

# LEADERSHIP

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## THE ESSENTIALS

The understanding and practicing of leadership can vary from being somewhat complicated to being very challenging and complex. In this article on leadership, the approach will be to provide some of the essentials of leadership. In this endeavor, the first focus is on what leadership is.

Leadership is primarily focused on reaching goals and objectives and to reach the goals and objectives in cooperation with a team, inspired and motivated by leadership. Put differently, leadership aims to get things done in cooperation with others.

Leadership is a call to action and leadership calls for action. This can be called leadership of the hands.

As part of the call to action and the action following on the call, leaders must inspire, motivate, convince and lead by example to get their teams to do things and get things done.

**Leadership that does not get things done is not leadership, but merely passing time and mostly converting fuel into noise.** At the end of each day, leaders should ask themselves very pertinently what their leadership contributed to get things done.

To get things done leaders need competencies and commitment. The leadership competencies to get things done, which is the primary purpose of leadership and the priority process leaders should be aiming at and engaged in, are:

**1. The competency of situational assessment.** *Leaders must be able to scan the contexts with in which they operate like a fighter pilot scans the space that surrounds him with a radar scan and the radiologist scans the state of the health of a body with a CT scanner. This continuous scanning requires an understanding of trends in the areas of:*

- a. the **economy**, in terms of markets, consumer preferences, supply and demand for products and production and distribution effectiveness and efficiency,
- b. **politics**, in terms of who has power and influence, how this power and influence is used and to whose benefit it is used by the powerful and influential as well as understanding over which power and influence the leader and his group possess in order to use their power and influence to convince or force things for them to benefit,
- c. **society**, in terms of who the people are who have to be served through service delivery and/or who use the goods or services produced and distributed by the leader and his group and also what their needs, preferences, consumer behavior and priorities are,
- d. **technology**, in terms of which instruments can be used for the beneficiation of services and products, from a wide range of tools and techniques, for example from improved husbandry science and techniques in agriculture services and products, to which sophisticated information and computer technologies may be available for improved decision-making, production and delivery,
- e. **legal and regulatory provisions** and changes to make sure that leader and team actions comply with the law and other regulatory mechanisms,
- f. **the ecology**, to remain in harmony with the environment, as failing to do so will lead to declining sustainability of the soil, water, the air and all of the life supporting conditions and systems required for life on earth to thrive and even to merely survive.

**2. The competency of envisioning.**

*Essentially this competency uses the creative and imaginative capacity of the leader to facilitate reachable dreams linked to action into a shared vision. The vision must be a compelling and inspirational vision of an improved and idealistic future. Visions have to inspire, excite and mobilize teams to strive towards and reach the inspiring shared vision.*

**3. The competency of rational analysis.**

*This competency requires understanding and interpretation of the challenges and opportunities in the context and the competency to, through analysis, find the evidence on which to base leadership decision-making. This competency for analysis links to thoughtful and mindful leadership of the head, which requires intelligence, thinking and strategy. The competency of rational analysis links to mind-fulness, focus and experience to, over time, cultivate wisdom in dealing with difficult challenges to which there are no easy answers.*

**4. The competency of implementation,**

*which includes management aspects where programs and projects are programmed from the vision and the plans, operationalized, budgeted and costed, rolled out and where delivery takes place on the ground and in reality. Leaders should be managers and managers should be leaders - depending on which competencies are required at a given time.*

**5. The competency of control** through observation of progress - or the lack thereof, and monitoring and evaluation of and for performance. This control, monitoring and evaluation are necessary in order to act appropriately to keep things on track, if things are working out, or to change tack and tracks, if things are not going well. Progress and performance have to be monitored and evaluated and confirmed, if objectives are being reached, or corrected if objectives are not met.

**6. The competency to learn and to build** the lessons learnt back into the functioning of the system or organization. This competency requires systems thinking capabilities and result in systemic continuous quality improvement as the lessons learnt inform systems re-design.

Leadership is about getting things done. This is leadership of the hands, which is a fundamental necessity for leadership and leaders. Leadership of the hands, as active and action leadership results in reaching objectives and performance, if linked to the competencies of envisioning, analysis, implementation, control and learning.

Leadership of the hands as active leadership needs to be integrated with leadership of the head. Leadership of the head requires analysis, thinking, logic, systems thinking, intellectual and cognitive capacity, comparison, knowledge, validation, verification and reasoned rationality. Leadership of the head requires competency in the areas of:

- **Thinking** based on the finding and assessing facts and evidence and determining choices based upon verified evidence using logic and rational reasoning.

