



Becoming an Effective Leader

Introduction

A 'leader', has admirable traits, attributes, and capabilities like confidence, strength of purpose, integrity of character, accountability to higher principles, transparency, empathy in distressing situations, creativity in the workplace, delegation of responsibility, compassion towards others, humility in acknowledging the strengths of others, and so on. Leaders need to possess all these attributes. But an effective leader can bring about transformation and deep change, not only in his/her own life, and in the lives of his/her followers but has the ability to bring about deep change in the organization he/she serves and to lift it to new and greater heights to meet the needs of the real world.

To be an effective leader, certain habits and practices are called for. Stephen Covey has given the world the seven habits of effective people. As much as the habits are necessary and useful, an effective leader needs to go beyond them, that is, to move from the normal state of leadership to the fundamental state of leadership or deep change (this concept will be explained later which is a contribution of Robert Quinn). The word 'leader' can be considered synonymous with 'change' because change shows that there is growth and not stagnation and death. According to Robert Quinn, leadership is not about behaviour or technique but a state of being. Thus, leaders need to undergo deep change before they lead.

In this paper I seek to elaborate on:

- i) Stephen Covey's seven habits of a leader;
- ii) Robert Quinn's deep change -- the eight practices for entering the fundamental state of leadership from a normal state, which encourages deep change;
- iii) critical analysis of the seven habits and eight practices for becoming an effective leader; and
- iv) how leaders can practice the competing values.

i) Seven Habits of a Leader

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey writes about the seven habits essential for effective living. Effective people are well-integrated people. Being integrated means one's thoughts, feelings, and actions are in congruence. Covey believes that how we see the world is entirely based on our own perceptions. Our perception is sometimes preconditioned. In order to change a given situation, we must change ourselves, and in order to change ourselves, we must be able to change our perceptions. In Gandhi's words, "be the change you want to see". There needs to be a paradigm shift in our perception. In other words, we need to create a "paradigm shift" that involves changing the way we view the world. Although, the events may be completely identical, how we view and interpret them need to be altered to make a problematic situation into an opportunity. For example, a firm requires leaders to possess a certain amount of technological skills. This situation will challenge some to acquire skills or hone skills in the use of technology, turning the problematic situation into an opportunity for skill development. On the other hand, few may, view the situation negatively and dwell in a sorry state, implying, "I am not OK"¹, and miss the opportunity for skill development and thereby rewards, promotion, and so on.

We need to cultivate Covey's seven habits if we are to be "effective" leaders in our professional and personal lives, to bring about the following changes:

- Habits one to three focus on self-mastery, that is moving from dependence to independence.
- Habits four to six focus on developing teamwork, collaboration, and communication skills, and moving from independence to interdependence.
- Habit seven focuses on continuous growth and improvement, and embodies all the other habits.

¹ Eric Berne, *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships*, New Impression edition. (Penguin, 1973).

The details of the seven habits follow:

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Proactive people have greater sense of self awareness. They increase their circle of influence day by day. They do not dwell only on the circle of concern but how and what they can do to improve situations. In order to be effective one must be proactive. Proactive people increase the Circle of Influence. Circle of Concern according to Covey is a range of problems that we may not have control over; and Circle of Influence is what we can do something about the problems. He represents these two in circles. The Circle of Concern is the outer circle and the Circle of Influence is a small circle inside the Circle of Concern. The point is where one spends one's energy and time.

