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1 Sympathy for the Devil

Sometime before writing this book I was the *Acting* Chief Executive Officer of a medium-sized organization. I had been in the organization for a short while and happily accepted the role. It was a job that I took seriously and gave my full commitment to with the intention of making a genuine difference. The word *acting* though always caught in my throat, like a dry biscuit crumb that had welded itself to my windpipe. I wasn't *acting*, of course, in the Hollywood movie sense, nor was I *acting* in the undercover cop sense. In fact it felt very real in every way to me, but I was nevertheless not, at that point, substantiated in the position. *Close, but no cigar*, as the saying goes. People would inquire often about what would happen next in the process of filling the position for the leadership, for example whether it would be through advertisement in the newspapers or whether the Board had someone in mind. When speaking to me they would ask about arrangements for filling "your" position and then, recognizing the possible suggestion implied by the word "your," they would catch themselves midflow and attempt to "repair" the sentence. The question would usually therefore be accompanied by a kind of stutter and I would witness the quick but all-too-obvious switch of the "your" word to the nonpossessive "the" word before asking about the position. It reminded me of the experience of feeding the ducks at the local pond where you generously hold out some lovely plump bread taken from your own bread bin and carried lovingly to the bank of the pond. An elegant and beautiful swan waddles up to you and just as it is within a few inches of your gift of food, a streetwise pigeon swoops down and snatches the whole loaf from your hands. In the *acting* CEO role you can always hear the flapping of wings behind you.

So what this caused within me was a serious appraisal of the options that were open to me as an interim CEO. And these boiled down to three critical and interrelated questions, which remain as profound for me now as they did then. These were, how long do I think I have got? How grand should my ambition be? And how widely should I extend my influence? Looking back, I wonder how I ever hoped to be successful without first addressing each of these head-on.

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These were first-order questions that, once I had resolved to answer them, changed the landscape immediately. The otherwise tough, complex and demanding job of leadership became curiously clearer. My agenda for action was guided by the tramlines that the answers to these questions had produced – like a map that unfolded in front of me. More than ever before, I understood where I was going and exactly what I needed to do to get there. It provided a personal mandate for my leadership.

Thinking about it now, this applied as much as it did to me in an interim role as it did in other comparable and less temporary leadership positions that I had held. But more importantly it applies to anyone and everyone in a position of leadership, whether you expect to be in the role for 4 months, 4 years or 40 years. In the same vein, your decision to keep the organization simply ticking over or to go for something altogether more ambitious makes a mammoth difference to what you need to do as a leader: how you use your time, what skills you need, how you work with others. And ultimately, how broadly you frame the population of people and institutions you want to influence will bring into focus where your efforts should be directed. The odd notion, promoted by so many leadership writers and thinkers, that good leadership is a one-size-fits-all model has always confounded me. To formulate a theory of leadership in abstraction from the priorities that leaders pursue seems to ignore the leader in leadership.

Strewn across the path of leadership is a litter trail of considerations and opportunities – globalization, advanced communications, technological acceleration, climate change, people migration, poverty, health epidemics, terrorism, erosion of trust, a more demanding public, downsizing, right-sizing, outsourcing, strategic partnerships, mergers, demergers, acquisitions, virtual everything, power shifts, a war on talent, skills deficits, generations x, y, and z, sub-prime collapses, governance structures and lots more.

In a modern world that truly is defined by complexity and change, absolute clarity about direction, that is the direction in which you as a leader will travel, is worth its weight in gold. And if that clarity provides a route map for the know-how and skills you need to build along the way, then this is nothing short of a recipe for success. All of a sudden the messy domain of leadership starts to take a more orderly shape and you find yourself smoothly moving up a gear and entering the fast lane. It won't hurt for you to start working on these three questions for yourself now and to see the fog lift.

A personal manifesto for how you will lead

On the morning of August 6, 2002, an armed bank robber crept out of a hiding place in a local bank in Oxfordshire. Having broken in through the roof of the bank on the previous evening, the robber had laid low for several hours, no doubt rehearsing the heist that would see him seize a modest but not insubstantial sum of £126,000. As the staff arrived at the bank on this busy Tuesday morning, the robber, wearing a balaclava and a camouflage jacket, slowly made his way down to greet them. As they entered, he confronted the startled employees with a pump action shotgun and demanded that they provide the keys and codes to open the safe and the cash machines. He bundled them into a strong room while he started to load the money into a white waste sack. As time ticked by, the streets began to fill up outside the bank.

Once all the cash had been crammed into the bag, the robber ushered his hostages one by one into a room upstairs so that he could make a clean escape away from the glare of the bank staff. Triumphant, but with no time to lose, the robber fled from the bank into the bustling town only to find that his black Alfa Romeo getaway car, parked in the multistory car park next door, had been accidentally blocked in by some cars owned by nearby office workers. The farcical scene unfurled as it took the robber some 20 minutes to locate and get the owners to move their cars to allow his escape. Meanwhile, CCTV snapped away, compiling a veritable photo album of images of the robber in an increasingly fraught and indignant state waving a shotgun aloft for all to see. After finally exiting the car park and meandering through the gridlocked traffic at snail's pace, his car was caught again on a speed camera sometime later barely nudging the speed limit. It perhaps goes without saying that our robber was subsequently apprehended and arrested with the help of copious eyewitness accounts and photographic images. Neither the evidence nor time had been on his side.

Quite unbelievably at the court hearing, where the robber was ordered to serve a mandatory life sentence, Judge Anthony King proclaimed: "This was clearly a sophisticated, well-planned and deliberated offence." Deliberate – yes! But sophisticated and well-planned? You can decide.

The subject of leadership on which this book focuses attracts more definitions, theories, exemplars and case studies than you could possibly

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imagine. Leaders and leadership seem to be both the panacea for all problems that society faces and simultaneously the cause of all our problems. Our politicians slip from being worshiped one day to being lambasted the next. Our business leaders, once bringing desperately needed jobs to the community, become hounded for indulgent top team pay rises. Our public service leaders crack down on fuel emissions with brave policies and then step into gas-guzzling Jaguars to be taken to their next meeting.

Sitting peacefully at the center of all leadership are individuals who make important decisions about what they will do as leaders: about their plan of attack, about where their energies will go and about who they will become in the time they have. It is what occurs in the minds of leaders that feature most in the pages of this book. But above all, it is the answers to three fundamental questions that this book poses that will take our thinking in a different direction and may make the difference between successful and fruitless leadership, and may also make the difference between leadership that provides answers to our problems and leadership that creates the problems with which we live.

Let us now return to our bungled bank robbery, to explore one illustration of how some fundamentals shape and frame success, or otherwise. Our bank robber encountered three major challenges in his bank caper.

The first inescapably significant factor was the time and timing of his robbery. In very many ways the crime had the makings of a great success. The criminal positioned himself in the right place in the bank (crawling through the roof); he had the right tools for the job (mask, jacket, shotgun, money bag) and, one can assume, the right demeanor, attitude and everything that goes with being a convincing robber. But what he didn't plan well enough for was the time he had made available to carry out the job. As the morning marched on, the local streets and car parks inevitably filled up with more and more vehicles and the office workers converged on the town in their droves. Every second in the bank counted, and as time evaporated the prospect of success diminished.

A second important factor in the robbery was the scale of the job that was attempted, which in no small part mirrored the bounty of £126,000 that was found in the vaults of the bank. The robber had selected a relatively small bank in an English town of some 44,000 residents. High street banks typically hold different quantities of cash, with most small banks holding up to around £300,000, medium-sized banks holding up to £1 million, and larger, big-city branches holding as much as £10–£15 million. He might have opted for a village post office, a bureau de change or a major city bank. In each case the volume

of cash likely to be seized would vary. Our robber nevertheless made a judgment on the size of prize he wanted to pursue, the risk involved and the skills he possessed in being able to pull the job off – and in doing so settled for a small town bank. In the event, he bit off more than he could chew and the scale of his ambition exceeded his ability to deliver. On this point alone size of ambition mattered a great deal.

A final factor that had a bearing on the success of the robbery was the variety of outside influences on the job, in particular the arrival of office workers in the vicinity, the slow buildup of traffic in the area and the number and positioning of security cameras, specifically those in the car park where the robber had parked his getaway vehicle. One way in which the robber might have dealt with these would have been to extend some influence over them, perhaps by working with an accomplice who could assist his getaway or even disabling the security cameras, or, as wonderfully illustrated by the famous “Italian Job” film, he might have rigged the traffic light system to facilitate his exit from the scene. He implicitly chose to influence a narrow, rather than broad, range of factors that could in turn extend influence over his prospects of success.

This example illuminates three profoundly important questions that leaders rarely ask of themselves and that shape this book:

1. **For how long will I lead?**
2. **On what scale will I lead?**
3. **How broadly will I lead?**

For those who like propositions that are easy to remember, think of these questions as summarized by “how long, how big and how broad?”

While each of these questions sounds wonderfully simple, they possess immense power and carry weighty implications for leadership style, focus, possibilities and strategy. In fact, they implicitly come to account for what leaders will spend most of their time doing. The problem, of course, is that leaders, more often than not, find themselves knee-deep in the job without having taken the time to consider where they stand on each of these questions, which implicitly form the root structure of their leadership.

If we were to briefly identify the answers to the three leadership questions in relation to the robbery, we would probably come up with something like this:

1. how long (did our robber have to do the job)? = a very limited period of time, which, in the event, wasn’t long enough

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2. how big (was his ambition)? = small to middling ambition, which, in the event, was more than what our robber could manage
3. how broad (was his framing of the influences on the job)? = relatively narrow, which, in the event, saw outside factors ultimately causing his downfall

And it is the combination of decisions in relation to these questions that determined the robber's command over the operation and the final outcome.

