

How do I develop myself as a leader?

Warren Craycroft, ProjectConnections staff

The study of leadership

The study of leadership is an inexact science. Almost every reference of any worth on the subject has a disclaimer in its preface warning the reader that leadership is an elusive subject that does not lend itself to crisp definitions. [Bennis's](#) disclaimer is in the words of the French painter Braque: "The only thing that matters in art cannot be explained." The art of leadership has a similar elusive quality.

Nevertheless, we know leadership when we experience it, either as leaders or as [followers and constituents](#). There are reoccurring themes, attributes, and characteristics that appear in virtually all studies of leadership. These are not hard, fast lists. You are encouraged to add to them, and to question attributes that don't fit your own worldview. As we will see, much of the leadership educational process is self-learning -- learning about yourself and recognizing leadership qualities within yourself. Once we have a defining list of leadership attributes and characteristics, we can apply them to examples of leadership that we ourselves have experienced, further refining the target goals of leadership.

Using this model of leadership, we can then examine how people become leaders and how to put ourselves on the same path. There are no shortcuts and quick formulas, but there are useful guides to help keep you on the path and light the way. And like many long and difficult journeys, the rewards can be substantial even in the early stages of travel.

We will use extensively two excellent resources on the study of leadership:

Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader*, Addison-Wesley (1994) ISBN: 0201409291.

John W. Gardner, *On Leadership*, The Free Press (May 1993) ISBN: 0029113121

Let's begin our study by constructing a working definition of leadership using some commonly agreed-upon characteristics.

What is leadership?

Characteristics

Leadership, in a single sentence, is the art of getting people to want to follow you. [Gardner's](#) one-sentence definition: "Leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers." Let's put some additional detail on our definition by examining the attributes of leadership and leaders that are most often cited.

Leadership Attributes and Tasks

Vision: Virtually every serious study of leadership cites a compelling vision as [the single-most important characteristic](#) of a leader. The ability to articulate this vision and capture the

imagination with it is a fundamental force of cohesion among leaders and their followers/constituents. A powerful vision can even mitigate to some extent the lack of other fundamental attributes of leadership.

Passion, Energy, Enthusiasm: These attributes are part of the “vision transfer” process. Communicating one's passion is a driving force for motivation, a key leadership task. Bennis [p. 40] cites the need of both a broad passion for living in general and a particular passion focused on a job, profession, or area of interest.

Integrity, Virtue: Trust is another cohesive force among leaders and followers/constituents. Establishing trust is a key leadership task. Trust is generated by leaders who are honest about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and their wins and mistakes. Principles and beliefs are building blocks of integrity. A leader who has not earned the trust of his/her constituents will not be able to build a following except through coercion and threat, which are poor substitutes for persuasion.

Curiosity: Curiosity is a mandatory attribute for the leadership task of establishing credibility among an intelligent and highly specialized following. The leader has to walk a tightrope between generalist and specialist. He or she must strike a balance between stifling the broad, strategic view by specialization and being too out of touch with the particular passions and needs of his/her specialized constituents. A leadership role in high-tech and multiple-discipline project management involves knowing as much as possible about as many technologies as possible. Leaders who share intimate knowledge of a functional discipline with the team can communicate on a deeper level than leaders who don't. This competency can generate trust among practitioners of difficult engineering disciplines such as software engineering. So, while leadership profits from the broad view of a generalist, it may require occasional furious bursts of study in a specialty. A burning curiosity about the world is important fuel for this rapid, real-time educational process.

Daring, Risk Taking: As the rate of change in society and technology increases, it is an increasingly rare leadership role that does not involve change and renewal. Processes, methods, and organizational structures become obsolete almost as quickly as they are established. Leadership involves constantly questioning the status quo, either re-franchising the existing structures or sweeping them aside and establishing new ones that fit current needs.

Accountability: Perhaps the toughest pill to swallow in leadership education is to acknowledge the role of mistakes in forming a leader, and to even embrace making mistakes as a leadership task.

The endless list

The attributes of leadership discussed above are the ones that appear routinely in virtually any discussion of leadership. But there are many more, and the student of leadership is encouraged to expand on the list using his or her own experiences. Part of the self-learning process of leadership is to test such attributes against the "inner voice" that we all have and which can be a surprisingly valuable judge of what works and what does not work in leadership. We'll discuss this learning process in more detail later.

