

Leadership From The Inside Out Or Why We Suck At Developing Leaders

By Jeff Stone & Cliff Scott

Much has been written about the development of leaders. This article aims to provide the reader with a straightforward summary of what we see as the deficiencies of leadership development efforts to date and a practical approach to addressing the missing element – a leaders' internal beliefs and assumptions – in order to enable them to better access their creative competence. Our motivation is based on a clear vision that effective leadership is key and critical to improving the effectiveness of organizations; they are inextricably linked. Our hope is to engage the reader to reflect upon and try our suggestions. In writing this article we have drawn deeply from two of the leading thinkers in integral leadership and in developmental change resistance theories: Bob Anderson and Robert Kegan.¹ Our intent is to create a link between their two streams of work with an accessible and practical guide. We are indebted to both of them as well as to others whose work we have drawn on in developing the approach described here.

To date, much of the effort to develop leaders has focused on helping them learn to better manage their *outer world*: the individuals, teams and organizations they are charged with leading. Conventional wisdom teaches that success is achieved through mastery of a set of *competencies* – the knowledge, abilities, skills and best practices commonly associated with effective leadership. This seems like pretty basic stuff—common sense even.

But somehow it is not enough. Why is it that after repeated rounds of self and leadership development efforts, we do not change significantly? We spend our professional lives stalking what we believe we long for: material success, achievement, great teamwork, making a contribution and leaving a legacy. And many, many - too many – fall short in the legacy they leave. In spite of our best efforts, we are dogged by the tendencies to over control, be over critical, subordinate our vision to the influence of others, or refrain from taking risks and speaking out. We cannot seem to let go of that which holds us back. All the while something in us continues to long for more...to be more than we are presenting in the moment. If we listen inward, to what our hearts tell us we know this frustrated longing is stalking us! How do we engage this longing, unleashing the

passion that can seize all the knowledge poured into us and really do great things with it?

We believe this can only happen if we attend to a critically important element of the work of developing leaders – an element that has been largely neglected to date – namely, a leader's *inner world*. That is, the underlying motivations behind their actions and behaviors – their beliefs, assumptions and habits of thought, which too often go unexamined. One way to conceive of this inner world is as the *operating system* on which the leadership competencies, which have been given so much attention, actually run.

Thanks to Microsoft, we know that the most elegantly written application won't perform as expected if the underlying operating system is somehow not up to the task. It's our belief that the operating system most leaders rely on is ill suited to leading in today's increasingly complex and constantly changing environment. Here's why we say this is so...

The familiar statistic that approximately 75% of organizational change efforts fail to realize their intended resultⁱⁱ is a compelling, if not downright depressing figure. Furthermore, the most commonly cited reason is a *failure of leadership*.

Leadership Fails When It Does Not...

- ◆ Provide sufficiently clear focus and direction;
- ◆ Maintain accountability for results;
- ◆ Appreciate and manage the larger systemic implications of the change;
- ◆ Take risks by challenging the status quo;
- ◆ Embrace missteps and mistakes in order to learn from them;
- ◆ Engage employees in ways that build commitment rather than merely compliance, or even fear;
- ◆ Engage in the conversations that authentically expose the assumptions and beliefs driving behavior.

If leadership is the principle reason for the failure of most change efforts, then what does that say about our ability to develop leaders? We must not be very good at it! In fact (and plainly stated), we *suck at it!* And, it is time this changed. We have the data now to approach the development effective leaders with greater wisdom.

Over the last 20+ years, the leadership development profession has been on a mission to identify what it is that the best leaders do. We strived to identify the key skills, abilities and attributes of effective leaders—to understand what makes the best leaders so good. The good news is that this research has helped shape many well-validated leadership competency assessments that correlate strongly with leadership effectiveness and overall business results.