The purpose of this example is not to create a recipe for how to conduct the perfect bank job, but to argue that, depending upon where you place your leadership on these three axes, you will come up with a very different set of skills that are required, a different set of strategies, a different set of behaviors and nothing short of a manifesto for how you will lead. So when you read in books about what leadership is and what you should do as a leader, do not take this as gospel. What you should do instead is start with yourself and undertake the thinking and analysis so that you know your mind on these three underpinning questions.

Our criminal was sentenced to serve life in prison, and this is the cross that he has to bear for his actions. Similarly, leadership comes with its own consequences, and to provide further context to these three underpinning questions of leadership, we need to understand the condition of being a leader.

Leadership may cause harmful side effects

My position on leadership is absolutely clear. It is an enormously difficult job that carries more complexities, personal demands, expectations and costs than most people imagine as they furiously attempt to climb up the slippery pole to the top. We all know what the benefits are, but the costs are less visible to us and provide some critical context to the challenges we face and the questions we must ask of ourselves. They also provide a powerful argument for focusing the attention of leaders, at least initially, on a small number of simple but fundamental considerations.

The "condition" of being a leader is in many ways a unique, if not rare, set of experiences. At times it reads like the tightly folded piece of paper that you find crammed into packets of medication warning you of every conceivable side effect under the sun. I am reminded of a business trip that I recently took to Ghana and for which I had to take

some antimalaria pills called Malarone. In the advice note the list of potential side effects included the following (not a full read-out):

Disturbances of the gut such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or abdominal pain, Fever (pyrexia), Headache, Inflammation of the lining of the mouth (stomatitis), Mouth ulcers, Loss of appetite, Dizziness, Difficulty in sleeping (insomnia), Cough, Low blood sodium level (hyponatraemia), Low red blood cell count (anaemia), Decrease in the number of a type of white blood cell (neutrophil) in the blood (neutropenia), Hair loss (alopecia), Allergic reactions such as rash, or severe swelling of lips, face or tongue (angioedema).

Out of curiosity I searched on the Internet before I departed to the country to see what symptoms there might be associated with actually contracting malaria, and much to my surprise the list seemed much more attractive by comparison:

Headache, nausea, fever, vomiting and flu-like symptoms

For leaders, while the list of “symptoms” isn’t always as physiologically graphic (although for those who dislike public speaking it may be all of the above), the personal impact of being a leader should not be underestimated. Figure 1.1 draws out some of the themes to which we should pay attention.

If anyone ever needed a recipe for neurosis, anxiety and depression, it would be leadership. These dimensions of leadership come together to create the climate within which leaders operate and they amount to some pretty serious personal demands with which leaders need to cope. Let us take a look at each of these dimensions and further step into the shoes of leaders.

Your every action becomes amplified across the organization (and beyond)

Leaders, like celebrities, are watched and observed and they are the subject of intense interest and idle speculation. In very many ways they embody the health of the organizations they serve, and their actions, no matter how small, are interpreted by individuals and by “the collective” as casting a light on how well the organization is prospering.

If the boss is heard to have taken three weeks’ annual vacation, one week longer than the norm, this is seen to signal something – perhaps

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No.	Side effect/ Condition	Explanation
1	Your every action becomes amplified across the organization (and beyond).	The slightest word, inflection or suggestion by our leaders will be invested with significance by workers and echoed across the organization. A bit like celebrities without the glamour, our leaders are placed in the spotlight to become the subject of gossip, scrutiny and idle banter. Any wonder why some of our leaders become egotistical?
2	You will always feel underskilled to do the job.	At one level it is impossible for leaders to know all that they need to know: from how to structure an organization to how to change the brand image and from how to establish a governance system to how knowledge should be shared in the organization. While the leaders will never get into the mechanics of doing this, they nevertheless need to know how to lead all of the above. And the truth is that many leaders take on some of their biggest challenges with absolutely no prior experience or training.
3	You are caught between being authentic and necessarily having to say and do things in which you don't believe.	The characteristically personal dimension to leadership means that leaders have to give themselves to the job, and while all experienced leaders will recognize that authenticity is the key to success, the job at different times forces them to do and say things in which they don't believe. Those with a certain moral flexibility might well find this easier to contend with.
4	You permanently live amid ambiguity, complexity and change.	Leaders know more of the strategic challenges facing the organization than anybody else – more about the demands of shareholders and stakeholders, more about the “real” and often tough views of the Board, more about the budgetary crisis about to hit the organization, more of the action that Unions have threatened to take, more of the job losses that leaders will need to instigate as they give a rallying speech of support to the very group they will have to sack. The world of leadership contains no black or white, only a myriad of dilemmas painted in shades of gray.
5	You have a looser grip on the organization than you might imagine.	The notion that leaders are “in charge” of their organizations couldn't be farther from the truth. On the whole, leaders have neither the time nor the inclination to intervene in the running of the organization, which is for the layers of management over which the leader presides. The bigger the organization, the looser the grip leaders feel on the organization.

Figure 1.1 Continued.

6	You are time-poor.	On average Chief Executives spend at least half of their working week ensconced in planned meetings and additionally attend lunchtime, evening and weekend engagements, as well as international travel – all of which serve to erode the time available to think, reflect and recuperate.
7	You are alone/lonely.	As an individual at the top of the organization leaders have far fewer opportunities than most other people to form bonds, to chat and to off-load their worries. The role and the position often forces distance between the leader and the people around them. The result tends to create lonely leaders.
8	No matter what you do, you will always be told that you are not visible enough.	One of the most common conclusions of organizational surveys that touch upon leadership is that “leaders are not visible enough.” Unfortunately, even in the highest-performing and best lead organizations workers just want more “leader-time” and leaders despite their best efforts will always have to accept that they will underdeliver. (Incidentally, this is not a reason to become invisible as a leader.)
9	You can become demonized.	The prospect of being demonized is more of a certainty than a possibility. Leaders simply cannot consistently succeed with their organizations, not least because organizational success depends on factors outside the locus of leaders. Can you think of one great leader who hasn’t at some point been pilloried or demonized for their decisions?
10	Your workers may hold parental expectations of you.	Without having exchanged words over the psychological deal that staff strike with leaders, very often employees project onto leaders the notion that they should look after, care for and nurture them, that leaders should act as benevolent, father/mother figures. You won’t find this in any employment contracts, but you will find it deep in the expectations of many staff.
11	You become objectified/reduced to a symbol.	In organizations of more than a handful of people, most leaders cannot be “known” by the workers. Workers have to instead settle for a composite or caricature of their leader that is built through layers upon layers of stories, opinion and rumor. As a consequence, leaders can never be, for most people, more than symbols.
12	You are never off duty.	The implicit deal for the money that leaders are usually paid is that they should be available almost at any time to do what is required for the business. Evening soirees, weekend travels, breakfast meetings, lunchtime discussions all serve to blur the line between home and work.

Figure 1.1 The personal implications, costs and side effects of leadership

that they are in fact looking elsewhere for a job or that they are finding the job too difficult. If the boss is seen to drop his papers while walking along the corridor to a meeting, this is considered as a signal that he is losing his grip on the organization or that something is troubling him. If the boss speaks in front of an audience of workers and with an unintended aside mentions that she has received a lot of “spam” e-mails, the IT department goes into overdrive and reconfigures the e-mail security settings before the boss returns to the comfort of their office.

For many leaders this is an easy concept to “get,” but a harder one to live with every day. While some leaders may flatter themselves that they are masters of the amplification phenomenon, and may mercilessly make use of it and the “grapevine” to their benefit, most feel the weight of the incessant scrutiny of their words and deeds. Furthermore, in the same way that the child’s game “Chinese whispers” has a phrase or sentence contorted as it is quietly whispered from one ear to the next, the interpretation of what leaders do and mean is equally unpredictable and unmanageable.

An extreme example of this phenomenon was Gerald Ratner, boss of one of Britain’s most successful retailers, who in 1991 famously joked at an official engagement of London’s Institute of Directors that one of his firm’s products was “total crap.” He further boasted that some of his company’s earrings were “cheaper than a prawn sandwich.” The speech, no doubt unwisely conducted under Chatham House Rules, was immediately seized upon by the media and wiped an estimated £500 million off the value of his company. The toxic elements of his speech must have taken less than five seconds to put out into the world and ricocheted and reverberated around the business community almost as quickly.

I am reminded of a wonderful story told by Lord Digby Jones, former Director General of the Confederation of British Industry (a body whose membership is drawn from thousands of organizations that make up UK private business) about his entry into the 26-mile London Marathon. Before the world-famous event, Digby Jones was approached by the company Cadbury’s, who offered to sponsor Digby a significant sum of money which in turn would be donated to Cancer Research UK and Unicef. The deal was that Digby would wear a running shirt with the Cadbury’s logo printed on the front. He decided off his own initiative to have the words ‘chocolate is good for you’ printed on the back of the shirt. What you do need to know is that at the time Digby Jones was a man in his early 50s with a rather ample build and certainly not the kind of person you could easily picture running 26 miles. The story goes that as the day of the event came closer the sponsors became worried about how it might look if,

heaven forbid, Digby Jones was to collapse half way around the track while prominently sporting a T-shirt with the claim ‘chocolate is good for you’ emblazoned over it. The sponsors rather gingerly raised this issue and, as humorously told by Digby Jones, it was agreed that should he collapse he would fall onto his front so as to obscure the bold statement! The amplification principle was perfectly understood by the sponsors not least because it represented a considerable financial and reputational investment for them.

It helps in this context for leaders to think of themselves as not unlike a public limited company with a diverse shareholding. Workers within the organization and stakeholders outside all listen attentively to fluctuations in the same way that the market commentators do. Rumours, statements and opinion mixed with a sprinkling of data all serve to inflate or deflate the share price of the leader. Much of this is influenced, as our Gerald Ratner example illustrates, by the behaviour of the leader whether it occurs in front of one or one thousand people.