Leaders and managers

We can further clarify the characteristics and attributes of leaders by contrasting them with those of managers. Here Bennis makes a harsh distinction between managers and leaders: leaders master the context; managers surrender to it. He illustrates these differences with a set of keyword comparisons. We show some of those comparisons here (Bennis, p.44):

- The manager has his eye always on the bottom line; the leader has his eye on the horizon.
- The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
- The manager administers; the leader innovates.
- The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.
- The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.
- The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.

The list goes on and makes some good points. However, the pejorative generalizations are somewhat troubling. [Gardner](#) expresses his reservations on this process of distinguishing managers from leaders by saying, " In the process, leaders generally end up looking like a cross between Napoleon and the Pied Piper, and managers like unimaginative clods. This troubles me". [Gardner](#) goes on to soften the distinction between leadership and management. He points out that nearly every leader must carry out management functions to some degree, often finding himself/herself on the left-hand side of [Bennis's](#) list. Still, on page 4 of *On Leadership*, he makes a six-point list of how leader/managers distinguish themselves from typical managers, summarized here:

- They think longer term.
- They think of how their organization fits into a larger organization or larger outside world.
- They cross bureaucratic boundaries and jurisdictions.
- They emphasize intangibles like vision, values, and motivation.
- They have political skills to cope with conflict.
- They think in terms of renewal.

Status and power

Status and power are often confused with leadership. Although many leaders may have these components, they are not in themselves indicators of leadership.

Status in itself is not a guarantee of leadership ability. Everyone can recall examples of top executives, monarchs, high political office holders, and head bureaucrats whose office bestowed a level of status but whose leadership abilities were nonexistent. However, many leadership positions have a measure of status associated with them. Status can be an important component of the setting and context that encourages leadership to emerge. But status itself does not create leaders.

Similarly, power is not the sole province of leadership positions. A petty bureaucrat, an armed gunman, or an avaricious plumber responding to a pipe leak on Sunday morning can exercise power. And again, virtually all leadership positions do have a measure of power, and that power

is often used. What distinguishes a leader is how that power is used. Leaders combine power with persuasion. They understand that the use of pure power to dominate will quickly undermine trust. As [Gardner](#) points out, the exercise of power invariably comes with a cost. A leader measures that cost and tries to keep the cost in balance with benefits resulting from the exercise of power.

Examples of leadership characteristics in project management

The most credible studies of leadership are empirical. Take a broad range of people who are generally acknowledged to have exhibited leadership abilities; examine their personalities, backgrounds, settings, and context; and distill out common threads of attributes, characteristics, and actions that played a part in their leadership experience. Studying a wide range of leaders helps to demonstrate the independence of key attributes from the particular circumstance of any one leader. However, it can become difficult for a project manager interested in leadership to easily identify with the leadership context of kings, CEOs, quarterbacks, platoon commanders, or educators. So let us take leadership attributes discussed so far and apply them to the particular context of high-tech project management. In previous discussions, the term "manager" has been employed to contrast with "leader", becoming a kind of "less than a leader". We will continue with that terminology, putting aside for the moment the now ambiguous term "project manager". In the list below, a "leader" is a project manager displaying relatively strong leadership attributes, and a "manager" is a project manager with weak or non-existent leadership abilities. Here are some distinguishing characteristics of a "leader" project manager:

Process changers versus process followers: The manager follows the current development process to the letter and rarely questions it. The leader constantly questions the current development process and continually looks for ways to improve it. The manager is mesmerized by the "trance of nonrenewal" ([Gardner](#), page 125) and cannot see the flaws. The leader breaks the spell and sees the flaws clearly.

Crossing boundaries: Project management is a continual process of negotiating for resources, making deals, and getting commitments from different function groups in an organization. . The manager believes that the division of labor, protocol, and formal communication are cornerstones to good organization and must be respected. The leader in project management crosses functional boundaries and jurisdictions and deals directly with key people in other functional groups.

" Fire in the belly": A leader displays a burning desire to succeed and a constant high energy level. The drive to hit goals is relentless and infects the entire team. A manager is more steady state, applying adequate energy level to get the job done, but not at a level that inspires and motivates the team.

