

# Evolving Principles for Business Leaders

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*To transform our businesses into organizations that can increase their capacity to create, we must change the standard, fixed ways of doing things.*

1. While an organization can hire leaders who are more skilled in various domains than existing top leadership, its functional access to its creative energy is limited by top leadership's self-knowledge.
2. A leader's decision to follow a narrow, predictable path can limit access to his or her creative energy and his or her relationship with him- or herself. Choosing this path has at least two consequences: It limits a leader's access to his or her potential, and it greatly limits the quality of his or her contributions to the organization.
3. Understanding what is *behind* the principles recommended in many books on business leadership and management is essential if we want to create innovative organizations that can achieve excellence through mastery.
4. In western society, we have tended to regard politics, law, and economics (business) as the more "instrumental" (i.e., focused on competition as measured by external indices), more practical, goal-oriented, and generally accepted realistic realm of culture.
5. Like many things in life, the instrumental perspective is responsible for both individual and business accomplishment and ineffectiveness at the same time. As expressed by David Whyte in his book *The Heart Aroused*, "Work, paradoxically, does not ask enough of us, yet exhausts the narrow parts of us we do bring to its door."
6. The instrumental perspective can accomplish a lot, but the human and organizational costs are often too high to be sustainable. In other

words, the cost for too much instrumental focus is likely more than one would knowingly pay. The aim is to find the right mix of sustaining energy and genuine commitment as the means for achieving short- and long-term business objectives. This is not unlike what a marathon runner must do to ensure that he or she completes a race.

7. Where economic conditions are favorable and there are barriers to entry, focus on the instrumental perspective can offer an opportunity for temporary individual and business success. Rarely, however, does exclusive reliance on the instrumental perspective lead to optimal growth and sustainability.
8. What is so attractive about the instrumental model in business? A partial answer is that it provides a context that replicates what some of us learned about ourselves and our world early in life: particularly, that rewards are not freely given but must be earned. In many ways, we will always be haunted by what we have most denied in ourselves. How does this work?
9. Our evolving map of the world develops early and is cumulative. Imagine a flight data recorder that never forgets and never erases itself. These early maps develop into *mental models* of our world that can offer us a feeling of relative safety and personal effectiveness. In turn, these mental models help us to make sense of what we are experiencing and serve to guide our responses in ambiguous situations. In other words, the models offer us a perspective that represents a “good enough” approximation to reality and that, when followed, generates an “at home” feeling and a reliable context that validates our world view.
10. An interesting point is that people who have very different “maps of the world” can believe that their perspectives closely approximate reality and can even generate evidence to validate their mental models. An even more interesting point is that, once established, our models of reality are rarely questioned and tend to be enduring. One reason that we are so comfortable with the familiar is partially rooted in the way our brains appear to identify that what is familiar and predictable is also safe. One way to overcome this natural tendency is to develop the habit of always doing the “harder thing” (i.e.,

continuously challenging ourselves or participating in challenging situations).

11. There are two “hardwired” brain tendencies that, in combination with our “neurological software,” might explain why we may prefer to bear our ills than to explore options (i.e., the unknown) that could greatly expand our personal effectiveness and simultaneously enhance the rapture of being alive.
12. Our two hardwired brain tendencies are:
  - a. To interpret ambiguity as danger.
  - b. In the face of stress, to increase the intensity, frequency, and duration of habitual responses.
13. The “soft-wired” brain tendency (i.e., neurological software) is subtle, and it represents the mental models (i.e., compromises) that we form in our development to make sense of our world and our place in it.
14. Understanding these hard- and soft-wired brain tendencies is at the core of transforming business organizations, which, of course, requires transformation of ourselves.
15. Like it or not, each of us must accept these tendencies as givens, but their limiting effects can be overridden by modifying our neurological software and increasing access to our most recently evolved “neurological hardware” (i.e., the frontal lobes).
16. The frontal lobes represent what is distinctly human in terms of neurological functioning. We will learn why they are so important when we talk about the advantages of understanding how our mind works.
17. The problem we all face is that the adaptation of our mental models to our lives represents an accommodation to an earlier context and, hence, limits full access to our multiple potentials. As a result, even some *ostensibly* impressive levels of achievement can come at too high a price. In fact, most extremely high levels of achievement come at the expense of other areas of the personality.

