CHAPTER 3

# The Leader's Character

*The course of any society is largely determined by the quality of its moral leadership.*

—Psychologists Anne Colby and William Damon

*Virtue is better than wealth.*

—Kenyan proverb

## What's Ahead

This chapter addresses the inner dimension of leadership ethics. To shed light rather than shadow, we need to develop strong, ethical character made up of positive traits or virtues. We promote our character development through direct interventions or indirectly by finding role models, telling and living collective stories, learning from hardship, establishing effective habits, determining a clear sense of direction, and examining our values.

## Elements of Character

In football, the best defense is often a good offense. When faced with high-scoring opponents, coaches often design offensive game plans that run as much time as possible off the clock. If they're successful, they can rest their defensive players while keeping the opposing team's offensive unit on the sidelines. By building strong, ethical character, we take a similar proactive approach to dealing with our shadow sides. To keep from projecting our internal enemies and selfishness on others, we need to go on the offensive, replacing or managing our unhealthy motivations through the development of positive leadership traits or qualities called *virtues*. Interest in virtue ethics dates at least as far back as Plato, Aristotle, and Confucius. The premise of virtue ethics is simple: Good people (those of high moral character) make good moral choices. Despite its longevity, this approach has not always been popular among scholars. Only in recent years have modern philosophers turned back

to it in significant numbers.[1] They've been joined by positive psychologists who argue that there is more value in identifying and promoting the strengths of individuals than in trying to repair their weaknesses (which is the approach of traditional psychologists).[2]

Character plays an important role in leadership. CEOs Franklin Raines (Fannie Mae), John Thain (Merrill Lynch), Angelo Mozilo (Countrywide Financial), and Martha Stewart (Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia) cast shadows due to greed, arrogance, dishonesty, ruthlessness, and other character failings. Their lack of virtue stands in sharp contrast to such widely admired leaders as Costco cofounder Jim Sinegal, and Southwest Airlines president emeritus Colleen Barrett. These leaders serve followers and customers and create organizational climates that foster caring and equality. (Turn to Box 3.1 to see how virtues are essential when leading in life-and-death situations.)

Proponents of virtue ethics start with the end in mind. They develop a description or portrait of the ideal person (in this case a leader) and identify the admirable qualities or tendencies that make up the character of this ethical role model. They then suggest ways in which others can acquire these virtues.

Virtues have four important features. First, they are woven into the inner lives of leaders; they are not easily developed or discarded but persist over time. Second, virtues shape the way leaders see and behave. Being virtuous makes leaders sensitive to ethical issues and encourages them to act morally. Third, virtues operate independent of the situation. A virtue may be expressed in different ways, depending on the context (what is prudent in one situation may not be in the next). Yet virtuous leaders will not abandon their principles to please followers. Fourth, virtues help leaders live better (more satisfying, more fulfilled) lives.[3] Important virtues for leaders include courage, temperance, wisdom, justice, optimism, integrity, humility, reverence, and compassion. Each of these is discussed below.

## Courage

> *Of all the virtues, courage is no doubt the most universally admired.*
>
> —Philosopher Andre Comte-Sponville

Courage is overcoming fear in order to do the right thing.[4] Courageous leaders acknowledge the dangers they face and their anxieties. Nonetheless, they move forward despite the risks and costs. The same is true for courageous followers (see "Focus on Follower Ethics: Courageous Followership"). Courage is most often associated with acts of physical bravery and heroism, such as saving a comrade in battle or rescuing a drowning victim. Nevertheless,

most courageous acts involve other forms of danger, such as when a school principal faces the wrath of parents for suspending the basketball team's leading scorer before the state tournament or when a manager confronts his boss about unauthorized spending even though he could lose his job for speaking up.[5] Such acts demonstrate moral courage, which involves living out one's personal values even when the price for doing so may be high. One common way in which leaders put moral courage into action is by intervening on behalf of others who are being victimized. For example, the human rights attorney representing jailed dissidents under a repressive regime risks persecution and jail.[6]

## FOCUS ON FOLLOWER ETHICS

### Courageous Followership

Ira Chaleff, who acts as a management consultant to U.S. senators and representatives, believes that courage is the most important virtue for followers. Exhibiting courage is easier for followers if they recognize that their ultimate allegiance is to the purpose and values of the organization, not to the leader. Chaleff outlines five dimensions of courageous followership that equip subordinates to meet the challenges of their role:

***The Courage to Assume Responsibility.*** Followers must be accountable both for themselves and for the organization as a whole. Courageous followers take stock of their skills and attitudes, consider how willing they are to support and challenge their leaders, manage themselves, seek feedback and personal growth, take care of themselves, and care passionately about the organization's goals. They take initiative to change organizational culture by challenging rules and mindsets and by improving processes.

***The Courage to Serve.*** Courageous followers support their leaders through hard, often unglamorous work. This labor takes a variety of forms, such as helping leaders conserve their energies for their most significant tasks, organizing communication to and from leaders, controlling access to leaders, shaping leaders' public images, presenting leaders with options during decision making, preparing for crises, mediating conflicts between leaders, and promoting performance reviews for leaders.

***The Courage to Challenge.*** Inappropriate behavior damages the relationship between leaders and followers and threatens the purpose of the organization. Leaders may

break the law, scream at or use demeaning language with employees, display an arrogant attitude, engage in sexual harassment, abuse drugs and alcohol, and misuse funds. Courageous followers need to confront leaders who act in a destructive manner. In some situations, just asking questions about the wisdom of a policy decision is sufficient to bring about change. In more extreme cases, followers may need to disobey unethical orders.

***The Courage to Participate in Transformation.*** Negative behavior, when unchecked, often results in a leader's destruction. Leaders who act destructively may deny that they need to change, or they may attempt to justify their behavior. They may claim that whatever they do for themselves (e.g., embezzling, enriching themselves at the expense of stockholders) ultimately benefits the organization. To succeed in modifying their behavior patterns, leaders must admit they have a problem and acknowledge that they should change. They need to take personal responsibility and visualize the outcomes of the transformation: better health, more productive employees, higher self-esteem, restored relationships. Followers can aid in the process of transformation by drawing attention to what needs to be changed; suggesting resources, including outside facilitators; creating a supportive environment; modeling openness to change and empathy; helping contain abusive behavior; and providing positive reinforcement for positive new behaviors.

***The Courage to Leave.*** When leaders are unwilling to change, courageous followers may take principled action by resigning from the organization. Departure is justified when a leader's behaviors clash with his or her self-proclaimed values or the values of the group, or when the leader degrades or endangers others. Sometimes leaving is not enough. In the event of serious ethical violations, followers must bring the leader's misbehavior to the attention of the public by going to the authorities or the press.

SOURCE: Chaleff, I. (2003). *The courageous follower: Standing up to and for our leaders* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

People must have courage if they are to function as ethical leaders. Ethical leaders recognize that moral action is risky but continue to model ethical behavior despite the danger. They refuse to set their values aside to go along with the group, to keep silent when customers may be hurt, or to lie to investors. They strive to create ethical environments even when faced with opposition from their superiors and subordinates. They continue to carry out the organization's mission even in the face of dangers and uncertainty.

## Temperance

> *To use things, therefore, and take pleasure in them as far as possible—not, of course, to the point where we are disgusted with them, for there is no pleasure in that—this is the part of a wise man.*
>
> —Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza

Moderation is key to practicing temperance, which is the ability to control emotions and pleasure.[7] The temperate person takes the middle ground between self-disgust/self-denial and self-indulgence. That means enjoying life's pleasures but not being controlled by them—for example, enjoying food without falling into gluttony, drinking but not becoming addicted to alcohol, enjoying sex without becoming trapped by desire. Temperance also means knowing one's limits and living within one's means.

Unfortunately, a great many leaders are intemperate. They are unable to control their anger and rail at subordinates, appear to have an insatiable desire for money and power, and fall victim to their need for pleasure. They may overreach by trying to know and control all that goes on in their organizations. Intemperate leaders also set unrealistically high goals for themselves and their followers and fail to live within their budgets no matter how inflated their salaries. Professional athletes far too often demonstrate the dangers of intemperance. Many end up broke at the end of their playing careers, after spending all their money on expensive cars, mansions, jewelry, homes for friends and family members, luxury clothing, and other items.

