational and visionary leader may need help in keeping things organized. If you are fortunate enough to have an effective administrative assistant, then ensure you have one who is “ticky-checky” with the details, great at proofreading, and good at anticipating deadlines and what you will need. There is an amazing synergy between leaders and support staff when the chemistry and trust is right between them. They need each other. The right support person will never be a charismatic visionary leader and, often, would not enjoy it at all, but they get great joy from facilitating the details and supporting the organization’s success. Similarly, the dynamic, charismatic, visionary leader will really need a support person they can count on. If you have this wonderful person already working for you—count your lucky stars. Others will envy you!

If you are a leader who manages your own administrative work, then you need to develop the skills of time management, effective filing and email systems, scheduling, good note-taking, and other aspects of personal organization that will ensure you stay on top of all your responsibilities. Fortunately, these are skills you can develop by learning what works for others, and through professional development and online resources. Even though it takes time to get good systems in place for yourself, you will feel the reward of knowing you are becoming more effective and reliable, and that others can count on you.

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163 Marone, M., & Blauth, C. (2004). *Creating a problem-solving culture*. AchieveGlobal. Retrieved from www.rpi.edu/dept/hr/docs/Creating%20a%20Problem%20Solving%20Culture.pdf

164 Marone & Blauth. (2004).

165 Marone & Blauth. (2004).

Skill #10: Finance and Resource Management

Ongoing sustainability is a continuing challenge for government departments that need to constantly address budget cuts. This requires good financial planning and management, with the leader helping the team understand what can be spent, and what cannot. For emerging leaders, it is important to learn the basics of reading financial spreadsheets, and understanding the revenue streams and reserves available to you and how the programs are funded. Financial management for government leaders also has a deeper, more important dimension that needs to be kept in the centre of the leader's thinking. It requires you to function as a prudent steward of the taxpayer's money, realizing your responsibility to manage the public purse ethically, responsibly, and with the desire to see maximum positive results for the investment made. Transparency, ethics, and an attitude of servant leadership are essential to ensure that funds and resources are used wisely, carefully, and strategically.

Summary

The skills of a good leader represent how they will get the job done; the inner core of the leader and the leader's aspirations reflect the reasons why they do what they do. They work together to produce success for a good leader.

The essential skills for effective leadership include communication skills in a variety of settings: public speaking, report and proposal writing, email, leading group meetings, and one-to-one communication. Good leaders know which to use when, and to communicate in ways that are inspiring, easy to understand, and appropriate for the context.

Good leaders not only provide large-scale vision and inspiration, but can also provide coaching, mentoring and appropriate evaluation to ensure that subordinates are on track, feeling supported, empowered and assisted towards ongoing success. Good leaders are aware of their own natural style in conflict, and how to work effectively with others when differences emerge. They can ask good questions, get to the heart of the matter, see beyond the surface to what is underneath, and negotiate and manage conflict as it arises. This enables them to ensure conflict—which is a natural part of life—is managed and resolved in a productive way. Building on this are the leader's skills for developing and leading teams: ensuring team members are clear on their roles, supported for the work, and guided through the process to a positive conclusion.

Good leaders are strategic, making decisions that will positively impact the ongoing success and sustainability of the organization, with a broad and long-term perspective that sees the big picture and the opportunities and threats therein.

They are problem-solvers and good decision-makers, whether the decision relates to day-to-day operations, or whether they are triggering changes to make improvements or to increase success.

On a more personal level, good leaders are organized. They have found ways to manage the “administrivia” of leadership and have built good support systems around themselves, whether those resources are human, or technical.

Finally, they know how to manage their resources, and have a good sense of financial leadership and management. They recognize their accountability to the public for how they use those resources. They also recognize that sustainability for tomorrow often depends on prudence today—prudence that adds to their creativity and innovative spirit, to ensure that decisions are both strategic and pragmatic.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders demonstrate:	
1.	good verbal/presentation skills
2.	good written skills
3.	active listening with skills for conflict management and resolution
4.	good coaching and mentoring skills
5.	good team-building skills
6.	good performance-evaluation and feedback skills
7.	good analytical and strategic management skills
8.	good problem-solving and decision-making skills
9.	good organizational skills
10.	good resource, asset, and financial management skills



Chapter Five

The Information Commitments of a Good Leader

An effective leader's information commitments flow in four important and interconnected directions: internal, interpersonal, operational, and external.

In our earlier chapters we have explored the heart and mind of a good leader, as expressed through their behaviour, their aspirations and their skills. We have seen repeatedly the importance of a strong inner core that guides the actions, priorities and values of the leader, ensuring that the leader behaves in ways that are ethical, supportive of others, and consistent with the kind of servant leadership that is essential for those in public service at any level of government.

The next three chapters will explore commitments that good leaders make—promises they make with themselves that they hold to, week in and week out. These commitments create a consistent leadership practice that shows up in three key areas: information, communication, and sustainability.

You will have noticed that certain themes and principles keep showing up, again and again. This is because good leadership is expressed through these interlocking principles regarding how we communicate, care, inspire, guide and mentor our people; principles that repeat when we look at how we respond to stakeholders, the public, and those in other organizations with whom we connect. These themes and principles interlock like pieces within a jigsaw puzzle—it is only when you put them all in place that you see the picture in its entirety.

“

Learn from the mistakes of others.
You can't live long enough to make
them all yourself.¹⁶⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt

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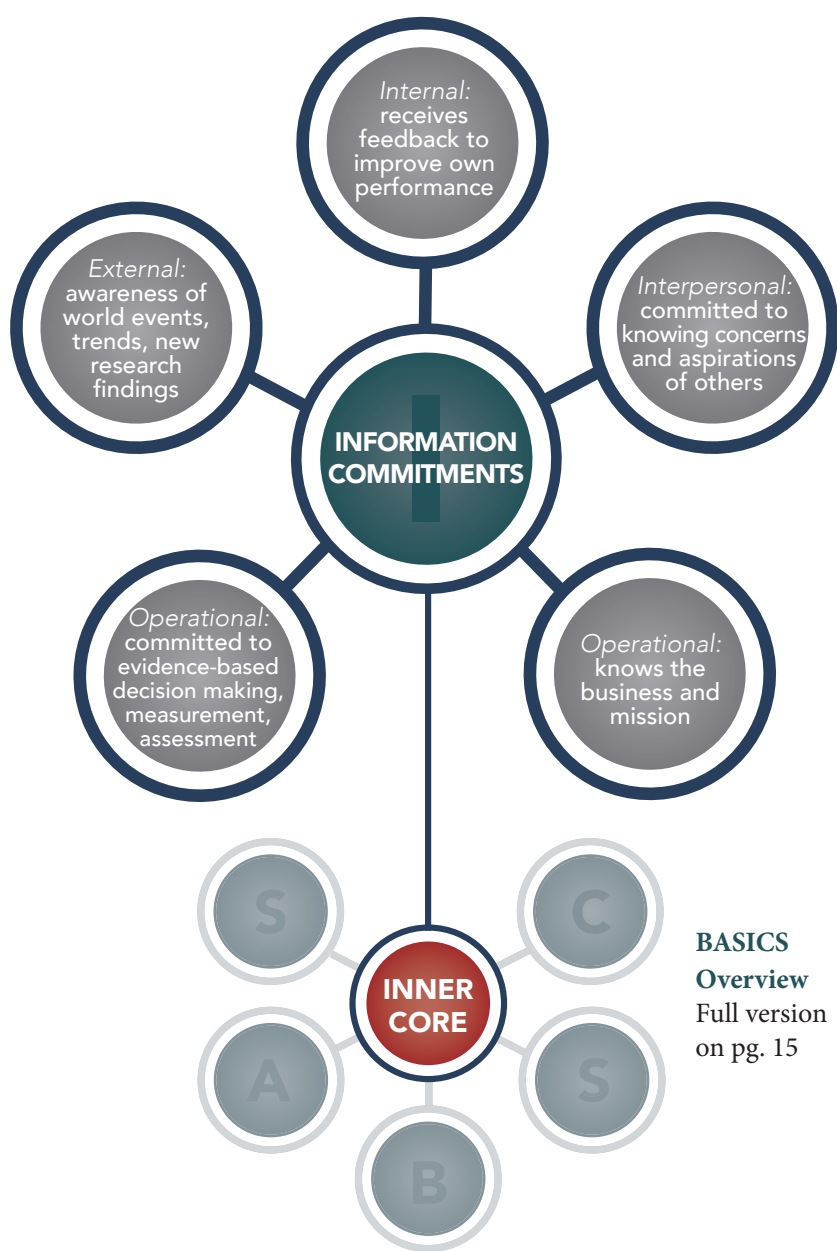
Because of this, we need to hear these ideas and principles again and again so they really sink in. It is not enough to give them cursory thought and then move on. If we want to become inspirational, ethical, caring and dedicated leaders we need to give considerable thought to these principles and then think about how to integrate them into our daily practice.

The idea of information commitments flows in four different directions. The first is *internal*: effective leaders are committed to getting information and feedback on their own performance, and are committed to knowing their own weaknesses and how to correct them. This reflects the aspiration of striving for personal excellence, as discussed in Chapter Two. The second is *interpersonal*: good leaders are committed to knowing the concerns and aspirations of their colleagues, their subordinates, and internal and external stakeholder groups. This is part of being a caring, supportive and well-informed leader, as discussed in the earlier chapters as well. The third area is *operational*, and relates to the content of the work: good leaders are committed to knowing intimately the general business and mission of the organization, or the unit for which they are responsible. They are also committed to measurement, assessment, and evidence-based decision making, and know how to define success in terms of measurable outcomes. The fourth is *external*: they are committed to keeping up on world events and trends that impact their work, and they stay current with research and new findings to support their aspirations for innovation and to help with risk assessment.

Using the model of previous chapters, information commitments can be seen on the next page.

166 Ettus, S. (January 23, 2015, updated December 6, 2017). *Inspiring quotes from 100 extraordinary women*. Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com/samantha-ettus/100-quotes-from-100-extraordinary-women_b_6483622.html

Diagram Six: The Information Commitments of a Good Leader



Let us look at these four areas in turn.

Internal Information Commitment #1: To Receive Feedback and to Know One's Weaknesses, Towards Becoming a Better Leader

As we have noted, who we are on the inside determines a lot about how we behave. Good leaders not only aspire for excellence, but they apply that to themselves through lifelong learning and personal growth. Good leaders are emotionally secure enough to receive feedback, and to value honesty from others so they can address a shortfall that may be limiting their success. In typical government hierarchies, this is easier said than done: most subordinates will never feel free enough or safe enough to pass on negative feedback to their boss. Tools such as 360 performance reviews can help with this, creating an opportunity for leaders to get feedback from a variety of sources around them. However, in a healthy workplace, staff members have the communication skills to talk about potentially difficult subjects with diplomacy and tact, and good leaders make it easy for staff to raise concerns if it is done in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Robert Sutton, author of *The No Asshole Rule*,¹⁶⁷ makes the point in his subsequent book, *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, that most bosses live in a “fool’s paradise” regarding how their subordinates see them.¹⁶⁸ He asks the powerful question that every leader should ask: “Would your employees, if given the chance, ever want to work for you again?” And regarding self-awareness, “Are you really in tune with what it feels like to work for you?” His research shows that most bosses are self-deceived, believing they are far better liked and appreciated than they are. The acid test question for employees becomes, “Would you want to work for him or her again?”