One such well researched and validated tool is the Leadership Circle Profile (LCP), developed by Bob Anderson, CEO of The Leadership Circle, Inc. The LCP defines a set of eighteen (18) “Creative Competencies” which can be grouped into five (5) summary dimensions. These competencies measure key leadership behaviors and internal assumptions that lead to a high-fulfillment, high-achievement organizational culture. Anderson describes the five (5) dimensions as follows:

Creative Competencies:

- ❖ **Relating** – the extent to which a leader relates to others in a way that brings out the best in people, groups and the larger organization. Specifically, how well a leader builds quality relationships, fosters teamwork, collaborates, develops people, involves people in decision making and planning and generally demonstrates a high level of interpersonal skill
- ❖ **Self-Awareness** – a leader’s orientation to ongoing professional and personal development, as well as the degree to which inner self-awareness is expressed through high integrity leadership. This dimension is a reflection of emotional and interpersonal maturity
- ❖ **Authenticity** – a leader’s capacity for relating to others in an authentic, courageous and high integrity manner. Specifically, the extent to which a leaders’ behavior is not masked by organizational politics, looking good or winning approval. This also speaks to a leaders’ ability to take tough stands, bring up previously un-discussable issues, share personal feelings and vulnerabilities and generally deal directly and openly with difficult/risky issues in one-to-one and group situations
- ❖ **Systems Awareness** – a leaders’ capacity for focusing on whole system improvement and community welfare – an appreciation for the symbiotic relationship between the welfare of the community and the interests of the organization
- ❖ **Achieving** – the extent to which a leader encourages a focus on end results that are at once purposeful and strategic and engages in the creative use of power and effective decision making

The research behind the Leadership Circle Profile tells us that if we are successful at developing these competencies in leaders, their organizations will achieve success. In fact, research by Jack Zenger and Joe Folkmanⁱⁱⁱ shows that organizations headed by leaders who are perceived as excelling at some

combination of these competencies (as measured by results of the LCP) will achieve results—as measured by ROI for that leader’s organization—that are two to four times those of leaders who measure as average.^{iv}

Think about a leader you admire at work, in your community, at your child’s school or at a place you volunteer. It is a safe bet that part of what you admire is their ability to exhibit many or perhaps even all of these same qualities, which set the best leaders apart. So, why aren’t we more successful at developing these competencies in today’s leaders? Why don’t we have more truly effective leaders out there? What have we been missing? Actually, we’ve been missing a lot. And, it’s because we’ve been looking in the wrong place.

A deeper understanding of adult development can help us greatly in understanding what we’ve been missing. Specifically, we need to become familiar with a Stage Theory of Adult Development.^v This theory and its many variations describe a series of developmental stages that we tend to work through as we grow and mature into and throughout adulthood. These stages are characterized by sets of assumptions about the world around us and beliefs about how we must operate in it in order to succeed (or at least preserve the self). Robert Kegan, in his research into adult development describes the five stages as follows:

Stages of Adult Development^{vi}:

2. **Egocentric** – The world happens because of me (think of a self-centered teenager)
3. **Reactive** – The world happens to me (a defensive victim of circumstances – the external defines me)
4. **Creative** – I create my world (reality is the result of powerful choices – self authoring)
5. **Integral** – The world is a reflection of me (external reflects internal – self transforming)
6. **Unitive** – I and the world are one (transcend the mundane and identify with the planet)

One way to think about these stages is as a successive series of operating systems – each representing a more evolved, more robust configuration or “release”. Inherent in this is the understanding that each stage stands on and develops from the one before it.

Research has shown that as a society we do a good job of developing adults into the Reactive Stage—anywhere from 60-80% of the population is estimated to be primarily configured at this stage.^{vii} This is to say that the internal beliefs *most* relied upon to govern behavior in the world are the ones associated with this stage.

In the case of the Reactive stage, this world is one based in large part on a belief in the simple rule of *Cause and Effect*. It is constructed on a set of assumptions, developed fairly early in life (age six to seven), for how one must operate in the world in order to maintain a sense of safety and personal identity. Anderson, drawing in part on the work of personality theorist Karen Horney, describes these Reactive assumptions in three summary dimensions^{viii}:

Reactive Dimensions:

- ❖ **Controlling** – the extent to which the leader establishes a sense of personal worth through task accomplishment and personal achievement – by being in charge;
- ❖ **Protecting** – the belief that the leader can protect himself/herself and establish a sense of worth through withdrawal, remaining distant, hidden, aloof, cynical, superior, and/or rational – by being separate and/or better;
- ❖ **Complying** – the extent to which a leader gets a sense of self-worth and security by complying with the expectations of others, rather than acting on what s/he intends and wants – by belonging and/or being liked.

