

CHAPTER ONE

WHERE DOES LEADERSHIP FIT IN YOUR LIFE?

As counselors and trainers of executives and as advocates for improving the human condition through leadership development, we've noticed in recent years that increasingly more clients seem less sure about their path of leadership. Despite having had high levels of achievement and an unwavering dedication to work and career, they admit, when pressed, that something just doesn't feel right. They're uncertain about whether they're spending their best years doing what they really want to do and whether, at the end of the day, the leadership path they have chosen will ultimately be fulfilling.

This concerns us because we believe that the need for effective leadership has grown. We need strong leaders not only at the top of formal organizations (corporations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, for example) but also at all levels in organizations and in our communities and families. Each of us has multiple opportunities to lead every day if we choose to do so. Our hope is that in reading this book, you will find clarity about the role of leadership in your life so that you can lead more effectively in whatever situation you face.

Leadership is a hot topic, as shown by the flood of journals, books, Web sites, blogs, and training programs that now discuss what it is and how it's best practiced. Search the Web using the word *leadership*, and you will generate well over 100,000 hits. Search university offerings, and you will see classes and degrees in leadership. Pick up

any newspaper or news magazine, and leadership is a prominent topic covered.

Leadership can certainly be read about, studied, and taught, but individuals rarely think about leadership as a vocation, even though acquiring its skills demands the same kind of conscious decisions as acquiring a technical specialty or pursuing an educational degree. At some moment early in your life, someone may have urged you to select and develop an area of technical knowledge. But has anyone ever asked you to consider specifically how leadership would fit into your life or urge you to select and develop it as a special skill?

We wrote this book to encourage you to make more conscious choices about why, when, how, and where you lead. We think it's critical that you connect your leadership to those things you find most essential in life. Leadership is not just about developing a brilliant strategy or executing a task perfectly. We believe that the most effective leaders are those who commit themselves to getting better day by day and week by week and then apply their skills to improving the lives of other people in the organizations in which they work or their communities.

This chapter explores questions and issues that leaders like you are raising and explains how the rest of this book can help you resolve them on a personal level through structured introspection, discussion, purposeful questions, and short cases of leaders who have experienced, as television sports journalist Jim McKay used to say, "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." In essence, this book addresses these questions:

- Why do you want to lead?
- Who are you as a leader?
- Are your personal goals, values, needs, and resources such that your work in leadership can be both personally rewarding and outwardly fruitful?
- If you now find yourself in a leadership position or hope to be in a leadership role in the future, do you have a vision of what you'd

like your leadership work to accomplish for you personally as well as for your organization or community?

- Are you clear about when and where you are most effective as a leader?

THE CHALLENGES TODAY

Leaders must be able to cope effectively with uncertainty and continuous change. The stress, sacrifices, criticism, responsibility, and accountability that leaders face can cause us to question our roles as leaders. Some leaders we work with each week will admit that at times they are tired, overwhelmed, stuck, lost, bored, or feeling devalued. Others aren't feeling much of anything and don't want to be noticed. Don't get us wrong: there are plenty of leaders who are optimistic and energized. But our sense is that leaders today are finding the road a bit tougher to navigate than leaders did in the past.

Leaders' New Questions

The three of us together have nearly a century of experience in assisting leaders in the development of their talents and careers. As the world becomes more interdependent and more complex, leaders with whom we work frequently come to us with questions, and sometimes concerns, about their place in the world as leaders and the place of leadership in their lives. The tenor of their questions has changed recently. Questions about strengths and developmental needs, becoming a more effective agent of change, confronting structural problems, organizational politics and difficult coworkers, and minimizing the tremendous stress of executive roles continue to surface, but they are being augmented and sometimes even replaced by a different inquiry. Contemporary leaders ask about personal and professional fulfillment, service to others, balancing the demands of work with life's other responsibilities. We hear about job dissatisfaction. We hear about job insecurity, even among the most senior leaders in organizations. Highly

rated performers are not immune from having reservations about what they experience as a lack of sufficient control over both the professional and personal aspects of their careers. One corporate executive captures the confusion quite well: “It seems there have been times in your life when the options before you have seemed clouded and the trail behind you so cluttered that you can’t seem to clear your feet to move ahead.”