Typically, employees have learned to read their bosses, and to interpret the myriad of spoken and unspoken cues that give the workers a sense of where things are at. And rarely do they let on what they see and know. In *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, Sutton provides overwhelming evidence that bosses are notoriously blind to what their followers really think about them, and frequently have no idea of the impact they are having (for better or worse) in their workplace. Not surprisingly, employees are reluctant to speak up. Having power over people tends to have that effect. For this reason, good leaders are diligent in fostering self-awareness. They make an internal commitment to remaining open to feedback and they commit to ongoing personal growth.¹⁶⁹

167 Sutton, R. (2007). *The no asshole rule: Building a civilized workplace and surviving one that is not*. New York, NY: Warner Business Books.

168 Sutton, R. (2010). *Good boss, bad boss: How to be the best... and learn from the worst*. New York, NY: Business Plus. p. 248-249.

169 Sutton, R. (2010). *Good boss, bad boss: How to be the best... and learn from the worst*. New York, NY: Business Plus.

Interpersonal Information Commitment #2: Know the Concerns and Aspirations of Colleagues, Subordinates, and Internal/external Stakeholder Groups

We have already touched on the importance of leaders being collaborative, attentive, good listeners, strong in people skills, and supportive of their team. This is sustained by an internal commitment to remain sensitive to the needs, concerns and aspirations of followers. Leaders who are aware of the needs of their team will work hard to ensure resources and structures are in place to support their team's success. Leaders who are sensitive to their followers' concerns will be able to receive feedback on their own performance, as well as feedback regarding operational concerns that may be affecting productivity and success. Good leaders are also committed to knowing the aspirations of their followers, and empowering them to fulfill these aspirations whenever possible. Obviously, this must harmonize with organizational priorities and goals, but within those parameters good leaders want their subordinates to flourish, succeed, and be happy at their work. For Sutton in *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, this means helping subordinates experience dignity and pride in their work, through actions of leadership that are based on empathy, kindness and respect.¹⁷⁰

Good leaders
are sensitive
to the needs,
concerns and
aspirations of
their followers.

Leaders who function this way are far better positioned to have subordinates with a high degree of commitment to the organization and to their leader. This form of loyalty is nurtured through a variety of strategies that have been well researched in the field. For example, leaders who give advice, support, and pay attention to the individual needs of followers will enhance the level of organizational commitment of the employees.¹⁷¹ Leaders who demonstrated servant leadership behaviours also were found to have higher levels of employee commitment than leaders who used those behaviours less often.¹⁷² Authentic leadership, characterized by integrity and consistency between words and actions, is also part of what fosters trust and employee commitment.¹⁷³

170 Sutton, R. (2010),. p. 248-249.

171 Kent & Chelladural, 2001, in Lo, M.C., Ramayah, R., & Min, H.W. (2009, September). Leadership styles and organizational commitment: A test on Malaysia manufacturing industry. *African Journal of Marketing Management*, 1(6), 133-139. Page 137.

172 Sokoll, S. (2014). Servant leadership and employee commitment to a supervisor. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 8(2), 88-104.

173 Xion, K., Lin, W., Li, J., & Wang, L. (2016). Employee trust in supervisors and affective commitment: The moderating role of authentic leadership. *Psychological Reports*, 118(3), 829-848. DOI: 10.1177/0033294116644370

When this is combined with a leader's commitment to be attentive to employee needs and concerns, it creates a strong and healthy work environment for others. A high degree of employee engagement becomes possible when leaders get to know their employees, provide appropriate training and development, give recognition, provide coaching when needed, and encourage teamwork with a client/customer-focused approach.¹⁷⁴

This information commitment also relates to stakeholder groups, both internal and external. Good leaders want to know the needs and concerns of these groups as well, to ensure they stay fully informed. This is an important component of collaborative practice: it is difficult to work well with others if you are not aware of their needs, issues, and concerns.

Even though we may be committed to openness, it can be difficult to get the information we need if others are reluctant to share openly what is on their minds. Sometimes it is about a longstanding culture within government where people do not feel safe being truly honest about what they are thinking and feeling. Over time, it becomes habitual for government workers to adopt a highly diplomatic and neutral way of communicating that does not offend, does not come across as opinionated, and does not ruffle any feathers. In these environments, good leaders may have to work harder than ever to get past this veneer of politeness to find out what people truly think and feel.

The Approachability Playbook describes this situation in terms of a power gap.¹⁷⁵ The more power you have, and the greater the distance in power between you and the other person, the more likely it is that others will mitigate their speech when talking with you. Common signals from subordinates are these:¹⁷⁶


- Hints: "I wonder if..."
- Preference: "Perhaps we should..."
- Question: "Do you think ____ would work?"
- Team Suggestion: "Why do not we try____?"
- Looking for attempts to sugarcoat or downplay bad news
- Being overly polite or deferential
- Quickly deferring or backing down when rejected by someone in power

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174 TNS Employee Insights. (2014). *8 Tips to engage your employees*. Retrieved from <http://tns.tnsemployeeinsights.com/acton/media/2055/employee-engagement-tips-for-managers>

175 Wilson, P. (2016). *The approachability playbook: 3 Essential habits for thriving leaders and teams*. USA: Approachable Leadership. Retrieved from <http://ALplaybook.com>

176 The following list is from Wilson, P. (2016), p. 25.



**Leaders who have an
open-door policy and
who truly listen to
what people are saying
send an upspoken
message that they
value others.**

If you notice your employees communicating this way and you have the sense that you are not hearing all you need to hear about the matter, you may find it helpful to use some of discussion starters from *The Approachability Playbook*.¹⁷⁷

- “You seem uncomfortable. It is OK—I really want to know what you think”
- “I’m not 100% sure what I think about this myself. Tell me what you really think.”
- “OK, that’s what I do [name the behaviour] when I’m not sure if I should say something. What’s up?”
- “I need your help. Can you be honest and tell me exactly what you think about this?”
- “I may be completely off base here, I do not know. Can you tell me what you really think?”

Obviously, if you want to foster this kind of openness, it is important to create a feeling of emotional safety and ongoing support for your team so they do not regret lowering their protective walls. According to *The Approachability Playbook*, openness is demonstrated by being available, welcoming and inviting, and by creating and maintaining the right kind of emotional space where people will feel free to share. It is important to follow that with understanding, expressed through personal warmth, active listening and empathy. Provide ongoing support by being receptive to what they say, and follow up and follow through on whatever commitments you make, so your actions support your words and intentions. Leaders who do this are more successful in shrinking the distance created by power; they are able to reduce fear, and build stronger connections.¹⁷⁸

It is also important to be truly available: that means having an open-door policy whenever possible, and turning away from phones and computers to really listen to what people are saying when they come to speak with you. Look up and smile—be genuinely welcoming—and demonstrate open and attentive interest. Leaders who demonstrate these behaviours are sending an unspoken message that they value others, which goes a long way to communicating that they are open and interested in the ideas and concerns of those around them.

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¹⁷⁷ The following list is from Wilson, P. (2016), p. 26.

¹⁷⁸ Wilson, P. (2016).

Operational Information Commitment #3: Know the Business and Mission of the Organization/Unit

It may seem rather obvious, but intimately knowing the business and mission of your organization is important if you want to command the respect of your followers. So why do we need to include this? In government, there can be a revolving door of staff coming and going with promotions, leaves of absence, retirements and other personnel changes. This often puts young and emerging leaders in a situation of needing to maintain respect of their followers when they are still developing their own skills and knowledge of their role. For this reason, it is imperative that leaders develop an intimate knowledge of the work at hand as quickly as they can, and to be crystal clear on the mission and vision of their department and the overall organization. It is difficult to be a visionary leader who can inspire others if you are not totally clear on the mission and vision yourself. Good leaders are committed and dedicated to the mission of the organization, and know it intimately. They are subject experts in their field and can lead confidently with the knowledge that they are acting clearly within the framework of the organization's mission.

Operational Information Commitment #4: Measurement and Evidence-informed Decision Making

Good leaders are also committed to measurement and assessment processes. This enables them not only to determine what success looks like, but to appreciate to what degree the department is producing that success. Often organizations think they are successful, but have not obtained the evidence to demonstrate they really are achieving the results they think they are. More and more, the field demands an evidence-based approach, and data-driven decision making. This means there must be measurement tools in place to evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and mechanisms to assess how effectively the work is getting done. This is especially important for government because of the reliance on taxpayer funds. For reasons of accountability and transparency, governments need to be able to clearly demonstrate they are producing positive results. This needs to be empirically proven, to ensure that success is genuine and not just propaganda or “spin” to placate the taxpayer. A commitment to an evidence-based approach also protects an organization from investing time, money and resources in programs that will not yield results, thereby ensuring leaders are properly stewarding the organization's resources.

External Information Commitment #5: Looking Outward to World Events, Trends, and New Research Findings

It is also important for government leaders to stay in touch with trends, globally, nationally and locally. World events and emerging trends will influence government behaviour, and often one country's government can benefit from "lessons learned" when innovative programs are tried elsewhere. Replicating successful programs that have shown positive results in other places helps to guarantee the likelihood of success. Similarly, government failures in other jurisdictions can be avoided in one's own jurisdiction if leaders are accessing research on what is working and what is not. We have already discussed the value of innovation; its value increases further if the innovative work is well-documented and evaluated so others can also benefit from its success. Similarly, innovative efforts sometimes produce unintended outcomes, and we need to pay attention to those as well. Good leaders are committed to supporting their efforts with sound research and an awareness of events and trends that can have a bearing on the work.

Summary

Commitments are not what we *aspire* to do; they represent what we have *committed* to do. They move beyond aspiration to a deeper level of dedication and promise within ourselves, resulting in behaviours and actions that demonstrate that those commitments are playing out in our daily work. Good leaders have information commitments that are personal: the internal commitment to continuous growth and the desire to receive feedback and information on what they need to do more of, and less of, to ensure ongoing effectiveness. Good leaders are also committed to knowing the needs and concerns of their subordinates, their colleagues, and internal and external stakeholder groups. This fosters a healthy work culture and contributes to collaboration.

Good leaders will have a deep level of dedication to their information commitments, resulting in behaviours and actions that play out in their daily work.

Information commitments in the operational realm ensure that the good leader has an intimate knowledge of the business and mission of the organization, and that mechanisms of assessment and measurement are in place to monitor ongoing effectiveness and success. The commitment to evidence-based decision making includes a commitment to stay attuned to world events, local and international trends, and the latest research that might have a bearing on the work of the organization. This ensures that the leader can not only define success, but can also measure and evaluate it, with an awareness of what is going on elsewhere that has relevance to the success of the organization’s work. These commitments help ensure that the good leader in government is accountable, responsible, and serving the public interest.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders are committed to:	
1.	getting feedback and knowing their own weaknesses and how to correct them, towards becoming a better leader
2.	knowing the concerns and aspirations of colleagues, subordinates, and internal and external stakeholder groups
3.	knowing the general business and mission of the organization or unit
4.	measurement and evidence-informed decision making
5.	keeping up on world events/trends/new research findings



Chapter Six

The Communication Commitments of a Good Leader

Communication is a key skill area for effective leaders. The ability to communicate well through a variety of mechanisms is part of the job.

