



CHAPTER ONE

Competence Matters

BUILDING PURPOSE

*If I were given six hours to chop down a tree,
I would spend four hours sharpening my axe.*

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AS A NEW Breed Leader, *competence* will top your list of leadership qualities that *matter most*. When you know what you are doing, have the experience and knowledge to take risks and make wise decisions, and have a deep sense of purpose and a healthy dose of charisma, you can lead people through beneficial actions into positive results.

Vision and Purpose Backed by Competence

When I ask people what is the most important quality a leader must have, they most often answer, “A vision.” I agree, there is no



disputing the power of vision. It is essential to your effectiveness as a leader. However, without competence, your vision remains just wishful thinking.

Nobel laureate Toni Morrison said in a commencement address, “As you enter positions of trust and power, dream a little before you think.” You need the dream—the vision—but then you need clear thinking to bring the dream to life. That’s where

Competence = Doing the right thing, the right way, at the right time.

competence comes in. Clear thinking leads to actions that add up to competence, which enables the dream. That is also a major difference between

having a vision and being a visionary leader. A visionary lives in a constant innovation mode that gives him or her the competence to move the dream into reality. Haven’t we all seen enthusiastic people fail because they didn’t know how to turn their vision into action?

While the dictionary defines competence as “properly or well qualified; capable,” you need a more workable, action-oriented description to enhance your leadership. Try this: *Competence* means doing the right thing, the right way, at the right time.

With a workable definition in place, it is important to decide how to measure or judge competence. The best way to begin is by asking, *Were the results satisfactory?*

Review any recent task or project in which you led a group of people and ask:

- How and why was the result satisfactory or unsatisfactory?
- Can I clearly describe the competencies we needed to implement the project?

- What did I learn from the process about my leadership competence?
- What could I have done better or differently and why?

Judging competence is never a single event; it is a constant assessment of the way things are being done. One of the best and most public examples in the last century was in 1969 when *Apollo 11* blasted off for the moon. Every detail was relentlessly checked, rechecked, and checked again. The very survival of the crew and success of the mission depended on everyone involved knowing exactly how their part was functioning. The whole world was watching and judging the competence of our space leaders.

On September 11, 2001, America was again put under the world microscope. How well did we do in handling the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City? Even though there were things that could have been done better, our performance was an amazing display of competence, caring, and commitment to work together. The world saw us come from all across the country to lend our know-how to those in need.

In his seminal book on leadership, Robert Greenleaf, the father of the modern servant-leadership philosophy, said leaders must be challenged to keep their organizations alive and well:

Most institutions that survive over a period of time do so because they have a survival pattern, a dogma that gives a general direction of rightness. Those who administer and staff the institution become highly competent in operating within that pattern. Yet unless they are periodically challenged on the adequacy of that pattern, eventually they lose survival ability.

Long before that happens, they probably cease to function at their best.

While you may not live in a fishbowl as NASA did, or be leading a historic or life-or-death project, the survival and success of your organization will depend on your ability to ask the tough questions that check and recheck your competence and strengthen your purpose. Fostering your commitment to grow and expanding your competence on a daily basis are fundamental to everything you hope to achieve.

Two Leaders . . . Two Views

One of the most interesting parts of writing this chapter occurred when I received a different view of vision building from two highly respected leaders, one from the military and government and the other from academia and government: Former Secretary of State General Colin Powell (U.S. Army, ret.) and Dr. Donna Shalala, president of the University of Miami and former Secretary of Health and Human Services in the Clinton Administration.

I asked Dr. Shalala how vision building in the twenty-first century differed from the past. She said, “It’s more collaborative. It is fundamentally different than having a hierarchical kind of approach. In the twenty-first century, no one should ask, ‘What’s your vision for this organization?’”

She surprised me with this answer. I asked her what they should ask.

“They shouldn’t ask the question at all,” she replied. “They

should be part of a process in which you work through where you want to go.”

I know that she is very strong on the subject of strategic competence, so I delved further. “If there’s no particular stated vision, how do you get the buy-in from all of those involved?”

She replied, “By participation. You develop a strategy and metrics for determining whether you are on track, but you do it collaboratively. That’s the difference.”

When I asked General Powell about leadership in the new century, he gave me a contrasting view:

Leadership will be no different in the future than in the past. Leaders need to have a vision, [and] communicate that vision with passion so followers are inspired. Then, “take care of the troops.” Train, equip, reward, and prune the followers. Leaders execute and supervise aggressively. Works in every organization I’ve been in. I learned it all as a young lieutenant and all the books and lists I’ve read and courses I’ve attended have merely refined my beliefs.

Now that you have read their differing responses, ask yourself:

- What do I think about their different responses?
- Is one opinion better than the other for my people?
- How can I utilize the expertise of these leaders to build my people and my organization?

Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. Your style of leadership, the circumstances you work within, and various events will determine how you view vision building.

Leadership Is Earned, Not Claimed

One of the most important insights in your leadership toolbox is the understanding that leadership is earned, not claimed. We make some real leaps of faith when we assume that people in positions of power or celebrity are competent leaders, but . . .

Just because you have money doesn't make you a leader.

Just because you have celebrity doesn't make you a leader.

Just because you have written a bestselling book doesn't make you a leader.

Just because you have the ability to get publicity, yell the loudest, be the most abrasive, or get the most attention doesn't make you a leader.

Just because you are head of a company or organization or department doesn't always make you a leader.

Just because you are a sports, media, television, or radio star doesn't make you a leader.

Just because you can get into the movies, on the TV screen, or create a presence on the Internet doesn't make you a leader.

Leadership is earned, not claimed!

Just because you represent a religious group doesn't make you a leader . . . and

Just because you can get elected doesn't automatically make you a leader.

Instead, leadership is *earned* by understanding and developing the qualities that *matter most*.

Where Vision and Competence Can Change the World

For an example of the power that could ensue when vision and competency come together, let's look at the issue of oil dependency. When leaders in every sector of business, government, education, research, and religion make oil independence the top national priority, we'll change the world and the life of every person on this planet. We can't tell China and other big oil users not to use so much energy, given what energy gluttons Americans are. We can only lead by example with a vision or a purpose so commanding it will attract followers from around the globe.

