Why, What For, Where, and How—or, Leadership 101

Why do we do what we do? What motivates us? For most of us, life consists of a series of algorithmic and heuristic tasks: things we do repeatedly, almost by rote, paired with things we must approach in a new way each time (Pink, 2011). Between eating breakfast, driving to the office, wrestling our inboxes to zero, driving home, eating dinner, and doing the household chores, we have decisions to make: what birthday gift should we purchase for a long-time friend? Should we read a self-help book, or would a beachy novel do us more good? For both algorithmic and heuristic tasks, we do well to name our motivations: what forces, internal and external, contribute to how we structure and choose to use our time? Pink (2011) has noted that most, if not all, human motivation boils down to one of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. That is, most of our behaviors can be traced to our desire to direct our own lives, to be masterfully good at something, and/or to connect and contribute to something larger than ourselves. For example, we may maintain a clear inbox because we value having our lives and commitments in good order (autonomy and competence), or—less compellingly—we may maintain a clear inbox because we want others to think that we are very quick and responsive. As we identify and name the reasons for why we behave as we do, we empower ourselves to make strategic changes based on whether our actions and desires align with our chosen core values and beliefs. For those with leadership responsibilities, of course, questions about motivation and aspiration, as well as the context in which these play out, take on added urgency, as they must tap into the "why" and "what for" behind team members' actions if they want to collaborate most effectively with them in accomplishing the organization's goals.

Motivation, Aspiration, Context

Motivation, the "why" that people bring to a task, affects their enthusiasm and persistence; it also shapes the way they imagine that task to begin with. The "what for" of aspiration, or the positive end-state that an individual envisions when they set about to accomplish something, also plays a major role in the shape that individual's actions take. For example, a university call center that handles new student

enrollments and basic advising, registration, and financial aid questions may start three new employees on the same day. One of them has taken the job because it provides a tuition waiver. He intends to keep it until he has finished the master's degree that will allow him to sit to be a Licensed Professional Counselor; the job meets his desire for autonomy. One of them has taken the job because she did not want to move away from her hometown and could not find anything else that would provide benefits. She intends to stay until she gets something better; the job meets her need for relatedness, though only indirectly, via not requiring her to move. And a third has taken the job because she wants to work with student affairs practitioners on retention-related initiatives; a first-generation college student herself, she wants to stay at this role for as long as she feels she is able to use it to improve student success—or until she is promoted into another role that will give her more ability to help students. For her, the job satisfies multiple desires at once and is thus likely to become a key part of her life. It does not take a particularly savvy leader to know that the second employee is the least likely to perform her task with energy and enthusiasm and that she will probably be the first to resign. Yet even an employee of this sort, one who seems devoid of motivations and aspirations that might suit her for her role, can be invested in and developed in a way that benefits her and moves the organization toward achieving its goals—if her upline understands how to do that.

Employees and the organization both benefit when team members' motivations and aspirations align with organizational context—the "where" and the "how." To take a different example: a newly hired faculty member expresses to their chair an aspiration to serve on important departmental committees. How should the chair understand this request? The chair, if they are wise, will first tease out the faculty member's motivation: do they want to make a case for early promotion (autonomy), get to know their senior colleagues (relatedness), or better understand their institution's culture (competency)? Knowing the motivation, the chair can then help to shape the faculty member's specific aspirations within their departmental and institutional context. Is the campus culture such that it tolerates heavy influence by junior colleagues, or should this faculty member pay their proverbial dues for a while before seeking to exercise their autonomy? Would the faculty member find social connections more readily by visiting a

local brewery on Friday afternoons? And can cultural competency be mastered more quickly by some means other than service on high-profile committees? Motivation and aspiration serve respectively as a team member's engine and rudder of progress, and a savvy manager will know how to help employees achieve their goals given the cultural currents in which that employee sets sail. In turn, that manager can contribute most effectively to the progress of the organization when they can strategically and deliberately align employees' motivations and aspirations with those of the whole team—context writ large.

Five strategies can help leaders harmonize the motivations and aspirations of individual team members with organizational context. First, as they tease out employee motivation, wise managers distinguish between personal motivations and core employee needs. More than 70 years of research in psychology and organizational behavior have identified core employee needs to be safety and security, group affiliation, and predictability (Kellerman, 2004), and these in turn inform the motivations of at least a significant portion of most teams. While some individuals may have motivations all their own that sometimes prove quite compelling (e.g., "I want to do well in this job so that I can help my father pay his medical bills"), primary attention, the sort that shapes process and gives rise to new initiatives, needs to be given to the core needs that are shared across most teams. Individuals on teams may understand these categories differently, however. Some employees need more feedback than others in order to feel a sense of safety and security; others may require higher levels of interaction and connectivity to feel affiliated with the group. Similarly, different individuals have varying levels of tolerance for change, surprise, and outside-the-routine occurrences. No manager can be expected to adapt to each employee's preferences at all times—and neither would that be possible except in a workplace full of clones—but some awareness of the general preferences of the team, along with understanding which team members may have an unusual understanding of one or more of these core needs, will allow managers to display the sort of cultural sensitivity that helps teams to feel seen and cared for.

Similarly, savvy leaders manage the comparisons, contexts, and possibilities that typically shape people's aspirations. Festinger (1954) notes that an individual's "stated 'level of aspiration' is actually a statement of what he considers a good performance to be. In other words, it is his evaluation, at the time,

of what score he should get, that is, his evaluation of his ability" (p. 2). Others' evaluation of that individual contributes to how they imagine their own potential, as does the field of comparison in which they exist (Festinger, 1954, pp. 1-3). To take a simple example, an entry-level employee who takes a job in an office where the last new employee was promoted after 18 months will likely set their sights on something similar—or perhaps better if that employee knows they are better qualified and more capable. Not surprisingly, people tend to compare themselves to others whom they perceive to be like themselves in some important way (Festinger, 1954, p. 3), so for a leader, being strategic about establishing points of likeness among employees may be a key strategy. Given a new team member who is smart, hard-working, and short-tempered, it would be wise for the manager to assign as their mentor an older employee who is similarly smart and hard-working but also patient and kind.

