

CHAPTER ONE

WHERE DOES LEADERSHIP FIT IN YOUR LIFE?

People become leaders in many different ways and for many different reasons: some actively seek leadership roles; others are asked to take on such roles; still others become leaders organically, by informally assuming leadership positions in various situations. But no matter how you become a leader, it is and will continue to be critical to make conscious choices about why, when, how, and where you lead.

The ability to be clear about the choices you make will help you avoid the problem of drift that every leader experiences at one time or another: doubts about your capabilities as a leader, questions about how best to leverage your talents, or confusion about the leader within you. Drift can feel as if you are going through the motions but not actually moving forward. It can leave you unable to make conscious choices and take action with a clear sense of purpose that is connected to your values and goals.

WHAT'S IN THIS CHAPTER?

This chapter includes:

- The Discovering Leadership Framework: An overarching framework that will help you connect who you are as a leader with the realities of your organizational context and personal life, providing you with the awareness that you may need to find your way out of drift and avoid it in the future by being clear about choices that are important to you
- Questions and activities to help you assess what you already know about your current situation and what leadership means to you

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

When you complete this chapter, you will be able to:

- Articulate the underlying reasons that you are a leader now or aspire to be a leader in the future
- Identify whether you are in a state of drift and, if so, identify possible causes

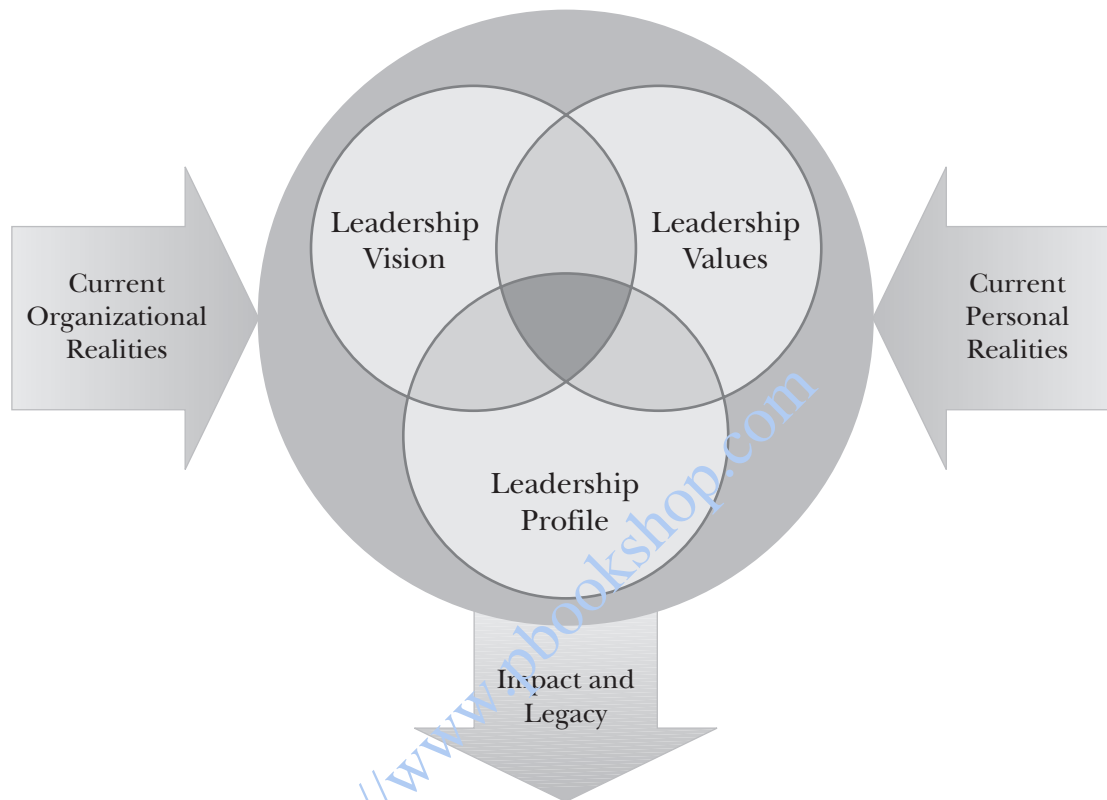
THE DISCOVERING LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The systematic framework on which this workbook is based (Figure 1.1) is designed to help you connect who you are as a leader (your vision, values, and profile) to the realities of both your organizational context and your personal life so that you can better match your talents to your opportunities.

