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LEADING WITH COURAGE

Unleashing the power
of moral, purposeful and
emotionally intelligent
leadership.



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Greetings, Friends and Supporters!

Moral Courage: Unleashing the power of Moral, Purposeful, and Emotionally Intelligent Leadership is the theme of this issue of INSIGHTS.

Why this theme now? According to Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report 2019, 76% of employees are looking to their CEOs to take the lead in addressing global and societal issues such as climate change, equity, and economic shifts. Addressing social and economic issues takes courage—specifically, moral courage.

Moral courage is defined as acting in a manner that shows concern for others despite potentially negative consequences. For example, moral courage involves making decisions that prioritize employees, their families, other stakeholders and the community over maximizing short-term earnings.

Moral actions differ from ethical actions. Ethical actions are defined by adherence to laws and social norms. In contrast, moral actions are those taken in the best interests of society and fellow humans, even if not required by law. For example, this could include reinvesting a portion of earnings in employee development programs and family benefits rather than dividends or stock buybacks. Another example of a moral action is to voluntarily reduce or adopt environmentally friendly packaging, even though not required by law. Moral courage demonstrates concern for others.

Recently, the Business Roundtable, the foremost association of chief executives in the United States, redefined the purpose of a company, stating that companies should look out for the interests of customers, workers, suppliers and communities, and aim to increase diversity and protect the environment. Over 200 CEOs signed the statement, including those of Apple, Amazon, Exxon, General Motors, and JP Morgan-Chase.

In this INSIGHTS, authors Doug Lennick, Fred Kiel, Kris Petersen and Ryan Goulart each focus on moral courage—that is, “doing the right thing”—and describe what that looks like in three different situations.

We also introduce an exemplary leader, Amy Langer, who founded her own values-based company, SALO LLC; and two new think2perform Research Fellows, Dr. Jeffrey Yip and Dr. Dayna Herbert Walker, who are studying the underlying leader beliefs that contribute to positive mentoring relationships.

We hope this issue stimulates your thinking about living and leading with moral courage, and the examples examined in these pages help you forge your own path to moral leadership.

Without courage, you cannot practice any other virtue. You have to have courage - courage of different kinds: first, intellectual courage, to sort out different values and make up your mind about which is right for you to follow. You have to have moral courage to stick up to that - no matter what comes in your way, no matter what the obstacle and the opposition is.

— INDIRA GHANDI

Warmest regards,

Kate Berman

Kate M. Berman
Executive Director,
think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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**Meet the
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A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated. A prominent blue beam of light shines vertically from the top of the frame down towards the city. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Rising to the Privilege of Leadership in the Worst of Times.

by DOUG LENNICK

IT WAS THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001,

a memorable day for all the wrong reasons. Terrorists attacked the United States in an unconventional manner. Part of the attack took place in New York City as two commercial planes were flown into the two World Trade Towers. The towers collapsed and thousands of lives were lost. Osama bin Laden was the mastermind of the terrorists' attacks.

Osama bin Laden was the “leader.”

Ken Chenault was relatively new to his position as CEO of American Express. American Express headquarters were (and are) located in lower Manhattan near the towers that collapsed. The American Express building sustained collateral damage and had to be evacuated. American Express also lost eleven employees who died trapped in the towers. Ken was facing a leadership challenge of monumental proportions, and he rose to the occasion. Ken was the “leader.”

Ken and Osama were both leaders, and yet they were different leaders. Both led with passion, but Ken cared about employees, customers, the people of the country and the people of the world. Osama cared about his cause.

BALANCE REALITY AND HOPE

On September 12, 2001 Ken and I were on the phone discussing the emotional impact the terrorist attack had, and would have, on the workforce. The American Express headquarters workforce would be displaced for several months within the three-state area: New York, New Jersey, Connecticut. Ken scheduled a meeting for all employees to be held at Madison Square Garden.

Ken recently shared the following thoughts about that meeting: “One of the points I wanted to get across was to define reality and give hope,” he told me. (A lesson learned from Napoleon.) Ken also recognized “the need to

demonstrate compassion (because)...the emotions were pretty raw.” He added, “The third, was being very authentic and personal and show both vulnerability and strength.”

Not surprisingly, Ken was masterful at Madison Square Garden, and he was masterful as a leader in the months and years to follow. People, myself included, loved working with and for Ken. Why? Among other reasons is Ken's sense of compassion. Compassion involves actively caring about the wellbeing of others. Ken did—and does—care about the wellbeing of others. We could all feel it. Ken also had—and has—the integrity to define reality while also providing hope. Ken is authentic, and he is personal. As Ken puts it, “Leadership is a privilege. If you don't take the responsibility of being a leader to achieve sustainable success, you won't achieve sustainable success.” Ken embraced his responsibility as a leader, and he achieved sustainable success.

COMMIT TO MORAL PRINCIPLES

Leadership involves both moral intelligence and moral competence. The first is knowing right from wrong. The second is acting on the first. There is indeed a difference between knowing and doing. Moral Intelligence is our mental capacity to determine how universal principles should be applied to our personal values, goals, and actions.

When Fred Kiel and I co-authored *Moral Intelligence: Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success*, we identified four moral principles necessary for sustainable success: integrity, responsibility, compassion, and forgiveness. As a leader, Ken Chenault demonstrated all of those. In the preceding paragraphs I highlighted his commitment to integrity, responsibility, and compassion. Although I didn't speak specifically about forgiveness, I can assure you that Ken demonstrated that as well. Ken recognized that forgiveness involved the act of letting go of mistakes...his mistakes or the mistakes of others. Forgiveness is not about approval or giving up one's claim for justice. Forgiveness is about letting go. I personally am fond of saying, "Amongst other things, forgiveness is about giving up all hope for a better past."

Fred and I followed *Moral Intelligence* with *Moral Intelligence 2.0: Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success in Turbulent Times*, and Fred subsequently authored *Return on Character*. In our moral intelligence books, Fred and I were able to make the case that the absence of a commitment to moral principles is very expensive (consider Enron, Global Crossing, Tyco, and many others).

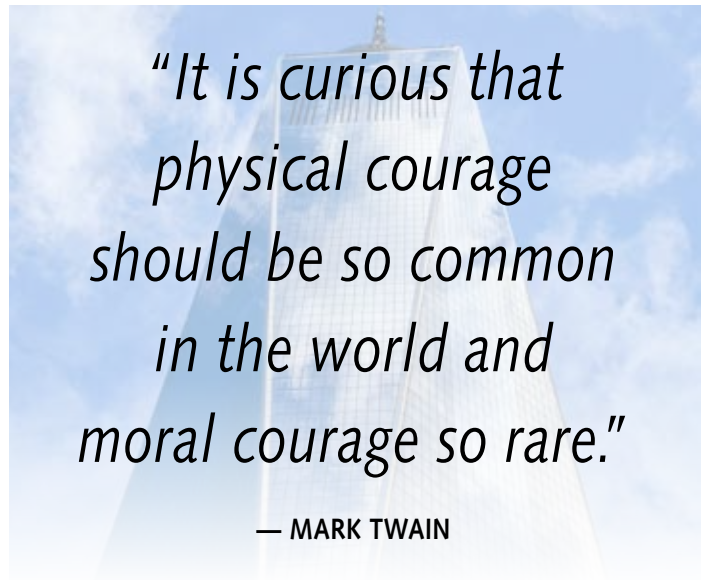
In *Return on Character*, Fred makes the case that the presence of moral principles and competence is very profitable. In a seven year longitudinal study involving dozens of companies, their CEOs, senior management teams, and thousands of employees, Fred and his team were able to conclude that high character organizations led by high character CEOs and senior managers were five times more profitable than lower character organizations.