Third, wise leaders use context to shape possibilities, as people tend to set their personal goals and aspirations based on what they perceive to be a likely outcome in their situation. A Honda-driving middle manager who transfers into an office where every upper-manager drives a Mercedes may begin to imagine their next career phase in terms of a German luxury brand, but that same middle manager, positioned in a different context, may instead imagine the next phase in terms of a more flexible schedule, more meetings in the C-suite, more high-profile projects, more time holding the floor in team meetings, more fires to put out, or a monogrammed company briefcase. The ways that employee's aspirations take shape will, in turn, shape their behavior, as well as how they feel about the progress they make toward their aspirations. As Shah and Kruglanski (2008) note, "goals, like other knowledge structures, can be automatically activated by the environmental context in which they are pursued, and . . . such activation can have significant self-regulatory implications for behavior and emotional experience" (p. 223). A leader looking to help his team shape their aspirations in a productive way will thus pay deliberate attention to status and progress markers they encourage and display in their environment, knowing that they will set a course for their team's behavior and even emotional realities. If an invitation to present in a team meeting tends to predict later success, for example, an employee receiving their first agenda item will likely see it as a significant opportunity and attach emotional significance to it. Similarly, an

employee in that same context who wants to present an idea to a group but is instead directed to send a summary email may be far more disappointed than the facts of the situation would seem to warrant. A leader needs to approach such team dynamics in a self-aware fashion, understanding the significance they hold for the ways that employees imagine their futures.

Finally, wise leaders regularly help people imagine their future selves, knowing that people adopt, evaluate, affirm, and/or change their aspirations and goals continually, based on their desired self-picture (King, 2008). To a large degree this process happens as people realistically appraise themselves and others, both in terms of advantages and limitations (Bondi, 1991), and set a course accordingly. On a macro level, people are engaged in a constant process of imagining possible selves that they might claim, an undertaking that involves both taking steps to prepare for potential futures and processing through lost goals or mourning the loss of selves that no longer seem possible (King, 2008). On a micro level, too, people daily set goals that move them toward certain aspirations and away from others, though these micro goals are sometimes formulated less deliberately, or mostly in response to circumstances. To take an example: a faculty member with a macro goal of publishing a seminal work of anthropological research will need to set micro or daily goals that allow them to balance their competing responsibilities, one of which is teaching. That faculty member, hoping to free up as much time as possible for a trip to an archive, sets a personal goal of grading 300 10-page essays in a day. Of course, that faculty member will soon realize that their reading speed limits their ability to achieve this goal. But even a more realistic goal—30 essays, for instance, or the papers from one section of a history course—may be hindered by a chatty colleague lurking in the doorway of the office or the fact that not all of the 30 students in the class turned in their work on time. Aspirations adjust themselves to context, and sometimes context wins. Leaders cannot control for all these factors, but they can help their team members plan for them and, when necessary, revise their approach.

Finally, wise leaders help those in their circle of influence to adopt effective daily behaviors that will help them realize their best possible selves. A department chair who wants to help a faculty member who wants to imbed deeply in the university and local community, for example, might take care to

schedule faculty members with school-aged children for classes that occur during the school day, for the chair knows the importance of work-life balance and presence at family activities. Or conversely, they may assist a faculty member who is having trouble pursuing their research agenda with applying for a sabbatical. At the same time, the future self that a particular team member imagines may not align well with organizational goals, and at that point, the responsibility to help the team member make decisions about how to proceed rests with leadership as well. A faculty member who wants to pursue a serious research agenda in a jet propulsion lab but who is also teaching five sections per term at a community college would likely benefit from an honest conversation with their supervisor. While leaders have many tasks within the workplace, then, primary among them is finding ways to help team members identify and understand their core motivations, to evaluate and adopt meaningful and realistic aspirations, and to weigh their own motivations against core employee needs shared across the organization—all within the context of the organization as a whole. When appropriate, and in the context of core employee needs and organizational goals, they may also to shift the context in ways that attune it to the individuals on the team, or, in turn, they may ask team members to make their own adjustments.

This dance of motivation, aspiration, and context does not always follow the leader, and to be fair, it varies greatly depending on the level and context in which a leader functions. Indeed, leaders must undertake this process for themselves as well: as contextual reality, motivation, and aspiration bump against one another, everyone must learn to adjust the ways that they narrate their own life stories if they want to preserve a sense of meaning and purpose in their work (Smith, 2017). A person who was a star basketball player in middle school but topped out at 5’6” will—if they are wise—shift their aspirations from being a professional player to being a coach, or perhaps they will use their skills to earn a scholarship at a smaller school that will finance their training in an unrelated field. Similarly, a dean on the fast track to a college presidency whose child is diagnosed with a debilitating illness will have to find a new way to tell their story: do they continue to pursue career goals? If so, they will need to make room in their narrative for strong support systems. Do they shift, instead adopting a caregiver role and settling into a mid-level administrative position that provides needed flexibility? If so, they will need to tell the

tale of their values-driven choices. A more experienced colleague, another parent of a child with a serious illness, and medical personnel may each in turn help that person to adjust both macro and micro aspirations around contextual realities. And, as appropriate, that dean's upline can use their role as Provost to shift the context in such a way that the dean can still operate from their core motivations and achieve meaningful—if not the original—aspirations. Yet in the end, this dean must own that process and make the adjustments that will enable them to tell their story in a way that makes sense for them. Leaders must first of all lead themselves.

Leadership Theory

Many of the most prevalent theories of leadership focus on the triad of motivation, aspiration, and context. Beginning at the beginning, we see Confucius defining leadership as the act of moderating among the demands of relationships, values, and process—the collective, beliefs and commitments, and the organization's *modus operandi*. Aristotle describes leadership similarly, though in the context of persuasive communication: the rhetorical triangle of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, or the message, personal qualities, and emotional appeals that a person uses to persuade others during a moment of interaction (Müller & Turner, 2010). Positive and EQ-heavy management styles (e.g., visionary, coaching, affiliative, and democratic) typically describe an effective team as emerging from a balance between individual needs and organizational context; a wise leader uses strategies such as vision-casting, mentorship, exploring shared values and interests, and inviting joint participation to achieve this. By contrast, less positive management styles, such as pace-setting, with its demands to "keep up or get out," and commanding, with its "because I said so" approach, tend to downplay the role that employee motivations and aspirations might play in team effectiveness, except insofar as these might be used to weed out the weak (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). A commanding or pace-setting leader, in fact, may encourage harmful employee motivations such as an overwhelming desire for prestige or a vengeful attitude toward another colleague if those contribute to making a particular employee a super-performer or toward speeding the organizational along toward achieving its own goals. Williams (2006) describes highly

effective and successful leaders as those who can adjust established processes and precepts to individual use-cases; the "unique originality of individual responses" separates highly effective leaders from those who merely get by (p. 30). Good leaders balance individuals with organization, and they do so by a series of day-to-day engagements and decisions.