In all cases, the fundamental operating state is fear-based. That is, fear of the consequences of *not* being in charge, better or belonging. Until we are in our teens, these are not entirely

unreasonable assumptions for a world in which we actually have relatively little power or capacity for self-determination. The challenge comes later in life when we move into adulthood and especially a leadership role.

Leadership is, at minimum, about managing complexity and change. It requires a more sophisticated understanding of the world than simple *Cause and Effect*. Leadership requires a more powerful orientation, in the sense that one sees oneself as the creator of one's own reality—not merely at the mercy of it.

So how does all this relate to our previous discussion about Leadership Competencies? Well it turns out that we've got the competencies right, it's just that they don't run particularly well on a Reactive set of assumptions. They are most effectively actualized by a leader who relies primarily on an internal belief system and assumptions consistent with a Creative or higher stage of development. Given that 60% to 80% of the population is configured primarily at the Reactive level, is it any wonder that truly effective leaders are relatively rare? With this insight it becomes clear why, in spite of all the training and determination to be more effective, significant improvement at the individual leader level is actually all too rare.

Put another way, if we think about our development stage as our "Operating System", as described earlier, (i.e. the basic assumptions on which you run your life) and acknowledge that most of us are configured at the Reactive stage, then, we are effectively running on an Operating System that was developed by and for an adolescent! It is very relevant and appropriate for that age and within the Reactive dimensions lie the seeds of social intelligence, discernment and the ability to create results. However, once we become adults and leaders and until we upgrade our operating systems, our ability to transmute Reactive styles, from self-serving behaviors into Creative stage competencies to be used for greater good, will be severely limited. In fact, Anderson's research shows a strong negative

correlation between the Creative and the Reactive. That is, the more people perceive you as relying on the Reactive assumptions of Controlling, Protecting and Complying, the **LESS** likely it is they will perceive you as effectively demonstrating the Creative Competencies—or as an effective leader. Put simply, the Reactive assumptions are a significant limiter on our ability to develop the Creative Competencies^x and as a result truly effective leadership.

Is it any wonder then that 75% of change efforts fail, given that somewhere between 60% & 80% of us are relying primarily on a Reactive set of internal beliefs and assumptions to guide our behavior?

Given the role of the Reactive in limiting the Creative Competencies, the starting place for any effective leadership development effort needs to be in uncovering and dealing with these internal, often unconscious, beliefs and assumptions. We need to help our leaders (and ourselves) begin to develop a greater awareness of when and how we operate out of the self-limiting Reactive assumptions of Controlling, Protecting and/or Complying. With this awareness we can then develop strategies for managing this inner dynamic in order to make room for the Creative mindset and Competencies to develop and flourish.

In short, the real work of developing leaders begins with the need to first become more aware of and then to better manage the inner self in order to enable our best outer leader to emerge. This is what's been missing from most leadership development efforts and why we have not been more successful at developing leaders who can effectively navigate change.

So What?

This is all very interesting from a theoretical standpoint, but how can we learn to recognize when and why our Reactive nature gets triggered and then manage it, and ultimately incorporate it into a more productive Creative state? Just as developing new skills requires focused attention and practice, so it is with

developing the tandem capabilities of mindset awareness and a capacity to cope with greater complexity. We will now turn to a practical description of one way to engage in this self-development.

Upgrading The Operating System

In our experience, examining and revising ones' assumptions and internal beliefs leads to incorporating a higher level operating system (i.e. development stage). And, this effort requires a willingness to take the time to reflect, to grapple with your own sense of identity with discipline. Kegan & Lahey, in their book "Immunity to Change" describe a process that we have adapted here. The process can be described in five steps^x:

1. **Becoming aware:** taking a good hard look in the "mirror" via 360° assessment and then developing a discipline of mindfulness, watching oneself in action to validate the data;
2. **Making Sense:** delving into one's own not-so-conscious beliefs and unnoticed assumptions about life, and how one achieves success, and security – all to develop a new understanding of self;
3. **Reality Testing:** finding out if those unnoticed assumptions stand up to scrutiny or turn out to be based upon self-serving and/or self-limiting motivations;
4. **Creating a Vision:** developing a deep commitment to something that matters more now that you are aware, have insight and know what's true and false about your assumptions – stepping into a higher stage of leadership;
5. **Disciplined Action:** engaging in practices that make your leadership more creative, empowered and effective; collecting ongoing feedback as means of monitoring and motivating progress.

