Introduction
The Power of Reframing

Intelligence, talent, and experience are all vital qualities for leadership, but they're not enough. They don't make the difference between success and failure. It's commonplace for businesses, once successful, to go into a funk. Then they need a turnaround because the smart, experienced people in charge who know the place better than anyone else have failed. The usual solution is to bring in an outsider with a stellar track record, but that approach doesn't always work. It all depends on how a leader thinks.

Take the case of an American institution, JCPenney, where generations of Americans had shopped for almost everything for more than a century. More than a few remember it as "the place your mom dragged you to buy clothes you hated in 1984."[1] By 2011, the firm was treading water, and CEO Myron Ullman retired after seven years at the helm. Ullman's initial years had gone well, but the recession of 2008 hit Penney's middle-income shoppers hard, and the company had been going downhill since.

The board looked for a savior and found Ron Johnson, a wunderkind merchant who had worked his magic at two of the most successful retailers in America. He'd made Target hip and led Apple Stores as they became the most profitable retail outlets on the planet. Johnson moved quickly to create a new, trendier JCPenney. His vision went well beyond making the company more profitable. He wanted to graft an entirely new model of retail merchandising on old root stock: "to analysts and employees, Johnson was Willy Wonka asking [them] to go with him on a trip through his retail imagination."[2]

Wanting to move fast, Johnson skipped market tests and staged rollouts. "No need," said Johnson. "We didn't test at Apple."[3] Creative new floor plans divided the stores into boutique shops featuring brands such as Martha Stewart, Izod, Joe Fresh, and Dockers. Centralized locations provided places for customers to lounge, share a cup of coffee, have their hair done, or grab a quick lunch. Games and other entertainment kept children occupied while customers visited boutique offerings or just "hung out."

Johnson quickly did away with Penney's traditional coupons, clearance racks, and sales events, part of a model that relied on inflating prices, then marking them down to create the illusion of bargains. Johnson replaced all that with everyday "Fair and Square" prices. To Johnson's rational way of thinking, this move made perfect sense. But shopping is more of a ritual than a rational undertaking:

> JCP's Ron Johnson was . . . clueless about what makes shopping fun for women. It's the thrill of the hunt, not the buying . . . Women love to shop and deals are what make the game worth playing . . . Bargain hunting is now like playing a game—and finding deeply discounted goods on sale is part of the game.[4]

Johnson replaced much of Penney's leadership with executives from other top retailers. Many, like Johnson, lived in California, far from company headquarters in Plano, Texas. They often looked down on the customers and the JCPenney culture they had inherited. One of Johnson's recruits, COO Michael Kramer, another Apple alum, told the *Wall Street Journal*, "I hated the JC Penney culture. It was pathetic."[5] Inside and outside the company, perceptions grew that Johnson and his crew blamed customers rather than themselves as results went from bad to worse. Traditionally, great merchants, such as Costco's Jim Sinegal or Wal-Mart's Sam Walton, have loved spending time in their stores, chatting up staff and customers, asking questions, and studying everything to stay in touch with their business. Johnson, on the contrary, gave the impression that he wouldn't shop in one of his own stores and didn't particularly understand the people who did.[6]

Johnson substituted broadcasts for store visits. He sent out company-wide video updates every twenty-five days. Staff gathered in training rooms to hear what the CEO had to say, and struggled to make sense of

the gap between Johnson's rosy reports and the chaos they were seeing in the stores. It didn't help that Johnson liked to broadcast from his home in Palo Alto or from the Ritz-Carlton in Dallas, where he stayed during visits to headquarters. Instead of marking milestones in Johnson's turnaround effort, the broadcasts deepened a perception that he was out of touch and self-absorbed. They "came to be emblematic of how Johnson seemed to have little grasp of the way he was perceived inside the company and how little faith workers had in his plans."[7]

Johnson's reign at JCPenney lasted seventeen months. Customers left, sales plummeted, and losses piled up. A board with few good options sacked Johnson and reappointed Ullman, the man who had left under a cloud less than two years earlier.

If Johnson failed, even though he was a retail superstar, imagine how much worse it would be for a company to hire a chief executive who didn't even know the business. That's what the board of IBM did after the company ran up a $5 billion loss in 1992. They fired CEO John Akers and went after such luminaries as Jack Welch and Bill Gates, who all said no. Eventually they turned their sights on Lou Gerstner, who had just finished a stint as CEO of Nabisco, purveyor of brands such as Oreos and Triscuit. Skeptics wondered if he knew the difference between chocolate chips and computer chips.