DEMONSTRATE CHARACTER AND COMPETENCE

The late great Stephen Covey, who I had the good fortune of knowing and working with from time to time, recognized the importance of character in the trust equation. But trust isn't only about character. To paraphrase Covey, trust is a function of character and competence. Having one, doesn't ensure the other. Unless one has both, one can't be trusted to get the job done. For example, I might be a person of high character, but if you're drowning and I don't know how to swim, you won't be able to trust

that I can save you. Or on the flip side, if I'm a world-class swimmer who's been instructed on how to save a drowning victim, yet I lack character, I might allow you to drown.

My colleague Chuck Wachendorfer and I are now working on *Leadership Intelligence*. You can be sure that great leaders including Ken Chenault will be referenced. You can also be sure that we will emphasize the importance of moral and purposeful leadership.



"It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare."

— MARK TWAIN

In our first *Moral Intelligence* book, Fred Kiel and I quoted Mark Twain. Twain once said, "It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare." He was right then, and he's right now. Business leaders, government leaders, elected and non-elected leaders, and all people need to step up and demonstrate the moral courage to do the right thing in the presence of competing and difficult to deal with emotions. In the wake of one of our country's biggest tragedies, Ken Chenault proved that moral and purposeful leadership is not only possible, it's essential for sustainable success.

DOUG LENNICK, CEO of *think2perform*, is legendary for his innovative approaches to developing high performance in individuals and organizations, and for his expertise in the art and science of human behavior. Before founding *think2perform*, Doug served as Executive Vice President – Advice and Retail Distribution for American Express Financial Advisors (now Ameriprise Financial). His is the author of six books, including *Moral Intelligence 2.0*.

The **think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE** is governed by a stellar group of Directors who are highly accomplished leaders, scholars and coaches. t2pRI is grateful to its leaders for their vision and stewardship.



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Courageousness

THE ANTIDOTE TO THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

BY KRIS PETERSEN
AND RYAN GOULART





Imagine
you are responsible
for product development
and are called into a meeting
with company executives. A major
competitor recently launched a
product that addresses more of
your customers' needs and is a
direct threat to your company's
main product line—a line the
company has offered for more
than 50 years. The urgency to
produce a response is extremely
high; including significant pressure
from shareholders. Decisions from
this meeting will direct the
company's future for several
years. At some point in the
meeting, someone suggests that
tweaking the product—rather
than a complete revamp—will be
the most cost-effective, time-
saving option. The executives in the
meeting agree, and the stage is set.

As you and your product engineers begin examining how quickly and inexpensively you can make adjustments to compete with your competitor's product, it becomes evident that certain technology will be needed in order to address design defects. These defects present numerous risks in how the product will respond, particularly if the technology fails. You need to make a decision whether to proceed with earlier proposed solution, or if the risks are too big. What do you do?

This type of analysis is not uncommon in business today. The need to make products efficiently and effectively has never been greater, placing an equally great significance on leaders' decisions. In its simplest form, the narrative told here might mirror what Boeing has had to address since two 737 MAX planes crashed killing over 200 people. As more and more details become available, it is becoming clearer that these planes had a design flaw. Developed due to client needs for longer range, and more fuel efficient planes at a lower price point, the placement of the engines were placed closer to the front of the plane offsetting the weight distribution. This weight distribution could cause the plane to pitch up. To compensate for this, software was used to make sure that during takeoff, flight and landing the planes would remain steady. This software, however, could overcompensate pitch, which would cause the plane to nose dive with no ability to control its trajectory. Decisions were made to shortcut the engineering of this product. This is a leadership issue as much as it is an engineering issue. It appears those in the room decided that the cost of an accident was less than the cost of losing market share to Airbus. Fear likely played a critical role.

As the think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE advances moral and purposeful leadership to current and emerging leaders, the conduit to how this mission is actualized is through the expression of courage. At its core—courage—

particularly moral courage, is standing up for what is right. More often than not, what is right is not the same as what is easy. Due to the difficulty factor, there is also an element of fear. In the presence of fear, moral and emotional competence become increasingly more important for a leader navigating a difficult path. The human experience of taking a difficult path can be lonely, which is counter to our social and survival tendencies. These social and survival tendencies drive our behavior to keep with group norms such as, “that’s the way we do things around here” or reframing blame—thereby perpetuating the possibility of mistakes. To a leader, this status quo perspective may feel beneficial to the greater group, however, in reality they are limiting the group and individuals. That is not leadership. It is certainly not moral and purposeful leadership. Behaving with moral courage produces moral and purposeful leadership, inspiring those who follow to move forward with greater integrity.

Moral courage is defined as standing up for what is right in the presence of fear. In corporate culture, fear takes many forms. Fear of losing one’s job, fear of looking foolish, fear of being alone, fear of making enemies are a few common fear experiences. These internal fears are compounded by external pressure placed on leaders to be immune to failure. This emotional cocktail causes leaders to make choices that compromise their integrity. The Chairwoman of the board for the think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE and former executive of a Fortune 500 company, Kris Petersen, shares that this compromise is a defining quality of what makes or breaks inspirational leaders. Petersen asserts, “There is a clear distinction between those who are inspiring and those who are not. This distinction takes form in the behaviors leaders demonstrate.” In her observations, those who find themselves living small, making things up, and taking shortcuts end up losing both their credibility and losing themselves in the process

by comprising their ethical integrity. Alternatively, those who take responsibility for their mistakes, are more tolerant of the mistakes of others, and most importantly, understand who they are, engage the best efforts of others through showcasing the behaviors they would like to see. Petersen mentions that one of the most important qualities of a leader is self-awareness. Understanding what one is experiencing emotionally can be the difference in making choices that are courageous instead of fear-based.



