

{Excerpt from *The Leaderful Fieldbook: Strategies and Activities for Developing Leadership in Everyone* – by Joseph A. Raelin © 2010}

## Introduction and Leaderful Team Development Exercise

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# Introduction

This fieldbook is based on the premise that leadership may be constituted as a democratic approach known as “leaderful” practice. Leaderful practice, in turn, is based on a fundamental humanistic principle that can be simply stated: When people who have a stake in a venture are given every chance to participate in and affect the venture, including its implementation, their commitment to the venture will be heightened. Democratic leadership, no matter what form it may take—participative management, total quality management, or organizational learning—requires full participation in leadership and decision making at all levels in the organization and in multiple decision processes.

The word *practice* in leaderful practice signifies that leadership need not be centered on the traits of any one individual but that we can find it in the everyday practice of those who are engaged. It is less about what one person thinks and does and more about what people do together to accomplish important activities. What makes the exchanges between people leaderful is their commitment to collaborate with one another to accomplish a shared purpose. They don’t contribute to leadership sequentially, however, or one at a time; they do so all together and at the same time.

To fully appreciate the applications and possibilities of democratic leaderful practice, let’s first review its contrast in what I might refer to as the traditional model of leadership.

## *The Traditional Model of Leadership*

Most of us have grown up with this model. We can call it *implicit*, suggesting that its meaning is so widely accepted that there is no need to question its prevailing connotation. In other words, the qualities of traditional leadership have become commensurate with leadership itself. Here, then, are my nominations for the tenets that best describe the Western historical tradition of leadership.

1. *Leadership is serial.* Once one achieves an office of leadership, the leader retains that position at least for the duration of the term of office. Only when one completes his or her term, or vacates or is forced to leave the office, does leadership transfer to a successor. A leader is thus always in a position of leadership and does not cede the honor to anyone else unless his or her time is up. Indeed, once they have acquired power, most leaders attempt to sustain or increase it and not give it up.
2. *Leadership is individual.* Leadership is a solitary role. There is only one leader of an enterprise; normally this person is designated as the authority or the position leader. It weakens or, at a minimum, confuses leadership to have more than a single leader or to share leadership because no one, then, has the final say in making decisions and directing actions.
3. *Leadership is controlling.* The traditional leader believes that it is his or her ultimate duty to direct the enterprise and engender the commitment of all the employees of the organization. To ensure smooth coordination of functions, the leader is the spokesperson for the enterprise. The subordinate's role is to follow the guidance of the leader and to help him or her successfully accomplish the mission.
4. *Leadership is dispassionate.* Although the leader recognizes that people have feelings, the leader's function is to make the tough decisions for the enterprise in a dispassionate manner. Tough decisions may result in not satisfying (or may even hurt) stakeholders, including employees, but accomplishing the mission of the enterprise must come first. Leaders are the authoritative source when facing problems in the operation and tend to exude confidence that they are in charge and that subordinates can rely upon them to handle any challenge facing the enterprise.

## *A Brief History of the Traditional Model*

The traditional model tends to paint the leader with heroic imagery. Where has this heroic paradigm come from? We can trace the concept of leadership back to its root. The Anglo-saxon *lédan*—for leadership—has the meaning of “going forth” or “standing out in front.” In the nineteenth century, Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle insisted that the one certainty that defines history is what “Great Men” have accomplished. Perhaps this is why the pull toward the heroic model of leadership persists even though there is much talk about the need to include other members of the organization under the leadership umbrella. Though the value of democratic leadership may be advocated, the drive to have a charismatic leader whom we can love and who can save us sneaks back into our consciousness just as we prepare to assert our own worth and independence. Part of the reason for this is that many Western cultures value individualism while preaching

teamwork. Whatever the walk of life, be it a corporate setting, a sports team, or an opera, there tends to be a focus on the star performer even when he or she may be entirely dependent upon the team to achieve prominence.

### *The Leaderful Practice Model*

Leaderful practice offers an alternative approach to the traditional model of leadership. Leaderful practice, as we shall discuss it, is characterized by four contrasting operating tenets known as the Four Cs. These Four Cs call on leaders to be concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate (see Figure I.1).

The first tenet, that leaders be *concurrent*, stipulates that there can be more than one leader operating at the same time in an organization. Leaders willingly and naturally share power with others. Indeed, power can be increased when everyone works together. Since leaders carry a variety of responsibilities in an organization, it can be counterproductive to insist that there be only one leader operating at any one time and that this person stay in power until replaced serially by the next authority. For example, an administrative assistant who “knows the ropes” and can help people figure out who is knowledgeable about a particular function may be just as important to the group as the position leader. However, this same position leader does not “stand down” or give up his or her leadership as members of the group turn their attention to the administrative assistant. The two of them as well as many others can offer their leadership at the same time.

