Influence Beyond "Me" - Igniting Inspiration for Accelerated Performance

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Abstract

Leadership is the ability to set direction; inspire, motivate, and influence others to produce results. A world-class leader transforms ordinary individuals into a team, which produces extraordinary results. Sustained performance is from equal portions business acumen, technical competencies, interpersonal skills, and team dynamics. All are essential to produce results. As a leader, knowing what to do and how to engage others is at the heart of expanding success or diminishing returns. This paper presents a pragmatic approach to understanding how Tribal Leadership (Logan, King, & Wright, 2011) creates a new context for understanding team behavior and how developing interpersonal competencies establish a foundation for world-class leadership. PMs will discover how acquiring the appropriate mindset, creating core values, and using team tools can transform an organizations reputation and energize a team. An energized team culture thrives on collaboration, integrity, and accountability. Project managers committed to performance transformation can become world-class leaders. Igniting their leadership capabilities, PMs create trust-based relationships and inspire others to flourish.

Building a Foundation

Executives expect a project manager (PM) to deliver on-time results within budget by balancing their technical competence and interpersonal skills. Using Goleman's Emotional Quotient (EQ) (1998) as a framework, leaders can enhance their personal and social competence to self-manage and build relationships with others. PM's extend their interpersonal base by mastering the skills associated with Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Dominance-Influencer-Steadiness-Compliance (DISC) behavioral-based communications framework. When PMs understand their personal styles, pay exquisite attention to others, and demonstrate style flexibility, they build trust-based relationships. Arbinger Institute's, "Way of Being" can significantly accelerate individual trust by respecting the humanity of others and not engaging in self-betrayal (Arbinger Institute, 2004). NLP skills sharpen sensory acuity with heightened eye access and predicate selection awareness (Dilts & Bonissone, 1993). Refined sensory acuity accelerates the identification of preferred communication styles (Alessandra & O'Connor, 1996). In *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box* (2002), Arbinger states the greatest source of influence is a "Way of Being" where leaders interact and treat others as people honoring their humanity. For individual leader development and building personal confidence, Goleman's EQ, NLP, DISC, and the "Way of Being" are the building blocks for establishing trust-based relationships and creating greater influence.

Team Behavior

A framework to decode team behavior extends beyond the boundaries of a project manager's self-knowledge and knowledge of each individual team member's behavior. Tuckman (1965) identified the four developmental stages in small groups, forming, storming, norming, and performing. Hersey and Blanchard's *Situational Leadership* (1979) combined communication approaches, telling, selling, participating, and delegating with the maturity level, ability and willingness, to perform a task as a way to influence individual performance. With limited success, leaders have extrapolated the Tuckman and Hersey-Blanchard approaches to explain team behavior. A significant new way to understand team behavior is looking at the five modern tribal stages described by Logan, King, and (2011).

Tribal Leadership

"A culture and a person's sense of self are inseparably locked together. One cannot be understood without the other" (Logan et al, 2011). As described in Tribal Leadership (2010), each stage has a mantra and a productivity level with stage one, the lowest, and stage five delivering the highest productivity. The mantras are, stage one - "Life sucks;" stage two - "My life sucks;" stage three - "I'm great, and you're not;" stage four - "We're great;" and stage five - "Life is great." 2007, p. 25) and summarized at Exhibit 1..

STAGE	Relationships	Dynamic	Theme
5	Vital	Team	Life is Great
4	Important	Stable Partnership	We're great
3	Useful	Personal Domination	I'm great
2	Ineffective	Separate	My life sucks
1	Undermining	Alienated	Life sucks

Exhibit 1 – Tribal Leadership Summary (Logan et al., 2011)

Each stage has a specific language and behavior; the project manager can use this knowledge to move a team to the next performance level by design rather than default. The most effective leaders are stable at level four or five, exhibiting communication style flexibility while honoring team member and stakeholder humanity. Level-five leaders influence team members to accelerated performance. Typically, sponsors select the "Best Performers" for project team membership. Best performers have a tendency to strive for dominance, outperform, or put one another down with even a few members disengaged and apathetic. Effective world-class leaders easily adjust their communication style and behaviors to establish rapport with all team members regardless of their stage (Logan et al., 2011). Leading a stage three team to stage four is possible by encouraging a proper mindset, establishing team values, and deploying collaborative tools and techniques.

