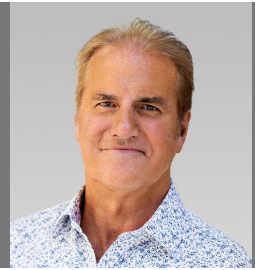


# Leadership Revealed

By Henry S. Givray



**T**he concept of leadership is elusive as it is both encompassing and far-reaching. Pundits and so-called experts would have you believe otherwise. During good times and bad, they continuously offer opinions on how to boost profits, wow customers, drive innovation, manage change, build creative teams, or increase productivity, often wrapping their “focus-of-the-day” around the word “leadership.” This results in the creation of redundant buzz phrases – strategic leadership, adaptive leadership, change leadership, innovative leadership, courageous leadership, to name a few. These are just gimmicks, of course. True leadership by definition includes these attributes, among many others.

The pundits’ piecemeal approaches to leadership trivialize the concept and miss the mark on multiple levels. At the core, the essence of leadership is profoundly uncomplicated, involving three critical actions: imagining a better future, getting others to join in the journey, and then getting there. But no simple formulas or instruction manuals exist on how to become a true leader. There are, however, timeless principles and essential guidelines, and these can be learned and applied only through a never-ending process of personal, active engagement and self-discovery. And what has been true in the past is true today and always will be – *time reveals true leaders and exposes false ones*. While this becomes dramatically evident during difficult times, it can also be particularly noteworthy during good ones.

True leaders are revealed in two sure ways. The first is by what they *inspire* in others. By inspire, I mean being able to elicit positive emotions, behaviors and actions in others without the promise of reward or the threat of punishment. In that way, inspiration is very different from motivation. Motivation’s source of influence is often a carrot, a stick or both. But inspiration comes from the heart and it flows naturally and willingly.

The key is inspiring the right things in those with whom we work. True leaders inspire *common purpose, loyalty, trust,*

*confidence, engagement, hope, shared meaning, credibility, passion, experimentation and risk taking, the best in others, and life-long learning.* The real and pervasive existence of these 12 human elements is essential for any organization to achieve sustainable success, vitality and long-term endurance, regardless of inevitable up and down cycles or unpredictable shocks to the general economy or specific industry.


So what does it take to inspire others? Charisma and eloquence alone will only generate initial attention and short-lived fascination. True leaders embody certain hallmark attributes that allow them to inspire. Specifically, they:

- Are first in line to sacrifice before asking others to do so.
- Show the way by being, teaching and presenting a vivid picture of a desired future state.
- Stay “up” even in the face of great challenge and turmoil by enduring stress and demonstrating resilience.
- Define and pursue desired outcomes with determination, relentless commitment, passion and a steadfast work ethic.
- Communicate clearly, openly, truthfully and from the heart. They

say what they mean and mean what they say.

- Exemplify and faithfully practice the *13 Distinguishing Qualities\**
- Connect their actions, decisions, choices and behaviors to who they are at the core and the values and beliefs they have communicated to others. They do this consistently, deeply and genuinely – every day and without compromise.

The second sure way true leaders are revealed is by what they *enable*. In the context of leadership, to enable means being able to produce tangible outcomes through others. So whereas inspiration is governed by the heart (feeling) and followed by the brain (thinking), enabling is governed by the brain and followed by hands and feet (doing).

To ensure the organizations they serve remain vital, value-creating and sustainable, leaders enable the following outcomes: desired annual results; an authentic, sustainable culture; 





**“Those who hold positions of authority, whether such positions are paid or volunteer, are typically expected to set targets and goals, solve problems and ensure tasks are carried out. Leaders, however, set the bar higher, much higher.”**

change – incremental, transformational or both; individual and organizational growth; achievement of organizational goals – strategic and operational; cohesiveness and alignment; organizational excellence and great work; critical thinking, problem solving and continuous improvement; innovation; and, resilience, resourcefulness and renewal.

But to enable tangible outcomes, leaders not only visualize a better future state. They create the conditions to achieve it. In this way, leadership is as much about providing the means as it is about pointing the way. Specifically, leaders consistently practice and hone the 10 fundamentals of enabling. Within the organizations they serve, leaders:

- Ensure clarity, context and understanding
- Supply the right tools
- Develop necessary skills
- Build relevant knowledge
- Provide needed resources
- Remove barriers, clear pathways
- Lend passive and active hands
- Surface and resolve conflict
- Monitor, measure and report
- Applaud achievements, celebrate wins and reward performance

Those who hold positions of authority, whether such positions are paid or volunteer, are typically expected to set targets and goals, solve problems and ensure tasks are carried out. Leaders, however, set the bar higher, much higher. They set expectations of themselves to inspire positive emotions, behaviors and actions in others and to enable tangible outcomes through others. In the process they build great, enduring organizations. In the end, isn't this the ultimate reveal of true leadership? •

---

**Henry S. Givray** is former Chairman, President & CEO of Smithbucklin Corporation, the world's largest association management and services company. He served as President & CEO from 2002 to 2015 and Chairman of the Board (non-executive) from 2016 to 2020. Henry is a dedicated, ongoing student of leadership, committed to speaking and writing as a way to teach and give back. His insights and ideas on leadership have been prominently featured in business books and national news media, and he has been invited to speak at numerous association conferences, corporate meetings, and educational forums. One of Henry's most enduring achievements has been his creation of comprehensive, high-impact leadership learning programs. The programming has evolved to include two offerings under the brand *Leadership's Calling*®. The Diverse Cohort Program is for CEOs and other C-suite executives, vice presidents, directors and managers at all levels, business owners, entrepreneurs, individual practitioners, and high-potentials from all types and sizes of organizations representing varied industries and professions. The second offering is an exclusive program for a CEO (or head of an organization) and members of his or her senior management team, participating together.