We wonder why such issues seem increasingly common. The global economic crisis that began in 2008 will no doubt affect people’s perceptions of the future and their career aspirations for some time to come. Certainly the tasks of leadership in a more interdependent global world have changed from what they used to be. Advances in technology fundamentally affect the way that individuals and groups interact. When you consider how some organizations expect to have access to their leadership around the clock, getting away from work becomes quite challenging. We also wonder whether the human potential movement of the 1960s shifted people’s concepts of what constitutes a happy life. Do the attitudes and expectations of the millennial generation (born between 1980 and 2000) create different expectations of leaders? When leaders demand more personal meaning in their work lives, are they responding to changes in career patterns or family relationships? In the pages that follow, we explore these and other questions leaders today are asking themselves and others.

The Problem of Drift

Some people go through life with complete clarity about their goals as a leader, but most leaders, at one point or another, express doubts about their capabilities, have questions about how best to leverage their talents, or are simply confused about the leader within them. We call this the problem of *drift*. Drift can feel as if you are going through the motions but not actually moving forward. It can be short-lived (for instance, after a challenging meeting or a tough week, you may begin to wonder whether you can handle the expectations of your team) or it can be chronic (for example, after five years in a job, you realize that unless you make a change, some of your life’s goals are not going to be met).

Think of drift as being opposite to being “in the zone,” or in a place in life in which you are making conscious choices and taking action with a clear sense of purpose and connection to your core values and goals.

We work with leaders in all kinds of organizations, from multinational to grassroots and from public to private sector. Drift is an equal opportunity employer that at some point affects leaders from all walks of life. Whether underqualified, underchallenged, overwhelmed, burned out, or in some other way miscast, it’s not uncommon for leaders to feel out of place in their current roles, unprepared for the demands of leadership, misaligned with their responsibilities, unaware of the unknown factors inherent in a leadership role, or unsure about how to seize the potential for change and get back on the right track. One goal of this book is to help you address issues you may have about drift and about your sense of focus, purpose, effectiveness, and drive as a leader. We will help you move from feeling a sense of drift to a place where you reach your full potential as a leader by delineating a process of discovering the leader in you.

Drift can occur for a number of reasons. Consider these situations, and see if any are familiar to you:

- *You are overwhelmed.* Your organization let go of 15 percent of its workforce. You are now covering the leadership responsibilities for three departments. How can you be effective with so much responsibility?
- *You are skeptical.* Your organization has undergone the third major restructuring in three years. Change is the name of the game, but to what end isn’t clear. You are responsible for motivating your team and getting them on board with the changes. How can you do that when you don’t believe in the change yourself?
- *You are stuck.* You have been doing the same job for the past four years. Because of your organization’s outsourcing to overseas locations, moving to a new position would require you to move abroad. You see little opportunity for advancement given your desire to stay rooted in your community. Your work is critical to

the organization's success, but the fire in your belly is not as strong as it once was. How do you get excited again?

- *You are lost.* Your boss and three other senior leaders have left the organization. You are being asked to fill in on some of their key projects, while others in the organization conduct a search to fill these positions. You didn't want more responsibility, but others are looking to you for answers. How do you step up to the plate when you're not sure you can swing the bat, let alone hit the pitch?
- *You are in denial.* You have had six bosses in three years. Change keeps coming, but you don't know what is going to ultimately stick. Perhaps if you ignore the newest change, hunker down, and pretend to be onboard, this too shall pass. How long can you wait?
- *You are angry.* Your spouse lost her job, and the job market in your area is horrendous. You have decided to move, but you love your organization, your role, and your colleagues. How will you find the right next leadership role?
- *You are unhappy.* You have often made leadership and career decisions based on the expectations of others. You chose your field because of your father's encouragement. You said yes to each organizational opportunity because your boss, mentor, or spouse said it was the right thing to do. But now you realize you aren't doing what you want to do. How do you break the cycle and find a job that is more connected to your core values?
- *You are pressured.* In order to put your three children through college, maintain your financial commitments to nonprofit organizations you care about, and contribute to your own retirement account, you feel pressure to serve in a high-level, well-paying position where the perks and financial rewards are plentiful. How do you find respite from the demands of the role?
- *You are underchallenged.* You are twenty-seven years old and new to the organization. You believe that you have a lot to give, and yet your boss continues to ask you to work on routine tasks you mastered