Doing so will change the balance of power with rogue nations. It will put millions upon millions of people to work in businesses not yet imagined. It will create economic engines that will far outweigh the oil industry and its associated enterprises. It will improve the living standards of all societies, to say nothing of the fact that it will all but eliminate hydrocarbons from the atmosphere and slow down global warming.

Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* foreign-affairs columnist and author of *The World Is Flat*, wrote that “. . . a country that can double the speed of microchips every eighteen months ought to be able to innovate its way to energy independence. Focusing the nation on great energy efficiency and conservation is the most tough-minded, geo-strategic, pro-growth, and patriotic thing we can do.”

Clearly, a nation that was able to put a man on the moon is competent enough to make us oil independent if we put the national mind, heart, creativity, and energy behind the cause. Will you be among our new breed of leaders with the combined vision and competence to begin? Tremendous courage—and leaders of heroic proportions—will be required to change our lives so dramatically.

A Glimpse of Competent, Vision-Driven New Breed Leaders

David Gergen, journalist and adviser to four U.S. presidents, wrote in *Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership*, “The vision thing is a sense of purpose with competence. It’s not intended to be a statement of who we are, but of what we dream of becoming, realizing that the journey never ends. It’s our communal vision.” He was referring to our country, but the reference applies to any organization, large or small. When everyone involved feels a sense of ownership, the vision takes on a life of its own.

Look closely and you can see our new breed of leaders emerging. In 1999, for instance, Bill Gates was describing his vision for Microsoft: “To empower people through great software anytime and place and on any device.” Just three years later, he added, “*To enable people and business throughout the world to realize their full potential.*” His vision had grown along with his competence. Further, in describing why he and his wife, Melinda, created the Gates Foundation, they wrote, “. . . from those to whom much is given, much is expected. We benefited from great schools, great health care, and a vibrant economic system. That’s why we feel a

tremendous responsibility to give back to society.” That’s the kind of purpose to expect from a new breed of leader.

Or take Oprah Winfrey, who is watched by viewers in 118 countries. When asked about her purpose, she said, “. . . I can talk to anybody about anything with a sense of respect and integrity.” Whether she’s promoting a book on television or encouraging literacy or other causes in South Africa, this charismatic woman clearly understands that she has built an empire on her ability to connect with her audiences. Her leadership is fueled by her people-competence, or, as she puts it, “I relate to the core of everyone’s pain and promise.”

Starbucks chairman Howard Schultz once said, “We are not in the coffee business. We are in the people business.” Of his leadership philosophy, he says, “There is no long-term shareholder value if it isn’t linked to building long-term value for your people.” His New Breed Leadership stands out when you hear him talk about his vision—not just to be the biggest coffee seller in the world, but to share the Starbucks experience of connecting to people in every nation in which it operates.

All of these leaders have had grand visions. However, it’s their high degree of competence and nearly fanatical thirst for learning that brought their visions to fruition. They’ve fired the imagination of generations to come by passing on a sense of contribution and pride in building a new and better world.

I often work in Washington, D.C., and each time I’m there, I visit the Lincoln Memorial late at night when I can be alone to think. As I stand at the bottom of the steps and look up at the floodlit memorial, I think about the courageous men and women who trekked across the continent to start a new life on the frontier. I think about all the small and large visions and competencies

that gave us the states whose names are carved around the top of the monument.

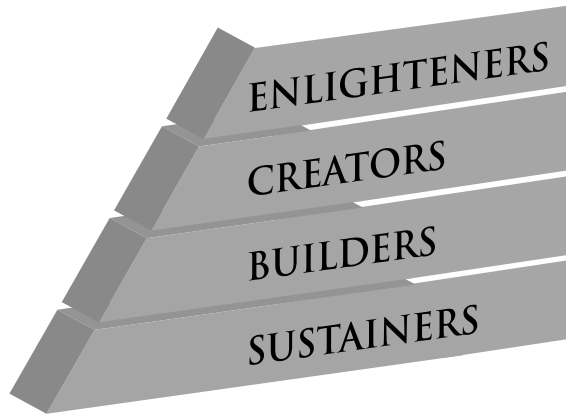
As I walk up the steps in the silence, I'm overwhelmed by Lincoln, looking down with those benevolent eyes that seem so real. As I read the words of the Gettysburg Address inscribed in the marble, I—like others—am deeply moved and feel the power of Lincoln's vision. (In fact, it's said that since the memorial was built, every sitting president has visited Mr. Lincoln in the wee hours of the morning seeking inspiration or solutions for critical problems.)

Lincoln's vision was to maintain "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The Emancipation Proclamation was framed by a statesman, not just a politician. He gave us powerful examples to live by and to lead by. Though it was far too slow in coming, the fight for racial equality was sparked and driven by the brilliance, clarity, and power of Lincoln's vision.

Can You Make Something Better?

Seeing how people, places, and things can be better than they are is the first step toward improving anything.

Where will your competence lead you? Do you have the passion of an *Enlightener* to change the world, or to right a societal wrong that will take us all to a new place in history? Are you a *Creator* of a new industry or inventor of a tool to help us solve the problems we face in this new century? Do your skills and abilities fall into the *Builder* or *Sustainer* category? One is not better than the other. We need men and women from every part of society to fill all the levels of the New Breed Leader.



When your vision is backed by competence, it is exciting, contagious, and can achieve wondrous results. How can you check the power of your vision? Ask yourself:

- Do I have a vision of a better world that others do not yet see?
- Am I able to imagine people performing better than they can see themselves?
- What am I doing to build both my vision and my competence?

When the times get tough, the passion of your purpose gives you the courage and tenacity to push on. When times are good, your purpose can explode your potential and you fire the enthusiasm of everyone around you.

