

Leader for Life

Work from the inside out.



by Kevin Cashman

WE LEAD BY VIRTUE of who we are. We are all CEOs of our own lives. The only difference is the domain of influence. The process is the same: we lead from who we are. The leader and the person are one. As we learn to master our growth as a person, we will be on the path to mastery of *Leadership from the Inside Out*.

What does *mastery* of leadership mean to you? Our ideas about mastery and leadership tend to be externalized. Our leadership development (LD) programs focus on learning about *things*. We learn *what* to think, not *how* to think. We learn *what* to do, not *how* to be. We learn *what* to achieve, not *how* to achieve. We learn about *things*, not the *nature* of *things*.

As leaders, we receive recognition for our external mastery. Our success is measured by the degree to which we master our external environment. Revenue, profit, new product breakthroughs, cost savings, and market share are some measures of our external competencies. But where do the external results come from? Is focusing on external achievement the sole source of greater accomplishment? Could our single-minded focus on external results cause us to miss the underlying dynamics supporting sustainable peak performance?

Our definitions of leadership also tend to be externalized. Most descriptions of leadership focus on the *outer manifestations* of leadership—vision, innovation, results, drive—instead of getting to the *essence* of leadership.

Many companies develop massive leadership competency models or “perfection myths” about what they want or expect of leaders. When competency models are perfectionist, mythical, and disconnected to the business needs, they are counter-productive.

We decided to study the most effective clients that we had coached over the last 30 years. We asked, “What is fundamental to the most effective, results-producing leaders that supports their various competencies or styles?” Three patterns became clear:

1. **Authenticity:** Self-awareness that openly faces strengths, vulnerabilities and development challenges.

2. **Influence:** Communication that connects with people by reminding self and others what is genuinely important.

3. **Value creation:** Passion and aspiration to serve multiple constituencies—self, team, organization, family, community—to sustain performance.

By evaluating these principles, we landed on what we think is an essential definition of leadership: **Leadership is authentic influence that creates value.**

The implications of this definition are far-reaching. Leadership is not hierarchical—it exists everywhere. The roles of leadership change, but the core process is the same. Anyone who is authentically influencing to create value is leading.

Some may influence and create value through ideas, others through systems, others through people. Deep from their core, the person brings their talents, connects with others, and serves multiple constituencies.

The single biggest performance issue organizations face is inspiring leadership at all levels. There are infinite ways to manifest leadership. There are as many styles of leadership as there are leaders. To enhance your leadership effectiveness, explore three essential questions: How can we enhance our *authenticity* as a leader? How can we extend the *influence* we have? How can we create more *value*?

Leadership from the Inside Out is about our journey to discover and develop our purposeful inner capabilities to make a more positive contribution. Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic, notes: “The more we can unleash our whole capabilities—mind, body, spirit—the more value we can create.”

Mastery of Leadership from the Inside Out is principally about achieving one thing—making a difference by applying more of our potential. This does not mean that we only lead from the inside-out. We lead just as much—and sometimes more—from the outside-in. Leadership involves a dynamic between the inner and the outer. We emphasize

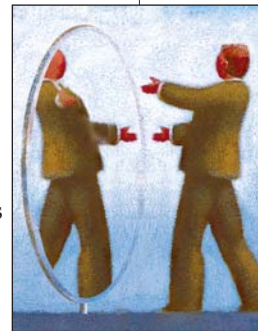
the inside-out dynamic because we tend to focus too much on the outside. We are in a dynamic relationship with ourselves and our constituencies—the marketplace, our customers, employees, and personal relationships. Ultimately, we want a balance of leading from the inside-out and the outside-in. Our decisions and actions are in a dynamic loop from us to others and back again. To practice leadership at the highest level, we need to take responsibility—personal and social responsibility—and be vigilant about the “I” and the “We” of effective leadership (awareness of self and others).

As we help people to develop their leadership, we learn:

- As the person grows, the leader grows. The master competency in LD programs is *growing the whole person to grow the whole leader*.

- Most definitions of leadership need to be balanced from the inside-out, viewing leadership in terms of its external manifestations and seeing it also from its internal source.

- Helping leaders to connect with their core talents, core values, and core beliefs is key to effective LD.



- Leaders who learn to bring their core talents, core values and core purpose to awareness experience dramatic increases in energy and effectiveness.

- Leaders who integrate personal power and results power with relational power accelerate their effectiveness.

- Leaders who achieve congruence—alignment of their real values and their actions—are more energetic, resilient, effective and interpersonally connected.

- Transforming LD programs from a series of fragmented, content-driven events to an integrated, inside-out / outside-in growth process enhances team and organizational excellence.

Leadership from the Inside Out involves clarifying your identity, purpose, and vision so that your life is dedicated to a more intentional manner of living and leading. This inner mastery directs your diverse intentions and aspirations into a purposeful focus. As you move to a more fulfilled manner of living and leading, a focus on purpose replaces your single-minded focus on external success. This purposeful intention and action serves as the energetic, inspired basis for leadership effectiveness. **LE**

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ACTION: *Keep connected to your inner core.*