THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP:
RELATIONSHIPS BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE, TRUST, POWER AND PRESENCE

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The path to exceptional leadership is a personal and individual journey. Each person defines the purpose of the journey, but it will ultimately be about the release of human possibility. Leading—as a way of being, not just focused on a role or title—is a function of relationship with yourself and others. It is a way of being in the dynamic balance of reflection and action. In its essence, leadership consists of the principles, skills, behaviors and attitudes that harness and integrate knowledge, trust and power to get something done.

Wisdom, integrity and courage are leadership characteristics that foster and synthesize knowledge, trust and power. Especially in times of complexity and change, leaders who by their presence and competency can build trust quickly and inspire others to collaboration are the ones who succeed. Building your presence as a leader is a process of coming into an authentic and powerful sense of Self and being able to extend into the world with clear intention, skillful action, and grounded compassion.

ELEMENTS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP: KNOWLEDGE, TRUST, POWER, AND PRESENCE

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is a necessary but insufficient condition for effective or exemplary leadership. Having the data, information, or ideas available to make an evaluation and to decide is a necessary beginning. But from there each person needs self-awareness and practice to take action from choice. We are best served by choice that is informed by our values, morals, and a life ethic rather than by automatic reactions stemming from our historical conditioning.

Generally, the people who assume leadership roles do so by virtue of subject-matter expertise in domains other than leadership. They demonstrate competence in certain specialized technical areas necessary to be valued decision-makers and people who determine strategy and implementation. As leaders, though, they need more than their own knowledge. They need to know how to gain access to others' knowledge and how to work with people to convert knowledge into coordinated, productive action. A leader's orientation to knowledge, learning and adaptation is critical, especially when working with creative people.

If your organization depends on the creativity of its members to thrive (or even to survive), then an effective leader needs to manage "knowledge stress." This is the stress caused by working on complex problems in complex situations—often with conflicting interests—at high rates of speed. It is the stress caused by working in a world of insecure, temporary relationships. It is stress due to a perception of vulnerability that challenges a person's self esteem. By managing "knowledge stress" a leader can enhance— rather than undermine—people's ability to take risks, learn, contribute value and adapt. See ***The Leadership Triad: Knowledge, Trust, and Power*** (Zand, 1997).

A leader's attitudes and behavior can either release or repress distributed knowledge. The importance of self-esteem becomes painfully obvious in situations where subordinates know more than their leaders do. These team members may have different personality styles, an incessant desire to question, a drive for freedom and self-responsibility, an insatiable interest in personal growth and advancement, and concern for corporate morality. The leader must seek out the information that points to false synergy and pseudo-knowledge that can cause costly diversions. In converting knowledge to action, leaders constantly have to deal with subtle obstacles, including the complacency of success, unfamiliar opportunities, and cultural resistance. Rather than dictate direction, the leader's job becomes to communicate a compelling vision and strategy and then harness the knowledge to realize it. The leader, by living example, has to demonstrate the inner strength and qualities of character to guide and coordinate with team members.

TRUST

Trust is the foundation of relationships and is vital to leadership and collaborative excellence. Trust-based leadership promotes flexible, adaptive and productive work environments. In evaluating whether and how to support and follow another person, we—as human animals—are constantly assessing whether the person and situation are trustworthy. For example, as an entrepreneur seeking funding, even with a highly innovative and promising technology, you have to convince a savvy investor that you and your team can and will follow through to create value for the investor. The evidence is overwhelming that indicates that working with trusting and trusted leaders produces superior productivity, creativity and commitment as compared to that produced when working with mistrusting or distrusted leaders. Even so, business leaders are often faced with the task of (re)building trust in organizations without the support, tools or explicit understanding necessary to work with complex dynamics of trust and the consequences of betrayal.