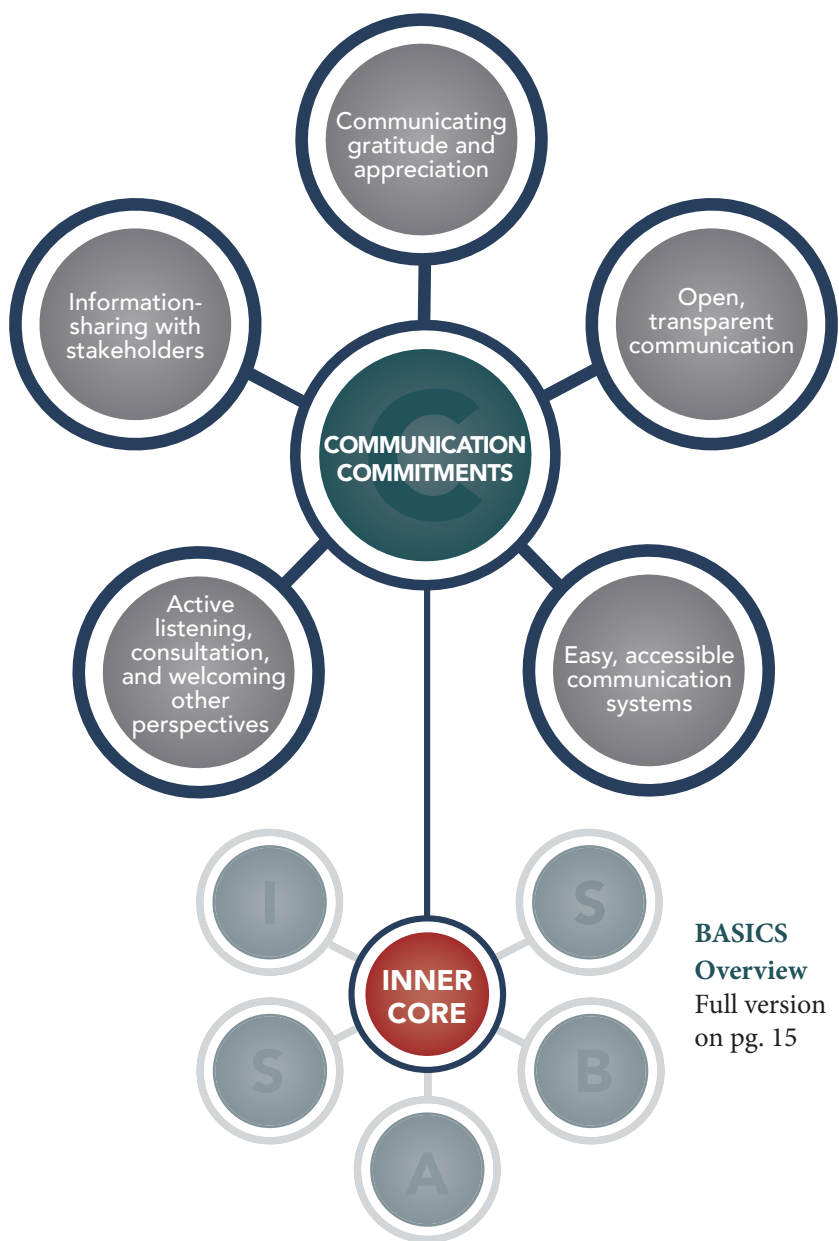
In the last chapter we identified the difference between aspirations, skills, and commitments. Once again, we should remember that commitments are the promises we make within ourselves to behave in a certain way over and over again. It is not something we *aspire* to do; it is something we *commit* to do. Aspirations stretch us and give us a goal to reach for; they help us expand our skills and abilities and continue our growth as leaders. Commitments reflect our values and what is important to us, and what we are capable of doing *right now on a daily basis*.

In this chapter we will look again at leaders and how they communicate, but with a specific focus on some key aspects of communication where leaders need to show consistency. Our first two communication commitments begin within us, reflecting our attitudes and values toward others and the spirit with which we interact with those around us. Commitment one relates to expressing gratitude and encouragement; commitment two involves cultivating open, transparent communication and workplace culture. Commitment three builds on the second commitment through the development of easy, accessible communication systems, and commitment four relates to the important practice of active listening, consultation, and the day-to-day behaviour of welcoming other perspectives in large-scale ways, and in one-to-one conversations. Our last commitment is specific to internal and external government stakeholders, to whom we commit to be open and transparent through effective information-sharing mechanisms.

Communication, as we have seen over and over again, is a key skill area for effective leaders. The ability to communicate well through a variety of mechanisms is part of the job. This chapter identifies important areas of communication where good leaders make promises within themselves to keep on doing something consistently, so that it becomes a natural and inherent part of the daily experience of working with that leader.

As ever, our communication commitments are guided by our values and principles, so we continue to frame these commitments around that inner core of an ethical, principled moral compass.

Diagram Seven: The Communication Commitments of a Good Leader



Communication Commitment #1: Expressing Genuine Gratitude and Appreciation to Colleagues and Subordinates

Expressing gratitude and appreciation are part of valuing our team members; this demonstrates that we not only appreciate them but want to encourage them as well. It may seem rather surprising that this has been placed at the top of the wheel, but here is why: appreciating, valuing, affirming, thanking and encouraging colleagues and subordinates (and others) is harder than it looks as a daily practice. Not only that, it is strongly linked with the attributes of servant leadership which is a natural fit for those in public service. What makes this so difficult? Why is it important that it becomes a daily commitment, and not just an aspiration?

The tough answer is that we are human, and innately inclined to think first about our own well-being, our own desires, our own goals and ambitions, and our own success. It is natural to pursue self-interest. It is much harder to think first about the well-being of the team, and how others are doing around us. This is where it serves us well to reflect deeply on what truly motivates us. Are we all about getting ahead, at the expense of others? How do others see us in this regard? Do they wonder if we are one of those “snakes in suits” who seem nice on the surface, but really can’t be trusted?¹⁷⁹

An attitude of gratitude and appreciation is more than just saying nice words to others at the appropriate moment. We are identifying something much deeper, something that connects to your inner core. It is about rising above the temptation to be ego-driven and self-serving, to focus on what people around you truly need, and on how you can be a source of ongoing support and encouragement to them. It is about doing something for others when there is nothing in it for you. But here is the interesting part: leaders who invest in their teams in this way usually receive the reward of loyalty and support from their team, who know their leader is their primary encourager and will not throw them under the bus.

What might this look like as it plays out on a daily basis? It means ensuring that people get the credit for the work they do—and not just to them directly, but in the presence of others as well. It means acknowledging with thanks when people are required to go above and beyond the regular requirements of the job. It means taking time to really get to know your people, and their hopes, dreams and goals, and helping them grow. It means saying in countless verbal and non-verbal ways, “I am so glad you are part of my team. What you do makes a positive difference here and I want you to know that I see it, and really appreciate it.”

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¹⁷⁹ This is a reference to the title and concepts found in Babiak, P. & Hare, R.D. (2006). *Snakes in suits: when psychopaths go to work*. New York: Regan Books.

Valuing and appreciating people is another way of investing in them—there is power in acknowledgement and praise.¹⁸⁰ When an employee believes his or her superiors are grateful for their work, the employee benefits by having an improved sense of worth within the organization, which can encourage ongoing performance improvements.¹⁸¹

Life is full of challenges, difficulties and negative experiences. We often have no idea of the difficult things people are experiencing at work and in their personal lives, and frankly, it can suck the positive energy right out of them. When we can give meaningful encouragement and gratitude to others it often has the effect of giving water and fertilizer to a drooping, dry plant—it picks right up and begins to flourish again. We noted before the value of positive energy and optimism for workplace morale, and this connects with that idea. When we, as leaders, notice and affirm all the good things our colleagues do and express our appreciation, thanks, and praise, it helps create a positive, encouraging environment. And it also helps to establish this behaviour as a cultural norm and positive example for others. We become a role model.

If we train ourselves to notice the things that are going well, we become better equipped to think in a more positive way.

There is another interesting outcome of adopting a grateful attitude. This relates to the psychological reality that whatever we tend to focus on and dwell on becomes larger in our minds, and becomes a bigger and bigger part of our perspective. If we focus primarily on the negative, soon all we can see is the negative. If we cultivate a more positive, appreciative approach, and train ourselves to notice and acknowledge the things that are going well, we become better equipped to think in a more positive way. In an earlier chapter we noted the physical and psychological benefits of optimism and positivity—here is another setting in which we can cultivate it. Grateful people report higher levels of life satisfaction and optimism, and greater energy and connections with other people¹⁸²—all of which will be positive within our organizations.

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180 Umlas, J. (2013). *Grateful leadership: Using the power of acknowledgement to engage all your people and achieve superior results*. New York: McGraw Hill.

181 Kerns, C. (2006). Gratitude at work: Counting your blessings will benefit yourself and your organization. *Graziadio Business Review* 9(4). Retrieved from <https://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/gratitude-at-work/>

182 Kerns, C. (2006).

It takes daily practice to make this part of your working life, which is why we feel it needs to be one of your daily commitments. If this is a challenging area for you, start small and commit to acknowledging and appreciating at least one thing every day for which someone around you has been responsible. Continue to do this every day, and train yourself to become observant regarding the good things other people are doing, even the small things. Then increase the numbers of times per day you can acknowledge the good things going on around you. Notice them. Acknowledge them. Show appreciation. Say thank you. Not only will you be a better person for doing it, you will have a happier team as a result.

Communication Commitment #2: Open, Transparent Communication

We have noted previously the importance of a leader having integrity that inspires trust in followers. Nothing reduces trust quicker than the sense of being lied to, deceived, or having been manipulated in some way. Good leaders are committed to communicating truthfully and honestly, and with as much openness and transparency as can be permitted considering the confidentiality requirements of the job.

As we said earlier, knowledge is power. Furthermore, having and holding information puts a person in a position of power. For that reason, many leaders guard their information jealously, even when they do not need to be so vigilant. Good leaders are wise about how they handle information and when they release it. They balance appropriate discretion with the realization that there is often benefit in empowering the group through sharing information.

As modern business structures become flatter and less hierarchical, and collaboration and teamwork become more the norm, it challenges old paradigms about how we handle information and when we release it. Good leaders are prudent and wise in this regard, and they value openness and transparency. This is especially important in government settings, where there is the expectation of high accountability for how public resources are managed.

The good news is that positive, transparent communication from leaders has been positively associated with higher degrees of trust in followers, with the added benefit that followers perceive these leaders to be more effective.¹⁸³ This is true not just in the good times, but even more so when an organization is undergoing change, downsizing, or dealing with other stressful experiences.

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183 Norman, S., Avolio, B., & Luthans, F. (2010). The impact of positivity and transparency on trust in leaders and their perceived effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(2010), 350 – 364. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984310000500

A positive approach combined with communication transparency was found to increase the willingness of followers to be vulnerable and place their trust in the leader during downsizing—which can be a common occurrence in government settings when cutbacks are happening. Transparency in this situation means that leaders demonstrate a *pattern of openness and clarity* in their behaviour toward others by sharing the information needed to make decisions, by accepting input from others, and by disclosing their personal values, motives and feelings in a way that enables followers to accurately assess leaders’ competence and morality of actions. Transparency involves that crucial dimension of ethical behaviour in which actions and words align consistently. When a leader is transparent, followers can see what the leader values and stands for, and that the leader understands who they are as well.¹⁸⁴



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184 Norman et al. (2010).