Long term strategic view: A manager accepts responsibility for generating a design that meets the product's requirements. A leader feels a responsibility for solving the customer's problem and competes with the marketing product manager for ownership of the requirements. A manager accepts the product's requirements as a blueprint for ensuring quality and fitness for use. A leader constantly questions the product's requirements and reaffirms their adequacy in modeling the proper solution for the customer. A manager takes responsibility for the entire development cycle of a product. A leader feels responsibility for the entire product lifecycle from first outline of the vision to the withdrawal of the product from service, even if he/she will

only be involved during its development. The manager takes responsibility for the project budget. The leader constantly thinks in terms of return on investment and good custodianship of the investor's money.

Accountability: Project management tasks include reporting status, re-planning and midcourse corrections, and debriefing for lessons learned. In all of these activities, a manager is conscious of how negative revelations may affect his or her own near-term performance evaluations and "scores". The leader accepts responsibility for results both good and bad. A leader understands the inevitability of mistakes and the value of learning from them. A leader has enough faith in his/her abilities to transcend short-term (and shortsighted) dips in performance scores and evaluations.

Communication: A leader emphasizes personal contact, one-on-one's, and eyeball-to-eyeball commitments. A leader uses E-mail and voice mail as necessary but poor substitutes only when personal contact is not practical. Electronic foxholes are not part of a leader's arsenal.

How is leadership taught? How is leadership learned?

Are leaders born, or are they made?

Most leadership experts quickly and adamantly put this question to rest, making a strong case for leaders being made, not born. [Gardner](#) insists that most of the attributes of leadership can be learned, although he seems to qualify his argument somewhat by making a strong case for the value of early influences in childhood. [Bennis](#) is equally unequivocally in his belief that nearly anyone can become a leader, given the right setting, context, and skills training. They both give copious examples of the following empirical arguments for leaders being made, not born:

The broad diversity of people who have become leaders. Leaders emerge in national, state, regional, and local politics; at the top and bottom of fortune 100 companies; in large and small businesses; in professional sports and the local Little League; and in high religious office and the neighborhood parish church, synagogue, and mosque. Leaders can come from all walks of life, from all ethnic groups, from all social strata, and from a broad range of IQs. The message is that virtually everyone has the innate potential to become a leader.

The crucial role of settings and context in making leaders. Context is cited constantly as the key factor in creating leaders. Individuals with no visible leadership ability in one context -- their job, for example -- may exhibit strong leadership ability in another context -- organizing the local soccer league or neighborhood association. [Gardner](#) uses the example of Winston Churchill, whose career was spotty and unremarkable until World War II. At age sixty-six, the feisty, old-school patriotic warrior suddenly became a perfect fit for the backs-to-the-wall, do-or-die leadership that post-Dunkirk Britain so desperately needed. [Gardner](#) also points out that the context "window" may close just as quickly and dramatically as it opens. In post-war Britain, the voters quickly and unceremoniously dropped Churchill.

The failure of any innate trait to guarantee leadership. Again, examples are given of people who have traits commonly associated with leadership -- charisma, high energy

levels, high I.Q. -- but who fail to develop as leaders. There appears to be no innate trait that by itself gives a significant advantage for success in leadership.

However, the premise that virtually everyone has the potential for becoming a leader is tempered with the observation that most people fail to achieve the realization of this potential. There is clearly more to the leadership education process than providing a candidate leader with the proper setting and watching leadership spontaneously bloom.

Teaching leadership

A cornerstone theme in leadership studies is the paradoxical argument that leadership cannot be taught; it must be learned. It must be learned by doing, and by being. If the cliché "experience is the best teacher" is a tired one, it is because it gets a thorough workout in every study of leadership. This does not mean that classes (and books) on leadership have no value. Leaders need skills, and skills can be taught. But, [as Bennis points out](#), traditional leadership classes focus primarily on management skills and produce managers ("when they produce anything at all"), and not leaders. As we discussed earlier, management skills are useful and often needed in leadership roles. But, as we also illustrated, there are striking differences between the attributes of a manager and those of a leader.

