Leadership in Action

How Effective Directors Get Things Done

Paula Jorde Bloom
The Starting Point—
Know Thyself

Socrates was right! You can’t lead others unless you first understand yourself. The quest for leadership must begin with an inner quest to discover who you are—your passions, values, talents, personal resources, and even those foibles and annoying habits you might prefer not to acknowledge. The insight that comes from self-awareness will help you appreciate the unique gifts you have to offer your organization and the importance of surrounding yourself with others who complement (and not necessarily compliment) your unique skill set and personality. Self-awareness generates self-confidence—a faith in your own ability to meet the challenges of leadership and work with others to achieve your vision.

Objective introspection gives you insight into your emotions, an essential ingredient in effective leadership. When you can recognize and manage your own emotions, you are better equipped to understand the emotions of others. Self-aware leaders are attuned to their emotional reflexes and understand how their behavior affects the job performance of others. If you are aware, then you are better able to adapt your style as needed to accommodate the demands of different situations.

Self-awareness also means having a clear picture of your internal motives, those things that drive you to say what you say and do what you do. Peeling away the layers of your motivations is not always a comfortable process, but it is a necessary step if your goal is to become an authentic leader known for personal integrity. In Chapter 6 we’ll talk more about what it means to "walk the talk."

Think of the insights that come from self-awareness as the ultimate navigation system to maximize your personal performance. The first step in the process is to take a thorough and candid inventory of your strengths and weaknesses as well as your physical, intellectual, social, and emotional resources. This is not a one-time endeavor; rather it is a continuous process that involves ongoing personal reflection as well as soliciting feedback from others. In this chapter we’ll only scratch the surface of this important topic.

Before we launch into a discussion of these important issues, however, let’s first take a look at the leaders, mentors, and role models in your life who have inspired you and helped shape your thoughts, ideals, purposes, and passions.
Which Leaders Have Inspired You or Disappointed You?

In her book *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*, Marion Wright Edelman stresses that most people are influenced by several mentors during the course of their lives, not just one or two people. Sometimes it is a well-known person you’ve come to know through the front pages of the newspaper. Most often, though, it is a person close to you—a relative, teacher, friend, or supervisor—who has inspired you to be your best. Think about the influential leaders and mentors in your life as you take a moment to complete Exercise 3.

Write the names of two or three people whom you respect and admire for their leadership abilities. Think of people who have inspired or mentored you to be your best; people who made you say "Wow, I wish I could be like ..." Next to their names, write the two or three traits or personal characteristics that set these individuals apart from others. Then in the adjacent space, add a specific example or two of how they put that quality into practice. Be as detailed as possible in describing their behavior.

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Now think about all the supervisors, bosses, and managers you’ve worked for as you complete this sentence.

*I do my most effective work for leaders who . . .*

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Thinking about the traits, dispositions, skills, and specific behaviors that inspire you to peak performance can serve as a guide as you seek to expand your own repertoire of leadership skills and support the work of others.
There are many leadership lessons we can learn from individuals in other fields and disciplines. This is one of the reasons I love to read autobiographies and biographies. One of my favorites is *Personal History* by Katherine Graham. Mrs. Graham was thrust into a career in publishing and business with virtually no experience. She drew on her natural instincts, strength of character, and her personal charm to forge what today is one of the country’s leading media and education businesses, The Washington Post Company. Along the way she stood her ground and took the heat on issues of principle. She surrounded herself with smart, capable people who shared her vision. And she encouraged those she hired to think for themselves and stand up for what they believe.

I loved this autobiography because although Katherine Graham was confident, her insecurities were deep and wide. "In truth," she confessed, "I didn’t even know how much I didn’t know, or the complexity of what lay before me. What I did know was that I wasn’t at all sure that I could do what was going to be required of me."

Being overwhelmed by the scope and responsibility of a leadership position is certainly not a phenomenon experienced solely by Katherine Graham. Many famous figures in history write about being thrust into positions of awesome responsibility and feeling utterly overwhelmed. The experience is common enough that social psychologists refer to it as the *imposter syndrome*. You may have experienced such feelings yourself when you assumed your first job as a director. A key trait in strong leaders, however, is the capacity to meet the challenges of their new roles and find the fortitude and determination to triumph over their fears.

Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court, has also written a compelling memoir. She recounts the difficulty of getting her first job after graduating from Stanford Law School. She interviewed for a position and was told she would not be hired as a law associate but could consider a secretarial position at the firm if she wanted to. She had the confidence in herself to tell the attorney that she wasn’t interested in the secretarial position but that she would work for the firm for a year without pay just to prove her worth as a lawyer. The rest, of course, is history.

Justice O’Connor’s memoir is a reminder of how lonely being a trailblazer can be. She zeros in on the extraordinary pressure to perform that is put on leaders who are “firsts.” It wasn’t until Ruth Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the Court, Justice O’Connor says, that she could relax and feel like all eyes weren’t focused on her.

While the lessons we learn from extraordinary leaders are helpful, we can also learn powerful lessons from the “unleaders” who have been part of our world of work. My guess is you’ve had a boss, supervisor, manager, or agency official
who held a leadership position but did not live up to your expectations of how a leader should act. He may have been indecisive, unreliable, or inconsistent in his actions. Perhaps she showed favoritism or outright bias and discrimination in making decisions. Or he simply may have been in over his head regarding the demands of the job, incompetent but unaware of his own inadequacies.

The emotional scars and organizational turmoil that can result from ineffective, unethical, or just plain incompetent leadership can leave us disillusioned, frustrated, and angry. Seeing the damage done by poor leaders can serve as a powerful reminder of those behaviors and traits we never want to emulate.

**Which Traits Define Your Leadership Style?**

Case studies of exemplary leaders from history and from your own experience provide ample evidence that there is no one best style of leadership. Leaders come in all shapes and sizes. Some have a bold, assertive style and enjoy the attention of being in the spotlight. Others transform organizations in less flamboyant and outspoken ways. How about you? Think about the traits and characteristics that define your leadership style as you complete Exercise 4.

**Exercise 4**

Read through the list of traits in the accompanying table "Some Traits We Associate with Good Leaders" and select **five** traits that best capture the essence of your leadership style. If you think of a personal trait that isn’t on the list, feel free to add it.

1. ________________________
2. ________________________
3. ________________________
4. ________________________
5. ________________________

Now go through the list again and select **three** more traits that you would like to develop over the next year.

1. ________________________
2. ________________________
3. ________________________
### Some Traits We Associate With Good Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessible</th>
<th>Empathetic</th>
<th>Open</th>
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<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledges mistakes</td>
<td>Engaging</td>
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<td>Ambitious</td>
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<td>Assertive</td>
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<td>Available</td>
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<td>Calm</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Practical</td>
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<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
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<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Predictable</td>
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<td>Confident</td>
<td>Good listener</td>
<td>Problem solver</td>
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<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Gracious</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Considerate</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Resourceful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Risk taker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>Inquisitive</td>
<td>Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Introspective</td>
<td>Tactful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Visionary</td>
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An important point to keep in mind as you pinpoint the traits that define your unique leadership style is that sometimes the very traits that make you highly effective in one situation may actually undermine your effectiveness in another situation. Look back at the five traits in Exercise 4 that you selected to best define your leadership style. Are there any that work better in some situations than in others? Self-knowledge about how your defining traits can support but also limit you from achieving desired outcomes allows you to flex your style, modifying and adjusting your signature themes as the situation demands.

How Effective Do You Feel in Your Leadership Role?

Your gut feeling about how you handle the day-in, day-out demands of your job can serve as a pretty accurate barometer of how effective you actually are in your leadership role. Here are some questions that will lead to the heart of your perception of your own leadership effectiveness:

- Do you always feel like you’re swamped, fighting fires, barely meeting deadlines, and living on the edge till the next crisis?
- Are you burdened with more paperwork than you had a year ago?
- Do you find people seeking your permission to carry out tasks they should be assuming on their own?
- Do you receive a lot of work-related telephone calls at home in the evening or on weekends?
- Do you feel you can give honest feedback to members of your staff without their getting defensive?
- Do you find yourself spending more time working on small details than on planning and visioning for the future?
- Do you need to repeat directions and suggestions over and over before they are followed?
- Does the conversation stop or change focus when you walk into a room full of teachers?
- Do you feel that you have to remind others in subtle ways how hard you work because they don’t seem to appreciate how much you do?

If you answered yes to five or more of these questions, you probably feel a bit dispirited and overwhelmed by the scope of your responsibilities. You may even be questioning whether the job is really the right fit for you. Don’t give up hope. Many of the concerns in this list relate to time and task management issues that are easily improved with focused determination. Others relate more to your leadership style and the interpersonal behaviors you exhibit.
Certainly there is no easy formula for learning effective leadership skills. The principles of good management must be personalized to fit your individual style and the unique set of circumstances in which you work. The good news is that effective leadership can be studied, practiced, and refined. In the process you can attain that all-important balance: achieving organizational success while still meeting your own needs.