Creating a Culture of Transparency

There are specific things leaders can do to operationalize their daily commitment to transparency and openness. The University of Florida Human Resource Services makes these suggestions to create a culture of transparency:¹⁸⁵

- **Show others that you care.** People thrive when personal connections are forged and maintained. Relationship-building creates safety, understanding, appreciation and reliability. When employees feel seen, heard, affirmed and supported, they are more likely to be loyal and supportive of the leader.
- **Be vulnerable.** Most employees appreciate a leader who is genuine and authentic. Vulnerability demonstrates sincerity, and builds credibility. It does require maturity and judgment on the part of the leader to assess what to share, and how the employees will interpret and share it with others. One key area is to invite feedback on the leader's performance to discover how others perceive them. This demonstrates for employees that feedback is a powerful tool for improvement and for building a high performance team.
- **Be fiercely honest.** Be more transparent, especially on how decisions are made. This helps reduce the sense that there are hidden agendas at play. If you do not have all the pieces in place or are waiting on more data to come in—just say so.
- **Hold the tough conversations.** Do not dance around performance issues. As already discussed, giving positive feedback and constructively critical feedback to promote improvement and growth is part of the leader's job. Employees need a workplace environment that does not tolerate bullying, uncivil interactions, unproductive gossiping, blaming of others, and negative behaviours that jeopardize the team's performance toward goals and objectives. A transparent leader makes sure that employees are clear that these tough conversations will happen when needed.
- **Pay attention to the mood in the office.** Listen, observe, and care about the experiences employees are having within the workplace. Let employees know that you are paying attention to these factors, and be mindful of your own moods—as we mentioned before, your own emotions can “infect” the team, both positively and negatively.
- **Keep your promises.** This sets the tone for the entire organization, and builds trust. Show up on time for meetings, return emails promptly, and follow up on requests you have made of employees—these are examples of little things that build trust for bigger things. Communicate your promises cleanly and clearly to avoid any misunderstandings.

185 The following list is from Office of Human Resource Services. (n.d.) *Maximize your leadership potential: Creating a culture of transparency*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Training and Organizational Development. Retrieved from http://training.hr.ufl.edu/resources/LeadershipToolkit/job_aids/CreatingACultureofTransparency.pdf

- **Be composed.** Leaders with self-control, poise, and patience minimize workplace anxiety and uncertainty. Employees are always watching their leaders, so stay strong and confident; smile often and authentically, and be compassionate. This helps neutralize workplace chaos and creates certainty that a confident, caring, fearless leader is in charge.
- **Deliver bad news well.** This demonstrates courage, and shows you will do things for the good of the organization and the team. Bad news moves fast, so address it promptly with employees. Say as much as you can without divulging confidences and do not play the blame game. When employees voice concerns or appear upset, listen to them so they feel you are “in it with them” and not throwing a mess on them and walking away. Let them know what the steps are to correct a situation and communicate often where you are in the process of handling the situation.

According to the University of Florida Human Resource Services,¹⁸⁶ when employees feel they work in a relational environment where there are no secrets, they are more connected and invested in the outcomes. This means no secrets about cash flow, hours worked, what to wear to work, how promotions are handled, goals and roadmaps, performance expectations, and the value each team member brings to the table. Transparency is something that is cultivated over time by repeated actions—it is not something you can do only once. You must remain consistent. It is not always easy and it can open leaders up to being wrong and being judged, but the benefits greatly outweigh the risks. Good leaders see the power of transparency and the positive impact it has on everything they do.

Communication Commitment #3: Accessible, Easy Communication Systems

Building on the idea of openness and transparency, it is important for government leaders to advocate for technology and data systems that make it easy for the public to communicate and receive information from government offices. It is a common complaint that government websites and online application processes can be difficult to use, especially for those who, for a variety of reasons, may find online systems challenging. Often those with personal challenges or vulnerabilities are those who need government help the most—therefore, it is important that communication systems work well for people of all capabilities. In an age of automation it can be frustrating for members of the public to face difficulties in trying to talk with someone, especially if there are complicated telephone menus, chronic busy signals, or long hold times.

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186 Office of Human Resource Services. (n.d.)

Government communication systems need to be easy and accessible for the public. It is not sufficient to be complacent about this, allowing poor customer service to continue because “that’s just the way it is.” Government bureaucracy often works against simplicity and ease of access, so it is important for good leaders to commit themselves in this regard, and to set strategies and targets that will eliminate bottlenecks, reduce wait times (or eliminate them entirely) and to ensure that taxpayers and the general public get the information they need quickly, easily, and in terms they can understand.

Information-sharing within and between government departments can also help reduce silos and isolation, improving inter-department collaboration. Information-sharing platforms can help employees access and share information with greater ease. While there are policy and procedure questions and technical, legal and organizational considerations that must be addressed when implementing information-sharing technology, it is worth considering how the flow of information can be improved.¹⁸⁷ In a general sense, information-sharing has been associated with higher levels of team performance.¹⁸⁸ This should encourage leaders to think about how communication flows in and through their departments, given the impact it may have on performance, outcomes, and deliverables.

Communication Commitment #4: Welcoming Other Perspectives through Consultation and Active Listening

In our earlier chapters we identified the importance of a collaborative approach. We also suggested developing a communication style that is supported by active listening. We need to remind ourselves what active listening is, so we can think about how often during each day we are using this important skill. Active listening is more than refraining from speaking when others are talking—it involves thinking deeply about what the other person is saying, asking open, probing questions to get more information and greater understanding, and using communication skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, and reframing. Active listening involves talking, but from the perspective that you are focused on trying to deepen your understanding of the other person’s perspective. It is not about advancing your own view or debating the subject.

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187 International Association of Crime Analysts. (2014). Information-sharing platforms. (White paper 2014-02). Overland Park, KS: Author.

188 Hoch, J. (2014). Shared leadership, diversity, and information sharing in teams. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29(5), 541-564. doi: 10.1108/JMP-02-2012-0053

Active listening involves curiosity and openness to explore how other people see things. It involves showing empathy toward what they feel. It enables you to explore the deeper levels of needs, fears, interests, beliefs and values, which are often not expressed until someone asks about them. It also involves moments of silence as you allow the other person to continue to sort out what they are thinking and feeling.

While active listening can happen in one-to-one conversations or meetings, many levels of government and government departments are adopting active listening through larger processes of community engagement and consultation, realizing that it is vital for governments to understand the issues and concerns of communities and individuals who live there. It is difficult to make significant decisions within a community without support and buy-in. Therefore, governments are increasingly appreciating that they need to solicit information from local stakeholders, individuals, community groups, and others before making decisions that will affect the daily lives of their constituents.

Processes of consultation and active listening will inevitably bring up areas of disagreement and dissent. People naturally see situations differently, and their perspectives are shaped by their experiences and personal knowledge. Good leaders are not intimidated by this—they expect it. It is not seen as a threat, but as a natural part of exploring what is needed to create healthy, vibrant and flourishing communities. Good leaders commit themselves to active listening regularly, and to consultation processes when decisions are made that will have an impact on the lives of others. A good leader will always welcome other perspectives, knowing that in the diversity of ideas and opinions there may be the creative beginnings of a workable solution or outcome for the problems at hand.

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Feedback is a gift. Ideas are the currency of our next success. Let people see you value both feedback and ideas.¹⁸⁹

Jim Trinko and Les Wallace

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189 GovLeaders.org. (n.d.). *Leadership quotes*. Retrieved from <http://govleaders.org/quotes.htm#character>

Communication Commitment #5: Information-sharing with Stakeholders, and Being Committed to Building the Necessary Information Systems to Facilitate It

This commitment is strongly related to the previous commitment because it involves many of the same issues and values, although they may be addressed through a different approach. Stakeholders are group of people with a strong and particular interest in what the government is doing, because it has an impact on their work, the clients they serve, or on their daily life. Stakeholders may be internal or external to government, but they are all affected in some way by the government’s actions, objectives, products, services, or policies. While Commitment #5 and Commitment #4 are similar, stakeholder information-sharing will often involve developing positive, informal relationships as well as more formalized processes of giving and receiving information.

Good leadership in government promotes strong and healthy relationships with stakeholders. Deloitte & Touche recommend that organizations formalize the implementation of a formal stakeholder engagement policy.¹⁹⁰ Not only will this enhance the value of the stakeholder engagement process, but it will also reduce the risk of missing important perspectives, which may cause embarrassment or negatively affect the reputation of the government department in question.

According to Deloitte & Touche, the stakeholder engagement process and policy approach usually involves the following steps:¹⁹¹

- Define the scope of the policy
- Define the ownership and decision-making process
- Define the governance process
- Identify the key stakeholders and stakeholder groups, given their influence and dependence on the organization
- Develop an engagement plan, including frequency, method and channel
- Facilitate the stakeholder engagement process
- Identify the legitimate concerns and interests of key stakeholders
- Design a process for dealing with conflicts between stakeholder concerns
- Define a mechanism to feed stakeholder concerns into strategic planning to ensure alignment
- Provide feedback to stakeholder groups
- Generate reports, including input for an Integrated Report for key stakeholders

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190 Deloitte & Touche. (2014). *Stakeholder engagement*. Retrieved from www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/za/Documents/governance-risk-compliance/ZA_StakeholderEngagement_04042014.pdf

191 The following list is from Deloitte & Touche. (2014).

While this may seem rather mechanical, the process is a logical sequence of steps that will ensure that mechanisms are in place to invite input, gather information regarding needs, interests, and concerns of stakeholders, and have a way of processing and communicating that information in strategic ways. All levels of government encounter community concerns that relate to public safety, and the desire for prosperity and human thriving. It is difficult to address these concerns effectively without appreciating the perspectives of those who will be directly affected, which is why community consultation and engagement is growing in importance. Information-sharing with stakeholders may also involve improved access to technology, particularly online information systems that help improve two-way communication between government and the public.

A commitment to be open and welcoming of other perspectives helps reduce the “fortress mentality” that often keeps governments from engaging the public effectively.

These mechanisms are tools to bring to life the leadership commitment to be open, inclusive, and welcoming of other perspectives. This helps reduce the “fortress mentality” that often keeps government departments from engaging the public effectively. It also helps reduce a sense of “we know better than they do,” which can keep government departments advancing policy that is not understood or supported at the community level.

Summary

Communication commitments are embraced and practised daily by good leaders, demonstrating their willingness to be open, transparent, and concerned about others. This expresses itself through caring behaviours such as active listening; encouraging, thanking and praising others; inviting input; and building mechanisms and processes to ensure that information can flow easily to the people who need it. Communication commitments also ensure we are able to receive information from our stakeholders. Specifically, our communication commitments begin first with a daily practice of appreciating, acknowledging and expressing gratitude to those around us and to those who work for us. This fosters a positive, encouraging work environment with more highly engaged employees.

Our second commitment is to open, transparent communication with our teams and others, followed by a third commitment to open, accessible communication systems for those inside and outside the organization. These are enhanced by our fourth commitment to active listening, to consultation, and to welcoming other perspectives. Commitment four is expressed in on-to-one conversations and meetings, and includes much larger consultation processes, which demonstrate the value we place on hearing the perspectives of others. Finally, commitment five is targeted specifically toward information-sharing with government stakeholders, who are in a unique relationship with us.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders are committed to:	
1.	formally and informally expressing sincere gratitude and appreciation to colleagues and subordinates for work well done
2.	open and transparent communication
3.	easy and accessible communication (for example, user-friendly technology and data systems)
4.	encouraging input —including criticism and critical perspectives—through active listening, consultation, and being consistently inclusive
5.	improving information-sharing and information systems with relevant stakeholders





Chapter Seven

The Sustainability Commitments of a Good Leader

Because governments are not self-serving organizations, leaders in government are in unique positions to provide visionary leadership that is responsible, sustainable, and innovative.