There is limited value in dwelling on the influence of our early years in molding leadership potential, since those years are past and the influence (or damage) has been done. But there is value in at least understanding what occurred in those years. [Gardner](#) gives an in-depth discussion on the role of education in developing leadership. He even makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to starting leadership training in infancy, but admits that he can offer little in this area besides the truism that early behavior standards and values in the home can influence later life. He is uneasy about our system of education's tendency to emphasize individual achievement at the expense of cooperative effort. Despite this tendency to thwart rather than encourage leadership, he points to school and college as a source of leadership training for those who seek it out. The value of a broad education, at least in the undergraduate years, is emphasized. He concedes that specialization at the graduate and professional level is inevitable, but encourages us to resist total specialization and try to obtain as broad an education as the curriculum rules allows. He also points out examples of programs both on and off campus that promote leadership through shared experiences and emulation of leadership roles, while cautioning us that these emulations are usually so simplified that they have limited value.

Gardner does emphasize the importance of communication, a skill that can be taught. He encourages potential leaders to master writing and speaking in their native language, as well as a working knowledge of at least a second language.

Bennis also emphasizes the value of [broad cultural training](#) -- continuing education; travel and exposure to other cultures; and associations with mentors groups are a few of his "know the world" recommendations. He laments the current state of cultural illiteracy, citing the [thesis of E. D. Hirsch](#) that our educational system has serious failings in its role of cultural educator.

Gardner has a similar list of lifelong learning opportunities and experiences, including career changes and cultural boundary-crossing, elective politics and public service, and rotating reassignments within an organization.

And finally, before we leave training, we should raise the alarm against the "leadership in 21 days" courses and weekend leadership development courses. [Bennis](#) calls the latter the "microwave theory" of leadership training: pop in the candidate on Friday evening, and ding -- on Sunday evening out pops a leader. Short courses that help equip you for the long road of self-learning may have value; short courses that promise instant leadership ability have none.

Learning leadership

Self-education, self-exploration

Zen is a four-letter word in many circles. Any discussion of an "inner self" or "inner voice" risks losing a significant part of an audience. But a critical step in becoming a leader is the process of learning about and becoming your true self. So [Bennis](#) navigates carefully through these potentially dangerous waters with a compelling discussion of self-learning and the power of the [inner voice](#). Discussions such as these are difficult to summarize, as they are necessarily empirical and steeped with examples to illustrate points. So we'll give some highlights in the hope that it encourages the reader to consult the original sources.

The leaders that Bennis studied all went through a process of learning and unlearning about themselves. Virtually all of them had some baggage that needed to be dumped. Childhood and adolescence education is often biased toward conformity, emulation, and proving ourselves instead of free thought, invention, and expressing ourselves. We find that we have been made by our elders and our peers, directed toward their goals and roles thinly disguised as our own. This early conformity is not necessarily wrong or damaging. In fact, infants and young children must necessarily be followers and conformists for the sake of their very survival. But at some point in our lives, we become capable of knowing our selves, and at that point some of our previous experiences may work against us. Some of Bennis's subjects found themselves deep into adult life and career paths before they truly understood who they were, what they truly desired, and what they were capable of achieving and learning.

The theme here is the platonic one that learning is basically the recovery or recollection of knowledge that we already instinctively know. The argument of whether we are born with this knowledge hard-wired into our brains or whether we unconsciously record the knowledge while experiencing the world -- the "nature/nurture" argument -- is secondary to our discussion here (however, it is extremely important in the discussion of the [effects of childhood and education](#)). The important premise here is that there is a rich store of knowledge waiting to be tapped in all of us. It lies beneath the protective jumble that our egos can make of experience in order to shield us from some of life's traumas. We already know much of what we need to know to become leaders. And the inner voice is the mouthpiece of this knowledge.

Another theme among these leaders was a strong drive to learn as much as possible as they re-made themselves. There is an important distinction between learning from others and being made by others. A leader is constantly learning from others; the process is life long and never ends. But the leader examines and reflects on the knowledge gained, always ready to unlearn conventional wisdom, habits, and paradigms that no longer fit into their dynamically growing experience sets.

Four tests for aiding self expression

Here are four tests for aiding self expression, given by Bennis (see page 122 of *On Becoming a Leader* for more detail):

The first test is knowing what you want, knowing your abilities and capacities, and recognizing the difference between the two.

The second test is knowing what drives you, knowing what gives you satisfaction, and knowing the difference between the two.

The third test is knowing what your values and priorities are, knowing what the values and priorities of your organization are, and measuring the difference between the two.

The fourth test is – having measured the differences between what you want and what you're able to do, and between what drives you and what satisfies you, and between what your values are and what the organization's values are – are you able and willing to overcome those differences?