several years ago. You see many opportunities to lead, but your boss seems threatened by giving you too much exposure. How do you convince her that you are ready for more?

- *You are worried.* You have been asked to volunteer your time on a major cross-functional taskforce with high visibility. You have just had your first child and learning how to manage the role of parent, spouse, and employee. You are already finding it difficult to keep up with all of the demands in your life. How can you add still more work to your plate?
- *You are thrilled.* You have just landed the marketing job you always wanted: leading a project team for one of your firm's major accounts. But this is your first real leadership role, and you are unsure of how to best organize, lead, and motivate your team. Is there a map to help guide your next steps?
- *You are nervous.* You are the first expatriate for the company and are moving your entire family to Hong Kong. You will be charting new territory by opening the first office in Asia and leading a culturally diverse workforce. You are not sure what to do next. Instead of taking action, you feel stuck in place, almost paralyzed. What do you do first?

These situations describe the multitude of questions that leaders at all levels are asking. Given the pace of change in organizations, individuals who are in a pretty good place can suddenly find themselves thrust into situations they didn't foresee or don't know how to handle. These situations have both a professional and personal impact on them.

We have had many conversations with clients who faced one or more of these issues. Our conversations revealed that many leaders find themselves in the middle of situations and don't have a systematic way to navigate to a better place. All in all, they haven't conducted much of a conscious, guided evaluation of themselves as leaders. Intrigued by drift, we probed further by asking, Have you thought about the role that

leadership plays in your life? Has leadership been a conscious decision? In a few cases, the answers were a resounding yes; the individuals had indeed given much thought to who they were as leaders and the skills they wanted to develop in the future. These individuals came across as self-assured. Some planned to move up to the next level, and a few were content to end their careers in the jobs they held. In either case, they stood on solid ground. But most of the leaders we talked with hadn't been very thoughtful about assuming a leadership position. One leader described "falling into" his position. Another said, "I don't even give it a second thought. You know, it's like you just try to get through each day and do the best you can."

These conversations, no matter the amount of change or circumstances, confirm our belief that too few individuals actively think about leadership or are truly comfortable with their identities as leaders. We are struck by how seldom people in leadership positions consider to any great extent their work as leaders. We are well acquainted with people who are so keen on assuming leadership responsibilities that they have pursued that goal without paying enough attention to the meaning of the work or the fact that developing others was a critical skill for being a successful leader. Not only are individuals uncomfortable with their identities as leaders, more are walking the halls of organizations disillusioned, dissatisfied, and disconnected. Rather than being active in tackling the issues before them, they hide out in their offices, work from home, disassociate themselves from mistakes, and hunker down hoping that this too shall pass. The main question they ask is, "Is taking this leadership role worth the effort?"

The bad news is that the problem of drift has impact beyond individual discomfort. Since leadership is about having responsibility for others, drift has consequences that can be challenging and frustrating for colleagues and families as well. Leading by rote wastes good talent and energy, dilutes the talent and energy that others muster to create results, and creates drag on company resources. Perhaps worse, while in the grip of drift, you can experience a malaise that stands in the way

of full commitment and fulfillment. This malaise can be contagious and infect other members of your team or work group.