Those who dwell in the Circle of Concern, become reactive people - blaming and accusing attitudes, reactive language, and increased feelings of victimization. The negative energy generated combined with neglect in areas they could do something about, cause their circle of influence to shrink and they empower the things within the Circle of Concern to control them. In contrast those dwell in the Circle of Influence become proactive and expend their energy in the concerns that they can do something about. The more they spend their time and energy in thinking and doing what they could do, positive energy is exerted and it causes their Circle of Influence to expand. Proactive people recognize that they have a responsibility -- or "response-ability," which Covey defines as the ability to respond to a given stimulus or situation, i.e. make a reasoned response.²

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Start with a clear destination in mind – i.e., begin with the end in mind. The most effective way to begin with the end in mind is to have personal vision and mission statements. The mission statement needs to focus on what one wants to be, and what one wants to do. They must define the values and principles that underlie their being and doing. A mission statement empowers individuals with the same timeless strength in the midst of change. A mission statement must begin at the very center of our Circle of Influence and needs to be principle-centered. Imagine the vision of what we want to become and conscientiously decide what values will guide us. **Vision** is based on the principle that all things are created twice. The first creation, happens in the mind (imagination), and the second creation results in the physical - the actual -- happening. Self awareness is important in the first creation, or else other people and circumstances outside our circle of influence will shape our lives. We will live out the scripts or agendas of others.³

Habit 3: Put First Things First

We need to prioritize our day-to-day actions based on what is most important, not on what is most urgent. In order to manage ourselves effectively, we must put first things first.

Covey categorizes all activities into four quadrants based on two factors: Urgent and important.

Quadrant I - urgent and important;

Quadrant II - not urgent but important;

Quadrant III - not important but urgent matters; and

Quadrant IV - activities which are neither important nor urgent.

Of the four, Quadrant II is at the heart of effective personal management - building relationships, long-term planning, exercising, and preparation. All things we know we need to do but somehow seldom get around to actually doing, because they don't feel urgent. In order to focus on Quadrant II, we have to learn how to say "no" to other activities, sometimes ones that seem urgent. We also need to be able to delegate effectively. When we focus on Quadrant II, we are thinking ahead, working on the roots, and preventing crises from happening in the first place.⁴

² Stephen R Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People; Restoring the Character Ethic* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 66–94.

³ Ibid., 96–144.

⁴ Ibid., 146–182.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

To establish effective interdependent relationships, commit to creating Win-Win situations that are mutually beneficial and satisfying to each party. Covey explains six paradigms of human interaction:

1. **Win-Win:** Both people win. Agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial and satisfying to both parties.
2. **Win-Lose:** “*If I win, you lose.*” Win-Lose people are prone to use position, power, credentials, and personality to get their way.
3. **Lose-Win:** “*I lose, you win.*” Lose-Win people are quick to please and appease, and seek strength from popularity or acceptance.
4. **Lose-Lose:** Both people lose. When two Win-Lose people get together, that is, when two determined, stubborn, ego-invested individuals interact, the result will be Lose-Lose.
5. **Win:** People with the Win mentality don’t necessarily want someone else to lose. What matters most to them is that they get what they want.
6. **Win-Win or No Deal:** If you cannot reach an agreement that is mutually beneficial, there is no deal.

The best option is to create Win-Win situations. “*To go for Win-Win, you not only have to be nice, you have to be courageous,*” says Covey.⁵

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Understand the other before offering advice or suggesting solutions. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Seek to deeply understand others and their perspective through empathic listening. Unfortunately, in our interactions with others, we prescribe a solution before we diagnose the problem. We don’t seek to deeply understand the problem first.⁶

Listening empathically requires a fundamental paradigm shift. We usually seek first to be understood. Most people listen with the intent to *reply*, not to *understand*. At any given moment, they’re either speaking or preparing to speak. When we listen with our own perspective as our frame of reference, we tend to respond in one of four ways: i) Evaluate, ii) Probe, iii). Advise, and iv) Interpret.⁷ But if we replace these types of responses with empathic listening, we can see dramatic results and improvement in our communication. The second part “... then to be understood” is equally critical in achieving Win-Win solutions. To be understood one needs to be open, which needs courage. “*Seeking to understand requires consideration; seeking to be understood takes courage*” says Covey.⁸