## Wisdom and Prudence (Practical Wisdom)

> *We judge a person's wisdom by his hope.*
>
> —American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson

> *The goal of human life is to be good. Prudence assists us in getting there.*
>
> —Baldwin-Wallace College professors Alan Kolp and Peter Rea

Wisdom draws upon knowledge and experience to promote the common good over both the short term and the long term. Wise organizational leaders engage in six practices.[8] First, they are skilled at thinking. They are smart, drawing from a broad base of knowledge to engage in complex decision making. Second, wise leaders demonstrate high emotional capacity. They are empathetic and sensitive, recognizing differences and respecting them. Third, wise leaders are highly collaborative. These individuals work well with others and

seek their benefit. Fourth, wise leaders are engaged with their organizations and their worlds. They are proactive, constantly experimenting, forming networks, and adapting to changing circumstances. Fifth, wise leaders are reflective, demonstrating depth. They are keenly aware of their values, needs, and emotions and have a sound sense of self. Sixth, wise leaders are aspiring. Well-intentioned, they pursue principled objectives and hope to make themselves, their organizations, and their world better places.

Prudence is a form of wisdom that enables individuals to discern or select the best course of action in a given situation.[9] Thomas Aquinas argued that this virtue governs the others, determining when and how the other qualities should be used. For example, prudence reveals what situations call for courage or compassion and helps us determine how to act justly. Foresight and caution are important elements of practical wisdom. Prudent leaders keep in mind the long-term consequences of their choices. As a result, they are cautious, trying not to overextend themselves and their organizations or to take unnecessary risks. Billionaire investor Warren Buffett is one example of a prudent leader. Buffett, the head of Berkshire Hathaway, sticks to a basic investment strategy, searching for undervalued companies that he can hold for at least 10 years. His lifestyle is modest as well (he still lives in the home he bought for $31,500 and earns $100,000 a year). When Buffett and his wife die, 99% of their estate will go to a charitable foundation.

## Justice

> *And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy. And to walk humbly with your God.*
>
> —Old Testament prophet Micah

Justice has two components. The first is a sense of obligation to the common good. The second is the fair and equal treatment of others.[10] A just person feels a sense of duty and strives to do his or her part as a member of the team, whether that team is a small group, an organization, or society as a whole. A just person supports equitable rules and laws. In addition, those who are driven by justice believe that all people deserve the same rights, whatever their skills or status.

Although justice is a significant virtue for everyone, regardless of her or his role, it takes on added importance for leaders. To begin, leaders who don't carry out their duties put the group or organization at risk. Furthermore, leaders have a moral obligation to consider the needs and interests of the entire group and to take the needs of the larger community into account. The rules and regulations they implement should be fair and should benefit everyone. In fact, employees often complain about injustice, and their performance suffers

when they believe they are being treated unfairly.[11] Leaders also need to guarantee to followers the same rights they enjoy. They should set personal biases aside when making choices, judging others objectively and treating them accordingly. Leaders also have a responsibility to try to correct injustice and inequality caused by others. (You can rate your level of courage, temperance, prudence, and justice by completing Self-Assessment 3.1)

## Optimism

> *Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.*
>
> —Former Czech Republic president Václav Havel

Optimists expect positive outcomes in the future even if they are currently experiencing disappointments and difficulties.[12] They are more confident than pessimists, who expect that things will turn out poorly. People who are hopeful about the future are more likely to persist in the face of adversity. When faced with stress and defeat, optimists acknowledge the reality of the situation and take steps to improve. Their pessimistic colleagues, on the other hand, try to escape problems through wishful thinking, distractions, and other means.

Optimism is an essential quality for leaders. As we'll see later in the chapter, nearly every leader experiences hardships. Those who learn and grow from these experiences will develop their character and go on to greater challenges. Those who ignore unpleasant realities stunt their ethical growth and may find their careers at an end. At the same time, leaders need to help followers deal constructively with setbacks, encouraging them to persist. Followers are more likely to rally behind optimists who appear confident and outline a positive image or vision of the group's future.

## Integrity

> *Integrity lies at the very heart of understanding what leadership is.*
>
> —Business professors Joseph Badaracco and Richard Ellsworth

Integrity is wholeness or completeness. Leaders possessing this trait are true to themselves, reflecting consistency between what they say publicly and how they think and act privately. They live out their values and keep their promises. In other words, they practice what they preach. They are also honest in their dealings with others.[13]

Nothing undermines a leader's moral authority more quickly than lack of integrity. Followers watch the behavior of leaders closely, and one untrustworthy act can undermine a pattern of credible behavior. Trust is broken, and cynicism spreads. In an organizational setting, common "trust busters" include inconsistent messages and behavior, inconsistent rules and procedures, blaming, dishonesty, secrecy, and unjust rewards.[14] (You can measure the integrity of one of your leaders by completing Self-Assessment 3.2, the Perceived Leader Integrity Scale.) Employees at United Airlines were particularly outraged by the bonuses given to executives described in Chapter 1 because these officials had consistently promoted "shared sacrifice" during the company's bankruptcy. Performance suffers when trust is broken. Trust encourages teamwork, cooperation, and risk taking. Those who work in trusting environments are more productive and enjoy better working relationships.[15] (I'll have more to say about trust in Chapter 9.)

## Humility

> *Let us be a little humble; let us think that the truth may not be entirely with us.*
>
> —Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru

The failure of many celebrity CEOs makes a strong argument for encouraging leaders to be humble. In the 1990s, many business leaders, such as Carly Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard, Revlon's Ron Perelman, Disney's Michael Eisner, WorldCom's Bernie Ebbers, and Tyco's Dennis Kozlowski, seemed more like rock stars than corporate executives.[16] These charismatic figures became the public faces of their corporations, appearing on magazine covers and cable television shows and in company commercials. Within a few years, however, most of these celebrity leaders were gone because of scandal (some are in jail) or poor performance. Quiet leaders who shunned the spotlight replaced them and, in many instances, produced superior results.

Management professors J. Andrew Morris, Celeste Brotheridge, and John Urbanski argue that true humility strikes a balance between having an overly low and having an overly high opinion of the self.[17] It does not consist of low self-esteem, as many people think, or of underestimating one's abilities. Instead, humility is made up of three components. The first of these is self-awareness. A humble leader can objectively assess her or his own strengths and limitations. The second element is openness, which is a product of knowing one's weaknesses. Possessing humility means being open to new ideas and knowledge. The third component is transcendence. Humble leaders acknowledge that there is a power greater than the self. This prevents them from developing an inflated view of their importance while increasing their appreciation for the worth and contributions of others.

Humility has a powerful impact on ethical behavior. Humble leaders are less likely to be corrupted by power, claim excessive privileges, engage in fraud, abuse followers, and pursue selfish goals. They are more willing to serve others instead, putting the needs of followers first while acting as role models. Humility encourages leaders to build supportive relationships with followers that foster collaboration and trust. Because they know their limitations and are open to input, humble leaders are more willing to take advice that can keep them and their organizations out of trouble.

## Reverence

*It's not wise to lift our thoughts too high; We are human and our time is short.*

—Ancient Greek playwright Euripides

University of Texas humanities professor Paul Woodruff argues that reverence, which was highly prized by the ancient Greeks and Chinese, is an important virtue for modern leaders.[18] Reverence has much in common with humility. It is the capacity to feel a sense of awe, respect, and even shame when appropriate. Awe, respect, and shame are all critical to ethical leadership, according to Woodruff. Ethical leaders serve higher causes or ideals. They are concerned not about power struggles or winners and losers but about reaching common goals. They respect the input of others, rely on persuasion rather than force, and listen to followers' ideas. Ethical leaders also feel shame when they violate group ideals. Such shame can prompt them to self-sacrifice—accepting the consequences of telling the truth, for example, or supporting unpopular people or ideas.