Beyond this, major approaches to and theories of leadership all tend to assume this balance between individual and organizational needs, moderated by the person of the leader. Yet they differ in their approach to motivation, aspiration, and context, as well as in their ideas about what levers a leader must pull to achieve the greatest effect:

- Transformational leadership, a contrast to transactional leadership, emphasizes the importace of the leader for changing attitudes and values of those on the team, as opposed to merely assuring compliance. To do this, the leader must form and articulate a vision of the future that is contextually savvy; they must also engender trust in the team and empower team members to participate fully (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007). Transformational leadership theory describes employee belief and attitude as the primary engine of success in an organization, and it is the task of the leader to shape those.
- Greenleaf's famous essay "The Servant as Leader" (1970) makes the point that the servant-leader, a leader who serves first (rather than leading first), will ask questions about whether other people's core needs are being met: do those on the team grow and display the characteristics of health, freedom, autonomy, etc.? Servant-leadership theory emphasizes that employee motivation and aspiration are created by having a leader whose own motivations and aspirations include the success and well-being of those on the team. Employees and leaders function in a feedback loop, where the leader's care for the team assures that the organizational context is healthy and that goals are achieved.
- Behavioral leadership theory emphasizes the extent to which the leader's behavior sets the tone for the organization, shaping employee aspirations and organizational context in turn. A leader who chooses to prioritize their team's well-being in a time of crisis, for instance, is likely to be

able to command loyalty and improve morale, while a leader who prioritizes accomplishing a task will likely have a team that feels satisfied with their productivity. Behavioral leadership theory offers more flexibility than servant-leadership theory, allowing a leader to adopt varying approaches depending on the context. Sometimes, for instance, helping the team rally in a time of emergency may prove more necessary than seeking always and first to serve core employee needs.

- Functional leadership theory emphasizes the role a leader plays in making sure the team is properly resourced and supported to accomplish its goals. The leader's focus is making sure the task gets done, and functional leadership theory suggests that the best way for this to happen is for the leader to focus on fully developing and casting a vision for the whole team. Like servant-leadership and behavioral leadership theory, functional leadership theory focuses on the importance of the leader's investment in their team; this investment, however, tends to be more practical and operational in nature, revolving around training, resources, and other non-affective assets.
- Contingency leadership theory, sometimes also called situational leadership, emphasizes the importance of context to a leader's success. Leaders succeed or fail based on how skillfully they manage the elements of their context within which their performance happens. To the extent that the people on the team are part of the context, contingency leadership theory emphasizes the balance between leader and team; however, its overall emphasis falls on the realities of organizational culture, the larger context in which the organization functions, and other factors that affect performance and outcomes.
- The Great man or trait theory has received significant criticism in recent years for its suggestion that great leaders are not made, but born with inherent gifts such as ambition, "grit," and confidence that tend to shape the motivations and aspirations of the team to perform in a certain way. Per this theory, a gifted and natural leader will succeed regardless of the context in which they function.

- Transactional leadership forms a negative contrast to transformational leadership, with the role of the leader being understood as "chief compliance officer" rather than as someone who earns buy-in by shaping the visions of those on the team. Transactional leaders are often effective in the short term, but because they operate by systems of rewards and punishments, they cannot bring about meaningful contextual change or inspire higher-level motivations and aspirations. Transactional leadership is related to behaviorist leadership, which aims to "train" employees to respond in a predictable fashion to external cues.
- Participative leadership involves employees in decision-making and is common in higher educational environments. While participative leadership rightly tends to pay keen attention to employee motivation and aspiration, it sometimes leads to less effectiveness in the short-term, as contextual goals and outcomes play a secondary role to the way the team feels affectively at any given moment. As in any participative democracy, processes sometimes slow down the machinery.
- Authentic leadership "emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, self-discipline, and conviction" as the leader follows their own values (Spain, 2019). It requires the leader to have a well-defined "true north" (George & Sims, 2007) that informs how they treat the team and that plays an important role in setting the organizational context. Authentic leaders behave with consistency, which can lead to a healthy organizational context and motivated team, provided that leader's values include employee well-being. The effectiveness of an authentic leader depends to a large extent on whether their true north aligns well with the overall goals of the organization.
- Relationship leadership theory—as the name suggests—holds that the most effective leaders are those who make their highest priority their relationships with team members. Relational leaders tend to be people- rather than task-focused, and to have a coaching or mentoring approach to leading. While relational leaders easily prioritize employee motivation and aspiration, they may struggle to attend to and articulate organizational context.

- Finally, as though to acknowledge the pendulum swinging between people and process, team members and organizational context, the integrated psychological leadership model emphasizes the need to balance the needs and motivations of team members with the demands of the task as well as the leader's own needs.

Over the years, an increasing emphasis on the need for self-awareness among leaders has emerged. Dale Carnegie's 1936 self-help book How to Win Friends and Influence People, for example, offers seven rules that have often been applied in a leadership context, yet none of these rules points directly back to the need for a leader to know and govern their own motivations and aspirations. Instead, Carnegie's thought centers on relationships, which he understands as a means to an end: Carnegie positions the reader of his book as a salesperson or marketer who will increase their own influence and ability to accomplish their goals by learning certain key social skills. Chief among these is learning what the other person values and what interests them. While Carnegie's third principle, to "arouse in the other person an eager want," speaks to the role that a leader can play in shaping employee aspirations, it does so in a way that is unapologetically pragmatic. The end to be accomplished matters more than the private lives of the people engaged in the process.

The contrast with more recent leadership literature shows clearly in Stephen Covey's milestone 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (1989), which similarly emphasizes the importance of listening to and seeking common ground and shared possibilities with team members. Perhaps because of its more recent approach, however, it also spells out the importance of self-storying and self-care. Covey sees self-awareness as a task for people at all levels in an organization—not something a leader alone needs to embrace—though what each of his seven habits looks like varies by role and application. The CEO of a major corporation, for example, cannot listen to the thousands who directly or indirectly report to them in the same way that a leader of a team of five can. Finally, John Maxwell anchors represents another popular approach with his 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership (2007). As leaders follow these "laws," the argument goes, so also will team members follow the leader. Maxwell's sound advice touches all aspects of a leader's role, including their ability level, their daily practices, their values, the respect and trust they

inspire, their ability to read context, their ability to wield emotional influence, the quality of their inner circle, and their willingness to self-sacrifice. While Maxwell frames his laws in terms of the leader's behaviors, he incorporates a fully fledged understanding of the emotional demands of leading and following, as well as a nuanced understanding of leadership decision-making within organizational and cultural contexts.

Increased attention to the need for self-awareness among leaders has offered a helpful addition to recent work in leadership studies. Mendonca and Kanungo (2007) note that leaders tend to focus disproportionately on one of three things: people, tasks, or decision-making, and the theories of leadership discussed above bear this out. While a charismatic leader will find ways to attend to all three of these, any individual will have certain natural and learned proclivities that incline them in one direction or another. Within these central tendencies, then, leaders must learn to gauge their motivations toward personal power, organizational power, personal achievement, and social achievement (Mendonca and Kanungo, 2007, pp. 51-52). Not surprisingly, leaders who find organizational power and social achievement most motivating tend to be more altruistic in their approach, yet even a leader who is motivated by a need for personal power can prove effective, given an ethical approach and an ability to earn the trust of the team. Practiced self-awareness can help a leader understand the positive and negative effects of their leadership tendencies. A task-focused leader who feels a keen need for social achievement, for example, may struggle to align their competing needs—finishing a to-do list (which sometimes requires a leader to push a team hard regardless of whether they like it) and mattering in the social sphere (which sometimes requires doing a popular thing rather than an efficient one).