Habit 6: Synergize

Understand and value the differences in another person, to create synergy, to uncover new possibilities through openness and creativity. Synergy is a creative cooperation. In group situations it allows us to collectively agree to scrap old scripts and write new ones. Think Win-Win and Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood if practiced genuinely, can introduce synergy to a given situation or environment.⁹

In achieving synergy, we can pool our desires with those of the other person or group. We are not on the opposing side but together on one side, looking at the problem, understanding all the needs, and working to create a third alternative that will help solve problems. The end will be transformation not a transaction. Both sides will get what they want, and build their relationship in the process. The real essence of synergy is valuing differences between people -- mental, emotional, and psychological.¹⁰

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Sharpen the Saw means to renew ourselves physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and socially:

- focusing on the physical dimension helps develop muscles for proactivity;
- focusing on the spiritual dimension helps us begin with the end in mind;

⁵ Ibid., 205–234.

⁶ Ibid., 235–260.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 262–284.

¹⁰ Ibid., 266–284.

- focusing on our mental dimension helps us to put first things first;
- renewing our social and emotional dimension helps us think win-win, seeking to understand others, and synergize.

These four dimensions of our nature must be exercised regularly, and in balanced ways.¹¹ Continuous renewal helps us to synergistically increase our ability to practice the seven habits. It surrounds all of the other habits and makes it possible to preserve and enhance one's greatest asset -- oneself.

ii) Deep Change by Robert E. Quinn

When we think of change, we usually think of small changes and work toward small changes, which are incremental in nature. If that works then we go for other small changes or small wins. We always have a fear, "What if it does not work?" and we are not prepared to take risks. When we move with small changes, if the change does not happen, nothing is lost.

In *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, Robert E. Quinn¹², defines incremental change as safe as it does not disrupt the original frame, does not involve taking risks, and its scope is limited. Incremental change is an addition to the existing pattern and we feel that we are in control during the incremental change.

Quinn defines deep change as taking risks and surrendering control; as discontinuous with its past and generally not reversible as in incremental change.

- Deep change requires new ways of thinking and behaving.
- Deep change has tremendous scope and is drastic in nature.
- Deep change means abandoning knowledge and competence and "walking naked into the land of uncertainty" or "building the bridge as we walk on it", a terrific choice, which involves a "dark night of the soul".

So, it is understandable that most people do not opt for deep change.¹³

In James E. Loder's term, deep change is transformation, which disrupts the existing frame and reconstructs a new frame, which is not reversible.¹⁴ Quinn explores the process of deep change and the development of internally driven leadership.¹⁵ He says given the circumstances, we have a choice for either deep change or slow death. We are always confronted with the dilemma between the two. Circumstances seem to demand more than we can deliver. So, everyone is lured into playing roles of powerless victim or passive observer. When we take on either of these roles, our life becomes meaningless or void and we become detached and start decaying and a slow death of the self begins. Quinn helps us to confront the dilemma between deep change and slow death. Leaders need to move from a normal state of leadership to a fundamental state of leadership (defined under iii) Quinn's Eight Practices for Entering the Fundamental State of Leadership from the Normal State of Leadership) to confront the dilemma between slow death and deep change. Leaders can experience deep change when they enter the fundamental state of leadership.

Quinn shows that anyone can be a leader of change, but to do so, one's self needs to be transformed. After reading his book, some of the readers shared their stories as to how reading his book helped them in their journeys into deep change. Analyzing these stories he noticed that some shared characteristics, which

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Margaret Elliott Tracy Collegiate Professor in Business Administration & Professor of Management and Organizations. University of Michigan School of business. Has a PhD from University of Cincinnati. Teaching for the last 35 years. Fellow of National Academy of Management and World Business Academy. Consulted with Many fortune 500 Companies, Centre for positive organizational Scholarship. Written many books and impacted leadership and change perspectives through 3 key books: *Deep Change*, *Change the world, Building the Bridge as you walk on it*, and *Lift*. Also inspired by Servant-Leadership Concept of Robert K Greenleaf.