If you feel this way, be comforted by the fact that many others do as well. Do you want help moving out of the drift cycle? If you do, you will benefit by stepping back, asking yourself some fundamental questions, and then figuring out how to get back in the driver's seat. The process can help you gain traction for moving yourself to a place of fulfillment, commitment, and motivation.

Reflect on the following questions, and write down responses that immediately come to mind:

- How much of your life today involves being a leader? (Don't limit your answer to just your work life.)
- Are you currently in a leadership role? How did you get there?
- Do you see yourself as a leader? Are you a leader all of the time?
- How comfortable are you with your identity as a leader?
- Did you choose to become a leader, or did it somehow choose you?

By answering these and other questions we pose throughout this book, you will be making the decision and commitment to move away from drift. Deane Shapiro wrote in *Precision Nirvana*, "When sitting just sit. When walking just walk. Above all don't wobble" (1978, p. 149). We believe this is good advice to you, and we add this corollary: When leading, lead; when following, follow; but take action always.

FROM DRIFT TO CLARITY: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHOICE AND ACTION

Many people who are in or are considering leadership roles can benefit from a systematic look at themselves as leaders. By paying attention to all the different aspects of leading, you might gain useful insight into your short-term situations and long-term plans.

Choosing Leadership

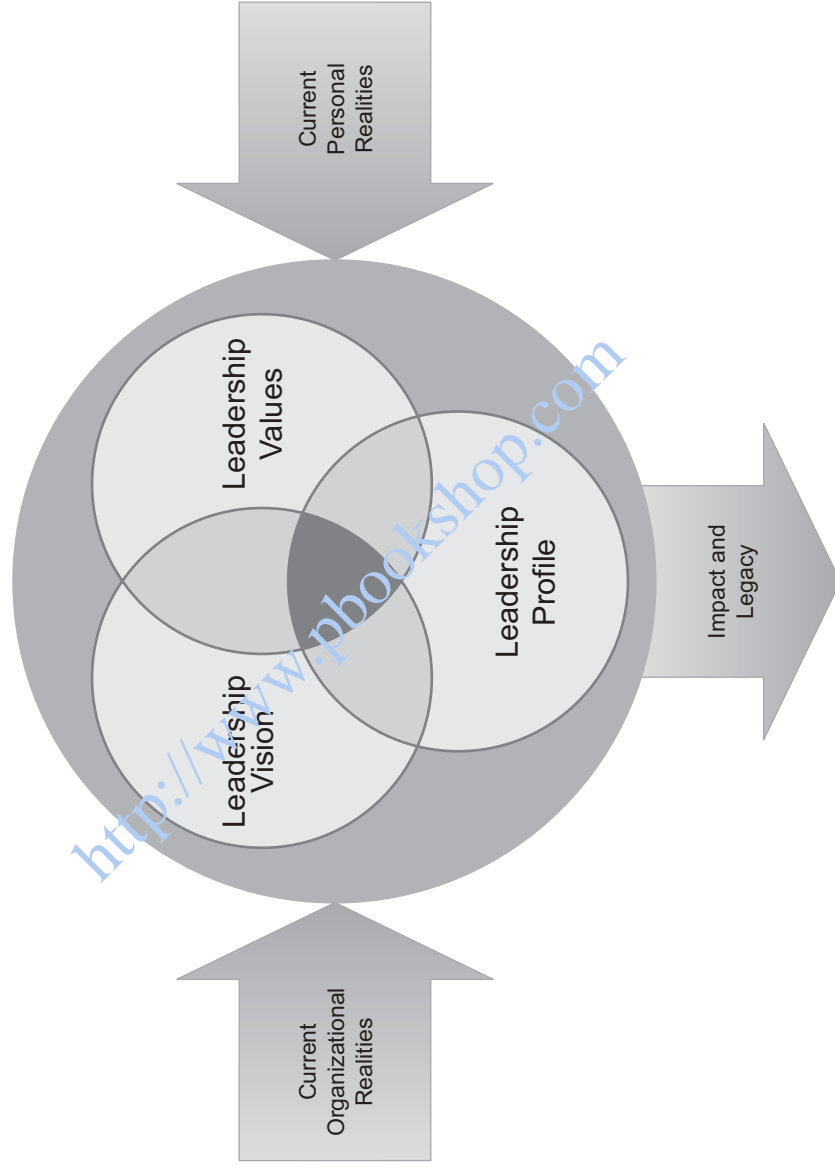
Demands for leadership come in many guises and are not always clearly signaled by job title, job description, or status. For example, a researcher discovers that her position involves interacting with clients who are using products that the researcher has studied. When she realizes that her research will have more value if she gets out of the lab and sees how customers actually use those products, she leads a revision of her organization's research protocols. Or a senior graphic designer realizes that he spends more time attempting to inspire good work from freelance artists from all over the globe than he spends creating images of his own. Collaborating with these artists requires a deep knowledge of culture and context. The designer needs to develop skills around leading a charge to break down the barriers between in-house and outsourced talent. Or a community organizer working at a nonprofit has to tap into the collective capabilities of local citizens, and in the process she helps to build a community's capacity to address poverty.