What Image Do You Project?
You’ve heard it before—first impressions are lasting impressions. Ask yourself, do I project a professional image? Think about the way you dress, your overall grooming, making eye contact, body posture, and even the energy you communicate in your handshake. The way you choose to present yourself can have a profound effect on how seriously you are taken.

Essential to effective leadership is effective speaking. The ability to communicate persuasively lies at the core of leadership, whether your goal is to convince one person in a private meeting or sway an entire organization. Have you taken time to really listen to your voice recently? If not, audiotape yourself at a meeting and play it back. Is your voice dull or vibrant? Do you exude confidence, or does your speech pattern include hesitations such as "ah," "you know," "um," and "uh"? Does the pitch of your voice rise at the end of sentences, creating a string of declarative statements that sound more like questions?

As Christine Jahnke stresses in her book *The Well-Spoken Woman*, most people focus far more on what they want to say (or how they look) than on how they deliver their message. But pitch, volume, and diction are all aspects of voice control that affect how seriously we are taken. Jahnke believes our voice is an overlooked leadership tool and leaders who don’t maximize their vocal potential will not realize their full effectiveness.

It is possible to train your voice to be clear, strong, and decisive. When she was First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt took elocution lessons to improve her presence. She ultimately wound up as representative to the United Nations, where her voice was heard around the world.

While voice control takes effort, there is one aspect of speaking that is easier to correct. It has to do with how much you say. When it comes to speaking, more is often less. A constant stream of words flowing from your mouth can reduce your credibility. It takes discipline to keep your words few but full. Try to become known as a person who has something to say when you speak. This means reducing the use of jargon as much as possible and avoiding the trap of repeating yourself over and over to make your point.
What Are Your Assumptions About People?
Examining your assumptions about people can be a valuable aid to understanding leadership behavior. Take a few minutes to complete Exercise 5 before reading the rest of this section.

Exercise 5

Below are six pairs of statements. In each pair, check (✓) the one statement that better represents your beliefs about people and the work they do in your organization. When you have completed the exercise, you should have six items checked.

1. □ It is only natural for teachers to do as little work as they can get away with.
2. □ When teachers avoid work, it is usually because their job lacks meaning.

3. □ If teachers have access to information about centerwide issues, their commitment to the center will be increased.
4. □ If teachers have access to more information than they need to do their specific job, they will most likely misuse it.

5. □ One problem with asking for ideas from teachers is that their perspective is too limited for their suggestions to have much practical value.
6. □ Asking teachers for their ideas broadens their perspective and results in generating more useful suggestions.

7. □ If teachers are allowed to set their own performance goals, they would likely set them lower than a director would.
8. □ If teachers are allowed to set their own performance goals, they would probably set them higher than a director would.

9. □ People will work harder if they are accountable for their own behavior and correcting their own mistakes.
10. □ People tend to lower their standards if they are not supervised carefully and corrected for their mistakes.

11. □ If you pay employees more, they will be less concerned with intangibles like recognition and acknowledgement of a job well done.
12. □ If you give employees interesting and challenging work, they are less likely to complain about their pay and compensation.
Directors’ assumptions about their employees relate to their beliefs about human nature and how best to motivate people to high levels of performance. An assumption is an opinion that something is true. Your assumptions about people will determine how you treat them. That is because what we assume about people is what we look for. And what we look for is what we usually find.

The work of Douglas McGregor serves as a good starting point for understanding this aspect of our leadership behavior. McGregor postulates that there are essentially two ways that leaders view employees in the work setting. Theory X holds that people dislike working and that they will avoid it at all costs if they can. This view is based on the belief that individuals want to avoid challenge and responsibility; what people really want most is job security. Directors who ascribe to Theory X assumptions tend to see their role as one of controlling, directing, coercing, and prodding individuals to do what they should. They use supervision, time clocks, and a range of other external controls and rewards to keep people in line.

Theory Y assumptions contend that work is intrinsically rewarding for people, a natural extension of their identity. This view is based on the belief that individuals work toward things to which they are committed, and this commitment is the basis of job satisfaction. Under the right conditions, people will not only accept responsibility but will seek it.