Mendonca and Kanungo's approach offers a helpful primer for a leader looking to understand their own motivations in more nuance, yet it limits itself in its assumption that leaders are motivated only by needs for power and achievement. The basic motivations with which we began this discussion—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—describe leaders as much as team members, and while they may dovetail with the desire for power and achievement, they also make room for leaders whose motivations are complex, layered, and ultimately human. A stay-at-home mother who starts a home-based business to

assure financial stability/autonomy for her family may, in time, find that she enjoys and desires the relationships the business gives her (relatedness) and that she also finds her own mastery of her craft energizing (competence). She may also discover in time that her business allows her to donate to causes in which she believes, to produce products that measurably improve people's lives, and that allow her to live out her own ethical commitments with integrity. Her business has brought her power and achievement, but she did not seek those as her chief ends.

Similarly, as leaders grow more self-aware about how their aspirations fit with the context in which they lead, they will be more able to position themselves in situations where they are likely to flourish. A task-focused leader of an admissions office is likely to shine at crunch times, such as the week before the application deadline, enrollment deposit day, or the week when acceptance packets hit students' inboxes: they can do a great deal of work very quickly, and they can engage a team to support the process, as they aspire to the knowledge that they have completed their work well. They would dislike the murk of transition periods, however, or the times when planning rather than execution dominates the calendar; nothing would annoy a task-focused leader more than a drawn-out RFP period to select a new software platform or a lengthy iterative process of writing policies. By contrast, a decision-maker is likely to shine during times of strategic planning or project launches but may grow impatient as the execution phase drags on—and indeed, they may be so eager to make more decisions that they struggle to stay the course until a project is complete. A people-focused leader likely maintains the more or less constant goodwill of their team and can likely garner quick cooperation when it is needed. At the same time, they may struggle to make executive decisions that will disappoint certain team members; a people-focused department chair, for instance, may be reluctant to reassign a faculty member's favorite class to a more junior colleague, even if there is clear evidence that the senior faculty member is doing a poor job with that class's delivery.

The answer to the question of why we do what we do, then, has three consistent answers—motivation, aspiration, and context. Imbedded within the ideas of motivation and, to some extent, aspiration is a complex of human desires and strivings for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and

core needs such as safety and predictability—not to mention the private and individual motivations and aspirations that we all hold. Contextual realities act on each of these motivations and aspirations in turn, rewarding or stymying individuals' movements toward achievement, power, significance, or meaning. As leaders act within their natural tendencies to gravitate toward and focus on people, tasks, or decision-making, they learn both their own limits and those of their contexts. The wisest of leaders will adjust as much as possible to align the individuals under their care with the organization's goals, but "as much as possible" is by its very nature delimited by the leader's own capacity, self-awareness, and willingness to compromise and grow. There is no one right way to lead; neither is there a magic formula that assures a team will be effective or that the organization's goals will be accomplished. While an assertion such as this may frustrate a newly minted leader looking for a model to adopt as their own, it in fact offers an opportunity to self-reflect in order to develop a best, individualized path forward.

Common Leadership Must-Haves and Must-Dos

While no one path to positive and effective leadership exists, a study of leadership literature from the past several decades reveals certain common characteristics and practices that tend to contribute to an individual's ability to lead well. Together, these allow team members to operate within their motivations and pursue their aspirations in contexts that they find meaningful and fulfilling. The table below summarizes the sorts of characteristics that manifest commonly among effective leaders:

Table 1. Characteristics of Effective Leaders

Broad Category	Specifics	Literature for Further Reading
Their skills and competencies	Ability to perform the "basics" of the job brilliantly	Tracy, 2010
	Ability to adjust depending on context and circumstances	Williams, 2006
	Excellent credentials and experience	Covey, 2006
	Ability to envision the whole and to set a direction	Tracy, 2010; Marcus, McNulty, Henderson, & Dorn, 2021; Gini & Green, 2013
	Ability to model the relationship between the self and the world, or to understand how outside	Müller & Turner, 2010; Williams, 2006; Kouzes, 2010

	factors and team members affect one another	
	Ability to focus	Tracy, 2010
	Intellectual excellence	Gini & Green, 2013
Their priorities and values	Cooperation; wants to work alongside others	Tracy, 2010
	Team member learning and growth	Kaye, 2010
	Inclusion; encourages all to make a contribution	Kaye, 2010
	Employee well-being	Folkman, 2010; Gini & Green, 2013
	Some passion-area outside the organization	Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010
	Generosity without expectation of repayment	Lederman, 2012
	Creativity & aesthetic sense	Gini & Green, 2013
Their posture toward others	Patience and understanding	Tracy, 2010; Lederman, 2012
	Attitude of service; deep selflessness	Tracy, 2010; Gini & Green, 2013
	Empathy & compassion	Williams, 2006; Tracy, 2010; Gini & Green, 2013
	Respectful behavior	Folkman, 2010; Covey, 2006; Tracy, 2010
	Fairness and consistency	Folkman, 2010; Covey, 2006; Gini & Green, 2013
	Transformational, inspirational style	Williams, 2006
Their virtues	Approachability, positivity	Folkman, 2010; Baldoni, 2010; Lederman, 2012
	Welcomes feedback	Folkman, 2010; Covey, 2006
	On-brand for the company	Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010; Covey, 2006
	Self-awareness	Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007; Spain, 2019; Brown, 2018
	Trustworthiness, with good intentions	Covey, 2006; Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007
	Consistency, person of integrity	Tracy, 2010; Covey, 2006
	Courage	Rosen, 2010; Gini & Green, 2013
	Cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance)	Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007
	Honesty	Gini & Green, 2013

As the table above shows, effective leaders tend to be competent, to value things outside their own agenda, to behave kindly and respectfully toward others, and to exercise virtues that show them to be people of quality. They also avoid what Izzo (2017) calls the thieves of happiness: control, conceit,

coveting, consumption, and comfort. These—in brief—revolve around trying to force things to turn out in a particular way, or what in a leader might be seen as an insistence on achieving outcomes and goals at all costs; ego, or a person's need to prove their significance by making a mark; over-comparison or competition with others; seeking happiness in things or rewards; and sticking with what is known and predictable rather than taking important risks. What Collins (2001) calls a Level 5 Leader, the sort of person who can lead an organization to "make the leap" from modest to remarkable success, also displays these positive characteristics. This sort of leader, the polar opposite of the grandiose celebrity CEO, acts in the interests of the company as a whole; is humble and modest yet stubbornly patient in pursuing the overall good; and is retiring and kind but also fearless.