Leaders go first. They set an example and build commitment through simple daily acts that create progress and momentum. When leaders create trusting environments, people are safe to take risks and to perform beyond expectations. People feel more open, freer to express creative ideas, and more willing to take, admit and learn from mistakes. Trust has been shown to be the most significant predictor of individuals' satisfaction with their organization. Trust—and the absence of betrayal—can be critical to the accomplishment of strategic organizational goals. In organizations, trust stimulates productivity while mistrust drives it down. Indeed, mistrusting groups self-destruct.

Trust arises when people have confidence in how they and others will use knowledge and power. In most workplace situations, trust is earned. It is a reciprocal transaction. You have to give it to get it. People earn trust by, for example, disclosing relevant information in a timely manner, sharing influence and rewards, competently applying their knowledge, being fair in their dealings with others, fulfilling the spirit of their agreements, and by not abusing their power. Rapid growth often masks mistrust; people devote their attention elsewhere, perhaps hoping that the trust issues will just take care of themselves. But they rarely do; instead they put down deep roots. Breakdowns in trust are at the core of any conflict. In order to heal or reconcile the conflict and move forward into another future, trust issues have to be addressed.

One's capacity for trust begins with Self. The trust you are able to extend to others corresponds to the trust you are able to extend to yourself. Building one's capacity to trust is not about training for trustworthy (e.g., organizationally approved or politically correct) behaviors. It is about becoming more aware of the attitudes, behaviors, and interpretations that, over time, have shaped your willingness to stay open, present and connected to yourself and to others. We tend to trust people who are self-aware and where our gut instinct tells us it is safe to trust them. Those are generally people who take responsibility for their role in a relationship, practice the values they say are important to them, listen to and respond to our needs and interests, and speak the truth without blame or judgment. We tend to distrust people who we experience as selfish, self-absorbed or self-righteous, those who blame and judge others without considering their own role in the experience, those who distort the truth and change the rules for their own purposes.

TYPES OF TRUST:

BASIC TRUST

o   Provides the basis for one's entire personality and demeanor toward the world.

o   Relatively open-ended and indiscriminate.

AUTHENTIC TRUST

o   Focused on relationships rather than single transactions or outcomes.

o   Exists wholly in its particulars, in each and every instance of the practice of trust.

o   The key to authentic trust is action, and, in particular, commitment: commitments made and commitments honored.

Building Trust in Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life (Solomon & Flores, 2001)

TRANSACTIONAL TRUST

Trust is a relationship of mutual confidence in contractual performance, honest communication, expected competence, and a capacity for unguarded interaction.

o   Competence

o   Contractual

o   Communication

TRANSFORMATIVE TRUST

o   Conviction

o   Courage

o   Compassion

o   Community

Trust & Betrayal in the Workplace: Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization (Dennis Reina & Michelle Reina, 1999)

There is a growing body of literature and practical experience indicating that trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration. Trust is the central issue in human relationships within and outside of an organization. In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner offer the following example from research about the impact of various levels of interpersonal trust on group effectiveness:

> *In one study, several groups of business executives in a role-playing exercise were given identical factual information about a difficult manufacturing-marketing policy decision and then asked to solve a problem related to that information as a group. Half of the groups were briefed to expect trusting behavior ("You have learned from your past experiences that you can trust the other members*

of top management and can openly express feelings and differences with them"); the other half, to expect untrusting behavior.

After thirty minutes of discussion, each team member completed a brief questionnaire. Other executives, who had been observing the team meetings, also completed the questionnaire. The responses of team members and observers were quite consistent: the group members who'd been told that their role-playing peers and manager could be trusted reported their discussion and decisions to be significantly more positive than did the members of the low-trust group on every factor measured. In the high-trust group,

- *Members were more open about feelings.*
- *Members experienced greater clarity about the group's basic problems and goals.*
- *Members searched more for alternative courses of action.*
- *Members reported greater levels of mutual influence on outcomes, satisfaction with the meeting, motivation to implement decisions, and closeness as a management team as a result of the meeting.*

In the group whose participants were told that their manager wasn't to be trusted, genuine attempts by the manager to be open and honest were ignored or distorted. Group members' distrust was so strong that the manager's candor was viewed as a clever attempt to deceive them, and they generally reacted by sabotaging the manager's efforts even further. Managers who experienced rejection of their attempts to be trusting and open responded in kind. Said one who played the manager role, "If I had my way I would have fired the entire group. What a bunch of turkeys. I was trying to be honest with them but they wouldn't cooperate. Everything I suggested they shot down; and they wouldn't give me any ideas on how to solve the problem."