18. How is the early software developed, and what makes it so resistant to change?
19. The original software gets created early in life when our constitutional and hardwired brain tendencies (present at birth) guide our interactions with our environment.
20. In essence, we need to make some sense of our world (which is always imperfect) and to construct relatively enduring compromises that eventually solidify into mental models of our world and our *place* within it. (We may be aware of this at some level, especially during stressful times when our models are less effective.)
21. These mental models are very powerful, often tacit, and very difficult to change.
22. Two potential problems emerge for us based on our early negotiation with the world: (a) We solidify our view of reality early in life, *before* our frontal lobes are sufficiently developed, and (b) we limit our functional access to our innate potentials by restricting our map of the world (including ourselves) to what helped us survive, even thrive, in our early learning environment.
23. There are at least a couple of issues that this presents:
  - a. This initial model tends to be enduring and to become the template for organizing subsequent experience.
  - b. Our mental models lead to choices that define us too narrowly and limit our *functional* access to our innate potentials.
24. In essence, our models provide a relatively restrictive perspective of reality. Like “psychological lenses,” they not only determine what we see but also suggest potential responses available to us based on what we see. In essence, we do not interpret the world we see; instead, we see the world as we interpret it. This alone perpetuates the psychological inertia that keeps us on the same path in our negotiated interchange with the world.
25. In general, even success is defined in the context of our view of ourselves and our world.

26. To obtain optimal access to our capabilities, we must learn how to broaden our mental models of the world or override our self-limiting brain tendencies. In essence, we need to learn how our mind works, become observers of our thoughts and behaviors, and develop the ability to override our limiting brain tendencies. We need to stretch our capacity to negotiate the world by learning how to reprogram our thinking beyond what we believe is possible.
27. A quote attributed to Marianne Williamson may apply here: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us...Your playing small doesn’t serve the world.”
28. Our interpersonal effectiveness is also influenced, irrespective of our business objectives. Our interactions with others are greatly influenced by our relationship with ourselves. The more rigid our defenses and compromise formations, the more our interactions constrain others. As “rigid matter,” we narrow the responses of others from more differentiated to less differentiated.
29. To elaborate on the previous point, rigid mental models (i.e., neurotic behaviors) are response-constraining. For example, the healthier a person’s behavior tends to be, the less differentiated the responses he or she receives from others. A healthy, mature individual lives in a differentiated world where he or she is constantly offered opportunities to expand his or her perspective and to challenge his or her fixed social constructions regarding him- or herself. The freedom that others experience to be creative in our presence, and express fully who they perceive themselves to be, is, in the aggregate, a measure of *our* psychological health and maturity. In this respect, leaders can be divided into two broad groups: those who surround themselves with constricted image-enhancing subordinates and those who have the confidence and courage to seek the truth about themselves and, thereby, free the organization to create its own truth and abundance. To quote Simone Weil: “Belief in the existence of other human beings as such is love.” The implications for organizations in the information age are painfully obvious. Differentiation provides the raw material for creativity.

30. As you can see, the greater access we have to our own range of thoughts and feelings, the more we encourage others to increase their access to their own thoughts and feelings. Our interactions will be less static and more dynamic. This is the ideal interpersonal context for effectiveness, creativity, bonding, innovation, and, yes, even sales. The more open we are to our full range of emotions, the greater our *response ability*. We never have to search for what to do next; our responses are in sync with the other person's, and both are enriched.
31. The instrumental perspective adopted in the business world represents a kind of common denominator for persons who resolved early experiences in similar ways and made compromises to cope that resulted in enough tangible successes. Like all patterns of adjustment, however, too much narrowing of our perspective for negotiating the world can be limiting and keep us from seeing achievable possibilities.
32. When our early environments are extreme in almost any direction, the consequences of our compromises are evident, and their negative effects on our lives are often apparent for most to observe.
33. The *silent but real* problems affecting business success are experienced by the broad range of us in the middle, who achieve a measure of success but never recognize the gap between our current levels of functioning and our unrealized potential.
34. In most business environments, success is measured by indices such as market share, profits, salary, etc. But rarely is success measured by reduction of the gap between individual (and collective) potential and performance. Traditional accountability measures would still apply, but the *means* for achieving them would add personal and interpersonal mastery as major goals and objectives.
35. In essence, traditional business success can be defined as resulting from interpersonal interactions focused on a common aim accomplished through the interaction of mental models and interpreted through the psychological lenses of organizational members.