Reverence and humility are critical to preventing executive hubris. Hubris is the feeling of invincibility that often comes with assuming the top power position in an organization.[19] CEOS who suffer from hubris have a highly inflated view of themselves. They also believe that they are superior to the rest of humanity and that the normal rules and laws don't apply to them because of their lofty positions. Hubris has much in common with narcissism (see Chapter 1). However, hubris is specifically tied to positions of power. Those who suffer from it often equate themselves with organizational status. Organizations, followers, and society all pay a high price when leaders fall victim to hubris. For example, overconfident business leaders pay too much to acquire other companies, which then underperform. They take on too much debt and engage in more risk taking. Arrogant leaders become cruel tyrants ruling by fear and intimidation. They reject the rules of society and express contempt for any authority except their own. Former Bear Stearns CEO Jimmy Cayne was one leader who appeared to suffer from hubris. He bragged about intimidating critics. He spent much of his time out of the office

playing bridge and golf while his firm was collapsing. Even after he was fired, Cayne remained convinced of his abilities, claiming that he received standing ovations from employees and board members on his final day at the office.[20]

Humility and reverence both remind leaders that they are not gods. Both emphasize that there is a power greater than the self and that we all share a common humanity. Both foster sound decisions because they remind leaders that they have limited knowledge and power. And both encourage respect for followers and the development of healthy relationships.

## Compassion (Kindness, Generosity, Love)

> *All happiness in the world comes from serving others; all sorrow in the world comes from acting selfishly.*
>
> —Leadership expert Margaret Wheatley

Compassion and related concepts such as concern, care, kindness, generosity, and love all refer to an orientation that puts others ahead of the self.[21] Those with compassion value others regardless of whether they get anything in return from them. Compassion is an important element of altruism, an ethical perspective addressed in more detail in Chapter 5. An orientation toward others rather than the self separates ethical leaders from their unethical colleagues.[22] Ethical leaders recognize that they serve the purposes of the group. They seek power and exercise influence on behalf of followers. Unethical leaders put their own self-interests first. They are more likely to control and manipulate followers and subvert the goals of the collective. In extreme cases, this self-orientation can lead to widespread death and destruction.

Eunice Shriver provides an outstanding model of compassionate leadership.[23] Born into the wealthy and powerful Kennedy family, which included brother John, who became president of the United States, and brothers Robert and Ted, who became senators, she used her money and political clout on behalf of those with mental limitations. When John Kennedy became president, she convinced him to set up a committee to study developmental disabilities, which led to the creation of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. She started a camp for the intellectually disabled at her estate and cofounded the Special Olympics. The first Special Olympics meet had 1,000 contestants. Now more than 2.5 million athletes in 80 countries take part. Shriver's efforts played a major role in changing public attitudes toward those facing Down syndrome, mental retardation, and other intellectual challenges. They used to be viewed as outcasts and warehoused in mental facilities. Shriver encouraged Americans to see that, with adequate training, those with intellectual limitations could live productive lives and contribute to society.

Concern for employees plays a central role in paternalistic leadership, a leadership style popular in many parts of the world, including Asia, Latin America, Mexico, Turkey, and the Middle East.[24] In paternalism, leaders act as parental figures who demonstrate concern for the welfare of their workers both on and off the job. They may lend money to their subordinates, attend the weddings of their children, find them housing, and so on. Paternalistic leaders also set a moral example through selflessness, self-discipline, a strong work ethic, and other positive behaviors. Researchers distinguish between exploitative and benevolent paternalistic leaders. Exploitative paternalists abuse their authority and mistreat followers. In contrast, benevolent paternalists are genuinely interested in the well-being of their employees, who then pay back their supervisors with loyalty and respect. Followers of benevolent, moral paternalistic leaders are more committed to their organizations and obey company rules and procedures as well as professional and legal standards. Like their leaders, they demonstrate concern for others both inside and outside their organizations.[25] Paternalistic leadership is most effective in societies that (a) value the group over the individual, (b) accept large differences in power between leaders and followers, and (c) demonstrate low tolerance for uncertainty. (See Chapter 10 for more information on these important cultural differences.) Nonetheless, even followers in more individualistic, egalitarian societies such as the United States appreciate considerate leaders, suggesting that the benefits of benevolent paternalism may generalize across cultures.[26]

Identifying important leadership virtues is only a start. We then need to blend desirable qualities together to form a strong, ethical character—to develop what moral psychologist Augusto Blasi calls *moral identity.*[27] Those with moral identity place ethics at the center of their being. They are motivated to take moral action (e.g., be just, demonstrate compassion) because they want to act in a way that is consistent with their core identity. Developing ethical character or moral identity is far from easy, of course. At times, our personal demons will overcome even our best efforts to keep them at bay, and we will fail to live up to our ideals. We're likely to make progress in some areas while lagging in others. We may be courageous yet arrogant, reverent yet pessimistic, optimistic yet unjust. No wonder some prominent leaders reflect both moral strength and weakness. Martin Luther King, Jr., showed great courage and persistence in leading the civil rights movement but engaged in extramarital relationships. Franklin Roosevelt was revered by many of his contemporaries but had a long-standing affair with Lucy Mercer. In fact, Mercer (not Eleanor Roosevelt) was present when he died. Longtime Penn State football coach Joe Paterno's legacy was tarnished when he apparently failed to stop one of his staff from molesting boys. (See Case Study 3.2 for another example of a leader who demonstrates both moral strength and weakness.)

The poor personal behavior of political and business leaders has sparked debate about personal and public morality. One camp argues that the two cannot be separated. Another camp makes a clear distinction between the public arena and private life. According to this

second group, we can be disgusted by the private behavior of politicians such as those who engage in extramarital affairs (e.g., Bill Clinton, Rudy Giuliani, former New York governor Eliot Spitzer, Nevada senator John Ensign) but vote for them anyway based on their performance in office.

I suspect that the truth lies somewhere between these extremes. We should expect contradictions in the character of leaders, not be surprised by them. Private lapses don't always lead to lapses in public judgment. On the other hand, it seems artificial to compartmentalize private and public ethics. Private tendencies can and do cross over into public decisions. Arizona State business ethics professor Marianne Jennings points out that many fallen corporate leaders (e.g., Richard Scrushy, Dennis Kozlowski, Scott Sullivan, Bernie Ebbers) cheated on their wives or divorced them to marry much younger women.[28] She suggests that executives who are dishonest with the most important people in their lives—their spouses—are likely to be dishonest with others who aren't as significant: suppliers, customers, and stockholders. Furthermore, conducting an affair distracts a leader from his or her duties and provides a poor role model for followers. That's why the Boeing board fired CEO Harry Stonecipher when members discovered that he was having an affair with a high-ranking employee.[29]

In the political arena, Franklin Roosevelt tried to deceive the public as well as his wife and family. He proposed expanding the number of Supreme Court justices from 9 to 15, claiming that the justices were old and overworked. In reality, he was angry with the Court for overturning many New Deal programs and wanted to appoint new justices who would support him. Roosevelt's dishonest attempt to pack the Supreme Court cost him a good deal of his popularity. Bill Clinton's personal moral weaknesses overshadowed many of his political accomplishments. (Turn to "Leadership Ethics at the Movies: *The Iron Lady*" to see how character played a role in the successes and failures of another political figure.)

## LEADERSHIP ETHICS AT THE MOVIES

### *The Iron Lady*

*Key Cast Members*: Meryl Streep, Jim Broadbent, Alexandra Roach, Anthony Head

*Synopsis*: Meryl Streep won an Academy Award for her portrayal of Margaret Thatcher, the longest-serving British prime minister of the 20th century. Thatcher, a grocer's daughter, overcame great odds to become leader of the elitist, male-dominated Conservative Party and then of the nation. Near the end of her life, the former prime minister struggles with the loss of her husband, Denis

*(Continued)*

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(played by Broadbent), as well as dementia. In a series of flashbacks she revisits key moments in her tumultuous political career. Her austerity policies as prime minister made her the target of domestic riots as unemployment soared; she survived one bombing carried out by the Irish Republican Army. Thatcher led Britain to victory over Argentina for possession of the Falkland Islands, a war that many considered unnecessary. Eventually she lost the support of her party (and her job as prime minister) after humiliating her cabinet members and refusing to listen to their advice.

*Rating:* PG-13 for some violent images and brief nudity

*Themes*: courage, determination, persistence, ethical decision making, the cost of power, abuse of power

**Discussion Starters**

1. What character traits helped Thatcher to become prime minister and to remain in office? What character traits ultimately led to her downfall?
2. What price did Thatcher pay for her rise to power?
3. At one point, Thatcher says that ideas are more important to her than feelings. Did this trait make her less sensitive to the impacts of her policies and to the opinions of her colleagues?