In other words, at all levels in an organization, individuals can and do become leaders. Sometimes they explicitly and intentionally step forward to take on a leadership role; sometimes they are asked to do so; sometimes the leadership blossoms organically from their daily practices. Even if you are not designated with a formal title (for example, you don't have a manager title or you don't supervise a staff), if you pay attention and build your self-awareness, you can daily discover opportunities to lead.

The Discovering Leadership Framework

Knowing that most current and prospective leaders had never systematically looked at the situation they find themselves in and tried a more integrated approach to their solutions, we developed the Discovering Leadership Framework (Figure 1.1). Its purpose is to help you better see the role of leadership in your life. It will help you reach the point of saying, "This is the perfect role for me," "I am just not suited to this work," "This is how I can lead more effectively," or "Yes, this is why I lead."

FIGURE 1.1 Discovering Leadership Framework



The five areas of the framework will help you organize your thinking by logically connecting important career and life issues with leadership development activities:

Current Organizational Realities

The problem of drift and what leadership opportunities are available to us is always embedded in a larger context. This context differs by individual. It can be as broad as the social, economic, and global trends that have an impact on leadership today. It might be more specific to your industry. Is it one of growth (the energy industry) or one of decline (the U.S. textile industry)? It might be specific to your organization if there are structural changes, cutbacks, or new ventures. It might be the context of your current or potential leadership role. Do you have a new boss or a difficult employee? Organizational culture and climate are part of your context as well. The point is to understand the broader circumstances that define your leadership situation and why you feel adrift. Context also refers to the new demands and expectations leaders face, the main views of leadership in your organization, and their fit with your own view or philosophy. We have included the costs of leading as part of the organizational context. We know these costs are often specific to the organization, role, and other circumstances that an individual leader faces.

Your Vision

A vision for your life is your ideal future state. It describes what you see as the overall purpose of your life: what dreams you want to achieve, what goals you want to accomplish, the people you want to be with, and the kind of life you want to have. This framework takes a specific look at your leadership vision. More specifically, what is the role that leadership plays in your life? We believe that being purposeful about what you want in life is important to being purposeful about what you want in your leadership situation. A leadership vision helps you out of drift. Without an articulate leadership vision, you will have a difficult time evaluating the leadership choices presented to you.

Your Values

Values are the standards or principles that guide your beliefs, decisions, and actions. Understanding your values and leveraging them as a foundational cornerstone of your leadership choices is a critical contributor to effective leadership. Articulating your motivations and values and understanding their role in your work as a leader isn't an easy task. Neither is figuring out if your motivations and values align with your current role or with your organization's values. Examining your motivations and values may give you more insight into why you feel adrift.