In the previous two chapters we discussed a variety of commitments related to information and communications. In this chapter we want to be forward-thinking, considering the long-term health and sustainability of our organizations, and the health and wellness of the people who work for and with us. Sustainability is a popular term: every company, business, NGO and branch of government seems to be considering how to become more sustainable. But what does sustainability mean for those who work in government? One aspect of it certainly relates to environmental concerns and social responsibility. But organizational sustainability also supports healthy workplaces with good retention and succession planning, and highly engaged, committed employees who are flourishing within an organizational culture of support and respect. Sustainability also connects to ideas of innovation, growth, and continuous development and improvement. In the business world, this is vital—and can make the difference between surviving or shutting the doors. However, the nature of government is such that bureaucracies can survive even when they are inefficient and lacking in innovation, or when the workforce is not happy but is inclined to stay because of job security, generous salaries or benefit plans. Therefore, good leaders in government need to go further to ensure that sustainability includes the health and well-being of employees and the workplace culture.

In one sense, governments—not business—should be on the leading edge of sustainability that is socially, fiscally, and environmentally responsible because of their obligation to serve the public, and what is owed to the taxpayer. They do not have the temptation of making a profit at the expense of principle. Governments exist to provide structure, governance, safety and help, and to provide leadership in ways that improve the quality of life for all without causing further harm. They are not, and should not become, self-serving organizations. Therefore, leaders in various levels of government are in unique positions to provide visionary leadership that is responsible, sustainable, and innovative.

From the perspective of business, sustainability is about demonstrating social responsibility by balancing business results with concern for the greater good.¹⁹² Although corporations are paying more and more attention to environmental issues, the notions of sustainability and social responsibility both look beyond short-term results to long-term implications of decisions and how they affect health, safety, the environment, and other areas of concern.¹⁹³ It means embedding social responsibility into processes and procedures, and taking responsibility for the impact that decisions will have on the workplace.¹⁹⁴ Is government really that different? The concerns are similar, and good leaders must consider the intended and unintended consequences of decisions and how they influence the workforce, the environment, and overall operations. There should be a similar desire to balance results with concern for the greater good. As expressed by the Cambridge Program for Sustainable Leadership, “a sustainable leader is someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world.”¹⁹⁵

In our understanding of holistic, organizational sustainability we see it through two different lenses: human and operational. Human sustainability involves a commitment to employee health and well-being. It means daily commitments to develop an engaged, committed workforce with a high level of employee satisfaction. Achieving this means a commitment to respect, and fostering a work environment that affirms dignity and respect daily. Human sustainability requires us to look ahead to the long-term welfare of the organization, with a commitment to succession planning. This involves ensuring that young or emerging leaders are supported to learn and grow, so that they will be well-equipped to move into higher positions of responsibility as others move on. It means ensuring that people receive the training they need when they need it. Human sustainability also involves a daily commitment to nurturing positive relationships throughout the organization, for internal and external stakeholders as well as your employees.

Operational sustainability is more institutional in focus. It demonstrates a commitment to the serious review of suggestions for innovation or change. It is a commitment to a system of continuous improvement, guided by a desire for quality and excellence. These are achieved through commitments to ongoing assessment, cross-comparison assessment, and built-in mechanisms for evaluation, as part of a larger commitment to strive for best practices. Operational sustainability also looks outward, through careful consideration of the institutional brand or corporate image. Commitments in this area keep a good leader working to strengthen how their organization is perceived by the public. Finally, operational sustainability commitments involve forward-thinking fiscal and environmental responsibility.

192 Price Waterhouse Coopers. (2008). *How leadership must change to meet the future*. 2007/2008 US Human Capital Effectiveness Report.

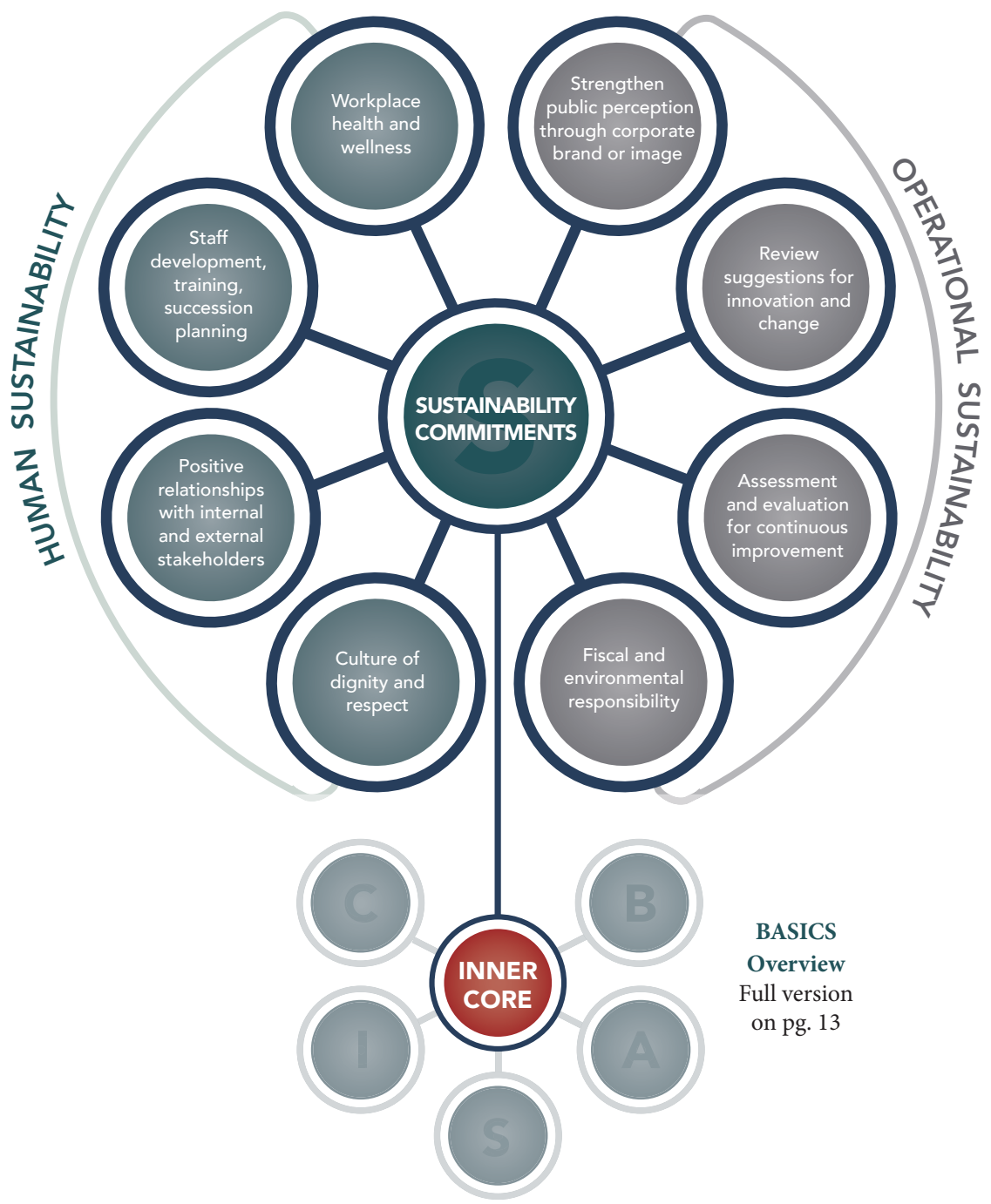
193 Price Waterhouse Coopers. (2008).

194 Price Waterhouse Coopers. (2008).

195 Visser, W., & Courtice, P. (2011). *Sustainability leadership: Linking theory and practice*. SSRN Working Paper Series, 21 October, 2011.

This time, our diagram looks slightly different from previous chapters.

Diagram Eight: The Sustainability Commitments of a Good Leader



BASICS
Overview
Full version
on pg. 13

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A sustainable leader is someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world.¹⁹⁶

Visser & Courtice

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Human Sustainability

To be successful, we need to look deeper at the people-oriented, human sustainability commitments that are linked with good leadership. Obviously, it is difficult to sustain the work of an organization if there is low morale, rapid turnover and transience, or if there are entrenched negative attitudes or behaviours that affect productivity and success. This is why we assert that good leaders' sustainability commitments must be more than environmental. They must address the very essence and nature of the workplace itself. As we have noted before, good leaders set a tone by their words and actions—they are role models and they chart the path for others. However, it is not enough simply to model the behaviours one wants to see in others. Good leaders take steps regularly to ensure high job satisfaction as well as high productivity and engagement in the workforce.

Sustainability Commitment #1: Employee Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is positively associated with a high level of commitment on the part of the employee toward the organization. Researchers have noted that highly committed workers have a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values. They personally identify with the organization. They have a willingness to exert a considerable effort on the part of the organization, and they have a strong intent or desire to remain with the organization. They are loyal.¹⁹⁷ When commitment flows from the worker to the organization, the organization benefits. But what does the organization need to do to create a working experience that produces this level of loyalty and commitment? Some things are obvious, like appropriate compensation, benefits and advancement opportunities.

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196 Visser, W., & Courtice, P. (2011).

197 Yousef, D. (2000). Organizational commitment: a mediator of the relationships of leadership behaviour with job satisfaction and performance in a non-western country. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 15(1), 6-28.

However, job satisfaction goes deeper than that. It involves an emotional attachment and connection to the workplace. It is affected by relations with colleagues and superiors, and how employees perceive the workplace culture and their own performance within it.¹⁹⁸ It is also linked with the behaviour of their leaders. Research findings indicate that employees who perceive their superiors as adopting consultative or participative leadership behaviour are more committed to their organizations, more satisfied with their jobs, and score higher in their performance.¹⁹⁹ Effective leaders are considered by employees to be flexible, offering guidance to employees, yet allowing them to show initiative and be creative.²⁰⁰ This is consistent with what we have noted about the importance of being collaborative, listening to your team, sharing information, empowering your workers, and consulting with others. Daily commitments for a sustainable work force need to include an inner commitment to these values and practices.

Sustainability Commitment #2: Employee Health and Wellness

Human sustainability is linked with the ongoing promotion of employee health and wellness. Ensuring health and safety issues are addressed, plus building a wellness culture, can be part of what sustains organizational life. Even though workers spend many hours per week at their place of employment, their lives are much more complex and multi-dimensional. Emotional stresses, financial pressures, or poor health or lifestyle choices may all affect how they perform at work. Ill health costs employers, and preventable health problems are not in the employee's or the employer's best interests. Therefore, more and more workplaces are recognizing that promoting overall health, fitness and good nutrition, and other wellness strategies, pays long-run dividends. A healthier workforce will typically be more productive and will generally be happier. Promoting wellness means promoting a lifestyle in which the needs of mind, body and spirit are addressed, and in which mental health and physical health are both important. As always, leaders are role models and provide an example to the rest of the team. They can play an integral role in ensuring that wellness is encouraged on a daily basis, and this includes allocating time, money and resources to ensuring that wellness becomes part of the organization's daily life.