Fostering character is a lifelong process requiring sustained emotional, mental, and even physical effort. Strategies for developing leadership virtues can be classified as direct or indirect. Direct approaches are specifically designed to promote virtues. For example, many schools have character education programs.[30] Instead of deliberate moralizing (telling children how to behave), the best of these programs foster character development though debate, dialogue, case studies, self-evaluation, and problem solving. In psychological interventions, therapists help clients become less egocentric (and therefore more humble) by encouraging them to develop more realistic assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. Counselors suggest that their counselees convert pessimism into optimism by identifying their negative cognitions ("I am a failure") and then transforming them into more positive thoughts ("I may have failed, but I can take steps to improve"). Psychologists have also found ways to help people deal with their fears while building their courage. They first

expose clients to low levels of threat and then, once the clients have mastered their initial fears, introduce them to progressively greater dangers.[31]

Although direct methods can build character, more often than not virtues develop indirectly, as by-products of other activities. In the remainder of this chapter, I will introduce a variety of indirect approaches or factors that encourage the development of leadership virtues. These include identifying role models, telling and living out shared stories, learning from hardship, cultivating good habits, creating a personal mission statement, and clarifying values.

# Character Building

## Finding Role Models

Character appears to be more caught than taught. We often learn what it means to be virtuous by observing and imitating exemplary leaders. That makes role models crucial to developing high moral character.[32] Eunice Shriver is one such role model; William Wilberforce, who led the fight to abolish the British slave trade, is another.

Government ethics expert David Hart argues that it is important to differentiate between different types of moral examples or exemplars.[33] Dramatic acts, such as rescuing a child from danger or landing a plane safely, capture our attention. However, if we are to develop worthy character, we need examples of those who demonstrate virtue on a daily basis. Hart distinguishes between *moral episodes* and *moral processes.* Moral episodes are made up of *moral crises* and *moral confrontations.* Moral crises are dangerous, and Hart calls those who respond to them "moral heroes." Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist, was one such hero. He risked his life and fortune to save 1,000 Jewish workers during World War II. Moral confrontations aren't dangerous, but they do involve risk and call for "moral champions." Marie Ragghianti emerged as a moral champion when, as chair of the state parole board in Tennessee, she discovered that the governor and his cronies were selling pardons and reported their illegal activities to the FBI.

Moral processes consist of *moral projects* and *moral work.* Moral projects are designed to improve ethical behavior during a limited amount of time and require "moral leaders." A moral leader sets out to reduce corruption in government, for example, or to introduce a more effective medical treatment, or to improve the working conditions of migrant farmworkers. In contrast to a moral project, moral work does not have a beginning or an end but is ongoing. The "moral worker" strives for ethical consistency throughout life. This

moral exemplar might be the motor vehicle department employee who tries to be courteous to everyone who comes to the office or the neighbor who volunteers to coach youth soccer.

Hart argues that the moral worker is the most important category of moral exemplar. He points out that most of life is lived in the daily valleys, not on the heroic mountain peaks. Because character is developed over time through a series of moral choices and actions, we need examples of those who live consistent moral lives. Those who engage in moral work are better able to handle moral crises when they arise. For instance, André and Magda Trocmé committed themselves to a life of service and nonviolence as pastors in the French village of Le Chambon. When the German occupiers arrived in France in 1940, the Trocmés didn't hesitate to protect the lives of Jewish children and encouraged their congregation to do the same. This small community became an island of refuge to those threatened by the Holocaust.[34]

Anne Colby and William Damon studied 23 moral workers to determine what we can learn from their lives.[35] They found three common characteristics in their sample:

- *Certainty:* Moral exemplars are sure of what they believe and take responsibility for acting on their convictions.
- *Positivity:* Exemplars take a positive approach to life even in the face of hardship. They enjoy what they do and are optimistic about the future.
- *Unity of self and moral goals:* Exemplars don't distinguish between their personal identity and their ethical convictions. Morality is central to who they are. They believe they have no choice but to help others and consider themselves successful if they are pursuing their mission in life.

What sets exemplars apart from the rest of us is the extent of their engagement in moral issues. We make sure that our children get safely across the street. Moral exemplars, on the other hand, "drop everything not just to see their own children across the street but to feed the poor children of the world, to comfort the dying, to heal the ailing, or to campaign for human rights."[36]

Colby and Damon offer some clues about how we might develop broader moral commitments like the exemplars in their study. They note that moral capacity continues to develop well beyond childhood—some in their sample didn't take on their life's work until their 40s and beyond. Given this fact, we should strive to develop our ethical capacity throughout our lives. The researchers also found that working with others on important ethical tasks or projects fosters moral growth by exposing participants to different points of view and new moral issues. We too can benefit by collaborating with others on significant causes, such as working for better children's health care, building affordable

housing, or fighting the spread of AIDS. The key is to view these tasks not as burdens but as opportunities to act on what we believe. Adopting a joyful attitude will help us remain optimistic in the face of discouragement. (See Box 3.1 for additional information on how to become a more compassionate leader.)

## BOX 3.1 THE JOURNEY TO HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

Humanitarian leaders spearhead efforts to feed the homeless, fight sex trafficking, educate street children, bring medical care to poor rural villages, and so on. Researchers Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson wondered why some individuals "take charge of helping people in need" while most of us do not. They conducted interviews with 31 humanitarian leaders ranging from age 16 to 88 from a variety of educational and social backgrounds. The investigators found that, despite their differences, their subjects followed a common path. Seven choice points marked this journey to helping others.

***Choice 1: Leveraging Life Experiences.*** Humanitarian leaders reflect on their life stories. They develop empathy for the needs of others through (1) role models (parents, teachers, religious leaders, friends) and positive values, such as caring for the poor or serving others; (2) troubling awareness about a societal problem like sex abuse or lack of clean water; or (3) traumatic personal experiences, such as the death of parents or a cancer diagnosis.

***Choice 2: Having a Sense of Fairness.*** Humanitarians are convinced that the world is divided into those who are fortunate and those who are not. The disadvantaged are victims of circumstance and are therefore worthy of help. To make the world fairer, the humanitarian leader believes in providing opportunities for those who have been denied such access by fate.

***Choice 3: Believing That We Can Matter.*** Those out to assist others aren't overwhelmed by the need. Instead, they focus on helping individuals. Meeting the needs of one person is the first step to addressing the broader problem—whether that is poverty, substandard housing, or disease. Humanitarian leaders believe that they have something to offer and know what they can and cannot do to contribute. They try to make the future better for those in need.

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

***Choice 4: Being Open to Opportunity.*** Compassionate leaders are inclined to say yes to possibilities instead of automatically saying no. They have an external focus. They are attuned to the needs of others, and their impulse is to respond because they have a clear sense of life's direction. Unlike many people, humanitarian leaders align their actions with their convictions.

***Choice 5: Taking the First Small Step.*** Every leader interviewed by LaFasto and Larson reported a pivotal or defining moment when he or she first responded to the impulse to help. Humanitarian leaders don't let the size of the problem discourage them; rather, they do something, no matter how small. While they don't know where their efforts will lead, they still make the commitment to act. Take the case of Ryan Hreljac. Ryan started his humanitarian career as a 6-year-old by trying to raise $70 to provide one well for a village in a developing nation. This small step led to the creation of the Ryan's Well Foundation, which has provided sanitation and clean water for three-quarters of a million people around the world.

***Choice 6: Persevering.*** Those who tackle difficult social problems can expect to encounter a great deal of frustration. But they believe in what they are doing and are convinced that reaching their goals is worth the cost. Humanitarian leaders are also adaptable, often turning obstacles into opportunities. If funding sources dry up, they find new, more stable ones, for example. They maintain their positive focus by taking heart in short-term victories and remaining convinced they can make a difference.

***Choice 7: Leading the Way.*** The passion of humanitarian leaders draws others to their causes. Their enthusiasm, energy, and optimism are contagious. Others join in, and movements are born.

LaFasto and Larson conclude that we all have the potential to become humanitarian leaders. However, to start down the path to socially responsible leadership, we must first answer yes to this question: Do I feel a sense of responsibility for helping others?