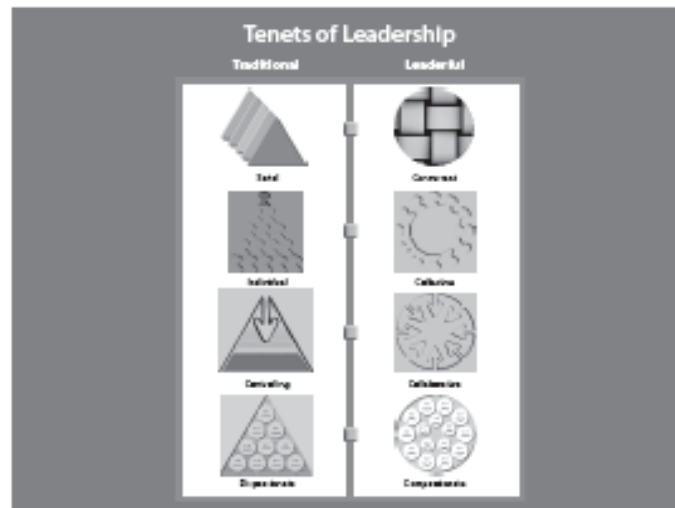
According to the second tenet, leaderful practice is *collective*. Since a group can have more than one leader operating at a time, people might operate as leaders together; in other words, leadership is a plural not just an individual phenomenon. The collective view purports that leadership does not derive from individual influence; rather it emanates from the process of people working together for a common purpose. According to this interpretation, anyone may rise to serve the group’s leadership needs. The entity is not solely dependent on one individual to mobilize action or make decisions on behalf of others. I include in this assertion the role of the position leader. This “authority” may have formal power conferred on him or her by the organization, but formal authority is not necessarily the most valuable to the operation. Decisions are made by whoever has the relevant responsibility. Leadership may thus emerge from multiple members of the organization, especially when important issues arise, such as preparing for a strategic intervention, creating meaning for the group, or proposing a change in direction. Although someone may initiate an activity, others may become involved and share leadership with the initiator.

Consider a team temporarily stymied in its attempt to solve a problem. Feeling disconsolate, members wonder if they will ever find a solution. Suddenly, some member offers an idea, perhaps not a mainstream idea, but one that has an immediate appeal and engages everyone’s imagination. Soon, others begin throwing out additional thoughts and tactics to build on the original idea. For a time, there is an almost breathless quality to the team’s functioning as it becomes absorbed in this all-encompassing solution process. The team is experiencing collective leadership; it is not dependent on any one member, not the position leader, not the idea initiator; everyone is participating. Further, the collective nature of leadership illustrated here incorporates the critical components of learning and meaning making. Team members use their conversation to invent

new ways to attack a problem and collectively make sense together from what once was a state of “not-knowing.”

The third tenet posits that leaderful practice is *collaborative*. All members of the organization, not just the position leader, are in control of and may speak for the entire organization. They may advocate a point of view that they believe can contribute to the common good of the organization. Although they might be assertive at times, they are equally sensitive to the views and feelings of others and consider their viewpoints to be equally valid. They thus seek to engage in a public dialogue in which they willingly open their beliefs and values to the scrutiny of others. It is through dialogue that collaborative leaders co-create the enterprise. They also understand the difference between collaborating as a pretense versus becoming fully involved. In pretentious involvement, one quickly discovers that all the critical decisions seem to be made when one is absent. Collaborative leaders realize that everyone counts—every opinion and contribution sincerely matter.

FIGURE 1.1  
The Four Cs of Leaderful Practice®



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Finally, leaderful managers are *compassionate*. By demonstrating compassion, one extends unadulterated commitment to preserving the dignity of others. Stakeholders' views are considered before making a decision for the entire enterprise. Rather than have one key individual make decisions dispassionately for the "good of the enterprise," each member of the organization is valued, regardless of his or her background or social standing, and all viewpoints are solicited whether or not they conform to current thought processes. In practicing compassion, leaders take the stance of a learner who sees the adaptability of the organization as dependent upon the contributions of others. Members of the organization, not necessarily the position leader, handle problems as they arise. Compassionate leaders recognize that values are intrinsically interconnected with leadership and that there is no higher value than democratic participation. The endowment of participation extends to the wider organization affected by the actions of a given stakeholder. If building a new corporate complex will affect the existing ecology or serenity of a neighboring property, the compassionate leader includes the neighbors in deliberations concerning the construction.

## Activity: Leaderful Team Development

Just as teams evolve at varying rates toward fuller development, they also require time and nourishment to develop along leaderful dimensions. Figure 3.3 displays continua of leaderful team development along five such dimensions:

1. The degree of discretion in how team members interpret and transact the skills inherent in their job
2. The autonomy they exhibit toward the key decisions in their work
3. The empowerment they may feel toward shaping actions and decisions beyond their own sphere of work
4. The extent to which their motivation is intrinsic suggesting genuine care about their job, team, and organization
5. The degree to which they would characterize their work culture as trust-oriented rather than control-oriented

The right endpoint of each of the continua specifies the more leaderful properties.

FIGURE 3.3  
The Continua of Leaderful Team Development

Discretion	Low Discretion	←→	High Discretion
Autonomy	Seeks Permission	←→	Autonomous
Empowerment	Over Own Tasks Only	←→	Beyond the Job
Motivation	Calculative	←→	Intrinsic
Culture	Control-Oriented	←→	Trust-Oriented

### Activity 3.5

## Mapping the Continuum of Leaderful Team Development

The steps in this activity focus on the team rather than on individual team members and can be used on multiple occasions to assess the team's development.

**Step1:** Display the continua of Figure 3.3 to all team members. Be sure to explain the meanings of these continua. Each places a mark where he or she feels the team currently resides along each of the five continua.

**Step2:** Members share their results and explain why they placed the mark where they did.

**Step3:** Try to arrive at a team consensus on where they feel the team currently resides on the five continua.

**Step4:** Discuss as a team how its processes and interactions may need to change to move the current state to the right (on each continuum).

**Step5:** Repeat this activity at subsequent points in the team's life to determine if there is growth in the direction of more leaderful practice.