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# Leadership and Communication

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The next three chapters provide an overview of leadership in specific contexts: Chapter 7 introduces group and team leadership and describes the special challenges of leading project teams and virtual teams. Chapter 8 is a discussion of organizational leadership with particular focus on the creation of culture, sensemaking, and the communication of expectations. Chapter 9 examines the power of public leadership, highlighting public relations, public speaking, and persuasive campaigns.

The final four chapters look at important leadership issues. Chapter 10 describes the impact of cultural differences on leading and following, how to foster diversity, and how to narrow the gender leadership gap. Chapter 11 outlines the ethical challenges facing leaders and followers, components of ethical behavior, and ethical perspectives that can guide both leaders and followers. Chapter 12 identifies proactive leader development strategies as well as tools for managing leadership transitions. Chapter 13 examines the role of leadership in preventing and responding to crises.

As we noted in the preface to previous editions, this text is designed as an introduction to leadership from a communication vantage point, not as the final word (as if there could be one) on the topic. Please consider *Leadership: A Communication Perspective* as our contribution to a continuing dialogue with you on the subjects of leading and following. Throughout the book we'll invite you to disagree with our conclusions, generate additional insights of your own, debate controversial issues, and explore topics in depth through research projects, reflection papers, and small group discussions. If we've ignored issues that you think are essential to the study and practice of leadership, let us know. Send your comments and suggestions to us via e-mail or regular mail to the addresses below or in care of Waveland Press.

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# LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

***Leadership is action, not position.***

—Donald McGannon

## OVERVIEW

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## Leadership: At the Core of Human Experience

Leadership attracts universal attention. Historians, philosophers, and social scientists have attempted to understand and to explain leadership for centuries. From Confucius to Plato to Machiavelli, many of the world's most renowned thinkers have theorized about how people lead one another.<sup>1</sup> One reason for the fascination with this subject lies in the very nature of human experience. Leadership is all around us. We get up in the morning, open the newspaper, turn on our computer, radio, or television, and discover what actions leaders all over the world have taken. We attend classes, work, and interact in social groups—all with their own distinct patterns of leadership. Our daily experiences with leadership are not that different from the experiences of individuals in other cultures. Leadership is an integral part of human life in rural tribal cultures as well as in modern industrialized nations. Looking at your past leadership efforts can help to provide a good starting point for understanding why the success of leadership often varies so significantly. Identify your own best and worst leadership moments and what you can learn from these experiences by completing the self-assessment exercise in box 1.1.

Followers prosper under effective leaders and suffer under ineffective leaders whatever the context: government, corporation, church or synagogue, school, athletic team, or class project group. The study of leadership, then, is more than academic. Understanding leadership has practical importance for all of us. (See the case study in box 1.2 for a dramatic example of how important leadership can be.) In this text we will examine leadership in a wide variety of situations. However, our perspective remains the same—leadership is best understood from a communication standpoint. As Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr explain, effective leaders use language as their most tangible tool for achieving desired outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Let's begin our exploration of leadership by considering the special nature of human communication and the unique qualities of leadership.

## Defining Leadership

As we have noted, leadership is a fundamental element of the human condition. Wherever society exists, leadership exists. Any definition of leadership must account for its universal nature. Leadership seems to be linked to what it means to be human. As communication specialists, we believe that what makes us unique as humans is our ability to create and manipulate symbols.

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*I take leadership to signify the act of making a difference.*

—Michael Useem

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### Box 1.1 Self-Assessment

### Your Best and Worst Leadership Moment<sup>3</sup>

Everyone has enjoyed leadership success at some point. At some time—whether in high school, college, on the athletic field, in a community or religious group, or at work—we have all made things happen through other people. We have all been leaders. Looking back over your life, what is the experience that you are *most* proud of as a leader? Use the space below to capture the details of that moment.

Just as all of us have enjoyed success, we've also experienced the pain of leadership failure. Learning to be a leader requires looking back and learning from past mistakes so that you don't repeat errors. What was your most disappointing experience as a leader? Record your thoughts in the space below.

Given the best and worst leadership experiences you identified, consider the lessons you have learned about leadership in the past. In working through this assessment it can be very helpful to share your leadership stories with others so that you have a richer set of examples from which to compile a list of leadership lessons. The lessons learned from past leadership experiences might be things like: *It is difficult to succeed as a leader when followers are not motivated; leadership works best when you have a clear sense of direction; or a leader must be sure his or her message is understood to ensure followers stay involved.* Try to identify 10 leadership lessons your experiences (and, if possible, those of others) have provided.

#### Leadership Lessons

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



**Box 1.2 Case Study****Death and Heroism on the Savage Mountain<sup>4</sup>**

Mountaineers call K2 the Savage Mountain. The world's second tallest peak, K2 claims a greater percentage of climbers (1 in 3) than Mt. Everest, the world's tallest mountain (1 in 10). Fewer than 300 climbers have topped K2 as compared to over 3,000 on Mt. Everest. The Savage Mountain is not only steeper and harder to climb than Mt. Everest; its location further north makes it even more susceptible to bad weather. There are only a few days when high winds and snow abate, allowing climbers to attempt to reach the summit at over 27,000 feet.

In summer 2008, ten expeditions made up of members from Serbia, the United States, France, South Korea, the Netherlands, Italy, Nepal, and Pakistan huddled in their small tents at the highest camp on K2 waiting for the weather to break. Because so many people were on the mountain, team leaders knew they had to coordinate their efforts, particularly to navigate the Bottleneck. The Bottleneck is a narrow, sheer section of trail that requires climbers to go single file. At the Bottleneck, a slow climber can delay all those who follow. Team leaders agreed that on the day of the summit one group would go first and lay out ropes for the other teams to use as they ascended and descended the Bottleneck. Another group would put willow wands in the snow to mark the path back to camp.

On August 1 the weather cleared and 20 climbers launched their mass assault on the summit. Problems arose almost immediately. The lead team didn't have enough rope and started to lay rope too soon so that there wasn't enough to reach the top of the Bottleneck. The wands weren't planted. The only climber to have previously made it to the top took sick and couldn't summit. Some groups were slow to start and, as feared, a cluster of climbers got stuck below the Bottleneck, waiting to ascend. A Serbian fell to his death during the initial ascent and another climber died while trying to retrieve his body.

Descending in darkness is highly dangerous, as is bivouacking at 27,000 feet without shelter in intense cold. To avoid these dangers, climbers should have turned back by 2 PM. Instead, most pressed on to the top, not reaching their goal until much later. Eighteen reached the top—a K2 record—with the last team arriving at 7 PM. As a result, some decided to stop for the night while others made their way back down the mountain. That's when disaster struck. A huge overhanging piece of ice broke off. Tumbling through the Bottleneck, it buried one climber and scoured away the ropes. Subsequent icefalls and avalanches, as well as the elements, disorientation, and deadly climbing conditions, would take additional lives. The total death toll was 11, making this one of the worst mountaineering disasters ever.

While nothing could have prevented the huge icefall, the loss of life was greater than it should have been. To begin, members of the various expeditions never bonded but instead remained strangers. They had difficulty communicating with each other because of language differences and operated independently. Members of some teams were highly critical of the preparation and skills of those on other teams. This apparently contributed to a disregard for human life when the crisis struck. Far too many ignored those in need, failing to offer assistance to those likely to perish. According to a Dutch survivor, "Everybody was fighting for himself and I still do not understand why everybody was leaving each other."

Summit fever drove many to continue to climb when they should have turned back, putting them at high risk. So close to reaching their goal, they feared that they would never have another chance to reach their objective. Some had corporate sponsors and felt additional pressure to summit. The high altitude porters had an incentive to support their efforts because they would earn a \$1000 bonus if their clients succeeded. Those on the mountain also became too dependent on the ropes, even though the peak can be successfully climbed without them. In fact, the first climber to summit and successfully descend that day did so using only his personal alpine gear.

Sherpa are often overlooked in tales of mountaineering, which focus on the exploits of European and North American alpinists. However, Sherpa climbers earned international recognition as the heroes of the K2 disaster. Pemba Sherpa repeatedly left the safety of camp to assist

stranded climbers. Pasang Lama gave his ice axe to another climber while above the Bottleneck. When his colleague Chhiring Dorje saw his plight, he climbed back up to help. Chhiring roped himself to Pasang and they descended step by step to safety. Two other Sherpa lost their lives in an avalanche after they ascended to assist three Korean climbers tangled in rope.

The disaster on the Savage Mountain illustrates the high cost of ineffective and unethical leadership and followership. However, these events also demonstrate how individuals can make a life-and-death difference when they put aside selfish concerns to help others.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever followed a leader in a high-risk situation? How did you determine that this person was worthy of your trust?
2. Have you ever been the leader in a high-risk activity? How did you approach this task?
3. Have you ever let pursuit of a goal override your common sense and put you in danger? How can you prevent this from happening again?
4. What steps, if any, could have been taken to prevent the disaster on K2 or to lessen the death toll?
5. Why do some people, like the Sherpa on K2, rise to the challenge of a crisis while others do not?
6. What leadership and followership lessons do you take from the disaster on K2?

**The Nature of Human Communication**

Communication theorist Frank Dance defines symbols as abstract, arbitrary representations of reality agreed upon by human users.<sup>5</sup> For example, there is nothing in the physical nature of this book that mandates labeling it a "book." We have agreed to use this label, or symbol, to represent a bound collection of pages; this agreement is purely arbitrary. The meaning of a symbol, according to Leslie White, does not come from the intrinsic properties of the idea, concept, or object being represented. The value is "bestowed upon it by those who use it."<sup>6</sup> Words are not the only symbols we use; we attach arbitrary meanings to many nonverbal behaviors as well. Looking someone in the eye symbolizes honesty to many North Americans. However, making direct eye contact in some other cultures is considered an invasion of privacy. Meaning is generated through communication.

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*[Humans] differ from the apes, and indeed all other living creatures so far as we know, in that [they are] capable of symbolic behavior. With words, [humans] create a new world, a world of ideas and philosophies.*

—Leslie White

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Communication is based on the transfer of symbols, which allows individuals to create meaning. As you read this text, the words we have written are transferred to you. The meanings of these words are subject to your interpretation. It is our goal to write in a way that allows for clear understanding, but factors such as your cultural background, your previous experience, your level of interest, and our writing skills influence your perception of our message.



The goal of communication is to create a shared reality between message sources and receivers.

The human ability to manipulate symbols allows for the creation of reality. Simply labeling someone as “motivated” or “lazy,” for example, can lead to changes in behavior. Followers generally work hard to meet the high expectations implied in the “motivated” label; they may lower their performance to meet the low expectations of the “lazy” label. This phenomenon, discussed in detail in chapter 8, is known as the Pygmalion effect.