The role of mentors

Every leader who has commented on his or her journey through the leadership experience has cited one or more mentors as being pivotal in their lives. Bennis describes mentors as teachers who finds things in a person that the person didn't know were there, or who demanded more from him than he knew he had to give. Gardner gives a [compelling description of mentors as "growers"](#). Like farmers raising crops, they understand that not all factors are under their control. Patience, concern, vigilance, and a willingness to keep trying are some of the traits of good mentors.

Some leaders who may find themselves without a flesh and blood mentor will resurrect one or make one up. They may continue an intellectual relationship with a long dead former mentor, or create a dialog with a historical figure they have never met, or even create a faceless critic and advisor. Bennis's has a favorite questions for leaders who write, act, lecture, or perform. He asks them how they imagine their audience. The response are invariably some actual mentor currently or formerly in their lives, or some personification of a mentor. Clearly there is a strong need among leaders for mentors, belying the idea that leaders imagine themselves at the top of the heap with no one left to learn from.

Mentors are relatively rare. Gardner cites a study of the careers of the twelve top people at AT&T. Four of the twelve had come up through the same middle manager, who was 1 of 900 at his level. When recognized, mentors should be valued and used as important resources.

The power of mentors is well understood in some organization. They have programs that pair up the inexperienced with the experienced. These programs allow prospective leaders to view leadership up close and expose them to role models. A mentor can also help expose the trainee to real leadership situations in a carefully controlled set of circumstances. Much of leadership training comes from trying (and failing often). The mentor can help steer the trainee around some of the pitfalls. And when failure does occur, the mentor can help minimize the trauma of failure and help the trainee learn from the experience rather than be defeated by it.

But mentoring does not have to be a formal master-apprentice arrangement. A mentor can be a superior, a coworker, a member of one's church, a friend, virtually anyone who has an experience

set to share and who understands the potentially soaring returns that an investment in people can yield. Professional associations can facilitate bringing together mentors and trainees. This is also the promise of emerging Internet communities-of-practice.

The role of followers/constituents in creating leadership

As we touched upon earlier in an aside, followers/constituents play an important role in shaping and legitimizing their leaders. Gardner avoids the term "follower" because it does not adequately convey the two-way relationship between leaders and their constituents. In politics, this reciprocal nature is expressed in the well-accepted maxim that "good constituents tend to produce good leaders". In the corporate environment, the element of choice of leaders may be missing from a constituency. We are typically presented with our leaders without much say in the selection process. Nevertheless, the same two-way relationship exists. As Gardner points out, one of the key differences between managers and leaders is that "executives are given subordinates; they have to earn followers."

Although there are [no easy answers](#) or pat formulae in structuring this relationship, the one factor that does emerge as vital to the leader-constituent relationship is two-way communication. We have already stressed the importance of communications skills as part of the leadership skill set. And we've stressed the avoidance of [electronic analogs](#) that replace direct, personal contact unless good business reasons forces their use. But the "what" of leader-constituent communication is just as important as the "how" This is where shared culture plays an important role in a leader's gaining the trust of his/her followers. In the realm of high-tech development, followers/constituents often lament how out of touch their managers appear to be with the realities of life in the trenches. The more specialized the discipline, the more difficult it can be for a manager to bridge this culture gap and earn the trust of his/her subordinates. This gap is often seen in difficult engineering disciplines such as software engineering. We have already examined curiosity as an important driving force in leadership; we emphasize it again here. In high-tech development, the shared culture so necessary for good leader/constituent relations often involves descending into detail on a technical discipline. The level of detail that a leader can achieve is necessarily limited by the broad, general view that the leader must maintain. But striving to understand what their followers/constituents are truly up against in their workday will help a leader bridge this gap. This knowledge will also be valuable in management tasks such as work breakdowns and issue resolution.

There is a key advantage here for the technical specialist who can grow into a strong leadership role. This change will likely necessitate leaving direct technical work behind, but such "from the ranks" leaders can achieve a high level of legitimacy and trust through shared experiences among their specialist follower/constituents. This level of communication may be difficult to achieve by the manager who has never "walked the walk".

