

# Leadership



## Overview

For the third time in five years, the library at Longleaf College is searching for a new director. Edward Ravenal served as director of the library for 27 years until his retirement five years ago. Since then, there has been no consistency in leadership at the Longleaf College library. Each search process brought in a promising replacement, but once the new director began work, library employees began to complain about the changes being made and the new director's leadership style. The first new director lasted two years and then accepted another position out of state. His replacement was forced to retire after 18 months due to ill health brought on by stress, and an interim director is now in charge of the library. As the search committee begins the search for yet another library director, it is trying to understand what has gone wrong with the previous searches. What has caused these failures after promising new leaders were hired? Is the fault in the organization or in the individuals being selected? Why is it so hard to find a good leader these days?

This search committee is grappling with the same questions that are being faced by numerous organizations in all segments of today's society. Throughout history, people have struggled with the question, "What makes a good leader?" but there are still many aspects of leadership that are not fully understood. Can leadership be taught? Are the skills of leadership the same in all organizations? What is the difference between a manager and a leader? What do good leaders do? How do they invest their time? How can a good match between an individual leader and the organization he or she is leading be assured?

This chapter will present an introduction to the topic of leadership, examining what leadership is, what leaders do, and how the topic of leadership

has been studied in the past and at present. The chapter will end with suggestions for preparing future leaders.

## WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Because having a good leader is so important to organizations of all types, leadership has long been a topic of interest, but there is far more interest in leadership than there is agreement upon it. Leadership is an often perplexing topic with numerous debates about what leadership is and even what leaders actually do. Our failure to understand leadership is not the result of any lack of literature on the topic. Writers in a number of fields have churned out hundreds of books and thousands of articles. A recent review listed more than 7,000 books, articles, or presentations on the topic of leadership.<sup>1</sup> In 1999 alone, there were more than 2,000 books on leadership published, exhibiting many varying viewpoints on the topic, with “some of them repackaging Moses and Shakespeare as leadership gurus.”<sup>2</sup> There is so much advice available about how to be a successful leader that it is almost overwhelming.

The definitions of the term *leadership* are not much clearer. James MacGregor Burns, one of the most respected experts on leadership, once wrote, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.”<sup>3</sup> Leadership is a difficult subject to understand because it defies easy analysis. Indeed, it is even a difficult term to define. There are many books and articles that define leadership, but often these definitions do not agree with one another. The most common definition of leadership is that it is an ability to inspire confidence and support among followers that permits a group to reach its goals. Regardless of how we define leadership, there are certain elements that are usually included. The words *influence*, *vision*, *mission*, and *goals* are almost always a part of the definition. It is commonly accepted that an effective leader has the ability to influence others in a desired direction and thus is able to determine the extent to which both individuals and the organization as a whole reach their goals. Leadership transforms organizational potential into reality.

## MANAGERS AND LEADERS

Because leaders often function in an organizational or institutional setting, the terms *manager* and *leader* are closely related, but they are not the same. Managers are often associated with qualities of the mind, such as rationality, analytics, and authority, and leaders more with the qualities of the soul, such as vision, creativity, passion, and inspiration.<sup>4</sup> As one expert said, a manager takes care of where you are, but a leader takes you to a new place.<sup>5</sup> In general, leaders are viewed as being able to take control of situations, whereas managers learn to live with them. Other distinctions include: Leaders create vision and strategy, whereas managers implement the outcome; leaders cope with change, whereas managers cope with complexity; and leaders focus upon interpersonal aspects of the jobs, whereas managers deal with administrative duties.<sup>6</sup>

But because individuals in both managerial and leadership roles are often at the top of an organizational structure, there is often overlap in the roles. Perhaps the most helpful distinction that can be made between the two is an examination

of where the power to lead comes from: With managers, it comes from their positions, whereas with leaders, it may come from more personal attributes. But individuals often play both roles in libraries, and without a doubt, managers can be leaders, and it is beneficial when they can be because one of the things that is known about leadership is that the successful organization is almost always set apart from less successful ones by the fact that it is headed by a dynamic and effective leader. For this reason, both managers and organization theorists long have been interested in how leadership can be encouraged and developed.



## What Do You Think?

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, two leading scholars of leadership, once wrote, “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing.”

What is the difference between doing things right and doing the right thing? Do you agree that managers do things right and leaders do the right thing?

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Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 21.

However, individuals can be good managers without being leaders. Our organizations also need good managers. Effective managers are highly valued by those who work for them because good managers facilitate employees getting their jobs done. Of course, some managers also may be leaders, but it is a mistake to denigrate what managers do by assuming that they are failures if they are not also leaders.<sup>7</sup> Leadership may not be as important to an organization that is enjoying a favorable, nonturbulent environment. But when an organization needs innovation more than standardization, it needs a leader rather than a manager as the top administrator. An organization may be managed well but led poorly.<sup>8</sup>

## LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

If managers and leaders are not synonymous, are there qualities that every leader possesses? It always must be remembered that there is no one model of a successful leader, and leaders differ in different cultures and historical periods. Despite this variability, according to most experts, each leader must fulfill two major roles. First, a leader must exercise power, and second, each leader must through actions, appearance, and articulated values present a vision that others will want to emulate.<sup>9</sup> Let us look at these two roles a little more closely.

### Exercising Power

The first role, that of exercising power, obviously has close connections to what a good manager does. Good leaders exercise power wisely and efficiently;

they must be temperate and fair, must set objectives and see that they are carried out, and must make good decisions. The characteristics that we usually associate with a good manager are also found in a good leader.

Unfortunately, not all leaders are good. A few people become leaders not to advance the good of an organization but to gain personal power or achieve their own objectives. A recent book has characterized these individuals as toxic leaders—those who are destructive to their employees, their organizations, and even to their nations.<sup>10</sup> Leaders such as Adolf Hitler or Jeffrey Skilling from Enron were destructive leaders, although in very different ways. Barbara Kellerman, in another recent book, provides a typology for measuring bad leadership.<sup>11</sup> This typology ranks bad leadership from bad to worst (see “Try This!” for more about the typology). Both of these books emphasize that bad or toxic leaders have followers who tolerate and remain loyal to them and who enable them to remain in leadership positions. As Kellerman points out, managerial literature often tries to accentuate the positive by discussing only good leadership and ignoring the so-called elephant in the room—bad leadership. She argues that ignoring bad leadership is analogous to a medical school that claimed to teach health while ignoring disease.<sup>12</sup> So, although it is true that most leadership literature focuses on the good leader, it is important to acknowledge that there is a dark side of leadership and that all leaders are not good. Many of the traits that allow a person to become a leader can be used for either good or for evil.



