

CHAPTER ONE

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EAST TO THE SUNRISE
LOOK IN THE MIRROR

A scenic landscape featuring a range of mountains in the background, partially obscured by a layer of mist or low clouds. In the foreground, there is a dense forest of tall, dark evergreen trees. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and a bright light source, likely the sun, is visible on the right side, creating a lens flare effect. The overall color palette is muted, with blues, greys, and greens, giving it a serene and atmospheric feel.

Each day,
leaders must
be willing
to look into
a mirror of
self-awareness.

The journey is never about the leader, but it starts with the leader. Along the way, the leader is the motivator, navigator, and guide: charting the course, setting the pace, and changing direction when necessary. As a shepherd, the leader keeps others aligned, sometimes by walking in front, sometimes behind, and sometimes beside. The leader's focus is always on others.

By taking a good look in the mirror at the start of each morning, you reflect, assess, and recommit to continual improvement, always asking yourself, “What can I do to make—and be—the change I want to see in the world?”

Undertaking the leadership journey requires self-awareness on the part of the leader. It bears repeating: It's not about you, but it begins with you—who you are as a person and the behaviors and attitudes that you model for others.

LEADING OTHERS BEGINS BY FIRST LEADING YOURSELF



MEASURE YOURSELF BEFORE
YOU MEASURE OTHERS.

TAKE A HUMBLE LOOK IN THE MIRROR.

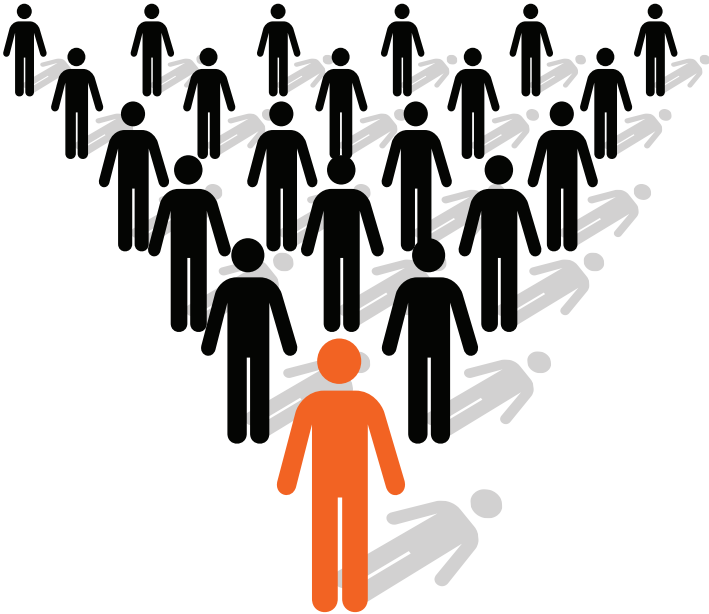
To lead others, you must continually measure yourself—not overestimating your strengths, and not underestimating your weaknesses. To do so, you must be able to look humbly in the mirror. After all, self-awareness and honesty go hand in hand. Let others illuminate your blind spots as you improve yourself and, by extension, the organization.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY YOU WANT TO SEE IN OTHERS STARTS WITH YOU.

I once engaged my senior team in a live assessment of my leadership strengths and blind spots. I gathered them from all over the world in a hotel conference room to rate me using remote control “clickers” to ensure anonymity. After each question, the results were immediately displayed at the front of the room. It was intense, to say the least. As insightful and appreciated as the feedback was, that wasn’t the real purpose of this exercise; it was to demonstrate a willingness to be vulnerable.

As the leader, I wanted to model for my team the vulnerability of being willing to look in the mirror—in this case, publicly and transparently. That’s why, at the end of the three-hour session, I gave each person a small mirror as a reminder that a leader can only inspire and motivate others if he or she is willing to undertake an honest self-assessment. Only by looking in the mirror can they ask themselves such things

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as whether they were truly willing to be vulnerable around soliciting and accepting feedback.

As the leader, you are responsible for what goes on in your organization. Model the leadership behavior that empowers others. The changes and accountability that you want to see at every level start with you. Your attitude and actions cascade throughout the organization, creating followership. So believe it, say it, mean it, and act it. Consistency is paramount.