Gerstner spurned the initial overtures. He knew IBM was in deep trouble and wondered whether he, or anyone else, could save it. In the end he was persuaded by friends who told him, "IBM is a national treasure."[8] He took on the awesome challenge of pulling a giant enterprise out of its free fall.

When he arrived at IBM, Gerstner saw an exclusive club of sovereign fiefdoms, a bloated whale trying to compete with a group of agile bluefin tuna. The smart money wanted to break up the company, and vultures circled in the hope of grabbing the good stuff, like the renowned T. J. Watson Research Center.

In the 1960s and 1970s, IBM had been the jewel of American business, the world's most admired company. Its laboratories developed products such as the System/360 mainframe, so advanced that competitors struggled to keep up. IBM's sales force dominated the computer market. Impeccable customer service kept customers loyal and satisfied, as reflected in the

popular adage that "no one ever got fired for buying IBM." Enjoying a near-monopoly in the computer industry, IBM entertained America with Charlie Chaplin commercials and pithy slogans such as THINK. But too much success can be heady and dangerous. IBM began to lose touch with changes in the world outside. Events soon came knocking.

In 1969, the U.S. government slammed IBM with an antitrust suit that dragged on for thirteen years before ending with a whimper. In the meantime, the suit ate cash, distracted management, and made the company gun-shy about doing anything that might bring the feds back. Once a sure-footed market leader, IBM became a laggard as the pace of technological change accelerated. The introduction of the UNIX operating system, championed by HP and Sun, provided a cost-effective option that eroded IBM's dominance in mainframes. IBM fell behind Digital Equipment Corporation as minicomputers grabbed market share, and stumbled badly when personal computers took off.

Enter Gerstner, trained as an engineer at Dartmouth, with a reputation as a hard-nosed rationalist and brilliant strategist who prized analysis, measurement, and discipline. He was known more for impatience and arrogance than charm:

> No one in his right mind would describe a session with Gerstner as congenial. Before he meets with almost anyone, he requires something in writing that establishes the facts, defines the problems, and allows him to skip the small talk when he sees you . . . "When you got a call from Lou, it was never to hear a compliment," recalls [a former subordinate]. "It was always: 'What the hell is this?'"[9]

Gerstner seemed to confirm this tough, rational frame of mind in one of his early comments after coming on board: "The last thing IBM needs right now is a vision."[10]

Gerstner spent his early days getting to know his new place. He traveled to IBM locations in the United States and abroad. He met with stakeholders inside the company and customers outside. Within his first ninety days, he developed five bullet points that defined an initial strategic direction:[11]

- Keep the company together and not spin off the pieces.

- Reinvest in the mainframe.

- Remain in the core semiconductor technology business.

- Protect fundamental R&D budget.

- Drive all we did from the customer back and turn IBM into a market-driven rather than an internally-focused, process-driven enterprise.

The first four might sound like clinging to the past, but all ran counter to conventional wisdom at the time. The fifth point on customer focus signaled that IBM needed to change its ways. These points were only a start. Gerstner knew he had to do much more to revive the "national treasure."

One issue that soon got his attention was culture. In his early days, Gerstner felt as if he had landed on a strange island where the natives spoke a peculiar language and cherished mysterious customs and rituals. Group presentations relied on "foils" that signaled the presenter's place in the social order. "Non-concur" was IBM-speak for "no," and was widely used to delay or kill new initiatives. Phrases such as "crisp up, tweak, and swizzle," "boil the ocean," and "lobs" made sense only to insiders. On two scheduled visits to IBM facilities, Gerstner found it hard just to get in the building. These experiences nudged him to reframe and to begin to look at IBM through a cultural window:

> I came to see at my time at IBM, that culture is not just one aspect of the game—it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value. Vision, strategy, financial management—any management system, in fact—can set you on the right path and carry you for a while. But no enterprise—whether in business, education, healthcare, or *any* area of human endeavor—will succeed over the long haul if those elements aren't part of its DNA.[12]

Gerstner looked back as well as forward, studying IBM's history to glean the secrets of its prior greatness: "It was a magical time and Thomas Watson Sr.

was the wizard who waved the magic wand creating the enchantment and excitement."[13] In opening a window on the past, he saw that Watson's legacy had lost its original intent and hardened into rigid prescriptions. A core value of excellence had deteriorated into obsessive perfectionism, slowing down the development of new products. (Gerstner once complained that products didn't get launched at IBM; they had to escape.) Respect for the individual had morphed into letting people do whatever they wanted. Superior customer service had come to mean controlling customers and selling them what IBM produced rather than what they needed. Tom Watson had insisted on dark suits and white shirts when that was what the customers wore. By the 1990s, the customers had all gone casual, and "IBMers" stuck out like actors costumed for some other century.