Leadership literature also suggests that effective leaders approach tasks in a consistent fashion. While the specific to-do list may vary from one position or task to the next, the broad-stroke approach to leadership follows a guiding pattern:

Table 2. Leadership Tasks

Broad Category	Specifics	Literature for Future Reading
Strategy and Goal-Setting	Create priorities and define key steps to achieve them	Tracy, 2010
	Behave strategically and communicate strategy to others	Zenger, 2010; Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010
	Instill a clear vision and purpose	Vicere, 2010; Rosen, 2010
	Clarify expectations	Covey, 2006
	Define people, tasks, and decision-making roles	Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007
	Identify resource needs and decisive process points	Cohen, 2005
Organizational Alignment	Create functional alignment across the organization	Bardwick, 2010
	Create good feeling	Goleman & Boyatzis, 2002
	Accept responsibility for staff and engage talent	Tracy, 2010; Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010
	Tell a story to generate buy-in; persuade, inspire, motivate	Spain, 2019; Walton, 2004; Zenger, 2010
	Create productive anxiety	Rosen, 2010
	Define role behaviors for the group	Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007
	Eliminate low-trust behaviors (e.g., meetings after meetings); extend trust as appropriate	Covey, 2006
	Empower the team	Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007

	Advocate for the team and give recognition	Kaye, 2010; Folkman, 2010
Executive Functions	Innovate and market	Tracy, 2010
	Solve problems and make decisions	Tracy, 2010
	Get it done; follow through and bring things to completion	Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010; Baldoni, 2010; Covey, 2006; Tracy, 2010
	Demonstrate proficiency and practice until important procedures are automatic	Smallwood & Ulrich, 2010; Cohen, 2005
	Act decisively, quickly, and with purpose	Cohen, 2005
Rhetorical functions	Be a role model	Tracy, 2010
	Engage emotionally and listen well	Zenger, 2010; Kaye 2010; Lederman, 2012; Brown, 2018; Covey, 2006
	Provide feedback and perspective	Kaye, 2010; Folkman, 2010
	Give a clear and truthful picture of the organization that guides behavior and communication	Folkman, 2010; Vicere, 2010
	Bring positive energy	Lederman, 2012
Adaptability and responsiveness	Respond flexibly based on context/situation	Williams, 2006
	Define organizational boundaries around tasks, functions, hierarchies, cultures, politics, etc.	Williams, 2006
	Communicate openly in order to resolve conflicts and clear confusion; ask people to articulate their own understanding and interpretation of tasks	Folkman, 2010; Brown, 2019
	Right wrongs and make restitution; be accountable and keep commitments	Vicere, 2010
	Show appropriate loyalty tempered with realism	Vicere, 2010
	Seek improvements but avoid perfectionism	Vicere, 2010; Brown, 2018
	Manage varying perceptions and communication styles	Lederman, 2012
	Differentiate, but also recognize the consequences of doing so	Schein & Schein, 2007
	Be present and familiar	Lederman, 2012

As the table above illustrates, the tasks of leadership are rarely those that might occupy the most glamorous seats in our imaginations: blue-sky vision casting, executing an eleventh-hour plan in a panic room, and presiding over a large and complex operative team. Instead, leadership exists much more meaningfully in the day-to-day moments of story-telling and direction-setting, interpersonal relationships, carrying out and improving processes, adapting to new information, and finding ways to work across silos. Leadership proves itself not in the ether of theory but in the dirt and grime of surface-living; it is more immanent than transcendent. Still, without a clear vision, purpose, and understanding of the rhythms of the organization as a whole, a leader is unlikely to know what to do in the day-to-day of the organization where they exercise influence.

How Not to Be a Toxic Leader

When this balance between vision and execution, or between people (motivation, aspiration) and context (processes, policies, products), fails, an organization or its leaders often begin to take on characteristics of toxicity or dysfunction. In recent years, a wealth of attention has been paid to toxic leadership. While no one definition of toxic leadership dominates the conversation, there is general agreement that leaders whose styles may be described as "commanding" or "pace-setting" (Müller, 2010) are likely to fall into that category, while those with more collaborative or supportive styles are not. A commanding or pace-setting style can prove highly effective during a time of crisis. However, over time, leaders of this sort typically break down the team's morale and effectiveness with their monomaniacal focus on what they have determined the direction should be, regardless of the effect on their team members. Another version of leader-focused toxicity occurs when the leader plays a "heroic" role—typically white, male, and American—riding a white horse as he leads the organization into new frontiers, its employees shuffling behind like so many proverbial huddled masses (Higgs, 2009). Besides the obviously denigrating approach such a leader takes to those on the team and the potentially damaging cultural mythos which this understanding of leadership propagates, it also creates impossible expectations for the leader. Finally, a contrasting though equally toxic version of leadership happens when the leader

operates rigidly and predictably, without adjusting their responses to suit the situation or context (Williams, 2006). Such an approach to leadership may be seen as admirably consistent or principled; however, its failure to attend to the practical, the applied, and the everyday means that it lives in the world of either compliance or rote memorization alone: it is less leadership than policy enforcement, and it too results in a deadening of the spirit of the team.

Dysfunctional or toxic behaviors tend to emerge among leaders and organizations as a whole during times of stress: limited resources, understaffing, tight deadlines, and so on (Roter, 2017). A recent study estimates that approximately 20-50% of executives "cause chaos and mayhem" (Furnam, 2015, p. 1)—no doubt unintentionally at times. Unintentionally toxic leaders typically lack the characteristics and behaviors of effective leaders discussed above, displaying instead incompetence, rigidity, intemperance, or other characteristics and behaviors that prevent them from working effectively alongside a team to accomplish a goal (Gini & Green, 2013). Of course, not every weakness a leader displays qualifies them as toxic or even ineffective; indeed, the same leader that proves remarkably effective in a time of steady growth and strategic planning may struggle to maintain effectiveness in a crisis. A weakness such as poor oral communication skills may on an everyday basis not cause a significant issue, but at a time when organizational morale is low and a pep talk is needed, it may prove to be a significant—though not necessarily toxic—liability. Strong, clear, well-rehearsed organizational processes, policies, and checks and balances support and assist leaders whose dysfunction results from inadequate skills, stressful circumstances, or mistaken ideas rather than persistent character flaws. Moreover, the same strong organizational systems that assist unintentionally dysfunctional leaders also keep true narcissists from seizing too much power. Competent narcissists such as Napoleon often occupy leadership roles easily and naturally, though they are stymied by boundaries around their ambition (Spain, 2019). Toxic leaders often welcome an atmosphere of chaos, even at times creating "tension and turmoil in order to further their agendas and goals" (Roter, 2017, p. 124), yet strongly articulated processes keep such turmoil at bay.