### Try This!

Kellerman has developed a classification scheme that can be used to categorize bad leaders. The characteristic of the leaders in each group are summarized in the following list with the typology ranging from bad leaders who are merely incompetent to those who are evil. Can you think of examples of leaders in each of these categories?

- **Incompetent:** lack of skill or will to sustain leadership.
- **Rigid:** stiff, unyielding, and unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times.
- **Intemperate:** lacks self-control.
- **Callous:** uncaring or unkind; ignores or discounts the needs of the rest of the organization, especially subordinates.
- **Corrupt:** lies, cheats, or steals; puts self-interest above the public interest.
- **Insular:** disregards or at least minimizes the health and welfare of those outside their own inner group.
- **Evil:** commits atrocities inflicting severe physical or psychological pain on others.

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Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters* (Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 2004).

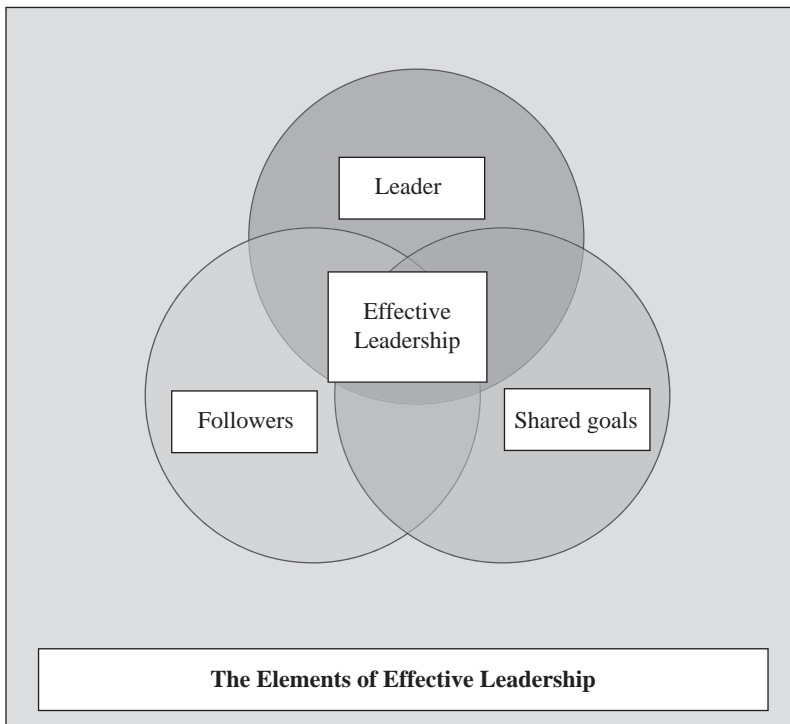
## Presenting a Vision

The second role, that of presenting an image that others will want to emulate, is the aspect of leadership that is called vision. A leader must provide a vision, a difficult undertaking in itself, and a lack of vision is one of the major problems of leaders today. Although a leader must present a vision so that an organization will not drift aimlessly, presenting a vision is not enough. A leader must have his or her vision accepted by the followers; the followers must buy into the vision and adopt that vision as their own. They must be energized so that the vision can be accomplished.<sup>13</sup> With an effective leader at the helm, the goals of the leader and the followers are meshed and congruent.

When leaders fail, it is often because they have not been able to create a vision that is shared. Sometimes, people are hired in an organization, and they bring with them a predetermined vision that they want to see fulfilled. They begin to move too quickly, before their vision is accepted by the individuals who are going to have to carry it out. These individuals inevitably fail because they did not sell the vision to those who had to implement it.

In discussing leadership, sometimes the importance of followers is forgotten. A leader is not a leader without followers. Garry Wills has stated that three elements—leaders, followers, and a shared goal—are necessary for effective leadership. He defines a leader as “one who mobilizes others towards a goal shared by leaders and followers.”<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 14.1—Three Elements of Effective Leadership**



Getting individuals to buy into a vision is perhaps the hardest task confronted by a leader. As the great Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu said long ago, a leader is best when people barely know he exists. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, we did this ourselves. The leader's vision has been so thoroughly ingrained in the followers that they think it was their idea to start.

An effective leader has the ability to influence others in a desired direction and thus is able to determine the extent to which both individual employees and the organization reach their goals. Leadership too often has seemed to be in short supply. For these reasons, both managers and organization theorists long have been interested in how leadership can be encouraged and developed. There have been a number of approaches to studying leadership. Because managers and leaders share many responsibilities and attributes, a number of the studies cited actually studied high-level managers as a method of investigating leadership. Some of the most important studies are discussed in the following sections.

## **THE TRAIT APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP**

Early studies on the subject of leadership were concerned with identifying the traits or personal characteristics associated with leadership. The studies were based on the premise that leaders were born, not made, and only those who were born with these traits could be leaders. The assumption was that once the traits were identified, leadership selection could be reduced to finding people with the appropriate physical, intellectual, and personality traits. Leadership training would then consist of developing those traits in potential leaders.

### **Lessons in Leadership**

Ron Yeo was a former chief librarian of the Regina Public Library in Saskatchewan, "whose extraordinary vision and leadership led to a new order in Canadian public libraries." A recent article in *Public Libraries* distilled his leadership wisdom into 21 lessons that are helpful to leaders in any type of library.

- Lesson 1: Want to Succeed
- Lesson 2: Have a Central Vision
- Lesson 3: Share the Power
- Lesson 4: Be Strategic
- Lesson 5: Keep a Wide-Open Mind
- Lesson 6: Don't Back Off from Conflict
- Lesson 7: Make Some Key Commitments
- Lesson 8: Act with Conviction
- Lesson 9: Exceed Expectations
- Lesson 10: Harness Respect

Lesson 11: Favor the Best  
 Lesson 12: Make More Leaders  
 Lesson 13: Don't Confuse Scholarship with Leadership  
 Lesson 14: Be an Intrapreneur  
 Lesson 15: Make Your Cause Their Cause  
 Lesson 16: Bet on the Future  
 Lesson 17: Take Responsibility  
 Lesson 18: Be Undeterred  
 Lesson 19: Raise the Bar  
 Lesson 20: Go to the Community  
 Lesson 21: Lead from the Outside

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To read more about each of these lessons, see Gary Deane, "Lasting Lessons in Leadership: How a Former Book Trade Rep Took a Library from Good to Truly Great," *Public Libraries* 44, no. 3 (May/June 2005): 163–68, <http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/publiclibraries/mayjune2005.pdf>.