This is the sequence that one follows initially. It is also iterative. Eventually it becomes a way of living that loses the distinctness of each step or technique. It simply evolves into a new mindset

through which you engage your life, not only as a leader but as a human being. This happens because you get into the source code of your own operating system, transforming to a higher level of ability to cope with change and complexity. The remainder of this article describes the five steps in greater detail.

1. Becoming Aware

"Taking a good, hard look in the mirror", means beginning by soliciting feedback. See yourself through the eyes of others and reflect on what you learn. We are partial to The Leadership Circle's Profile instrument because it reveals not just the competency strengths but the underlying belief structure and associated ineffective tendencies as well. This kind of information, however, is still only intellectual, albeit with an emotional impact. It is important to witness yourself in action to prove the veracity of the feedback. In fact, Jon Kabat-Zinn^{xi} trains a discipline of mindfulness focused on self-observation without becoming reactive or judging your actions. If this discipline is combined with data gathered from a 360° assessment, you can develop the ability to monitor your emotions, to hover over the process of your own mind and to validate the 360° assessment data. Furthermore, self-observation interrupts the flow of: [event → *subliminal processing* → *instant reaction*] so you can avoid getting swept away and instead allow reason to guide your consideration and choice of new responses.

Unfortunately, we can't be followed around by a mobile-cam that witnesses us and gives us the power to playback everything we do for review and analysis at the end of the day. How then do you learn to "hover" beside yourself and watch yourself in action?

The first act is to realize that you are neither your mind nor your emotions, but instead a consciousness that rides on top of these vehicles. You can prove this to yourself by simply asking yourself a question: "What am I feeling right now?" If you were your feelings, you could not

ask yourself this objective question because you would not see your feelings as separate from the “you” who is asking the question. Similarly ask, “What am I thinking about? Why am I thinking this?” Again, you can simultaneously be the actor and reflect upon your consciousness.

The second act is to have a process that prepares you to stay mindful when you will need it most. Consider a simple discipline of preparing for even routine meetings. Test any assumption that there is no necessity to prepare by asking yourself what could arise during this event that could trigger an ineffective reaction. Make an internal commitment to slow down and not respond immediately if this should happen. Perhaps you simply say, “let me take a minute to think about this” or actually opt to share what you are experiencing to bring your subjective experience to the awareness of others. In any case, you need a way of not engaging in knee-jerk reactions. Imagine saying, “Right now, I feel myself getting tense and, I know that it is the topic we are discussing and the way we are discussing it that is causing my reaction.” Or, “I feel the impulse to react quickly in ways that I want to avoid or at least consider first. Here’s why I say this....”, etc. etc.

Another technique is simply keeping “meta notes” about what is going on. Whether it is a meeting, a phone call or a walk around the plant, take notes on the activity or experience in the left hand column of a table you create on your notepad. In the right hand column, note what you are feeling and thinking as you move through the experiences and activities you describe on the left. It is amazing what you can learn about yourself doing this. Many people practice writing these meta notes in a ritual of review at the end of the day because they find it easier to do after the fact.

2. Making Sense

The result of all the self-observation described above is that you develop a better sense of how you are operating and the impact you are having. You have begun to validate what others have been telling you and what your

360° feedback says. More importantly you have begun to take charge of what has been your subconscious Operating System. It has been driving your behavior for better or for worse thus far, but now you’re no longer the last one to know about it.

But now what do you do with this information to convert it from simple awareness to understanding and insight? Those receiving 360° feedback will sometimes say, “Oh, I hear that about me all the time. I have gotten that feedback before and made serious efforts to change, but I’m not succeeding. Maybe it’s just not in me to be different.” And, this can serve as a rationalization for inaction because of a lack of deeper insight.

In the beginning of this article we alluded to the notion that we are driven by needs, which at times can inhibit our better selves. Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey refer to these needs as “Competing Commitments”^{xii} – behaviors motivated by a deeply held belief or assumption so powerful it literally hi-jacks our ego, leading us in a direction we actually know – at some level – will not be effective. We pointed out that these needs fall broadly into three categories: a need to *comply* with the needs of others, a need to *control* everything in order to ensure we get what we want, and a need to *protect* ourselves from seeming inadequate.