SOURCE: LaFasto, F., & Larson, C. (2012). *The humanitarian leader in each of us: Seven choices that shape a socially responsible life.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Telling and Living Collective Stories

Character building never takes place in a vacuum. Virtues are more likely to take root when nurtured by families, schools, governments, and religious bodies. These collectives impart values and encourage self-discipline, caring, and other virtues through the telling of narratives or stories. Shared narratives both explain and persuade. They provide a framework for understanding the world and, at the same time, challenge us to act in specified ways. For example, one of the most remarkable features of the American political system is the orderly transition of power from president to president.[37] George Washington set this precedent by voluntarily stepping down as the country's first leader. His story, told in classrooms, books, and films, helps explain why the current electoral system functions smoothly. Furthermore, modern presidents and presidential candidates follow Washington's example, as in the case of the 2000 election. Although he garnered more of the popular vote than George W. Bush, Al Gore conceded defeat after the Supreme Court rejected his court challenge.

Character growth comes from living up to the roles we play in the stories we tell. According to virtue ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"[38] Worthy narratives bring out the best in us, encouraging us to suppress our inner demons and to cast light instead of shadow.

In the introduction to this text, I argued that we could learn about leadership ethics from fictional characters as well as from real-life ones. Ethics professor C. David Lisman offers several reasons the ethical models contained in literature can provide a moral education that helps us to nurture our virtues.[39] Lisman focuses on literature, but his observations also apply to other forms of fiction (films, plays, television shows). In Lisman's estimation, fiction helps us understand our possibilities and limits. We can try to deny the reality of death, the fact that we're aging, and that there are factors outside our control. However, novels and short stories force us to confront these issues.

Literature explores many common human themes, such as freedom of choice, moral responsibility, conflict between individual and society, conflict between individual conscience and society's rules, and self-understanding. Fiction writers help us escape our old ways of thinking and acting. Their best works expand our emotional capacity, enabling us to respond more fully to the needs of others. They also provide us with opportunities to practice moral reflection and judgment by evaluating the actions of important characters.[40] In sum, almost any story about leaders, whether real or fictional, can teach us something about ethical and unethical behavior. Moral exemplars can be found in novels, television series, and feature films as well as in news stories, biographies, documentaries, and historical records.

## Learning From Hardship

Hardship and suffering also play a role in developing character. The leaders we admire the most are often those who have endured the greatest hardships. Nelson Mandela, Václav Havel, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn served extended prison terms, for instance, and Moses endured 40 years in exile and 40 in the wilderness with his people.

Perhaps no other American leader has faced as much hardship as did Abraham Lincoln. He was defeated in several elections before winning the presidency. Because of death threats, he had to slip into Washington, D.C., to take office. He presided over the slaughter of many of his countrymen and -women in the Civil War, lost a beloved son, and was ridiculed by Northerners (some in his cabinet) and Southerners alike. However, all these trials seemed to deepen both his commitment to the Union and his spirituality. His second inaugural address is considered to be one of the finest political and theological statements ever produced by a public official. (Turn to Case Study 3.3 for another example of a leader who faced and overcame hardship.)

Trainers at the Center for Creative Leadership have identified hardship as one of the factors contributing to leadership development. Leaders develop the fastest when they encounter situations that stretch or challenge them. Hardships, along with novelty, difficult goals, and conflict, challenge people. CCL staffers Russ Moxley and Mary Lynn Pulley believe that hardships differ from other challenging experiences because they are unplanned, are experienced in an intensely personal way, and involve loss.[41]

Research conducted by the CCL reveals that leaders experience five common categories of hardship events. Each type of hardship can drive home important lessons.

- *Business mistakes and failures:* Examples of this type of hardship event include losing an important client, failed products and programs, broken relationships, and bankruptcies. These experiences help leaders build stronger working relationships, recognize their limitations, and profit from their mistakes.
- *Career setbacks:* Missed promotions, unsatisfying jobs, demotions, and firings make up this hardship category. Leaders faced with these events lose control over their careers, their sense of self-efficacy or competence, and their professional identity. Career setbacks function as wake-up calls, providing feedback about weaknesses. They encourage leaders to take more responsibility for managing their careers and to identify the type of work that is most meaningful to them.
- *Personal trauma:* Examples of personal trauma include divorce, cancer, death, and difficult children. These experiences, which are a natural part of life, drive home the point that leaders (who are used to being in charge) can't run the world around them. As a result,

they may strike a better balance between work and home responsibilities, learn how to accept help from others, and endure in the face of adversity.

- *Problem employees:* Troubled workers include those who steal, defraud, can't perform, or perform well only part of the time. In dealing with problem employees, leaders often lose the illusion that they can turn these people around. They may also learn how important it is to hold followers to consistently high standards and become more skilled at confronting subordinates about problematic behavior.

- *Downsizing:* Downsizing has much in common with career setbacks, but in this type of hardship leaders lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Downsizing can help leaders develop coping skills and force them to take stock of their lives and careers. Those carrying out the layoffs can also learn from the experience by developing greater empathy for the feelings of followers.

Being exposed to a hardship is no guarantee that you'll learn from the experience. Some ambitious leaders never get over being passed over for a promotion, for instance, and become embittered and cynical. Benefiting from adversity takes what Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas call "adaptive capacity." Bennis and Thomas found that, regardless of generation, effective leaders come through *crucible moments* that have profound impacts on their development.[42] These intense experiences include failures such as losing an election but also encompass more positive events, such as climbing a mountain or finding a mentor. They generally fall into three categories. *New territory crucibles,* like taking an overseas assignment or serving in a new organizational role, put leaders into stretching experiences. *Reversal crucibles* involve loss, defeat, or failure. *Suspension crucibles* involve extended periods of reflection or contemplation, such as between promotions and jobs. The accomplished leaders Bennis and Thomas sampled experienced just as many crises as everyone else but were able to learn important principles and skills from their struggles. This knowledge enabled them to move on to more complex challenges.

Successful leaders see hard times as positive high points of their lives. In contrast, less successful leaders are defeated and discouraged by similar events. To put it another way, effective leaders tell a different story than their ineffective counterparts. They identify hardships as stepping stones, not as insurmountable obstacles. We too can enlarge our adaptive capacity by paying close attention to our personal narratives, defining difficult moments in our lives as learning opportunities rather than as permanent obstacles. To see how you can learn from a specific failure, take the following steps:

1. Identify a significant failure from your professional or personal life and summarize the failure in a sentence (be sure to use the word *failure*).
2. Describe how you felt and thought about the failure immediately after it happened.

3. Move forward in time to identify any positive outcomes that came out of the failure, including skills you acquired, lessons you learned, and any relationships you established.
4. Identify how the failure changed or shaped you as a person, noting any new traits or attitudes you have adopted and whether you are any more mature now than you were before the failure event.[43]

## Developing Habits

One of the ways in which we build character is by doing well through the development of habits.[44] Habits are repeated routines or practices designed to foster virtuous behavior. Examples of good habits include working hard, telling the truth, giving to charity, standing up to peer pressure, and always turning in original work for school assignments. Every time we engage in one of these habits, it leaves a trace or residue. Over time, these residual effects become part of our personality and are integrated into our character. We also become more competent at demonstrating virtues. Take courage, for example. To develop the courage and skill to confront our bosses about their unethical behavior, we may first need to practice courage by expressing our opinions to them on less critical issues such as work policies and procedures.[45]

Business consultant Stephen Covey developed the most popular list of positive habits. Not only did he author the best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,* but thousands of businesses, nonprofit groups, and government agencies have participated in workshops offered by the Covey Center for Leadership.[46] In his best-seller, Covey argues that effectiveness is based on such character principles as integrity, fairness, service, excellence, and growth. The habits are the tools that enable leaders and followers to develop these characteristics. Covey defines a habit as a combination of knowledge (what to do and why to do it), skill (how to do it), and motivation (wanting to do it). Leadership development is an "inside-out" process that starts within the leader and then moves outward to affect others. The seven habits of effective and ethical leaders are as follows:

> *Habit 1: Be Proactive.* Proactive leaders realize that they can choose how they respond to events. When faced with career setbacks, they try to grow from these experiences instead of feeling victimized by them. Proactive people also take the initiative by opting to attack problems instead of accepting defeat. Their language reflects their willingness to accept rather than avoid responsibility. A proactive leader makes statements such as "Let's examine our options" and "I can create a strategic plan." A reactive leader, in contrast, makes comments such as "The organization won't go along with that idea," "I'm too old to change," and "That's just who I am."
>
> *Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind.* This habit is based on the notion that "all things are created twice." First we get a mental picture of what we want to accomplish, and then we follow through on our plans. If we're unhappy with the

*Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw.* "Sharpening the saw" refers to the continual renewal of the physical, mental, social or emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the self. Healthy leaders care for their bodies through exercise, good nutrition, and stress management. They encourage their mental development by reading good literature and writing thoughtful letters and journal entries. They create meaningful relationships with others and nurture their inner or spiritual values through study or meditation and time in nature. Continual renewal, combined with the use of the first six habits, creates an upward spiral of character improvement.