Symbols not only create reality but also enable us to communicate about the past, present, and future. We can evaluate our past performances, analyze current conditions, and set agendas for the future. In addition, symbolic communication is purposive and goal driven. We consciously use words, gestures, and other symbolic behaviors in order to achieve our goals. The purposeful nature of human communication differentiates it from animal communication.<sup>7</sup>

The communication patterns of animals are predetermined. For example, wolves normally travel in small groups known as packs. Dominance within the pack is predetermined based on such characteristics as size, physical strength, and aggressiveness. Humans, on the other hand, consciously select from an array of possibilities for achieving their goals. Human leadership is not predetermined as in the animal world; rather, it varies from situation to situation and from individual to individual.

Leadership shares all of the features of human communication just described. First, *leaders use symbols to create reality*. Leaders use language, stories, and rituals to create distinctive group cultures. Second, *leaders communicate about the past, present, and future*. They engage in evaluation, analysis, and goal setting. Effective leaders create a desirable vision outlining what the group should be like in the future. Third, *leaders make conscious use of symbols to reach their goals*. See the case study in box 1.3 for examples of the effective and ineffective use of symbols by leaders. We will have more to say about how leaders adapt their behaviors to reach their goals later in the chapter. In the meantime, let's take a closer look at the characteristics of human communication.

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*Words can destroy. What we call each other ultimately becomes what we think of each other, and it matters.*

—Jeane Kirkpatrick

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## The Human Communication Process

Noted communication scholar Dean Barnlund identified five principles that reflect the basic components of human communication.<sup>8</sup>

**Communication is not a thing, it is a process.** Communication is not constant; it is dynamic and ever changing. Unlike a biologist looking at a cell through a microscope, communication scholars focus on a continuous, ongoing process without a clearly defined beginning or end. Take a typical conversation, for example. Does a conversation begin when two people enter a room? When they first see each other? When they begin talking? Barnlund, and others,

### Box 1.3 Case Study

### The Importance of Symbols

Leadership is primarily a symbolic activity. The words and behaviors of leaders greatly influence the reactions of those who follow. Consider these examples:

**Don Isley** is the General Manager of Renco Manufacturing, a medium-sized manufacturing company producing precision components for the airline industry. The Renco plant is located in an office park near a commercial airport and parking is limited. Employee parking areas at the plant are divided into two lots. In one lot, managers and office staff park their vehicles near the main entrance to the Renco plant. On the other side of the building, those who work in the production area park near a side entrance to the plant. This parking arrangement is more informal than formal, but employees are consistent in their behavior and rarely park in the “wrong” lot. Isley parks in neither lot. He parks his vehicle, a new Corvette, directly in front of the building in a fire lane designated as a no parking area. Isley claims he needs to park in this location so that he can have easier access to his office. Some of the production workers who earn salaries just above minimum wage feel like Isley is “showing off.” What do you think?

**Peter Houghton** is the CEO of a large privately owned utility company—Valley Electric. Houghton came to Valley Electric from a competitor where he was highly regarded for his successful management practices. Despite this reputation, employees at Valley Electric were nervous when Houghton was hired. He replaced a well-regarded CEO who had been at the helm during a period of rapid growth and profitability. Sensing this uneasiness, Houghton made the decision to spend his first month on the job meeting as many Valley Electric employees as he could. Houghton visited offices, power stations, and field sites. He introduced himself to employees, asked questions, and learned policies and procedures. At the end of his first month on the job, Houghton finally reported to his office. He felt ready to assume the challenge of leading Valley Electric. What do you think of this strategy?

**Mark Ayala** is the owner of a small T-shirt printing business. His company employs about 15 full-time staff members who are responsible for the production of a variety of custom-designed T-shirts. Most of the staff work for minimum wage, and turnover is high. The clothing produced ranges from special-order logo shirts for corporate clients to mass-produced shirts celebrating sports team championships. Ayala started the business in his garage five years ago and has built a loyal clientele by providing high-quality products that are delivered on time to his customers. Ayala and his staff must, at times, work around the clock to meet deadlines for special orders. Through his persistence and hard work, Ayala has developed a very successful business. Recently, Ayala noted that his total revenue for the year exceeded \$1 million for the first time in company history. To mark this accomplishment and to thank his employees, Ayala came in late one night and printed T-shirts for his staff. The shirts featured a depiction of a \$1 million dollar bill with Ayala's picture in the center. On the back each shirt read, “Thanks a Million.” When Ayala announced the \$1 million milestone to his employees and handed out the shirts, many of his employees were appreciative. Some, however, found the T-shirt giveaway insulting. What do you think?

**Eric Littleton** is the president of Bald College, a small, private, residential school in the South that is heavily dependent upon tuition revenue. Due to a drop in the number of incoming students, Bald had to reduce costs. Littleton called an all-employee meeting to announce that department budgets would be cut and that some employees would be laid off. He delivered this message to faculty and staff while wearing workout clothes—a T-shirt, Bald College sweatshirt, and running pants. At the end of the meeting he declined to take questions. Instead he told the crowd that he was headed over to the athletic complex to run with the college's highly successful men's basketball team. A number of employees were upset with the way the president handled this important announcement. What do you think?

**Margaret Gates** is the superintendent of schools in the Elmwood Hills school district. Elmwood Hills is an affluent community located in the suburbs of a large metropolitan area. The schools in the Elmwood Hills district have an excellent reputation, and many parents choose to

(continued)

live in the area so their children can attend the schools. Gates was hired as superintendent after her predecessor (who had been in the district for 37 years as a teacher and administrator) retired. Gates was a well-regarded candidate; she had years of experience leading high-performing programs in school districts in another state. Within two months of her arrival at Elmwood Hills, Gates assembled the more than 2,000 faculty and staff members within the district. Although few of these teachers or staff members had met Gates yet, most were eager to hear what their new leader had to say. In the meeting, Gates unveiled a new vision statement and a set of 12 initiatives, including mandatory nightly homework assignments, a greater emphasis on core academic subjects, and revamping many of the existing programs within the district. Although many of the initiatives Gates presented had merit, most of those attending the meeting left with a very negative impression of their new leader. What do you think went wrong?

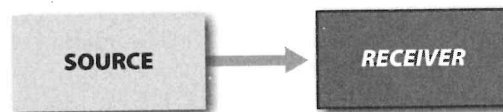
**Shirley Phillips** is the CEO of Hilcrest Laboratories, a multinational pharmaceutical company. As CEO, Phillips has exhibited an antipathy toward corporate perks. Like all other Hilcrest executives and managers, Phillips has a cubicle, not a private office. When Phillips travels, she flies coach class and rents a subcompact car, as do all Hilcrest executives and managers. Employees jokingly refer to these small rental cars as "Hilcrest limousines." Phillips's efforts are viewed by some as merely an attempt to cut costs. Some senior managers feel they have earned the perks of first-class travel and full-size rental cars. Others contend that Hilcrest's profit-sharing plan is perk enough and that money shouldn't be wasted on costly airfares and rental cars. Phillips argues her actions communicate a belief that all at Hilcrest are equal in importance. What do you think?

After considering these six examples, think of some of the leaders with whom you have worked in the past. Identify examples of effective or ineffective symbolic behavior on the part of these leaders. Discuss your examples with others in class.

would suggest that a conversation actually "begins" with the experiences, skills, feelings, and other characteristics that individuals bring to an interaction.

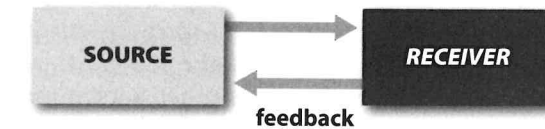
**Communication is not linear, it is circular.** Models depicting the process of communication have evolved from a linear explanation, first developed by ancient Greek rhetoricians over 2,000 years ago, to a circular explanation, offered by Barnlund. In the earliest description of the communication process, a source transmitted a message to a receiver in much the same way that an archer shoots an arrow into a target. Only the source had an active role in this model; the receiver merely accepted messages. This view, known as an action model, is diagrammed below.

**An Action Model of Communication**



The action model provided an incomplete depiction of the communication process because the response of the receiver was ignored. Reactions to messages, known as feedback, were included in the next explanation of communication—the interaction model. The interaction model described communication as a process of sending messages back and forth from sources to receivers and receivers to sources. From this perspective, diagrammed at the top of p. 9, communication resembles a game of tennis.

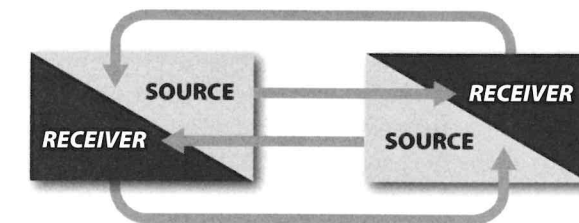
**An Interaction Model of Communication**



The evolution of the circular explanation of communication was completed with the development of Barnlund's transactional model. The transactional approach assumes that messages are sent and received simultaneously by source/receivers. The ongoing, continuous nature of the process of communication is implicit in this model.

In the transactional model, communicators simultaneously transmit and receive messages. Effective communicators pay close attention to the messages being sent to them as they talk with others. The typical classroom lecture demonstrates how we act as senders and receivers at the same time. Even though only one person (the instructor) delivers the lecture, students provide important information about how the lecture is being received. If the lecture is interesting, listeners respond with smiles, head nods, and questions. If the lecture is boring, class members may fidget, fall asleep, surf their e-mail, or glance frequently at their watches. These responses are transmitted throughout the lecture. Thus, both the instructor and students simultaneously act as message source and receiver.

**A Transactional Model of Communication**



**Communication is complex.** Communication involves more than just one person sending a message to another. The process involves the negotiation of shared interpretations and understanding. Barnlund explains that when you have a conversation with another person there are, in a sense, six people involved in the conversation.

1. Who you think you are
2. Who you think the other person is
3. Who you think the other person thinks you are
4. Who the other person thinks he or she is
5. Who the other person thinks you are
6. Who the other person thinks you think he or she is

**Communication is irreversible.** Like a permanent ink stain, communication is indelible. If you have ever tried to "take back" something you have said to another person, you know that while you can apologize for saying something



inappropriate, you cannot erase your message. Many times in the heat of an argument we say something that hurts someone. After the argument has cooled down, we generally say we are sorry for our insensitive remarks. Even though the apology is accepted and the remark is retracted, the words continue to shape the relationship. The other person may still wonder, “Did he/she really mean it?” We can never completely un-communicate.

**Communication involves the total personality.** A person’s communication cannot be viewed separately from the person. Communication is more than a set of behaviors; it is the primary, defining characteristic of a human being. Our view of self and others is shaped, defined, and maintained through communication.

Now that you have a better understanding of the process of human communication, we will examine the special nature of leadership communication.

## Leadership: A Special Form of Human Communication

One way to isolate the unique characteristics of leadership is to look at how others have defined the term. According to James MacGregor Burns, the scholar attributed with founding contemporary leadership studies, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on Earth.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Joseph Rost found there were 221 definitions of leadership published in books and articles between 1900 and 1990—a number that likely has doubled given the recent interest in leadership since his review.<sup>10</sup> With so many definitions of leadership in print it is helpful to classify these conceptions into broader categories. Four primary definitional themes emerge.

