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# A model of integrated leadership

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Effective leaders get results through people by making clear what has to be done, why it should be done and how each person can contribute

In May of 1990, John Kotter's hugely influential article *What Leaders Really Do* was published in the *Harvard Business Review*. That article clearly delineated a distinction between managing and what Kotter called leading. Although he was not the first to recognize the distinction (Drucker was famous for “managers do things right; leaders do the right thing”) the article was extremely useful in its identification of the actual work that leaders do: articulating and communicating a vision; aligning constituents behind that vision; and motivating people to purposeful action. That idea, that leadership required actual work, broke leadership away from the commonly held view that it was something reserved for those with special natural abilities. The article was also extremely useful in laying out the case that times of change call for the work he called leadership, whereas times of stability can be handled by the work he called managing.

Although the article was famous almost from the moment it was published, over the succeeding decade, very few schools of administration – business or public – actually taught a course on leadership. Leadership was undoubtedly mentioned in many course on Organization Behaviour but it would be hard to find a full course, let alone programs that made leadership a required element of the curriculum. In the business world it was not usual to refer to a person as a leader. The people at the top of organizations were executives. The top team was the Senior Management Group. The

highest accolade from Fortune magazine was to be declared “America's Top Manager”.

In June of 1996, the *Harvard Business Review* published another now famous article. This one, by Daniel Goleman, called *What Makes a Leader* set out an Emotional Intelligence framework that defined empathy – sensing one's own and others emotions – as a central skill of leaders. His framework emphasized the idea that leaders have awareness and control of their own emotions as well as insight into how to work with the emotions of those they want to lead. In that article, he also stressed that people who want to become leaders have to be motivated to want to take on hard and difficult work. In his subsequent articles and writings, he has paid less attention to the inner motivation idea.

These two articles and the work behind them were important in their own right, but in addition they gave rise to books and research and a renewed interest in leadership as a topic. In my view, their impact has been even greater than their authors might realize. Taken together these two articles laid the foundation for what I now think of as *The Leadership Industry*, an industry defined by thousands of books, required courses at schools of administration around the world, and a seemingly unending array of programs and seminars and weekend retreats. Estimates are that American industry spends between \$14 and \$20 billion dollars a year on leadership development. The reason that I find these two articles foundational to that extraordinary level of expenditure is that they did two things that are very profound. First, they described leadership as something that can be learned. Second, they identified the specific activities that

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leaders perform, and a specific set of skills needed to perform well as a leader. The Kotter article, by focussing as its title suggests, on what leaders do, defined leadership as a very specific kind of work – really hard work, but work not magic. Kotter said that leaders articulate and communicate a vision, align people behind that vision and motivate them to pursue it. There have been many variations on the list by the leadership gurus who came after 1990, but what is important is not what's in the list but the fact that there is a list. A list implies that there are certain concrete steps one can – and perhaps must – take to be able to lead. Goleman said the essential skill of leaders is the ability to understand themselves and others and, with practice and hard work, they can learn to do that. Many scholars have added to or changed Goleman's list, but when they do, they describe their addition as skills one can learn. Taken together, these two articles laid the foundation for the leadership industry. A foundation built on the idea that leadership is a researchable topic, leadership can be taught, and leadership is learnable. Leadership is not alchemy or the gift of a special few; it is a set of hard skills and a set of concrete actions that can be accomplished by the many.

Over the decades since these ideas emerged, the *leadership industry* arrived, or one might say exploded. Virtually every school of administration has a course or courses on leadership. Academic journals have sprouted and flourished; PhD programs and chaired professorships abound. Leadership development has become the foundation of internal human resource development activities. Senior people in all organizations are described as the leaders, or the senior leadership group. Fortune magazine (and its equivalent in many countries and societies) now lauds the "Leader of the Year". It is unimaginable to refer to a CEO as a manager.

Over these same decades though, as the legitimacy of leadership as a teachable topic became accepted, it has been broken into many pieces, each of which is considered to represent the whole. In *Leadership BS*, Jeffrey Pfeffer surveyed the state of the leadership industry and identified five attributes that many in the industry consider essential for effective leadership: modesty, authenticity, truthfulness, trustworthiness and concern for the welfare of others, particularly those being led. Pfeffer explains how those supposedly essential attributes are often not found in effective leaders, and how their pursuit can effectively derail a career. It may be that the gradual realization that many of these "essential" attributes are not as essential as claimed that has led to considerable disillusionment with the idea that leaders can be developed. Perhaps this is the real source of the lament that there are just aren't enough good leaders for the world as we find it today. "Where have all the leaders gone?"

There is an alternate view, one which I put forward in this paper. That view is that the problem is not that the various elements and attributes that are taught as leadership essentials are in themselves wrong. The problem is that effective leadership requires the integration of a set of actions and skills. Doing a few well and ignoring the others just does not work. Doing everything well but not in an integrated way does not work. In this paper, I lay out the essential work that leaders do, the skills associated with that work, and how they must work together. The essential work can be described around three integrated sets of activities: *managing*, as defined by

academics and practitioners over the years; *directing*, which is the term I use to describe what Kotter thought of leading: and, *engaging*, which is, in my view, the foundation of the success of many of today's most admired organizations. Each of the activities can be performed better with specific skills.

## LEADER AS MANAGER

The earliest, and even today the most powerful images of leadership come from the military. For thousands of years, the military has been the one institution in society that has developed, promulgated and taught an approach to getting people to work together to achieve some kind of objective. The military approach, often referred to as "Command and Control" is translated into civilian terms through the Managing Model: Plan, Organize, and Control.

Both individuals and groups need to be managed. It is nice to think that a great inspirational speech will galvanize everyone to take the right action at the right time, coordinating with everyone else. But this rarely happens. Meetings need agendas and follow-up. Team members have to know their assignments and deadlines. No one can get caught up in leading without considering the imperatives of management.

Managing implies a "command and control" mindset. It implies a scientific approach to work. Be clear on what has to be done. Make sure everyone knows their job. Set SMART goals, and don't forget to follow up. The managing cycle starts with the creation of a plan that sets out what has to be done, when, by whom and with what resources. The cycle takes into account the various elements that have to come together to accomplish the goal. The next step in this cycle is to assemble the people, assign tasks, ensure people know how to do those tasks, and specify the processes for getting the work done. Finally it is important to keep track of the work as it progresses, and to measure the final product against the goals, targets, or objectives that were initially set. This is a cycle because there is feedback between the steps. If things aren't going well, reconsider the plan or add more people, resources, or both.

The managing cycle is not just for a giant enterprise. It works – and is followed – whenever a group gets together to accomplish a task. A small team brought together even to take on a very small project should follow the same cycle: developing a plan to achieve the project goal; assigning tasks and determining how and when to measure results; keeping track, following up, and adapting the plan and/or the work assignments. One thing I have observed in the classroom is that people from all types of work situations recognize and intuitively follow this managing cycle as they go about their work. It seems to be the natural way to behave. The teacher has a plan for the day, the week, the term, and the year. Assignments are handed out, tasks assigned, and work evaluated. The principal in the office and the administrator at the regional level both work within this managing cycle. The nurse manager in a busy hospital will have recognized technical expertise in science, but will also be an intuitive expert at planning, organizing, and controlling. The principal researcher for a large global project to discover part of the mystery of cancer follows the same cycle of activity. And none of these people had to go to a business school to

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