SURVIVAL OF THE SELF-AWARE.

Leading others on a long journey (literal or metaphoric) demands many capabilities, traits, experiences, and skills. You must be smart and have the required expertise—all the things that got you to a leadership position in the first place. In addition, you must possess an array of other skills and attributes—the motivation to lead, the interpersonal skills to connect and communicate with others, the ability to inspire other people, and so forth. Without this palate of competencies, your leadership journey will probably be a very short jaunt.

What's the secret ingredient for leadership success over the long term? Self-awareness. As Korn Ferry has found in its extensive research and work with senior executives, self-awareness is a crucial, make-or-break trait. Why? Without self-awareness you will not see your blind spots—and virtually all leaders (nearly 80 percent by our assessments) have them. Blind spots amount to overestimates of skills. You think you're this, but you're really that. You think you are very good at inspiring and motivating people, but they don't feel it. You think you're exceptional at strategy, but others don't perceive you that way.

Having a mirror to reflect who you are is great. But you need to be able to see it clearly. Self-awareness clears the fog.

YOU ARE THE FACE OF THE ORGANIZATION.

As an operating officer, you can be “one of the guys.” Even though you've been promoted several levels from where you started out, other than having increased responsibilities, the shift in how you are perceived probably doesn't change all that much as you climb the pyramid toward the top of the organization. Then you approach the pinnacle. Once you step over that threshold from the number-two level to number one, everything changes.

Standing at the top, the apex of the pyramid, you experience a colossal difference. As “the” leader you are viewed as a function first—the CEO—and a person second. It’s not about you (it never is, don’t forget). It’s about the job that you represent.

I learned the “you are a function” lesson as a newly promoted CEO when I attended a formal dinner in South America. It started late, as is the custom. It seemed to go on and on until we were three hours into the event. It was well after 11 o’clock, and I was jetlagged and exhausted from traveling. Yet no one had left yet. I didn’t want to appear rude to the hosts, so I waited for others to get up. No one did. Finally, as it approached midnight, I mentioned this to someone sitting next to me. “Nobody has gotten up to leave as yet because you haven’t,” he explained. It was my first taste of the truth that, as the CEO, when people looked at me they didn’t see “Gary,” they saw “the CEO”—the role that I occupied.

FIND A CONFIDANT/CONFIDANTE FOR YOUR “GRAY DAYS.”

When people view you through the lens of the leadership function, you no longer have the same freedom you once had. You are the face of the organization. Because of that, the people around you will begin reading your mood like tea leaves. If you seem worried or preoccupied, then people will wonder if they should be worrying, too! On those “gray days” you can’t radiate your doubts, worries, and concerns. However, you do need confidants/confidantes to help and advise you, ideally someone who has walked the same path: a CEO for a CEO, a coach for a coach, and so forth. With these trusted advisers who understand what it means to occupy a leadership position, you will have help and guidance as you fulfill your obligation to be “on” 24/7.

THE JOB IS NOT YOURS FOREVER.

Here is the paradox: As the leader, you must fully and totally embody that function as a steward of the organization, the role model of the purpose and vision, and a shepherd of the team. As all-encompassing as that job is, though, it doesn't belong to you.

In the time-collapsed world in which we live, tenures are often relatively short; the same is true for coaches of major teams and senior leaders of other organizations. In any leadership appointment, you don't have a lot of time—and the job can be taken away from you. Being a leader is not a lifetime appointment.

Recognize that the end point of your leadership is not the end point of the organization. You are part of a leadership continuum. Your job is to be a source of energy and change to grow the organization, and to be a steward during the time of your leadership. Being a leader is more about who you are than what you do.

“My job is to recruit, attract, and compensate people; provide a moral compass; match their skill sets to different needs in the organization that I’m running, whether it’s a company or a government; and then to make sure that they work collaboratively and collectively.”

*—Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York,
and Founder, Bloomberg L.P.*

RADIATE PURPOSEFUL PASSION



AS THE LEADER, YOUR JOB IS TO INSPIRE PEOPLE SO THEY CAN EMPOWER THEMSELVES.