Some combination of these is typically at the core of our Competing Commitments. Of course, we don’t experience it as such. We experience some commonplace derivative, such as: “I can’t argue with the boss because he might decide I don’t belong on his team” (Complying); “I better be sure I have something bright to say – be one of the smart people in the room – or they will wonder if I am adding any value” (Protecting); “Nobody else understands this as well as I do – they just don’t get it – I will just do it myself, rather than risk them screwing it up and making me look bad.” (Controlling).

The trick is to determine which combination of these is driving the behavior you have been witnessing in your mindfulness exercise. In their book *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey describe a process for this type of self-exploration. The following is our adaptation.

Focusing on a real work-life example of your own choosing:

- A. Identify a “Key Objective” you must accomplish for the good of the business in the next 6-18 months. You should choose only things you have a gut level passion for and which are supported by the facts and by your key stakeholders.
- B. Identify the leadership behavior shift you must commit to – your “One Big Thing”^{xiii} – for success of your Key Objective. Use specific and concrete language, such as: *“I must work harder to speak when I believe a plan is not going to work before it is put into action, even if I might offend others in doing so. This will be my commitment to engage in difficult conversations.”*
- C. List the interfering behaviors – in plain language – that you could exhibit and would cause you to fail to fulfill your commitment. For instance, *“At management committee meetings, I will wait for others to speak before I go out on a limb, and I may even decide to hold back if others don’t look like they are open to what I would say.”* Or, *“If it is not a thing that I am directly accountable for, I will let others decide whether to raise concerns.”*
- D. Determine the underlying Competing Commitment driving your behavior in “C” by imagining fighting the urge to do those things you listed in C and by noticing the feelings and physical sensations that are aroused: *“I feel my stomach tighten and my face flush as I feel embarrassed about speaking up when I am reluctant to do so.”* If you describe these feelings in terms of the underlying

worry, you will find something like, *“I worry I will create tension in the group or that others will see me as not a team player.”* What you will have then described, represents your Competing Commitment, perhaps more accurately described as, *“I must always show that I am on the team to be accepted.”*

- E. Expose the assumptions supporting your Competing Commitment by listing the examples of the logic that would support your worries (i.e. *“My peers expect others to agree with them.”* *“My peers will believe that I am trying to make them look bad in front of my boss, or worse, that I am trying to look better than everyone else.”*) Dig deep for these “Big Assumptions”. Do not do a superficial job. Every worry, every emotion that encourages you to behave Reactively is based on assumptions which must now be reevaluated even if they were relevant in the past.

3. Reality Testing

Now you have something to work with that can help unlock your commitment to a Reactive Operating System. You have a set of assumptions to test. Experience has shown they are almost always *not* true to the degree we believe them to be. The difference between belief and reality leaves lots of opportunity for change without real risk. To make it possible to believe in such change, you must engage in some experimentation. Therefore, carry out tests of your Assumptions. Choose those that seem most in the way of the One Big Thing in 2. B. above. If proven wrong, letting go of these assumptions would free you up the most.

Create a test plan covering:

- A. *What you will do to test your assumption,*
- B. *How you will know if you have gotten useful data, yet not biased to reinforce your assumption.*

Once you have tested, answer the questions,

- A. *What happened?*

- B. *What does the data mean about my assumption?*
- C. *Is my analysis objective?* (For this last, get a trusted partner to share your findings with for a sanity check.)

Having come this far, you have a great deal of information about yourself. You have a view of what you want to achieve, (your One Big Thing), and why (your Key Objective). You have an understanding of how you get in your own way, (the Competing Commitment) and of the beliefs (based on Big Assumptions) that drive the ineffective behavior. What was once part of your subjective and invisible Operating System, you now see more objectively. However, you are not yet competent in your ability to make change. Overcoming the deep habits associated with the old Operating System requires your ability to catch it the moment it is triggered and to supplant it with a new Operating System. You will need to design this first; then practice with it very deliberately.