Gerstner came to admire the original meaning of IBM's cultural values and beliefs: "In the end my deepest cultural-change goal was to induce IBMers to believe in themselves again—to believe they had the ability to determine their own fate, and they already knew what they needed to know. It was to shake them out of their depressed stupor and remind them of who they were—you're IBM damn it!"[14]

As his thinking expanded beyond analysis and logic to culture and heart, Gerstner developed a symbolic bond with the company: "Along the way, something happened—something that quite frankly surprised me. I fell in love with IBM."[15] In rounding out his traditional strengths in structure and strategy with a new appreciation for the importance of culture and people, Gerstner developed a fuller appreciation of the challenges IBM faced.

Lou Gerstner learned, evolved, and developed a revised picture that enabled him to engineer one of the most successful turnarounds in America's corporate history. Contrast him with Ron Johnson, who approached JCPenney with a heavy dose of rational thinking that he never got beyond. He saw no need to test the assumption that he could make Penney's another Apple. Instead of learning, he discounted contradictory data and remained clueless about the symbolic impact of his moves. Johnson and Gerstner were both smart, experienced leaders with a track record of success who were hired to execute challenging turnarounds. The key difference: Gerstner learned and reframed his thinking. Johnson didn't.

■ ■ ■

The goal of this book is to give you the tools to think like great leaders, whose ability to reframe sets them free, and avoid getting trapped in cognitive ruts. The better you can read and understand your terrain, the clearer you'll be about what to do—like Lou Gerstner. If you misread your situation, you're likely to follow Ron Johnson down a road to ruin. You'll be clueless and won't know what's going wrong. You'll continue doing more of the same even though it's not working. But you won't be alone. There are more Johnsons than Gerstners trying to lead organizations. Why should this be? We'll explore why *cluelessness* is so common.

Then we'll introduce *reframing*—our prescription for sizing things up and figuring out what's really going on. Reframing requires an ability to think about things in more than one way. Gerstner intuitively found another lens when his usual way of making sense was falling short. Leaders can expand how they think by using different mental models to determine what's going on and what to do in complex situations. The goal of this book is to teach you how to do that.

We introduce four distinct and powerful *leadership frames*. Each captures a vital slice of organizational reality. Artfully combined, they enable leaders to develop a more comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in whatever situation they face. Gerstner's mastery of this art made him an exemplar of business leadership. You can develop this capacity to think holistically as well.

THE CURSE OF CLUELESSNESS

Year after year, the best and brightest managers maneuver or meander their way to the apex of enterprises great and small. Then, like Ron Johnson, they do really dumb things. Take Bob Nardelli, who expected to win the three-way competition to succeed management legend Jack Welch as CEO of General Electric. Nardelli was stunned when he learned he'd never run GE, but within a week, he received an excellent consolation prize—the top job at Home Depot. He embodied a big change from the company's free-spirited founders, who had built the wildly successful retailer on the foundation of an uninhibited, entrepreneurial "orange" culture. Managers ran their stores using "tribal knowledge," and customers counted on friendly, knowledgeable staff for helpful advice.

Nardelli revamped Home Depot with Six Sigma (an approach he learned at GE) and a heavy dose of command-and-control, discipline, and metrics. Almost all the top executives and many of the frontline managers were replaced, often by ex-military hires. At first, his approach seemed to work—profits improved, and management experts hailed Nardelli's success. But employee morale and customer service went steadily downhill. Where the founders had successfully promoted "make love to the customers," Nardelli's toe-the-line stance pummeled Home Depot to last place in its industry for consumer satisfaction. A new website, HomeDepotSucks .org, gave customers a place to vent their rage.