LET THEM SEE YOUR PASSION FOR THE PURPOSE.

People will not always agree with the leader. But the one thing that should never be in question is the leader's passion for the organization and its purpose. More than anything, the leader's passion must be seen and felt throughout the organization.

People rarely follow someone because of their plan of action—what we're going to do next. What excites people is passion for a purpose—a gravitational force that will pull them in to the shared vision. It comes back to the “why”—knowing the purpose and believing in it so much that you embody it.

TAP THE POWER OF STORYTELLING: EMOTIONALIZE YOUR MESSAGE.

Whenever I interview people, I never ask what's on their resume. I'm looking for something else—the way the person thinks, how he or she engages with others, how he or she creatively solves problems. Recently, I asked a candidate, “How many quarters would you have to stack to reach the top of this building?” The answer was immaterial. I just wanted to know how the person would handle such a question, whether puzzling it out or making a wild guess. What the person did, though, was question the question. He just couldn't figure out why such a thing was relevant (of course it wasn't—but that wasn't the point). In the end, the person wasn't hired.

Engagement and interaction say more about you than any list of accomplishments in a bio or on a resume. I remember being told by a hiring manager many years ago, “I know what’s on your resume. Tell me about you. Tell me a story so I can really know who you are.”

Storytelling and personal engagement extend far beyond the job-seeking process. As the leader, you are the master of your organization’s narrative. Just as the shamans of old gathered people around the fire at night to share the tribal wisdom and lore, so, too, the leader is the keeper of the organizational story. People will feel the force of your passion and commitment in the stories you tell and the actions those stories reflect. They will believe—and they will become inspired to act. When you emotionalize your message, you will move others to consider what they, too, might become if they were “more”—more determined, more prepared, more confident, and more empowered.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL EMPOWERED? USE THAT FEELING!

I can still remember the first time I rode a two-wheel bicycle: my dad removing the training wheels from my shiny Schwinn, his hand firmly on my back as he gave me one hopeful and final push, and then I pedaled down the pavement as if I owned the road.

We never forget these first moments when we felt freedom, joy, and accomplishment in what we mastered. As the leader, your job is to inspire them, evoking in others that same feeling of riding a bike for the first time, so that they become empowered. Remember, you cannot empower people; people must do that for themselves.

To be inspirational you must:

1. Be yourself;
2. Demonstrate authentic belief in the organization's purpose;
3. Make an emotional connection with your audience—your customers and your employees.

AUTHENTICITY TRUMPS CHARISMA ANY DAY, IN EVERY WAY.

Late-night infomercials with the charismatic salesman describing how you, too, can make millions if you just buy the instructional CD. The magnetic pitchman at the county fair inspiring you to purchase kitchen knives that never dull, all for an incredibly low price that you have to finance over five years. Or, perhaps on a more positive note, persuasive politicians such as Franklin Roosevelt, Bill Clinton, or Tony Blair.

Looking at your own skills, you may wonder, “How can I put in what Mother Nature may have left out? Can I be that inspirational?”

To be “inspirational,” you don’t have to be Churchill-like. Rather you must: 1. Be yourself; 2. Demonstrate authentic belief in the organization’s purpose; and 3. Make an emotional connection with your audience—your customers and your employees. This is the essence of leading others: knowing yourself first and leading others.

When you are an authentic leader, people will trust what you say and mirror what you do. Then purpose, passion, and commitment will scale and cascade throughout the entire organization.

RAISE PEOPLE'S SIGHTS TO SEE WHAT IS POSSIBLE—WHAT THEY CAN BECOME.

Empowerment means enabling and equipping others to make decisions that are directionally aligned with the organization's vision and purpose. People grow as they are stretched. As the leader, you are accountable for making sure they are not stretched too thin. Your ability to empower others is all about raising people's sights and instilling belief and confidence in what they can do.



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“Empowerment as leadership is not me giving something to you. It’s helping you find the resources so that you can empower yourself.”

*—Peter Guber, Chairman and CEO,
Mandalay Entertainment, and Filmmaker*