¹³ Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, 1st edition. (San Francisco, Calif: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 3.

¹⁴ James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2 edition. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard Publishers, 1989).

¹⁵ Quinn, *Deep Change*, xv.

led him to develop a new model for leadership. He began to think of leadership not as behaviours and techniques but as a state of being. He says leadership is first about what we are and he calls the model he developed “the fundamental state of leadership”, an alternative to the normal state of leadership.

In his book, *Building the Bridge As You Walk on It*, Quinn shows how anyone can enter the fundamental state of leadership by engaging in the eight practices that center on the theme of ever-increasing integrity:

reflective action,
authentic engagement,
appreciative inquiry,
grounded vision,
adaptive confidence,
detached interdependence,
responsible freedom, and
tough love.

Quinn emphasizes that developing leaders is not a simple matter of imparting a set of concepts or reaching into a toolkit of strategies and behaviours. To become a leader requires engagement in the process of deep change in oneself, thereby inviting others to do the same. Once this process is in motion, we truly begin to transform one another to become the type of leaders we strive to be.¹⁶

Quinn’s Eight Practices for Entering the Fundamental State of Leadership from the Normal State of Leadership

Before we unpack the eight practices of the fundamental state of leadership, we need to define the normal state of leadership and the fundamental state of leadership according to Quinn.

The normal state of leadership is the one which moves towards slow death, not deep change. It is

- i) externally driven – leaders tend to define themselves by how they think, they are seen and how well they are able to obtain external resources;
- ii) internally closed – tend to stay in comfort zone, denying external signals for change;
- iii) self-focused – tend to be ego driven, placing his/her own interests before others, and
- iv) comfort-centred – tend to engage in problem-solving activities, thereby living in a reactive state.¹⁷

In the normal state of leadership there are self-interested journeys, no unifying goal, the operating strategy is to respond to the personal agendas of strong personalities; roles are defined by tradition; and people are insecure. In short, being in the normal state of leadership is about maintaining the status quo and living in the comfort zone, which eventually leads to slow death.

On the other hand, fundamental state of leadership is that which leads to deep change. When leaders are in this state, they are

- i) purpose centred – the leader clarifies what result he/she wants to create. He/she is committed and engaged, full of energy and holding an unwavering standard as he/she pursues a meaningful task;
- ii) internally driven – constantly examines his/her hypocrisy and closes the gaps between his/her values and behaviour;
- iii) other-focused – transcending ego, placing the common good and welfare of the others first;
- iv) externally open – moving out of one’s comfort zone, experimenting, seeking real feedback, adapting, and reaching a higher degree of discovery, awareness, competence, and vision; just the opposite of being in normal state.¹⁸

When we are in the fundamental state of leadership, we are very different from the normal state. We begin to attract new flows of energy. We overcome entropy and slow death. We become more fully alive.

¹⁶ Robert E. Quinn, *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 18–24.

¹⁷Ibid., 18–19.

¹⁸Ibid., 22.

Furthermore, we begin to attract others to the fundamental state of leadership. It becomes a system of positive organizing, a more productive community with increased energy, commitment, and capability.

The eight practices for entering the fundamental state of leadership hold eight pairs of polar opposite positive values in tension so that leaders can become purpose centred, internally driven, other-focused, and externally open, which are the characteristics of the fundamental state of leadership. They are as follows.

1. Reflective Action

“Most of us in the organizational world... are engulfed in action, at the expense of contemplation and reflection. This extreme is just as isolating as the extreme of contemplation divorced from action.”¹⁹

Reflective action is integrating reflection/contemplation and action. Leaders need to make time to reflect or contemplate and also engage in action. The two polar opposites -- reflection and action -- need to be kept in balance. Leaders need to learn to listen to the inner voice, make time for things that matters to him/her, so that he/she can be a centered human being. Leaders need to move from constant action to an appreciation of the power of reflection. When the two are integrated, leaders will begin to behave differently. In reflecting deeply on his/her behaviour, the leader travels to the “centre of his/her existence, where one finds the best self. That is where leaders find courage to enter the fundamental state of leadership, and patterns and behaviour change.”²⁰ Mahatma Gandhi, did not proceed with the salt march (action) until he heard the inner voice for action (reflection).