## Developing Mission Statements

Developing a mission statement is the best way to keep the end or destination in mind. Leaders who cast light have a clear sense of what they hope to accomplish and seek to achieve worthwhile goals. For example, Abraham Lincoln was out to preserve the Union, Nelson Mandela wanted to abolish apartheid, and Mother Teresa devoted her whole life to reducing suffering.

Author and organizational consultant Laurie Beth Jones asserts that, to be useful, a mission statement should be short (no more than a sentence long), easily understood and communicated, and committed to memory.[47] According to Jones, developing a personal mission statement begins with personal assessment. Take a close look at how your family has influenced your values and interests. Identify your strengths and determine what makes you unique (what Jones calls your "unique selling point"). Once you've isolated your gifts and unique features, examine your motivation. What situations make you excited or angry? Chances are, your mission will be related to the factors that arouse your passion or enthusiasm (teaching, writing, coaching, or selling, for example).

Jones outlines a three-part formula for constructing a mission statement. Start with the phrase "My mission is to" and record three action verbs that best describe what you want to do (e.g., *accomplish, build, finance, give, discuss*). Next, plug in a principle, value, or purpose that you could commit the rest of your life to (joy, service, faith, creativity, justice). Finish by identifying the group or cause that most excites you (real estate, design, sports, women's issues). Your final statement ought to inspire you and should direct all your activities, both on and off the job.

Leadership consultant Juana Bordas offers an alternative method or path for discovering personal leadership purpose based on Native American culture. Native Americans discovered their life purposes while on vision quests. Vision cairns guided members of some tribes. These stone piles served both as directional markers and as reminders that others had passed this way before. Bordas identifies nine cairns or markers for creating personal purpose.[48]

BY MARTHA PEREGO

# ADVOCATING FOR YOUR PERSONAL CAUSE

## New guidance from ICMA

A national organization notified a city of its plans to open a branch in one of the city's booming commercial districts. The nature of the business as well as the location required a special permit. Due to a unique provision in the city charter, the city manager was the only official who was authorized to grant or deny the special permit. Sounds like just another routine administrative task for the manager, right?

Except that the national organization was Planned Parenthood. Given the organization's mission, public engagement on this issue would be anything but routine. Whatever the manager's decision, the connection of the issue to Planned Parenthood would bring out vocal supporters as well as detractors.

To further complicate matters, the manager privately supports Planned Parenthood's work. She has been a consistent albeit modest financial donor to the organization. But she has never publicly stated her support for the organization or worked in any official volunteer capacity.

### Managing Ethics and "Optics"

The manager is absolutely confident that her personal support of the applicant will not impair her professional judgment in reaching an objective decision based on the merits of the case. That said, the manager is concerned about these ethics and perceptions of the situation:

- Does the manager have an ethical obligation to disclose her personal support of the organization? If she does so before making her decision, is she acknowledging that her capacity to make an objective decision is flawed—that her professional decision will be influenced by her personal position?
- How will the council and/or the public view her decision if it is later disclosed that she personally supported Planned Parenthood?
- How will she respond now or later if asked for her personal opinion on the merits of Planned Parenthood's mission? Does she have a right to keep her personal views and activities private? Is it ethical to decline to answer such an inquiry?
- Was the city manager wrong to provide personal support for an organization whose mission is so politically divisive? Does privately supporting a cause undermine the public's confidence in the manager and the office?
- What advice does the ICMA Code of Ethics offer on personal advocacy?

All are difficult questions to resolve.

### The Debate

For decades, the Code of Ethics has acknowledged a professional's right to voice his or her opinion on public issues. As to the specifics, the guidance was limited to the topics of how to assist the governing body in the presentation of issues or what to do when asked for help to promote the council-manager form of government.

The code did not address members' rights and responsibilities if they wanted to advocate on behalf of an issue of personal concern in their private life and outside the scope of their official position.

The profession's dialogue this year on the relevancy of Tenet 7 ignited



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the debate about whether it's really ok for a professional working in local government to advocate on behalf of issues of personal concern. Tenet 7 of the code advises members to refrain from all political activities that undermine public confidence in professional administrators.

In this era of polarized politics, what can be more "political" than publicly announcing your stance on gun control, abortion, immigration, marriage equality, or any number of other contentious public issues. Make a donation to an organization that advocates for an issue or find yourself on the opposite side of the issue with your elected officials or the community, and the political heat just escalates.

Members even debated the perils of simply being a member of an organization that publicly advocates a position. How do you maintain your status as a "politically neutral" professional in a culture where you quickly get assigned to a political box based on just one or a few associations?

But the majority of members also recognized the need for balance and judgment. People drawn to public service have a heightened awareness and commitment to social issues. They understand the connection between policies and programs and their impact on the people in the communities they serve. Given that, how do you ask deeply committed and informed public professionals to just stand down?

### New Guidance on Issue Advocacy

Based on the dialogue, the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct recommended adding a guideline to address issue advocacy that takes place outside the day job. The final version of the guideline, approved by the ICMA Executive Board in September 2013, states:

**"Personal Advocacy of Issues.** Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues. Members may advocate for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties."

In drafting this guideline, committee members had three goals. First, they wanted to make it clear that members are free to express their opinion on public issues. Second, they wanted to reinforce the concept of balance and restraint required of all those who serve the public.

Third, they recognize that you, the professional on the ground, must assume responsibility to assess whether your advocacy on a public issue undermines your effectiveness in the community you chose to serve. PM

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR STATUS AS A "POLITICALLY NEUTRAL" PROFESSIONAL IN A CULTURE WHERE YOU QUICKLY GET ASSIGNED TO A POLITICAL BOX BASED ON JUST ONE OR A FEW ASSOCIATIONS?

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# Spiritual leadership: fulfilling whole-self needs at work

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## Abstract

The work community is becoming the most significant community for many people. People are coming to expect their work - where they spend most of their time - to satisfy deeply held needs for wholeness and to help provide spiritual support for our values and our aspirations for personal as well as economic growth. This paper reports on original research which supports a growing literature attesting to the centrality of work in meeting both economic and spiritual needs. Spirit refers to the vital, energizing force or principle in the person, the core of self. Respondent managers understand spirit in its secular connotation as defining self meaning and motivation for action. This study begins a definition of a model of leadership based on this kind of spiritual relationship, one founded on morality, stewardship and community. It also lists some critical issues that this emerging leadership model faces.

## Full Text

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Introduction

Work has become the centrepiece of our lives. Whether we like it or not, work has become the fountainhead of values in our society, the site of our most useful social contributions. Work is the place where most of us find our sense of full meaning. The organization (community) within which we work is becoming our most significant community. For some, work is replacing family, friendship circles, church and social groups. Yet in 1994 only one in four workers were extremely satisfied with their work compared to 40 per cent in 1973. According to Renesch (1995) more than 40 million people in the US are seeking a more "intrinsically valued" lifestyle and the numbers are growing. While work is critical to economic wellbeing, these numbers suggest that it is not meeting our needs as human beings.

It is hard today for many of us to separate our work from the rest of our being. We spend too much of our time at work or in work-related social and leisure activities for us to expect to continue trying to compartmentalize our lives into separate work, family, religious and social domains. As one result, the pressure many of us feel to recognize and respond to the sacred in us must find outlet in the secular workplace. If personal or social transformation is to take place, it will most likely take place at work. For, after all, life is about spirit and we humans carry only one spirit that must manifest itself in both life and livelihood.