You will always feel underskilled to do the job

Positions of leadership attract some of the highest salaries imaginable. In the United States, Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, earned, at the height of his career, a \$125 million package, comprising salary, bonuses and stock options. In 2006/7 the average CEO of a large US company made roughly \$10.8 million each year. In the UK in 2006/7, Sir Terry Leahy, who leads the UK’s most successful supermarket chain, Tesco, earned £6.8 million. The top 300 bosses in the UK state sector saw their salaries increase by 12.8 percent on 2006 figures, boosting their pay to an average of £237,000. Seventeen of the top public servants earned more than £500,000 per year.

These figures would suggest that the job of the Chief Executive and leader of an organization is extremely valuable. It would also suggest that leaders bring considerable insight, conviction, knowledge and above all skill to their position to justify the salaries they receive. What is even more fascinating though is the inevitability that as the leader of an organization you cannot possibly know all that you would like to inform the decisions you make. Very few of our top Chief Executives have been trained to do the very critical appointments that they accept. Very few of today’s leaders have been prepared for the rapidly changing world in which we exist. Very few of our leaders have all the skills they would like to so as to navigate a globalized world of ever-increasing customer expectations and technology that improves at an exponential rate.

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Looking to public service leaders as an illustration, we see the monumental task with which they have to grapple.

In the US since the 1960s health care costs have grown by almost 3 percent every year faster than the economy as a whole. Over the next 25 years the proportion of the population that is 65 years and older will increase from 12 percent to 25 percent of the US population. The growing burden on the state system through an aging population is one of the most pressing problems that government and public service leaders face. The major difficulty, of course, is that as this unstoppable force of change drives forward, social security expenditure has increased by almost a half (48 percent from 2001 to 2007), putting a strain on budgets, programs to promote home ownership coming at a time when there is a collapse in the sub-prime market, international efforts to tackle world poverty, which barely seem to make a dint in the problem and the already prevailing energy crisis. Leadership, whether political or managerial, is no small task.

By comparison, in the UK its definitive spending plans for 2007–10¹ set out the challenges facing its public service and political leaders:

The government's response to the new challenges and opportunities facing the UK include demographic and socio-economic change, with rapid increases in the old age dependency ratio and rising consumer expectations of public services; increasing pressures on natural resources and the global climate, requiring actions by governments, businesses and individuals to maintain prosperity and improve environmental care; the intensification of cross-border economic competition, with new opportunities for growth, as the balance of international economic activity shifts towards emerging markets such as China and India; the rapid pace of innovation and technological diffusion, which will continue to transform the way people live and open up new ways of delivering public services; and, continued global uncertainty with ongoing threats from international terrorism and conflict and the continued imperative to tackle global poverty.

Still on page 2 of this lengthy central edict, the document then goes on to outline some further goals of

Sustainable growth and prosperity, in order to continue to improve people's standard of living; fairness and opportunity for all, so that everyone can make the most of their talents and share in rising national prosperity; stronger communities and a better quality of life, enabling people to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives; and, a

more secure, fair and environmentally sustainable world, with the UK playing a leading global role.

At a much more practical level the job of leadership, regardless of the sectors in which leaders operate, calls upon panoply of skills and strengths that most leaders cannot hope to cover. Modern leaders are faced with the task of adding value to, and exercising judgments over, the task of growing and attracting talents, managing corporate knowledge, getting organizational design and structures right, building effective systems of governance, shaping culture, “right-sizing”, building corporate alliances and strategic partnerships, leading change, defining and nurturing the skills of workers, shaping the brand and perceptions of their organization, leading the top team, satisfying shareholders and stakeholders, focusing the attention of the organization on top priorities, leveraging technology, horizon-scanning and much more besides.

All of these areas appear on the radar of leaders who ultimately take responsibility, and are held to account, for everything that occurs. The result is that leaders will always be caught short and no matter how much they rely on the functional managers of these areas (where they exist), the buck stops at the top. Being underskilled and under-prepared is a certain reality that leaders face and the impact is felt on a personal level. Having run senior leadership development programs for many years and for hundreds of successful leaders I can vouch for the state of performance anxiety that leaders inhabit and the chronic state of fear (of failure) that goes with the job.

You are caught between being authentic and necessarily having to say and do things in which you don't believe

A common theme in leadership literature and theory is the proposition that leaders should, above all, always act authentically. There is widespread agreement on this assertion from most quarters of the leadership field and this prerequisite has taken on significance for a few reasons. The first reason is that, in general, we are highly skilled at detecting when leaders appear to say one thing but actually do or think something very different. Where this occurs we find it difficult to believe in what we might regard as an inauthentic or dishonest leader, and without the support of followers leaders quickly become unstuck. Furthermore, those pushing for the top soon start to circle like vultures if they too feel the disappointment of the workers. This skill to see through people is one of the assets of a deficit-based thinking mode and should

not be underestimated by anyone in a senior position. Stephen Covey, the American management thinker, has spoken about this issue of alignment referring not only to the alignment of words and deeds but to the congruence of values, principles, words and deeds for a leader to be effective.

A less obvious reason for the pursuit of authenticity relates to the truckload of baggage that accompanies the topic of leadership which brings to mind great, iconic role models and often charismatic individuals such as Winston Churchill, Alexander the Great, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Bill Clinton, Cleopatra, etc. This legacy creates a tension for many modern leaders who find it difficult to understand how they can step into the shoes of these leadership giants. Against this backdrop, some modern leaders find themselves emulating or borrowing liberally from these iconic figures and inevitably coming up short. This phenomenon can produce inauthentic leaders struggling with their own professional identity. The solution, of course, is to be yourself as a leader but this is much more easily said than done, particularly as everything that you do is under the organizational microscope.

As we all know, leaders very often have to bite the bullet and do things in which they don't believe. UK Prime Minister Tony Blair provides an interesting example of this when he used to join forces with President George Bush on various state visits. The strain etched across his face as he appeared with Bush in press conferences told the world more than he would ever have wanted to communicate about his real position on his partnership with Bush. There is clearly a more serious side to this point, but for now, I want to linger for a while over some other challenges to authenticity that add to the personal pressure of leadership.

You permanently live in ambiguity, complexity and change

Most jobs below the top positions within organizations have a bounded and predictable quality to them. While workers on the front line attend to the wants of customers, and HR professionals, for example, might deal with personnel disputes, and managers compile project plans, it would be crass to suggest that these roles are unambiguous, simple or unchanging. Clearly they are not. However, the job of a leader is characteristically unchartered and eternally shifting in a way that is of a different order of magnitude to most other roles. This dimension of unpredictability may sound odd as over the years we have had leaders in sufficient numbers to discern a pattern to the work involved. This is true. It is just that how leaders approach their responsibilities

is a function of the personality and style of the individuals involved. It is also true that as leaders operate within much greater degrees of freedom than most people within a given organization, they are also faced with a broader range of concerns and tensions. As the ability to take action (or more commonly to inspire action) increases so do the variety of competing interests about which no one in the organization could possibly know more than the leader.

Let me illustrate this with an example taken from my encounters with the leadership of the Prison Service. The Prison Service in the UK and most Western countries is under considerable pressure. Many prisons are experiencing overcrowding, custodial sentences have increased in the long term, the daily pressures on prison workers reflect the inherent challenges of the job and the tight legal constraints within which prison officers work, many prison services have strong Unions that are renowned for being in conflict with management and occasional high-profile prison breaks hit the headlines triggering tighter controls and procedures.

For a leader in this kind of scenario whatever you choose to focus on will be tainted by every other factor that you are dealing with. So, for example, if you intend to restructure the pay and grading arrangements within the service (as has been attempted on numerous occasions over the last decade), you are faced with the anxieties, suspicions and resentment of prison officers who already feel pulled in multiple directions. But you are also challenged every step of the way by the Union who counter your every move. You might also have prior knowledge, that no one else has, that the government Minister responsible for prisons (ultimately your boss) is about to be replaced with another and not only do you have to deal with the media fallout but you will now have to build a brand new relationship with, as yet, an unknown quantity. You are nearing too the start of an efficiency program that will see your organization engaged in identifying sweeping cost reductions with all the difficulties that this entails. And finally, you have your own top team to contend with, some of whom are holding the line that now is definitely not the time to restructure the pay and grading system.

So, when you stand up at the annual conference to announce your plans how do you feel? As a professional you will no doubt say the right things in a way that is measured and thoughtful and, if you are lucky, maybe even inspirational. But what really goes on inside you is the true experience of being a leader; an experience that can routinely make you feel nervous, unpopular, isolated and conflicted. The root of this experience is the asymmetric nature of knowledge. You know so much more than everyone else about what is going on, but inevitably

you cannot, respecting the interests and confidences of others, share all that you know as the basis for your decisions.

But the world around us is changing too like it's going out of fashion and the job of leaders has be to predict, to make sense of and to ride the waves of change like a gray pin stripped surfer. This introduces yet another set of dilemmas that place you in the center of complexity, ambiguity and change.

You have a looser grip on the organization than you might imagine

The job of leadership is radically different from most other roles in an organization. Promotion within organizations into positions of leadership can mistakenly occur on the presumption that good managers make good leaders. This would only be true if management was on the same trajectory as leadership or, simply, if leadership was a harder version of management. Good managers might also make good leaders through good luck, but for the salaries that companies pay for top positions let us hope that luck is not a strategy that is widely employed.