Mindset

A level-five leader invites ordinary people to produce extraordinary results. In essence, the ability to influence and inspire others, build a culture of accountability, integrity, and collaboration comes from a level-five leader's "Way of Being" directed toward stakeholders and the project team. Leadership by example always has a powerful impact on followers. The "Way of Being" is how leaders access and revitalize the intelligence in the people around them creating a culture where common people achieve extraordinarily uncommon results Wiseman, Liz (2010). Arbinger's *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box* (2010) systematically helps level three leaders discover how self-deception limits effectiveness and how to operate out of the boxes of blame and justifications. The level-five leader mindset embraces a "Way of Being" that seeks the natural genius within others and is responsive to the humanity of others.

Way of Being

How a PM communicates and interacts with others is an important aspect of project life. Arbinger in *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box*, states that a leader's actions and behaviors, a way of "doing," achieves results in a variety of ways and "There is something deeper than behavior that [ultimately] determines influence" (Arbinger, 2002, p, 48). Level-five leaders interact and treat others in two manners. One way, a "Way of Being," recognizes people as people and the other way is to see people as objects; specifically as obstacles, vehicles, or irrelevancies. "This 'Way of Being' [ultimately] determines influence" (Arbinger, 1998; p. 10). Understanding the distinction between behaviors, the doing, and our "Way of Being" is essential (Exhibit 2).

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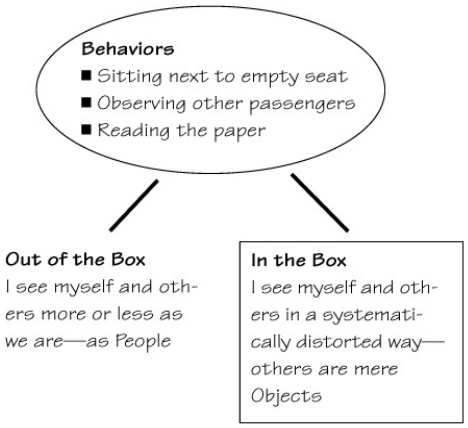

Exhibit 2 – "Way of Being" (Arbinger, 2002; p. 35)

Leaders who see people as objects may become resentful or frustrated when the schedule slips or impatient when a team member is slow to make adjustments. By treating people as objects, PMs form a "box" around themselves creating relationship barriers. Level-three leaders being resistant to the needs of others are operating from within a box and betray their deepest sense about the right way to treat people (Arbinger, 2002). This self-betrayal produces justifications, placing blame on others when something goes wrong. Self-betrayal radically degrades working relationships. Level-three leaders find reason to blame others and unknowingly provoke team members into unproductive behaviors. Collusion, a detrimental blame-response cycle, escalates and divisiveness begins to expand as a level-three leaders and team members enlist allies to support their respective viewpoint (Arbinger, 2002).

A level-five leader sees others as people and suspends judgment; inviting the team to take collaborative action. A level-five leader encourages the team to develop a solution by asking thought provoking questions and removing any barriers, which hinder performance. Seeing others as people PMs "are" different, by the way they listen and learn, teach and while helping go right. A level-five leader allocates more time keeping others informed, finding and using the genius of others, and helping colleagues grow professionally while clarifying performance expectations. Level-five leaders significantly improve project results and trust by seeing people as people as shown in Exhibit 3.

In the Box – Resistant way of being	Out of the Box – Responsive way of being
• I blame others and make excuses	• I accept responsibility for every aspect of my results
• I self justify my behavior	• I recognize the humanity and intention of others
• I see people as objects	• I see people as people
• I deny being in the box	• I recognize when I am in the box, apologize and choose to be helpful to others
• I focus on being right	• I focus on taking action and getting results
• I shift responsibility when things go wrong	• I hold myself accountable for my results
• I create problems to prove I'm right	• I respond to problems and recommend solutions
• I resist other people	• I respond to people as they are and take action

Exhibit 3 - Project Managers "Way of Being" Guide
Adapted from Arbinger (2002)

Multiplier

To accelerate a pervasive "Way of Being," a PM can use the five-multiplier distinctions to establish behavioral interaction expectations. As a talent magnet (Wiseman, 2010), level-five leaders attract the best and brightest talent maximizing individual contribution by finding each person's native genius. Skilled leaders create an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work. As a result, people offer their best and boldest thinking,

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giving their best effort. Successful PMs replace the "know-it-all" attitude by reframing problems as opportunities, challenging the team to ask the hard questions and co-creating action plans. Asking tough questions extends into creating a safe environment for the vigorous and passionate of best thinking while demanding rigorous deliberation. Micromanagers, level-three leaders, exhibit the most debilitating actions through their personal intervention in all project aspects. This level-three behavior exhibits the micromanager's belief his or her involvement is critical to project success because others lack the experience or knowledge to produce the proper results. However, a wise leader gives other people the ownership for results and invests in his or her success.