Research by Jacobson (1994) and confirmed by the author, strongly suggests that mature leaders and other workers in our organizations are seeking more than merely economic rewards on the job. They are redefining work to include satisfaction of their inner needs for spiritual identity and satisfaction. Jacobson's survey of national leaders, and the author's survey of mid-level managers using similar questions, confirm a growing need for workplace cultures, leadership and work processes that celebrate the whole individual with needs, desires, values and a "wanting" spirit self. Respondents in the author's study unanimously agreed that spirituality is a part of their work lives (see Table I).

The recent wave of literature advocating a new age of spiritual awareness attests to this increasingly widespread need. We have obviously reached a point where non-intuitive, leaner, rational management has made a mess of many American companies. What Cappelli (1995) calls the deregulation of employment - the abandonment of the traditional psychological contract connecting workers to a life-long career with the company - has effectively destroyed the security and tranquillity of the workplace. People need something else to repair the damage. For a growing cadre of people - all of the author's respondents - spirituality is the answer.

Understanding spirit at work

There is a part of us that is not just physical, a part that we are comfortable in calling spirit, which people less spiritually inclined may call human nature. It is the vital, energizing force or principle in the person. It affects our identity, our values; our memories; our sense of humour. It integrates guiding principles of wholeness, relationships, inner wisdom and inner authority.

People are hungry for this kind of meaning in their lives. They are trying to integrate their spiritual selves with their professional or work lives (Kantrowitz, 1994). Almost 85 per cent of the survey respondents (Table I) found a "significant connection" between their leader's disposition to spirituality and his or her impact on their work. For these people, spirituality connotes the essence of who we are, our inner selves, separate from the purely physical, but including the physical. It describes those essential human values universal and across time, that teach us that humanity belongs within the greater scheme of things and how harmony can be realized in life and work (Heerman, 1995).

Without taking anything away from religious doctrines, the new focus on workplace spirituality is one way to apply spiritual beliefs and satisfy the need to feel the spirit through work. In other words, we cannourish the spirit in widely diverse ways. Spirituality made manifest is the essence of leadership.

A characteristic of current leadership texts is that they confuse dedication, mission or vision, with spirituality. Spirituality goes beyond these ideas and provides the underpinning necessary to make them work in our personal and professional lives. Spirituality implies a relationship with something intangible beyond the self. It is a source guide for personal values and meaning, a way of understanding self and the world and is a means of personal and group integration. It is in this latter context that spirituality has place in our work lives. Table II shows the most frequently mentioned definitional characteristics of spirituality identified by respondents to the author's survey. The increasing interest in the integration of spirituality with secular leadership and organizational development holds promise of further application of these seminal ideas in leadership.

The values foundation of spiritual leadership

Spiritual leadership asks us to reject past models of human leadership that focused on values of self-interest. These earlier models are energized by implicit values focusing on power, wealth and prestige. Rather, the transcendent values of spiritual leaders include a rejection of these self-interest values. Corporate and government managers in the survey suggest that spiritual leaders focus on ultimate ethical values like integrity, independence and justice (see Table III). These values draw heavily on principles from Judeo-Christian teachings (Erteszek, 1983). They reflect core American values (Fairholm, 1991). They reinforce our traditional beliefs in the dignity of all people. They define corporate leaders as the trustees/stewards of life and resources. They reflect ideas of what is good for individuals and for groups - convictions about what will promote the faith, or protect the country, or build companies, or transform our schools. Spiritual leaders clarify followers' moral identities and strengthen and deepen their commitments. Spiritual leaders make connections between others' interior worlds of moral reflection and the outer worlds of work and social relationships.

Application of spiritual leadership at work

A legitimate question may now be asked: How might we apply spirit in our lives? Comments by those surveyed (incorporated in the following material) suggest some ideas and issues spiritual leaders need to consider. For example, nourishing the spirit at work requires leaders to consider and respond to yet another dimension of human life beyond those commonly identified with leader-follower relationships. A working definition of spiritual leadership therefore must include ideas like teaching our followers correct principles and the application of techniques that enable self-governance. It is creating circumstances in which followers can function freely with the leader, and within their work subject only to broad accountability. It is redefining leadership in terms of service and stewardship.

From the growing research on spirit in the workplace we can abstract a skeletal model of spiritual leadership that embodies those values and practices proven effective in various kinds of organization. The model is holistic, with the individual parts providing synergistic support for the whole. These model characteristics include:

a carefully designed corporate philosophy or vision embedded in a corporateculture;

- a value of personal and other forms of development (growth) to become one's best self;

- commitment to serving others;

- a sense of interactive, mutual trust;

- an authentic concern for people and organizational goals;

- an environment that encourages openness, fairness, individuality and creativity;

- commitment to group unity, teamwork and sharing;

- integrity in all interpersonal relationships;

- simplicity and flexibility of structure and systems;

- a process that emphasizes continuing evaluation of progress.

There is peculiar power in this new leadership model defining a holistic, community conception of the organization both as an economic enterprise and as a human system. This holistic approach includes services that address the personal as well as the professional lives of workers (Kouzes and Posner, 1993). The question is how to achieve and maintain a renewing balance between work and family and between personal and professional areas of life.

We can delineate three specific spirit leader components. Together they helpcomplete this evolving spiritual leadership model. Individually, they represent foundation stones on which leaders can buildtheir unique leadership ethic. These foundation stones are morality, stewardship and community.

Moral leadership

Spiritual leaders are moral leaders. Moral leaders prefer not to compromise, accommodate, or collaborate in areas where their core values are at stake. Rather, they may prefer to challenge opposing ideas, rather than accommodate them. Thus, the spiritual leader may sometimes be outspoken and deliberately confrontational to alternative value systems. Spiritual leaders affirm the superior value of the spiritual over other leadership models. While traditional functions and roles may be similar, spiritual leaders apply them in overtly moral ways.

Leadership entails principles of action, motivated by spirituality. Sixty-three per cent of those responding to the author's survey found spirituality a core basis for their values, beliefs and ethics (Table I). This source of individual ethics is also recognized in the recent leadership literature dealing with values-based transformational leadership (see, for example, Burns, 1978; Covey, 1991; Depree, 1989; Fairholm, 1991; 1994; Greenleaf, 1977; Lee and Zemke, 1993; Vaill, 1989). Their application in work situations compels a spiritual orientation that centres on moral conduct. It is a case of doing good while doing well.

The infrastructure of spiritual leadership is an idea of moral leadership focused on service. It is uncompromisingly committed to the higher principle of selfless concern for others. Spiritual leadership rejects coercion to secure desired goals. It is non-interfering of human freedom and choices, although these choices may entail some painful decisions and shifts in priorities.

Elements of moral spiritual leadership include the following:

Building shared values

Spiritual leaders inspire a sense of shared community values. Common values provide the basis of the sanctions' systems that define the morality of community members and determine its measures of success.

Vision setting

Spiritual leaders exhibit a sustained ability to build consensus and lead democratically within the framework of a common vision.

Sharing meaning

Spiritual leaders create meaning for others. They engage the heart (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). Spiritual leadership is about finding shared meaning, not about coercion or force. It is about persuasion, about right or wrong.

Enabling

Leaders need followers to lead, but they need capable, energized followers who can and will do their share of the group's work including sometimes even taking over the leader's role. Enabled people flourish in an environment of interactive trust, shared vision and common values. Moral leaders train, educate and coach followers, provide motivation, involve them in appropriate networks and then free them from situational constraints that may hamper their growth/transformation towards full effectiveness.

Influence and power

The measure of leadership is not structural, but attitudinal (DePree, 1989). Followers confer leadership. Until followers choose to accept the leader's power, the leader cannot lead. This acceptance comes out of the relationship, not from a formal structure orsystem. Spiritual leaders have no desire to manipulate others. They help followers feel powerful and able to accomplish work on their own.

Intuition

Intuition is knowledge gained without rational thought (Fairholm, 1991; Rowan, 1986). The spiritual leader's influence comes out of an in-depth familiarity with the organization's culture, customs, values and traditions. Such leaders develop an integrated framework based on core values - a vision - and operate out of this framework without stopping and thinking. Spiritual leadership, or moral leadership, must tap shared values of the group. It is this intuition taping ingrained ideas and values also held by group members that gives spiritual leaders their moral legitimacy.