Let us briefly explore these points of differentiation. Where management is focused on organizing the workload, leadership is about establishing the right agenda for the organization (through which the workload is determined). Where managers are concerned with driving delivery, leaders are interested in setting the tone, inspiring workers and shaping the culture (which should provide an environment for delivery to occur). Where managers specify, plan for and control the processes that lead to outputs, leaders engage hearts and minds and focus attention on how the processes and their outputs fulfill a vision for the organization. Where managers drive performance by working within the parameters provided by the organization, leadership is about creating and changing at will the parameters within which the organization operates. To the question, do leaders undertake some of the duties of management and vice versa? The answer has to be yes, but only to the same extent that a carpenter might be able to turn their hand to plumbing or the work of an electrician. What this doesn't mean is that once a carpenter reaches the zenith of their field that they can automatically be "promoted" to Head Foreman or the job of landscaping – they are simply different jobs.

So if we accept that leadership is a rather unique and distinctive function within organizations, we can start to examine its features and limitations properly without this blurring of roles. One of the most striking dimensions to leadership is that individuals in such positions can find

themselves “responsible” for hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of workers. In thinking about the magnitude of this responsibility most senior leaders have between four to ten senior people reporting directly to them, who in turn exercise influence over layers and layers beneath them comprising directors, managers, supervisors, executives, etc. Conventional wisdom might tell us that if the Chief Executive Officer of an organization wants something done, it just happens – almost how we might imagine a Mafia don giving the nod for a member of the crew to be snapped back into line.

The rather bothersome reality is that, short of hauling the business unit or individual that has taken the leaders attention into his office on Monday morning to give out his instructions, the leader must work through his direct reports or someone close by to drive his wishes into the business. The CEO can of course speak to whoever he wants to in the organization at whichever level he chooses but as a routine mode of behavior it would leave very little time in his diary to do the leadership bit for which he is paid so highly. More importantly, every intervention he might make might well be implemented, but it would be nothing short of dangerous if the leader didn’t understand every possible ramification of his wishes on the business. I am reminded of the film called *Amadeus* about the composer Mozart who is told by the rather pompous King of Austria dressed in fineries and a powdered wig that one of his compositions had “too many notes,” to which Wolfgang Mozart replies, “Which notes would you like me to remove?”

Another slice of reality experienced by most leaders of an organization when they attempt to strategically influence parts of the business is that their direct reports will very often advise them that their very good idea “cuts across a related initiative so should perhaps be held back for a while,” or “might give the wrong message about priorities,” or “will take a lot of effort to find the resources for” or “is better taken up by the member of the top team not present at the meeting.” In short, there are a plethora of reasons, some of them good and some of them bad, for leaders feeling somehow shut out from their own organizations.

Another reason for leaders experiencing a loose grip on their organization is related to mastery. Understanding when and, above all, how to intervene into the organizational system is no mean feat. The famous management imagery that this conjures is the seemingly impossible task of herding cats. But it is so much more than this. At least, as the image implies, the leader can personally get close to the cats, work with them, watch their behavior, interpret the twitching of their whiskers and appreciate their individual habits. Ultimately our leader cat wrangler can enjoy perfect synchronicity between what he or she believes should happen and what will happen.

In the “real” world the cats are scattered in their thousands around the organization and they are already living lives of their own. Some of them have become smarter than their masters. Others don’t respond anymore to the food and rewards they were once given. Some can’t learn the tricks that you want to teach them. Others are waiting out their days trying to find a warm radiator to sleep under. So as a leader you have two significant obstacles to overcome. The first is that you are necessarily remote from the vast majority of those that you want to herd. If only they were all visible to the human eye or could fit within one room, but in today’s organizations of multinationals, “virtual” companies and dispersed employees working with ever more flexible arrangements, it is only possible to form a personal relationship with a small minority of those you seek to change. Secondly, you need a diverse skills-set that reflects the variety of motivations and agendas that you want to shape. And it is not only skills that you need but a more technical appreciation of how systems with their moving, inter-connecting and interdependent parts affect the outcome of a given intervention. Your skills as a leader take on paramount importance and, in short, you have a lot that you need to know in order to be proficient in the work you have to do.

You are time poor

I once worked briefly with a successful strategic change agent who was used to bring about major transformations across large organizations. As with all change agents he understood the importance of working with the most influential figures within the organization to get them, first and foremost, on board with the shifting agenda. He headed up a relatively small team that operated flexibly and swiftly like an organizational SWAT team. Their business was that of setting an agenda, inspiring change, getting people on board, mobilizing the organization and building ways for the change to be sustainable.

One of the techniques that he adopted when meeting with very senior figures was to arrange an hour-long meeting, as one usually does, but deliberately to run the meeting so that the full hour was never used up perhaps taking just over half, but no more, of the time allocated. In every way this differs from the normal flow of events for meetings of this sort where every minute of “face time” with senior figures is soaked up like water to a sponge that has been left out in the sun for too long. The signal that this kind of meeting has gone on too long is usually when the PA pops their head around the door to

politely remind the boss of their next engagement. The very best Personal and Executive Assistants understand perhaps better than anyone the paucity of time from which leaders suffer. Half an hour with your average PA about the bosses work lifestyle is an education in itself.

Back to our change agent. The outcome of this deliberate meeting strategy is that senior people come to associate the meeting time with the change agent as a mercifully brief and focused affair that, more often than not, gives the senior figure an extra 15 minutes to grab a quiet cup of coffee or to think about their meetings for the day. The next time the change agent needs to talk something through with the same leader the diary magically opens up and where others are blocked out our change agent moves to the front of the queue like a slippery eel.

The issue of time poverty is a serious one for us all but our leaders suffer more than most. Very few senior figures conduct all of their affairs from a single location. Even with the advances made by technology that give us e-mail, streaming video, teleconferencing, videoconferencing and more there is nothing that beats a face-to-face discussion where you can look into the eyes of your customer, competitor, colleague or controllers. Furthermore, there are very few leaders that have become successful without engaging internationally and taking the time – their time – to fly to the four corners of the earth to connect to the right people. Such visits typically take a few repeated journeys to further build and cement the relationships made before moving into action.

So, at the most basic level, if you think of the time available in the average working week to a Chief Executive Officer, you have to first deduct the quite considerable time spent en route to doing the business. Most research into the time pressures of senior executives suggests that leaders spend between 17 hours and 24 hours a week in scheduled meetings. Once you take out the travel time, let's say, an average of 10 hours a week, you have already reached at least 27 hours of "occupied" time and most likely more.

But this is only the beginning as most senior leaders have roles that have little to do with the position for which they are paid but nevertheless place further demands on their time. These might include nonexecutive directorships, belonging to professional institutes and chairing of a diversity of groups and bodies, to name but a few. We might modestly propose that this soaks up four or so hours a week taking our running total to 31 hours a week.

We then have both lunches and dinners that for most senior people become fair game pretty quickly. Working with others over lunch and dinner offers the illusion of being relaxing while at the same time

accruing all the benefits of being business-like. More often than not it fails to deliver on both sides of the equation and is more of a guarantee of heartburn and coronary disease than anything else. Nevertheless, this is the world of leaders and it serves to hack away at the time that leaders have by, let's assume, five or so hours in an average week. Our total nudges up to 36 "occupied" hours a week.

And how else do leaders find themselves spending their time on in a typical week? – speaking engagements, board meetings, unscheduled "urgent" business, meeting the workers, launching new initiatives, diary meetings and 1 to 1 chats with key members of the top team. If we attach no more than 8 hours to these responsibilities we find that our Chief Executive Officer has already clocked up 44 hours in "occupied" time in an average week leaving very little time to think, reflect on what needs to be done, and take the personal action required.

All of this is not to suggest that the real business of leadership occurs in the thin slither of private time left over for leaders to quietly think and hatch plans away from the interference of meetings – like the restaurant dishwasher who gets outraged each time a customer messes up one of his beautifully cleaned plates. The task of leadership is of course played out in every single moment leaders spend with others – when they can inspire, model behavior, challenge, motivate, hold to account, paint the vision and share insights. What this does mean though is that the condition of being a leader robs you of time and, to a practical extent, of the ability to manage your own time. As a result of all of the above you very often become tired, anxious and pressured and get the distinct sense that you have become a resource for other people's well-meant intentions.

You are alone/lonely

Leadership holds some fascinating contradictions. Take, for example, the notion of loneliness; leaders are almost permanently in the company of others – in meetings, at dinners, at conferences, at breakfast engagements, on the telephone, working lunches and more. They are also in demand and people from inside and outside the organization vie to secure some time, any time, with them. But at the same time leaders inhabit a world that is unique to them. The bigger picture, with all its complexity, uncertainty and dilemmas that sit inside the head of leaders, can't be shared freely with others. In this context, a problem shared is not a problem halved – "spilling the beans" and telling all would more likely be a problem multiplied. Leaders can't indulge

in the cathartic offloading conversations about what “*they* i.e. the management, have done this time” because the leader is the “*they*” and the leader, at least in theory, has no one to blame but himself or herself. Because of the amplification principle leaders can’t let their hair down, loosen their inhibitions and *really* get to know people. No sooner has this happened, the office at the other end of the country will have heard contorted accounts and disseminated the “boss goes wild!” story. Leaders can’t fully share their experiences and woes with their husbands/wives or family either because they too are part of that experience, often only able to come to those woes from their own perspectives. The conversation starts – “It is murder at the office and it’s taking up all of my time and energy.” “Yes, we know, the kids have barely seen you for weeks!” – The conversation abruptly ends.

Leaders are alone for other reasons too. Robert Swan OBE who was the first man to walk to the North and South Pole tells of an expedition he led in marching a crew of international people from different nations to the North Pole. The expedition became very quickly under threat from injuries to members of the team, blistering winds and unexpectedly adverse weather conditions and, above all, ice that melted into water on their route in a way that it hadn’t previously done for hundreds of years at that time of the year. What started out as a tough but achievable journey had turned into a nightmare that jeopardized the lives of every single person on the team. Knowing that the only way to reach safety and respite from the searing conditions was to keep marching forward, Robert had encouraged, advised, inspired, chivvied and implored the team to keep putting one foot in front of the other. While the team had been strong and optimistic at the beginning, no doubt buoyed by the excitement of making the pages of the history books, motivating them had been straightforward, but as conditions worsened, spirits flagged and hopelessness set up camp, Robert Swan’s invocations fell on deaf, frost-bitten ears.