- **Observation** in the most objectively possible way of what the situation is, what the challenges and options are and to correlate and validate observation against reality while specifically compensating for own subjectivity and individual and group bias which may be based on ideology or emotion rather than on ideas and evidence.

- **Decision-making** on the basis of the consideration in a mindful and thoughtful way what the factual base as discovered points to as a considered and wise course of action.

- **Implementation** competencies, again requiring planning, doing, assessing, learning and adapting capacity with the team and the leader.

The cerebral, cognitive, evidence and rational leadership of the head has to be combined with active leadership of the hands for impact and effect in reaching goals and objectives effectively and efficiently.

**DON'T BE  
UPSET BY THE RESULTS  
YOU DIDN'T GET WITH THE  
WORK YOU DIDN'T DO.**

It is important to realize that leadership of the hands and the head are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for effective and ethical or good leadership. Leadership of the hands and the head have to be considered and practiced in the context of leadership of the heart and leadership of the soul, which refers to the pathos and ethos of leadership and relates to feeling and morality and ethics. Leadership of the heart requires humanity, caring, empathy, consideration, sympathy and emotional intelligence.

Essentially the basics of leadership of the heart combined with leadership of the hands is best captured in the golden rule of doing unto others as you want done onto yourself.

Mere leadership of the hands can be very instrumental and mere leadership of the head can be very cold and clinical if not imbedded in leadership of the heart which links it to caring and empathy.

**Concretely leadership of the heart can be linked to the competencies of emotional intelligence which have been identified as:**

- *The competency of self-awareness, which requires of leaders to know and deal constructively with their individual personal strengths and weaknesses.*
- *The competency of social awareness which is the competency to act appropriately and with considerateness and care in social situations.*
- *The competency of self-management which requires leaders to recognize, understand and manage their own emotions through competent and appropriate self-management.*
- *The competency of relationship management in order to recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others through competent and appropriate relationship management.*

**In summary, emotional intelligence is about self-awareness, altruism, personal motivation, empathy and the ability to love and be loved by friends, partners, family, team members and other groups of people with whom the leaders engage and interact.**

Leadership of the soul is about ethics and morality.

It is about leading good and leading well.

In leadership contexts ethical competence as a first step of enabling conditions requires a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes, that enable a person to adequately deal with moral challenges and make decisions and behaviors that meet high ethical standards

Concretely, the competencies required to lead ethically and morally have been identified as honesty, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Ethical leadership competencies result in good leadership whereas unethical leadership results in bad leadership. The impact of these two poles of leadership of the soul for a public governance context is captured in the following quote:

***“Good leaders globally... guide governments of nation-states to perform effectively for their citizens. They deliver high security for the state and the person; a functioning rule of law; education; health; and a framework conducive to economic growth. They ensure effective arteries of commerce and enshrine personal and human freedoms. They empower civil society and protect the environmental commons.”***

Crucially, good leaders also provide their citizens with a sense of belonging to a national enterprise of which everyone can be proud. They knit rather than unravel their nations and seek to be remembered

for how they have bettered the real lives of the ruled rather than the fortunes of the few.

Less benevolent, even malevolent, leaders deliver far less by way of performance. Under their stewardship, roads fall into disrepair, currencies depreciate and real prices inflate, health services weaken, life expectancies slump, people go hungry, schooling standards fall, civil society becomes more beleaguered, the quest for personal and national prosperity slows, crime rates accelerate, and overall security becomes more tenuous. Corruption grows. Funds flow out of the country into hidden bank accounts. Discrimination against minorities (and occasionally majorities) becomes prevalent. Civil wars begin.” Rotberg (2003)

The benevolent effects of good leadership of the soul as ethical and moral leadership as opposed to bad leadership as unethical and immoral leadership of the soul in the context of governance can also be worked out in other contexts of society such as the political, economic and social contexts.

**In conclusion essentially leadership is about setting and reaching visionary purposes, goals and objectives through getting things done with others in ways which are effective and ethical. It is as simple and as complicated and complex as that. It requires capacity and commitment from leaders who are found not only in the formal leadership positions in a team, but within all of the leadership spread throughout the team.**

It is of less use if the leader and the members of the team have capacity to lead towards results, but not the commitment to do so, or alternatively the commitment to attempt leadership, but not the capacity to do so. Effective and ethical leadership requires capacity and commitment to practice and learn from leadership of the hands, the heart, the head and the soul. In essence, it is about conscious and conscientious committed and competent leadership by and for all concerned. ■