Many trait studies were conducted, and traits that were said to be associated with leadership, such as energy, aggressiveness, persistence, initiative, appearance, and height, were identified.<sup>15</sup> However, summaries of this research demonstrate its shortcomings: Each study tended to identify a different set of traits. In one summary of more than one hundred studies, only 5 percent of the traits were found in four or more studies.<sup>16</sup> Eugene Jennings concluded, "Fifty years of study have failed to produce one personality trait or set of qualities that can be used to discriminate between leaders and non-leaders."<sup>17</sup> Although some traits have been found to be weakly associated with leadership, these studies show that there is no such thing as a single leader type. Instead, there is much variation in the skills, abilities, and personalities of successful leaders.



### Try This!

It is interesting that many individuals have different ideas about the characteristics associated with leadership. List five different characteristics that you think most leaders possess and then get a colleague or classmate to make the same list. How many of the characteristics were on both lists?

## BEHAVIORAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

After the trait studies fell out of favor, interest grew in the actual behavior of leaders. Researchers turned from looking for a single configuration of leadership characteristics to investigating leadership style. This research examined the behavior of leaders: what they did, what they emphasized, and how they related to subordinates. Three of the most important of these

studies are discussed. All of these studies looked at managers as leaders within organizations.

### **The University of Iowa Studies**

One of the first of these studies was done at the University of Iowa by Kurt Lewin and his associates. These researchers primarily used controlled experiments with groups of children to examine three types of leadership styles: autocratic (a leader who centralizes decisions and makes decisions autonomously), democratic (a leader who allows subordinates to participate in decision making and delegates authority), and laissez-faire (a leader who gives the group complete freedom in decision making).<sup>18</sup> The results of this experiment demonstrated that there was more originality, friendliness, and group cohesion in democratic groups and more hostility, aggression, and discontent in laissez-faire and autocratic groups.<sup>19</sup>

### **Ohio State Studies**

Other early studies were conducted at Ohio State University in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These studies identified two relatively independent dimensions on which leaders differ. One of these dimensions—consideration—refers to the extent to which a leader establishes mutual trust, friendship, respect, and warmth in his or her relationship with subordinates. Initiating structure refers to the leader's behavior in organizing, defining goals, emphasizing deadlines, and setting direction. Consideration and initiating structure are independent of each other; they are not separate ends of a continuum. A high score on one does not necessitate a low score on the other. A leader could be high in both consideration and initiating structure.<sup>20</sup>

### **University of Michigan Studies**

A group of researchers at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research conducted similar studies at about the same time as the researchers at Ohio State.<sup>21</sup> These studies tried to identify managers' supervisory styles and their effects on employee productivity. The researchers identified three types of managers: predominantly production-centered managers, predominantly employee-centered managers, and those with mixed patterns. Because no person is always the same, the word *predominantly* is important. A production-centered manager was one who felt full responsibility for getting the work done; departmental employees were to do only what the manager told them to do. An employee-centered manager recognized that the subordinates did the work and therefore should have a major voice in determining how it was done. Employee-centered managers thought that coordinating and maintaining a harmonious environment was the supervisor's main responsibility.

The research results were surprising. Contrary to traditional management thinking, which emphasized that permissive management led to employee



laxity and carelessness, the departments that had employee-centered managers produced more than those with production-centered managers. The Michigan researchers had to make an assumption that was radical at the time; that assumption was that many workers like their jobs, want to be productive, and would be productive if given a share of control over their jobs.

## STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

The next trend in the study of leadership was the development of ways to assess the style of a leader. The proponents of these typologies used the findings of the leadership behavioral studies to categorize the ways in which leaders lead. The style theorists thought that although many different leadership behaviors were possible, some styles were better than others. Three of the best known of these style theories are Likert's Systems of Management, the Leadership Grid developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, and the transactional/transformational model of leadership.

### Likert's Systems of Management

Rensis Likert, in *New Patterns of Management*, built on the research done at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.<sup>22</sup> Likert describes four prevailing ways that managers lead within organizations. These styles can be depicted on a continuum ranging from System 1, exploitative-authoritative, to System 4, participative.

- System 1 management is exploitative-authoritative. In this system, management has no trust or confidence in subordinates. Managers are autocratic, and almost all decisions are made at the top of the organization. Subordinates are motivated by fear and punishment and are subservient to management. Almost all communication in the organization comes from the top of the hierarchy.
- System 2 management is benevolent-authoritative. Management is condescending to employees, who are expected to be loyal, compliant, and subservient. In return, management treats the employees in a paternalistic manner. This system permits more upward communication than System 1, but top management still tightly maintains control.
- System 3 is consultative. In this system, management has substantial but not total trust in subordinates. Top management still makes most of the major decisions but often solicits ideas from subordinates. Control is still primarily retained by top management, but aspects of the control process are delegated downward. Communication flows both up and down in the hierarchy.
- System 4 is participative. Managers have complete trust in subordinates, and much of the decision making is accomplished by group participation. Decision making is found on all levels of the

organization. Communication flows up, down, and horizontally among peers. Because of their participation in decision making, employees are strongly motivated to achieve the organization's goals and objectives.<sup>23</sup>

In short, System 1 is a highly structured and authoritarian system of management. The assumptions made about employees under this system closely approximate Douglas McGregor's Theory X. System 4 is a participative system based on trust and teamwork. Here, the assumptions made about employees are similar to McGregor's Theory Y. Systems 2 and 3 fall between the two extremes.

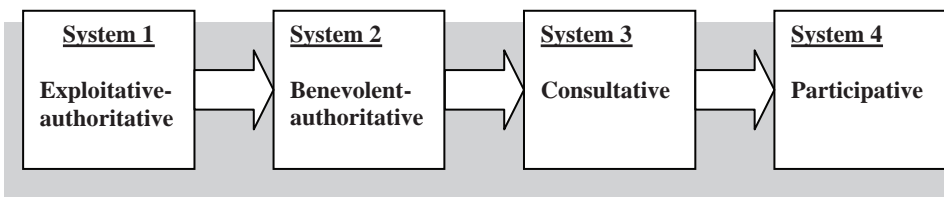
Likert concludes that the most effective organizations use the System 4 style of management. Although System 1 may yield favorable results in terms of productivity in the short run, over a period of time, production in System 1 organizations will taper off. In addition, the negative effects of System 1 upon people more than offset any short-term gains in productivity. Today's organizations can be found at all points on the continuum. Those that have adopted innovations such as self-directed work teams are moving toward System 4. Undoubtedly, there are more organizations using System 4 now than in the past, but the true System 4 organization is still rare. Most libraries and information centers are still at the System 2 or System 3 level.