The Discovering Leadership Framework addresses five key topics:

1. *Current organizational realities.* What is the situation in which you lead? Every leader functions in a specific organizational context. That context is affected by current social, economic, global, and industry trends, as well as situational factors in the leader's organization and role. To avoid or address the problem of drift, you need a good understanding of the broader circumstances and the demands and expectations that affect you as a leader.
2. *Leadership vision.* What is the role that leadership plays in your life? Being purposeful about what you want in life is crucial to being purposeful about what you want as a leader. A clear, compelling leadership vision is essential for evaluating your leadership choices.
3. *Leadership values.* What are your values—the standards or principles that guide your beliefs, decisions, and actions? Understanding your values and leveraging them as a cornerstone of your leadership choices may give you more insight into why you feel adrift.
4. *Leadership profile.* Who are you as a leader, and what do you bring to your leadership role? Your leadership profile can include many things, such as

FIGURE 1.1 Discovering Leadership Framework



your competencies, styles, and experiences. Analyzing your profile will give you a good understanding of your strengths and developmental needs.

5. *Current personal realities.* What impact do your personal and work lives have on one another? Many leaders tend to compartmentalize those two areas of their lives when they would benefit by thinking about them in a more integrated and holistic way. After all, you are one person whether you are at work or at home.

Addressing these five topics will help you determine the impact you have as a leader and the legacy you will leave.

YOUR CURRENT STATE: WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Where are you now on your leadership journey? The questions and activities that follow will help you articulate your current perspectives and assess your current relationship to leadership.

1. Write three to five sentences that express why you want to be a leader. What do you want to accomplish through your leadership? What do you see as your overarching purpose as a leader? If you are not sure that you want to be a leader, write a brief statement that explains why you aren't sure and what you think is contributing to your uncertainty.

2. Following are some reasons that leaders experience drift. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being very little (a low level of drift), 5 being very much (a high level of drift), and N/A meaning "does not apply to me," rate the extent to which each of the following factors is affecting you right now:

I feel overwhelmed with too much responsibility.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am skeptical about the long-term success of changes in my organization.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I feel stuck because I see little chance for advancement in my current position.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am no longer excited about my job.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

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I feel lost and unsure about whether I can handle some of the responsibilities I have been asked to take on.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am in denial about the challenges I face and cope by trying to ignore the changes that keep coming at me.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I feel angry because I have to leave my current job, which I love, and I don't know how I will find the next leadership role.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am unhappy because my job does not seem to be connected to my core values.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I feel pressured because my financial needs mean that I must serve in a high-level, high-paying position that is tremendously demanding.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I feel underchallenged because I think that I can handle more responsibilities than my boss seems willing to give me.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am worried about how I can take on more responsibilities than I already have, considering all the demands in my professional and personal life.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am thrilled because I have just landed my first real leadership role, but I am unsure about how best to organize, lead, and motivate my team.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

I am nervous because I am about to take on an extremely challenging leadership position that will chart new territory, and I am not sure what to do first.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Review your responses. Remember that high numbers represent high levels of drift. What trends do you see? Then summarize your current state of drift.

3. How would you currently evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as a leader? For example, are you a good communicator? Do you demonstrate integrity? Do you excel at delegating, building teams, or developing others? Can you build trust with a wide range of people? Are you adaptable? Innovative? Comfortable with change and ambiguity? Do you have technological savvy? Are you good at building networks and alliances? Do you know how to lead in a global context?

In the left-hand column, list three to five skills and competencies that you consider strengths. In the right-hand column, list three to five skills and competencies that you think you need to improve.

Strengths**Need to Improve**

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Briefly describe how your weaknesses might be getting in your way.

Briefly describe how your strengths help you in your current role.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC

The questions and activities in this section will help you explore the concept of drift and take a closer look at your desire to be a leader. They will also help you determine whether you are in a state of drift and, if so, what might be contributing to your feelings of drift.

We learn a lot from observing others. Try it yourself. Answer the questions below about leaders you know about or know personally:

1. Think of a person who appears to be driven to lead by a clear purpose that resonates highly with you. This can be a famous person you have read or heard about or someone you know quite well.

What do you think this person's purpose for leading might be?

What makes this person's purpose compelling?

In what ways is having a clear purpose related to this person's effectiveness as a leader?

What behaviors do you think characterize someone who leads with conviction?

2. What about a leader who doesn't have a clear purpose (or has not communicated his or her purpose in ways that you can understand)? What are the implications for this leader's effectiveness?