Subscribing to this set of assumptions means that a leader has faith in employees to structure their own goals and that individuals are their own best source of motivation. If their work is properly structured, employees will be motivated by the results of their efforts more than by external rewards or other controls. Theory Y leaders focus on the nature of relationships and creating a work environment that encourages commitment to personal and organizational objectives.

Theory X and Theory Y are clearly contrasting beliefs about human nature and the real-world conditions of work. Theory X views motivation as a carrot-and-stick set of transactions and promotes the necessity for close supervision of employees. Collaboration and participative management in this belief system are viewed as a nice ideal in the abstract but really not practical in the real world. Theory Y leadership is characterized by commitment to shared goals, high levels of trust, and authentic, open relationships.

Look back now at the answers you gave to Exercise 5. Theory X assumptions are associated with questions 1, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11. Think about how your assumptions are related to your expectations for the employees working at your center.
What Is Your Work Orientation?

The effective early childhood administrator has the skills of both a task specialist and a human relations specialist. This means balancing the needs of the organization (budgets, maintenance, planning) to run efficiently while still meeting the needs of the people who work at the center (guidance, motivation, counseling, modeling). It is a rare person indeed who can juggle both sets of responsibilities and maintain their equilibrium. Many directors are more proficient in one set of skills than the other. Exercise 6 provides an opportunity for you to assess your preferences as they relate to your work orientation.

Exercise 6

For each set of paired statements, circle A or B next to the sentence that better describes your work orientation.

A. I prefer working alone  
B. I prefer working with other people

A. I like to work on a single task at a time  
B. I like to work on multiple tasks simultaneously

A. I am good at noticing details  
B. I am good at seeing the big picture

A. I engage in conversation to share information  
B. I engage in conversation to make connections

A. I need a sense of closure on projects  
B. I don’t mind leaving projects uncompleted

A. I approach my work in a systematic way  
B. I approach my work in an unstructured way

A. I make decisions based on facts and logic  
B. I make decisions based on intuition

A. I am regularly on time for appointments  
B. I am frequently late for appointments
A. I think inside the box
B. I think outside the box

A. People view me as methodical and precise
B. People view me as flexible and carefree

A. I make decisions easily and quickly
B. I take my time making decisions

A. I focus on what people say
B. I focus on the feelings behind what people say

A. I work well with "to do" lists and deadlines
B. I do just fine without a "to do" list

A. I am more planned than spontaneous
B. I am more spontaneous than planned

A. I keep my feelings to myself
B. I freely show my feelings

A. I value clear and precise thinking
B. I value creative thinking

A. Other people’s opinions matter only a little to me
B. Other people’s opinions matter a great deal to me

A. I consider myself a paper person
B. I consider myself a people person

Tally the total number of As and Bs you circled. The A statements describe characteristics typical of a task-oriented work style. The B statements describe characteristics of a process-oriented work style.
Achieving center goals is most important in a task-oriented work style. Directors with this preference have a strong concern for high performance and accomplishing the business of the day. The emphasis here is on structuring the work, specifying the tasks to be performed, establishing channels of communication, and designating responsibilities. The focus is on planning, following procedures, and applying uniform standards and expectations for all. The needs of the center come first.

Many employees like task-oriented directors because job descriptions and policies are clearly defined, paychecks are never late, minutes are promptly sent out after meetings, and the supply cabinet is always stocked with paint and glue. The key words for this work orientation are efficiency and productivity. The downside of this style is that some staff view the director as too structured, inflexible, and bureaucratic.

Achieving harmonious group relations is foremost in a process-oriented work style. Leaders with this preference have a strong concern for nurturing relationships, building mutual trust, and maintaining comfortable, friendly, and satisfying working conditions. Directors with this orientation ensure that everyone’s point of view is heard, that due process is followed, and that congenial relationships are fostered. Feelings and emotions are valued as much as intellect and know-how.

Many employees like process-oriented directors because their hard work is validated and they are made to feel special. The key words for this work orientation are collaboration and collegiality. The downside of this style is that some staff may complain about the lack of order and coordination in the center.