### **The Leadership Grid**

The Leadership Grid (first termed the Management Grid) was developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton.<sup>24</sup> The Leadership Grid involves two primary concerns of the organization: concern for production and concern for people. The term *production*, as used here, "covers whatever it is that organizations engage people to accomplish."<sup>25</sup>

Managers who are most concerned about productivity focus almost exclusively on the tasks that have to be accomplished; managers who are concerned about people are more interested in the human relations part of the organization. These two concerns and the range of interactions between them are illustrated in figure 14.3. Concern for production is represented on the horizontal axis, and concern for people is represented on the vertical axis. Each rating is expressed in terms of a nine-point scale of concern, with one in each case indicating minimum concern and nine indicating maximum concern. A manager with a rating of nine on the horizontal axis has maximum concern

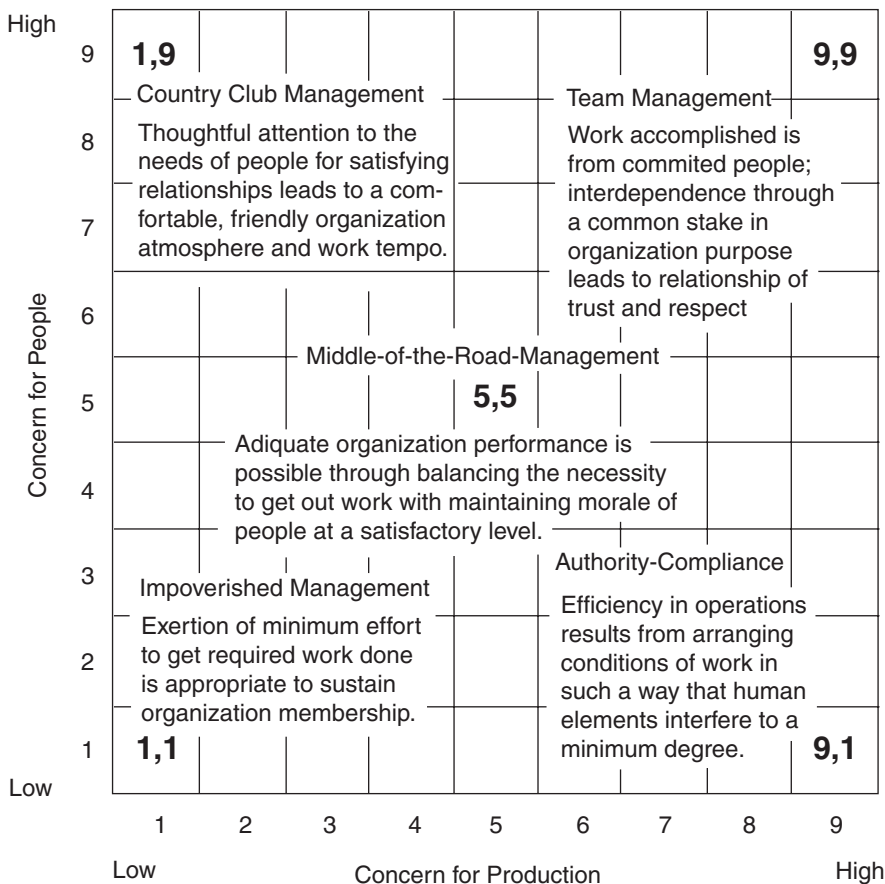
**Figure 14.2—Likert's Four Systems of Leadership**



for production; a manager with a rating of nine on the vertical axis has a maximum concern for people.

Based on the grid, Blake and Mouton describe five leadership styles. A rating of 1,1 is considered impoverished leadership. Minimum effort is exerted to get the required work done, and minimum concern is paid to employees. A leader with this rating is essentially doing nothing at all for either people or production; he or she has abdicated leadership responsibility. A rating of 1,9 is called country club leadership. Thoughtful attention to people’s need for satisfying relationships leads to a comfortable, friendly atmosphere and work tempo. There is no concern for production. A rating of 9,1 is considered task leadership. Here, operational efficiency results from arranging work conditions in such a way that human elements interfere to a minimum degree. Leaders with this rating are autocratic taskmasters. A rating of 5,5 is middle-of-the-road leadership. Adequate organization performance is achieved by balancing production

**Figure 14.3—The Leadership Grid**



Source: From Robert R. Blake and Anne Adams McCanse, *Leadership Dilemmas—Grid Solutions* (Houston, TX: Gulf, 1991), 29; formerly the Management Grid figure by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton. Reproduced by permission of the owners.

with maintaining a satisfactory level of morale. Leaders with this rating are adequate in dealing with both people and production but are not outstanding in either capacity. Finally, a rating of 9,9 is team leadership. Work is accomplished by committed people; interdependence, resulting from a common stake in the organization's purpose, leads to relationships of trust and respect. According to this theory, leaders with a 9,9 rating are outstanding in their concern for both people and production.<sup>26</sup>

The Leadership Grid is most helpful for identifying and classifying leadership styles. It is useful as a theoretical framework for understanding human behavior in organizations. Using this grid, managers at any level should be able to identify their level of concern for people and for productivity.

### **Transformational/Transactional Leadership**

James MacGregor Burns was the first person to popularize the terms *transactional* and *transformational* to describe leadership styles.<sup>27</sup> Transactional leaders see job performance as a series of transactions with subordinates. The transactions consist of exchanging rewards for services rendered or punishments for inadequate performance. On the other hand, transformational leaders are skilled at getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the larger group. Transformational leaders bring out the best in their subordinates. The described differences between these two types of leaders are reminiscent of the differences that often are said to exist between managers and leaders. The transactional leaders are more like managers, being sure that the job is done, whereas the transformational leader is more like a leader because he or she inspires subordinates. Transformational leaders usually allow more participation on the part of subordinates. Another researcher described transformational leaders as working "to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved. More specifically, [they] encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth, and get others excited about their work."<sup>28</sup> Later research has shown that these two types of leadership are not in opposition to each other.<sup>29</sup> Instead, transformational leadership often builds upon transactional leadership. But of the two types of leadership, transformational leadership usually has a greater positive effect on an organization than does transactional leadership.<sup>30</sup> However, transformational leadership, like so many other models of leadership, is not the answer in every situation. It has been found that transformational leadership alone does not always produce better results. Other factors such as organizational culture, structure, and employee receptiveness influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership.<sup>31</sup>

### **SITUATIONAL OR CONTINGENCY MODELS OF LEADERSHIP**

Likert's Systems of Management, the Leadership Grid, and the transformation/transactional model imply that there is a preferred leadership style. More recent theorists have turned away from the idea that there is one best way to provide leadership. They assert that earlier theorists had

little success in identifying consistent relationships between patterns of leadership behavior and group performance. Instead, these contingency, or situational, theorists argue that there is no single ideal type of leader but, instead, a number of leadership styles that may be appropriate, depending on the situation. Employee-centered leadership may be best under some circumstances, and production-centered leadership may be best under others. According to advocates of contingency theories, the task of a leader is to use the style that is most appropriate in any given situation.