As criticism grew, Nardelli tried to keep naysayers at bay. At the company's 2006 annual meeting, he gave critics little time to speak and ignored them when they did: "It was, as even Home Depot executives will concede, a 37-minute fiasco. In a basement hotel ballroom in Delaware, with the board nowhere in sight and huge timers on stage to cut off angry investors, Home Depot held a hasty annual meeting last year that attendees alternately described as 'appalling' and 'arrogant.'"[18] The outcry from shareholders and the business press was scathing. Nardelli countered with financial numbers to show that all was well. He seemed unaware or unconcerned that he had embarrassed his board, enraged his shareholders, turned off his customers, and expanded a reputation for arrogance and a tin ear. Like Ron Johnson, he ignored his organization's traditions and culture, and disrespected its people. Nardelli abruptly left Home Depot at the beginning of 2007, and his successor executed a U-turn to take the company back to its historic foundations.

How do bright people turn out so dim? Are they too smart for their own good? Do personality flaws or their style lead them astray? No—research shows that smart people tend to have fewer hang-ups and to be better at most things than the less gifted. The primary source of cluelessness is not personality, style, or IQ but a failure of "common sense." People are at sea whenever their ways of making sense of the world around them fail. They see and imagine the wrong thing, so they do the wrong thing. But if they don't realize that their image is incorrect, they don't understand why they don't get what they hoped for. So they blame someone else and, like Ron Johnson and Bob Nardelli, insist that they're right even when they're headed over a cliff.

FRAMING

A wise and successful executive got to the heart of the challenge managers face every day: "The world simply can't be made sense of, and facts can't be organized, unless you have a mental model to begin with."[17] In his best-seller *Incognito*, David Eagleman writes that human thinking and perception don't work the way most people assume they do. Common sense, for example, tells you that vision is very simple: you look at something and see it. Not so, says Eagleman. Instead, your brain is always looking for matches between what's out there and what's inside. The brain pays attention to differences between what it expects and what's there. It's an efficient process that can be very powerful when your mental maps are good, but very poor when they're not. Newborns, for example, can't tell the difference between their mother's face and a pumpkin because they haven't yet developed their visual software. Chess masters, in contrast, can instantly recognize more than fifty thousand configurations of a chessboard. That's why grand masters can play twenty-five lesser opponents simultaneously, beating all of them while spending only seconds on each move.[18]

Neuroscientists now tell us that believing is seeing rather than the reverse. The human brain constructs its own images of reality and then projects them onto the external world. Reality is what each of us believes it to be: "Beliefs come first, explanations for beliefs follow."[19] Our mental models—rich or impoverished—determine the breadth and depth of our personal reality. How you think determines what you see and how you respond to situations.

There are many labels for such mental models: maps, paradigms, mindsets, worldviews, and cognitive lenses, to name a few. We call them *frames*. A frame is a set of beliefs and assumptions that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate some part of your world. A good frame makes it easier to know what's happening, see more options, and make better choices. Frames are vital because human affairs don't come with computerized navigation systems to guide you turn by turn to your destination. Instead, you need to develop and carry accurate maps in your head.

Such maps make it possible to register and assemble key bits of available data into a coherent pattern—an image of what's going on. When it works fluidly, the process takes the form of "rapid cognition," which Malcolm Gladwell examines in his best seller *Blink*. He describes it as a gift that

makes it possible to read "deeply into the narrowest slivers of experience. In basketball, the player who can take in and comprehend all that is happening around him or her is said to have 'court sense.'"[20] In the military, it's called "situational awareness."

The same rapid cognition is at work in the diagnostic categories physicians rely on to evaluate patients' symptoms. The Hippocratic Oath—"Above all else, do no harm"—requires physicians to be confident that they have a good diagnosis before prescribing a remedy. Their skilled judgment draws on a repertoire of categories and clues, honed by training and experience.

But sometimes they get it wrong because their diagnostic categories don't quite work for the situation at hand. They put indicators in the wrong category and lock on to the first answer that seems right, even if a few messy facts don't quite fit. Their mind plays tricks on them, and they ignore any inconvenient data that should tell them they're adrift.

Treating patients is hard enough, but the challenge is even tougher in the workplace because organizations are so complex and the diagnostic categories are less well defined. The quality of your judgments depends on the information at hand, your mental maps, and how well you've learned to use them. Good maps align with the terrain and provide enough detail to keep you on course. If you're trying to find your way around downtown San Francisco, a map of Chicago won't help.