The responses of the other members were no less hostile. Said one, "Frankly, I was looking forward to your being fired. I was sick of working with you — and we had only been together for ten minutes." Not surprisingly, more than two-thirds of the participants in the low-trust group said that they would give serious consideration to looking for another position. People don't want to stay very long in organizations devoid of trust. (Kouzes and Posner, 1995), pp. 163-165.

What's crucial to keep in mind is that this was just a simulation; these people were executives from various organizations attending an executive development program. They behaved and responded as they did simply because they'd been told that they couldn't trust their role-playing manager. They wanted to be rid of each other after only about ten minutes! Trust or distrust can come with a mere suggestion, it seems, and in mere seconds. It's also highly contagious and can spread through the group.

After this simulation, participants were asked to think about what factors might have accounted for the differences between the outcomes and feelings reported by the various groups in the experiment. Not one person perceived that trust had been the overriding variable. One executive in the study reported this insight: "I never knew that a lack of trust was our problem (at work) until that exercise. I knew that things weren't going well, but I never really could quite understand why we couldn't work well together. After that experience, things fell into place."   See *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (Kouzes and Posner, 1995).

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Power

Power is about generating and directing awareness and action. It is best used with intention and purpose. As leaders, we generate and direct the power to create and transform ourselves, our situations and our futures. While leaders may crave power, others often fear it. Power can be used for good and ill. Ideas of legitimate, formal power—of having a position of ascendancy over others in order to alter the will or actions of others so that they conform to one's own will—are very consistent with conventional understanding of leadership. That kind of power is important for leaders… but it is not sufficient.

In a leadership context, one can inquire about legitimate power and decision process power. According to author Dale Zand, these have to do with the exercise of rights: legitimate power is the right that people give a leader to make choices and resolve conflicts, whereas decision process power is the leader's right to determine how a decision will be made. The leader's legitimate power is to decide who, when, and how people will be involved in making a decision. "Although legitimate power is sometimes obscured, leaders rely on it as their fundamental source of power. Teamwork and empowerment greatly contribute to performance, but legitimate, formal power persists as the core of leadership." (Zand, 1997) Power in leadership, however, is not limited to the domain of rights. It is shaped by the larger context of what we understand to be the nature of power, who has it, and how it is acquired, lost and used.

We tend to think of power being about what we know and do, especially, about people or stuff outside ourselves we can control. In all areas of life, but especially in business and politics we tend to think of power in terms of money and status. Money and status are a type of currency; they make it possible to take action in certain ways. It generally translates to power in terms of "power over" or the ability to control or dominate people and situations.

"Power over" refers to domination and its related attributes of coercion, control and punishment and reward. It tends to include some aspect of coercion. The coercion may be by design, as in rules and requirements with damaging consequences for non-compliance. A "power over" type of authority also arises when someone possesses a special skill or knowledge that is useful to others. The power may not be explicitly coercive in that the person may be consulted but compliance may not be required. A coercive quality can be implicit, however, as in the example of a physician with a patient. The urge to dominate can be based in an urge for self-aggrandizement but is can also emerge from a strong idea about the common good. Either way, control in our times is generally seen as good in its own right, for its own sake, such that those with the greatest "power over" are praised as "the greatest" men or women and are hailed as leaders.

Of growing importance for leadership competency (and human evolution) is the idea of "power to." Also highly esteemed in our society, "power to" refers to ability or capacity and connotes a kind of freedom. This is the "power to" generate and direct one's own awareness and action; for leaders this is primary. It is the "power to" engage others in collaboration so they create things that are otherwise impossible to create alone. "Power to" unleashes enthusiasm, commitment, creativity, and trust in self and other.