**Leadership is about who you are.** This definitional theme focuses on leader traits and attributes and is one of the oldest ways of conceptualizing leadership. The emphasis is on identifying the characteristics that define “born leaders.” Examples of such definitions of leadership published in the early part of the twentieth century are “personality in action . . . in such a way that the course of action of the many is changed by the one,”<sup>11</sup> and “[the] person who possesses the greatest number of desirable traits of personality and character.”<sup>12</sup>

**Leadership is about how you act.** From this perspective, leadership is defined as the exercise of influence or power. To identify leaders, we need to determine who is influencing whom. For example, Paul Hersey defines leadership as “any attempt to influence the behavior of another individual or group.”<sup>13</sup> Bernard Bass argues that “an effort to influence others is attempted leadership.”<sup>14</sup> When others actually change, then leadership is successful. Swedish researcher Mats Alvesson focuses on the influence process from a communication perspective, arguing that leadership is a “culture-influencing activity” that involves the “management of meaning.”<sup>15</sup>

**Leadership is about what you do.** This definitional thread focuses on the importance of followers. Leader influence attempts are neither random nor self-centered. Instead, leaders channel their influence and encourage change in order to meet the needs or to reach the goals of a group (task force, business organization, social movement, state legislature, military unit, nation). Note the group orientation in the following definitions:

- the behavior of an individual when he/she is involved in directing group activities;<sup>16</sup>

- the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal setting and goal achievement.<sup>17</sup>

Placing leadership in the context of group achievement helps to clarify the difference between leadership and persuasion. Persuasion involves changing attitudes and behavior through rational and emotional arguments. Since persuasive tactics can be used solely for personal gain, persuasion is not always a leadership activity. Persuasion, although critical to effective leadership, is only one of many influence tools available to a leader.

**Leadership is about how you work with others.** This definitional theme emphasizes collaboration. Leaders and followers establish mutual purposes and work together as partners to reach their goals. Success is the product of leaders’ and followers’ joint efforts. Joseph Rost highlights the interdependence of leaders/followers this way: “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and their collaborators [followers] who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.”<sup>18</sup> Others, such as Peter Block and Robert Greenleaf, discuss concepts such as “stewardship” and “servant leadership” in defining leadership as a partnership with followers.<sup>19</sup>

Combining our discussion of human communication with the definitional elements above, we offer the following communication-based definition of leadership: **Leadership is human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs.** (For a sampling of how some other textbooks have defined leadership, see box 1.4.)

### Box 1.4

### Leadership Definitions: A Textbook Sampler

“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”—Peter Northouse<sup>20</sup>

“Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.”—Gary Yukl<sup>21</sup>

“A leader [can be defined as] a person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in the establishment of goals, and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective.”—Afsaneh Nahavandi<sup>22</sup>

“Leadership is social influence. It means leaving a mark, it is initiating and guiding, and the result is change.”—George Manning and Kent Curtis<sup>23</sup>

“Leadership. . . a dynamic (fluid), interactive, working relationship between a leader and one or more followers, operating within the framework of a group context for the accomplishment of some collective goal.”—Jon Pierce and John Newstrom<sup>24</sup>

## Leaders vs. Managers

Management is often equated with leadership. However, leading differs significantly from managing. Managers may act as leaders, but often they do not. Similarly, employees can take a leadership role even though they do not have a



managerial position. Leadership experts James Kouzes and Barry Posner suggest the following exercise to highlight the differences between leaders and managers. Take a sheet of paper and make two columns. In the first column, identify the activities, behaviors, and actions of leaders. In the second column, list the activities, behaviors, and actions of managers. Now compare the two lists. Kouzes and Posner predict that you will associate leaders with factors such as change, crisis, and innovation and that you will associate managers with organizational stability. According to these authors, "When we think of leaders, we recall times of turbulence, conflict, innovation, and change. When we think of managers, we recall times of stability, harmony, maintenance, and constancy."<sup>25</sup>

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*You manage things; you lead people.*

—Grace Murray Hopper

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John Kotter uses three central activities to highlight the differences between management and leadership: creating an agenda, developing a human network for achieving the agenda, and executing the agenda.<sup>26</sup> The management process for creating an agenda involves planning and budgeting. Managers at this stage tend to focus on time frames, specific details, analysis of potential risks, and resource allocation. By contrast, leaders create an agenda by establishing direction and communicating long-range views of the big picture. This process involves developing a desirable and attainable goal for the future, otherwise known as a vision. The actions of Herb Kelleher during his tenure as CEO of Southwest Airlines are examples of this type of leadership activity. In taking a fledgling airline to prominence in the U.S. airline industry, Kelleher had a clear vision of the strategy and leadership practices necessary to make Southwest Airlines a success (see the case study in box 1.5 for more about leadership at Southwest Airlines). The presence of a shared and meaningful vision, as we'll see in chapter 4, is a central component of effective leadership.

Once the agenda is established, people must be mobilized to achieve the plan. Managers mobilize others through organizing and staffing. The focus of this management activity involves getting individuals with the right training in the right job and then getting those individuals to carry out the agreed-upon plan. Leaders mobilize others by aligning people. Alignment focuses on integration, teamwork, and commitment.

The execution of the agenda from a management perspective involves controlling and problem solving. This process usually focuses on containment, control, and predictability. Leaders execute their agenda by motivating and inspiring. This process focuses on empowerment, expansion, and creativity. One organization that does an excellent job of motivating and inspiring followers is Mary Kay Cosmetics. Founded in 1963 by the late Mary Kay Ash, the company has more female employees earning over \$50,000 per year than any other organization in the world. One of the most coveted awards presented to the independent agents (known as "beauty consultants") who sell Mary Kay products is a 14-carat gold brooch in the shape of a bumblebee. The bumblebee, all new recruits are reminded, has a body too big for its wings and thus

### Box 1.5 Case Study

### Putting Employees First at Southwest Airlines

Southwest Airlines began as a fledgling operation with four airplanes flying 18 daily round-trip flights among three cities in Texas. The early history of the airline led to the development of a unique leadership approach. Before Southwest ever had its first flight, a group of competitors filed a lawsuit to block the upstart airline from initiating its proposed service. The legal battle dragged on for three years before Southwest finally got off the ground in 1971. The early days were lean for the airline; flights often carried only a handful of passengers, and the cost of the legal battles required to establish the company drained its resources. The CEO of Southwest Airlines from its founding until his retirement in 2001 was Herb Kelleher. An attorney by training, Kelleher turned the struggling airline into a personal crusade. To survive among its hostile and much larger competitors, Kelleher worked to develop the leadership practices that would allow Southwest to prosper.

Southwest's operating strategy focuses on providing low-cost, no-frills service with frequent direct flights between cities. The method for achieving success in using this strategy has been to employ a revolutionary leadership approach. While many companies argue that the customer is always right, Kelleher believes employees come first. "Customers are not always right, and I think that is one of the biggest betrayals of your people you can possibly commit. The customer is frequently wrong. We don't carry those sorts of customers. We write them and say, 'Fly somebody else. Don't abuse our people.'"<sup>27</sup>

As Southwest's corporate philosophy explains: Employees are number one. The way you treat your employees is the way they will treat your customers. The results for customers have been exceptional. Southwest has consistently been rated by the U.S. Department of Transportation *Air Travel Consumer Report* as having the best on-time performance, best baggage handling, and fewest complaints of all major air carriers. In a highly competitive industry in which all carriers strive to get top ratings in any of the three reporting categories, Southwest is the only airline to ever be rated best in all three categories—a feat called the triple crown. Indeed, Southwest once held the triple-crown for five consecutive years—an astonishing record considering no other airline has held the triple crown for even one month!

Southwest goes to extraordinary lengths to connect with employees. The company has a culture services department that sponsors Spirit Parties, chili cook-offs, awards banquets, and other special events. A team of five people acknowledges significant employee "life events" (births, deaths, serious illnesses) through phone calls, cards, and gifts. A customer communications team makes sure that commendations are forwarded to employees with acknowledgment to the customer making the compliment. The "Heroes of the Heart" program recognizes employees or departments for extraordinary service by painting the names of winners on planes for a year. CEO Gary Kelly views communication as his "primary job," spending an "incredible" percentage of his time communicating with Southwest employees. Kelly records news updates for employees every Monday morning and meets weekly with staffers. Every February he meets with company workers in six locations around the country, delivering a "State of the Company" address to thousands of employees. In August he holds a series of conversations with employees, meeting with flight attendants, pilots, and ground crews at airport locations.<sup>28</sup>

Other key corporate philosophies emphasize that work should be fun (employees are encouraged to take their jobs and the competition seriously—but not themselves); that employees should demonstrate a warrior spirit that is passionate and committed to hard work; that others should come first (a servant's heart); and that employees should do whatever it takes to meet the needs of customers. As former company president Colleen Barrett explains, "No employee will ever be punished for using good judgment and good old common sense when trying to accommodate a customer—no matter what our rules are."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps most noteworthy is Southwest's commitment to conducting its business in a loving manner which respects the dignity of every employee no matter his or her position in the organization. As consultants Kevin and Jackie Freiberg explain,

(continued)

"Southwest understands that when people feel loved they develop a greater capacity to love others. Employees bear out this belief every day in the kindness, patience, and forgiveness they extend to each other and their customers."<sup>30</sup> This value is so deeply ingrained in the company's culture that Southwest's stock symbol is LUV.

The results of the Southwest leadership approach have been nothing short of phenomenal. The airline has been rated as one of the nation's 10 best companies to work for.<sup>31</sup> Each year Southwest receives over 200,000 applications for some 4,000 available jobs. The demand for employment at the airline is so great that it is easier to get accepted at Harvard than it is to become a mechanic at Southwest!<sup>32</sup> In an industry plagued by problems associated with excessive costs, frequent labor disputes, and the often-changing whims of travelers, Southwest has been a bastion of profitability. Southwest is the only U.S. airline to have made money every year since 1973. It is the nation's largest domestic airline, carrying 100 million passengers a year. Certainly Southwest's well-defined operating strategy has contributed to its long-term success. The airline's major competitive advantage, however, appears to be its people and its leadership practices. Kelleher's retirement has seemingly had little impact on Southwest's ongoing culture. Under the direction of new leaders, the company appears as strong as ever.

#### Discussion Questions

1. How do you think an organization's past history affects leadership practices?
2. Do you agree with Herb Kelleher's contention that employees should come first? Have you ever worked somewhere where you have felt that you were particularly valued as an employee? Have you had the opposite experience?
3. Do you think people are more productive and satisfied if they have fun in the workplace? Why or why not?
4. Is there a place for "love" in organizations? How can a leader build a loving environment?
5. Southwest Airlines is noted for its outstanding customer service. What are some of the organizations you have encountered that have provided the best and the worst customer service? What do you think the relation is between customer service and leadership?

should not be able to fly. But it does. Recruits are told that the ability to achieve more than seems possible is what Mary Kay Cosmetics is all about.<sup>33</sup>

According to Kotter, the outcomes of management and leadership differ significantly. Management produces orderly results. Leadership, on the other hand, often leads to useful change. Both these activities are important in the overall success of groups and organizations. To be successful, organizations must consistently meet their current commitments to customers, stockholders, employees, and others, and they must also identify and adapt to the changing needs of these key constituencies over time. To do so, they must not only plan, budget, organize, staff, control, and problem solve in a competent, systematic, and rational manner, they must also establish and reestablish, when necessary, an appropriate direction for the future, align people to it, and motivate employees to create change even when painful sacrifices are required.