The role of failure in successful leadership

Failure in successful leadership is not just a play on words but an important theme, repeated over and over again in studies of leaders. Bennis returns to this theme constantly. He emphasizes that creativity is based on the freedom to make mistakes. Mistakes are a driving force in innovation, growth, and progress. Among the [questions](#) Bennis asked his study group of leaders are, "What role has failure played in your life" and "How did you learn?" The answers are often identical. Leaders emphasize constantly that mistakes are a metric of how hard you try and how much

progress you are making. Some executives systematically encourage mistakes in their organizations. They believe that, far from being reckless, such a policy is a mechanism for growth and competitive advantage. As management consultant Donald Michael puts it, "Leaders embrace error."

Finding opportunities in setting and context

Virtually every story of successful leadership has a component of "being in the right place at the right time." We've already discussed the crucial role of context in providing the stage for leadership emergence. An important part of leadership education is to identify and seek out situations that enable leadership to emerge. And the situations that have true learning and growth potential for an emerging leader will never be easy. There is a military truism that "it's hard to make rank in peace time" and this applies to project management as well. Look for the projects in trouble, the crises, the difficult technical disciplines, and the falsely branded "problem teams" which have good people but poor management. If you have a special advantage such as relevant technical knowledge or previous experience in a related product area, then exploit that advantage. But don't wait for such "tailor made" opportunities. Prepare to plunge into a fast and furious learning mode as you take on projects in unfamiliar territory. Follow the example of [Marty Kaplin](#), who accepted a Vice President position at Disney Productions with a wide-ranging background but little knowledge of the movie industry. He plunged into a self-orchestrated crash course on the movie industry, characterizing the process as "inventing his own university". He had been told that it would take him three years to get grounded in the movie industry basics. It took him nine months. In the words of Bennis (1994) Chapter 6's title: "Strike hard, try everything".

But, be wary of true "problem teams". As much as we would like to believe that we can fix any people problems through good leadership and effective management, the fact is that some people and groups of people may be poisoned beyond salvage. Be careful of taking on a task that is doomed to failure. There is a good reason why leaders constantly emphasize hiring the best people available and empowering them.

How organizations can foster leadership

Organizations that encourage and foster leadership have recognizable characteristics. We've already examined some of them, including good communication, recognizing the value of mentors, and encouraging mistakes. We list some others here:

Embracing change: Effective leadership involves constant questioning of the status quo and constant renewal of an organization as the business climate changes. An organization that resists change will run constantly against the grain of leadership.

Highly skilled workers: Organizations that hire the best will foster leadership by strengthening the foundation of the two-way relationship between followers/constituents and their leaders.

Leadership opportunities: True leadership responsibilities, with real-world consequences for success and failure, should be offered early in a manager's career. This testing of inexperienced leaders under fire may be viewed as risky by the organization, but such a view is shortsighted. Making this investment will yield more experienced leaders faster over the long run than will a "safer" and more conservative doling out of real responsibility.

Allow reflection: Allowing leaders time away from the front lines to reflect seems counterproductive in a fast moving organization. Yet examination and reflection is a vital part of renewal and change in an organization. Bennis encourages all executives to practice the "three Rs: retreat, renewal, and return." Many of the leaders that he studied have some component of this quiet time build into their lives, whether it is a scheduled daily moment of reflection, one day a week in a "retreat office", or a yearly escape to a hide-away with no telephones.

Learning: An organization must provide its members opportunities for growth and development if it is to release the full potential of those members.

Further reading on leadership

Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader*, Addison-Wesley (1994) ISBN: 0201409291

John W. Gardner, *On Leadership*, The Free Press (May 1993) ISBN: 0029113121

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy - What Every American Needs To Know*, Vantage Books (May 1988) ISBN: 0394758439

Joseph F. Kett, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, Houghton Mifflin Co. (Sept 1993) ISBN: 0395655978

Jane M. Healy, Ph.D., *Endangered Minds, Why Children Don't Think And What We Can Do About It*, Paperback, Touchstone Books (October 1991); ISBN: 067174920X

Brief References and Quotes

“Followers” and “constituents”

In describing people who follow leaders, students of leadership don't like the term “follower”. Gardner explicitly uses another term “constituents”. Although this term is awkward in some contexts, the term “followers” implies too much passivity and dependence. And Gardner makes strong points about the important role that constituents play in forming and legitimizing leaders themselves. Bennis also illustrates the power of the two-way relationship between constituents and their leaders in his discussion of accommodation under the delightful term “stakeholder symmetry” (see [Bennis \(1994\)](#), p. 200).