### **Fiedler's Leadership Contingency Model**

Fred Fiedler developed one of the best-known contingency theories. According to Fiedler's model, three situational variables determine how favorable any particular situation is for the leader. These three situational variables are:

- **Leader-member relations:** the degree to which group members like and trust a leader and are willing to follow him or her.
- **Task structure:** the clarity and structure of the elements of the tasks to be accomplished.
- **Power position:** the power and authority that are associated with the leader's position.

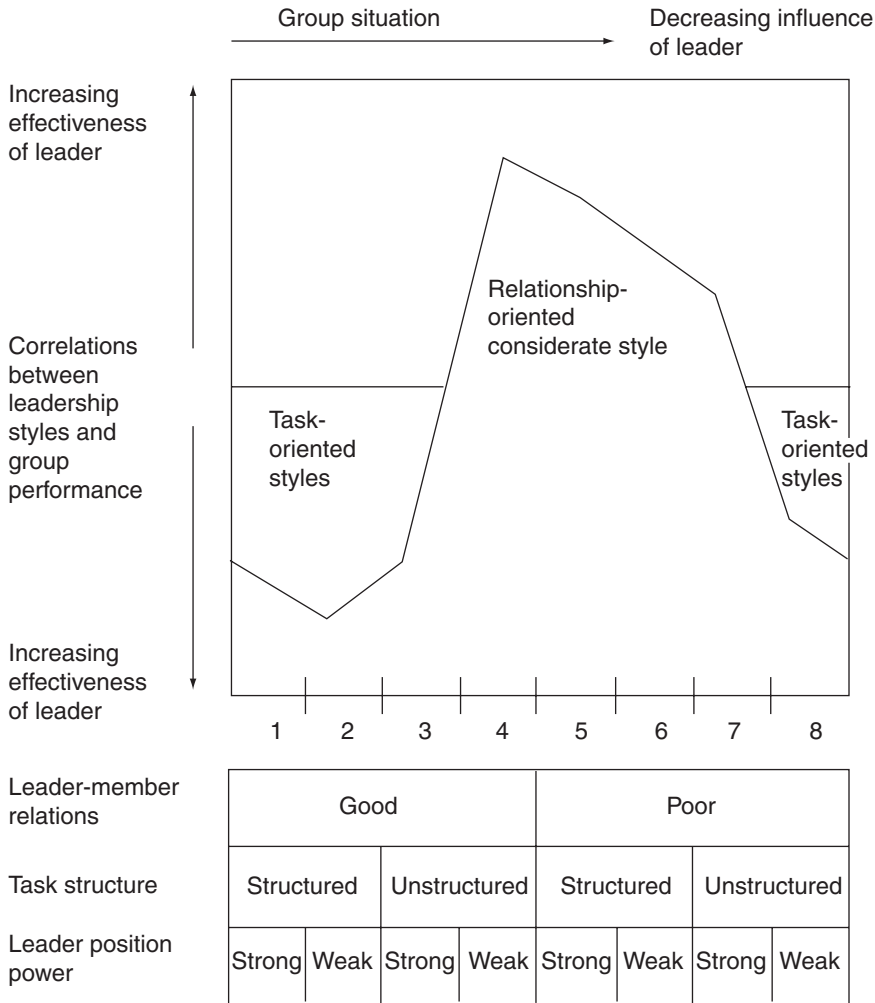
Fiedler produced and studied eight combinations of these three variables. The combinations range from the situation that is most favorable to a leader (good relations with followers, highly structured task, and strong power position) to the situation that is most unfavorable to a leader (poor relations with followers, unstructured tasks, and weak power position). Figure 14.4 lists each of the combinations. Fiedler then attempted to assess what would be the most effective leadership style in any of these situations. His theory predicts that the task-oriented leader is most effective in situations at either end of the continuum. When situations are most favorable or least favorable for a leader, the production-oriented style is most effective. The human relations, or employee-oriented, style works best when conditions are either moderately favorable or moderately unfavorable for the leader.

Fiedler's research is helpful to managers because it improves their understanding of the relationship of the various situational variables involved in leadership. Leadership effectiveness depends as much on the organizational variables as it does on the leader's own attributes.

### **Path-Goal Theory of Leadership**

Another contingency theory of leadership is called the path-goal theory. This theory, first developed by Robert House, differs from Fiedler's contingency theory because its central focus is on the situation and leader's behavior instead of the personality traits of the leader.<sup>32</sup> Unlike Fiedler's view that leaders could not change their behavior, the path-goal model assumes that leaders can adopt different leadership goals depending on the situation.

**Figure 14.4—Fiedler’s Contingency Model Relating Style of Leadership to Situational Variables**



Source: From Fred Fiedler, “Correlations between Leadership Styles and Group Performance,” *Psychology Today*, March 1969, 42. Copyright American Psychological Association.

The path-goal theory arises from a belief that effective leaders clarify the path to help followers achieve work goals, and they make the journey along the path easier by reducing any pitfalls or roadblocks. House thought that the role of a leader is to increase “personal pay-offs to subordinates for work-goal attainment and make the path to these pay-offs easier to travel by clarifying it, reducing road blocks and pitfalls, and increasing the opportunities for personal satisfaction en route.”<sup>33</sup> This theory suggests that managers have three ways to motivate: first, by offering rewards for reaching performance goals; second, by making the paths toward these goals clear; and third, by removing obstacles to performance.

House identified four types of leadership behaviors:

1. **Directive leadership** occurs when specific advice is given to the group and clear rules and structure are established.
2. **Supportive leadership** occurs when the needs and well-being of subordinates are considered.
3. **Participative leadership** occurs when information, power, and influence are shared. Subordinates are allowed to share in the decision making.
4. **Achievement-oriented leadership** occurs when challenging goals are set and high performance is encouraged. Achievement-oriented leaders show high confidence in subordinates and help them in learning how to achieve high goals.

A leader may use any of the four types of leadership behaviors, depending on the situation. The two most important situational contingencies in the path-goal theory are:

1. The personal characteristics of the workers, such as their experience, ability, motivation, needs, and locus of control.
2. The environmental factors, including the nature of the work to be done, the formal authority system, and the work group itself.

So, the leader has to take into account both the environment and the characteristics of the followers. For instance, a new employee in an uncertain environment might need directive leadership, whereas an established employee performing a familiar task would be better off with supportive leadership. As is seen in figure 15.5, different situations require different types of leadership behavior.