Your Leadership Profile

Your leadership profile is your personal leadership tool kit and what you draw from to lead. It can include many things, such as competencies, styles, and experiences. Through careful analysis of your profile, you can identify what you see as your strengths and developmental needs. Your leadership profile further defines who you are as a leader and what you bring to leadership roles. Knowing your profile helps you clarify why and how you lead, why you might be adrift, and how to take action to move in a more positive direction.

Personal Realities and Expectations

You have a personal life that has an impact on your work life and a work life that has an impact on your personal life. Often we tend to compartmentalize these two areas of our lives when we would benefit by thinking in a more integrated and holistic way. At the end of the day, you are one person, whether you are at work, on vacation, or at home. How you integrate all aspects of your life with your responsibilities as a leader is one of the most challenging that you will face.

These five areas of the framework are closely related. Our goal in presenting this framework is to help you make more conscious, unifying connections that will help you move from drift into clarity.

THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY OF DISCOVERING LEADERSHIP

As authors, we share a belief that individuals should choose fulfilling, meaningful work that they are passionate about. What is it that you really want to do? This is a key question to discovering the leader in you. If you are not doing what is meaningful to you, think hard about whether you need to find something else to do. In *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959), Viktor Frankl observed that a life without purpose is a life full of pain and hardship. Thus, one of the most important tasks for a leader is to find an anchor point of deep purpose and to draw on that anchor point during good and bad times.

Consider what Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple, told the Stanford University graduating class of 2005. Given the success of Jobs and the innovative industrial designs that flow out of Apple Computer, you might expect a speech about creativity, about pushing limits, about looking beyond the horizon. But the core of his commencement address was about the utter importance of loving what you do, even when times are challenging:

I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz [Steve Wozniak] and I started Apple in my parents' garage when I was 20. We worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company with over 4000 employees. We had just released our finest creation—the Macintosh—a year earlier, and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired. . . . What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating.

. . . I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and fell in love with an amazing

woman who would become my wife. Pixar went on to create the world's first computer animated feature film, *Toy Story*, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, I returned to Apple, and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance. And Laurene and I have a wonderful family together.

I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. . . . I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle ["You've Got to Find What You Love," 2005].

Jobs's advice is as relevant to individuals who are well into their careers as it is to newly minted graduates. Without meaning, creative leadership can't flourish.

Even if you do discover what you really want to do as a leader, leading is still hard work, and it comes with both pleasure and pain. Discovering the leader in you is not for the faint of heart. It requires deep introspection about what is important in your life, what you would like to pursue as your legacy, and whether you are willing to genuinely seek and act on feedback from others.

Peter Drucker often encouraged people to think about their legacy. He suggested that if you don't know what you want to be remembered for by the age of fifty, it's doubtful that you will leave much of a positive legacy (2001). To discover the leader in you requires that you regularly evaluate what you want to contribute in life. Drucker argued that considering this question is one of the best ways for you to renew

and reinvent yourself. Don't put this off until late in your career. Even if you are just starting out on your leadership journey, set aside time each year to evaluate the larger question of legacy. If you keep this in the front of your mind, year in and year out, you'll have a better chance of fulfilling your true potential.

We believe that leadership can be learned, that self-awareness is critical to leadership development, and that people can learn, grow, and change so that they can become the kind of leader needed for the context in which they live and work. That's not to say that everyone can develop or needs to develop into great leaders. But most great leaders are great because they take the time to learn, grow, and get better; in other words, they are made, not born.

Our philosophy and approach resonate with the work on mind-set by Carol Dweck and her colleagues at Stanford University. Consider that scientists used to think that personality and intelligence were hardwired (fixed) at a very early age. We now know from a large body of research that while all humans have some hardwired characteristics and abilities, their capabilities and skills are not predetermined. Those attributes are heavily influenced by the perceptions that people have of themselves, the actions that they take, their life experiences, and the contexts in which they have lived (Dweck, 2006; McAdams, 2006). Dweck (2006) writes about the importance of having a growth mind-set (a belief that your skills and effectiveness are malleable by cultivation and practice). People with a growth mind-set "believe that a person's true potential is unknown (and unknowable); that it's impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training" (p. 7). Dweck has shown that managers who have a growth mind-set appreciate talent but do not rely on talent alone to ensure that their employees are effective. Instead, these managers invest in developmental conversations, coaching, mentoring, and other interventions to ensure that their employees become more effective and don't remain stuck. The idea that one's potential is never known and continual investment in acquiring knowledge and skills can lead to more effective leadership is an empowering one.