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198 Belias, D., & Kastelios, A. (2014). Leadership and job satisfaction – a review. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(8), 24 – 46. Retrieved from www.researchgate.net/publication/261570285_LEADERSHIP_AND_JOB_SATISFACTION_-_A_REVIEW

199 Yousef, D. (2000).

200 Belias, D., & Kastelios, A. (2014).

Sustainability Commitment #3: Cultures of Respect

As we have just discussed, having healthy, satisfied, and positively engaged workers is part of organizational sustainability. Good leaders not only foster this, but also commit to creating an environment where preserving dignity and maintaining respect are the norm. Sutton's book, *Good Boss, Bad Boss*, points out that the best bosses balance performance and humanity, getting things done in ways that enhance rather than undermine dignity and pride.²⁰¹ In Sutton's view, bosses ought to be judged by what they and their people accomplish, and by how their followers feel along the way.²⁰² Good leaders want their workers to feel a sense of pride and dignity; they actively foster a climate of mutual respect that supports the ongoing quest for excellence and high performance. It is difficult to sustain your workforce if people feel angry, disrespected or mistreated. Good leaders do all they can to foster positive working environments where people feel valued, respected and listened to, and where they have a sense of pride and accomplishment about what they do.

Sustainability Commitment #4: Staff Development, Training, and Succession Planning

The next commitment that specifically relates to leading and supporting one's team or subordinates includes a commitment to staff development, training, and succession planning. Part of empowering people is to ensure they have access to ongoing growth and development opportunities. This not only validates them and supports improved performance, but it helps create ongoing renewal and growth so that renewal can be managed with greater ease. Good leaders are concerned about fostering this kind of renewal by investing in young or emerging leaders, ensuring they have the mentoring and support they need to take on new responsibilities and move into higher levels of leadership and responsibility as opportunities arise. If some employees are an obvious wrong fit for the job, the good leader is already engaged in the ongoing performance review process to help re-direct them, or ultimately, to help them move on to something else that is a better fit for them. Sustainability commitments involve ensuring that you have the *right people for the job*—and that you provide them the training and support to ensure they continue to function that way.

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201 Sutton, R. (2010), p. 38.

202 Sutton, R. (2010), p. 38.

Sustainability Commitment #5: Internal and External Stakeholder Relationships

Our last human sustainability commitment looks beyond the workers to internal and external stakeholders, without whose support it can be very difficult to accomplish our goals. Good leaders are committed to building positive relationships with their internal and external stakeholders, and they cultivate these relationships regularly. As we have asserted, having a collaborative approach is key. Valuing others and their input, working together in cooperative ways, being open to other points of view—all are part of maintaining positive relationships. This can be difficult in a government setting, where stakeholders may hold conflicting or divergent views, with different claims on government time, energy and resources. However, responsible leadership includes proactive and inclusive engagement with stakeholders, and the promotion and facilitation of inclusive dialogue and discourse that will help guide ethically sound decision-making.²⁰³

Responsible leadership includes proactive and inclusive engagement with stakeholders, and the promotion of dialogue that will help guide ethically sound decision-making.

Responsible business leaders have to deal with the moral complexity that results from a multitude of stakeholder claims, and they recognize the need to build enduring and mutually beneficial relationships with all relevant stakeholders.²⁰⁴ Government leaders have the same challenge and responsibility. Building these beneficial relationships with stakeholders is understood as a significant component of building social capital, the various networks of relationships which can work together for collective good. Social capital consists of “the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible.”²⁰⁵ What matters, according to the principles of corporate and social responsibility, is that leaders make sure that their organizations adopt a truly inclusive and ethically sound way of creating value for all legitimate stakeholders, even those who may have been previously excluded; it also includes future generations.²⁰⁶

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203 Maak, R. (2007). Responsible leadership, stakeholder engagement, and the emergence of social capital. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74, 320-343. doi: 10.1007/s10551-007-9510-5

204 Maak, R. (2007).

205 Putnam, R., in Maak, R. (2007), p. 333.

206 Maak, R. (2007).

In government settings controlled by politics, voting cycles and four-year terms, the pressure is to act in short time frames. However, good leadership also takes the long view, and thinks not just about the immediate future but the long-term implications for current and future stakeholder groups as well.

In summary, good leaders are committed to human sustainability. They work regularly to ensure the workplace is grounded in dignity and respect, and they encourage employee wellness, learning and growth. They are concerned about employee job satisfaction, and foster employee commitment through a variety of strategies, including the provision of training, professional development, and opportunities for growth and advancement. They think ahead and plan for transition and change with effective succession planning. Taking the broader view, they ensure that stakeholder relationships are positive, within and outside the organization, creating healthy networks of relationships that can be used to achieve common goals and objectives. They take the long view, with a commitment to building a healthy future for current stakeholders and future generations.

Operational Sustainability

Operational sustainability is also important for good leaders. Here you see the practices and values that people most often associate with the idea of sustainability. This includes social and environmental responsibility, and the commitment to make decisions in ways that support the common good. It also requires commitments to key practices within the organization to ensure these larger goals are met. These include the commitment to considering and reviewing suggestions for innovation and change. It involves a commitment to a system of continuous improvement, because good leaders value excellence and quality in services and products. Continuous improvement is supported by commitments to ongoing assessment and evaluation, cross-comparison assessments, and a desire to determine and implement best practices. It also includes a commitment to be future-focused, with strong fiscal responsibility.



Sustainability Commitments #6 & 7: Continuous Improvement Through Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation

We have already discussed the importance of building in mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and review, to ensure that programs are delivering what they are designed to accomplish. Operational sustainability commitments include a commitment to monitoring programs and activities. Is the program on track to meet its expected outcomes? This involves knowing where the program started (identifying a baseline), having a sense of comparison with what other similar programs achieve (positing benchmarks), and having a clear sense of what is to be achieved (identifying targets).²⁰⁷

Cross-comparison analysis also enables the leader to compare similar programs from different jurisdictions, to help determine how well their own program is faring in comparison with others. How are these cross-comparisons helpful? Even if a government program or initiative appears to be efficient or effective, sometimes examining an alternative way of accomplishing the ultimate objective will reveal a better way. Good leaders are always open to new and better ways to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and overall program success.

The commitment to continuous improvement will compel the good leader to ensure that mechanisms are in place to conduct this sort of ongoing evaluation, with the willingness to consider new or different approaches if change is needed.

207 Malone, N., Mark, L., Miller, K., Kekahio, W., & Narayan, K. (2014). *Program monitoring: The role of leadership in planning, assessment, and communication*. (REL 2014 – 034). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545117.pdf>.

Sustainability Commitment #8: Innovation

As we discussed in earlier chapters, good leaders strive for innovation and aspire to foster creativity and new ways of thinking. Here, we examine the daily commitments that help the leader ensure that creativity and innovation become an integral part of organizational life. It begins with the leader’s commitment to promoting and acknowledging the creative process. This can be difficult, because there are often points of tension between traditional business thinking and innovative, creative thinking. Both approaches are valid—it is a question of when to use each for best results.²⁰⁸

Business Thinking	Innovation Thinking
Logical	Intuitive
Deductive/inductive reasoning	Abductive reasoning
Requires proof to proceed	Asks, “What if?”
Looks for precedents	Unconstrained by the past
Quick to decide	Holds multiple possibilities
There is right and wrong	There is always a better way
Uncomfortable with ambiguity	Relishes ambiguity
Wants results	Wants meaning

Good leaders know that sometimes it helps to depart from the tried-and-true paths. Part of being a visionary leader is to imagine a desired future state and how to get there; however, doing that without creativity and innovation can be extremely difficult. While we support the commitment to evidence-based practice and data-driven decision making, we also recognize that there are times when it helps to adopt a curiosity-driven, exploratory, and more imaginative approach to problem-solving.

208 The chart comparing business and innovation thinking is from Horth, D., & Vehar, J. (2014). *Becoming a leader who fosters innovation*. Center for Creative Leadership. Page 4. Retrieved from www.ccl.org/articles/white-papers/becoming-a-leader-who-fosters-innovation/

It means striving for a better way, and it involves the willingness to explore multiple possibilities. Ambiguity then becomes an advantage, not a problem. It allows us to ask, “What if?”²⁰⁹

Operational sustainability then means committing oneself to using an evidence-based approach to assess and evaluate processes and programs, while also embracing creativity and innovation as a way of bringing about growth and improvement. Good leaders balance traditional business thinking (with its emphasis on evidence, evaluation and assessment) with innovation thinking, which encourages collaboration, team thinking, and exploration of “outside-the-box” ideas. Sustainable organizations need an appropriate balance of both to ensure they can meet and surmount challenges or unexpected threats. Furthermore, a culture of innovation allows ideas to grow and flourish, adds value, and helps the organization meet its targets.²¹⁰ Good leaders foster creativity, but also have the skill to determine which ideas to support and to develop the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the execution of a new idea will be successful. For many leaders, this means developing their ability to release the intelligence, creativity and initiative of people throughout the organization, and then to integrate new initiatives toward an agreed vision of the future and solving whatever problems are encountered along the way.²¹¹

Sustainability Commitment #9: Consultation and the Corporate “Brand”

Leadership requires an ongoing commitment to evaluation, to assess how well the organization is doing to meet its goals and targets, and how well the organization is supporting internal, healthy workplace practices while also thinking about its public face. Every organization or business needs to think about its image or its “brand.” The same commitment to evaluation that causes good leaders to use data and other evidence to assess effectiveness will inspire the leader to think about the public’s perception and opinion of the organization, and what might be needed to address any deficits. The communication commitment to public engagement and consultation can work well with this commitment to strengthening the corporate brand or image. When government organizations engage in meaningful stakeholder engagement and consultation, it not only strengthens the image or brand, but it can also stimulate an increased sense of pride and respect for the organization in the eyes of the employees. It must be noted, though, that consultation must be sincere and meaningful, motivated by a genuine desire to increase understanding and be inclusive. It must not be ritualistic.

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209 Horth, D., & Vehar, J. (2014).
210 Horth, D., & Vehar, J. (2014).
211 Simmons, M. (1997). Leadership: The key to continual improvement. *Total Quality Management*, 8(2-3), S273-S274. Carfax Publishing Ltd. Retrieved from www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09544129710224?journalCode=ctqm19

Employees and the public will lose respect for leaders who waste one another's time through consultation processes that are mainly for show, when the course of action has already been decided. It is not ethical or responsible to mislead people in this way simply to keep up appearances or look good in the public eye. On the other hand, when there is genuine consultation and the results will help shape the final outcome, respect for government is usually increased among employees and internal and external stakeholders.

Sustainability Commitment #10: Forward-thinking Fiscal Responsibility

Sustainability leadership also involves fiscal responsibility. Leaders are stewards of resources that are human, material, financial, and environmental. Governments are frequently criticized for how they allocate funds, and how spending is either too much (creating deficits) or too little, thereby under-resourcing programs and initiatives intended for the public good. Political pressure in a time of restraint can create silo-based thinking, where each department or ministry is rewarded by how they trim and cut back—whereas fiscal responsibility might be better served by looking broadly across many departments and thinking about how savings can be achieved laterally, not just in isolated departments. Furthermore, small strategic investments can sometimes result in significant returns.

Governments are frequently criticized for how they allocate funds, and how spending is either too much or too little.