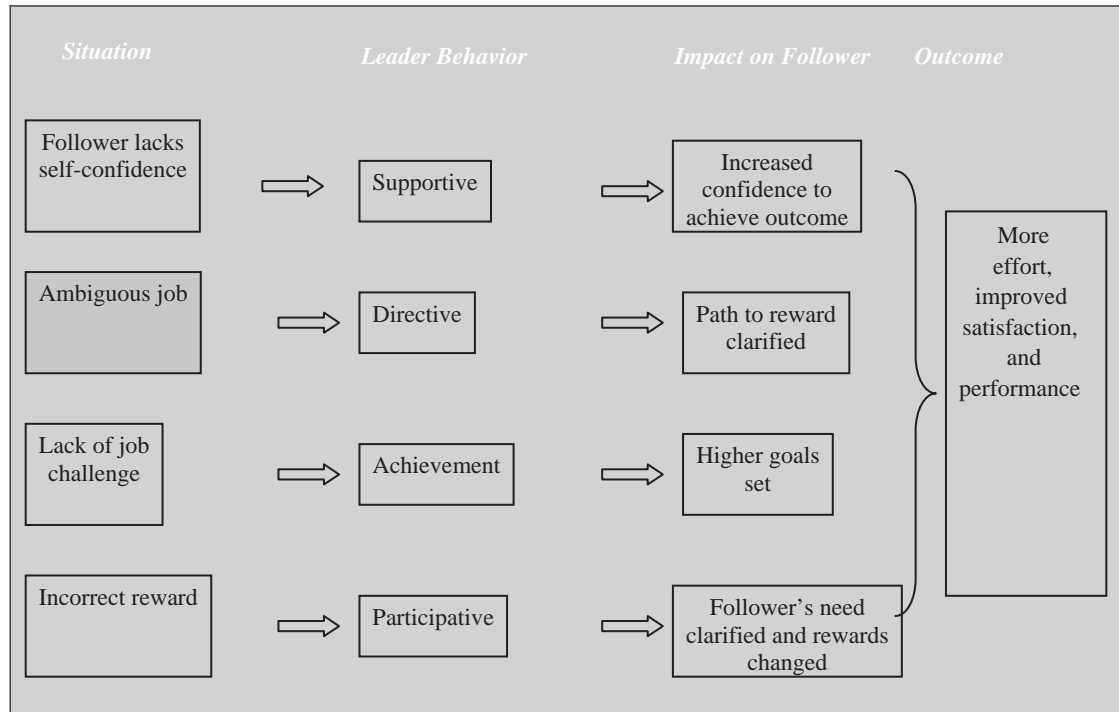
The path-goal theory is complex, but it is one of the most respected theories of leadership today. Research to validate its conclusions generally has been encouraging, with most studies supporting the logic underlying path-goal theory.<sup>34</sup> It makes sense that both an employee's performance and satisfaction are likely to be positively influenced when a leader is able to adapt different leadership behaviors to compensate for differences in either the employee or the work setting.



## What Would You Do?

Chris Adams has just been hired as the new library director at Plainville State University (PSU). The new director is replacing Dr. Zachary Longstreet, who was the founding director of the PSU library. PSU is a medium-size state institution founded in 1964, which today enrolls approximately 14,000 students and offers undergraduate degrees in a number of fields and master's degrees in education and business. Chris received an MSLIS degree 10 years ago and had worked in several academic libraries, most

**Figure 14.5—Situations and Preferred Leader Behaviors According to the Path-Goal Theory**



Source: Adapted from Gary A. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 146-52.



recently as head of reference. The new director is eager to move into a leadership position at PSU but is a bit worried about the best way to proceed. It seems to Chris that the library at PSU is at least twenty years behind most libraries. There is an early-generation online catalog and access to a few databases but little else in terms of information technology. The library has never engaged in strategic planning, and there have been no staff meetings at the library for years. The PSU library is still using the same organizational structure it used when it opened more than forty years ago. It seems that Dr. Longstreet ran the PSU library in an autocratic fashion, and its employees are used to being told how to do everything and are certainly not used to changes. Chris would like to implement a number of innovations but is unsure of what to do first and how to do it. If you were Chris, how would you proceed? What things would you do first? What actions might you delay.

## LEADERSHIP IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The pressure is building to walk the talk. Call it whatever you like: post-heroic leadership, servant leadership, distributed leadership, or, to suggest a tag, virtual leadership. But don't dismiss it as just another touchy-feely flavor of the month. It's real, it's radical, and it's challenging the very definition of corporate leadership for the 21st century.<sup>35</sup>

What is the best leadership style for the twenty-first century? Some experts have postulated that we are entering a postheroic period of leadership. In the past, leaders often have been viewed as heroes. James MacGregor Burns wrote a great deal about heroic leadership, which he described as a relationship between leaders and follows in which followers put great faith in the leaders' ability to overcome crises and problems.<sup>36</sup> The leader has all the answers, and the followers follow his or her directives. Peter Senge described the heroic leader as follows: "Especially in the West, leaders are heroes—great men (and occasionally women) who rise to the fore in times of crises.... At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders."<sup>37</sup> The heroic style of leadership consists of powerful leaders and fairly powerless followers. Making leaders play the role of hero is detrimental both to a leader and to those who are being led. Extraordinary pressures are placed on heroic leaders; many feel that they have to be perfect and cannot acknowledge mistakes or the negative impacts of their actions. Heroic leadership is also harmful to followers who become overly dependent and disempowered. The heroic leadership style does not match the needs of today's flatter, more participative organizations. In response, a new concept of leadership—postheroic leadership—has been emerging, which stresses the importance of shared power.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most important proponents of this new style of leadership is James Collins, who has introduced the notion of Level Five leadership. Collins and his research associates formulated the concept after research done on 11 companies that made the leap from “good” to “great.”<sup>39</sup> The researchers found all of these highly successful companies had one characteristic in common: At the time they made the transition from good to great, they were led by a Level Five leader. Collins defines a Level Five leader as one with a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. Level Five leaders are very ambitious, but they focus their ego needs not on themselves but on their organizations. They are not weak or vacillating but combine a respect toward people with a powerful commitment to achieve results. Their lack of ego is combined with a strong will to do the right thing for the organization at all costs. This type of leader, according to Collins, brings out the best in subordinates.

All of the levels of Collins’s hierarchy of leadership styles are illustrated in figure 14.6. Workers at the lower level can be successful and contributing members of an organization, but the most successful leaders have reached the top level.