"Power to" is generally considered to be a personal attribute, based on ability and developed through self-discipline. In truth, an individual's "power to" is rarely achieved by that individual alone; it takes communities or networks of support. Even in organizations that claim to promote and reward individuals

on the basis of merit have to deal with the reality that people in society value certain kinds of talent and encourage them above others. An ability, like a person, requires nourishment and scope if it is to grow. "Power to" reflects not just individuality, independence, and drive to excel, but also dependency, interconnection, and the acceptance of society. "Power to" overlaps with "power over" where the practice of a skill becomes competitive or where it involves managing, influencing or persuading other people. See *Beyond Power: On Women, Men, and Morals* (French, 1985).

Of particular relevance for collaborative ventures is another kind of power: "power with." It is the power that arises when people connect and combine—their energy, ideas, talents, resources, labor etc. Increasingly, leaders are moving from a reliance on rank to a cultivation of links to produce results. Because synergy, "win/win" and collaboration are concepts currently in vogue, there is considerable talk about them but precious little experience of the real item. "Power over" has changed its guise in many cases; in practice it is an imposter for the sought-after "power with" that is essential for genuine, sustainable collaboration. Even so, there is a significant shift moving away from a dominator model and towards the actual experience of a partnership model. "Power with" refers to joining together and is related to the concept and experience of synergy. In connotes interrelated gain.

Presence

Presence describes a quality of being and connection. We perceive presence more through the senses, less as a thought. When present with yourself, you devote a quality of attention to the life of the body…the physical sensations, moods, emotions, and thoughts expressed through image and language. When present with another person, you become more open with a quality of listening that takes in more than sound.

Presence is what you embody, how you connect with the larger living system and how you move with that in an enlivening way. It is your capacity to be fully conscious and aware in the present moment, to listen deeply and to attune with that which is seeking to emerge. It is your capacity to translate self-awareness into productive, coordinated action and meaningful results. Knowledge, trust and power come to life with presence.

A powerful way to cultivate presence is through awareness and practices for leading from center. Emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, center is the recurrent and compelling connection to what you care about (for the sake of what…) and is the place from which you can respond with greatest choice and from greatest self-esteem. Moving or leading from center requires a willingness to build emotional strength and resilience. Physiologically, center is experienced as a condition of balance, alignment, and fluidity (especially in the breath). Center is an open, receptive and calm readiness for action. Leading from center is a practice of Self-mastery, one that engages the body in its integrated wholeness. See *Being Human at Work: Bringing Somatic Intelligence Into Your Professional Life* (Strozzi-Heckler, ed., 2003).

By attending to the Self—whole and integrated—you can transform yourself, your situation and your future. Attending to the Self means attending to the life of the body. In noticing where there is life (or not), we pay attention to where energy is and how it moves. Energy follows attention, so we are developing the "muscle" of being present in the moment and being aware of what we

- Believe
- Think
- Feel and
- Do.

Because we are what we practice, cultivating presence means paying attention to habits and patterns of belief, thought, feeling and action. What we choose to pay attention to and how we organize and mobilize that in language is a central concern for shaping leadership and any collaborative activity. Just as we perceive and create reality with our bodies, we perceive and create our reality in language. We perceive the world not just through our senses but by the thoughts we have about what we experience and the meanings we attribute by way of language. We commonly think of taking action only in terms of putting the physical body into motion. But expressing a thought in language always results in some physical activity, too. It may be as subtle as the physical activity of bio-chemical reactions in the body that produce emotions, moods and memories. By paying attention to what you practice, you can reinterpret and reorient yourself and begin to practice anew. You practice consciously so that what begins as "new" can eventually become "you," especially under pressure or stress.

THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP: RELATIONSHIP

Emerging models of leadership—such as transformational leadership and integral leadership—are based on a fundamentally different approach to human motivation, interaction and accomplishment. A key question is: What leadership is necessary to lead organizations that are no longer conceived as mechanistic, closed systems?

The integral leadership model, primarily attributed to philosopher Ken Wilbur, asserts that changes to business systems must be supported by individual behavior, which demands personal commitment, a supportive organizational culture, and shared values.

Wilbur expands the matrix for effective and sustainable leadership:

	INTERIOR	EXTERIOR
INDIVIDUAL	Personal Meaning	Individual Behavior
COLLECTIVE	Organizational Culture and Shared Values	Business Systems and Processes

A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, and Spirituality (Ken Wilber, 2001); and Integral Leadership Summit 2002 http://www.inspiralworld.org

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Power—its sources and manifestations—is present in all four quadrants. And within each quadrant, both "power over" and "power to" are important. Significantly, an increased emphasis on "power to" opens greater possibility for collaborative power, or "power with." Collaborative power is founded on applied knowledge and trust in action.

The theme in "new science"—physical and social sciences—is our interrelatedness. There is a greater emphasis on ways to optimize individual and collective "power to" and "power with." New understandings about quantum physics, self-organizing systems, and chaos theory have contributed to the modern consciousness that considers the possibilities of:

- Order out of chaos (stability is neither guaranteed nor desirable; there is great power in meaning making to sustain us through chaotic times)
- Systemic nature of life (nature of fractals—diverse and intricate patterns created by defining a few basic principles and then relying on great amounts of individual freedom)
- Webs of interconnections (underlying processes in living systems that give them the extraordinary capacity to adapt and grow as required).

Chaos theory and feminist scholarship are integral parts of our emerging understanding of what makes living systems function and evolve. By their influence, for the first time in history, science is focusing more on relationships than on hierarchies. See *The Chalice and the Blade*, (Eisler, 1987). A central motif of twentieth century feminist literature, for example, has been to probe existing power relations and then consider alternative ways of perceiving and using power: of power as affiliation. This significantly informs our current trends for seeking "win/win" solutions to problems and move from an "either/or" mentality to a more inclusive and empowering "both/and" approach. It is also relevant to what is increasingly understood as the networked nature of all life. It is a vital reaffirmation of the dignity and worth of all of humanity. The "new science" of the natural, physical world keeps reminding us that this is a participative universe and that nothing living lives alone.

> "Everything comes into form because of relationship. We are constantly called to be in relationship—to information, people, events, ideas, life. Even reality is created through our participation in relationships. We choose what to notice; we relate to certain things and ignore others. Through these chosen relationships, we co-create our world." *Leadership and the New Science*, (Wheatley, 1999)

To lead organizations of people—living systems—through unrelenting change and chaos at superhuman rates of speed, leaders have to access the power of applied knowledge, trust and awareness in themselves and others. A living system, according to Wheatley, requires self-knowledge in three critical areas:

1. People need to be connected to the fundamental identity of the organization or community. Who are we? Who do we aspire to become? How shall we be together?
2. People need to be connected to new information. What else do we need to know? Where is this information to be found?
3. People need to be able to reach past traditional boundaries and develop relationships with people anywhere in the system. Who else needs to be working with us?

Truly generative and enduring power in relationships is about applied knowledge, trust and a quality of presence as much as anything else. As you shape yourself as a leader, your power lies in being able to take action consistent with your values, your ethics and standards. As you evolve through different levels of personal and professional development, you discern what "games" you are willing to play in this life. Your power may be expressed in choosing to stay in the game where you are, playing by the existing rules, working it so that the game is in your favor. You may express your power by choosing to change the rules so that you and others play that game differently—perhaps toward a different end. You may express your power by choosing to create a new game, preferably one in which there is less suffering and more joy. Your innate and most authentic power lies in being able to choose how and who you will be, no matter what the circumstances.

Your power to lead begins with the Self and extends in relationship to the "other." Leadership excellence is about leading from the inside out.