Even with the right map, getting around will be slow and awkward if you have to stop and ponder at every intersection. The ultimate goal is fluid expertise, the sort of know-how that lets you think on the fly and navigate organizations as easily as you drive home on a familiar route. You can make decisions quickly and automatically because you know at a glance where you are and what you need to do next.

There is no shortcut to developing this kind of expertise. It takes effort, time, practice, and feedback. Some of the effort has to go into learning frames and the ideas behind them. Equally important is putting the ideas to use. Experience, one often hears, is the best teacher, but that is true only if you reflect on it and extract its real lessons. It wasn't clear, for example, that Bob Nardelli learned very much from his Home Depot experience. In his next leadership opportunity as CEO of Chrysler, he managed to drive the company into bankruptcy in two years—after he passed on a government

loan that would have required a cap on executive pay. His stints at Home Depot and Chrysler combined to earn him spots on at least two lists of the worst American CEOs of all time.[21]

His successor, Sergio Marchionne, took the loan and the pay cap, and brought the company back to profitability. One of the key traits of successful executives is that they never pass up a good learning opportunity.[22]

FRAME BREAKING

Framing involves matching mental maps to situations. Reframing involves shifting frames when circumstances change. But reframing also requires another skill—the ability to break frames. Why do that? A news story from the summer of 2007 illustrates this. Imagine yourself among a group of friends enjoying dinner on the patio of your Washington, D.C., home. An armed, hooded intruder suddenly appears and points a gun at the head of a fourteen-year-old guest. It's a potentially lethal home invasion. "Give me your money," he says, "or I'll start shooting." If you're at that table, what do you do? You could freeze. Or you could try to creatively break frame and put a new spin on the situation. That's exactly what hostess Cristina "Cha Cha" Rowan did.

> "We were just finishing dinner," [she] blurted out. "Why don't you have a glass of wine with us?"
>
> The intruder took a sip of their Chateau Malescot St-Exupéry and said, "Damn, that's good wine."
>
> The girl's father . . . told the intruder. . . to take the whole glass. Rowan offered him the bottle. The would-be robber, his hood now down, took another sip and had a bite of Camembert cheese that was on the table.
>
> Then he tucked the gun into the pocket of his nylon sweatpants.
>
> "I think I may have come to the wrong house," he said, looking around the patio of the home in the 1300 block of Constitution Avenue NE.
>
> "I'm sorry," he told the group. "Can I get a hug?"
>
> Rowan, . . . stood up and wrapped her arms around him. Then [the other guests followed suit].

"That's really good wine," the man said, taking another sip. He had a final request: "Can we have a group hug?"

The five adults surrounded him, arms out.

With that, the man walked out with a crystal wine glass in hand, filled with Chateau Malescot. No one was hurt, and nothing was stolen.

. . . In the alley behind the home, investigators found the intruder's empty crystal wine glass on the ground, unbroken.[23]

After the event, the father of the teenager commented, "There was this degree of disbelief and terror at the same time. Then it miraculously just changed. His whole emotional tone turned—like, we're one big happy family now. I thought: Was it the wine? Was it the cheese?"[24]

The wine and cheese helped, but breaking frame made the key difference. In one stroke, Cha Cha Rowan redefined the situation from "we might all be killed here" to "let's try offering our guest some wine." Like her, artistic managers frame and reframe experience fluidly, sometimes with extraordinary results.

John Lewis, one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s lieutenants, reportedly was with King in a protest march when a Southern redneck confronted him and spit in his face. Lewis was silent for a moment and then asked, "May I borrow your handkerchief?" After a long period of startled staring, the man gave Lewis his handkerchief. A conversation led to a friendship. A final example: A critic once commented to the artist Paul Cézanne, "That doesn't look anything like a sunset." Pondering his painting, Cézanne responded, "Then you don't see sunsets the way I do." Like Cézanne, Lewis, and Rowan, leaders have to find new ways to shift points of view when needed.

Like maps, frames are both windows on a territory and tools for navigation. Each window offers a unique view. Every tool has strengths and limitations. Only experience and practice bring you the adroitness and wisdom to take stock of a situation and use suitable tools with confidence and skill.

FOUR LEADERSHIP FRAMES

Leading in an organization is probably as demanding as anything you have ever tried to do. Not surprisingly, what you read or hear about leadership

goes off in many different directions, producing conflicting schools of thought. Each version has its own ideas about how to understand and lead organizations. When you are looking for help, you have to sort through a cacophony of voices and visions.