This postheroic way of envisioning leadership is a change from what has been thought in the past, but it fits well with the pattern of distributed leadership found in many of today’s organizations. It requires “many of the attributes that have always distinguished the best leaders—intelligence, commitment, energy, courage of conviction, integrity. But here’s the big difference: It expects those qualities of just about everyone in the organization.”<sup>40</sup> At present, there is a great deal of interest in postheroic leadership. As the twenty-first century progresses, there doubtlessly will be other new theories about leadership, because leadership is a topic that continues to be of interest to managers both in libraries and in all other types of organizations.

## **THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE**

So, as can be seen, there are many theories to suggest what makes a leader successful. None of the theories completely explains leadership; however, they do help explain many of the variables that contribute to being a successful leader. But as was discussed at the beginning of the chapter, leadership is a complex topic and one that has no easy answers.



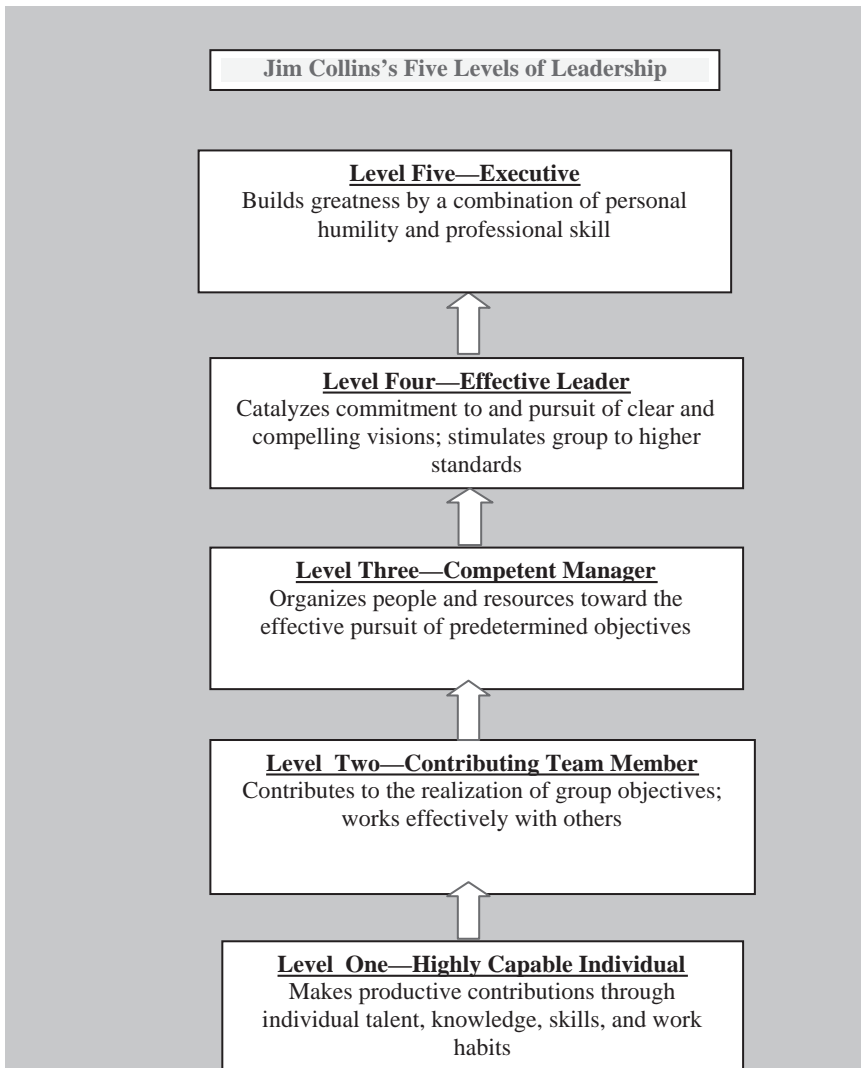
### **What Do You Think?**

Herb White, a former dean at the LIS school at Indiana University, once wrote, “We believe in leaders and leadership, but ... on a personal basis few of us want to be led.”

Do you agree with this and if so, why?

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Herbert S. White, “Oh, Where Have All the Leaders Gone?” *Library Journal* 112 (October 1987): 68–69.

**Figure 14.6—Collins’s Five Levels of Leadership**

It is more difficult for individuals to succeed in leadership roles now. In the past, people were far less likely to question the authority of a leader. Today's leader must try to inspire confidence and trust in followers who are likely to be at least partially distrustful of authority of all types.

Managers who are concerned with leadership should keep in mind that, despite all the theories about leadership style, research still has not shown whether one style of leadership is superior to the others. The analysis of leadership style is a complex topic, and much of the research that has been done to date has been short-term and scattered. The situational theories, such as Fiedler's contingency model and the House's path-goal theory, seem to be the most helpful in dealing with real-life situations. However, such theories, with their emphasis on matching a leadership style to a particular environment

or work situation, complicate the manager's task. Many managers would like to be told how to lead; the situational theories say there is no one right way. Instead, effective leaders adapt their style of leadership behavior to the needs of the followers and the situation. Because these factors are not constant, discerning the appropriate style is always a challenge. And if the postheroic theorists are correct about the type of leadership that will be most effective in twenty-first-century organizations, we need to find a way to encourage and develop leadership in all parts of our organizations.

## **DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP**

One of the most important lessons that successful leaders must learn is that no one can lead alone. By definition, leaders do not operate in isolation. Nor do they command in the literal sense of the word, issuing a one-way stream of unilateral directives. Instead, leadership almost always involves cooperation and collaboration.<sup>41</sup> As Peter Senge wrote:

In the knowledge era, we will finally have to surrender the myth of leaders as isolated heroes commanding their organizations from on high. Leadership in the future will be distributed among diverse individuals and teams who share responsibility for creating the organization's future.<sup>42</sup>

It is impossible for any one individual to succeed as a leader if they are working without help. It is no longer possible for any one person to run an organization successfully. For contemporary organization to function effectively, "interdependent teams at different levels need leaders."<sup>43</sup> Leadership has to be found throughout the organization, and leadership skills must be nurtured and developed in many individuals. Some individuals, such as the library director, might have an ongoing leadership role, while others might assume leadership responsibility based on specific activities or projects. If leadership is to be exercised on all levels, libraries need to develop leadership capacity throughout the organization and nurture the leadership proclivities of individuals working in all levels of the organization.

Today, it is commonly accepted that leadership is a quality that can be developed. Leadership is an acquired competency that is the result of many circumstances, including chance. As the old saying goes, being in the right place at the right time often provides an opportunity for a person to discover that he or she can exert leadership.