3. Now think about a leader you have known personally for at least a few years and who you think is currently in a state of drift. What do you think the possible causes of drift could be for this person?

If you were this person's mentor or coach, what advice would you give him or her about getting out of a state of drift?

4. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes “flow” as times when you are so absorbed in an activity that you lose your sense of time and place. Recall yourself at two different times in your leadership journey: a time that you were in a state of drift and then a time where you were in the flow.

If you could have coached yourself when you were in a state of drift, what advice would you have given yourself?

What lesson can you take from the time when you were in the flow that might be useful when you are in a state of drift?

5. Sometimes drift happens because you are not in a role that capitalizes on your strengths. Therefore, you need a good understanding of what you do well and what you need to improve. Use the following activity, adapted from *Leadership Wisdom: Discovering the Lessons of Experience* (Wei & Yip, 2008), to gain insight into your strengths and needs.

The list that follows contains some of the key characteristics that leaders need in today’s competitive, fast-paced, global world. Use the rating scale to indicate how well each statement currently describes you.

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Not usually

- _____ I can draw on both rationality and intuition in making decisions.
- _____ I am comfortable with ambiguity.
- _____ I am open to multiple perspectives.
- _____ I weigh the consequences of alternatives.
- _____ I clearly see the right course of action among multiple conflicting priorities.
- _____ I have a good understanding of my own personal strengths, limitations, and emotional status.
- _____ I have a good understanding of the personal strengths, limitations, and emotional status of others.
- _____ I recognize my own emotions and manage them effectively.
- _____ I recognize the emotions of others and manage them effectively.
- _____ I am good at building strong and supportive relationships with different types of people.
- _____ I am people oriented, and my values are based on collective well-being, not on my own gains.
- _____ I model the way and align my actions with my words.
- _____ I focus on tasks and results.
- _____ I am willing to experiment to make changes happen even when facing uncertainties and challenges that are complex and stressful.

What are some insights you gained from your responses to the items on the checklist? What characteristics might you want to develop further, and how might you go about developing them?

EXPAND YOUR LEARNING

The following activities can help you learn more about your purpose for being a leader and any feelings of drift you may be experiencing. Note your observations and responses to the questions in your leadership journal:

1. To help you expand your thinking, show the statement that expresses why you want to be a leader to a few friends, family, or colleagues, and ask them for their thoughts, reactions, and questions.
2. Take a quiet moment to think about your purpose for becoming a leader and where you want to be as a leader in the next three years. Write down the first three words or phrases that come to mind. Then use a search engine such as Google Image Search to find an image that represents your response. (As an alternative, you can look for images in a magazine such as *National Geographic*.) Briefly describe that image and how it connects to your vision and purpose in your journal.
3. Now think about where you are right now with respect to being in a state of leadership drift. Write down the first three words or phrases that come to mind and search for an image that represents your response. Briefly describe that image in your journal and its connection to your feelings of drift.
4. Looking at what you wrote, think of some actions you could take to move from a state of drift toward where you want to be as a leader in three years.

THEMES AND PATTERNS

Use the following questions and activities to pull together what you have learned in this chapter about drift and the underlying purpose driving your desire to be a leader:

1. Having done the activities in this chapter, how clear would you say you were about the purpose that drives your desire to lead and the factors that might be causing you to drift?

My purpose in leading: ___ Very clear ___ Somewhat clear ___ Not very clear

The factors that cause me to drift: ___ Very clear ___ Somewhat clear ___ Not very clear

2. Ernest Hemingway was once challenged in a bar to write a very short story. He wrote the following six words: "For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn."

Try it yourself. Reflect on your responses to the questions in this chapter. Then write a six-word story that expresses what you have learned in this chapter about purpose and drift. (As an alternative, write six words that summarize the major takeaway points or learning from the chapter.)

3. What other insights have you had from this chapter?

4. Writing a letter can be a useful process for summarizing your thoughts. Write a one- to two-paragraph letter to yourself about the topic of leadership drift and purpose that does the following:

- Articulates your reasons for wanting to be a leader
- Explains whether you think you are in a state of drift and, if so, what the reasons might be

LETTER TO MYSELF

NOW WHAT?

What will you do to use what you have learned in this chapter? Which actions can you take immediately? Which actions require the help of others? Whose help do you need? What can you do to get it?

Action	Can take now? Yes or No?	Requires help from	To get help, I will

What do you still need to explore and understand about drift and the underlying purpose of your commitment to leadership?

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the next chapter, you will examine the organizational realities and trends that have an impact on you as a leader.