### The Question of "Bad" Leadership

Most of those who study and write about leadership have focused on the more positive connotations of the concept. Recently scholars have devoted increasing attention to the "bad" or "toxic" side of leadership.<sup>34</sup> Those inter-

ested in destructive leadership believe that researchers and practitioners must embrace a more honest and holistic view that acknowledges the dark side of human nature. These investigators argue for a broader conception of leadership that includes an exploration of those whose impact on others is damaging.

Like many leadership scholars, we believe that leaders should be ethical and serve the common good. Yet, we recognize that far too many individuals fall short of this standard, driven by personalized or harmful motives that make them more "power wielders" than leaders who serve the needs of the group.<sup>35</sup> These bad leaders can teach a great deal about good leadership, however. Studying examples of bad leaders can alert us to the ethical dangers of being in a leadership role (see the discussion of the ethical shadows of leadership in chapter 11); help us prevent ethical abuses in ourselves and others; and clearly demonstrate what we DON'T want to do when our time comes to lead.

There are a number of reasons why leaders engage in destructive behavior. Important causes or antecedents of bad leadership include:

**Selfishness.** Self-centeredness is a particular problem for leaders. That's because impulsive, selfish individuals are more likely to seek positions of power and, at the same time, they are more likely to be identified as leaders by others. They are extroverts who are seen as energetic and charismatic.<sup>36</sup> Once in power, impulsive leaders are free to satisfy their own desires at the expense of others. For example, they consume more than their share of organizational resources and violate group norms (including rules about sexual behavior). They justify their actions by defining morality in terms of rights instead of responsibilities. They believe that resources should go to those who contribute the most (which favors them) instead of to the needy (which favors less powerful individuals) and generally ignore other points of view when making moral determinations. Organizations can reinforce these selfish tendencies. Those in power frequently silence the critiques of followers. Unchallenged, they exert even more control and, over time, low power individuals modify their emotions and attitudes to match their leaders.

Many leaders are narcissistic.<sup>37</sup> The term *narcissism* is derived from Greek mythology. In the ancient Greek fable, Narcissus falls in love with his image that he sees reflected in a pond. Contemporary narcissists are just as self-absorbed as their namesake. Thinking highly of themselves, they are attracted to leadership roles that make them the center of attention. Narcissists often succeed in their bids for power because they are socially skilled and make a positive first impression. In a small group, for instance, they are likely to emerge as leaders when none are appointed because they are quick to speak up and come across as bold and competent.<sup>38</sup> They are effective at holding on to their authority once in power, convinced that they deserve to be where they are. Narcissistic leaders engage in a variety of bad leadership behaviors, including claiming special privileges, demanding obedience and admiration, dismissing negative feedback, abusing power for personal goals, ignoring the welfare of followers, and acting like dictators. They put their organizations at risk because they have unrealistic visions and expectations of what they and their groups can achieve.

Machiavellianism is another selfish trait that drives leaders to engage in destructive behavior.<sup>39</sup> Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli argued in *The*



*Prince* that political leaders should maintain a positive public image while using any means possible (ethical or unethical) to achieve their goals. According to modern psychologists and communication scholars, highly Machiavellian individuals (high Machs) follow this advice. They are skilled at manipulating others to achieve their ends, a fact that makes them more likely to end up in leadership positions. Compared to narcissists, Machiavellian leaders have a more accurate sense of their abilities and are more in touch with reality. However, they too engage in lots of self-promotion, tend to be emotionally cold, and are likely to be aggressive. High Machs frequently deceive others because they are out to generate positive impressions while getting their way. They may pretend to care about coworkers to secure their cooperation, for instance, or work overtime only to score points with the boss. (We'll have more to say about ethical impression management later in the chapter.) Machiavellian leaders enjoy successful careers because they are so skilled at manipulation and hiding their true intentions. However, they put their groups and followers in danger. They may be less qualified to lead than those who don't make as good of an impression. High Machs are also tempted to engage in unethical behavior because they want to succeed no matter what the cost. When followers suspect their supervisors are manipulative, they are less trusting and cooperative, which lowers organizational productivity.<sup>40</sup>

**Cognitive errors.** Bad leadership is also the product of poor decision making.<sup>41</sup> Officials at NASA ignored the possible damage to the *Columbia* shuttle, for example. The spacecraft then disintegrated when returning from space, killing seven astronauts. The CEO at Quaker Foods decided to acquire Snapple, a product line that didn't fit with the organization's culture and strategic plan. (Quaker later sold Snapple for a \$1.4 billion loss.) Common leader errors occur when (1) gathering and organizing information (e.g., failing to contact an important client for feedback, putting off the most important tasks, using the wrong criteria to evaluate a training program); (2) deciding how to use information (e.g., ignoring safety reports, basing decisions on outdated data); (3) managing personnel resources (e.g., hiring the wrong employees, assigning workers to tasks they aren't prepared for); and (4) managing tasks and resources (e.g., purchasing unneeded office equipment and factory machinery, failing to repair equipment).

**Environmental factors.** Selfishness and decision-making errors are internal sources of bad leadership. However, outside forces can also encourage leaders to engage in destructive behaviors. Leaders are more likely to initiate and persist in unethical behaviors when they experience the following:<sup>42</sup>

- pressure to meet aggressive goals
- intense competition to maintain market share, profitability, etc.
- organizational instability and uncertainty caused by downsizing, mergers, recessions, rapid technological developments, shortage of resources
- perception of an outside threat
- pressure from followers to engage in unethical behavior
- organizational climates that encourage unethical behavior
- pressure to conform

- lack of checks and balances both inside (governing boards, performance appraisal systems) and outside the organization (the media, governing agencies) to check toxic behavior
- cultural values that encourage destructive leadership (tolerating large power differences, putting the needs of the group above those of outsiders)

According to Harvard University professor Barbara Kellerman, bad leadership falls into two categories—ineffective and unethical—and is exhibited through destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personality characteristics. Ineffective leaders are not successful in achieving desired outcomes. These “bad” leaders may be poorly skilled, may exhibit ineffective strategic or tactical planning, or may not have the requisite traits to succeed. Unethical leaders are unable to distinguish between right and wrong, often engaging in behaviors that maximize their rewards while harming others. Kellerman identifies seven types of “bad” leaders.<sup>43</sup>

**Incompetent.** These leaders do not have the desire or skill (or both) to sustain effective action. They may lack practical, academic, or social intelligence and can be careless, dense, distracted, lazy, or sloppy. Juan Antonio Samaranch, who presided over judging and doping scandals and rampant corruption as president of the International Olympic Committee (1981–2000), exemplifies such incompetence.

**Rigid.** These leaders are unyielding. Although the rigid leader may be competent, he or she is unable or unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times. Russian President Vladimir Putin's response to the sinking of the submarine *Kursk* in 2000 is an example. When advised of the situation, Putin showed little interest (continuing a planned vacation to the Black Sea) and initially ignored offers of assistance from other countries (particularly from the United States). Speculation was that Putin did not want to appear weak—rigidly clinging to the idea of Russia as a superpower.

**Intemperate.** These leaders lack self-control and are aided and abetted by followers who are unwilling or unable to intervene. Marion Barry, Jr.'s career is an example of intemperate leadership supported by followers who ignored his failings. Barry served as the mayor of Washington DC from 1979 to 1991. His arrest in 1990 on drug charges precluded him from seeking reelection. After his conviction, Barry served six months in prison, but he was elected to the DC council in 1992 and ultimately as mayor again in 1994, serving a fourth term from 1995 to 1999. Barry continues to be involved in DC politics even after pleading guilty in 2005 to charges of failing to pay federal and local taxes on more than \$530,000 worth of income.

**Callous.** These leaders are uncaring or unkind. Corporate downsizer Al Dunlap—known as “Chainsaw Al” for zealously cutting jobs—is an example of a callous leader. Dunlap fired thousands at Crown-Zellerbach and Scott Paper in the 1980s and 1990s before becoming the CEO at Sunbeam. There he slashed 6,000 more jobs before eventually being fired himself in 1998 after just two years on the job. Dunlap walked away from CEO posts wealthy while thousands at the companies he led were left without jobs.

**Corrupt.** These leaders, and at least some of their followers, lie, cheat, or steal—putting self-interest ahead of the public interest. Vincent (Buddy)



Cianci, Jr., who served six terms as mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, from 1975–1984 and again from 1991–2001, is an example of this type of bad leader. Over the years Cianci and members of his staff were indicted on a variety of charges ranging from extortion, larceny, conspiracy, and assault to federal racketeering. Cianci was ultimately convicted on one count of conspiracy in 2002 and sentenced to five years in federal prison.

**Insular.** These leaders, and at least some followers, minimize or disregard the welfare of others outside the group or organization for which they are directly responsible. During the course of a hundred days in 1994, the Hutu government of Rwanda and its extremist allies nearly succeeded in exterminating the country's Tutsi minority. Using firearms, machetes, and a variety of garden implements, Hutu militiamen, soldiers, and ordinary citizens murdered some 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu. It was the fastest, most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century. Despite evidence that he knew about the horrible events in Rwanda, President Bill Clinton did not take action to stop the genocide, thus exemplifying insular leadership. Although Clinton later traveled to Africa to apologize for his inaction, the question remains as to why the U.S. government failed to intervene.

**Evil.** These leaders, and at least some followers, commit atrocities that inflict physical and/or psychological harm on others. Pol Pot, the Cambodian leader from 1975 to 1979, is a chilling example of evil leadership. His Khmer Rouge army was one of the most brutal in history. During his time as leader, violent deaths in his country were more common than deaths by natural causes. More than 1.7 million Cambodians—one-third of the population—were murdered in just four years.

A group of Norwegian researchers, led by Ståle Einarsen, offers an alternative typology of destructive leadership behaviors derived from the organizational context.<sup>44</sup> They are careful to say that organizational leaders are typically not totally good or bad, toxic or nontoxic. Instead, leaders engage in a mix of constructive and destructive behaviors. The investigators discovered that constructive behaviors are far more common but the majority of the respondents they surveyed noted that their immediate supervisors engaged in at least one type of negative behavior. Destructive leadership is directed primarily at subordinates, the organization, or at both. Based on these dimensions, Einarsen's group outlines five types of leadership behaviors.

*Constructive leadership behavior* supports both the organization as well as subordinates. Constructive leaders motivate and inspire employees while using resources wisely to reach organizational goals.