Neuroscience continues to make headway in the self-awareness space. When we experience a threat, real or perceived, our biological experience is designed to restrict cognitive thought. While this survival biology may have served humans well in the past, this biological response keeps us from thinking clearly. When we do not think clearly, we do not make the best decision possible. We then fallback on biases and group norms to govern how we make decisions. Foundationally, biases and group norms are mental shortcuts. One example of a mental bias that can appear in corporate cultures is called the bystander effect. The bystander effect is the diffusion of responsibility when multiple people are present. This psychological bias can have equally real and scary consequences in the real

world. Let's pretend you're in a group meeting with your leader and the VP of the department. Both have been identified as up and coming leaders wielding significant clout with the executive team. After hearing the presentation, the VP suggests that the project was such a success that bonuses may be in order for those who worked on the project. Your leader promptly replies, throwing their weight behind the decision. From your standpoint, the project wasn't a success at all, but rather a complete failure. Only two out of the four objectives were met. It also appears that the bonus may be a way to line the leaders' pockets before year end. The bonuses may not hurt anyone, but it doesn't align with the values you have. Yet, despite that, you hope someone else decides to say something for fear of looking poor in front of leadership. The awareness to recognize what is happening and the competency to say something is important to being morally courageous.

This awareness of what one is experiencing allows for one to utilize moral and emotional competence. Moral competence, as defined by Doug Lennick and Fred Kiel in their seminal book *Moral Intelligence 2.0, Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success in Turbulent Times*, is "Our ability to act in alignment with what we know is right."¹ Coupled with emotional competence—our ability to make decisions in the presence of competing and often difficult to deal with emotions—leaders can begin to feel equipped to handle decisions that they may encounter. C.S. Lewis states, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at its testing point." Understanding this test point utilizes both moral and emotional competence. Empowered with self-awareness, leaders can find themselves in situations where they will have the skills to use moral courage.

The case for the application of moral courage is compelling. With any behavior change, recognizing situations is the first step,

and like any first step, it also is not enough. Recent research from the *Journal of Business Ethics* examines how more needs to be done regarding how business ethics lectures are taught.² For it is the application of the knowledge, not the knowledge itself that is the differentiator. "Even though people are not perfect, and even though they make mistakes, most have good intentions."³ This statement may appear to be an obvious observation, yet it can very easily be overlooked when the expectation is perfection. No one at Boeing purposely tried to kill those people on their planes. In fact, one imagines there is almost a sense of pride among employees when seeing Boeing planes in the sky. There is, however, an unfortunate cost to not addressing mistakes that leaves room for failure down the road. Boeing was not immune to this, nor are most corporations.

The role of moral and purposeful leaders, behaving with moral courage, is to be comfortable with this imperfection. Demonstrating an ability to embrace failures and mistakes is critical to developing a culture where innovation extinguishes the need to play catch up. As innovation occurs, leaders can inspire followers forward. As Brene Brown says, "You can choose courage or you can choose comfort, you cannot choose both."⁴

FOOTNOTES:

^{1/} *Moral Intelligence 2.0, Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success in Turbulent Times*, Page 43

^{2/} Comer, D. & Schwartz, M. "Highlight Moral Courage in the Business Ethics Course" *Journal of Business Ethics* (2017) 146: 702-723.

^{3/} *Moral Intelligence 2.0, Enhancing Business Performance and Leadership Success in Turbulent Times*, Page 188

^{4/} (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/brene-brown-live-bravely_n_5193927)

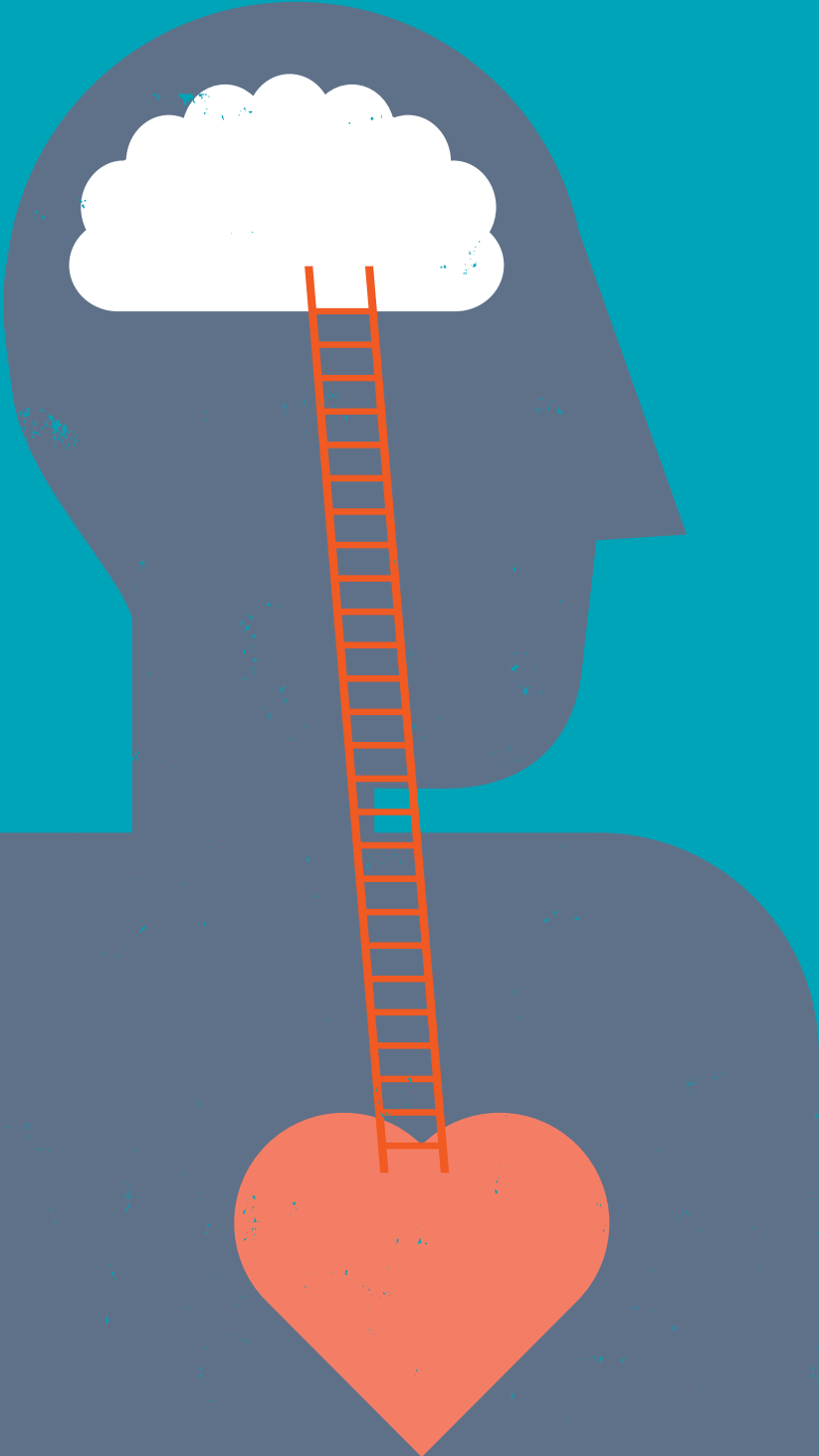
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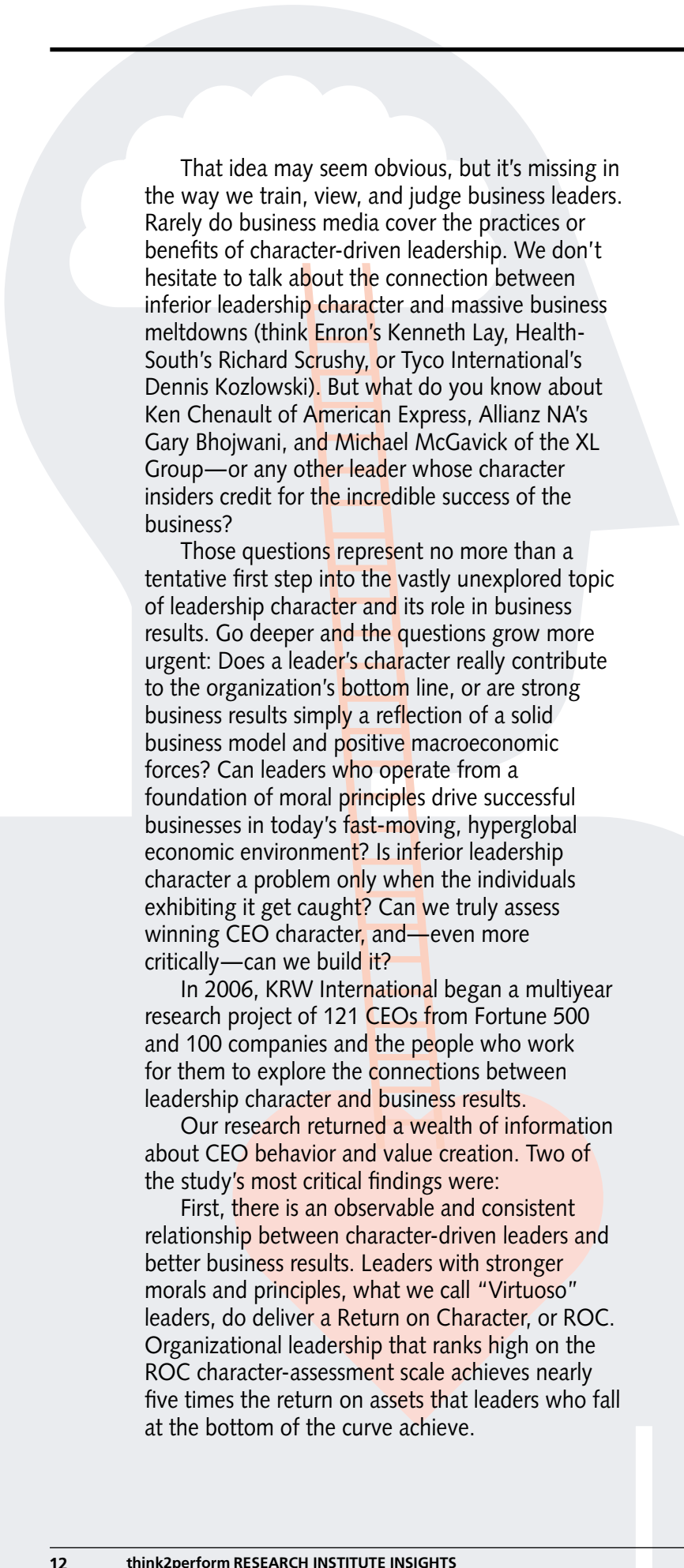
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THE VALUE OF VIRTUOSO LEADERS