What turned the fortunes of this desperate party was a decision that Robert Swan made that, in his words, “*would have every member of the team hate him more than the perilous predicament they were in.*” Robert put to one side his preference for a more collaborative and democratic style of leadership in favor of the only method he knew would work under the circumstances, a command and control approach that amounted to barking orders at exhausted, desperate and angry individuals. Every day the group cursed and vilified their leader, and with the anger boiling inside them, they got on their feet to walk another 20 hours a day. With the clock ticking the group marched ahead of the melting ice and just as they had been pushed to their outer limits and

not long before they would have bludgeoned their autocratic leader to death, the ice station came into view. They had made it – injured, chilled to their bones, but alive. Robert Swan, during the long days and nights of the expedition, had understood what it meant to lead and to be truly alone.

The marked growth in recent years of networking meetings for leaders, leadership development programs, mentor schemes and executive coaching goes some way to addressing this condition of loneliness and the weight of the dilemmas that leaders carry. The “away days” to residential conference centers that so many top teams take can sound like junkets, but from this perspective they are one of the best ways to keep the sanity of senior leaders and provide a relatively safe space for them, simply, to share ideas in the company of others.

A final observation to make about the extent to which leaders feel isolated is based on my own experiences of directing leadership development programs. The leadership interventions that I have run have, like most programs, followed a broad curriculum, taking participants through the A to Z of leadership. Everything from self-awareness to organization design; from strategic thinking to emotional intelligence; from crisis management to fostering innovation; from globalization to systems thinking; from talent management to corporate governance. And after sweating my little socks off to strengthen the capabilities of business leaders across the sectors, the single most common benefit attributed to participating in these not inexpensive experiences, is always “the opportunity to spend time with colleagues at the same level.” After extensively comparing notes with my colleagues in other business schools, it was heartening for me to know that I was not alone in receiving this feedback. But the more important point in all of this is that leaders need company much more than one might imagine.

No matter what you do, you will always be told that you are not visible enough

The visibility of leaders is a recurrent theme in the expectations of workers within most organizations. In short, people want to feel that they have come to *know* their leader. They want to connect to the person for whom they offer their discretionary effort over and above the norm. They want to know who they should go that extra mile for. The difficulty, of course, is one of scale and of allocation of a leader’s time. Leaders need, first of all, to balance the time they spend with stakeholders and customers outside of the organization with their own

workers inside. When they engage with people within the organization they rightly need to be selective. If we assume that leaders have more than a few hundred people on their payroll and potentially tens of thousands, this makes it an absolute necessity to exercise discrimination in the internal engagements they keep. The consequence of this is that the vast majority of workers who expect and hope to connect to their leader will be disappointed, and that disappointment will find a voice.

Ironically, all that we know about “employee engagement” is that increased top team visibility and engagement typically has a positive effect on well-being, worker productivity and retention. While the statistics vary widely and wildly, the message is clear that leaders who engage internally cause worker productivity to increase. For example, research undertaken with 400 Human Resources professionals in companies in the UK showed that engagement was a business imperative. *Personnel Today* who sponsored the research with Chiumento in late 2004 concluded:²

Board directors appear to have their heads in the clouds, according to the research, with 69 per cent believing that engagement levels in their organisations had increased in the past 12 months. Only 38 per cent of HR managers agreed with them. This difference might be because directors rarely come into direct contact with the feelings of employees on the shop floor, instead basing their opinions on the feelings of managers with whom they have regular or day-to-day contact. [One of the greatest] obstacles to engagement cited included lack of time (48 per cent of respondents).

Leaders face an ongoing dilemma, that of knowing for sure that the more they connect to their workers the better this is for the organization, while at the same time, feeling the gravitational pull toward more strategic, board-level, externally focused interests. Overlay this with an array of unpredictable urgent demands that might see, for example, our leaders hauled in front of the media or flying across to the other side of the world at the drop of a hat, and we have a recipe for disengagement and low visibility.

Glaxosmithkline, one of the world’s most successful research-based pharmaceutical companies, employing over 100,000 people in 116 countries undertook a global leadership survey in 2006.³ The survey, attracting responses from over 10,000 employees concluded that, despite fairing better in terms of employee satisfaction than 42 top-ranked benchmark companies, two areas for further work were identified – reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and, surprise, surprise – increasing

leadership visibility – a drive for managers to spend more time with their teams.

A UK government's 2006 survey⁴ of the top 1 percent of Civil Servants (2,959 Senior Civil Servants) demonstrated that more than half (55 percent of respondents) could not provide a favorable response to the statement "the top team are sufficiently visible in my organization." A similar survey in the same year by the Treasury⁵ highlighted that "leadership team visibility is a vital element of successful change leadership; and staff think that the Executive Committee could be more visible as a team."

Every time a new change initiative or internal program is launched the call comes in for the leader to open it; to physically be there to support it. An e-mail or bulletin to the workers telling them something is important won't be enough. A deputy sent in place of the leader will cause workers to feel short-changed. A refusal to appear will carry symbolic significance even if it is not intended. The workers pull the leader in one direction while the business pulls them the other way.

The consequences of low internal leadership visibility are not unlike those of driving a car in the fog. The reaction to this for most drivers (like employees) is typically to slow down and to focus only on what is immediately in front of them. This is usually accompanied by a degree of anxiety and a lowering in confidence as the driver tries to anticipate what might happen next. As James Collins, author of *Built to Last*, would no doubt claim, the very best leaders can build organizational systems that enable organizations to thrive even in the absence of their leader(s) and can thus avoid this rather foggy picture caused by leadership invisibility. While this is an insightful perspective, the pressure nevertheless remains for those that are judged to be in leadership positions to be visible and to be available to employees.

Furthermore, in these days of terrifying change, the scale and frequency of planned organizational change grows and quickens day by day. Leaders find themselves more and more having to call upon their workers to stop doing what they were told to do last year and focus on new priorities. Thanks to management thinker Kurt Lewin, there was a time when the concept of change was that of freeze, unfreeze and then freeze again once the intended change had been implemented and the organization was "re-set" to its new course. In recent years the metaphor has evolved into a description of organizational *slush* that better captures the notion of change initiatives that have barely had the time to solidify before the next program has come along. For today's organizations I would suggest a different metaphor again, that of opening all the cages in a zoo. Where once there was order, now there is a world

of shifting rules, norms and expectations. Where once we felt that we understood the environment we inhabited, now we are surrounded by new possibilities, opportunities and unfamiliar terrain – some aspects welcome, and others just plain frightening. Sociologically this is an interesting phenomenon as it calls upon us individually and collectively to assert some sense of what is occurring – to identify patterns and meaning in globalization, the technology explosion, changing demographics, terrorism, people migration, world poverty and more. In all of this, we desperately want to see a friendly zookeeper walking into the menagerie. Someone dressed in a blue uniform and a peaked cap and a purposeful look on their face. Someone who can explain to us what is going on and how the new arrangement can be made to work. If you, as a leader/zookeeper, want the organization to move with you toward the next big priority, you will want the workers to believe in you and your plans. After all, seeing is believing.

So, as you set up shop in your organization as “a leader,” one of the more significant tricks you will be expected to pull off is omnipresence – being everywhere, for everyone, all the time.

You can become demonized

See if you can guess what all of the following icons have in common:

Jack Welch, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Benazir Bhutto, Princess Diana, Sigmund Freud, Walt Disney, Kate Moss, John Browne, Margaret Thatcher and Michael Dell

The answer is that, as leaders of their particular field, they have all been judged to be both great and awful leaders & figureheads during their lives. In most cases, although not all, “greatness” has preceded derision.

Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric, and Bill Clinton, former President of the US, both engaged in high-profile sexual affairs that eventually hastened their fall from the top. Tony Blair, former UK Prime Minister, revolutionized the political left holding the longest Labour government for decades, only to plummet in the polls as he joined forces with the US in invading Iraq. Benazir Bhutto, having twice been Prime Minister of Pakistan, was once regarded as a symbol of modernity, democracy and emancipation for women, only to lose the respect of her people due to continued allegations of corruption. Princess Diana, whose career took such very strange turns, was, at one time vilified for besmirching the reputation of the UK Royal Family

and then, upon her tragic death, was dubbed the “Queen of Hearts.” Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis brought about some of the most profound shifts in the field of psychology but, over the years and through repeated attacks on his theories, his lifestyle, his relationships and his method, Freud has been accused of setting back psychiatry hundreds of years, of damaging modern feminism, and of using cocaine in the development of his psychoanalytic theory. Walt Disney, the lovable figure of childhood cartoons and creator of Mickey Mouse spied for the FBI from 1941 until his death, made US government propaganda movies and allegedly attended American Nazi party meetings. Kate Moss, one of the very few supermodels that have gone on to enjoy lasting success, was pilloried for high-profile drug use. John Browne, former CEO of BP, who turned around the 100,000 worker-strong company in the 1990s to become one of the world’s top oil players, stepped down under a cloud following speculation about his private life and explosions in a refinery in the US, causing the deaths of 15 people. Margaret Thatcher, UK’s first female Prime Minister, who led Britain at full speed into a market-driven economy and rolled back the state sector, was eventually defeated by a Brutus-esque coup by her own Deputy Prime Minister, Geoffrey Howe, who, in many ways, reflected the mood of a disenchanting British public. Michael Dell, the computer giant, had been so determined to stick with Dell business model despite shifts in the marketplace that competitors swooped in and knocked him and the company off its top perch. The bigger they come, the harder they fall.