*Tyrannical leadership behavior* serves organizational goals at the expense of followers. Tyrannical leaders may be highly competent (have technical and planning skills, for example) but they are abusive to subordinates, using intimidation, manipulation, and humiliation to try to improve organizational performance.

*Derailed leadership behavior* works against the interests of both the organization and subordinates. These leaders skip work, shirk their duties, commit fraud, and steal company equipment and supplies. At the same time, they attack and undermine subordinates using many of the tactics employed by tyrannical leaders.

*Supportive-disloyal leadership behavior* is profollower but antiorganization. These leaders care for their subordinates and build positive relationships with

them. However, they allow employees to benefit at the expense of the organization by, for instance, allowing them to take too much time off, shirk their duties, steal, and so on. Supportive-disloyal leaders may also pursue goals that are different than those of the organization, encouraging employees to work hard but for the wrong objectives.

*Laissez-faire leadership behavior* is passive behavior that undermines the organization as well as subordinates. Laissez-faire leaders avoid interacting with followers when they can, delay decisions, provide little feedback, and make no effort to motivate employees to reach organizational goals. Doing nothing reduces employee satisfaction and commitment and hurts group performance.

## The Leader/Follower Relationship

Clarifying the relationship between leading and following is the final step in defining leadership. Earlier we noted that leaders and followers function collaboratively. Recognizing that leaders and followers work together toward shared objectives should keep us from overemphasizing the importance of leaders or ignoring the contributions of followers. Unfortunately, we generally pay a lot more attention to leaders than to followers. Leaders get the vast majority of credit when businesses like Facebook or Twitter are successful. However, these companies would not have succeeded without the hard work of software and hardware engineers, programmers, supervisors, customer service representatives, administrative assistants, and other followers. Scholars, too, have been slow to recognize the value of followers. An analysis of articles in *Leadership Quarterly* from 1990 (the first year the journal was published) to 2008 revealed that only 14% included any form of the word "follower" in the title or abstract.<sup>45</sup>

Shifting some of the spotlight from leadership to followership is one way to assure that followers get the credit they deserve. This shift appears to be taking place. Not only are more followership books and articles being published, but there is also evidence that followers play an increasingly important role in the modern world. In America, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s saw the birth of the civil rights, antiwar, and gay rights movements, all of which were driven by followers. Americans of all political persuasions learned to distrust authority. As a result, constituents gained power at the expense of leaders, a trend that has continued to the present. Information and computer technology have empowered followers around the world. *Time* magazine recognized the power of followers by naming "the protester" as the 2011 Person of the Year.<sup>46</sup> Protesters brought down regimes in the Middle East, challenged corruption in India and Russia, and drew attention to economic inequality in Europe and North America.

Recognizing that leadership duties can be widely distributed is another way to ensure that followers are properly recognized. In *shared leadership*, group and organizational members share the responsibility for achieving collective goals.<sup>47</sup> Shared leadership can take several different forms. Two individuals might function as coleaders by jointly occupying a leadership position, as in the case of William Hewlett and David Packard, cofounders of the technology giant HP. In another form of shared leadership, group members divide up leadership func-

tions or take turns rotating in and out of leadership roles. For instance, members of a firm's executive team may each take responsibility for one component of a merger plan (finance, operations, products, personnel). Or different team members may take the lead depending on the plan's stage of development. The chief financial officer (CFO) might be in charge as the company determines if a proposed merger will be profitable. The human resource director will likely coordinate salary and benefits when the two groups of employees are brought together after the merger is approved. In yet another form of shared leadership, leadership duties are disbursed throughout the organization rather than concentrated in the hands of a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy. Frontline supervisors and their teams are empowered to make hiring and firing decisions (see chapter 5), for example, or to shut down the production line. (Turn to box 1.6 for more information on disbursed organizational leadership.)

Describing leaders and followers as relational partners who play complementary roles is the best way to capture what followership means.<sup>48</sup> Leaders

### Box 1.6 Research Highlight

### Complex Leadership

Looking to the physical sciences can provide us with important clues about leadership, according to Russ Marion and Mary Uhl-Bien.<sup>49</sup> These investigators argue that organizations and social movements are dynamic, unstable, and unpredictable, like nature. In such complex environments, leaders can't control events but must exert indirect influence instead. Effective leaders focus on creating networks that foster innovation and change. They organize the work environment so that it encourages communication between employees by, for instance, eliminating cubicles that foster isolation in favor of open spaces and central work areas. In order to spark new ideas, they facilitate interaction between centers of knowledge located throughout the organization. Complex leaders empower employees through delegation and training. While they quickly resolve personal conflicts between workers, they encourage employees to resolve task-related conflicts on their own.

Leaders in complex systems provide general guidance (by outlining goals and values, for example) but don't generally intervene in day-to-day organizational operations once networks are in place. In addition, they function as "tags." A tag, according to the researchers, "is the flag around which everyone rallies; it is the philosophy that binds people together."<sup>50</sup> A newly appointed school principal might serve as a tag by acting as the catalyst for improving a school's low academic rating, for example.

Complex leadership is much more of a bottom up than a top down process. Leaders don't create the system; they are the product of the system instead. Thus, Marion and Uhl-Bien are careful to talk about complex *leadership* (a process) rather than complex *leaders* (individuals). Leaders emerge because events and followers call for them and leaders can be found at every organizational level.

The investigators point to al-Qaeda as an example of complex leadership in action.<sup>51</sup> This Arab organization is a loose confederation of earlier political and military groups that formed as the result of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the first Gulf War. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's top leaders, didn't start this movement but were the product of it. They functioned as symbols and spokespeople (as tags) rather than as hands-on leaders, since al-Qaeda consists of a network of small independent cells and businesses spread around the world. Local leaders direct the daily activities of these independent units. Even though bin Laden was killed, al-Qaeda continues to operate under the leadership of al-Zawahiri. In the future other leaders may emerge to rally the group's members.

exert a greater degree of influence and take more responsibility for the overall direction of the group. Followers, on the other hand, are more involved in implementing plans and carrying out the work. Most people routinely shift between leader and follower functions during the course of the day. As a student you must follow in the classroom, but you may also lead a class project group or an intramural sports team. In recognition of this fact, we suggest that you make a mental note to think of yourself not as a leader or a follower, but as a *leader-follower*. Recognize, too, that you can learn to lead by following and learn to follow by leading. Leadership can prepare us for followership in the same way that following prepares us for leading. By observing our followers we can gain insights into what we should (and shouldn't) do when we serve in a follower role.

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*A good leader can't get too far ahead of his [her] followers.*

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

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As you can see, followers play an active, vital role in the success of any group, organization, or society. They are neither passive nor subservient. Throughout this text we will use alternative terms like "constituents," "stakeholders," or "collaborators" along with "followers" to help drive home this point. We also believe that effective leadership is based on service, not hierarchy. In our discussions of transformational leadership in chapter 4 and ethical leadership in chapter 11, we suggest that truly great leaders serve rather than rule because they recognize that those whom they lead entrust them with leadership responsibilities.

Followership expert Robert Kelley sums up the work of followers and leaders this way:

In reality followership and leadership are two separate concepts, two separate roles. . . . Neither role corners the market on brains, motivation, talent, or action. Either role can result in an award-winning performance or a flop. The greatest successes require that the people in both roles turn in top-rate performances. We must have great leaders and great followers.<sup>52</sup>

## Viewing Leadership from a Communication Perspective

From our perspective, leadership is first, and foremost, a communication-based activity. Leaders spend much of their time shaping messages that are then presented to a variety of follower, constituent, and stakeholder groups. It is also true that the more leadership responsibility one has, the more one's job focuses on communication. Certainly political leaders, executives, coaches, educators, and religious figures alike all share this common characteristic—the higher the level of leadership, the higher the demand for communication competence.



Willingness to Communicate

Leadership effectiveness depends on our willingness to interact with others and on developing effective communication skills. Those who engage in skillful communication are more likely to influence others. Communication professors James McCroskey and Virginia Richmond developed the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scale to measure the predisposition to talk in a variety of situations.<sup>53</sup> Take a few minutes to complete the WTC instrument in box 1.7, and then compute your total score as well as your scores for each of the subscales.

Box 1.7 Self-Assessment Willingness to Communicate Scale (WTC)<sup>54</sup>

**Directions:** Below are 20 situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate in the space at the left what percentage of the time you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. You can choose any percentage ranging from 0% (never communicating) to 100% (always communicating).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Talk with a service station attendant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Talk with a physician.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Talk with a salesperson in a store.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Talk with a police officer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Talk with a waiter/waitress in a restaurant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Talk with a secretary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Present a talk to a group of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Talk with a garbage collector.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Talk with a spouse (or girl/boy friend).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Talk in a small group of friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

The WTC is designed to indicate how willing you are to communicate in a variety of contexts, with different types of receivers. The higher your WTC total score, the more willing you are to communicate in general. Similarly, the higher your given subscore for a type of context or audience, the more willing you are to communicate in that type of context or with that type of audience.

**Scoring:** The WTC permits computation of one total score and seven subscores. The subscores relate to willingness to communicate in each of four common communication contexts and with three types of audiences. To compute your scores, merely add your scores for each item and divide by the number indicated below.

Subscore Desired	Scoring Formula
Group discussion	Add scores for items 8, 15, and 19; then divide by 3.
Meetings	Add scores for items 6, 11, and 17; then divide by 3.
Interpersonal conversations	Add scores for items 4, 9, and 12; then divide by 3.
Public speaking	Add scores for items 3, 14, and 20; then divide by 3.
Stranger	Add scores for items 3, 8, 12, and 17; then divide by 4.
Acquaintance	Add scores for items 4, 11, 15, and 20; then divide by 4.
Friend	Add scores for items 6, 9, 14, and 19; then divide by 4.
To compute the total WTC scores, add the subscores for stranger, acquaintance, and friend. Then divide by 3.	
Norms for WTC Scores	
Group discussion	> 89 High WTC, < 57 Low WTC
Meetings	> 80 High WTC, < 39 Low WTC
Interpersonal conversations	> 94 High WTC, < 64 Low WTC
Public speaking	> 78 High WTC, < 33 Low WTC
Stranger	> 63 High WTC, < 18 Low WTC
Acquaintance	> 92 High WTC, < 57 Low WTC
Friend	> 99 High WTC, < 71 Low WTC
Total WTC	> 82 High Overall WTC, < 52 Low Overall WTC

McCroskey, Richmond, and their colleagues report that overall scores on the WTC scale are directly related to communication behavior. Individuals with high WTC scores communicate more frequently and for longer periods of time than people with low WTC scores. Increased communication activity, in turn, leads to a number of positive outcomes in the United States, a society that values individualism and assertiveness (see chapter 10). Speaking up is not viewed as favorably in other cultures, such as some Asian societies, that put more emphasis on the needs of the group as a whole.<sup>55</sup> In the United States:

- High WTCs are viewed as more credible and attractive and are more often identified as opinion leaders.
- People who speak frequently in small groups are more likely to hold leadership positions (see chapter 7).
- Talkative people are more likely to be hired and promoted. They also stay with organizations longer than their quiet colleagues.
- Willing communicators rate themselves higher as competent communicators and report that they are more skilled at using humor.<sup>56</sup>
- High WTCs are rated as more socially and sexually attractive by members of the opposite sex.
- Students who are more willing to communicate with people from different cultures have more friends from other countries and are more willing to interact with international students on campus.<sup>57</sup>
- Those who are more willing to communicate are also more open to change and enjoy tasks that require thought.<sup>58</sup>

There are a number of reasons why we may be reluctant to interact with others: we may have inherited a tendency to be shy, introverted, and anxious



about communication; put a low value on talk; feel alienated from other people; suffer from low self-esteem; or experience fear or anxiety about specific communication situations. In some cases, we're reluctant to communicate because of a skill deficiency. We don't know how (or think we don't know how) to communicate effectively. This perceived deficiency becomes a vicious cycle. Thinking we can't communicate successfully, we avoid interaction. As a consequence, we don't get the practice we need and therefore can't communicate as well.