This is where it gets tricky. You might be tempted to dash forward, pursuing your One Big Thing by fixing your behaviors, by simply saying “no” to old habits of mind. And, if you rigorously spotted those old assumptions popping up and tested them constantly, you would have some success. But, there is a more fruitful path – a path based on defining your primary motivation for the One Big Thing you set your sights upon in the first place.

We are speaking of Vision: your personal vision of your contribution as a leader. Vision requires that you identify your deep-seated passion for something more important than your One Big Thing. Your One Big Thing then becomes just a strategy in service of your vision. Seeing your One Big Thing in the context of a bigger picture about which you care deeply and personally, makes it more likely you will stay focused and do the hard work of putting in place a new operating system.

4. Creating a Vision

In the beginning of this article we described Stages of Adult Development. Those operating from the perspectives of a Creative, Integral or Unitive level of development are pursuing a purpose larger than just their own safety, security or any external definition of success. Personal reward matters less and less as they occupy higher levels of consciousness. And, letting go of your historical sources of reward is easier if you first have clarity about what is worth sacrificing for. In fact, with clarity, trading the security of the familiar for the adventure of the vision may not feel like a sacrifice at all.

To support your own clarity, engage in a writing exercise of reflective questions:

- A. *What will I walk through fire to create?*
- B. *Why does it give my life meaning to do so?*
- C. *What are the values that I hold as critical ingredients to making this contribution?*
- D. *What would be lost to the world if I wavered or retreated from the Vision?*
- E. *Therefore, who am I, at my core, below my skin and my name, below the trappings of my identity?*

These are fundamental questions, the answers to which will sustain you and drive you when the going is hard and courage is required. A vision of this order matters more than any One Big Thing because it is the sum total result of all the One Big Things you will ever take on to become a highly effective leader. So, before you take action, first find this grounded and profound reason to even be working on your One Big Thing.

Being fired up about what you want to create is not enough. You must identify what has held you back, if anything, so far and also identify the courage that will be required of you – in very specific terms – to achieve your Vision.

So also answer,

- A. *Drawing from your One Big Thing, describe the behaviors, competencies or mindset you will embody to fulfill your Vision*
- B. *What will you have to do differently?*
- C. *What will you have to accept in yourself or develop in yourself to succeed?*
- D. *What values will be exhibited by your actions and words?*
- E. *Do you know already whether you have what it takes or will you be stepping into untraveled territory?*

The key to remember is that defining a Vision is a process of identifying it and then refining it over a lifetime. So, expect to live with a measure of ambiguity and unknowing. You will not always be certain you have gotten it right. The more you learn, the more you will realize you don't really know. And, you will likely also grow in the conviction that despite not being certain of what is true here and now, you know the direction you must travel to learn the truth.

5. ***Disciplined Action***

Peter Drucker famously stated, "Sooner or later all grand strategies come down to work". So it is with lofty visions and One Big Things we use as the strategies to reach them. Just as on a regular basis, you must engage in practices to make your life more creative, empowered and effective, you must also measure your progress regularly. The last step in the process we are laying out is a practiced discipline of planning and tracking. Doing so after completing Steps 3 and 4 may require you to revise your original One Big Thing statement or even your Key Objective to ensure clear alignment with your vision.

Therefore, create a detailed Commitment Plan.

- A. Working with your Key Objective and your One Big Thing (the behaviors, competencies and/or mindset), specify

what you will embody and what you will actively work to let go of.

- B. Articulate three measures of how well you are embodying your One Big Thing: evidence of early progress; evidence of significant progress; evidence of ultimate success. Indicate the timeframes by which you will achieve each phase of progress
- C. Describe how you will gather evidences of each stage of progress (e.g. feedback, observable outcomes, etc.).
- D. Lastly, implement the plan and monitor progress, by building specific action steps into your calendar. **Nothing changes if it is not measured.** Therefore, plan actions and measurement activities and give someone else a copy of your plan; someone you give permission to hold you accountable and to be your support.

This is the process or roadmap. It never ends, although it becomes easier with practice. It will also not necessarily always be so explicit. We have witnessed leaders move through the steps above taking on a set of objectives, One Big Thing, Competing Commitment, etc., who learn new ways of operating and become more conscious of how they think, feel and act. As mindset changes occurred, they developed new abilities to handle complexity and ambiguity, only to face new challenges requiring further growth. For them – for all of us – whether followed in detail or in general the journey we have described here will repeat.