Diminisher	Multiplier
• Empire Builder	• Talent Magnet
• Tyrant	• Liberator
• Know-It-All	• Challenger
• Decision Maker	• Debate Maker
• Micromanager	• Investor

Exhibit 4 - Project Managers Multiplier Distinctions
Liz Wiseman, (2010)

Values

Team values are the core ingredients for success. Organizational values can shape teams daily to inspire higher customer service levels, enhance operational effectiveness, better team collaboration, and deliver quality. This greater ability to fulfill the stated mission provides high personal satisfaction and thus creates a more motivated team. Motivation is indeed a necessary component to achieve success in any fully functioning organization. Quite often the values of an organization are present but not clarified and defined. Stephen Kiesling (2000) quotes Richard Barrett,

> "Organizations are living entities that share needs and motivations similar to those of individual people. The critical question is whether these corporate values are conscious, shared, and lived or unconscious and undiscussed. When corporate values remain unconscious and undiscussed, they tend to reflect the values of the leader, not the employees. The likely result: The creative potential of the employees is either crushed or they take it home to their hobbies and charities" (Kiesling, 2000, p. 37).

Duncan (2005) cites a Gallup study showing that "actively disengaged" employees cost the economy approximately $355 billion dollars per year and that almost 25 million U.S. workers are actively disengaged resulting in roughly 86 million days of absence from work (n.p.). Kiesling continues, "What's the bottom line performance difference between companies with fulfilled and unfulfilled employees? Citing a number of specific studies, Barrett has a number, 39%" (p. 37). Dearlove and Coomber (1999) reference Fredrick Reichfield, who estimates that the 'disloyalty factor' from stakeholders, employers, shareholders, staff, and customers can cut performance and productivity by 50% (p. 10).

David Pendleton and Jennifer King define values as guiding principles for individuals and organizations (Pendleton & King, 2002). Charles Kerns proposes that the leader's values contribute to attitudes resulting in behaviors (Kerns, 2004). Dave Logan and John King identify core values as "principles without which life wouldn't be worth living" (Logan, King, & Wright, 2011, p. 181). According to Thomas Ambler, organizations that have identified three to six core values are more successful than those organizations who have not taken this action (Ambler, n.d). Studies of hundreds of companies has shown that higher functioning organizations build a high producing culture based on aligning values with day-to-day operations (Logan et al., 2011).

Project teams generally reflect the values of the creating organization; when the behaviors of the members of the project team align with organizational values, a successful project outcome increases (Ambler, n.d). Team members build credibility with customers when behavior is consistent with stated values (Kerns, 2004). Unfortunately, some organizations have stated values; yet have not implemented them in ongoing operations (Kaufman, 2005). A value failing to guide behavior reduces organizational productivity and adversely affects team culture (Kaufman, 2005). In 15 years of research, Kouzes and Posner (1995) link values to individual and team behaviors such as ethical behavior, expectation clarity, solution innovation, and team collaboration. With core values in place, the PM's mindset inspires others to find the genius in others and honor their humanity.

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Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995) say to define organizational values, management should actively involve the employee perspective. Every employee's personal values contribute to the creation of the values of the organization. Exhibit 5 displays an effective values definition process.

Step One:	Team members write the five values wanted in the work environment
Step Two:	Have team members prioritize their values
Step Three:	Gather the top prioritized and publish a list by category
Step Four:	Review published list and rank top categories
Step Five:	Each group reviews then determines the top values by categories
Step Six:	Determine the core values from the prioritized lists

Exhibit 5 - (Kuczmarski & Kuczmarski, 1995, Pp. 120-23)

Team Tools

With values woven into the culture, the effective leader can begin to shape working relationships by sharpening team focus on results and setting expectations for teammates. Specifically, the effective leader shifts the team relationship structure creating triad work teams to produce results (Logan et al., 2011) using simple tools to sustain core-value awareness, plan interim deliverables, solve problems, and engage others in passionate debate.