People and organizations are eager to have an authentic leader guide them to better places and better times. It's never too early or too late to become a visionary leader. There's no age limit and no

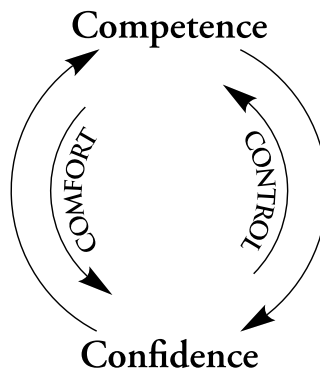
socioeconomic barriers against turning your dreams into visions. The only obstacle is your competence to make them come alive.

Continual Competence Building

As your leadership takes you to new levels of expertise and positions of importance, be sure you continually appraise your competence, and continue to grow.

All human growth occurs within what I call the:

Competence-Confidence Cycle



When your competence grows, you will feel more control over your environment, which increases your self-confidence. As your confidence grows, you relax and feel more comfortable to continue your competence building, which results in the ability to give life to your vision.

One of your major challenges as A New Breed Leader is to work with your teams to support their growth with the same cycle. When one of your organization's common goals is continual development, everyone benefits, in both their work and their personal lives.

Nontransferable Competence

Nontransferable competence has become an issue in recent years. Corporate boards of directors have lured high-performing executives from one company or industry and inserted them as CEOs into a different kind of organization. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

It can be a major mistake to assume that a person's specialized competence is always transferable. Boards need to ask: Does this person's previous success work in the context of the prospective position? Both Carly Fiorina and Gary C. Wendt are examples of the transferable competence challenge.

Fiorina's success and star executive status at AT&T and Lucent brought her to Hewlett-Packard, where the association seemed doomed from the beginning of the fiery relationship. The big question remains: Why did the board of directors bring a sales executive into an engineering-based company, a straight-talking leader into a conflict-avoidance culture, and why did she accept?

Shares of Consecro did leap in 2000 when Gary C. Wendt, former head of GE Capital, became its new chief. However, he was unable to continue the company turnaround, and two years later he relinquished the chief executive slot. Consecro soon filed for bankruptcy protection. "GE people are good at getting structure, system, and strategy right, but they don't always understand the soft issues like culture," said Boris Groysberg, an assistant professor at the Harvard Business School, who recently studied twenty star GE managers who went on to run other companies.

If we could do an in-depth survey of every short-term CEO for the last dozen years, we would probably find a large number

A MIDWEST COMPANY CASE STUDY

Two years ago I was invited to give the keynote address at a leadership conference of top management in a specific business sector. In the audience was a CEO of a Midwest company with offices in nine locations around the state. He invited me to lunch after my presentation and asked if I could help him with his company.

He had just been installed as the new chief executive and was excited about the vision he had to move the company forward. The company was an established organization with a good track record and good reputation in all nine locations. After several meetings with him, his executive staff, and with key individuals in the company, we agreed on the major issues that needed addressing that were within my expertise.

The problems

- The company had a stodgy, risk-averse comfort zone, *“that is how we have always done it”* attitude.
- It was stuck in a rut of the 1990s.
- It was losing market share and its competitive edge.
- It was not attracting new talent or generating innovative ideas, processes, and services.

The strategy

Here is the strategy we used to move the company into a learning/competence mode, while increasing esprit de corps with an innovative attitude.

- We immediately instigated some serious training in people skills such as risk taking, decision making, conflict resolution, negotiation,

communication skills of both listening and speaking, customer service, and effective change.

- We brought in outside industry experts to lay the groundwork to jump-start the process of building new products and services that would give the firm a twenty-first-century competitive edge.
- Simultaneously, we went after the creativity and innovation issues with seminars, games, and nonthreatening team challenges.
- Then we took it to the personal level and gave everyone the opportunity to learn something fun, new, interesting, or different. We asked everyone to try something they had always wanted to try. Do things that had nothing to do with work, but were of a personal interest.

Results

Igniting the competence of the company was a two-year, multilevel project. None of the strategies worked overnight. The CEO was very aware that to make a serious culture change without disrupting the entire organization and having a mass exodus of staff, he and the executive team would need to get behind all four steps in the plan. Everyone from executives to the newest employees went on a learning/competence spree.

Here are two of the most fun stories about personal growth and learning that occurred:

One woman always wanted to learn to tap-dance. But she was twenty pounds overweight and felt that she didn't have the energy to take on such a strenuous task. After a little encouragement, she decided to give it a try. In six months she lost so much weight, she went down two dress sizes and had so much fun tapping her way through two evenings a week, she and her husband are now taking ballroom dancing.

A man said that as a teenager he had always wanted to build exotic model cars but just never got around to it. Now that his children were in college, he thought he would get into the spirit of the learning challenge and look into it.

I have a friend in Paris, France, who is the same age and has a collection of exotic model cars that he has built, many of which are not available in this country. I asked both men if they would be interested in communicating with each other. To make a long story short, they began with e-mail and are now planning on reciprocal visits to each other's homes.

There were some people who refused to take part, afraid to take a risk, deriding the idea of any training or learning. That will always happen, so we just ignored them and focused on those who were enthusiastic about the programs. The peer pressure was interesting to watch as some of the resistant folks got on board.

At the end of the first year, they began to see distinguishable changes in the culture. During the two years the firm did increase market share, and innovation became welcomed, not feared. That is not to say it was all easygoing; it was not. There were potholes, resistance, and the status quo to overcome.

The company now has a full training department using all the tools possible to continue the pattern of learning. It rewards and recognizes those who are at the forefront of new competence.

Early on, the CEO was able to move into other vital issues that will ensure the success of the company and his employees.

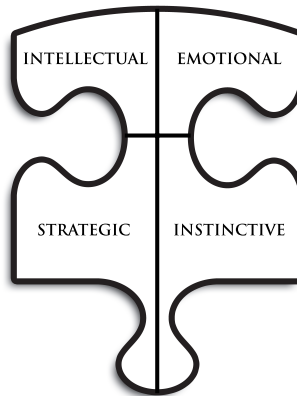
who were unable at best, and incompetent at worst, to carry out their duties at the new company. Their capabilities just weren't transferable. For a variety of reasons they may not have thought they needed to question their own competence. Or, if they did, they may have been under such pressure to perform quickly that there was little, if any, time to build new competencies.