By Fred Kiel, PhD



Being cynical is easy when it comes to the topic of character's role in business leadership. Just seeing the words character and business leadership in the same sentence brings to mind a seemingly unending list of ineffective leaders who periodically sweep through the business world, draining organizations of all real value, leaving nothing behind but angry investors and an unemployed workforce. When it comes to running a business that achieves maximum returns for all stakeholders — investors, governing boards, employees, clients, communities, and the world they share—self-involved, bottom-line-driven leaders rarely deliver the goods.



That idea may seem obvious, but it's missing in the way we train, view, and judge business leaders. Rarely do business media cover the practices or benefits of character-driven leadership. We don't hesitate to talk about the connection between inferior leadership character and massive business meltdowns (think Enron's Kenneth Lay, Health-South's Richard Scrushy, or Tyco International's Dennis Kozlowski). But what do you know about Ken Chenault of American Express, Allianz NA's Gary Bhojwani, and Michael McGavick of the XL Group—or any other leader whose character insiders credit for the incredible success of the business?

Those questions represent no more than a tentative first step into the vastly unexplored topic of leadership character and its role in business results. Go deeper and the questions grow more urgent: Does a leader's character really contribute to the organization's bottom line, or are strong business results simply a reflection of a solid business model and positive macroeconomic forces? Can leaders who operate from a foundation of moral principles drive successful businesses in today's fast-moving, hyperglobal economic environment? Is inferior leadership character a problem only when the individuals exhibiting it get caught? Can we truly assess winning CEO character, and—even more critically—can we build it?

In 2006, KRW International began a multiyear research project of 121 CEOs from Fortune 500 and 100 companies and the people who work for them to explore the connections between leadership character and business results.

Our research returned a wealth of information about CEO behavior and value creation. Two of the study's most critical findings were:

First, there is an observable and consistent relationship between character-driven leaders and better business results. Leaders with stronger morals and principles, what we call "Virtuoso" leaders, do deliver a Return on Character, or ROC. Organizational leadership that ranks high on the ROC character-assessment scale achieves nearly five times the return on assets that leaders who fall at the bottom of the curve achieve.

Second, people demonstrate character through habitual behaviors. Therefore, they can develop the habits of strong character and "unlearn" the habits of poor character. Further, by doing so, they can improve their results—in both business and personal outcomes.

WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Despite the common wisdom, character isn't some hidden quality that no one can really know or assess. We reveal our character all the time through observable behaviors: in the way we treat other people. As we mature, these character-driven behaviors become automatic reflexes, the character habits that express our guiding principles and beliefs.

Beyond the way we internalize universal moral principles, therefore, the definition of character that informed our ROC research includes an understanding of how we demonstrate those principles in relationship to other people. Accordingly, we define character as an individual's unique combination of internalized beliefs and moral habits that motivate and shape how that individual relates to others.

From a list of moral principles that are universal for all humans, we chose four—Integrity, Responsibility, Forgiveness, and Compassion—that are demonstrated in a wide range of common human behaviors and attributes and of particular importance in the workplace.

Because the habitual demonstration of these universal principles supports and promotes all other behaviors and habits that express human character, we refer to these four universal principles as Keystone Character Habits. When we embrace the habits born of these principles they begin to inform, support, and develop all other beliefs and habitual behaviors that express our character.

The habits of integrity and responsibility are dominated by our intellect (our "head"); the other two, forgiveness and compassion, are most often expressions of our emotions, or the "heart."