We can reverse the cycle by developing our skills. Skill development builds confidence and encourages us to talk. When we communicate, we practice our skills and increase our effectiveness. This results in greater self-assurance, making it even more likely that we'll participate in future interactions. In one study, for example, students enrolled in an introductory public speaking course significantly increased their willingness to give speeches during the semester. Those who were the least willing to give speeches at the beginning of the class saw the most rapid improvement.<sup>59</sup> (Box 1.8 describes another leadership skill we can improve through practice.)

## Storytelling as Leadership

One of the primary ways in which leaders shape reality is through storytelling. As Washington College professor Michael Harvey explains, "Leaders frame stories and events to help [followers] understand the world, themselves, and other groups, as well as to identify or solve problems."<sup>60</sup> Stephen Denning suggests that leadership is an "interactive" endeavor largely shaped by narrative.<sup>61</sup> This is not to suggest that abstract reasoning and analysis are not important to leadership, but rather that storytelling is a valuable supplement to these generally recognized aspects of leadership. Leaders tell their stories in a variety of informal and formal contexts, from conversations over a cup of coffee to formal presentations. Through stories leaders can connect themselves with others, building strong relationships and a sense of affiliation. Stories carry multiple messages. Among other functions, they reflect important values, inspire, and describe appropriate behavior. Further, when leaders tell compelling stories they influence others to pick up the same story line, thus extending the narrative. This process of retelling stories (often in a revised form by those who follow) is part of the cocreation of meaning that is central to storytelling. Royal Dutch Shell Group offers a good example. The group's managing directors first developed their own story lines about needed change and the future and then engaged the next layers of management in crafting their versions. Tales were told for years of profitable growth and technical leadership. These stories were then retold throughout the company across sites in more than 100 countries. As a result, all those concerned understood the case for change and told each other what they would have to do to bring the "new reality" into being.<sup>62</sup>

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*The right anecdote can be worth a thousand theories.*

—Warren Bennis

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### Box 1.8 Research Highlight

### Leading with Questions<sup>63</sup>

Asking effective questions is a critical skill for leaders. In his book, *Leading with Questions*, professor and consultant Michael Marquardt builds a case for exercising leadership through questioning. To discover how successful leaders use inquiries, Marquardt interviewed 22 leaders from around the world who are known for their questioning abilities. His sample included top-level executives at DuPont, Novartis, and ConocoPhillips Petroleum, as well as academic leaders and nonprofit officials drawn from Brazil, Finland, North America, Malaysia, Korea, Mauritius, and Switzerland.

Professor Marquardt found that asking questions instead of providing answers creates a "questioning culture." In a questioning culture, members challenge assumptions, encourage inquiries, and find creative ways to solve problems. Both groups and individuals benefit as a result. Questions promote organizational learning; improve collective problem solving and decision making; produce greater adaptability; energize followers; encourage teamwork; and foster innovation. Individuals working in a questioning climate experience greater self-awareness, self-confidence, openness, and personal flexibility. They become better listeners; are more comfortable expressing and managing conflict; develop keener insight into organizational dynamics and relationships; and demonstrate stronger commitment to learning and personal development.

Unfortunately, leaders are often quick to provide answers instead of asking questions, based in part on their belief that followers are looking to them for solutions. When leaders do ask questions, they may put others on the defensive. Examples of judgmental questions include: "Why are you behind schedule?" and "What's the problem with this project?" According to Marquardt, leaders must admit when they don't have the answers and ask questions that encourage followers to come up with their own solutions. For example: "How do you feel about the project thus far?"; "What have you accomplished so far that you are most pleased with?"; "What key things need to happen to achieve your objective?"

Moving from judgmental questions to productive ones takes a shift in mind-set as well as behavior. Leaders need to begin with a commitment to learn rather than to judge. They should frame questions in a nonthreatening manner to express curiosity and to open dialogue. They can set the stage for inquiries by spelling out what they desire from the conversation ("I hope to get a better idea of why costs are up," "I want to understand your feelings about the reorganization plan"). The questioning leader should allow the other person enough time to reflect and to respond and show genuine interest in the reply. Finally, it is critical to follow up on information and concerns. As one nonprofit executive in Marquardt's sample noted: "The power of questions can only be realized through learning, follow up, and change. The leader who asks questions and doesn't pay attention to the answers quickly loses credibility."

Denning proposes that there are eight general categories of stories that leaders can use to assist in achieving their goals.<sup>64</sup>

**Sparkling action.** These stories describe how a successful change was implemented in the past, allowing listeners to imagine how such a change might work in their situation. These "springboard" stories enable listeners to visualize the large-scale transformation required. For example, as program director of knowledge management for the World Bank in the mid-1990s, Denning struggled to get his colleagues to see the importance of the need for a central repository for the information scattered throughout the organization. The message was falling on deaf ears until Denning found a "springboard" story. He framed the need for collecting and sharing information at the World Bank by describing how technology was changing the landscape of our planet.

The story he told involved a health worker in 1995 in a remote village in Zambia who logged on to the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, and got an answer to a question on how to treat malaria. When this story was added to the presentation, audience members were able to visualize how the information collected in their organization might be used.

**Communicating who you are.** These stories reveal your identity to an audience, building trust and creating a connection. Political leaders such as Barack Obama, for example, write books, maintain websites, and give speeches designed to present a desired image of themselves to the electorate.

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*Leadership is personal. Do the people you lead know who you are, what you care about, and why they ought to be following you?*

—Ron Sugar

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**Communicating the brand.** These organizational stories are designed to communicate brand image to customers. Cosmetic retailer The Body Shop created a global brand without using conventional advertising. Brand identity was communicated through the stories of the company founder, the late Anita Roddick, and through commitment to a model of commerce-with-a-conscience.

**Transmitting values.** These stories reflect and reinforce organizational values by telling audience members “how things are done around here.” Jim Sinegal of Costco is an example of a leader who uses stories (and his very presence) as a means for transmitting organizational values. Costco is an \$89 billion business. Sinegal, the founder and retired CEO of the company, took only a modest salary and spent much of his time on the road. While visiting up to half a dozen Costco stores a day, he preached his philosophy of loyalty to his customers and to his employees. (Read the case study in box 1.9 for more on Costco.)

### Box 1.9 Case Study

#### It's All About the Message: Leadership Communication at Costco<sup>65</sup>

Jim Sinegal, cofounder and the recently retired CEO at Costco, began his career at age 18 unloading mattresses in a month-old venture called Fed-Mart. After several acquisitions and start-ups, Fed-Mart morphed into Costco in the early 1980s. Today Costco sales exceed \$89 billion a year and it is one of the world's top 10 retailers. Costco is a warehouse merchandiser in the mold of Sam's Club or Walmart and sells everything from wine (more than any other single retailer in the world) and salmon fillets to flat-screen TVs and leather sofas. But while Sam's Club and Walmart have been criticized for being driven strictly by profit, Costco has adopted a values-driven approach that was firmly anchored by Sinegal. One investment officer described Sinegal as “the most prominent CEO in terms of setting corporate culture that I can recall. He's basically the retail Steve Jobs.” His successor, Craig Jelinek, a long-time Costco employee, is expected to maintain the company's vision and values.

Sinegal believes that employees should be paid fair wages for their valuable contributions to the organization. The average Costco warehouse employee earns significantly more than at other warehouse merchandisers. According to Sinegal, “They're entitled to buy homes and live in rea-

sonably nice neighborhoods and send their children to school.” Costco also offers better than average benefits, including paying 90% of health care coverage. When employees ended up paying more than 10% of their health care costs one year, Sinegal gave them additional stock for their 404(k) retirement plans. Wall Street analysts are critical of Costco's pay and benefits policies. One complained, “It's better to be an employee or a customer than a shareholder.”

As Sinegal explains, there is a real business advantage in treating employees well. He calls his 120,000 loyal employees “ambassadors.” These employees tell the company's story to the more than 45 million shoppers who visit a Costco store, and they often stay with the company (Costco has the lowest employee turnover rate in retailing). Sinegal also took an unorthodox view on his own compensation. Sinegal's salary was just \$350,000 plus additional bonuses. Costco stock brought his total compensation package to around \$3.5 million, which was only a fraction of that earned by other business leaders. Further, Sinegal's CEO employment contract with Costco was the shortest of more than 2,000 such contracts reviewed by the corporate governance organization, The Corporate Library—and the only one that specifically states that he could be “terminated for cause” if he didn't perform. Sinegal's office was a tiny alcove without a door furnished with nothing more fancy than folding chairs.

As unique as all of this is, perhaps the most exceptional element of Sinegal's leadership was (and is) his presence within the company. He led from the road, hopping on the corporate jet and visiting up to half a dozen Costco stores a day, including the grand openings of all new store locations. During these visits he interacted with his 120,000 “ambassadors,” met with customers and, quite simply, pitched in where he could help—always wearing his Costco employee name tag that simply read, Jim. When he was at his corporate office he answered his own telephone (“if a customer's calling and they have a gripe, don't you think they enjoy the fact that I picked up the phone and talked to them?”).

Costco employees gush about the family atmosphere, and why not? The company promotes almost 100% from within. As Sinegal explains, “We have guys who started pushing shopping carts out in the parking lot who are now vice presidents of our company.” It's not just loyalty that pushed Sinegal to hire from within; those who have been with the company know the Costco story and, as such, are better able to adhere to the core philosophy of providing quality and value. Examples of adherence to the corporate philosophy are labeled “salmon” stories in honor of a particularly successful effort. In 1996 Costco sold salmon fillets at \$5.99 per pound. Over a five-year period Costco buyers were able to negotiate price reductions that lowered the price to \$3.99 per pound while, at the same time, substantially increasing the quality of the product by improving the trim and removing the pin bones, among other enhancements. This story is used as a teaching tool at Costco to encourage others to hold fast to the company philosophy. Even more powerful is the fact that Costco employees approached Sinegal to tell him their version of the “salmon” story, explaining the efforts they have undertaken to reduce prices while increasing value to the customer.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Sinegal that employees will be more effective at telling the corporate story to customers if they are treated as “ambassadors”?
2. What should a CEO earn? Was Sinegal underpaid at Costco? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever been involved with an organization where the CEO had a strong (or weak) presence? What was the impact of having regular interaction (or a lack of interaction) with this individual?
4. Do you think that Costco is too generous to employees and not generous enough to stockholders?
5. Do you think Costco's pay and benefits policies and strategy of hiring from within are mostly helpful or harmful to the bottom line?
6. Have you ever been part of a group or organization that had its own version of a “salmon” story? If so, what was the impact of this story?