For example, within the realm of healthcare, certain drugs are relatively inexpensive to produce and sell, and it may seem to be in the government's best interest to encourage the use of these drugs to keep health costs down. There are, however, examples of how this thinking can backfire, producing the opposite effect than intended. Warfarin is an example of a drug that has been long on the market and is less expensive to purchase than newer blood thinners. It is not surprising that this would be a preferred option when the government is paying for an individual's drug plan. However, Warfarin is highly toxic—it was originally developed as rat poison and kills rodents by causing massive internal haemorrhage.

When a test was developed to help monitor its effects on the human bloodstream, it became possible to use Warfarin as an anti-coagulant. However, because of its toxicity, it requires frequent blood testing to ensure the patient is staying healthy while using the drug. This represents ongoing additional costs to the health care system, because the patient is required to be monitored regularly by a physician and through regular lab tests. However, if the physician and lab costs are paid by a different department than the one that pays for the drug plan, these costs will not be immediately apparent. Each department will believe they are operating within good budget parameters. A broader view—and a more ethical one—would be to compare the costs for both departments with the cost of using a newer, less toxic drug that does not have such potentially harmful side effects or require such rigorous follow-up. It would be a healthier option for the patient and it would decrease overall costs, while recognizing the initial cost would be higher to purchase the alternate medication.

Another important example of fiscal sustainability relates to infrastructure spending. While governments are bound by four-year election cycles it can be tempting to avoid tackling the big projects that will bring benefits to the taxpayers for years and years to come. However, taking the shorter view can decrease safety, and increase environmental problems. Delaying the work may mean it becomes more expensive later when the project is finally started. This is also true in public safety. Placing a low priority on crime prevention and street-level social problems can result in higher costs for emergency responders, fire services, police, and hospitals.²¹² Again, sustainable leadership looks at the long-term implications of providing (or not providing) services, as well as the immediate needs. Good leaders have the courage to take the long view.

Sustainable leadership is complex. It involves both human and operational commitments. It is also values-based, and is aspirational in nature. When assessing the success of certain educational institutions over others, the Spencer Foundation examined organizational change over 30 years in eight different Canadian and American schools. A researcher's examination of their study provides seven principles of sustainable leadership, listed on the next page. While the first is specific to education, the rest are relevant for other government leaders as well.

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213 Garis, L and P. Maxim (Eds.) (2016) *Designing out Crime*, University of the Fraser Valley. <https://cjr.ufv.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Designing-Out-Crime.pdf>

Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership²¹³

- 1. Sustainable leadership creates and preserves learning that will be ongoing and sustaining.
- 2. Sustainable leadership secures success over time, achieved through succession planning and succession management.
- 3. Sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others, through distributing leadership opportunities and grooming successors.
- 4. Sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice; it recognizes that one's own actions have an effect on the wider environment.
- 5. Sustainable leadership develops rather than depletes human and material resources. It is thrifty without being cheap; it carefully manages resources while taking care of people and helping them to take care of themselves.
- 6. Sustainable leadership develops environmental diversity and capacity. Promoters of sustainability cultivate a working environment that has the capacity to stimulate continuous improvement on a broad front. They enable people to adapt to and prosper in their increasingly complex environment by learning from one another's diverse practices.
- 7. Sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment. This may mean intensive engagement with stakeholders, creating strategic alliances and forging the connections necessary to make the changes that are needed to protect our environmental futures.

Summary

In conclusion, the sustainability commitments that are part of the BASICS of good leadership encompass human and operational concerns. On the human level they foster healthy workplaces of dignity and respect, where highly engaged and productive workers experience job satisfaction, and ongoing growth and development. Upcoming leaders are groomed and trained to ensure organizational growth and succession management. Training and professional development support continuous improvement, which is also supported by evaluation, assessment, and creative innovation where needed. Sustainability commitments look outward to stakeholder relationships, and how those outside the organization perceive it. Social capital is built through strong networks of mutually respectful and beneficial stakeholder relationships, and effort is given to managing the organizational identity and brand.

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²¹³ The following list is from Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2003). *The seven principles of sustainable leadership*. Pages 3-10. Retrieved from http://jotamac.typepad.com/jotamacs_weblog/files/seven_principles.pdf

Sustainability commitments also involve fiscal and environmental responsibility, with an understanding that social responsibility and social justice are inherent to the success of government in the eyes of stakeholders, the wider community and society at large. This requires appropriate stewardship of resources, effective timelines for projects, evidence-based evaluation, and a commitment to environmental responsibility.

Attributes for Measurement and Growth

Good leaders demonstrate they are committed to:		
HUMAN SUSTAINABILITY	1.	a high degree of employee job satisfaction
	2.	employee health and wellness
	3.	building an organizational culture of respect
	4.	staff development and training (including succession planning)
	5.	developing and maintaining constructive, mutually beneficial, and positive relationships with both internal and external stakeholders
OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY	1.	a system of continuous improvement
	2.	ongoing assessment , cross-comparison assessment, and evaluation towards best practice
	3.	placing value on suggestions for innovation / change
	4.	strengthening an institutional brand / corporate image
	5.	forward-thinking fiscal responsibility





Chapter Eight

A Last Look in the Mirror

Find a way to nurture your inner core, your moral compass that will guide your path. For many, this is not just an intellectual exercise; it is akin to a spiritual journey.

As we noted at the beginning of this book, not everyone can be a great leader. But we can all aspire to be *good* leaders, and take the steps necessary to become one. We are all heir to human fallibility and the inevitable mistakes and growing pains that are part of continuous improvement. However, we can still make the commitment to aspire to be a leader who will reflect what we have explored here. Our world is desperate for good leadership. More than that, the workings of government rely on the principled, ethical values of leaders, who lead their teams and departments with the behaviours, aspirations, skills, and commitments that reflect a strong inner core of good character. This is an essential part of the larger picture of being a visionary, results-oriented, people-focused and caring leader who communicates skillfully and leads strategically with innovation, courage, and a focus on sustainability.

For some, developing the inner core of a good leader will be the hardest part. We encourage you to take steps to learn more about what it means to be ethical, principled, and socially responsible in the setting where you work. Find a way to nurture your inner core, your moral compass that will guide your path. For many, this is not just an intellectual exercise; it is akin to a spiritual journey. There is often a transcendent aspect to the inner core of good leaders who are truly transformational in their workplaces. Find out about that, do some digging and exploration to discover what that is truly about. We encourage you to never stop nurturing your inner core, because life will never stop bringing circumstances that will challenge it.

Perhaps it is time for some further self-reflection. Maybe you have come to see that there are areas of your leadership that need more attention. We encourage you to explore the tools that will help you get there.

In thinking about that, you always need to have in mind that people around will almost never give you direct criticism about yourself. This is even truer when they really respect and like you. They will think it, they will tell others, but they will not tell you. That is why you have to be very mindful and proactive about self-improvement.

“

In the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be, by remaining what we are.²¹⁴

Max De Pree

”

360 Tools

Using a 360 tool is an effective way to discern how you and others are perceived as leaders. The management consulting field offers many variations on these tools. Most commonly, they are basic questionnaires designed and administered to obtain anonymous feedback from employees and other relevant stakeholders on co-workers, supervisors, and managers in an organization. The questionnaire will usually provide a listing of leadership or work characteristics deemed to be important. In considering each characteristic, the person completing it will check a box or otherwise assign a score to indicate the extent to which they believe the individual being assessed demonstrates a particular trait. The collective responses from all of those completing the questionnaire are then presented to the person being assessed. This presentation will normally be done in concert with a discussion about how the individual assessed themselves, using the same tool. Accordingly, the person being assessed will have the opportunity to see how their self-perception fits with the view others have of them. It not only provides an opportunity to identify strengths, it will also call attention to those characteristics that the individual being assessed should improve upon.

A 360 tool can be enormously helpful in enabling employees and others to provide both positive and constructive critical feedback in a non-threatening way. But it has to be done right.²¹⁵ These tools are only appropriate when you have enough people completing them so no one participant can be identified, and when the participants have enough experience and knowledge to make a fair assessment of characteristics being considered.

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214 Haden, J. (Aug 4, 2014).

215 Taylor, S. (July 12, 2011). *Assess Pros and Cons of 360-Degree Performance Appraisal*. Society for Human Resource Management. Retrieved from www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/360degreeperformance.aspx

They are not a mechanism for people to hide behind anonymity to say things that are unkind or cruel, or to backstab a colleague to help themselves get ahead. Similarly, the process needs to be protected from collusion, where workers may develop coalitions in the spirit of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.”²¹⁶ A 360 tool is only a snapshot at one moment in time, and it needs to be included within a wider array of strategies for support, development and evaluation.

It also has to be quick and easy to complete and easy to administer. Further, it is critical that the administrator/facilitator be especially skilled in delivering and discussing feedback in a developmental way. Otherwise, the process can be intimidating and demoralizing. It is also important to avoid the practice of using these tools only when things are going badly or when an employee’s performance is suffering. Too often, supervisors do not affirm the positives when things are going well, and performance review processes can be neglected in the years when there are no concerns. It is not fair to use them as a mechanism to trigger a dismissal, or to neglect ongoing and continuous support and feedback that should be taking place on a regular basis. It is also wise to avoid using them as part of a promotion process or to determine compensation.²¹⁷

“I’ve seen departments blow up and employees leave companies because the 360 wasn’t handled properly... 360s are most effective when they are used as a development tool, not a rating tool.” ²¹⁸ (Leadership coach Alicia Arenas)

Despite these cautions, there are numerous reasons to use 360 tools if you want to develop your strengths and give attention to the areas that need development. To help you develop the BASICS of good leadership, we invite you to review the 360 tool in the Appendix that is based on the leadership characteristics discussed in this book. You may find it a helpful option in consideration of other 360 tools available in the marketplace. At the same time, you need to have in mind “what’s next” after the administration of a 360 or feedback in any other form. That is where coaching and mentoring become all important. It is also where education and training are commonly helpful.

A 360 tool can be a useful complement to other strategies that support learning and growth, and can assist leaders in developing self-awareness and reducing their blind spots. As stated, they must be administered appropriately and presented to the individual being assessed in a way that fosters growth and development, instead of diminishing their morale.

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216 Taylor, S. (July 12, 2011).
217 Taylor, S. (July 12, 2011).
218 Leadership coach Alicia Arenas, in Taylor, S. (July 12, 2011).

Educating and Developing Leaders

It is worth noting that researchers, when trying to determine what *good leadership* is all about, usually end up learning a lot more about ineffective and poor leadership. As we said in the opening chapter of this book, poor leadership abounds. Nearly everyone can think of personal examples of when they have been subjected to ineffective or even damaging leadership. As this book concludes, we need to remind ourselves of some of the pitfalls you will want to avoid.

A 2009 study from the University of Leicester concluded that ineffective leaders are not trusted; they operate with questionable integrity; they fail to consult others while leading; and, they ignore problems.²¹⁹ Those ineffective leaders are displaying the very behaviours that are opposite to much of what we have been talking about as the BASICS of good leadership. Other research has noted the following pitfalls: relying on your promotion to give you power; acting on assumptions instead of clearly communicating your goals and asking for input and feedback; leading without being a good example; getting too comfortable in your position; and, ridding the workplace of fun.²²⁰

The process of educating, training and developing leaders is complex. Within the business sector, research indicates that most leadership training programs are not yielding the results that are needed.²²¹ One-size-fits-all training programs are not providing the benefits one would hope for when developing younger and emerging leaders.²²² What seems to be missing? In leadership expert Mike Myatt's view, training programs too often indoctrinate the learner in systems, processes, and techniques, and the experience can be rote, one-dimensional, and more of a monologue from the trainer than a dialogue with the participants.²²³

Ineffective leaders
are not trusted;
they operate with
questionable
integrity; they fail
to consult others
while leading;
and, they ignore
problems.