Triads

"Leadership is not about changing ideas or gaining knowledge; it is about changing language and relationships" (Logan et al., 2011). Triad teams connect three stakeholders by common values and complementary skills, experiences, and opportunities where collaboration will produce a significant result. Self-sustaining triads will generate excitement and naturally attract the genius within others. World-class PMs form triads because they are matchmakers. Triad project conversations are always with at least two people with the PM primarily listening and deepening the relationship between the other two. Woven into the discussion are the values and gifts that make each person great. In short, level-five leaders create trusted relationships between people linked by mutual core values and beneficial abilities.

Core Values

"Genuine success does not come from proclaiming our core values, but form consistently putting them into daily action" (Blanchard & O'Connor, 2003). Using the six-step value definition process, PMs engage team member participation. Identifying a core value is an essential start; the dialogue creating action clarity is valuable. Specifically, listing bullet points, which clarify behavior, paraphrase what that value is and is not, facilitates comprehension understanding the how to integrate values into daily action. For each value, identifying, and documenting a team story makes the value memorable and enriches team culture. The table in Figure 6 assists to create value clarity.

Value	Behavior Clarity	What it IS	What it IS NOT	Story
Integrity	• Honesty • Trust	• Do what you say you are going to do • Keep your commitments	• Not being truthful to oneself or to others • Knowingly omitting the truth	• (example omitted)

Exhibit 6 - (Bristol & Yeatts, 2002)

Quick Plans

PMs know the planning cycle is continuous. During the project life, quick planning and thorough planning appear at odds. Logan and King have created a "Champagne Glass" planning format, which helps leaders and teams rapidly develop plans for interim deliverables. This tool liberates a teams' best thinking. Stating the desired outcome, identifying the deliverable, and any constraining resources such as dates, funds, or personnel begins the discussion.

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The next gate validates the outcome clarity. With outcome clarity, a team triad brainstorms available assets for project. The next questions are the hurdles for the second gate, 'Are the listed assets needed for producing the desired outcome' and 'Are these assets available?' With a YES, the next step is to determine the milestones and activities needed to achieve the outcome. This simple tool uses the power of team triads to align outcomes, assets, and actions.

Exhibit 7 - (John King, 2011)

World-class PMs liberate triads to use their best and most innovative thinking by creating a safe space for idea exchange, encouraging collaborative team solutions. This environment allows the PM to set work quality expectations instead of personally dictating every solution. Equally important, the PM invites team members to admit, share, and learn from mistakes. This blame-free "We" way of being" makes rapid learning cycles a team habit.

Problem Solving

"Creative problem solving is a form of innovative learning," (Bennis, 2009, p. 71. World-class PMs know how to create a culture where the passionate exchange of ideas is standard procedure. Wiseman, (2010) states that defining the question and selecting the appropriate triad to assemble the data, sets the proper decision-making framework. Most important, level-five leaders spark debate by creating safety for incisive thinking while demanding rigorous thought processes. The cumulative effect, each team member is accountable for sound decision making and communicating the decision rationale. The seven-step problem solving process shown in Figure 8 helps keep the team focused and synchronized. During problem solving, a PMs responsibility is to ask the hard questions, verify the data is correct, and ignite triad debate.

Figure 8 - Problem Solving Process (www.projectivity-solutions.com, 2004)

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Getting to Level-Five

Shifting from a project taskmaster to world-class leader is a continual improvement journey starting with an assessment of the brutal facts. After PMs complete the assessment, they build an action plan using enhanced soft skills as the foundation for growth. PMs achieve equilibrium between technical and interpersonal skills by developing communication flexibility and a responsive "Way of Being." Personal mindset stability is the springboard for advancing to levels four and five. As PMs spend more time helping things go right, compared to constantly making corrections, they can refine and simplify essential technical skills to teach and help others to learn.