36. In this regard, a “successful” business is one in which the leader and organizational members share models of themselves and the world and are able to align these to achieve their purpose.
37. Because most business organizations are composed of leaders whose compromises led to an instrumental view of reality, competition among businesses is experienced as a logical consequence. “Being first” is more important than being excellent and is often achieved at the expense of people. The alternative model is to strive for the optimal development of all people in the organization as a precondition to interpersonal effectiveness in pursuing business aims. The irony here is that the focus on developing people frequently results in “being first” as a consequence of organizational consciousness! This focus is also more sustainable.
38. Rarely is the following question raised in a traditional business context: What if a leader and members of an organization could stretch their view of themselves and their world beyond what they thought was possible?
39. What level of innovation could be achieved if there were a way to enlarge mental models for all members of the organization? How could this be achieved?
40. The recognition of the importance of changing mental models as a discipline for creating an organization that can evolve its capacity to create its future (i.e., a learning organization) is reviewed in *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge, PhD.
41. According to Senge, mental models represent only one of five disciplines that must be mastered to create a learning organization.
42. Creating a learning organization (i.e., an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its own future) requires the mastery of all five basic disciplines:
  - a. Shared vision
  - b. Personal mastery
  - c. Mental models
  - d. Team learning
  - e. Systems thinking

43. Leaders of the future must be willing to master the disciplines of a learning organization.
44. How do individual leaders and organizations transform themselves into becoming more conscious and getting closer to realizing their potential?
45. Both Senge and Stephen Covey have offered thoughtful and insightful perspectives on the domain that must be mastered to create an organization with enlightened leadership and an enlightened and motivated workforce.
46. Many of the excellent principles in business books (e.g., Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*) are focused on achieving this broadened view to accomplish unrealized and often "un-aspired-to" business objectives. Although they correctly identify the domains that must be mastered, they tend to underestimate the forces (e.g., compromise formations underlying mental models) that must be successfully addressed to overcome resistance to change, which is a precondition for implementation.
47. Achieving these ends in reality involves profound learning that focuses on the development of self-knowledge. This can be executed through a combination of organizational work and executive coaching that can put psychology and neuroscience tools in the hands of business leaders. Equipped with this knowledge, they can implement sophisticated systems to achieve unparalleled business success.
48. A few simple principles listed below have been offered by various business thinkers who see the need to create innovative companies that are equipped for future business success.
49. Some examples:
  - a. "Nothing living will obey" (Margaret Wheatley).
  - b. "People support what they create" (Margaret Wheatley).
  - c. Commitment is a function of the possibility of growth.
  - d. All extremely high levels of achievement come at the expense of other areas of the personality.

50. The consequence is that these principles are enacted in many work environments and contribute to reinforcing our long-standing mental models and relying on our habitual ways of coping and succeeding. The cost is that a large part of our potential is never accessed or recaptured.
51. According to Robert Cooper, recapturing the 90% of our functional ability that is lost to work requires addressing the following issues:
  - a. Trust
  - b. Energy
  - c. Farsightedness
  - d. Nerve
52. Leaders who wish to have access to their untapped potential for leadership and life must deal with issues of trust, energy, farsightedness, and nerve.
53. Resistance is minimized by presenting things in a manner that gives the other person a feeling that he or she is seen and that his or her deeper needs, as well as his or her wants, are acknowledged.
54. Consciousness represents only around 10% of our processing of information in our transactions with the world. Ninety percent of our processing is unconscious, and we are largely unaware that it is occurring (for example, driving unconsciously to a destination and wondering how we got there). Dreams can be categorized as REM-linked (i.e., they appear to involve resolution building) or not REM-related (i.e., they appear to be a continuation of unfinished processing).
55. If you think these principles only apply to psychological functioning and business effectiveness, it may give you pause to know the following: *There is no state of mind that is not mimicked by the immune system.*
56. As noted, what most distinguishes us from other living organisms is the frontal cortex (i.e., frontal lobes). It is a highly desirable destination for many sensations and impulses generated by the body. It also contains the most highly concentrated number of opiate receptors of any area of the body. Humiliation early in life can

permanently alter the amygdala. This permanent alteration can, to some extent, be overridden by areas of the frontal lobes.

57. There are several ways to stimulate the frontal lobes: Natural endorphins, opiates, meditation, and “doing the harder thing.” The latter two methods are highly effective if they are practiced consistently over time. The interplay between the frontal lobes and the emotional areas of the brain is critical to personal mastery and growth. Two quotes capture this relationship:
58. Einstein: “I never discovered anything with my rational mind.”
59. Senge: “What distinguishes people with high levels of personal mastery is they have developed a higher level of rapport between their normal awareness and their sub-conscious.”

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