**Fostering collaboration.** These stories encourage people to work together by generating a narrative to illustrate common concerns and goals. As exemplified in the case study in box 1.5, Southwest Airlines is an organization with a clear set of common concerns and goals. Stories are frequently used to reinforce this collaborative culture. One such story is that of a Southwest Airlines pilot who quickly exited his flight after arrival only to return a short time later for preflight checks for his return trip. Where had he been? Getting a quick cup of coffee? No, he had climbed in the front bin of the aircraft on a cold and windy day to unload all of the mail and freight—with no gloves, knee pads, or coat—while the other agents off-loaded the bags in the back.<sup>66</sup>

**Taming the grapevine.** These stories highlight the incongruity between rumors and reality. For example, one might deal with a false rumor of imminent corporate-wide reorganization by jokingly recounting how difficult it is to work out the seating chart at the executive committee meetings. It is important to be careful with these types of stories as mean-spirited humor can generate a well-deserved backlash and the denial of a rumor that turns out to be true can have a devastating impact on credibility.

**Sharing knowledge.** These stories focus on problems and show, in detail, how corrections were made and why the solution worked. Many organizations use an after-action review (AAR) in this manner. AARs are assessments conducted after a project or major activity that allow employees and leaders to explore what happened and why. They may be thought of as a professional discussion of an event that enables employees to understand why things happened during the progression of the process and to learn from that experience. AARs can be useful in a variety of situations, including: following the introduction of a new product line or computer system upgrade, after a busy holiday season in a retail store, or after a major training activity or a change in procedures. The discussion during the AAR allows leaders to use sharing knowledge stories to improve subsequent organizational responses to similar situations.

**Leading people into the future.** These stories evoke images of a desired future. Often such stories provide limited detail while encouraging listeners to imagine what the future might be. There are many fine historical examples of such stories, but none, perhaps, had more impact on twentieth century life in the United States than Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. King had a vision of whites and blacks living in racial harmony; where his children "would be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

## Emotional Communication Competencies

The rational dimension of leadership is critical. In the chapters to come, we'll outline ways that leaders use thinking and reasoning skills to solve problems, set goals, negotiate, argue, shape public opinion, adapt to cultural differences, and organize and deliver effective presentations. Forgetting the emotional side of leadership, however, would be a mistake. Effective leaders are also skilled at sharing and responding to emotions. For example, they know how to communicate affection, liking, and excitement to followers. In addition, they know how to channel their emotions in order to achieve their objectives and to maintain friendly group relations.

Neal Ashkanasy and Peter Jordan argue that successful leaders effectively utilize emotions at five different levels of the organization.<sup>67</sup> In their Multi-level Model of Emotion in Organizations (MMEO), *Level 1* is *within the person*. At this level the focus is on how leaders experience and respond to emotions. During the course of a day, leaders must cope with a variety of events beyond their control (rising and falling stock prices, customer feedback, news stories) that generate positive and negative responses. Effective emotional leaders communicate confidence and stability in the face of these emotional ups and downs. *Level 2* is *between persons*. Leaders differ in emotional intelligence (EI), which is the ability to perceive, respond to, and express emotions.<sup>68</sup> Evidence suggests that outstanding (transformational) leaders have high levels of EI.<sup>69</sup> They use emotions to encourage, inspire, stimulate, and motivate followers, resulting in significantly higher performance. (We'll take an in-depth look at transformational leadership in chapter 4.) High emotional intelligence also helps leaders make better decisions, as we'll see in the discussion of emotional competencies that follows.

*Level 3* is the *interpersonal* level, which is concerned with interaction within dyads in the organization. Effective leaders use emotional displays to accomplish tasks. For example, an instructor may make supportive comments to students when they feel overwhelmed by assignments but later express disappointment about the results of one test to motivate class members to study harder for the next exam. In addition to employing emotional expressions to achieve goals, successful leaders use positive, supportive displays to manage relationships and to build trust.

*Level 4* describes the *group level*. Work teams as a whole develop an "affective tone." Informal leaders influence moods indirectly through emotional contagion. Through their example, they help spread emotions like happiness or sadness throughout the group. Formal leaders exert direct influence on moods. For example, groups accomplish more when their appointed leaders are in a positive frame of mind. The affective tone of the group as a whole improves when formal leaders develop positive emotional relationships with individual group members.

*Level 5* is the *organizational level*. Effective leaders at this level help create an emotional tone for the entire organization. Virgin's Richard Branson, for instance, is out to create a "fun" organization. Successful leaders don't suppress emotions but recognize their importance. They realize that there may be times when negative feelings should be expressed. For instance, employees under particularly high levels of stress may need to voice their frustrations.

Unfortunately, some proponents of emotional leadership appear to overstate its importance. They go so far as to argue that nearly all of the competencies that account for executive success are emotional rather than cognitive in nature.<sup>70</sup> They also label as "emotional" some competencies that seem to have more to do with thinking than feeling. For instance, some researchers identify conflict management and influence as emotional skills, but we consider them to be largely rational leadership communication abilities.

Striking a balance between logic and emotion is safer than making one more important than the other. When it comes to leadership, *both* are essential.<sup>71</sup> Crisis decision making provides one example of the importance of both

cognitive and emotional competencies (see chapter 13). To avoid making a hasty decision in a crisis, leaders must exercise a variety of cognitive skills, such as rejecting their faulty beliefs and assumptions, gathering facts, identifying stakeholders, soliciting a broad range of opinions, keeping records, and perspective taking. At the same time, they must employ such emotional skills as managing stress, overcoming mental and physical fatigue, and resisting group pressures.

The following set of emotional competencies demonstrates that the success of followers and leaders depends on how well are they able to integrate emotion and cognition. Skillfully blending feeling and thinking requires the five skills listed below.<sup>72</sup>

1. *Perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion.* Emotional intelligence begins with the ability to identify, evaluate, and then express emotional states. These skills may seem rudimentary, but some people are “emotionally illiterate.” For example, people can be oblivious to the fact that they are irritating everyone else in the group. While most of us are not this insensitive, we frequently suffer from emotional blind spots. There are times when we feel uneasy but can’t identify our emotions or when we don’t know exactly how to express our affection for friends or loved ones. (A leader who had to overcome her lack of emotional intelligence in order to succeed is described in the Leadership on the Big Screen feature at the end of the chapter.)
2. *Attending to the emotions of others.* Those in a leadership role must understand the feelings of followers in order to connect with them. Consider the case of a CEO who doesn’t understand that his employees are feeling overworked and discouraged. If he fails to acknowledge their frustration and tries to inspire them to work harder, they aren’t likely to put forth additional effort. Instead, he will appear out of touch.
3. *Emotional facilitation of thinking.* Emotional states impact decision-making styles. Good moods facilitate creative thinking while sad moods slow the decision-making process and encourage more attention to detail. Both emotional states have a role to play in problem solving. Some problems require intuitive, broad thinking; others demand a more linear, logical approach. Emotionally intelligent leaders know how to match the mood with the problem. Further, they recognize the dangers of ignoring risks when in an optimistic frame of mind, or of being too critical when feeling pessimistic. Using emotions to facilitate thinking also means channeling feelings in order to reach goals. For example, moderate fear of failure can spur us to prepare before making a presentation. Remembering past successes can reduce our anxiety before we deliver the speech.
4. *Understanding and analyzing emotional information and employing emotional knowledge.* This cluster of competencies links symbols to emotions. Leaders must be able to label what they feel and recognize the relationship between that label and other related terms. For example, “anger” belongs to a family of words that includes “irritation,” “rage,” “hostility,” and “annoyance.” The internal states identified by these labels are connected in specific ways. Irritation and annoyance lead to anger and

rage, not the other way around. Understanding this fact can empower leaders. A supervisor may decide to postpone a meeting with a disagreeable employee, for instance, when she senses that her irritation with this individual could escalate into unwanted anger. Recognizing how emotions blend together is also important. Surprise is one example of an emotion that rarely stands alone. When we feel surprised, we generally experience some other emotion—perhaps happiness, disappointment, or anger—at the same time.

5. *Regulation of emotion.* The last component of emotional intelligence puts knowledge into action. This set of competencies enables leaders to create the feelings they desire in themselves and in others. Emotionally skilled leaders know how to maintain positive moods and how to repair negative ones. To do so, they employ such tactics as avoiding unpleasant situations, engaging in rewarding tasks, and creating a comfortable work environment. In addition, they can step back and evaluate their feelings to determine if their responses in a situation were appropriate. Such evaluation can encourage them to remain calm instead of getting upset and to be more supportive instead of only focusing on the task. Effective leaders also help others maintain and improve their moods. They use these skills to create cohesive groups and to inspire and motivate followers.

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*Humans are not, in any practical sense, predominantly rational beings, nor are they predominantly emotional beings. They are both.*  
—Peter Salovey

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## Playing to a Packed House: Leaders as Impression Managers

From a communication standpoint, leaders are made, not born. We increase our leadership competence as we increase our communication skills. We can compare the leadership role to a part played on stage to illustrate how effective communication skills translate into effective leadership.

Sociologist Erving Goffman and others have adapted Shakespeare’s adage that life is a stage to develop what is called the *dramaturgical approach* to human interaction. Proponents of this perspective argue that, like actors in a drama, people create meaning and influence others through their performances.<sup>73</sup> Let’s look at a typical date, for example. The date is a performance that may take place on any number of stages: the dance floor, the living room, the movie theater, the football game. The actors (the couple) prepare in their dressing rooms at home before the performance and may return to the same locations for a critique session after the date ends. Particularly on the first date, the interactants may work very hard to create desired impressions—they engage in “impression management.” Each dating partner tries to manage the perceptions of the other person by using appropriate behaviors, which might include dressing in the latest fashions, acting in a courteous manner, engaging in polite conversation, and paying for meals and other activities.



To see how impression management works, change one aspect of your usual communication and watch how others respond. If friends have told you that you seem unfriendly because you are quiet when meeting new people, try being more assertive the next time you meet strangers at a party. If you make a conscious effort to greet others, introduce yourself, and learn more about the others at the gathering, you may shake your aloof, unfriendly image.

Leaders also engage in impression management to achieve their goals. Remember that as a leader you'll play to a packed house. People in organizations carefully watch the behavior of the CEO for information about the executive officer's character and for clues as to organizational priorities, values, and future directions. They seek answers to such questions as: "Can I trust him/her?" "What kind of behavior gets rewarded around here?" "Is she or he really interested in my welfare?" "Is dishonesty tolerated?" "Are we going to survive the next five years?" "Is this an enjoyable, exciting place to work?"