This book helps you sift through the competing voices and merges them into an inclusive framework embracing four distinctive ideas about leadership. The ideas are powerful enough to capture the subtlety and complexity of leadership, yet simple enough to be helpful. We've combed through oceans of literature so you won't have to. We've distilled our learning from thousands of managers and leaders, and scores of organizations. We've condensed it all into four major frames—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic.[25] Each is used by academics and practitioners alike and found in bound form on the shelves of libraries and bookstores. Books, articles, and training programs typically present one frame or another, isolated from the others. Such single-lens views are exactly what got Johnson and Nardelli in trouble and frustrate other leaders.

To illustrate our point, imagine a harried executive browsing in the management section of her local bookseller on a brisk winter day in 2014. She worries about her company's flagging performance and fears that her job might soon disappear. She spots the black cover of *How to Measure Anything: Finding the Value of "Intangibles" in Business*. Flipping through the pages, she notices chapter titles such as "The Methods of Measurement," "Calibration Exercise," and "The Value of Information for Ranges." She is drawn to such phrases as "A key step in the process is the calculation of the economic value of information. . . [A] proven formula from the field of decision theory allows us to compute a monetary value for a given amount of uncertainty reduction."[26] "This stuff may be good," the executive tells herself, "but it seems a little too stiff and numbers driven."

Next she finds *Lead with LUV: A Different Way to Create Real Success*. Glancing inside, she reads, "Many of our officers handwrite several thousand notes each year. Besides being loving, we know this is meaningful to our People because we hear from them if we miss something significant in their lives like the high school graduation of one of their kids. We just believe in accentuating the positive and celebrating People's successes."[27] "Sounds nice," she mumbles, "but a little too touchy-feely. Let's look for something more down-to-earth."

Continuing her search, she picks up *Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't*. She reads, "You can compete and triumph in organizations of all types . . . if you understand the principles of power and are willing to use them. Your task is to know how to prevail in the political battles you will face."[28] She wonders, "Does it really all come down to politics? It seems so cynical and scheming. Isn't there something more uplifting?"

She spots *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*. She ponders its message: "Tribal leaders focus their efforts on building the tribe, or, more precisely, upgrading the tribal culture. If they are successful, the tribe recognizes them as leaders, giving them top effort, cult-like loyalty, and a track record of success."[29] "Fascinating," she concludes, "but this seems a little too primitive for modern organizations."

In her local bookstore, our diligent executive has discovered fragments that we have assembled into a coherent framework. The four distinct metaphors inform the essence of the books she examined: organizations as factories, families, jungles, and temples or carnivals. But she leaves still looking for something more. Some titles felt more compatible with her way of thinking. Others fell outside her comfort zone. She felt forced to choose one, because no single work brought all four together in a coherent way.

Factories

The first book she stumbled on, *How to Measure Anything*, provides counsel on how to think clearly and get the solid information you need to make decisions, extending a long tradition that treats an organization as a factory and the leader as an analyst and engineer. The structural frame, derived from sociology, depicts a world based on reason and emphasizes rationality and structure, including policies, goals, technology, specialized roles, coordination, and formal relationships.

Structures—commonly depicted by organization charts—are designed to fit an organization's environment and technology. Leaders allocate responsibilities ("division of labor"). They then create rules, policies, procedures, systems, and hierarchies to coordinate diverse activities into a unified effort. Problems arise when structure doesn't line up with current circumstances. At that point, some form of reorganization or redesign is needed to remedy the mismatch.

Families

Our executive next encountered *Leading with LUV*, with its focus on caring for people. The human resource perspective, rooted in psychology, sees the leader as servant and catalyst in an organization that is much like an extended family, made up of individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations. From a human resource view, the key challenge is achieving alignment between organizations and individuals—finding ways for people to get the job done while feeling good about themselves and their work. Followership and caring are seen as essential complements to leadership.

Jungles

Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't is a contemporary application of political science that sees organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles, and leaders as warriors, advocates, and negotiators. Parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in interests, perspectives, and resources among contending individuals and groups. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are part of everyday life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come and go. Problems arise when power is concentrated in the wrong places or is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done. Solutions arise from a leader's political skill and acumen—as Machiavelli suggested centuries ago in *The Prince*.