No group of toxic leaders have been discussed in recent years more than those who fall within the "dark triad": Machiavellianists (or "Machs"), psychopaths, and narcissists (Spain, 2019; Roter, 2017).

These display characteristics such as callousness, corruption, insularity, and more generally evil tendencies that more often than not produce toxicity within the organizations where they are employed (Gini & Green, 2013). As leaders, Machs tend to employ any means necessary, including unethical or illegal ones, to accomplish their personal goals. Machs tend to be manipulative and often deceptive and to see team members as means to their own ends. Psychopaths are often not as intelligent or strategic as machs, and they may not last long as leaders of functional organizations. They typically behave without empathy or remorse, bullying and exercising tyranny over those on the team as they pursue goals that may or may not seem reasonable or logical. Finally, narcissists display unduly high opinions of themselves and often behave in vain and arrogant ways, demanding deference and special treatment in exchange for the "gifts" they give to those who supply them. Narcissists in particular tend to thrive in fear-based environments, where they promise safety to those who follow them with appropriate adulation (Maccoby & Fuchsman, 2020), or in cases where a flashy new leader is desired (Grzesiak, 2023). While most discussions of narcissistic leadership have focused on grandiose narcissism, other sorts of narcissists occasionally occupy leadership roles (Gauglitz, 2022). Vulnerable narcissists tend to withdraw, display characteristics of hypersensitivity and neurosis, and fear failure; pathological narcissists tend to alternate between grandiosity and fear of rejection; and communal narcissists tend to view themselves as the most key members of any community. While narcissism manifests differently in each of these sub-variants, narcissistic leaders of all sorts show a desire and need for the organization to revolve around their personal vision and preferences, and to do this, they tend to introduce leadership methods that are more transactional in nature (Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009), focusing on assuring team members' compliance rather than seeking their buy-in or addressing their motivations and aspirations.

In his landmark study on narcissism, Lasch (1978) traces the rise of contemporary narcissism to—among others—Dale Carnegie, whose rules for winning friends and influencing people serve as a sort of preamble to much of today's leadership literature (p. 58). According to Lasch, Carnegie, Norman Vincent Peale, and others, replaced the Protestant work ethic with a more affective metric for success, where instead of economic stability a successful person enjoys influence and self-fulfillment. The

narcissist in this sort of cultural milieu does not see the world as a space waiting to be conquered by the imperial self, but rather as a field in which personal anxieties and inadequacies can be assuaged (p. 13). The narcissistic leader uses those under their authority to fill gaps in the self, and more often than not this happens as they enact a performative drama where the audience—the narcissist's team—offers praise and adulation that helps the narcissist achieve some peace of mind, at least momentarily. Because this new narcissism substitutes the relationship of an actor to their audience for relational duty or love, however, it depends on a constant dynamic in which the leader performs in hopes of receiving applause, and the team admires—rather than participates in—the leader's activities. Such leaders and teams feed off each other, with the leader needing adoration and the team filling their "own empty senses of self" (DeGroat and Mou, 2020, p. 23) with the leader's afterglow. As DeGroat and Mou (2020) note, "in this mutually reinforcing relationship, both [leader and team] are prone to a form of narcissism" (p. 23). Yet this reinforcing relationship produces ultimately unsatisfying results for all, for a narcissistic leader is unable "to enjoy life in a process involving a growing identification with other people's happiness and achievements" (Lasch, 1078, 41). The narcissist, in short, is unable to lead in a way that balances employee motivation and aspiration with organizational goals, and the team under the thrall of such a leader is unable to see their motivations and aspirations as significant to begin with, much less enjoy their fulfillment.

Organizations that function according to such logic oftentimes display bursts of effectiveness: they may seem highly mission-focused and passionate, and they sometimes enjoy nearly miraculous growth and achievement. Over time, however, the system comes to seem like an end in itself, an obviously superior way of operating. Of course, the engines that power this system—structure, shame, and control, combined with a sort of group-think that silences diverse voices and critical conversation (DeGroat & Mouw, 2020)—give the system durability beyond the life any particular leader. It is hard to remove a narcissistic leader and harder still to un-do the systems in which they are likely to thrive. Organizations that have come to behave in a way that creates and encourages narcissistic leadership can come in any number of flavors, though they tend to act on their employees in coercive ways and to value

power and achievement over other sorts of corporate performance metrics (Schein & Schein, 2017). They also tend to produce characteristics such as a lack of trust, inattention to results, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, and avoidance of accountability among team members and between team members and leadership (Lencioni, 2002). Over time, such situations come to feel unsafe to those inhabiting them, to lead to a rise in emotions such as fear and anger, both of which tend to keep rational thought at bay, and to encourage a Manichean intolerance of open debate, differing views, and questioning authority (Forgas and Crano, 2021). While in healthy organizations employee motivations run the gamut, in dysfunctional organizations that encourage narcissistic leadership, motivation narrows, centering primarily around fear and mistrust; similarly, aspiration reduces in scope, with bare survival occupying a priority space. This in turn leads to the controlling, self-interested, and even paranoid behaviors that further harm both employees who display them and the organizations within which they work. Organizations with dysfunctional leadership end up "autocratic, bureaucratic, and hands-off" versus "friendly, supportive, and productive" (Moore and Lynch, 2007). Dysfunctional leaders' behaviors, including avoidance, withholding information, ostracizing, and spreading gossip, "affects morale, motivation, teamwork, the organizational culture and productivity, as well as the overall health of the organization and followers" (Roter, 2017, p. 123). Organizations of this sort display little or no creativity or innovation, without which it is impossible to progress or undertake needed changes (Roter, 2017). Beyond this, they serve as breeding grounds for unhealthy and even illegal behaviors, including sexual harassment, discrimination, violence in the workplace, crime, corruption and fraud, and situations that lead to trauma-related syndromes (Burke and Cooper, 2016).