While it might be somewhat over dramatic to claim that in every instance these leaders have been demonized they have undoubtedly fallen from grace and their descent has been accompanied by feelings of disappointment, disenchantment, anger and sometimes hatred. Perhaps the sad thing about each and every example is that as leaders of their field they have, for some time, been incredibly successful and have left a meaningful legacy. Their work, whatever you might think of it on a personal level, has been valuable, and their leadership has been impressive. What this goes to show is that the path of leadership is beset with opposition whether it is open and visible or hidden in the shadows. On a psychological level, and perhaps in some cultures more than others, we love to see successful people fail. Within business settings it pays workers, both literally and metaphorically, to convey any discontent they might have or desire for the leader to fail, in a stealthy and less obvious manner. But, without doubt, behind every smile and behind every handshake are great expectations that, if dashed, can attract nothing short of contempt.

So what does this mean for you in your leadership journey? One implication of this is that people will hold high expectations of you. Another is that you will be closely scrutinized to see how well you deliver against these expectations. The third is that should you fail to be all that you should be, the crowd will quickly turn against you. From a day-to-day perspective each time workers hear of a new shift in priorities or an adjustment to the course they are required to adopt, the more you will be experienced as an irritant. You will also become a kind of “vomit bucket” for the negative feelings of the workers. It is partly a consequence of the powerlessness that workers feel when they are asked by the “management” to change, for the hundredth time, what they do. But, It is also because the call to change seems to come from a remote place far away from the local business unit, which always feels impersonal and frustratingly nonnegotiable. But leaders become the vomit bucket for the organization too because it is part of the tacit transaction that takes place between workers and leaders. The leaders get the money, the status, the power and the celebrity, and the workers in return get to blame the leaders for everything from the hours they work and the lack of career opportunities to the quality of internal communications and the food in the staff canteen. It’s all just part of the unspoken deal and not a million miles away from the general attitude of the public toward their government.

Your workers may hold parental expectations of you

An old Australian lady was being interviewed for a local newspaper. She had lived in the same remote region of Australia for her whole life, and the journalistic piece was to reflect on how the town had changed over the decades and to open a window into the mind of a well-loved local figure. Toward the end of the interview the interviewer became puzzled as to why the old lady had not once left the country let alone the area in over 80 years. The journalist asked, “have you ever wanted to travel more widely perhaps to other countries?” to which the old lady asked, “what countries do you have in mind?” Thinking of the heritage of Australia and stuck for anything else to offer, he answered, “what about visiting England?” The old lady paused for what seemed like a lifetime. “Oh no,” she said, “definitely not.” “Why doesn’t it appeal to you?” the interviewer responded tentatively. “Well, isn’t that where all the convicts come from?”

In the 1970s Robert Greenleaf introduced a powerful and alluring leadership concept that became known as *Servant Leadership*. The ideas

presented by Greenleaf were so engaging that numerous leadership thinkers over the last 30 years, including Ken Blanchard and Peter Senge, have gone on to further develop and amplify the theories presented. At its heart, the notion of Servant Leadership proposes that rather than focusing on their own issues and sense of priorities, leaders should instead orientate their activities toward meeting the needs of their workers. Not only is this an elegant challenge to the traditional definition of leadership, but also it has a wonderfully egalitarian and (despite being over three decades old) very modern feel to it.

In taking a Servant Leadership approach, Greenleaf encourages leaders to be nurturing and to help those served to grow as individuals. Greenleaf goes on to inspire servant leaders to help their workers to become healthier, wiser, freer and more autonomous. Over the years, I have seen various people teach Greenleaf's theory of leadership, many of whom have used an exercise that invites students to write down, at the outset of the discussion, what they traditionally expect leaders to do. They have then been asked separately to record, from the perspectives of workers, what they would want from their leaders (sometimes qualified by saying "in order so that the workers can do their jobs better"). Two important observations are usually made in this kind of exercise. The first is that the two lists often differ considerably which serves to demonstrate that there are very different notions of leadership depending on the perspective you adopt. And the second is the suggestion that by turning our attitudes toward leadership on their head and giving greater emphasis to the needs of workers we may have found a strategy for leadership that nurtures, empowers and liberates workers to be both happy and, at the same time, productive. This exercise and much of Greenleaf's philosophy often creates excitement and, at times, an epiphany for those about to embark on a path of leadership.

While I do not want to attempt a critique of Greenleaf's theory, what I do want to do is connect elements of this theory to another notion, which is that workers often tacitly expect their leaders to act almost as if they were in a parental role in relation to them.

In the various organizations that I have worked with over the years, I have listened hard to what I hear employees saying they value in their managers and leaders. In this, while there are of course some differences that are expressed, there is a range of common responses that include desired qualities such as honesty, fairness, consistency, visibility, accessibility, integrity and competence. But a feature that I have heard articulated on numerous occasions is the desired behavior that good leaders should "look after their staff," which is meant to imply acting in their best interests, defending them against "attack," helping

them to grow, being nurturing and being caring. Looking at this more closely, we can see some similarities between good leadership as identified here and good parenting. In fact if you were to see a list, let's say, that had mixed up top parenting tips with top expectations of leaders using the servant leadership method you might be hard pressed to distinguish between the two. Manfred Kets de Vries, the French leadership thinker, talks about a similar phenomenon, based on Psychoanalytic theory, called *transference* whereby workers subconsciously transfer the responsibilities of parenthood onto the workplace leader/manager. This is thought to be particularly pronounced at times of organizational upheaval and change.

It is useful for leaders to be aware of this dynamic in organizational settings and it is worth pausing for a moment also to look at how this might play through into the broader responsibilities of leadership. Figure 1.2 presents some polarities which highlight different features of organizational life.

Continuing with the same parental dynamic in mind, we can identify the features on the left-hand side of the figure as those more commonly associated with the servant leadership or parental expectation model. In short (and slightly exaggerating the polarities to make the point), the items on the left are what workers want from their work environment and from their managers/leaders. Interestingly though, it is the features on the right-hand side that necessarily occupy the minds of leaders. It is also what shareholders would want leaders to concentrate on as it is through change that organizations prosper and survive; it is through challenge that performance can improve; it is by being flexible that organizations can respond to changing public demands; it is by being tough that difficult decisions can be made; it is through efficiencies that organizations can be competitive. And it is

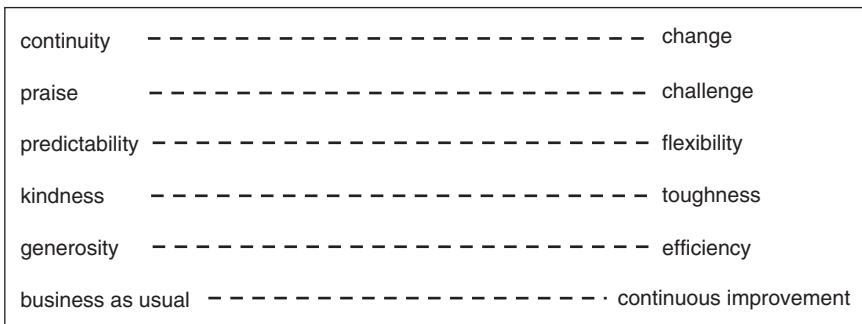


Figure 1.2 Polarities that express different features of organizational life

through unrelenting improvements to processes, systems and behaviors that progress can be made.

Where does this leave you as a leader? Once again, it leaves you somewhere between a rock and a hard place, having to live with worker expectations that might strike you as somewhat misplaced, and probably more appropriately expressed in the family home. And at the same time, you feel a sense of duplicity knowing that where the workers want continuity, consistency and support, you need to bring about change, challenge and more change.

You become objectified/reduced to a symbol

All CEOs at various points in their careers will have been interviewed for a variety of external and in-house publications. It might have been to record their hopes for the coming year, to comment on the latest business results or as a profile of the “boss.” On each of these occasions the CEO will have been faced with a question that will have lurked behind their eyes like an old fashion villain. The question, of course, being “how will I choose to present myself, the business or my views on the world?”. This of course will be a different proposition to simply answering the question honestly, authentically and naturally. These days in fact it would be seen as profoundly naive to choose the second of these two options. This is because we all understand that perception is reality and that if we can somehow define the way people think of us then we are one step closer to achieving our goals (whatever they may be).

Success in projecting a desired image of oneself (that may or may not correspond with reality) is partly a function of distance. If you have little or no contact with someone, and as a result you have a limited amount of data on which to assess what they tell you, you have little reason to doubt what they say is true. For leaders in most organizations, particularly those where there are significant numbers of employees, workers typically have little, if any, “face time” with their leaders and as a consequence have little data on which to base their assessments. What this tends to give rise to is a picture of the leader which is built up almost like a police criminal identikit from the messages that leaders send out about themselves mixed with the information from infrequent contact with them. But because the data on the leader is so scant the pictures tends to look more like caricatures – just as personal and just as exaggerated, and sometimes just as cruel as the caricatures you might see in the newspapers.

Most of the time, interpreting the caricatures of the leader won't be too demanding. I used to work with a senior figure who had the reputation that he was a "man of the people" and that he was "on the side" of the workers. He would be seen smoking outside of the company headquarters with the janitors and the security guards, and would always be found at the bar at any office party. Of course there was much more to this particular individual that if known to the populous would put frowns on more than a few faces. Nevertheless, what this leader symbolized proved enormously valuable in situations where he was called upon to give out messages to the organization that held the prospect of receiving an adverse reaction from the workers at the administrative levels. I worked alongside another leader who was widely reputed for being a "hatchet man" and, as such, was represented, usually by people who had never met him, as being hard-nosed, tough and exactly the man for the job if downsizing was required. While it was true that the individual had led a successful and large-scale redundancy program, he was one of the nicest and most sensitive people you could ever meet – certainly not the brute that he was understood to be.