When you as A New Breed Leader have a persistent desire and willingness to hone your skills, talents, and abilities, you will rarely fall into those two kinds of traps.

To earn the respect of all your stakeholders, it takes a deep commitment to learn all you can, in as short a time as you can, in order to be the best leader you can.

The Competence Puzzle Piece

The leadership competence puzzle piece has four core traits: *intellectual*, *emotional*, *strategic*, and *instinctive*. You can't take away one of the pieces without affecting the whole. Each is inevitably linked to the other.



Intellectual Competence

Permanent success cannot be achieved except by incessant intellectual labor, always inspired by the ideal.

—SARAH BERNHARDT, actress

You'll never have enough time to learn everything you need. So you need to surround yourself with the brightest and the best

MOO

What do you get when you combine two different competencies in one company? Add to that a passion for a purpose and a vision to change the way the world views organic food. Stir in a unique yogurt culture and recipe—and you get Stonyfield Farm, the world’s largest manufacturer of organic yogurt.

The combined expertise of Samuel Kaymen and Gary Hirshberg has enabled this firm to fly right by its biggest competitor, and by 2007, sales exceed \$300 million. That’s a long way from its start twenty-three years earlier when Kaymen milked his seven cows and produced the first batches of yogurt in a little room off the barn.

Gary Hirshberg is now president (and as he says, “CE-Yo”) of Stonyfield. “Samuel and I were ideal partners because we had a real healthy respect for what each other knew and didn’t know. He was the yogurt guy. He created the culture and the recipe. I had the financing, accounting, people-management, and marketing skills.”

Kaymen adds, “Gary had a natural talent for business, and we were on the same page of values.” They both attribute their success to the fact that they couldn’t just produce yogurt. They had to create a unique company, one that blended focus on business with a focus on the environment.

Stonyfield Farm’s mission is a direct reflection of Kaymen’s and Hirshberg’s personal belief systems: *to educate consumers and producers about the value of protecting the environment and to serve as a model that environmentally and socially responsible business can also be profitable.*

colleagues, plus ramp up your own learning to attain the highest level of intellectual competence.

Intellectual competence includes recognizing other people’s abilities and skills as well as questioning your assumptions about yourself and the current situation. In fact, erroneous assumptions

and invalid expectations are at the root of most bad decisions, difficult relationships, or poorly functioning groups. Checking your assumptions tells you where you are and where you should be going. This checking isn't always easy because our assumptions are usually familiar and comfortable. However, if you are going to tap your creativity and advance your competence, you need to be willing to let go of outdated assumptions.

Evaluate your assumptions, and let go of outdated ones.

Play the “what-if” game when facing a challenge. Begin by listing your assumptions about the situation. Then ask yourself: What if this happened? What if I did this instead? How would it work if I did this first and then this?

Next, make a statement you believe to be true about each of the following areas of your leadership competence:

- My credentials . . .
- My vision . . .
- My job description . . .
- My areas of responsibility . . .
- My decision-making skills . . .
- My ability to communicate . . .
- My priority management . . .
- My ability to deal with conflict . . .
- My ability to motivate others . . .

Then test the validity of the above statements, your assumptions, by playing devil's advocate.

Study each of your assumption statements and ask yourself:

- To what degree is my statement true or not true?
- What evidence do I have that I am operating at my highest level?
- Is there something I am overlooking?
- What am I taking for granted?
- What actions do I need to take?
- What are my expectations for the future?

Some of your answers will identify areas in which you need to reevaluate your assumptions. Too many leaders spend their time fighting skirmishes because they don't take the time to clarify the present and prepare for the future.

The next step requires you to take a risk and put your courage to work: Ask a trusted colleague to evaluate your statements. You'll probably have to endure some criticism. It's never pleasant to hear that you are not as effective as you imagine. On the other hand, your colleague may give you a better evaluation than you gave yourself.

Examining your assumptions helps you avoid being trapped in a bog of false concepts about yourself and sheds light on how your followers view your leadership. Don't be afraid that your assumptions will not stand up to scrutiny. If they don't, you're strong enough to reframe them or replace them with better ones.

Emotional Competence

*No guts, no glory. It's my motto. I will have
it engraved on my tombstone.*

—BETTE DAVIS, actress

The second component of the competence puzzle piece is emotional competence. It's the most difficult of the four competencies. While mental prowess—good old brainpower—is critical, the highest level of leadership won't be reached without emotional capability. It takes personal courage—"guts," as Bette Davis said—to tackle this capability because it forces us to turn inward and learn about ourselves. Work done in recent years by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, and other behavioral researchers make persuasive arguments that emotional maturity is crucial in terms of how well we do in our own life and in leading others.

The emotional intelligence of a highly competent leader reflects, as Goleman outlines, inner competencies that enable you to manage yourself. These inner competencies include self-awareness, personal motivation, self-discipline, empathy, and essential social skills such as conflict management, mastering influence, and team building.

The emotional self-confidence of a legendary sports leader was revealed in the final seconds of an especially tense Boston Celtics game. The coach called a time-out and began to quickly diagram a play, only to have star forward Larry Bird say, "Get the ball to me and get everyone out of my way."

The coach shot back, "I'm the coach, and I'll call the plays."

Then the coach turned to the other players, saying, “Get the ball to Larry and get out of his way.” That’s the kind of influence you’re seeking. You want to become known as a “can-do” person with the emotional competence to take charge in critical times. When you speak, people listen, regardless of your title or position.

When a highly intelligent but emotionally immature person is placed in leadership positions, disaster can result. They are often unable to build teams or partnerships or even handle the ups and downs of daily business and life. Such “leaders” often abuse their power and destroy the cohesion of an organization by, for example, having unreal expectations of others even though they can’t meet their own high expectations. They often punish risk-taking because they’re afraid to make a mistake themselves. Frequently using their position to fill their emotional voids, they often discount competent followers.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Part of being emotionally intelligent is being able to do things such as identify and label your feelings, be empathetic, delay gratification, and read and interpret (often unspoken) social clues.