### **Try This!**

1. Think of someone you consider a great leader.
2. List three traits this person possesses that contribute to his or her leadership ability.
3. Think of someone you consider to be an ineffective leader.
4. How do the two people differ?

There always will be some people more successful at becoming leaders than others. And obviously, everyone cannot be a leader at all times—an organization cannot have only leaders and no followers. But people can exercise leadership in different ways and at different times. As society and institutions become more complex, it will be even more important to expose more individuals to the opportunity to learn leadership skills. Leaders are not born, although leadership may come more naturally to some than to others. As a society, we cannot afford to waste the leadership skills that can be developed in the majority of people. In most modern organizations, leaders may be found at all levels of the organizational hierarchy, and to envision the person at the top as the only leader is to accept an artificially constrained view of leadership. More and more employees at all levels are participating in management and thus also are providing leadership within the organization.

How can leaders be developed? What can be done to ensure that new librarians entering the field this year or next can play appropriate leadership roles? And what can be done to enable individuals already working in libraries who perhaps aspire to more responsibility to move into leadership positions?

Leadership development consists of two intertwined components. First, there are the skills that need to be learned. Although many of the skills of leadership can be taught, they will be learned with varying rates of success by different people. Then there is the personal component of leadership. Knowing the behaviors associated with leadership is important, but an individual also needs to have a basic aptitude and will to lead. Most people can develop these aptitudes, but there always will be some who will not or who cannot.

Assuming that the aptitude and will are there, however, the skills associated with leadership not only need to be learned but also need to be practiced. First, a prospective leader needs to master skills associated with leadership, and then he or she needs to practice these skills. So, like so much else, leadership development is a mix of theory and practice. The best preparation for leadership allows individuals to learn a skill and then to practice it. All of this is to say that it is not easy to transmit leadership skills. True leadership cannot be taught in a course or learned in a leadership institution. These provide a start, but they alone will not make a person a leader.

A number of the leadership development attempts in librarianship are designed to help a person attain leadership skills. Many of the LIS schools are beginning to teach courses in leadership. These courses can be helpful in imparting to new practitioners what research tells us about leadership and the skills of leaders, but they provide few opportunities for the participants to practice leadership within a real organization. Luckily, however, many students get a chance to actually practice and demonstrate leadership within the various student organizations, community service projects, and internship programs that are part of LIS programs today.

The chance to develop leadership begins for most in the work setting. Here, many libraries have instituted programs to help new practitioners. Many of these programs are designed to provide additional management training, but leadership training is often a by-product because there is such a close connection between management and leadership in libraries. Libraries function as laboratories for beginning leaders, who all learn from doing. Often, mistakes are made when a person is learning to manage or to lead, but making mistakes is one way of learning. People learn a great deal from failure, and perhaps the

most important lesson is that no one is ever always right. Everyone makes mistakes, and it is all right to make some mistakes. A manager or a leader who has never made a mistake has never taken a risk or made significant changes in an organization.

One of the best ways to learn about leadership is to observe other leaders. People who aspire to leadership positions can learn a great deal from more experienced leaders who already have acquired many of the skills and the characteristics associated with leadership. Even better than observing is actually being mentored by a leader. Many libraries have mentoring programs in place, and a quality that has been identified with many of the best leaders is their desire to mentor and pass along their leadership experience. Leadership has many stages, from beginning leaders to those about to retire. As leaders progress through the stages, mentoring is always helpful, and it is very common for a leader to be both a mentor and a protégé at the same time.



### **What Do You Think?**

Nigel Nicolson writes:

Leaders come to power through both internal and external selection. The internal is self-selection, the force that induces some to seek and others to avoid leadership. Even when one is handed a leadership position on a plate, one's inner self has to acquiesce, especially around three attributes. Are you ready to take on the risks and responsibility (drive)? Do you believe you have the skills to take on the challenge and succeed (ability)? Can you withstand the demands on your energies (constitution)? Many people have succumbed to the lure of the rewards or the encouragement of others and have become bad leaders, when they would have done better to heed their inner doubts.

What attributes allow a person to become a good leader? Do you agree with Nicolson that people should forego leadership roles if they have inner doubts?

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Nigel Nicolson, *Managing the Human Animal* (London: Texere, 2000), 115–16.

As will be discussed in chapter 17, many libraries are using teams to accomplish their missions. Often, being a part of a team is one of the first places that an entry-level librarian is able to act as a leader. Success in leadership within a team often encourages a new leader to want to achieve more. Chairing committees can be another way to provide some leadership experience. Work within professional organizations is another. Often, individuals who never had considered themselves leaders find that they have a knack for it and want to go on to practice leadership at a higher level. Because high-level leaders need to get a feel for the entire organization, some libraries have used cross-training and job

rotation as another form of leadership development. Other libraries have used interim department head or associate director positions to let individuals get experience working in a leadership position. Those who have an inclination for leadership often use these positions as springboards into permanent leadership positions.

In addition to leadership development that happens on the job, there are a number of leadership institutions that are designed to help individuals who have been identified as prospective leaders acquire the skills that are needed in leadership. These institutes are not all alike, but they have some common characteristics. Usually, the participants have had several years in the profession and have been identified as individuals with leadership potential. The institutes are often week-long events in a residential setting and usually mix an academic introduction to leadership topics with a number of exercises designed to help the individual participants learn about themselves and their potential for leadership. This type of leadership institution has been very popular not only in librarianship but also in many other fields. Similar to free-standing leadership institutions are the numerous courses on leadership taught in schools of business or public administration, which many librarians take for continuing education.

All of these opportunities help individuals learn about the skills associated with leadership, but perhaps more important, they help individuals discover whether they really want to lead. Wanting to lead is crucial. Warren Bennis says that potential leaders always should ask themselves two questions: Do I really want to lead, and am I willing to make the sacrifices leaders must make? The self-awareness must go further, and potential leaders must understand and be able to articulate their values. The best leaders are the principled ones who know and follow their own convictions. They also must examine their fortitude. Are they willing to act on their principles despite resistance and questioning? Individuals considering leadership should consider carefully whether their skills and personal characteristics will allow them to be successful leaders in their institutions.

Leadership skills should be taught to all who are willing to learn, and librarians at all levels should be encouraged to engage in the self-reflection that is necessary to determine whether leadership is a role that they want to play. Transitioning from an entry-level library employee to a managerial position to a leader is a journey that not all will want to take, but as our libraries become flatter and more decentralized, more and more people will need to take this journey. The recognition of a diversity of leadership styles means that the routes to leadership will be different, because individuals must lead in ways that will draw upon their individual strengths. Libraries, like all organizations, must be willing to support and help those who are willing to take the steps toward providing the leadership that will be necessary in the libraries of the future.

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