The factors that build organizational dynamics (collaboration, innovation, adaptability, teamwork, communication) are inextricably linked to those that create workforce engagement (respect, fairness, care and support, confidence in

THE ROC MATRIX

HEAD

INTEGRITY

Telling the truth
Acting consistently with principles, values, and beliefs (walking the talk)
Standing up for what is right
Keeping promises

RESPONSIBILITY

Owning one's personal choices
Admitting mistakes and failures
Expressing a concern for the common good

HEART

FORGIVENESS

Letting go of one's mistakes
Letting go of others' mistakes
Focusing on what's right versus what's wrong

COMPASSION

Empathizing with others
Empowering others
Actively caring for others
Committing to others' development

This matrix includes the four universal principles of integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion, each accompanied by a list of the behaviors that express them.

management). Most of the latter are directly related to the character habits of the heart. Virtuoso leadership—and the results it obtains—are strongest when the executive team draws on all four principles represented in the ROC Matrix, and their decisions, actions, and Keystone Character Habits are guided by both head and heart.

VIRTUOSO LEADERSHIP

Although the term virtuoso typically describes a person who possesses outstanding technical ability at singing or playing a musical instrument, it applies very well to the act of leadership. Not only is leadership based on performance, but it is an art that requires disciplined practice as well as ability. The Virtuoso CEOs in our research truly are masters of the art of leadership.

Virtuoso leaders are people whose automatic responses, decisions, and patterns of interaction all emanate from strong character habits. And each of these character habits is a significant driver of execution readiness. Core competencies of the Virtuoso leader include telling the truth, accepting responsibility and owning up to mistakes, showing forgiveness when well-intentioned errors are made

in the pursuit of innovation, and simply caring for people as people. To obtain a fully engaged and committed workforce, the Virtuoso leader must be a person of deep character who “walks the talk.” He or she must demonstrate integrity and the organization's expressed values in his/her day-to-day leadership and decisions. This is the foundation for any organization that desires a high level of execution readiness that leads to better and faster results.

Of course, every member of the Virtuoso CEO group is an individual; they all differ from each other in many ways, including age, gender, education, personal background, and the size and kind of business they lead. But all of the Virtuoso CEOs identified in our research share three common characteristics:

1. **They are skilled businesspeople.** All Virtuoso CEOs know how to create a vision, maintain a strategic focus, demand performance, and hold people accountable—and they create great value for all stakeholders.
2. **Their employees consider them to be individuals of strong character.** In each case, employee survey ratings ranked these CEOs at the top of the Character Curve by indicating they consistently demonstrate the four Keystone Character Habits.
3. **They each have selected and lead an executive team of strong character.** No CEO was a Virtuoso if his or her executive team failed to achieve that same rank.

THE RETURN ON CHARACTER FOR CUSTOMERS

Customers also win when the organizations they deal with are led by individuals whose heads are connected to their hearts. While our ROC research was limited to the study of organizations, their CEOs, and their employees, the responses we gathered in that study strongly indicate how those who work directly with customers gauge the level of their customers' satisfaction.

The employees of Virtuoso CEOs in our research rated their organizations as much better than those of their competitors. These employees

also saw their organizations as providing greater value for customers than did the employees of the Self-Focused leaders and their teams.

INSIDE COSTCO'S CUSTOMER SERVICE SUCCESS

Jim Sinegal, the cofounder of Costco Wholesale, who retired as CEO in 2012, built his warehouse-members model with a strong understanding of the importance of caring for customers. The benefits of that care are evident in the almost 90 percent renewal rate of Costco members year after year. With nearly 50 million members at about \$55 each, this renewal rate represents big money. Sinegal's core principles of leadership—and strong employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and business results—continue to guide the business. More than a year after Sinegal's retirement, a Bloomberg BusinessWeek article called Costco, “the cheapest, happiest company in the world,” under the leadership of its new CEO, Craig Jelinek.

The organization's reputation for integrity is a critical factor in its success. Costco is known for its promise to members, which includes the commitment to mark up the cost of items in its warehouses by no more than 15 percent. This is a contract that members have come to trust. According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index, in 2013 Costco's customer satisfaction rate had gone up every year but one (2009) since 1999, and was higher than that of Sam's Club, Lowe's, Staples, and other organizations in its marketplace. By contrast, in the first quarter of that year, Bloomberg reported that Walmart had placed last in the index, for the sixth year in a row. Costco's picture continued to grow brighter; in the fourth quarter of 2013, its membership topped 71 million, a 4 percent increase in new membership over the previous year.

Business articles touting Costco's success in courting and keeping new members abound, but there's more to Costco's winning equation than its membership contract. As one of the Costco employees who participated in our study said:

For me, the best thing about working here is that we have a purpose, and it isn't to deliver great sales or margin to improve the share value, but to

serve our members. The members pay to shop here and we have a duty to ensure that they are happy, so they stay members and attract new ones. I feel proud to work at Costco.

Another Costco employee summed up the ROC to Costco's customers:

Costco is one of the only companies that works to improve the quality of its merchandise while lowering the price. We want to take care of the members and give them good reasons to come see us again.

In interviews with Costco employees and members in locations around the United States, no one has ever told me about an unpleasant experience in a Costco warehouse. While many in the business world may balk at Costco's business model, which includes compensation for frontline employees well above that of most of its competitors, it's hard to argue with the company's success. Between 2004 and 2013, the company's shares returned more than four times the market average, and by 2012, its revenues had advanced 50 percent, to reach nearly \$100 billion.

The ripple effect of ROC is illustrated in every aspect of Costco's operation: strong customer loyalty demonstrated through high renewal rates on customer membership; a satisfied, engaged workforce; and strong business results in a tough, competitive marketplace. Together, Costco's model and results offer compelling evidence of the winning that ROC character-led companies—and their customers—can enjoy. ❤️

Reprinted from Harvard Business Review Press. Adapted from Return on Character: The Real Reason Leaders and Their Companies Win. Copyright 2015 Fred Kiel. All rights reserved.

FRED KIEL, PhD, co-founder of KRW International, Inc., brings over 30 years of experience to his work with Fortune 500 CEOs and senior executives on building organizational effectiveness through leadership excellence and aligning organization with mission. Kiel is often called the “father of executive coaching” for his pioneering work in this field. Before founding KRW, Kiel worked with senior executives in private practice, developing a rigorous data-gathering and customized development process designed to provide executives with transformative feedback.