Risk taking

Spiritual leadership is active and action involves risk. Leaders need to challenge existing work and team processes (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). They do not simply accept current work systems or existing structural relationships. Rather, spiritual leaders are pioneers. They try to produce real change that meets people's enduring needs regardless of the risk.

Service

Spiritual leadership is servanthood. The spiritual leader is a servant committed to the principles of spiritual relationships defined above. This kind of moral leadership is the reverse of much written in past leadership literature. Rather than attempt to dominate followers, spiritual leaders go to work for them, providing all that is necessary for follower success.

Transformation

Spiritual leaders transform themselves,others and their organization. They enhance people's moral selves, help confirm others' beliefs in their own inherent self-worth. And, in the process, they help create a new scale of meaning within which followers can see their lives in terms of the larger community. The spiritual leader's role is to change the lives of followers and of institutions in ways that enhance both. Spiritual leaders convert (change) followers to leaders.

Stewardship

As we bring spirituality to the work place, a new idea emerges of the role of the individual in the organization, an idea, classically called stewardship. The idea of stewardship can be contrasted with ownership. Ownership is shifting to stewardship (McMillen, 1994). Ownership connotes possession, control and proprietorship. Stewardship connotes holding work resources in trust for a temporary period. In a stewardship organization, power is inherent in each steward to help accomplish his or her unit's ends; not just the steward's own ends. Stewardship is a collective idea. It is by sharing equally all power that we become one, become united.

Stewardship is based on self-directed free moral choice. The steward has the power of self-governance. Every steward has the same rights and is subject to identical limitations in the exercise of self-direction. This sharing of power preserves harmony and good will. The leader is a steward also and subject to the same limitations and advantages as other stewards. These ensure that every steward has a single voice in council with other stewards and a single vote. Stewardship preserves oneness by procedures that enhance common consent. In this way each steward is protected against unjust or dominating leaders.

Both ends and means are vital to stewardship. How we work is as important as whatwe do. Stewardship is a conception oforganizational governance that connotes initiative and responsibility without the baggage of control behaviours, direction and others (i.e. the leader) "knowing what is best" for followers. Instead, stewards have self-directing authority over their respective areas within the stewardship unit. The only limitation is that the steward's claim on his or her unit's resources must be just - all claims are equally subject to the overall limitations of the stewardship unit's resources.

Steward leadership is operating-in-service-to rather than in-control-of those around us. It is less prescriptive. It has more to do with being accountable than it does with being responsible for what the group creates or with defining, prescribing and telling others what to do. Steward leadership is not a single guiding principle but one-third of a triumvirate that includes also empowerment and partnership as well as stewardship. The principle of stewardship brings accountability while partnership balances responsibility. It is a sharing of the governance system in which each member holds control and responsibility in trust for the group as a unit. It is a relationship system based on mutual accountability.

A steward role asks both leader and led to risk losing class distinctions and privilege in the pursuit of living out a set of values and creating an organization where members personally reclaim the institution as their own. Stewardship operates at the whole-person - spiritual - level of existence and interrelationship. It includes ideas of team work and individual free choice.

Community

A sense of service to community plays a crucial role in the development of spiritual leadership potential. Leaders create co-operative, action-oriented communities that, in turn, provide the environment and culture within which leaders can operate from a sense of spirituality. These corporate spiritual communities are characterized by a willingness and ability to focus on group members' development, to stretch them. Community members are typically engaged in continuous learning or development. They take risks to attain desired personal and group goals.

The problems that many US organizations now face are not produced by temporary downturns in the economy. Rather, they are outcomes of earlier, now obsolete, ideas and principles of organization and management (Mitroff et al., 1994). The time has come to engage in the production of new organizational designs focusing on interactive communities of enabled moral leaders and followers. We need to engage such communities in meaningful work. Such communities use the full intelligence of workers by letting those closest to every problem have responsibility for finding solutions and acting on them. Community serves as the vessel of vision, values and mutually helpful connections that guide individuals and teams. The role of leadership in community is to lead all the people. The central task of the leader, therefore, is to be a whole-maker, a creator of oneness - of community. They counter the tendency to worker anomy and alienation by invigorating workers' lives with a sense of purpose and a feeling of belonging to a community doing something worthwhile.

Community is from the root word meaning "with unity". Community-focused organizations operate out of shared vision, beliefs and values. Leaders build workplace community by providing this common vision. No community - society - can function well unless most members behave most of the time because they voluntarily heed their moral commitments and social responsibilities (Etzioni, 1993). Leaders bring unity to organizations. They strengthen and use organizational culture and they definenew ceremonies and rituals that bringpeople together to form communities.Leaders transform work organizations into communities.

Discussion

Humankind cannot evolve beyond its current state of crisis by using the same thinking that created the situation. Conducting business as usual (based on conventional theory and experience) is to conduct business into decline. Business has now absorbed or replaced many of the occupations in which people formerly engaged to attain personal need-satisfaction. The workplace is a locale of our heart-thoughts as well as our economics. We see evidence of this in the fact that work is dominant in our lives and our social fabric. It would be a devastating blow to life itself if we found neither spirit nor inspiration in it.

As we move into a new era of interpersonal relationships and need-satisfaction using the workplace as the prime site, researcher and practitioner alike must deal with several kinds of issues, the resolution of which will define corporate - and societal life - for the foreseeable future. Both practising leaders and scholars must consider together several issues as they complete the evolving model of spiritual leadership. Among these are the following.

A crisis of meaning: spirituality and corporate co-existence

For most of human history no one had to search for the spiritual in their lives. At the core of every culture was a religion, with sacred times and places set aside for public rituals. For many, these holy places are less and less familiar today. Nevertheless, spiritual and religious values and those of a free democratic society go hand-in-hand (Lee and Zemke, 1993). Obviously, workers are much more than a bundle of skills and knowledge, contrary to what some managers think. People also come to work armed with a spirit, a life-giving principle, that involves also higher moral qualities. Of course church and corporate life differ, but committed religionist, like committed corporate executives or workers, brings their passions with them 24 hours a day. Religions have evolved as structures or forms designed to support and perpetuate specific beliefs or dogmas about spiritual matters. These dogmas are expanding to include work-life concerns and to relate spirit in business to ideas like empowerment, assigning meaning and people-centred business practices (Autry, 1992). They must be integrated with a guiding theory.

Professionalism and spirit

Some may suppose that attention to the spiritual side of self discourages education and professionalism (see, e.g. Peters, 1994). They may believe the two are antithetical, that it is education's purpose to dispel the mists and shadows of religion and free the human mind from so much error and delusion. In reality, however, human life is a duality of the spiritual and the physical. We must invent professional relationships suitable to this whole-self reality. We doom such efforts to failure if they do not grow out of generally held spiritual or moral values.

Corporate culture: making one of many

Success in leading from a spiritual base is conditional on the presence, in both leader and follower, of shared ideals, customs and morals; in a word, on a mutually accepted and desirable culture. Unfortunately, the typical corporate culture is antagonistic towards many of the values that drive the spiritual leader (Pascale and Athos, 1981). The new task for leaders is to become whole-makers, creators of oneness in people andin their groups. Therefore the leader's task today is to create a unifying culture andthen nurture its values and customs among followers.

Leadership on focus values

Before there can be purposeful participation, people must share values and ideas about where they are trying to go (Senge, 1990). Creating spiritually oriented work-places involves identifying and then nurturing core values among followers. More and more organizations are developing leaders who lead from spiritual values. Leadership based on spirit involves putting your life and your money where your values are. This may be the only way to lead in the coming new world (Fairholm, 1991).

Leaders in this quest for spiritual significance are surfacing from all points. Of course, the transformation to a new business politics based on spirituality is not complete. Indeed, it is just beginning. The distinguishing features of this transitional period are a mixing and blending of cultures and a plurality or parallelism of intellectual and spiritual worlds. It is clear that we must invent organizational structures appropriate to this new age. We doom such efforts to failure if they do not grow out of widely held spiritual core values.

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**Illustration**
Caption: Table II; Characteristics of spirituality; Table III; Leader values; Table I; Spirituality in the workplace



## Details

| | |
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