It's unrealistic to think that you can develop a high-powered growth mind-set overnight. Rather, view the development or nurturing of this mind-set as a marathon rather than a sprint. You can best develop your leadership skills by deconstructing big developmental challenges into smaller, more manageable chunks. Small changes in your behavior accumulate over time and can lead to substantial, substantive change.

In short, leadership must take on meaning, and you have to define its significance to you. You must also focus on developing the skills that you believe are important to help you address your goals. To do this, you must believe that you can improve, and you must have deep self-awareness of what to work on to produce the greatest gains in leadership abilities.

EVERYDAY, EVERYWHERE LEADERSHIP

Although the leaders we counsel speak about their roles in terms of their jobs and careers, few spontaneously consider leadership roles away from the office—as a parent, a community volunteer, a fundraiser, a political campaign worker, or a club member, for example. The next time someone asks, “What do you do?” think about this: Embedded in that question are assumptions about social status, economic success, and individual power. Defy those assumptions and your own expectation that the person asking the question wants to hear only about your work. Talk about your interests, your mission in life, or some topic other than your job. Reclaim what defines you as a person (not what's on your business card) and what you hope to accomplish in your life (not the business goals you're responsible for completing by the end of the quarter).

Although this book focuses primarily on questions of leadership at work, we urge you to think about leadership opportunities outside your own organization. Many of the ideas in this book carry over to non-job-related leadership. A leadership role in family and community

situations allows you to try new skills, styles, and levels of responsibility. Such opportunities often allow more flexibility in terms of the length of time you hold a leading role and how long you choose to do so. For some people, the best expression of their values may be to remain individual contributors at work and leaders in a nonwork setting.

Whether in an organization or in less formal situations, you can gain greater understanding and mastery of your leadership potential and practice with systematic self-assessment. You can also overcome some of the passivity that perhaps has led you into a position of leadership that you never made a decision to enter and where you may now feel less than fulfilled. If leadership opportunities are important to you (and given the need for leadership around the world in all kinds of situations, we hope that they are), you'll benefit by becoming more aware of how your personal vision, goals, and other aspects of your life can enhance or direct your choices. You can master and enjoy a life filled with leadership, as you choose it.

WHAT'S NEXT

Each of the next five chapters covers one component of the Discovering Leadership Framework. Chapter Two asks what you see happening in the turbulent world of organizations, what impact those changes have on leadership, and what forces are shaping your current feelings about being a leader. Do those forces present opportunities for you to develop as a leader?

Chapter Three explores the important role that leadership vision plays in effective leadership. Do you work from a vision that provides meaning, purpose, energy, and passion to yourself and others and how does your leadership vision connect to who you are as person?

Chapter Four asks you to assess your motivations and values to see how they are reflected in your life and how strongly they serve as a basis for leadership. This analysis will help you uncover conflicts or disconnects that might interfere with your leadership work.

Chapter Five is about your awareness of your own particular skills and qualities related to leadership. It leads you through an inventory of your own leadership competencies, roles, learning styles, and knowledge. It will help you pinpoint talents and skills where you show strength and others where you may want to improve.

Chapter Six considers the impact of a leadership role on the other aspects of your life. It suggests ways in which your life at home and at work can be more mutually integrated and supportive.

Chapter Seven brings you back to the Discovering the Leadership Framework and helps you identify themes and patterns among the various components of the framework. From this analysis we hope that you gain more clarity about why, how, when, and where you lead.

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