Closing Thoughts

In this article, we have asserted there are two things leadership mastery requires in addition to competence: a changed mindset or level of consciousness and a discipline that helps you uncover and understand hidden beliefs and assumptions.

There is a still one more critical ingredient we have not discussed. We are speaking of what many call "presence." Presence is deep

authenticity without defense. It is the ability to be totally open and attentive to yourself, aware of how you are showing up in the moment, in any given set of circumstances. Presence requires both focus and willingness to face the truth about you, be it joyous or awful.

We have provided a short and, we hope, practical roadmap to discovering the truth about you, enabling you to change your leadership behaviors and, as a result, what you are able to achieve. Yet, we haven't provided a guide to presence. That is because presence is an attitude and not a set of actions. It is a mixture of *attention*, *openness* to learn anything that there is to learn, and therefore also *courage*. The roadmap we have described will take you through territory that is at times quite rugged. It is no fun to become aware of your addiction to a set of self-serving assumptions that have provided convenience and even comfort. Behaviors that have been wired to wrong beliefs can be embarrassing when you suddenly see them for what they are. Staying attentively honest with discipline – accepting of yourself and of others when they remind you of yourself or seem to threaten your sense of self – develops presence you will need.

And yet, we are here to say the inner journey has enormous rewards. Freeing unseen possibilities in yourself inevitably means having the same effect on those around you, especially if you are a leader. What emerges from the hard-earned wisdom and clarity about how you show up, is a more trustworthy and compassionate leader. You become someone who will relentlessly pursue what you are passionate about. You are now willing to empower others to lead whenever possible. Failures become learning opportunities and your belief in yourself is founded not on security, acceptance, control or staying above the mess, but instead on a vision. Your confidence in your ability to pursue the vision is based on your willingness to learn, adapt, be wrong and recover on the journey. Results are not undermined by self-serving behavior, but achieved based on empowering relationships and strategic focus.

Success with the roadmap we have described depends on your relentless and selfless commitment to persevere in the journey. We wish you well along the way. We are on the same road.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Many of the concepts and general thesis of this article are derived from the work of Bob Anderson & The Leadership Circle, who in turn integrated the work of multiple theorists in adult development, personality theory and leadership development. Bob created a framework for leadership development, which is embodied in his assessment tools and leadership training programs. For more information go to: <http://www.theleadershipcircle.com>

ⁱⁱ John Kotter - *Leading Change* (1996).

2008 McKinsey Global Survey: *Creating Organizational Transformations*.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Zenger, Joseph Fokman & Scott Edinger – “How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profits: Decoding Leadership Trends to Discover the Patterns”, A white paper: <http://nl.cbe-group.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/whitepaper.pdf>. May 2011.

^{iv} Ibid.

Bob Anderson, “*The Leadership Circle and Organizational Performance*”. Unpublished monograph, The Leadership Circle. The monograph and other articles may be downloaded, free of charge at: <http://www.theleadershipcircle.com/site/optin/index.htm>.

^v A number of theorists have done work in this arena. Some authors to consider: Kevin Cashman, Susanne Cook-Greuter, Robert Fritz, Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey, Robert Quinn, Bill Torbert, and Ken Wilber

^{vi} Level 1 refers to a childhood stage and therefore most descriptions of adult stage development begin at level 2

^{vii} Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey, *Immunity to Change*, 2009

^{viii} Robert Anderson, “*The Spirit of Leadership*”. Unpublished monograph, The Leadership Circle. (See <http://www.theleadershipcircle.com/site/optin/index.htm>.)

^{ix} Robert Anderson, “*The Leadership Circle Profile: Advanced Leadership Assessment Technology*” (Emerald Journal of Industrial and Commercial Training, Volume 38 No4, 2006).

^x In their book, *Immunity to Change*, Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey describe a process which we have adapted with deep appreciation for their initial work.

^{xi} Jon Kabat-Zinn is Professor of Medicine Emeritus and founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He is the author or co-author of scientific papers on mindfulness and its clinical applications.

^{xii} Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey. *Immunity to Change*, 2009

^{xiii} Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey used this label in *Immunity To Change* to describe a single and fundamental shift necessary for effectiveness.