Important clues to how we can shape the impressions others have of us can be gleaned from the examples of outstanding leaders. Charismatic or transformational leaders are skilled actors who create the impression that they are trustworthy, effective, morally worthy, innovative, and skilled.<sup>74</sup> To see how they create these and other favorable images, turn to chapter 4.

Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of impression management. They equate playing a role with being insincere, since true feelings and beliefs might be hidden. They note that far too often fellow students and coworkers get ahead by acting like chameleons, changing their behaviors to conform to the wishes of whatever group in which they find themselves. As we saw in our earlier discussion of narcissistic and Machiavellian leaders, these are very real dangers. Self-promotion and ingratiation can trump competence and hard work. However, research suggests that individuals typically use impression management to project a public image that is congruent with their self-concepts.<sup>75</sup> Followers continually watch for inconsistencies and often "see through" insincere performances of leaders. Further, impression management is part of every human interaction. Others form impressions of us, whether we are intentional about our behaviors or not. Frequently, we have no choice but to play many roles. We are forced into performances as job applicants, students, dating partners, and leaders each day. The real problem is that we often mismanage the impressions we make. Our behaviors may make us appear dull or untrustworthy when we really are interesting and honest.

Some fear that leaders can manipulate impressions to mislead the group. This is a legitimate concern (we'll discuss the ethical dimension of leadership in greater detail in chapter 11). Yet, impression management is essential for achieving worthy objectives. The state human services director who inspires her employees to meet the needs of more clients through her use of impression management is helping the disadvantaged, making better use of state funds, and boosting the morale of her organization.

Because impression management can be used to further group goals or to subvert them, it should be judged by its end products. Ethical impression management meets group wants and needs and, in the ideal, spurs the group to reach higher goals. Organizational impression experts Paul Rosenfeld, Robert Giacalone, and Catherine Riordan offer the following guidelines for deter-

mining if impression management is beneficial or detrimental to an organization.<sup>76</sup> Beneficial impression management helps the organization achieve its objectives by: (1) promoting positive interpersonal relationships and increasing cooperation with both those inside and outside the organization; (2) accurately portraying positive persons, events, or products to insiders and outsiders; and (3) facilitating decision making, helping management and consumers make the right choices. Detrimental or dysfunctional impression management damages the organization by (1) blocking or undermining relationships with those who work with or do business with the organization; (2) incorrectly casting people, events, or products in a negative light to insiders and outsiders; and (3) distorting information that results in managers and consumers reaching the wrong conclusions and/or decisions.

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*In this theater of man's [woman's] life it is reserved only for God and the angels to be lookers on.*

—Francis Bacon

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## CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

- Leadership attracts universal attention. Historians, philosophers, and social scientists have attempted to understand and to explain leadership for centuries.
- Leadership is a fundamental element of the human condition. Wherever society exists, leadership exists. Any definition of leadership must account for its universal nature. Leadership seems to be linked to what it means to be human. What makes us unique as humans is our ability to create and manipulate symbols—abstract, arbitrary representations of reality.
- One way to isolate the unique characteristics of leadership is to look at how others have defined the term. Four primary definitional themes have emerged in the leadership literature: (1) leadership is about who you are; (2) leadership is about how you act; (3) leadership is about what you do; and (4) leadership is about how you work with others. We offer the following communication-based definition of leadership: Leadership is human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs.
- Management is often equated with leadership. However, leading differs significantly from managing when it comes to creating an agenda, developing a human network for achieving the agenda, and executing the agenda. While the manager is more absorbed in the status quo, the leader is more concerned with the ultimate direction of the group.
- Most of those who study and write about leadership have focused on the more positive connotations of the concept. Recently researchers have devoted attention to the "bad" or "toxic" side of leadership. Bad leadership is the product of selfishness, cognitive errors, and external forces. Destructive leaders can be classified as incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, cor-

rupt, insular, or evil. In the organizational context, destructive leadership behaviors are directed at followers, the organization, or at both.

- Leaders and followers are relational partners who play complementary roles. Leaders exert a greater degree of influence and followers have more responsibility for carrying out the work. Followers are playing an increasingly important role in modern society.
- In shared leadership, responsibility for achieving shared goals is distributed throughout the group. Think of yourself as a leader-follower, routinely shifting between leader and follower functions.
- Leaders spend much of their time shaping messages that are then presented to a variety of follower, constituent, and stakeholder groups. It is also true that the more leadership responsibility you have, the more your job will focus on communication.
- Viewing leadership from a communication perspective recognizes that your leadership effectiveness depends on your willingness to interact with others (the willingness to communicate) and on making skillful use of storytelling, emotional communication competencies, and impression management.
- Leadership is an “interactive” endeavor largely shaped by narrative. Storytelling is a valuable supplement to abstract reasoning and analysis. Important types of stories include those that: (1) spark action, (2) communicate who you are, (3) communicate the brand image to customers, (4) transmit organizational values, (5) foster collaboration, (6) tame the grapevine by pointing out the disconnect between rumors and reality, (7) share knowledge about problem solving, and (8) lead people into the future.
- Effective leaders know how to utilize emotions at all organizational levels—within the person, between persons, interpersonal, group, and organization wide. They demonstrate five emotional competences: (1) perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion; (2) attending to the emotions of others; (3) emotional facilitation of thinking; (4) understanding and analyzing emotional information and employing that information; and (5) regulation of emotion.
- To achieve your goals as a leader, you’ll need to manage the impressions others have of you. Generate positive images through the use of framing, scripting, staging, and performing (exemplification, promotion, facework, and ingratiation).
- Ethical leaders use impression management to reach group objectives rather than to satisfy selfish, personal goals. Beneficial impression management promotes positive interpersonal relationships and cooperation; accurately portrays people, events, or products; and facilitates effective decision making.

### APPLICATION EXERCISES

1. Take a trip to a local bookstore and check to see how many books you can find on leadership. Did you find more or fewer titles than you expected? Report your findings in class.

2. Conduct a debate regarding the relative importance of leaders and followers. Have one-half of your class argue that leaders are more important than ever and have the other half argue that followers are becoming more influential than leaders. As an alternative, debate the concept of “bad” leadership. Should we consider people like Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and Osama bin Laden leaders or are they merely “power wielders”?
3. Develop your own definition of leadership. How does it compare to the ones given in the chapter?
4. Make a list of the characteristics of leaders and managers. Are your characteristics the same as those described by Kouzes, Posner, and Kotter? To clarify the differences between leaders and managers, describe someone who is an effective leader and then someone who is an effective manager. How do these two people differ? Share your descriptions with others in class.
5. Select one of your follower roles (student, employee, team member, etc.) and then select one of your leadership roles (team captain, project group leader, coach). Consider the behaviors and qualities you appreciate or dislike in those who lead or follow you. What can you learn from those strengths and weaknesses that you can apply as a leader-follower? What conclusions can you draw about being an effective leader or follower? Write up your findings.
6. In a group, determine the advantages and disadvantages of sharing leadership responsibilities in a group or organization. Based on your discussion, what conclusions do you reach about shared leadership?
7. Pair off with someone and compare your overall Willingness to Communicate (WTC) scores as well as your seven subscores. What factors make you and your partner reluctant to communicate in all situations or in particular contexts? What can each of you do to increase your willingness to communicate? What communication skills do you need to sharpen?
8. Consider the stories you have heard from leaders in the past. Discuss with others in class which stories you found to be most/least effective and why.
9. Identify individuals you believe have low or high emotional intelligence. Discuss what you feel the impact of these ratings is on leadership effectiveness.
10. Analyze the impression management strategies of a well-known leader. What image does this individual create? How effectively does he/she use the dramatic elements described in the chapter? Does she/he make ethical use of impression management? Write up your findings.

### CULTURAL CONNECTIONS:

#### LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN KOREA<sup>77</sup>

*Written by Charles Choi, George Fox University*

Dealing with groups of followers from a variety of cultural backgrounds is a fact of life for modern leaders. Leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on intercultural competency. For example, leadership practices considered effective in an individualistic society might be rejected by employees who



value a more collectivistic or group-oriented approach to organization and business. Such is the case in South Korea. Confucianism heavily influences Korean culture, and this code of ethical behavior places high value on the maintenance of harmony and trust as the basis of social interaction. As a result, Korean businesses are often marked by authoritarian and paternalistic leadership, hierarchical structure, a bureaucratic managerial style, and acceptance of large differences in power and status.

One group of researchers identified the following as key organizational leadership competencies in Korea:

- Demonstrating enthusiasm for achieving business goals
- Providing a role model to follow
- Demonstrating responsibility
- Developing one's own career

They also found a clear distinction between executive-level and middle-level management, with a different set of competencies required for each group. In South Korea, executive leadership is exclusively engaged in developing and communicating a vision and strategy and in initiating and leading organizational change. Middle-level managers, on the other hand, are responsible for operations and social interaction with subordinates. To succeed, they must demonstrate relationship competencies—managing performance, coaching followers, building teamwork, and providing a role model to follow.

To be effective in Korea and other cultures, leaders (and followers) must set aside their preconceived notions about how to communicate within the organizational setting. Only then can they begin to develop the competencies they need to succeed in a multicultural world.

## LEADERSHIP ON THE BIG SCREEN:

### TEMPLE GRANDIN

*Starring:* Claire Danes, Julia Ormond, Catherine O'Hara, David Strathairn

*Rating:* NR (contains slaughterhouse scenes)

*Synopsis:* Claire Danes stars in the real-life story of Temple Grandin, who overcomes a series of obstacles to become an international leader in livestock handling and animal welfare. Born with autism, Grandin must cope with the ignorance of the medical community (her pediatrician recommends that she be institutionalized for life), her lack of social and emotional intelligence, the prejudice of faculty and fellow students, and sexism. She succeeds with the strong support of her mother (Ormond), aunt (O'Hara), and a sympathetic science teacher who serves as her mentor (Strathairn). Using her unique ability to see in pictures, as well as her insight into animal behavior, Grandin develops a more humane livestock handling system that is now used in approximately half of the meat plants in North America. She also goes on to earn her doctorate, to teach at Colorado State University, and to serve as an expert in autism education.

*Chapter Links:* leadership communication, emotional intelligence, willingness to communicate, impression management, bad leadership

# LEADERSHIP AND FOLLOWERSHIP COMMUNICATION STYLES

*Proper words in proper places, make the true definition of a style.*

—Jonathan Swift

## OVERVIEW

The Dimensions of Leadership Communication Style  
 Authoritarian, Democratic, and Laissez-Faire Leadership  
 Task and Interpersonal Leadership  
   The Michigan Leadership Studies  
   The Ohio State Leadership Studies  
   McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y  
   Blake and McCanse's Leadership Grid®  
 Follower Communication Styles  
   Engaged Followers  
   Exemplary Followership  
   The 4-D Followership Model  
 Communication Styles and Information Processing