Vision

In his landmark study of 28 leaders, [Bennis \(1994\)](#) says in his introduction (p. 6), “But of all the characteristics that distinguished the individuals in this book, the most pivotal was a concern with a guiding purpose, an overarching vision. They were more than goal-directed. As Karl Wallenda said, 'Walking the tightwire is living; everything else is waiting.'”

Leaders and Managers

[Bennis \(1994\)](#) p. 44

Leadership can't be taught; it must be learned.

[Bennis \(1994\)](#) begins Chapter 4 with this theme. The chapter stresses the importance of experiential learning rather than classroom learning.

Inner Voice

The following quote prefaces [Bennis \(1994\)](#) Chapter 3 on “Knowing Yourself:

I have often thought that the best way to define a man's character would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensively active and alive. At such moments, there is a voice inside which speaks and says, “This is the real me.”

William James

Letters of William James

Lifelong Learning

[Gardner \(1993\)](#) devotes Chapter 15, *Leadership Development - Lifelong Growth*, to this subject.

Knowing the world

See [Bennis \(1994\)](#), Chapter 4, *Knowing the World*.

Cultural Literacy

In [Bennis \(1994\)](#), Chapter 4, *Knowing the World*, p. 81, Bennis refers to Hirsch, [Cultural Literacy](#), which contains a landmark study of why cultural literacy is declining in the U.S. Hirsch proposes a baseline of cultural knowledge. He presents a provocative list of 5,000 essential names, phrases, dates and concepts. However, this list does not contain definitions or explanations. For a more complete reference of essential cultural knowledge with definitions and cross-references, see Kett and Hirsch, [The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy](#). This is a truly fascinating reference work. Its only shortcoming is that it can entrap you for hours, hoping from one subject to another.

The "Nature/Nurture" argument

In [Endangered Minds](#), the landmark book on the roots of the crisis in education, Jane M. Healy, Ph.D. discusses the scientific evidence supporting the theory that growing brains are physically shaped by experience (the "nurture" side of the nature/nurture argument). She describes the truly frightening measurable effects that media, principally television, have had on our children's ability to learn. And perhaps even more troubling is the "snowball" effect on education, as the products of the first television generations reach adulthood and themselves enter teaching as a profession. This book is a must-read for any parent or prospective parent and anyone involved in education. It is also important for anyone involved in their own self-assessment of what effects their own upbringing may have had on themselves as thinking and learning individuals.

Mentors as "growers"

[Gardner \(1993\)](#), p. 169 - 170: "Mentors are 'growers', good farmers rather than inventors or mechanics. Growers have to accept that the main ingredients and processes with which they work are not under their own control. They are in a patient partnership with nature, with an eye to the weather and a feeling for cultivation. A recognition that seeds sometimes fall on barren ground, a willingness to keep trying, a concern for the growing thing, patience -- such are the virtues of the grower. And the mentor."

Leader-constituent relationship

In [Gardner \(1993\)](#), Chapter 3, *The Heart of the Matter: Leader-Constituent Interaction* is devoted to this subject. Also see Bennis (1994), Chapter 8, *Getting People On Your Side*.

Communication - electronic analogs

Organizations can implement a highly efficient communication infrastructure and still not have good people-to-people communication. A network analogy is appropriate here. Communication infrastructure such as E-mail, voice mail, video conferencing, an intranet web, and a world-wide seven-digit phone system are all important elements of the "transport layer" of people-to-people communication, and attention should be paid to these elements. But it is how people communicate with each other, how they use these tools -- the "session" and "applications" layer of people-to-people communication -- that is vital to effective communication. More and more, organizations are being drawn into electronic communication for its own sake by the seductive nature of these communication tools. We are starting to use these tools as wholesale

replacements for live person-to-person contact, instead of useful adjuncts to powerful, live interaction.

Bennis's interview questions

[Bennis \(1994\)](#) is based upon in depth interviews with 28 leaders. The list of questions that Bennis asked his study group of leaders is on p. 7 of the introduction. The list of leaders is on p. 9.

Marty Kaplin

See [Bennis \(1994\)](#), Chapter 3, *Knowing Yourself*, p. 57.