So while as a leader you might know that you are a sophisticated and complex being, others will be perfectly happy to hold an image of you that is grossly oversimplified and quite possibly entirely inaccurate. If you yourself are a sensitive soul and the cartoon persona that you have been given is harsh or unkind you will need to contend with the way in which everything you do is tainted by that image. So, for example, if you are thought to be a jet-setting CEO that enjoys, rather too much, the first-class travel to exotic destinations, when you genuinely undertake an exploratory trip looking to set up an operation in Japan, your employees will assume they know the real reason behind your travel. Of course, you won't hear this said to your face, which in many ways makes it harder to deal with, but it will be thought and discussed. And one day, when you least expect it, your oversimplified, exaggerated and distorted reputation may well come and bite you on the ass.

Looking again at the earlier theme of the demonization of leaders, it is worth commenting that within the military it is a deliberate and well-worn strategy to objectify and dehumanize the enemy so that an attack on them is made psychologically more comfortable and less guilt-ridden for the advancing army. An extreme example of this is the propaganda poster campaigns during the Second World War which, from the British perspective, saw German soldiers literally depicted as spearing babies with their bayonets and, from the German perspective saw, Jews represented as Rats. Neither set of images could seriously be taken to be true or accurate, but in both instances they represented

the “enemy” as unfeeling, brutish and inhuman which then justifies the action that might follow. Of course this strategy is by no means limited to a military context as it also finds expression in the school playground, attitudes toward criminals, the media’s treatment of celebrities and the position taken against the unemployed, to name but a few examples. The social construction of leaders as symbols is a similar objectification process that makes it much easier for you, as a leader, to become demonized. If we add to this a dash of the amplification principle also discussed earlier, mix it liberally with the “them and us” notion reinforced by the workers and garnish with the sense of loneliness leaders inevitably experience, we have quite a cocktail. So if, as a leader, you find yourself feeling strangely self-conscious, paranoid and very uncomfortable in your own skin, remember that you are among friends.

You are never off duty

I feel sympathy for leaders who can experience a sense of inescapable responsibility and expectation. While this is felt in all quarters, the extent of this will vary according to the industry and situations in which each leader operates. Leaders that are closely watched by the media, for example, will feel this acutely. This category might include highly successful and renowned companies such as Coca Cola and McDonalds whose reputation is always under scrutiny. It might include leaders that work in the public sector, particularly those areas dealing, for example, with healthcare, older persons and childrens’ services and the criminal justice system. Other industries that are included are those where business hours are broader than a 9–5 window, such as the entertainment industry, catering and construction. The list goes on and on which is an illustration of the depth of the phenomenon.

What is interesting about this “condition” is that it is chronic rather than acute, and diffuse rather than being specific. This is because the prospect of being called in to attend to something – anything from a fire in the office to a breakout of a fatal virus in a hospital – is always present but exactly what and when it might happen is hard to predict. This leaves you, as a leader, in a state of low-grade anxiety, the cause of which you cannot hope to control.

But the notion of never being off duty has another meaning that refers to the daily life of organizational leaders who, as they go about their business, get approached, questioned, sidled up to, pilloried,

flattered and lobbied by all and sundry. This takes many forms. For example, leaders can find themselves engaging in conversations that appear to be informal, harmless and meandering (as all good informal conversations should be), only to discover that the discussion had been used to give the green light to a particular form of action that a worker had in mind. It might have been anything from taking a business trip to adjusting working hours and in the absence of outright disagreement, and unbeknown to the leader, the worker will have walked away with all they need. The engine that drives this behavior whether it is from employees or people external to the organization is the not-to-be-missed opportunity arising from a chance or rare encounter with a senior leader – an individual that one assumes possesses a degree of power, knowledge, influence, wealth and intelligence that most other people don't. What would be wrong therefore with pouncing on any opportunity that presents itself? A senior person being harangued as they munch through a bread roll in a restaurant isn't that bad, is it? A firm and intrusive handshake from an absolute stranger in a bar suggesting a meeting is ok, isn't it? An unsolicited conversation on a train before you get passed the first page of a novel that you're reading – that's surely fine? For some leaders this may be just part of the terrain and of course it is, but when set against each and every one of the 11 other side effects of leadership discussed so far, this might just be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Leadership is an emotional business

So where does this leave you as a leader of your organization? Let us briefly look at a simplified and deliberately bleak summary of each of the side effects of leadership:

The amplification of your deeds and words leaves you self-conscious and cautious about what you do and say

The sense you have that you are underskilled to do the job eats away at your self-confidence

The lack of authenticity you inevitably experience leaves you feeling duplicitous

The world of ambiguity, complexity and change that you inhabit makes you feel uncertain and, at times, overwhelmed

The loose grip that you have on your organization makes you feel powerless and questions the value that you add

The poverty of time from which you suffer leaves you feeling tired, used and confused

The loneliness you experience helps you to feel unloved and paranoid. Despite your best efforts, the eternal dissatisfaction with your lack of visibility makes you feel unappreciated

The way in which you can become demonized causes you to be resentful and potentially live up to the negative image people can have of you

With workers holding parental expectations of you, you feel compromised in relation to your employees and might even begin to treat them like children

The more that you are objectified and thought of as a symbol the more used and undervalued you feel

The sense that you are never off duty leaves you tense, tired and anxious

One quick look at the list of feelings associated with being a leader makes the picture very clear and equally terrifying. As a leader therefore be prepared to feel:

Self-conscious, cautious, lacking in self-confidence, duplicitous, uncertain, overwhelmed, powerless, self-doubting, tired, used, confused, unloved, paranoid, unappreciated, resentful, compromised, undervalued, tense and anxious

Interestingly, emotions don't work quite like numbers in that you can't simply net-off positive and negative feelings to reach an absolute emotional state. Whereas an income of 100,000 against an expenditure of 60,000 gives a net position of +40,000, feelings of anxiety, paranoia and confusion can't be weighed up, for example, against feelings of achievement to make you feel generally content. The colors of our emotions tend not to run in the wash – they remain intact and preserved in their original state. This is important because even though we can freely recognize the upsides of being a leader it doesn't subtract from the plethora of mixed negative feelings experienced on the downside. Furthermore, we know that negative feelings aren't abstract concepts without real and sometimes physical consequences. These feelings take their toll and chomp away at everyone in a position of leadership. And they will make their presence known to you too.

There is a wonderful Swedish proverb that, translated into English, says

Eyes that do not cry do not see

The job of leadership will bring tears to your eyes, but it may not, at least for sometime, help you to see more clearly. The emotional rapids of the leadership journey can have a paralyzing effect on your ability to lead. The swirl of self-consciousness, doubt and paranoia causes a white spray that clouds your decision-making. The powerlessness you feel as the boat bounces from rock to rock leaves you dizzy. The sheer exhaustion of battling against the shifting currents robs you of the strength to think clearly.

So what is needed is something to bring stillness and calm to the water on which the boat sits. With this you can then plot a clear course across the river. This is the purpose of the pages in this book; a purpose that in every way has your interests at heart. So, this book will help you in many ways and, if nothing else, the absorbent properties of these pages will catch your tears as they trickle down your cheeks.

A dashboard of self-awareness

Returning for the last time to our metaphor of a boat on turbulent waters, I want to touch upon the contribution made by the dashboard instruments and dials you will find on most craft. Depending on the size of the boat you are in, the instruments could be telling you about anything from fuel levels and the speed you are traveling to positional information and depth of the water. We are all familiar with the concept of dashboard information whether it is as we drive to work and look at the temperature gauge in our cars, or whether it is as we look at the TV to learn about weather conditions as we embark on a journey. The value, of course, is that dashboard information gives us quick feedback on factors that are critical to our success and often to our safety.

The equivalent dashboard information from a personal leadership perspective is important because of all the emotional issues described so far. But more than that, the job of leadership is as much about the individual leading the organization as much as it is about the strategy that they set for the organization. As such the personal “stuff” needs attention paid to it. It is mission-critical data.

So, what I suggest is that as you go about your business in leading your organization, or your slice of the organization, you should visualize a dashboard in front of you that gives you moment-to-moment feedback on three vital areas:

1. How you are being seen by the people around you (as if you had a camera trained on yourself)

2. How you are feeling at the time
3. How you are apprehending the situation you face (your lens on the world)

Of these three dashboard indicators the third is perhaps the most difficult to understand first time around, but more about this soon. All of these though offer a treasure trove of data that, with the occasional flick of the eyes down to the dashboard, put you in control and with the confidence that you are on the right track. I regard these as the “must haves” for leadership and as a foundation for the rest of this book.

Dashboard Indicator 1: How you are being seen by the people around you (as if you had a camera trained on you)



What you do as a leader and how this is perceived by others is a key factor to your success. The amplification of what leaders do is one good reason to remain eternally vigilant and alert to how you are perceived. One false slip of the tongue or unintended remark can be quickly taken, interpreted and bounced around the organization creating havoc in its wake. In this context, a little really does go a long way. Knowing, for example, that you are seen as looking tired or perplexed or behaving in a hesitant or bullish manner is good to know. This allows you to react accordingly. In this knowledge, you might decide to casually and perhaps humorously acknowledge this perception in conversation with others with the benefit that you are then seen to be self-aware and in control. Tired? Yes! But its because you are working hard on engaging with employees; Perplexed? Yes! But only because you are faced with some great choices for the organization; Hesitant? Of course! But only because you are picking the best moment to share some good news; Bullish? Certainly! And this is because the organization is in a very strong position. Whatever it is, you need the data first in order to decide how to respond.