Clearly the goal for effective leadership is to try to achieve a balance between these two orientations—an integrated style that gets the tasks done but also shows high regard for the process and the needs of people carrying out the work. This is easier said than done. The reason it is so difficult is that your employees have their own preferred work orientation. Those who are more task focused will appreciate the things you do to promote efficiency and get the work done: those who focus more on process will appreciate the things you do to create congenial relationships and honor each person’s voice. Take a look at the table on the following page. Where do you stand in achieving a balance?
### Achieving a Balance

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<td>Connecting and socializing with colleagues</td>
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<td>Disseminating information</td>
<td>Hearing all perspectives</td>
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<td>Making decisions</td>
<td>Attending to personal needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending to details</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
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<td>Following the agenda</td>
<td>Nurturing interpersonal understanding</td>
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<td>Solving problems</td>
<td>Encouraging full discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning work</td>
<td>Attending to people’s feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching the clock</td>
<td>Paraphrasing for validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills</td>
<td>Valuing creative thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying on task</td>
<td>Probing for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling events</td>
<td>Respecting diverse opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coming to closure</td>
<td>Providing recognition</td>
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### What Are Your Self-Expectations?

Even if you don’t know the difference between a Kenmore iron and a Ping iron, you can’t help but be impressed by the world-class act of Annika Sorenstam in daring to be the first female to play in a PGA tour event since 1945. For many on the pro golf circuit, this media-hyped event became a battle of the sexes. Sports commentators delighted in asking male pro golfers if their egos would be bruised if Sorenstam out-birdied them on the first round of the tournament held at the Colonial Country Club. For Sorenstam, however, the issue wasn’t men versus women; it was challenging herself to do her personal best. When asked how she found the strength and courage to challenge the norms of the males-only PGA circuit, Annika replied, "You’ve got to believe in yourself."

Self-expectations are such a powerful regulator of performance. You don’t have to be a star athlete to know that how you think about yourself—your self-efficacy expectations—has everything to do with your ability to execute a course of action or attain a certain level of performance.
Your self-efficacy expectations are your perceptions of your ability to carry out your role. Research has consistently confirmed that the stronger people believe in their capabilities, the greater and more persistent they will be in their efforts and the longer they will persevere in the face of obstacles. Simply put, expectations regulate behavior. People tend to avoid tasks and situations that they believe exceed their capabilities and seek out activities they deem themselves capable of handling.

What are your self-expectations? What administrative tasks have you convinced yourself that you are great, okay, or lousy at? What myths do you perpetuate by telling others that you lack the talent or skill to achieve? Do you ever hear yourself saying things like "I'm no good at budgets" or "I'm no good at public speaking"? Negative expectations are a strong predictor of negative results. Researchers who study exceptional leaders find that regardless of the field or discipline, individuals who consistently achieve at high levels believe in themselves and set high expectations for themselves. Their most important characteristic, though, is that they concentrate on their strengths rather than focus on their limitations.

Your self-expectations are closely related to your overall attitude and how you handle adversity. Your attitude is your focus on life, the way you approach things mentally. If you view life's situations positively, you communicate to those around you that you welcome the challenges and responsibilities of leadership.

Positive attitude—that can-do spirit—is contagious and uplifting. Focusing on what's wrong in the world and the barriers and obstacles to progress can pull people down. In the face of genuine challenges, how you approach a situation can influence people's willingness to problem solve and be solution oriented. Leaders must be mindful of their thoughts and actions in the broader context of how they affect others, not just themselves.

**Attitude**

*We cannot choose how many years we will live, but we can choose how much life those years will have.*

*We cannot control the beauty of our face, but we can control the expression on it.*

*We cannot control life's difficult moments, but we can choose to make life less difficult.*

*We cannot control the negative atmosphere of the world, but we can control the atmosphere of our minds.*

*Too often, we try to choose and control things we cannot.*

*Too seldom, we choose to control what we can … our attitude.*

John Maxwell
Do You Regularly Seek Feedback from Others?

Many of us have no idea how our actions are viewed or experienced by others. We may occasionally get unsolicited feedback about our behavior from our closest friends, family, or significant other, but we lack an understanding of how we come across to our colleagues in the work setting.

Asking for feedback and suggestions about how you can improve your performance can be scary. The process, however, is extraordinarily valuable in helping you become a stronger leader. Knowing how others perceive your actions helps you better understand the subtle but powerful ways you impact the quality of their work life. Knowing what they view as your strengths and your areas for improvement helps you become more responsive to their needs. And isn’t that what leadership is all about?

What a gift it is to see ourselves as others see us.

Robert Burns

Are You Ready?