Assessment

Unfortunately, many PMs place a higher value on tasks, productivity, and outcomes than on relationships. This work only orientation lacks empathy, creates barriers, and invites defensiveness. The book list in Figure 11 explores the essential aspects for achieving interpersonal skill stability, a launching pad into a level-five leadership style. Goldsmith's (2007) no-holds-barred review of the 20 transactional flaws performed against others provides an excellent departure point. Mersino (2007) clarifies the dangers of a low emotional quotient (EQ) while Losier's Law of Connection (2007) helps understand how to improve sensory acuity to build rapport; The Platinum Rule puts into motion "Do unto others as they'd like done unto them" (Alessandra, 2008, p. 2). Goldsmith, Mersino, Losier, and Alessandra do the heavy prep work for building trust-based relationships by starting to shift a PMs orientation from "ME-centric" viewpoint. Leadership and Self-Deception, (Arbinger, 2010) helps a PM to see how most communication failures and conflicts perpetuate self-deception; leading to breakdowns in trust accountability and collaboration. Most significantly, Arbinger provides practical strategies for getting and staying out-of-the-box. Tribal Leadership (Logan et al., 2011) details the how to identify the stage of tribal development and some strategies to help a team evolve into higher levels of productivity as trust-based relationships create a more cohesive culture.

Recommended Readings:
• Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers – Mersino • Law of Connection – Losier • Leadership & Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box – Arbinger Institute • Managing By Values – Blanchard and O'Connor • The Platinum Rule – Alessandra and O'Connor • What Got You Here, Won't Get You There – Marshall Goldsmith

Figure 11 – World-class leader reading list

Acceleration

Warrior-leaders studying the martial arts often hear their Shensi admonish, 'Go slow to go fast.' This saying is also true when establishing the mindset and interpersonal skill-base for level-five leadership. Incrementally mastering the mindset, interpersonal, and team skills layers adds depth and breadth to the PMs technical competency base, creating balance with leadership competencies. Each layer adds competencies to a PMs leadership capacity; to sustain personal performance continuous improvement becomes a life practice. Wiseman (2011) suggests an effective skill refinement strategy. World-class leaders periodically assess their mindset, interpersonal, and team skills; improve the lowest and take their highest to the next level. Figure 12, summarizes the steps identifies suggested authors for consideration.

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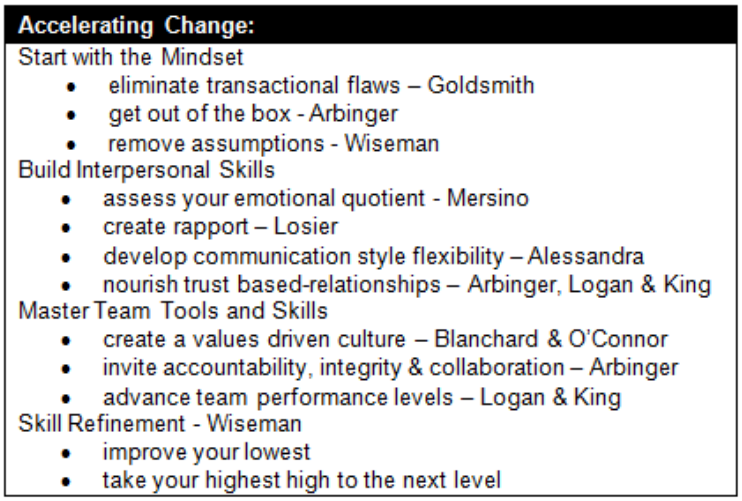

Figure 12 – Accelerating interpersonal skills transformation

Call to Action

Executives passionately debate if leadership is learned or innate. Dr. Bruce Avolio, Director, Center for Leadership Studies posits in *Psychology Today* (Sep/Oct 1999; 32, 5; p.18),

> After 50 years of collecting data on the topic, most psychologists believe that leadership qualities are innate or genetic and thus impossible to learn. Yet, my colleagues and I presented over a decade of research showing that leadership skills can be developed and mastered.

According to Bradberry & Greaves (2009), improving your EQ has a profound effect on your leadership skills, and Mersino (2007, Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 152-153) states,

> The good news about emotional intelligence is that no matter where you are now, most experts agree that you can improve your level of emotional intelligence. In fact, experts agree that you can continue to improve your level over the course of your life.

Building skills layer by layer creates synergy as PMs develop a world-class leader mindset, build core values, and use team tools to transform their competencies to accelerate organization performance. The transformational journey beyond a "Me-centeredness" takes time, stay with it for a year. By forming a triad with other PMs, learning will deepen, resolve will strengthen, and team performance will accelerate.

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