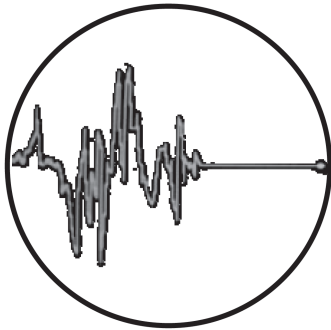
I once attended an address by His Royal Highness Prince Charles, the potential king of England. He spoke on the subject of sustainability, something he has been known to care about deeply. The event was held

at Clarence House, a wonderful royal palace adorned in glittering gold, plush red carpets and huge pristine mirrors covering the walls. It was the first time I had come into contact with Prince Charles and I carried, as we all tend to do, certain prejudices about the kind of man he was. Over the years he had been reported in the media, as many members of the royal family are, to have been a rather stiff and awkward person who was sometimes clumsy in social situations. When he was a little younger he had been famously known to talk to plants and was characterized as accordingly being out of touch. He was also thought to be rather outspoken and would launch, as commented on by some, ill-judged attacks, for example, on architecture and building design. This provided the context to my experience of Prince Charles who stood in front of a hundred or so people and outlined his call to action on sustainability. What followed was a delightful presentation that surprised and impressed me in so many ways. What stood out and remains with me still is the effortless and masterful way in which Prince Charles evoked each of these characterizations one by one and left the audience feeling rather silly for having believed the media stories in the first instance. So, for example, Prince Charles demonstrated the argument for action on sustainability with a barrage of statistics depicting the impact of pollution, migration, deforestation, climate change and more and then, with a crystal clear insight of how he was perceived, he wryly said, “not bad for a man that talks to plants.”

Actively acquiring this kind of data needs to become a habit of yours. You will need to sensitize yourself to your reputation “on the street” and build your listening skills. As a leader you may not always receive honest and frank feedback from people around you, many of whom will feel uncomfortable in speaking truth unto power. For this reason you need to create the right environment with others so that the data flow is rich, unadulterated and easily tapped. The way you frame questions is critical in this. Asking workers, for example, about their feelings about your leadership (Feeling Thinking⁶) as opposed to a critical analysis of you will help. So will asking about how others, rather than the person you are speaking to, around the organization view you (360 Degree Thinking⁷). Above all though you should inquire, ask, invite, probe, request, canvass, solicit or otherwise populate your dashboard with data. And if your source of data is directly from individuals, thank them too.

For the moment, and just as a practice, write down a few key words, both positive and negative, that capture how you believe you are seen by the people around you.

Dashboard Indicator 2: How you are feeling at the time



It's a strange thing that as you go about your daily work and life throws all that it can at you, you somehow find yourself gritting your teeth and getting on with it. Survival is humankind's greatest strength—we are just good at it—and if we weren't, we wouldn't be here to argue the point. As with all things though there is often a cost which for many is a disassociation of our actions from our feelings. We become somewhat estranged from ourselves as

we are forced to toughen up, to protect our feelings and to put on the emotional armor that we need to withstand the hardships of life.

What this can lead to is a situation where as a leader you do attend to the rational side of your business, that is, the logical, intellectual dimension to decision-making and action, but miss the significance of your own feelings, energy and emotions and the interplay of both. This is potentially problematic for three reasons:

- Your feelings are a central component of your intuitive ability. It is that sense of discomfort or wariness that you might find hard to rationalize, that tells you to think a little harder about the decision you are facing. It is that sense of excitement within you that is suddenly lost that tells you that something, not immediately apparent, is now missing from the proposal you are looking at. It is the feeling of “rightness” and elation that magically leaps into your body when you know you have got it right. And it is the awkward, negative energy you feel as you enter a board meeting that tells you are not going to get a good reception. It is worth looking at all decision-making and behavior as comprising at least 50 percent emotion – and emotion that you need to bring to mind, acknowledge and factor into your thinking.
- You rely on your energy, emotional strength and resilience to carry you over the leadership terrain already discussed. Leadership is tiring. It is demanding. It is unnerving. It is all these things and more. Understanding where the dial is on your own fuel gauges couldn't be more important. Knowing how close you are to the breaking point is critical, not least if you are two days away from your most important presentation to your shareholders. Better to clear your diary, leave early today and get an afternoon nap than appear tomorrow

in front of your most important stakeholders looking like someone that's just been washed up on a desert island. We can, I hope, all agree on this, but the data must be in first to make the decision.

- Your emotional status is leakier than you think. Confidence tricksters, street magicians and poker players alike all are familiar with the concept of the “tell” – the minute adjustments to our expressions or body movements that give away, to the trained eye, our true intentions and thoughts. But for all of us we pick up with remarkable ease the emotional state of those we are talking to. While it is one thing, as a leader, to give out these emotional signals that may or may not help your cause, it is quite another not to be aware of what emotional signals you are giving out. One of the best ways to identify what emotional data is leaking out is to know what you are feeling at any point in time.

For the moment, and just as a practice, write down a few key words, both positive and negative, that capture how you are feeling right now.

Dashboard Indicator 3: How you are apprehending the situation you face (your lens on the world)



Unlike the first 2 dashboard indicators, this stream of data is less likely to change significantly from situation to situation. The reason is that how each person sees the world, and therefore each situation, tends to be highly patterned and highly predictable. The easiest place to start with this idea is to think of someone that you know really well. It might be a husband, a wife, a parent, a sibling, a best friend, but above all someone you have spent a great deal of time with. Before reading on, have this person firmly fixed in your mind. Now imagine that you are asked to predict how you think this person will respond to buying a new laptop computer. Will they undertake research? – perhaps buying some computer magazines to compare models, speaking with friends about theirs, analyzing the kind of purpose they plan to use the computer for thereby identifying the most appropriate model, searching the Internet, etc. Or, are they more likely to visit a shop to find the one they most like the look of and, providing it seems to fit the bill, buy it there and then? If instead

the person you have in mind has a tax windfall of \$200,000 (we can always dream!) would they be more likely to invest it prudently in a range of moderate return, low-risk security options, or apply it to their high-risk business scheme? Finally, and again with the same person in mind, if they were to be invited to a friend's dinner party that started at 8 PM, would they arrive there on time or would there be a scramble getting out the house at about the time they should have arrived?

There are three observations I will confidently make about the exercise that you have just done. The first is that you will have accurately predicted the behavior of your chosen person (please check with them). The second is that 10 years on from now I will predict that your answers and their behaviors will still be the same. The third is that for every person reading this book, there will be a variety of responses to each question.

So what can we conclude from this? The main conclusion I wish to draw is that each and every one of us is biased in the way that we see the world and the opportunities it presents. But this bias is not a function of self-interest or because we have more information to hand than everyone else or because we are smarter than other people. Our bias precedes the arrival of the matter or decisions to which we turn our attention. We are, in the most neutral sense of the word, totally prejudiced when it comes to decision-making and our behavior.

The question is, are you aware of this? And if so, do you have an understanding of our own repertoire of defaults and prejudices? There is no shortage of models and techniques to help you gain access to your own set of biases. The more well-known approaches include the Myers Briggs Type Inventory, The Belbin model, Insights, Firo-B and Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence. A whole range of more specific models and tests help you understand your leanings in relation to activities such as creativity (for example, the "Kirton Adaptor-Innovator" test), conflict management (for example, the "Thomas-Killman" psychometric) and career leanings (for example, the "Strong Interest Inventory").

From a leadership perspective, these prejudices tell us what we routinely and automatically pay attention to. They tell us where our natural strengths lie and inevitably what we tend to be less good at. And they tell us about our blind spots – what we miss time and time again. This third dashboard dial therefore relies upon you having done the work to understand your natural frame of reference and relies on you having done this thoroughly and honestly. If you are not at this stage yet, I suggest you go out and get yourself profiled until you are sick of thinking about yourself. When you have reached this point you will know that you have done it thoroughly enough. Assuming therefore

that you have done this, the third dashboard dial becomes a kind of flashing reminder alerting you to your default thinking. This dashboard indicator is context-specific to the extent that if you are buying a computer or spending a tax windfall or structuring an organization or giving a presentation, the dial will call up the relevant data and set of biases that you need to observe. But by and large it is a data stream that reveals different facets of your mental model that represent the way you always see and apprehend the world.

For the moment, and just as a practice, write down a few key words, both positive and negative, that help to describe how you typically approach the challenges that you face.

What does good leadership feel like?

It is commonplace in the business world, whenever we think about a new proposal or program, to hear someone piping up with the predictable, but nevertheless insightful, question “what would that look like?” It is a question even more likely to rear its head in our modern world that is defined by the presence of change. Customers want more; citizens want more; we all want to do whatever we are doing better, differently, quicker, cheaper, etc. The world beyond our wishes and desires changes too from technological developments to globalization to security threats. All of this invites, and sometimes forces us, to drive change and in doing so to have a destination or desired state in mind. This is often understood by questions such as “what would success look like?” or “how would we know if we had been successful?” or something similar. You have probably, at some point in your life, asked or helped to answer this type of question. But in the context of this discussion and the focus so far I want to ask a slightly different question of you as a leader, which is – “What would you be feeling if you were being successful as a leader?” Implicit in this is the need for you to put aside what you will expect to achieve and the decisions you will make. Put out of your mind the specific activities you will engage in whether they be negotiating with the unions or speaking with the workforce. Instead, pose this question about your feelings and emotions – and let me presume to answer this question on your behalf. I would imagine that you would want to be feeling some of the following (and there may be others besides):

- confident
- happy
- clear-headed

- proud
- energized

Feel free to add your own feelings to this list and to bring your own definitions. Make the list as long and comprehensive as you like.

So, for the duration of time that you read this book, every time you pick it up and curl over a page, I want you to focus on using what you read to help you achieve the feelings that you have listed. As we move, in the remainder of the book, into the three major questions for you to consider as a leader, I want you to use them in just this way. Ask yourself, for example, “how can I use what I am reading to make me feel more confident or clear-headed?” Similarly, reflecting on what you have read so far, ask yourself, “how can I utilize what I have heard about the ‘side effects’ of leadership to help me feel energized about my role?” “How too can I ensure that as I picture the dials on my dashboard they give me data that will steer me toward a greater sense of pride?”

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