To assess your readiness for engaging a multi-rater feedback process, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I open to hearing how my actions affect others?
- Do I value input from those who work with me?
- Can I listen to feedback from others without getting defensive?
- Do I believe I could be a more effective manager?
- Do I agree not to retaliate for people telling me the truth as they see it?
- Am I willing to accept the perceptions that others have of my performance, even if I do not agree with them?
- Do I welcome honest and direct feedback?
- Do I understand that the intent behind my behavior may not be what others actually experience?
- Do I recognize that in order to improve my leadership, I must be willing to take action on feedback?

By collecting information from many people—your board, the center’s owner, the executive director of your agency, your peers, the staff you supervise, and the parents of children in your program—you will benefit from multiple perspectives of how you act and are seen by others. Some refer to this approach as 360-degree feedback or multi-rater feedback. Whatever term you use, the more perspectives you solicit, the more complete the knowledge you will have about how others perceive your strengths and your areas for growth. This knowledge leads to insights about yourself that you may not have had.

Appendix B is a multi-rate leadership assessment you can use to elicit feedback from your colleagues. Feel free to adapt this instrument by adding additional questions that measure appropriate competencies, behaviors, or skills relating to your position or your organization. It is best to give the form only to individuals who have worked with you for a minimum of six months. Also, be sure to complete the assessment yourself. That way you can use the scores to compare your perceptions with the perceptions of your colleagues.

LaToya is the owner and director of a small, for-profit child care center housed in a converted storefront in the business district of a low-income community. She supervises seven teachers and one office manager. LaToya attended a two-day leadership conference and was introduced to the concept of multi-rater evaluation. The workshop caused her to really reexamine her leadership assumptions, particularly with regard to the performance appraisal process.

LaToya had always viewed performance evaluation from a top-down perspective—that it was her job responsibility to evaluate others. It simply never occurred to her that performance feedback could be a two-way process. "To say I was nervous when I sent out a memo and survey to the staff inviting them to give some feedback on my leadership performance is an understatement," says LaToya. "I was absolutely terrified at the prospect that someone might be mean-spirited and say something nasty about me. How wrong I was. The process turned out to be the catalyst for an open discussion with staff members about how we all could support each other’s professional growth."

LaToya was pleasantly surprised when she tabulated the survey results from the eight respondents and compared their average scores with that of her own assessment of her leadership abilities. Her staff identified most of the
# Multi-Rater Summary Form

Name: LaToya B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Self Rating</th>
<th>Other Raters</th>
<th>Average of other raters</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
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</table>

Total | 106 | 108 | 115 | 113 | 104 | 110 | 107 | 111 | 113 | 110.19 |
Average rating | 4.24 | 4.32 | 4.60 | 4.52 | 4.16 | 4.40 | 4.28 | 4.44 | 4.52 | 4.41 |

Agreed-upon strengths: empathetic, ethical, knowledgeable, good listener, optimistic
Unrealized strengths: flexible, friendly, predictable, respectful
Areas for growth: creative, direct
Blind spots: open, organized, resourceful
same strengths that she saw in herself—that she was knowledgeable about the field, ethical in her conduct, optimistic in her outlook, empathetic in her approach with others, and a good listener. Her staff also agreed with her about two potential areas for growth—LaToya’s need to become more direct in her oral and written communication (“not ramble so much” as one person noted in a marginal comment) and being open to more creative ways to solve problems. What really surprised LaToya, though, were the traits that staff rated her higher than she did herself (flexible, friendly, predictable, respectful). The knowledge that her staff viewed these traits as strengths really boosted her confidence.

There were three areas in which LaToya had rated herself higher than her staff rated her—being open in sharing important information about the center, knowing how to create organizational systems to ensure the smooth functioning of the center, and knowing how to tap community resources to get things done. While the discrepancy in scores was not large, the differences in perceptions helped LaToya realize that these were her blind spots. Looking at these traits through the eyes of her staff made her appreciate that their perception of what it meant to be open, organized, and resourceful differed somewhat from her perception.

It is no surprise that people like to hear what is consistent with their own views and resist feedback that may be contrary to these views. By eliciting feedback from individuals who are your supervisors, by direct reports, and from clients you will get a more complete profile of how the people who interact with you in different capacities see you. Accept this input for what it is—their personal perceptions.

Your ability to handle less-than-flattering feedback is related to your level of self-confidence. If you are defensive in the face of criticism, then you should not initiate a 360-degree feedback process. But if you feel you can learn from others’ perceptions and evaluations of your performance, you will benefit and grow from the experience. Search for the merit in others’ opinions. Look for themes in what they share and be open to changing your style where appropriate.