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Doug Lennick
Author
Moral Intelligence



Richard Leider
Author
The Power of Purpose



Kris Petersen
President & COO
Think 2 Perform



Ruth Tongen
Senior Vice President
Think 2 Perform



Chris Farrell
Author
Purpose and a Paycheck



Kim Nelson
Retired Senior Vice President
External Affairs
General Mills



John G. Taft
Vice Chair, Baird & Author
Stewardship



Becky Roloff
President
St. Catherine University



Alan C. Page
Associate Justice
Minnesota Supreme Court (Retired)

- Morning Session:** *Living in Alignment with Purpose with Doug Lennick*
The Path to Purpose with Richard Leider
The Health & Wellness Connection with Kris Petersen & Ruth Tongen
- Luncheon Keynote:** *Purpose and a Paycheck with Chris Farrell*
- Afternoon Session:** *CEO panel discussion with Kim Nelson, Justice Alan Page, Becky Roloff and John G. Taft*

BUSINESS LEADER SPOTLIGHT

A close-up portrait of Amy Langer, a woman with long dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark purple blazer over a black top and a necklace with a small star pendant. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

AMY LANGER

The co-founder of Salo, LLC, reflects on leadership challenges and the road ahead.

Amy Langer's leadership style is evident in the intentional, principled culture of Salo, LLC, the finance and accounting staffing company that Langer cofounded with John Folkestad in 2002. In fact, ethical culture runs so deep that Salo will, from time to time, endorse a job candidate presented to a client by another search firm, when Salo recognizes the fit is good. Langer acknowledges that this is difficult to do in the moment, but "we value the relationship more than the transaction."

Langer is an exemplar of principled, purposeful leadership. But how did she come to this style of leadership? There have been several major transitions and turning points in her leadership journey.

The first major turning point came during Langer's second job after college, while she was employed by a national staffing firm. On September 11, 2001, she happened to be attending a training event in San Francisco. Despite the fact that some of those attending had employees working in the buildings that had been hit in the terror attacks, the staffing firm's management decided to move forward with the conference, apparently for financial reasons.

Langer was troubled by the decision and realized her values and her employer's values were misaligned. Soon after, she quit her job. Twelve months later, she and Folkestad, who remains her business partner, launched Salo, which Langer was determined would offer mentoring, consideration for individuals, a nurturing environment, and long-term rather than short-term thinking.

From the beginning, the principles of moral and purposeful leadership were in place.

Moral and purposeful leaders practice the universal, humanistic principles of integrity, responsibility, compassion, and forgiveness. Langer subscribes to these universal moral principles personally, and has further evolved these principles at Salo into six actionable values and behaviors that Langer describes as "part of the vernacular" at the company. The values are:

- Connecting
- Positive energy
- Driven (to pursue the best outcome)
- Professionalism
- Curiosity
- Aware and Intuitive

"That's our secret," says Langer of the "Aware and Intuitive" value. She is acutely aware of the power of emotional intelligence, both in Salo's internal operations and in the context of the cultures of client companies and the individuals Salo places in finance, accounting and human resources roles. Salo's staff dives deep, with awareness and intuition, to learn what qualities are needed in a candidate, beyond the list of skills in a job description.



Salo's culture of health includes working and collaborating from treadmill desks.

At the monthly celebrations of birthdays and work anniversaries—Langer "enjoys celebrating company and personal successes," co-founder Folkestad notes—each employee is introduced with an anecdote that demonstrates that employee's embodiment of one of the values. Both the firm's collaborative, people-oriented culture and Langer's leadership style are reflected in the bright, energetic, and open design of Salo's Minneapolis headquarters. However, the six values are not painted on the wall or spelled out in neon. "We've decided not to have the values on the wall, because we live them."

"A culture of health" is also one of the approaches that has characterized Salo for many

years. The company was the very first Blue Zones certified workplace, a designation that came along with a Mayo Clinic study that was featured on the television newsmagazine *20/20*.

Initially, the culture that grew up organically around Salo led to rapid growth. Annual revenue reached \$47 million within just six years.

Then came the recession of the late 2000s. It turned out to be another crucial stage in Langer's leadership journey.



Surviving the recession galvanized the Salo team.

Business dropped by about half. Langer and Folkestad were confident they could succeed in the future, but to survive the recession and move forward, they had to articulate their culture and develop processes to sustain it.

"It was a pivotal time to hone in on what we were as an organization," says Langer. Their commitment to the principles of integrity and responsibility during this time led to the company's first board, its first strategic plan, and a formally articulated statement of mission, vision, and values.

The experience was a test of leadership and grit, and it worked. Salo has grown for the past eight years, and it has an office in Chicago, as well as its Minneapolis headquarters. The

principles of moral and purposeful leadership provided a path forward at a time when it might have been easier to lose sight of them.

Langer emphasizes that leadership is a process of continuous learning and development, a process of reflection and reassessment: "How do I want to be going forward?" She says the question that keeps her up at night is, "Are we being human?" These questions are not just for moments of crisis; they are inherent in her leadership style.

Asked to describe her own strengths as a leader, Langer first notes that she is accountable, driven and results-oriented, and that it is difficult for her not to be that way. Folkestad describes her as "detail-oriented and strong with processes and systems. She has helped to drive uniformity across the firm so things are scalable and repeatable." He continues, "She is a natural networker, but this has become a superpower for her!"

Langer is aware that she is enthusiastic, charismatic and authentic, in many ways a natural leader. "We are all a work in process," however, and she notes several areas that she has worked to improve and strengthen. Looking back, Langer cites the principle of forgiveness as one of these areas.

When she was younger, she says, "I always thought I had to come with the answer." "Disappointment and anger" could result from this "command and control" style. The style worked in the context of a small startup, but less so in a larger, growing company. Over time, with feedback from employees and more experience managing them, Langer strengthened her ability to express her curiosity and ask questions to help others come up with the answers. Lisa Brezonik, who in December 2018 succeeded Langer as president and now runs day-to-day operations at Salo, says Langer "is curious about what people are thinking. She's always looking for new

perspectives.” Brezonik says that both Langer and Folkestad “have been really great mentors” during her four years at Salo.

In a similar vein, Langer wishes she had understood one of the central tenets of transformational leadership sooner: the importance of putting other people’s development first. Developing others is something she has developed in herself, and it is now part of Salo’s intentional sustained growth strategy. Langer notes that Brezonik excels in this characteristic, while Brezonik says that Langer “reinvents herself more often than she gives herself credit for. She knows when she needs to coach people, and she knows when to let them fly.”

Langer was driven to lead and succeed from an early age. Growing up in the small town of Quincy, Michigan, in modest circumstances, she excelled academically. While attending Michigan State University, she also worked 30–40 hours each week. When she graduated with an accounting major, she became the first person in her family to complete a four-year college degree.

Today, Langer faces a new stage in her journey as she steps back from day-to-day operations at Salo. Although she is still working through this shift, it is clear she will continue to provide moral and purposeful leadership wherever she directs her attention.

Langer, individually, and Salo, as a company, have always been involved in the community. Her emotional intelligence gives her the ability to recognize when someone is struggling and to reach out. The principle of compassion is evident. She is inspired by people’s stories, and she likes to make an impact. “That brings me joy,” she says. An example is her longtime involvement with Minnesota’s largest children’s mental health center, the nonprofit Washburn Center for Children. Steve Lepinski, who was the executive director of Washburn for 30 years before his

retirement, met Langer about 15 years ago and has watched her leadership skills develop over time. “Washburn was her first non-profit board,” he notes. When she took on the work of chairing the 125th anniversary committee, “she hadn’t done anything like that before, but she has a can-do attitude, and she’s not afraid to take risks. She can see the big picture, but also the details.”