The person becomes active and energetic while also being mindful and reflective. While deeply engaged in the world, the person also spends time in reflective contemplation. Contemplation when away from a task increases the capacity for mindfulness during the task. The person acts and learns simultaneously and is both mindful and energized while actively creating. Reflective action integrates the realm of action with the realm of personal identity. When we reflect deeply on our actions, we clarify who we really are and what we are really doing. We can then integrate our actions and inner selves in a creative way. A sister concept to reflective action is authentic engagement.

2. Authentic Engagement

Authentic Engagement means being engaged in the world of action with love for what we are doing. That love usually comes from increased integrity. Integrity is increased when we live a more principled life, be more virtuous, be a more authentic or real person. Here the emphasis is not on achieving a state of complete integrity; it is on gaining more integrity than we had before.

Authentic engagement is about holding creative tension between the positive values of integrity and engagement. If a person is so principled and ethical he/she may become uncommitted and unengaged. On the other hand if a person is too committed and engaged s/he may become unprincipled and unethical. In authentic engagement, the person is both principled and ethical while involved and engaged. Thus, the two polar opposite positive values are held in creative tension.²¹

3. Appreciative Inquiry

Here the two polar opposite positive values of constructive optimism and realistic questioning are held together in creative tension. To have positive values is to be optimistic and constructive, but if taken too far can cause one to become unrealistic and unquestioning. On the other hand, to be realistic and questioning is a positive force, but, if stretched too far can cause us to become pessimistic and destructive. The challenge is to be constructively optimistic and at the same time realistic and analytic. This integrative state is what Quinn calls appreciative inquiry. In this state a person seeks to find the most enabling and constructive aspects of current reality. Appreciative questions tap into the issues people care about most

¹⁹Ibid., 99.

²⁰Ibid., 96–107.

²¹Ibid., 107–117.

deeply and surface possibilities that have been outside their consciousness. In this way, they unleash energy and move self and others to a more creative state.²²

4. Grounded Vision

Grounded vision is a complement to appreciative enquiry.

“Even when a vision seems to come from the leader, as in the case of Gandhi, the vision moves others because it is deeply in touch with their reality and their hopes. That is why they respond. And the vision is credible because they can see that it is not a castle in the air, but a vision that is grounded in their lived experience, in bread and salt.”²³

Here the creative tension is between the two polar opposite values of being a visionary and being hopeful and at the same time being grounded and factual. Being a visionary with hope is a positive value but stretched too far one can become ungrounded and deluded. On the other hand, grounded and factual is a positive force but if stretched too far one can become visionless and hopeless and creativity is curtailed. So, the two values have to be held in creative tension for one to enter into a fundamental state of leadership.²⁴

5. Adaptive Confidence

Adaptive confidence is the capacity to walk naked into the land of uncertainty. Another way to express this is to build the bridge as we walk on it. The two positive polar opposite values need to be held in tension are adaptive and flexible and confident and secure. It is a positive value to be adaptive and flexible, but if it is stretched too far, we may become uncertain and insecure. On the other hand, confident and secure is a positive value, and if it is stretched too far then we may become rigid and inflexible. The challenge is to be both adaptive and confident. The practice of adaptive confidence means that we are willing to enter uncertain situations because we have a higher purpose and we are confident that we can learn and adapt as we move forward. The person who is in this state is adaptable and flexible while also confident and secure. The person has the confidence to learn from experience, moving forward into uncertain situations knowing that self and others can adapt and learn in real time. He or she maintains a focus on purpose while experimenting and remaining open to feedback about failure as well as success.²⁵