Given this cycle, with dysfunctional leaders and organizations feeding one another, how might an organization that wants to engender health proceed? One initial—though not final—answer is to make a space for employees and leaders alike to improve the self-awareness with they operate. Self-awareness includes skills such as recognizing one's own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, and operating within these in a deliberate way. Deliberate behaviors include self-control, framing and reframing situations to encourage positive feeling and action, adapting and problem-solving, and operating with integrity and

discretion. In turn, self-awareness forms part of social awareness, which extends the same listening and attentive behaviors to others that self-aware people extend to themselves. In place of producing cycles of fear and shame, personnel in self-aware organizations habitually read and try to understand others' feelings and perspectives, analyze trends and politics at the organizational level, sense and meet needs where appropriate, seek to manage and dispel conflicts, forge social bonds, collaborate productively with other team members and external stakeholders, and contribute to others' improvement. It is not enough for employees to seek these ends alone; rather, self- and social awareness need to be developed within the organizational context, as without appropriate and positive organizational core values in place, self- and social awareness will not create a productive workspace. A narcissist may recognize their own bad behaviors but, should that narcissist operate from a core belief that others really are inferior to them and ought to occupy subservient roles, they have little chance of leading a healthy organization. Similarly, a person who is aware of the negative undercurrents of feeling among their coworkers may, if they empathize too strongly with them, get pulled into the vortex of negativity rather than working collaboratively toward a more positive workplace culture. The healthiest leaders, employees, and organizations balance self-awareness with ethics and principles, and they never lose sight of the commitments the organization makes to accomplishing its goals. Organizational health involves both being and doing.

How Much Self-Awareness Is Enough?

Increasingly, the task of helping others along the path of self-awareness and identity development rests with the workplace rather than in more traditional places such as family homes, community organizations, and educational spaces (Côté, 2019). This is a task worth undertaking for the workplace, as decades of research have demonstrated the importance of a sense of purpose and personal agency in helping people resolve conflicts and competing voices as they seek to take purposeful action (Côté, 2019, p. 99). At the same time, the need for workplaces to invest simultaneously in helping people to develop a sense of purpose, vision, and identity and in performing the tasks—some of them algorithmic—needed to

finish the day's work places a significant burden on leaders, who must steward company resources while accomplishing their charge. To compound this conundrum, as we have noted, many leaders are themselves not fully actualized human being with a strong sense of mission and purpose, the "true north" or core belief system (George and Sims, 2007). Further, some may have a personal sense of vision but struggle to articulate how that might play out vis-à-vis the workplace. In this present context, then, leadership looks less like a series of strategies or steps to accomplish KPIs than the daily balancing of selves with tasks, people, and processes. To put this differently, a leader's success may be measured less by empirical outputs such as budget dollars and production units than by the health of those in their areas of oversight. If their team grows in self-awareness without descending into naval-gazing paralysis and performs the duties of their employment efficiently and effectively while not becoming mechanistic or unreflective, then the leader has taught the steps of the delicate dance between self-consciousness and the unexamined life.

How might this dance look in practice? As a case study, we can address the ways that a leader might address the very topic we have been discussing—self-awareness—in a multi-generational team. It is a truism that to some extent, self-awareness, or at least awareness of the self as an area of need and authority, is a generational attribute, more prevalent among Millennials than their older counterparts. The workforce in higher education is aging at a somewhat above-average rate, according to a recent report from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (Pritchard, Li, McCheney, & Bichsel, 2019). The median age for higher ed staff is 45, compared to 42 in the population as a whole, with almost a third of the workforce in higher ed being made up of people 55 and older (compared to less than one-fourth elsewhere). While higher ed does not have a disproportionately large percentage of employees under 25 overall, a number of fields within higher ed attract a young workforce that turns over quickly. An average admissions or student advising office, for example, is likely to have a number of young entry-level staff with vastly different life experiences and assumptions than their uplines, which translate into different expectations for how the higher ed workplace should function. How might a 50 year-old leading an advising office proceed?

A first step might be to invite a conversation about the ways that the employees in the office understand their identity to begin with. While individuals do not always behave in ways that their group and cultural affiliations suggest they should, it is likely to be the case that a Millennial will more readily welcome a conversation of this sort than will an older employee. A quick Amazon search yields approximately a thousand search results related to the needs and preferences of "baby boomers," three thousand for "Gen X" and five thousand for "Millennials"—surely a reflection of the extent to which generational self-awareness has grown over time. Today's Millennials simply spend more time reflecting on themselves than do older people. "OK, Boomer" jokes aside, dominant traits of the "boomer" generation suit them well for traditional workplaces: they are relational, ambitious, goal-directed, hard-working, and self-assured. Boomers likely display little work-related angst or self-reflective second-guessing. You can give a Boomer a project and expect that it will be completed without drama. Gen Xers will also complete projects, though they may do so in a less "by the book" fashion, instead valuing their own independence and creativity and exercising a healthy cynicism about established systems and processes. Millennials, by contrast, need a strong "why" to engage fully with a project, and once they do so, they are unlikely to place a high value on the existing *modus operandi*, including hierarchies among personnel at a workplace. Similarly, the way that core needs such as safety and security, group affiliation, and predictability manifest differs greatly depending on which sort of employee is asked about them. For Boomers, for example, safety often lies in having done a job well: the pursuit and accomplishment of an ambitious goal. For Gen Xers, the stereotypical "latch-key" or MTV generation, group affiliation might come not through formal management structures but through collaboration on an inventive and game-changing project. And for smartphone-native Millennials, security, group affiliation, and knowledge or predictability come through mechanisms of consistent connection: feedback from authority figures and the peer group, constant point-in-time tracking of projects, and engaging mentorship experiences (Deal & Levenson, 2016).

A Boomer manager of a Millennial team in an advising office may be frustrated by their penchant for questioning or asking for help rather than seeking an answer to an applicant's financial aid query

independently. They may puzzle over the Millennial teams' interdependent relationships with colleagues, parents, friends, and even technological interfaces; when they learn that an office BBQ is being held at the home of one of the staff's parents—despite the universally agreed upon excellence of the parental house's patio, established via Instagram—they will most likely be baffled. They may wish their Millennial team members were more patient, less eager for immediate gratification, feedback, and validation. They may worry about the irreverence and honest self-expression they overhear in breakroom conversations. And they may wonder about the freedom with which Millennials call their company values into question (Hersey, 2010). Yet they may also admit that they cannot move as fluidly through university hierarchies as their younger colleagues; neither can they establish rapport as readily via text. And, if they are fully self-aware, they may reflect on the times their Millennial counterparts understood the ethical significance of campus decision where they were personally more likely to press on based on the established status quo. They will welcome relationships with others who see and interact with the world differently than they do as a corrective to their own blind spots and rote habits.

Within that same office—to extend this further—a Millennial boots-on-the-ground academic adviser may raise any number of issues with their Gen X immediate upline. For example, they may struggle with the "lone ranger" approach a Gen Xer may take to a problematic student, though with self-awareness, they would see that Gen Xer's individualism as resourcefulness and work to find ways to establish a working partnership based on that. Their Boomer unit head's model of structured achievement may seem to the Millennial adviser to be rigid, to reward blind loyalty, and to reflect generational and position-based arrogance—yet that same Boomer likely excels at establishing and executing processes in an orderly fashion. Each group has its own relative strengths and weaknesses: Gen Xers think well outside the proverbial box but may seem needlessly disruptive, and Millennials demonstrate the power of values-driven work even though they may seem entitled or needy. No doubt as Gen Z enters the workforce we will grapple with the effects of their digital immersion, their mental health challenges, their political progressivism, and their skepticism about information in equally bifurcated ways. Self-awareness

is, for a leader or team member, a key to finding ways to work with those who natural firing-order differs from their own.