While Washburn is a sizable organization, Lepinski was pleased when Langer was asked to bring her talents to a much larger stage, the board of Twin Cities-based HealthPartners, the largest consumer-governed nonprofit health care organization in the nation. “I was pleased that she was asked, and I was pleased when she said she would,” Lepinski notes.

Today, in addition to serving on the board of HealthPartners, Langer serves on the Greater MSP board. She has long been active with the Women Presidents’ Organization (WPO), and with a Chicago-based mentoring organization called the Committee of 200 (C200), which puts on mentoring and leadership events in conjunction with universities. She is spearheading C200’s effort to create a process to facilitate longer-term, more sustainable engagement between mentors and women business students, whether they are on an entrepreneurial or corporate career path. She enthusiastically notes that an arrangement with the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Business is in the works.

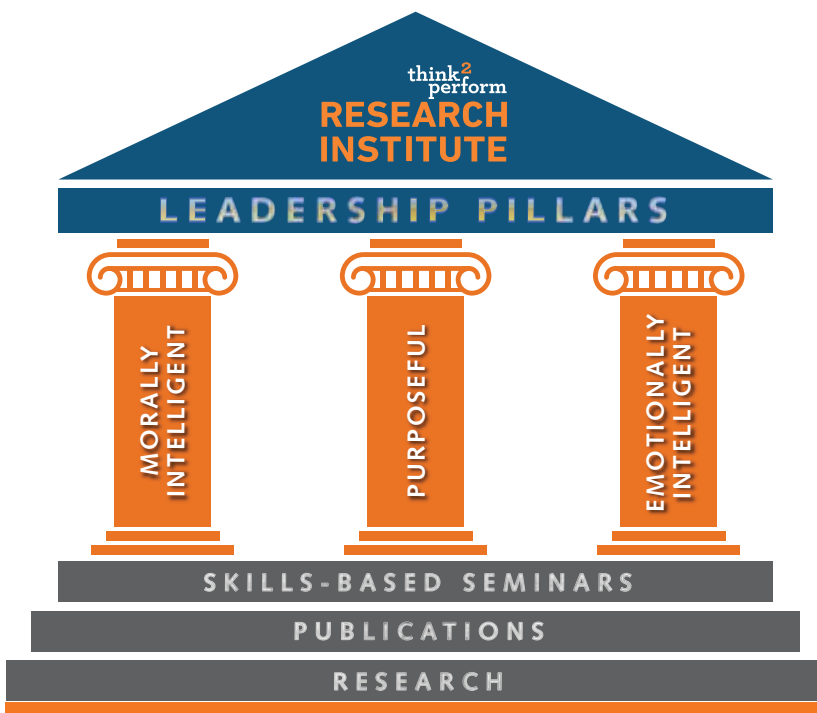
Brezonik predicts great things for Langer as she enters a new phase of life and leadership. “She likes to be the person that pioneers. Amy is full of energy and drive that propel people to something better,” says Brezonik. “She will continue to inspire women.” Given Langer’s track record, it’s a safe bet that Brezonik is right.

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We develop current and the next generation of LEADERS through:

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is committed to being on the forefront of advancing leadership. At the Institute, effective leadership is characterized as moral, purposeful and emotionally intelligent. This means that leaders:

- Act according to the humanistic values and morals of integrity, responsibility, compassion, and forgiveness, with caring toward their employees,
- Inspire others with a sense of shared purpose, and deeper meaning to their work,
- Recognize their own emotions and those of others, discern/label feelings, use emotional intelligence to guide thinking and behavior, and manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments and achieve one's goal(s).

Best-in-Class Leadership Practices Change

We recognize that as we learn more about neuroscience and behavioral science, opportunities exist for innovation in leadership practices. Leaders face new challenges with globalization, technological change and socio-economic issues. In the last century, we have moved from command and control (or directive) leadership to situational leadership (adapted to the employee's skill with the situation), and now to authentic leadership, servant leadership and transformational leadership (focused on developing the employee.) As Albert Einstein said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results." Innovation in leadership practices and employee engagement is in the best interests of all organizations and for society as a whole.

Cutting-Edge Research is Important!

At the Institute, we support research by doctoral students, post-doctoral faculty and senior faculty, recognized as thought-leaders in one of our areas of interest—moral intelligence, purpose and emotional intelligence. With the Institute's financial support, Research Fellows are able to pursue answers to important and emergent leadership questions, such as:

- How can leaders build greater self awareness?
- What are the key factors enabling leaders to effectively engage workers virtually?
- How do a mentor's implicit beliefs affect the experience of a mentee?
- How can we help individuals to develop a sense of purpose as they transition to new situations throughout their lives?

Once answers are revealed through research, the Institute shares research findings in publications and online. The Institute also develops practical skills-based seminars for leaders wishing to improve their skills and competencies in each area of innovation.

On the next pages, meet two of our latest Research Fellows as we highlight their work and its practical implications for leaders.

For more information on our research and programs, or to apply, visit us at www.t2pri.org.

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profile of t2pRI fellow

Jeffery Yip, PhD

Jeffrey Yip describes his research as “understanding the psychological compass behind how people make leadership and career decisions.” He contends, “If we know how and why the compass turns, we can help people chart their desired course.”

A management professor who studies the psychology of leadership and work relationships, Yip’s research on the consequences of cynicism, with Dayna Herbert Walker, is a good example.

An Assistant Professor of Management and Organizational Studies at Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business, Yip is driven by a focus on human potential and a passion to help people develop as ethical and effective leaders. He cites Abraham Lincoln as an example. "Lincoln appealed to the better angels of human nature. He was an exemplary leader following a time of great conflict. We can be troubled by what's wrong in the world but we need hope to create a better path forward," he admits.

With prior experience as a section commander in military service in Singapore, Yip experienced first-hand how leadership can bring out "the best and worst in people." During his studies at the National University of Singapore, Yip worked on research and programs for school dropouts. Yip recalls, "Many of them were creative people who didn't fit in." This insight led him to conceive and co-found Singapore's Halogen Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on developing young leaders and entrepreneurs. As a Fulbright Scholar, Yip attended Harvard University, graduating with a Masters in Human Development and Psychology; and earned a PhD in Management, Organizational Behavior from Boston University. He also worked with the Center for Creative Leadership—a leading think tank and provider of executive education.

In their research with senior executive leaders, Yip and Herbert Walker discovered that leaders with cynical beliefs were rated lower by their subordinates on ethical leadership and mentoring behaviors. Conversely, they found that optimistic beliefs led to ethical behaviors and a desire to mentor others: foundational aspects of moral and purposeful leadership. This direct connection to the mission of think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE is one of the reasons Yip and Herbert Walker were awarded research fellowships. Their complete findings are articulated in their working paper on "Our better angels: The

effects of implicit followership theory on leader integrity, relational engagement, and mentoring effectiveness."