6. Detached Interdependence

Detached interdependence requires that we consider our relationships from a very high level of maturity. When we do, extraordinary things are likely to happen, says Quinn. In this practice leaders need to grapple with two polarities: humility and openness, and independent and strong. There needs to be a creative tension between the two polar opposites. Leaders need to be humble and open, but when this is stretched too far, leaders become dependent and weak. Leaders need to be independent and strong, but when it is stretched too far, leaders become arrogant and closed. The challenge here is to hold on to a creative tension between the two polarities, integrate the two and become humble and strong. Here the person combines independence and strength with humility and openness. The person has a strong sense of purpose and belief that provides an inner strength. He or she is open but not determined by the relationship. Such detached interdependence allows for rich relationships in which people enable each other in co-creating a future that is best for both.²⁶

7. Responsible Freedom

We know how important freedom is. Without freedom no one can become what they are capable of becoming, but many times we do not realize that freedom and responsibility are inseparable. Responsible freedom is a form of work that leads to the unfolding of a more complex and capable self as opposed to foolish freedom, which instead of liberating and energizing people, tends to deplete energy and resources. It robs us of the sense of meaning that we crave.

In practicing responsible freedom leaders have to hold the creative tension between the two polar opposite positive values of being spontaneous and expressive, and self-disciplined and responsible. Leaders have to

²²Ibid., 122–126.

²³Ibid., 136.

²⁴ Ibid., 136–144.

²⁵ Ibid., 148–155.

²⁶ Ibid., 159–169.

be spontaneous and expressive, but when it is stretched too far, leaders become undisciplined and irresponsible. On the other hand, leaders need to be self-disciplined and responsible, when it is stretched too far, leaders become so structured as to be inexpressive and guarded. The challenge is to hold the creative tension and integrate the polar opposites, which is practicing responsible freedom.²⁷ The person who practices responsible freedom is spontaneous and expressive while also self-disciplined and responsible. Rather than fleeing purpose, discipline, or structure, this person is self structuring and tends to be ever elevated to higher levels of awareness and capacity. In obtaining this higher state, the person becomes more complex and capable, more empowered and empowering to others.²⁸

8. Tough Love

Tough love is a more mature kind of love. Living with tough love means living in the balance of a positive creative tension between the two pairs of polar opposite positive values: compassionate and concerned, and assertive and bold. A person can be compassionate and caring, but when these positive qualities are taken too far, the person becomes indulgent and permissive. Similarly, a person who is assertive and bold becomes, in the extreme, oppressive and assertive. The challenge is to hold the creative tension between compassionate and caring and assertive and bold. That is practicing tough love. The person who practices tough love is assertive and bold and yet compassionate and caring with concern. This person calls others to higher objectives and standards while also showing empathic, relational support. Others are lifted by the loving recognition of their potential and the challenging call to enact it in a more creative state of purpose.²⁹ Challenging employees?

iii) Critical Analysis of Covey's Seven Habits and Quinn's Eight Practices

On analysing Stephen Covey's seven habits of effective people and Robert Quinn's eight practices for entering the fundamental state of leadership for deep change, it appears that Covey helps leaders to avoid crises or how to solve a problem so as to sail smoothly through the journey of leadership, which is good, but if there are no crises, there are no opportunities for change. No change means no growth, no growth means slow death. The seven habits, being proactive, beginning with an end in mind, putting first things first, thinking win-win, seeking first to understand, then to be understood, and synergizing, help leaders to avoid crises and stay on track. In other words, maintaining the status quo. It is about taking control of the situation and it keeps leaders locked in a normal state of leadership.

On the other hand, Quinn calls for drastic change, deep change, in the midst of crises. In times of conflict or crisis, Quinn says leaders need to ask a transformational question, a unique question that will give rise to a shared vision and the self-organizing processes that follow, not the usual question, "What is wrong, and how do we fix it?" Deep change is surrendering control; walking in the land of uncertainties; and building the bridge as one walks on it, says Quinn. It is practicing adaptive confidence as opposed to Covey's habit of beginning with the end in mind. It takes courage to travel through an unknown path. Only a leader who is in the fundamental state of leadership can take risks and challenges.