Of course, these categorizations are just that: broad-stroke attempts to illustrate the values of large and diverse groups of people. As powerful as categories of this sort are—not to mention labels such as Enneagram or Myers-Briggs type indicators or Cliftonstrengths assessment results—they do not apply universally. At the same time, they offer context for the large question with which we began this section: how much self-awareness is too much? EQ, or "emotional quotient," has been described by myriad leadership gurus as a "must-have" skill, like self-awareness. Much of the burden for encouraging self-aware communication and practice rests with leaders, who can model and make space for their team to work on developing and practicing them. Self-awareness is only the first step in building a functional team, however: knowing why we do what we do does not excuse our every tendency and action or create a demand that others treat us according to our natural proclivities. Neither is it an end in itself—a fascinating but useless exercise in navel-gazing. Rather, it enables each team member to work within their own strengths and tendencies, appreciate those of others, and compensate for their weaknesses for the good of the whole. At the same time, a successful team has, once it reaches its maturing, moved past the highly reflective, analytical sort of self-awareness into something more like what Iris Murdoch calls "the unexamined life."

How does a team make a transition from self-awareness to "just doing it"? For leaders, much of the work to make this happen occurs at the vision-casting phase of an initiative. Just as the first chapter of a novel helps readers to know the major characters, key conflicts, and salient points about the context, the way a leader describes the road ahead, invites participation, and configures the team in relation to one another helps team members to understand how their motivations and aspirations fit within the organizational context they occupy. As Spain (2019) notes, "leaders help their followers to create a story or model for (some aspect of) the world, especially new, confusing, or unanticipated events or experiences" (ch. 1). The task of vision-casting asks the leader to be both the chief interpreter of the context and the chief author of the plot that the team will enact, the idea being that once a story of how

the team will approach a problem or task is set in motion, there will be no ongoing need for deep and continual self-analysis. For Murdoch (1970/1996), private individuals with their highly varied and sometimes inaccessible inner lives learn to live and work together via shared symbol sets that lay ground-rules for cooperative behavior and common interpretation. To illustrate this, she takes the easy example of traffic signage. One individual may look at a stop light and think "crimson," while another thinks "red"; both interpretations are valid, but what matters more is that these two individuals behave the same way in relation to the signal. As Murdoch puts it, "What matters is whether I stop at the traffic lights, and not my color imagery or absence of it. I identify what my senses show me by means of the public schemata which I have learned, and in no other way can this be *known* by me, since knowledge involves the rigidity supplied by a public test" (p. 11). The leader helps the team to know how to recognize a red light, why it exists, and what they should do when they see one, and once that knowledge has become ingrained, there is no need to second-guess it on a daily basis.

Another way to envision a leader might be to imagine a host who prepares a space to entertain a group. Smith (2018) notes the importance of the moment when leaders welcome those on their team to the table—when they invite everyone to "lean in," as it were. Per Smith, "hospitable leaders create space physically, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally where all other forms of moral leadership can be employed . . . Hospitable leaders embrace the mystery of home. We are aware of the need every human being has to be embraced in its inexplicable warmth" (pp. 39, 44). The opposite of narcissistic leaders who arrange the entire organization around their own needs, hospitable leaders assure that the needs of all are attended to, that team members treat each other not as enemies or combatants but as fellow hosts and guests. To do this, leaders must assure that vision, mission, and ground-rules are well articulated at all levels and that others understand and have personally responded to them, that organizational values and priorities are clearly articulated and acted upon, and that communication occurs across silos (Smith, 2018, pp. 136). Smith imagines the power of an organization in which all the team members are so at home that they can openly share their motivations and aspirations, knowing the rest of the team wants them to succeed and has their good as a shared goal. Covey (2006) calls this state, succinctly, trust. For Covey,

trust is built by the sorts of behaviors that typically describe effective leaders: talking straight, treating people respectfully, righting wrongs, showing loyalty, delivering results, improving, being realistic, listening, and so forth. The leader, by this definition, is someone with whom you'd want to have dinner.

Still another understanding of leadership emphasizes its ethical and altruistic components: effective leadership is trying do the most good we can where we are (Singer, 2015). With this definition, the emphasis shifts slightly, highlighting not just the opportunity the leader has but also the limits placed around their ability to enact their vision. Leaders, like team members, are responsible for fitting into their context and knowing the boundaries of their influence. A CEO or university president has a different ability and scope within which to cast a vision than does a manager in a university marketing office or a team lead for a project in the Registrar's office. And within this scope, the leader's own motivations and aspirations thus reveal themselves. While not all leaders are suited for all types of tasks, a leader who cannot find a way to flourish within the confines of the story they occupy may need to reframe their own self-story or—in some cases—end the current chapter and move to a different setting. Similarly, a leader may need to have this conversation with a team member in their area. A team member who aspires to upper-level leadership can learn and even advance from any position, should that person's motivations include learning, understanding, or something else that accords with their current assignment. On the other hand, a team member who aspires to upper-leadership but who also requires continual collaboration, wants to control all aspects of their current assignments, and who struggles to engage others in conversation unless they already share many common values, may find that their motivations and aspirations compete. We all want many things, and sometimes these things do not agree with one another. Yet in the hands of a wise leader, aspirations and motivations can be, if not martialed into alignment, at least known and considered within a larger contextual scope.

There is no one recipe for effective leadership, yet embracing an understanding of it that trains attention on both employee realities (core needs, motivations, aspirations) and the organizational mission, goals, and strategy offers a key first step. The necessary sub-skills and characteristics associated with striking this balance will vary by person, task, and organization, as will the myriad ways that teams will

respond to them. Yet even the attempt at a balance itself helps a leader to guard against the most damaging sorts of toxic behavior, in turn protecting the organization against becoming the sort of place that reproduces its own dysfunction. The leader who helps a team tell its story to itself becomes the leader who helps to shape each team member's vision in line with that of the organization as a whole; this is the leader who empowers the organization with a team that will make it better. The leader who invites the team warmly around a table as co-participants, guests, and valued contributors creates a hospitable environment in which core needs are spoken and met, motivations are acknowledged, and aspirations are achieved. In an environment of this sort, the "why," "what for," "where," and "how" of both team members and the organization as a whole, are known and honored, leading to action that accomplishes the goal.

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