Maturity Gap

INTELLECTUAL RESPONSE



Speed = Maturity

EMOTIONAL REACTION

This is emotional maturity. When these emotional skills are well developed and partnered with intellectual competence, it's an unbeatable duo for good leadership.

Maturity is emotion tempered by intellect. We have an emotional reaction to almost everything. The most effective leaders can temper their emotions and use their intellectual response system. The shorter the time between the emotional reaction and the intellectual response, the more emotionally mature the individual is. A leader must have emotional maturity in order to effectively handle conflict. When you are dealing with conflict, you are usually dealing with emotions first. When you approach upset people, be aware they're probably responding emotionally and you may need to give them time to get to their own intellectual responses. As the leader, you must control your emotions and manage the emotions of your followers.

COMPETENT COLLEAGUES

Another sign of emotional intelligence is to have the self-confidence and inner strength to surround yourself with the best people available, not just those who most resemble you or agree with you. It's natural, of course, to be attracted to those who are like you. That's how friendships and relationships are built. But if you only consult with like-minded colleagues, you run the risk of cutting off vital information and expertise. As a leader, you want to avoid cronyism, which almost always produces bad results. The best way to do that is to find and retain the best and brightest people you can attract. It takes courage to hear things that challenge your beliefs, ideas, or decisions. Check your current ability with the following:

- Where can I find “the best and brightest” to help me?
- Am I willing to let others’ knowledge and experience help me make the best decisions possible?
- Do I read and study great leaders from the past, gleaning ways to inspire and guide others into the future?
- Have I analyzed and discussed why so many leaders don’t learn from past experiences?
- Am I open to all ideas no matter how they sound at first?

These are tough questions, and no one can answer them for you. By asking them, you find a more authentic view of yourself and your leadership capacity. The answers give you some surprising insights to make a quantum leap into being an emotionally competent leader.

It is exciting and highly contagious when followers know that you, their leader, have the self-esteem to embrace competent counselors, advisers, and guides to move the entire organization in a positive direction.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Being skillful at asking critical questions adds a significant element to your competence. Having all the answers is far less important than asking penetrating questions. But as you do find the answers, you’ll greatly enhance your value and your ability to influence others, because of the quality of the inquiries. It is vital to ask yourself: *Do I really care about examining my capabili-*

ties? What is my personal definition of competence? What am I doing to improve both personally and as a leader?

The emotionally competent leader has the courage to ask “why” in order to challenge tradition, to seek new and innovative ideas, to set the example of welcoming change and to think in a tactical fashion, which leads us to the third part of our puzzle.

Strategic Competence

Each age is a dream that's dying. And one that's coming to birth.

—W. B. YEATS

Strategic intelligence is the proactive way in which people think about and create the future for themselves and their followers. It's both a daily and a long-term way of thinking. It always involves change for you personally and the organization as a whole.

While a good manager can maintain direction, you as a leader must be able to *change* direction by doing three things: looking at what has happened in your past experience, having a plan for today, and constantly searching for future opportunities to improve your organization.

“No Monday morning quarterbacking” is a common expression. But you can bet every professional sports team plays and replays past games to find ways to improve. When they stop questioning, they lose their edge. We can see businesses that are losing their competitiveness because of a lack of introspection.

Indra Nooyi has several rules to which she attributes her remarkable success as CEO of PepsiCo. Her strategic competence has

at its core her rule of “never stop learning regardless of one’s age, and such learning should not be restricted to academic knowledge, but be supplemented with ‘street smarts’ and being aware of matters and issues in the real world. Keep that natural curiosity.” She goes on “market tours” and walks around grocery stores to understand the competition. She adds, “Keep an open mind. It is a multicultural world out there and we all have to interact with people who are different . . . success comes with reaching out and integrating with the community . . . and giving back to the communities and neighborhoods, more than what you took out of them.”

BRINGING OTHERS ON BOARD WITH YOUR GAME PLAN

All talk about strategies is moot unless you can nudge your superiors and subordinates along the road to innovation.

Colin Powell wrote: “You have achieved excellence as a leader

People change when they either feel the heat or see the light!

when people will follow you everywhere, if only out of curiosity.” Are you able to bring your team along for the ride? Will your people follow you, even just out of curiosity?

One of the most dangerous elements an organization faces is members stuck in their comfort zones. They’re reluctant to move forward with new ideas. They certainly won’t come up with any ideas of their own. And without the ability to evolve or improve, the organization will lose relevance and eventually die.

As the old story goes, one frog is put into a pot of hot water

and immediately jumps out. A second frog is placed in a pot with cool water and is quite comfortable. Gradually the water is heated and the frog adapts as the temperature rises. Regardless of how hot the water becomes, the frog never becomes uncomfortable enough to jump out of the pan. In fact, the frog stays there and becomes dinner.

So another important question to ask is: “Am I as leader—are we as an organization—in a comfort zone? Am I—are we—missing opportunities and new realities?”

If you feel boxed in by less strategic thinkers at any level of your organization, try to learn what’s keeping them in their comfort zones. Are you, or your organization, a contributing factor? If so, how and why? Have freethinking, creativity, and risk taking been penalized? If so, see what you can do to change that. How can you improve a risk-averse culture and support strategic thinking? Here are three ideas:

- Be a good listener who spurs imaginative thinking, pull out and piece together ideas from followers at all levels, and then have the courage to take those ideas “upstairs.” Be sure to give credit to those who contributed.
- Praise against-the-grain thinking. Seek to become known as someone who doesn’t fear boldness. Be a leader who will sometimes ignore the organization’s rule book for the sake of a greater good, all the while praising the new thinking.
- Expect and accept errors. Then be fully committed to learning from them. Don’t dwell on mistakes. Constantly test your courage by keeping your eye on future opportunities.