Temples and Carnivals

Finally, our executive encountered *Tribal Leadership*, with its emphasis on culture, symbols, and spirit as keys to organizational success. The symbolic lens, drawing on interpretive sociology and cultural anthropology, treats organizations as temples, tribes, theaters, or carnivals, with leaders functioning as magicians, prophets, and poets. It abandons the assumption of rationality prominent in other frames and depicts organizations as cultures propelled by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths rather than by rules, policies, power, and managerial authority. Organizations are also theaters: actors play their roles in the drama while audiences form impressions from what they see on stage. Problems arise when actors play their parts badly, symbols lose their meaning, or ceremonies and rituals lose

their potency. Leaders rekindle the expressive or spiritual side of organizations through the use of symbol, myth, and magic.

MULTIFRAME THINKING

The overview of the four-frame model in Exhibit 1.1 shows that each of the frames has its own image of reality. You may be drawn to some and repelled by others, as was our bookstore visitor. Some perspectives may seem clear and straightforward, while others seem puzzling. But learning to apply all four makes you a better, more versatile leader. The evidence is clear that the ability to use multiple frames is associated with greater effectiveness for managers and leaders.[30] Like Lou Gerstner, successful leaders reframe, consciously or intuitively, until they understand the situation at hand. They use multiple perspectives to develop a diagnosis of what's really going on and what course of action might set things right. They transform puzzlement into a comprehensive view of complex situations.

Leaders operate in circumstances that are too complex and messy to take everything in. Consciously or not, they construct simplified cognitive maps in order to make sense of things. The maps are never perfect, but they only need to be good enough for individuals to understand what's going on and what to do next. If your maps are cockeyed, your choices will be too. Your results are disappointing or worse. Our research has repeatedly shown that the odds of success are higher for multiframe leaders who can approach situations from more than one angle. They draw on all four frames to get a more complete picture of any situation.

Less versatile leaders get in trouble because gaps in their thinking keep them from seeing or understanding some of the important challenges they face. They may, for example, be very good at handling technical problems, but mystified by issues of human emotion and motivation. Or they may find conflict so stressful that they can't face political realities. They may trip over subtleties of customs and traditions that they've never learned to see, much less understand.

It all adds up to a simple truth, one that is easy to overlook because it is at odds with everyday experience. The world you perceive is constructed in your mind. Your ideas, or theories, determine whether a given situation is foggy or clear, mildly interesting or momentous, a paralyzing disaster

Exhibit 1.1.
Overview of the Four-Frame Model

	Frame			
	Structural	**Human Resource**	**Political**	**Symbolic**
Metaphor for organization	Factory	Family	Jungle	Temple, theater
Central concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, emotions, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy and political savvy	Inspiration, significance
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organization with human needs and talent	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, hope, meaning, and belief

or a genuine learning experience. In any situation, there is simply too much happening for you to attend to everything. Your personal theories or frames tell you what is important and what can be safely ignored, and they group scattered bits of information into manageable patterns. Thus it is vital to understand how your habits of mind influence what you see and what you miss or misread.

Multiframe thinking requires moving beyond narrow, mechanical approaches for understanding organizations. We cannot count the number of times managers have told us that they handled some problem the "only way" it could have been. Such statements betray a failure of both imagination and courage and reveal a paralyzing fear of uncertainty. You may find

it comforting to think that failure was unavoidable and that you did all you could. But it also can be liberating to realize there is always more than one way to respond to any problem or dilemma. Those who master reframing report a liberating sense of choice, freedom, and power.

Akira Kurosawa's classic film *Rashomon* recounts the same event through the eyes of several witnesses. Each tells a different story. Similarly, every organization is filled with people who have their own interpretations of what is and should be happening. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker. No single story is comprehensive enough to make your organization truly understandable or manageable. You need multiple lenses, the skill to use each, and the wisdom to match frames to situations.

CONCLUSION

How leaders think determines what they see, how they act, and what results they achieve. Each of four lenses—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic—opens a new set of possibilities for leaders to use in finding their bearings and choosing a course. Narrow thinking all too often leads to a failure of imagination, a major cause of the shortfall between the reach and the grasp of so many leaders—the empty chasm between noble aspirations and disappointing results. The commission appointed by President George W. Bush to investigate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, concluded that the strikes "should not have come as a surprise" but did because the "most important failure was one of imagination." Multiframe thinking is a powerful stimulus to the broad, creative mind-set that imagination and great leadership require.

See the Appendix for the Leadership Orientations instrument to measure your frame preferences.