219 Van Dyke, D. (May 2013). *Ineffective leadership*. Leadership Simplified. Retrieved from www.leadershipsimplified.com/e-learning/newsletters/ineffective-leadership

220 Conlow, R. (August 22, 2012). *Leadership ineffectiveness: 5 Common managing mistakes*. Business Success: Leadership Development. Retrieved from <http://rickconlow.com/5-common-managing-mistakes/>

221 Freifeld, L. (September 30, 2013). *Survey: Leadership programs lack effectiveness*. Training: The Source for Professional Development. Retrieved from <https://trainingmag.com/content/survey-leadership-programs-lack-effectiveness>

222 Myatt, M. (December 19, 2012). *The #1 reason leadership development fails*. Forbes: Leadership. Retrieved from www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/19/the-1-reason-leadership-development-fails/#198baa846522

223 Myatt, M. (December 19, 2012).

Instead, we might do better to invest more in mentoring and coaching, and consider shifting toward a developmental approach rather than a “cookie cutter” training program. It is also important to remember that not every good leader is a good teacher—sometimes it is useful to have the additional support from external professionals who excel in listening, facilitating, and encouraging open dialogue when training leaders. That can help ensure there is open, honest conversation that helps address questions, struggles, and areas of concern.

Considerations for Leadership Training

If you and your organization are considering a leadership training or development program, ask yourself a few key questions:

- How will we balance the need to develop skills and competencies with the need to develop character, a moral compass, and the inner core?
- How will we create opportunities for dialogue, self-reflection, and the fostering of self-awareness?
- How will we encourage the development of emotional intelligence and soft skills?
- How will we ensure we can provide activities that foster growth and development, along with opportunities to take in new information?
- How will we access the latest findings in neuroscience and other fields that are relevant to leadership development?

It is also important to note that the employees who indicated the highest rates of satisfaction with their organization’s leadership program were part of companies and organizations who invested significant resources into their leadership programs, and had developed them over several years.²²⁴

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²²⁴ Freifeld, L. (September 30, 2013).

Selecting Leaders

Selecting the right people to advance into leadership roles is critical for any sector, and especially in government roles. In the public sector, where job security often ensures tenure longevity, it is especially important to hire well and to promote well.

Considerations for Hiring

Here are a few questions to consider as you think about how your organization handles its hiring processes:

- Are we looking for the right skills and attributes?
- Are we taking enough time in our hiring processes?
- Are we asking the right questions?
- How well do we explore the mindset of the applicant? How can we assess their values, their moral compass? What do we know about their inner core?
- Do we balance consistency with appropriate flexibility when interviewing? Or do we force every applicant through the same process for consistency, even when that becomes counter-productive? (Consider the interviewer who says to an unsuccessful applicant: “I knew you knew the answer to this, but because you didn’t say it aloud I couldn’t give you the point.” In a more flexible process, the interviewer would be able to ask a question to draw out the knowledge that he knew the applicant possessed.)
- How thoroughly do we explore their references? How else can we learn about them?

It can be beneficial to be able to recruit from within because you will have the benefit of knowing the person and how well they fit with the organization. Investing in succession planning and leadership development can be a solid strategy for helping to create the next generation of good leaders for your organization. This combines well with strategic external hires to ensure new ideas and approaches, to help prevent the organization from becoming entrenched, too inwardly focused, or out of touch.

“ Always do right. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”²²⁵
Mark Twain

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²²⁵ GovLeaders.org. (n.d.).

Final Thoughts

Becoming a good leader is a journey that can last a lifetime. Good leaders never stop learning; their commitment to continuous learning and improvement drives them to continue. As you think about what you have learned in this book, think about how you can begin to implement the ideas and principles that are contained here. Think about the mindset you bring to work with you. What are your aspirations? What motivates you? What are your unspoken commitments that shape the kind of leader you have become?

Our hope is that you will more seriously consider the deeper issues of leadership, and think more about what is at the very centre of who you are. Without that strong inner core, it will be difficult to lead well over time. We encourage you to build a strong moral compass, develop an ethical framework of principles that will guide you, and use those as a foundation upon which your competencies, aspirations and skills can be developed. Leaders who have these BASICS can be assured of greater success, and they have the satisfaction of knowing they will have a positive impact on those who follow them.

Seriously consider the deeper issues of leadership, and what is at the centre of who you are. Becoming a good leader is a journey that can last a lifetime.

“ Knowing your weakness only makes you stronger.²²⁶ ”
Gary Lenz

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²²⁶ Gary Lenz, Sergeant-At-Arms, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.





Appendix

The 360 Tool

Assess the leader on each of the following 47 items according to the scoring levels below. Please circle the number that best fits your rating, leaving the score blank for any item where you don't believe you have enough information to make a fair assessment.

- 1 = Mostly untrue**/leader needs serious improvement

2 = Somewhat untrue/leader needs significant improvement

3 = Somewhat describes the leader/ there is room for some improvement

4 = Mostly describes the leader/a good example for others

THE INNER CORE

They demonstrate:	Score
1. integrity (i.e. a strong moral compass, very ethical, trustworthy)	1 2 3 4
2. a commitment to social responsibility	1 2 3 4
3. an attitude of selfless service to others	1 2 3 4

1 = Mostly untrue 2 = Somewhat untrue 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Mostly true

BEHAVIOURS

They demonstrate:	Score
1. a commitment to investing in people, ensuring they are supported and developed	1 2 3 4
2. a genuine concern for the well-being and success of colleagues and subordinates	1 2 3 4
3. a commitment to getting results	1 2 3 4
4. that they foster genuine collaboration	1 2 3 4
5. that they encourage innovation	1 2 3 4
6. that they have vision	1 2 3 4
7. that they are courageous/are able to make really tough decisions	1 2 3 4

ASPIRATIONS

They demonstrate:	Score
1. a commitment to <i>getting to yes</i>	1 2 3 4
2. a commitment to seeking win-win solutions	1 2 3 4
3. a commitment to inspiring and motivating others	1 2 3 4
4. a commitment to excellence	1 2 3 4
5. that they are optimistic and positive	1 2 3 4
6. that they are thoughtfully skeptical	1 2 3 4
7. that they are dedicated and committed	1 2 3 4

1 = Mostly untrue 2 = Somewhat untrue 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Mostly true

SKILLS

They demonstrate:	Score
1. good verbal/presentation communication skills	1 2 3 4
2. good written skills	1 2 3 4
3. active listening with skills for conflict management and resolution	1 2 3 4
4. good coaching and mentoring skills	1 2 3 4
5. good team-building skills	1 2 3 4
6. good performance evaluation and feedback skills	1 2 3 4
7. good analytical/strategic management skills	1 2 3 4
8. good problem-solving and decision-making skills	1 2 3 4
9. good organizational skills	1 2 3 4
10. good resource/asset/financial management skills.	1 2 3 4

INFORMATION COMMITMENTS

They demonstrate they are committed to:	Score
1. getting feedback and knowing their own weaknesses and how to correct them, towards becoming a better leader	1 2 3 4
2. knowing the concerns and aspirations of colleagues, subordinates, and internal and external stakeholders	1 2 3 4
3. knowing the general business and mission of the organization/unit	1 2 3 4
4. measurement and evidence-informed decision making	1 2 3 4
5. keeping up on world events/trends/new research findings	1 2 3 4

1 = Mostly untrue 2 = Somewhat untrue 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Mostly true

COMMUNICATION COMMITMENTS

They demonstrate they are committed to:	Score
1. formally and informally expressing sincere gratitude and appreciation to colleagues and subordinates for work well done	1 2 3 4
2. open and transparent communicatio.	1 2 3 4
3. easy and accessible communication (e.g. user-friendly technology/data systems)	1 2 3 4
4. encouraging input—including criticism and critical perspectives—through active listening, consultation, and being consistently inclusive	1 2 3 4
5. improving information-sharing and information systems with relevant stakeholders	1 2 3 4

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS – HUMAN

They demonstrate they are committed to:	Score
1. a high level of employee job satisfaction	1 2 3 4
2. employee health and wellness	1 2 3 4
3. building an organizational culture of respect	1 2 3 4
4. staff development and training (including succession planning)	1 2 3 4
5. developing and maintaining constructive, mutually beneficial, and positive relationships with both internal and external stakeholders	1 2 3 4

1 = Mostly untrue 2 = Somewhat untrue 3 = Somewhat true 4 = Mostly true

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS – OPERATIONAL

They demonstrate that:

Score

1. they are committed to a system of continuous improvement

1 2 3 4

2. they are committed to ongoing assessment, cross-comparison assessment, and evaluation towards best practice

1 2 3 4

3. they value suggestions for innovation/change

1 2 3 4

4. they are committed to strengthening an institutional brand/corporate image

1 2 3 4

5. they are committed to forward-thinking fiscal responsibility

1 2 3 4

Totals Overall

#1s

#2s

#3s

#4s

Number of items scored

Source: Garis, L., Squires, C., & Plecas, D. (2018). *The essentials of leadership in government: Understanding the BASICS*. Abbotsford, BC: University of the Fraser Valley.

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What Others are Saying About *The Essentials of Leadership in Government*



This book is not only a foundational resource for government leaders, it gets at the heart of leadership by revealing the importance of the inner core of a good leader, while revealing essential leadership behaviors, aspirations, skills, and practices. It also addresses the haunting issue of sustaining the impact of effective leadership. How often have you seen a good leader leave her or his post and have the good work that was accomplished be destroyed by the next leader who assumes the role? This book provides a solution to this and many other previously unresolved issues that are faced by leaders in government. It is a guidebook to read again and again while navigating the white waters of change that we now face.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, PhD, #1 Leadership Thinker in the world (Thinkers 50) and author of #1 New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller *Triggers* and New York Times bestseller *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

This book has a soul! The authors cleverly propose a model which is simple to understand and all encompassing. The chapters are easy to read, interesting, down to earth and loaded with practical advice. As a professor of leadership at the University of Alberta, I have just found my new textbook for next year's class. If you are an aspiring leader put this book on your self-improvement list.

Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti, MD PhD MPH CCFP FRCPC FACP FRCPI FRCPE FRCPC ICD-D CCPE, Professor of Public Health, University of Alberta and Past President of the Canadian Medical Association and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

This book provides a compelling and comprehensive look at the key elements of leadership. The authors highlight fundamental elements for leaders such as a principled inner core, good character and a moral compass while providing useful day-to-day tools for navigating environmental and social complexities.

Victoria Lee, MD MPH MBA CCFP FRCPC, Vice President Population Health and Chief Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health Authority, British Columbia

This book is not only a derailment prevention toolbox, but a guidebook and pathway to long-term leadership success in government. It develops insight about leadership from the inside out, and equips government leaders with the knowledge and skills to avoid the many landmines that can beset them. Perhaps most uniquely and importantly, it reveals how government leaders can model the way toward the professionalization of leadership that engenders success in their agencies.

Dr. Terry Anderson, PhD, Co-Founder and Faculty at the Institute for Credible Leadership Development, and Chief Leadership Officer