Play the “if the world were perfect” game to improve an environment of creative-strategic thinking:

1. If we didn't care what it cost, how would we solve this problem?
2. If we were starting from scratch, how would we handle this?
3. If we didn't need anyone's authorization, what would we do?
4. If we didn't care what anyone else thought, how would we act?
5. If this were a perfect world, what would our next step be?
6. If we'd be respected no matter what we proposed, what would we propose?

When you become a champion of bold ideas, whether yours or others', you become a magnet that attracts followers. Previously reticent colleagues will shower you not only with more ideas but also with loyalty that will be an enduring testament to your leadership.

STRATEGIC COMPETENCE QUIZ

- What methods do I use to remove barriers of resistance so I can create new visions and objectives?
- How well do I describe results before selecting the ways and means to get to the new objectives?

- What methods do I use to define the gaps in our plans and goals?
- What are the high payoff results in this new model?
- What am I doing to identify the “what and how” to move us from our present model to a future one?
- How does our new model add value to our organization?
- What permanent, pervasive, and profound shifts will influence our future?
- What plans and actions do I have prepared for these changes?
- How will I measure our success along the way to the ultimate goals?
- Have I very clearly defined what our goals are?
- What steps do I have prepared to adjust course along the way?

This quiz is one that you can return to often to be sure you are on track in the tactical areas of your competence.

The strategically competent leader knows that seeing things others can't see is not only a quality of leadership, it's a responsibility. It means being part pragmatist and part mystic. This talent—as much an attitude as an aptitude—is not as rare as you might think. Reinhold Niebuhr said, “Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime.” But A New Breed Leader knows it *must* begin in our lifetime. We must have high expectations, projecting others and ourselves into a positive future scenario.

Instinctive Competence

*Good instincts usually tell you what to do long
before your head has figured it out.*

—MICHAEL BURKE, organizational behavioralist

Instinctive competence is the most mysterious ingredient of the puzzle pieces. How do you explain or define this elusive power? It's a gut feeling, an impulse, that little voice inside your head that tells you when it is time to "GO!"

I once asked participants in a seminar to give the simplest example they could of leadership instinct. One gave a perfect answer: "When the building is on fire, don't call a meeting to see who will leave first, never mind trying to figure out what started the fire or how much damage it'll cause—just get everyone out right now!"

A good sense of gut instinct almost always grows out of a deep and thorough knowledge of the subject. And one important way we gain knowledge is by making mistakes.

Growing and learning from your mistakes is a building block of instincts. The more experience you have, the more mistakes you make, the more success you have. In the process of this learning cycle, you make judgments, some good and some bad. Either way, you increase your awareness of what works, what doesn't, and why. Every decision is a judgment—a choice between alternatives. One of the payoffs is that each decision helps to develop good judgment and your gut reaction.

As your leadership instincts increase and you become more confident in them, you will find that when you go against those

gut reactions, you'll usually be wrong. Instead, try to read them and honor them as signposts. But it takes courage to "go with your gut" because people and exterior forces can present compelling reasons not to listen to your inner voice.

You can't be overly strategic in your thinking and planning or try to learn everything there is to know about a subject. You can't afford the "paralysis of analysis." Sometimes you will be compelled to act solely on instinct. Even though the other elements of competence are critical, your instinct must be sharpened to a razor's edge.

HEALING INSTINCTS AT THE PERFECT TIME

Cathy Keating was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a B.S. in education and a minor in special education. Although they had both lived in Tulsa, she did not meet her future husband, Frank, until after she had graduated from the university. They met on a blind date and were married seven months later.

Cultivate and trust your instincts . . . then follow them!

You may recognize them by their formal positions: Governor Frank Keating and First Lady Cathy Keating, of Oklahoma, 1994–2003, during the time of the Oklahoma City bombing.

I've had the pleasure of knowing Frank and Cathy since the late 1980s. I recently spoke with them about being A New Breed Leader. You will hear from both of them again in other chapters. Here is part of the conversation between Cathy and me about instincts and what a leader must do in a time of crisis.

Being a leader is about seizing the moment and then rising to the occasion. Sometimes in life, your opportunity to make a difference is unplanned. When Frank was elected governor, I inherited the wonderful job of First Lady. It doesn't come with a job description, you make your own, and then you decide your level of involvement.

My philosophy in life has always been not to let any grass grow under my feet. Make a difference. Leave a legacy. I saw this as one of life's opportunities to really make a difference in the lives of others where government can't or shouldn't be involved and where the private sector should and would love to be involved. So the first lesson I learned was to seize every opportunity to lead as it presents itself.

The memorial service for the victims of the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City was the first attempt to do that.

I said to Cathy, "When the bombing occurred, I remember watching television, and the first face I saw on the screen was yours. I knew Frank was doing what a governor needed to do in a horrific instance like that, and there you were. How did you decide what to say on camera and what was your philosophy about your message?"

Truthfully, I just followed my heart. I knew it was important to be honest about the unbelievable devastation, not to sugarcoat anything but to share the experience because it wasn't something that just happened to us. It was a loss for America, and people all over the world were sharing our emotions, our outrage. We were grieving and the world grieved

with us. Even though Frank and I both had determined that we would do everything in our power to be strong in public, make no mistake about it, we were grieving deeply, and I think that came across. Man's inhumanity to man was staggering when the bomb went off and we saw the devastation. But we never lost hope. We never lost our faith in people.

Help came in droves and we wanted the rest of the world to know about it and share the experience. There was such an unending generosity of spirit, love, and countless sacrifices of the rescue workers, volunteers, and the whole community came together instantly. Businesses were opening up their pocketbooks and saying, "What do you need, how much do you need," not wanting anything in return, other than to help everyone get off our knees and back on our feet.

The day of the bombing people started calling me to ask how they might help. Since Frank had only been in office three-plus months, I had not yet put my "First Lady systems" into place. With the help of a dear friend, I determined that my first role was to help not only Oklahomans but Americans heal. What better way to begin than with a prayer . . . or a memorial . . . service, a vigil, if you will.