Covey only talks about being proactive. That is good. Quinn, however, goes deeper, in suggesting that the polar opposites, action and contemplation, are necessary for effective leadership. Quinn talks about reflective action; reflective action is integrating both reflection and action, necessary for effective leadership. The polar opposites, action and reflection need to be in creative balance as both are essential for deep change. Covey talks about personal vision and mission, whereas Quinn talks about grounded vision - shared vision, grounded in the lived experience of people. Covey talks about moving from independence to dependence and from dependence to interdependence, in order to establish effective interdependent relationships, suggests thinking win-win, which is good. Quinn goes beyond that to suggest detached interdependence, which requires a very high level of maturity. In practicing detached interdependence, a person combines the pair of polar opposite values of independence and strength with humility and openness. Such relationships provide an inner strength and the person becomes open but not determined by the relationship.

²⁷ Ibid., 171–177.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 184–191.

Quinn's concept of tough love is important for leaders as it creates trust in the people who are being led. Tough love leads to openness. In this state leaders see the world differently and see other people differently. While describing tough love, Quinn quotes the words of a football player from the University of Michigan, who spoke about his coach, "Bo is the only person in the world I will let kick me in the butt – because I know he loves me", which says it all.

Quinn's eight practices are embedded with eight polarities of competing values. The polar opposite competing values that leaders need to possess are just brilliant. Though it is not easy to practice, it is possible and leaders can achieve extraordinary results if they practice competing values. To be precise, these values lead to deep change, which is essential to be an effective leader.

How Leaders Can Practice the Competing Values

How can we practice the competing values? What comes to mind at this juncture is the Conscious Competence Learning Model³⁰. **Noel Burch**, an employee with Gordon Training International, introduced the **Conscious Competence Ladder** in the 1970s. The model highlights two factors that affect our thinking as we learn a new skill: consciousness (awareness) and skill level (competence). It explains the stages by which we learn and ultimately acquire a new skill, behaviour, ability, technique, and so on. This model can be used to acquire values that lead to deep change. In this model, the learner always begins at the Unconscious Incompetence level and passes through Conscious Incompetence and Conscious Competence levels before arriving at the Unconscious Competence level. Using this model, leaders begin from unconscious incompetence, that is, they are not aware of themselves and their incompetence. Active reflection, failures, and mistakes, will help leaders become aware of their incompetence. Once a leader becomes aware of his/her incompetence or deficit, he/she moves to the next phase of conscious incompetence. Though the leader does not understand or know how to do something, he/she can recognize the deficit, a value that is lacking and the importance of acquiring the value/s. Leaders can learn from mistakes and failures at this stage if they are open to learning. This takes them to the next stage, conscious competence. A leader understands or knows what value/s to exhibit in certain situations. However, demonstrating the value requires conscious effort. Once this stage is mastered, that is, the leader practised a value/s consciously for a longer period, that it becomes "second nature" and can be performed unconsciously. This is called the unconscious competence level, in which the leader becomes effective unconsciously imbibing the value/s.

Conclusion

For leaders to be effective or become change agents, they need to undergo deep change or transformation; to do so leaders need to travel beyond Covey's seven habits to Quinn's eight practices for entering the fundamental state of leadership. The Conscious Competence Model helps to move from an unconscious incompetence level to an unconscious competence level in acquiring the values and practices needed for deep change. When we change ourselves, we change how people see us and how they respond to us. When we change ourselves, we change the world. This is the legacy of people who operate in the fundamental state of leadership.

³⁰ "Four Stages of Competence," *Wikipedia*, July 16, 2021, accessed November 2, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Four_stages_of_competence&oldid=1033842890.

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