As an organizational psychologist, Yip is a Sherlock Holmes of sorts, interested in uncovering the roots of organizational effectiveness and performance. His research sets the foundation for training and consulting work with leaders—it identifies what lies beneath the surface of organizational life.

In his current work, Yip explains how attribution error and cynicism are problems for leaders to overcome. "Leaders are not immune to the fundamental attribution error—the human tendency to attribute behavior and outcomes to individual traits," explains Yip. "Leaders can reverse this tendency through situational awareness—start by asking why and how, instead of playing the blame game."

In his work with organizations, Yip has witnessed how critical thinking can devolve into cynicism that results in distrust.

"Cynicism pulls people apart. Leaders need to counter cynicism with a positive vision and a bias for hope. A bias for hope can offer a way forward in difficult times." says Yip.

JEFFERY YIP, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Management at Simon Fraser University's Beedie School of Business. His research is in the areas of leadership, mentoring, and talent management. His professional experience includes work in leadership development and executive education at the Center for Creative Leadership, as co-founder of the Halogen Foundation in Singapore, and as a section commander in military service. Yip's work is published in leading peer-reviewed journals, such as the *Academy of Management Annals*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Human Resource Management*, and the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. He is also the author of two management guidebooks: *Return on Experience: Learning Leadership at Work* (2009) and *Leadership Wisdom: Discovering Lessons of Experience* (2008).



profile of t2pRI fellow

Dayna Herbert Walker, PhD

Dayna Herbert Walker expected to pursue a career in management consulting. But, during graduate school she made an important discovery: “I fell in love with the research process,” Herbert Walker admits.

A supportive advisor encouraged Herbert Walker's academic aspirations, prompting her to embrace this self-awareness. Once Herbert Walker committed to an academic path, academic teaching positions, research projects and other opportunities started lining up, including the chance to partner with Jeffrey Yip, Assistant Professor of Management and Organization Studies, Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University.

"I was an advanced doctoral student when Jeff invited me to join him on a research study," says Herbert Walker. With similar values, interests and working styles, Herbert Walker and Yip forged a strong research partnership. Both are talented writers with complementary strengths. Herbert Walker's data analysis skills blend well with Yip's ability to see "the big picture" and the potential contributions of their research to the business world. Their current research project as think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE Fellows is the pair's third collaboration thus far.

"We appreciate the financial support and recognition from think2perform RESEARCH INSTITUTE'S Fellowship," says Herbert Walker. "As early stage academics, this Fellowship is beneficial for our continuing development as academics, and in our ongoing research."

To date, their research focus is on leaders and leadership, especially surrounding social cognition, the development of belief systems, and how both can affect behavior. "We like the idea that how leaders think influences how they act," Herbert Walker says.

In their working paper, "Our better angels: The effects of implicit followership theory on leader integrity, relational engagement, and mentoring effectiveness" (2019), Yip and Herbert Walker springboard from Douglas McGregor's assertion in the *Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), that "behind every

managerial decision or action are assumptions about human nature." Using a sample of diverse senior leaders and their direct reports, Yip and Herbert Walker examined top executives as mentors and the assumptions that guide them—a topic generally ignored in favor of studying mentoring outcomes.

Yip and Herbert Walker's findings indicate that when leaders hold more optimistic assumptions about their followers, leaders tend to behave with more integrity and, in turn, that integrity makes them better mentors towards their direct reports. In essence, the assumptions leaders have about followers in general impacts the way they act. Results suggest that we need to pay more attention to implicit assumptions about followership instead of focusing only on explicit leadership behaviors.

As a researcher, Herbert Walker is excited by the paper's implications as it relates to individual and organizational advancement.

"The lens I try to view the world through is that we are all 'works in progress,' we're always growing, learning and developing with the help of others to be our best selves,"

says Herbert Walker. "We all need mentors. We all mentor. If we're optimistic about others, we can be even more helpful to them."

DAYNA HERBERT WALKER, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Lam Family College of Business at San Francisco State University. She researches employee development, including topics such as mentoring, leadership development, and leadership in the eyes of followers. Recent outlets for her research include *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Human Resource Management*, and *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*.

READY TO UNLEASH YOUR LEADERSHIP POWER?

The following two pages introduce a valuable tool developed by t2pRI Board Member, Richard J. Leider, founder of Inventure — The Purpose Company.

To understand your leadership credo, download his ebook of accompanying exercises at:

t2pri.org

The Power of Purposeful Leadership

YOUR LEADERSHIP CREDO

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one...the being a force of nature. Instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.” – G.B. SHAW

WHO BEFORE WHAT

Leadership today requires that we first lead ourselves. The ultimate leadership challenge is self-leadership. Character is defined here as the awareness of your core “stand” plus the courage to act on it!

- What do you stand for?
- What won’t you stand for?
- Who do you stand with?

At certain times in your leadership life your courage is tested. The courage of a purposeful leader calls for boldness—the willingness to take a stand. Purposeful leadership is the alignment between who you are and what you do.

Courage involves some form of risk - the possibility of some loss involved. Without risking, you cannot create change or deal with disruption.

Courage is about feeling fear and doing the right thing anyway. In this sense, you are pushing yourself to overcome fear and act on purpose, or push aside the emotions that beg you not to stand by your beliefs.

The character of purposeful leadership is the courage to “walk your talk.” One of the most telling questions you can ask someone in any kind of leadership role is “What motivates you to become a better leader?” The answer to that question will make a significant difference in how well you lead.

Walking Your Talk

To lead on purpose, it helps to share your leadership “credo” with others.

In every culture on earth, as language developed, people learned to share their stories, hopes, dreams, and purposes. We’re born to love stories. They are instant generators of interest, empathy, emotion, and curiosity. The stories that generate the deepest connection are stories about you personally. Tales of failure, awkwardness, misfortune, danger, or disaster, told purposefully, are most often the moment when listeners shift from mild to major interest. They begin to share some of your emotions.

The central thesis of this exercise is that “why you lead determines how well you lead.” The one thing that most matters in public speaking is not confidence, stage presence, or smooth talking. It’s having something relevant to say to your audience. It’s answering the “why” question — “why should I follow you?”

Master the art of talking on purpose to a “Purpose Partner”:

MY PURPOSE PARTNER

Plan a talk for an “audience of one.” Choose a Purpose Partner – a committed listener – and prepare a talk as if you will be delivering it to that one person only. Choose someone who is generally a curious, engaged listener – and someone whom you really like. This will help to bring relevance to your talk

With the ebook exercises as a guide, create your purpose story by following these five steps:

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Step #2: My Leadership Credo

Step #3: My Purpose Practice

Step #4: My Sounding Board

Step #5: My #1 Development Goal

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