At nine-thirty that first night, I called and asked five of my new Oklahoma City friends to come over to the Governor's Mansion to begin the planning process. I felt that it was important to include the Reverend Billy Graham, as he had the greatest moral authority to address why this wrong had happened, and of course President and Mrs. Clinton and all the cabinet officers who had offices in the Federal Building.

Also, sometimes leadership just seems to spring into action. Brenda Edgar, who was then the First Lady of Illinois, called

me and said, "Cathy, I'd like to send teddy bears. I have a program where we give teddy bears to abused children. We partner with Marshall Field's and I'd like to send teddy bears to the families of children who were killed in the bombing." I said, "Brenda, it's really nice of you to offer to do that, but I don't think we can give teddy bears to just the children of the families who lost little children because there are lots of children who have lost parents and many parents who have lost grown children. And if we're going to do it for one, I really think we need to do it for all." She said, "Well, how many people do you think we're talking about?"

Now this had not even been twenty-four hours at this point and I had no idea. I said, "We just don't have a clue." "Give me a guesstimate," she said. I told her, "Two hundred and fifty people have been affected." Her immediate answer was, "Okay. It's a done deal." I asked, "How quickly can you get them here?" She said, "I'll get them to you as quickly as possible." On Saturday, the day before the memorial service, we determined that we actually needed 650 bears. I called her back and asked her if she could get them, and she said, "It's Saturday. Marshall Field's is closed." I said, "Well, if you can get them to open, I'll find a plane to get them here." Herb Kelleher, CEO of Southwest Airlines, was kind enough to send one of his planes to pick up the bears.

Federal Express trucks drove up with boxes and boxes and boxes, a garage full of teddy bears. I decided that we were going to give the bears out at the memorial service, to every family who had lost loved ones, who were missing loved ones, or whose loved ones had been injured. Brenda, Marshall

Field's, and Southwest Airlines took the lead and we were able to hand them out that morning.

At the memorial service on Sunday, April twenty-third, they all came, Billy Graham, President and Mrs. Clinton, and the cabinet members who were affected.

As people entered, we gave a teddy bear as well as a yellow rose. Several Oklahoma City florists had organized a call for help, and florists from all over America responded by sending the beautiful yellow roses.

During the prayer service, one of the photographers snapped a picture of Dan McKinney, whose wife was killed in the bombing. He had his arms crossed over his chest hugging a teddy bear, his head was back, and he was sobbing. That picture popped up on the front page of newspapers all over the country and in magazines. (It later won a Pulitzer Prize.) Teddy bears began appearing at the fence surrounding the bombing site.

I told Cathy how much I admired her strong leadership instincts and responses to the tragedy. Her reply: Well, it was the right thing to do. I can't be absolutely certain, but I believe that on that day a teddy bear became an international symbol of hope. They appeared again after the shooting in the schoolyard in Scotland and again after the Columbine school shooting. Now it seems that when there is some sort of major tragedy, teddy bears appear because Brenda Edgar had the instincts of a leader and she picked up the telephone and offered a way to help. So leadership is sometimes unplanned and it continues to live on and on long after the deed is done.



The Hunt for Red October

One of the best examples of superior leadership “gut” instinct is in the film *The Hunt for Red October*, based on the bestselling novel by Tom Clancy.

Red October, the Soviet Union’s newest secret weapon, is a stealth submarine as big as a World War II aircraft carrier with enough atomic weapons on board to destroy most of the major cities on the eastern U.S. seaboard. It is commanded by Russia’s most experienced submarine captain, steely-eyed Marko Ramius (Sean Connery).

Ramius has stolen the sub and is going to defect to America and take the sub with him. Every ship in the Russian fleet sets out to find and destroy *Red October* before it can get into the hands of the Americans. Meanwhile, the United States thinks Ramius is coming to launch the missiles. CIA analyst Jack Ryan (Alec Baldwin), who has made a personal study of Ramius and his career, convinces the military that Ramius is going to defect, not attack. Ryan is sent out to the U.S. sub that has located *Red October*. They are in hot pursuit.

Ramius orders the navigator to head for Thor’s Twins, deep-water canyons near Iceland, where they may be able to hide. As they enter the underwater canyons, they’re navigating blind, using speed and time and Ramius’s instincts to guide them. A Soviet torpedo is right on their tail and, in front of them is a huge underwater mountain, the Neptune Massif. Ramius must reach into his gut and use his instinct as to exactly when to turn past the massif to avoid both it and the torpedo.

The navigator is counting the seconds to turn. You see the extreme tension on the crew’s faces and hear the countdown.

“Thirty seconds and counting,” says the navigator. “Three, two, one, turn, Captain!” The camera stays on Ramius’s face as we see his lips moving, counting. “Captain, the turn?” Ramius ignores the navigator and goes deep into his intuition and begins his own silent count. His lips move. “Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two . . .” Ramius’s instinct kicks in, his steady voice orders, “Right full rudder, reverse starboard engines.” The crewmen are certain they’re all going to die. The huge ship shudders and slips past the massif with only inches to spare. The torpedo slams into the massif. Ramius calmly gives the next order.

As we watched *Ryan* through the movie, it is clear that he is an expert on Ramius. However, he underestimated Ramius’s deep instincts that gave him the edge over the Americans and the Soviets.

BUILDING INSTINCT

Intuition is not contrary to reason, but outside the province of reason.

—CARL JUNG, psychologist

As a leader, you can increase the effectiveness of your instincts by being open to, and searching out, new experiences. If you accept new challenges and take new risks, you learn from both success and failure. But when we are successful, we don’t normally say, “Wow, that was great. Now let’s see what I did well to achieve this success.” We usually just move on.

In contrast, we seem to learn more from failures. If we have the emotional maturity to step back from a failure and examine our thoughts and processes, we learn volumes about ourselves, our organizations, and what we can do better next time. Intel-

ligence, combined with a good dose of emotional maturity and strategic competence, is the petri dish in which instincts can grow and multiply.

In author Rex Stout's detective novels, supersleuth Nero Wolfe tells Archie Goodwin, his sidekick and partner in crime solving, "Use your judgment [intuition] tempered by experience." That's instinct!

As you take the time and effort to build the other three competencies, your intuition will develop. When the opportunity arises, you can then use your instinct guided by intuition to make wise decisions and act with immediacy.

Mentors and Coaches for Competence

Very early in my career I met and had the privilege of having Bill Weise, vice chairman of Motorola, as my business mentor/coach. We agreed that he would never hold back or soften his opinions. He would give it to me straight, and my job was to listen to his views, grow where I needed, and question him where I felt I should. For fifteen years I had access to his superb business acumen. As I developed new material, he would review it for its real-world applications. He played devil's advocate and questioned my logic, assumptions, and desired outcomes. An invaluable source of expertise and insights, he made one of the most important contributions to my growth and my understanding of corporate America. He was one of the twentieth century's most significant strategic leaders, both in the United States and globally.

Do you have a strategic competence coach or mentor? Whom

do you know who could give your leadership development the kind of wisdom and expertise that Bill Weise shared with me?

It is intriguing to ask specific questions of highly successful leaders. They have strong and diverse opinions.

Dr. Donna Shalala had a different approach to mentors and how they helped her succeed. I asked her how she saw her rise to power in relation to mentors. She said, “The real insight into my career is that I always overreached. I was never in a job in which the consensus was that I was qualified. I always had to maneuver within each of those positions to learn about the job, to find people that would help me be successful.” I asked specifically if she had mentors. “Not particularly,” she replied, “but I counted on many people. I observed very talented people throughout my career, but I would not describe myself as having a mentor in the traditional sense of a mentor.” “But do you think developing leaders should find mentors?” I asked. “Yes,” she said. “However, being a mentor is interesting; either it fits or it doesn’t fit. I help lots of people, but it doesn’t necessarily mean I’m there for every nuance of a career.”

I agree with her. However, when it does fit, there are ways you can manage the mentor-protégé relationship that will be of great benefit to you and respect the time and position of your mentor.

Here are some tips on making the most of the mentor-protégé relationship:

- Two kinds of mentor relationships exist—formal and informal. An informal relationship can be as powerful as a formal one. A casual get-together in the hall, on the Internet, or by telephone can work very well. However, if you and your mentor would like to have a more formal arrangement, don’t hesitate.

- Be very careful of your mentor's time. The quickest way to alienate a mentor is to seek repeated information and unimportant details. On the other hand, don't be afraid to ask what you may think is a dumb question. There are no dumb questions, only uninformed, unprepared people. If you have already covered the issue but you still have questions or need further clarification and help, then certainly contact your mentor.
- Take careful notes so you don't have to go back for repeated information. This will help you prepare intelligent, meaningful questions and retain the jewels of wisdom the mentor will share.
- If you ask the advice of a mentor, take it! Protégés, in their enthusiasm, often ask advice and then argue the point. Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Report back on the results or actions taken. Your mentor may see that you need a slight adjustment or correction. Small action-plan refinements can be extremely helpful. If you are proceeding correctly and all is well, you need to know that also. Reporting to your mentor will give you this knowledge.
- Finally, once you have had a mentor or coach, pass on the legacy—becoming one yourself is a wonderful and rewarding endeavor.

The power of OPE (Other People's Experience) is the basis of the mentor-protégé relationship. None of us succeeds alone, and most who are successful in life and/or business will be proud to share

their knowledge and experience. If you find someone who can act as your mentor or coach, it will be a wonderful process for both of you. He or she will be a source of inspiration and information.

My Mentor and Action Plan

One of the most powerful traits great leaders have in common is *action*. And that's the next step for your personal leadership journey—taking action to maximize all your leadership potential.

To grow in this area, take a good look at how your followers are acting and what they are doing. Are they working well as a team? Do they seem to have a common goal? Have you empowered them to take risks and make decisions? The answers to these questions will tell you whether your vision is clear and whether your competencies bring people together. Having a clear, strong, value-based mission is the secret of building charisma and long-range leadership.

Turn the page for an action plan to help you make the best and most respectful use of a coach or mentor.

MY ACTION PLAN FOR: QUALITY #1

COMPETENCE MATTERS — BUILDING PURPOSE/VISION

People I will ask to act as my mentor or coach:

Name

Email Address

Telephone Number

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The three most important questions I will ask about the quality of Competence:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What leadership situations or experiences would I like to discuss with my mentor, in order to gain insights into my role as a leader using this quality?



My three most critical leadership challenge questions for this quality are:

Do I focus on the competence I need to build my vision each morning to help keep me on track? _____

Do I continually clarify both my competence and my vision? _____

Is my vision setting a positive example for others? _____

Here are the three steps I will take to clarify and strengthen my leadership readiness and effectiveness in the arena of Competence:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Today's Date: _____

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If you would like a free copy of this Action Plan simply go to my website, www.anewbreedofleader.com, and click on the “Resources” tab. There will be an Action Plan for all eight New Breed Leader qualities.

Humility Strengthens Purpose

When you recognize that competence begets competence and that knowledge shared is knowledge multiplied, you’re saying, in effect, to your followers, “We can learn and grow together.” You build a sense of connectedness and a community of growth.

While your competence develops and your purpose and vision emerge, a truly competent leader also has the powerful quality of humility. “Knowledge is proud that he has learn’d so much. Wisdom is humble that he knows no more,” wrote poet and hymn writer William Cowper.

When we study the Enlightener leaders of the last century—Martin Luther King Jr., Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, and Mother Teresa—it is clear that, as strong, committed, and decisive as they were, they also had an enormous degree of humility that drew followers to them, changed the world, and set an example for leaders everywhere to follow.

No matter where your competence takes you, no matter what your leadership accomplishes, it’s exciting to know that you are in the process of “becoming.” You are a constantly changing composite of the things you say, the books you read, the thoughts you think, the company you keep, and the dreams you dream. Openness, humility, accountability, language, values, perspective, and the wise use of power are each ingredients of a truly competent New Breed Leader.