

"The Prepared Mind of a Leader"

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The Skills of Prepared Mind Leadership: •Observing •Reasoning •Imagining •Challenging •Deciding •Learning •Enabling •Reflecting. "Chance favors the prepared mind" was the statement Louis Pasteur, the nineteenth-century scientist, used to describe his remarkable ability to invent and innovate across a complex set of problems. (1) The problem is that we are time starved and never seem to have the time to just think. Have you spent any quiet thinking time lately? (4) We need to understand other points of view to get the whole picture. Our view is only one view. If you decide based on the first possible solution to a problem, you are "satisficing." Satisficing may be a way to save time, but it often leads to mediocre solutions. (7) The competitive realities of the twenty-first century require as much "know why" as "know how"(8) Prepared Mind leaders are those who know how to work within the system while getting the system to realign or evolve in the direction they have imagined. (13) Thinking well and doing more, more quickly and more frequently than before, is an important variable in making progress. (16) One of the dangers of being strictly results driven is that we can spend so much energy "doing" and keeping up that we don't take the time to think ahead, until the inevitable is at our door and we feel compelled to react.⁴ (17)

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, the authors of the best-selling book *The Leadership Challenge*, now in its third edition, talk about the five practices of exemplary leaders: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.⁶ And Bill George, the former CEO of Medtronic, writes that he sees the qualities of a leader to include understanding the need for leadership, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing connected relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline.⁷ •Leadership is demonstrated in action, not just words. •Leadership is found in the trust relationship with followers; it is not just a position in the power hierarchy. •Leaders know their purpose and the purpose of their organization.(19) All of these realities lead to our working definition of leadership. Leadership, as we think of it in the context of the Prepared Mind, takes Ronald Heifetz's notion of adaptive leadership and builds and expands on it.⁹ Heifetz's definition departs from many other theories of leadership in two respects. One is that he believes, as do

⁴ This image of catching us off guard applies not only to threats in our internal and external environments but also to opportunities. It is generally accepted that Xerox's slide in the late 1990s and the discontinuation of its famed research organization, PARC, was due to ongoing failure to make sense of, decide, and act on the many inventions that were discovered within Xerox, costly lost opportunities such as the original Apple. Could the reason that innovation is so difficult in most companies be due to faulty Sense-Response Cycles? Many authors blame such failings on organizational systems and culture, but only Prepared Minds can outsmart systems and turn faulty cycles into progressive ones. Individuals experience faulty Sense-Response Cycles, and so do organizations.

⁶ James M Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)

⁷ Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)

⁹ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1994)

we, that leadership is practice, not a particular position; it can be exercised from anywhere in the organization. Second, adaptive leadership requires deep learning and the challenging of mental maps to adapt to changed realities. (20) The four aspects of leadership are (1) practicing outside the technical confines of one's job description, (2) challenging ways of thinking inside and outside the organization, (3) innovating to have an impact on the external environment as well as realizing the external environment's changing dynamics and potential impact on the internal environment of the organization, and (4) building the continuous process of change readiness on deeply held, sustainable principles. Therefore we define Prepared Mind Leadership as *the practice of continuously envisioning and executing opportunities for growth within complex, dynamic environments, built on core principles the organization is committed to sustaining and using as the basis for value delivered to all of its stakeholders.* (21) Fundamentally, strategy is all about answering the question, "How will we accomplish a goal?" And so it goes: goals beget strategies... (22) Strategic thinking at its core is simply good, critical thinking about the future of the organization. (23)

Whether leaders are wrestling with problems, working on strategic innovations, or running their department, they are always faced with four major and recurring issues: (1) the need to *sense* the environment and changes in the environment, (2) the need to *make sense* of this input, (3) the need to *decide* on an appropriate course of action, and (4) the need to *act* on that decision. We term the process of dealing with those issues the *Sense-Response Cycle.* (26) ...if we want those around us to be agile and prepared, we need to lead them less through command and control and more through letting them contribute. So where does this lead us as we think about the need for leadership in this century? First, it's more than just doing our job. Second, we have to sense and make sense of emerging problems and opportunities. Third, sense making has to lead to decision and action. Fourth, we need to be grounded in the mission and objectives of our organization; otherwise we won't know what to watch for; and our actions won't lead to progress for our organization. (28)

The boundaries and shape of our opportunity space are constantly changing. (29) But, like roadways, especially our skills, are always under construction, and sometimes they have to be rebuilt, enlarged, or rerouted. (30) Often we hear the postmortem, "It looked good on paper." In the *Sense-Response Cycle*, this is moving to decide too soon, when there was more making sense to do. Research tells us that experts spend more time in this upfront stage of making sense, planning, and thinking things through before deciding and acting. (34) We often watch really smart people think through issues. They ask a lot of questions, and then magic happens, or so it seems. We attribute their ability to brilliance and creativity. In reality, the key is often that they are thinking at the level of fundamentals and anchoring concepts and theories, and they make sense at that level. (35) We may be very efficient at what we do today, but we are not preparing ourselves or our organization for the future. (36) This description of leadership—the willingness and ability to work beyond formal job descriptions for the betterment of the (37) organization—supports and aligns with five powerful questions that drive organizational progress: 1. *Where are we?* 2. *Where do we want to go?* 3. *How do we get from where we are to where we want to be?* 4. *What assumptions are we making about our situation?* 5.

How is our opportunity space changing? (38) Similarly, Ellen Langer, a social psychologist and Harvard professor, has written extensively on the topic of mindfulness and, more important, mindful behavior. In her research, she has identified three characteristics of applying a mindful approach to our day-to-day activities: (1) the ongoing creation of new categories, that is, new shades of gray; (2) openness to new information that may not fit in existing categories; and (3) an awareness of multiple points of view, that is, the realization that our point of view is not the only one.⁵ (45) The challenge here is somewhat akin to the admonition to think outside the box. However, in this case, the challenge is to be willing to change the size or even the shape of the box. (46) So here's the situation we all face: we can wait and see the obvious, or we can improve our personal and organizational ability to observe and therefore sense the clues that in hindsight will seem so very obvious. (47) But problems with the skill of observing are usually not associated with lack of data from the environment. We generally have plenty of data, even too much data. Problems more often come from not knowing what to pay attention to in the midst of all that data. Also, we often spend energy on "urgent" things that are less meaningful in the big picture of our business and family lives (48)

In 1890, William James wrote, "Everyone knows what attention is. It is the taking position of the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its essence. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others."⁸ What James offered as a definition more than a century ago still holds true today. To put it in a nutshell, attention is the mental process we use to select what we will further process mentally. Attention is a requirement for the skill of observing. It is the filter through which we choose what to sense and make sense of. (50) In other words, perception is the process for turning information into experience. (51) When we offered Anais Nin's observation earlier, "We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are," we were in part referring to the role of prior knowledge (including beliefs, preferences, biases, and recognized attributes) in seeing and perceiving. We have to make a conscious effort to broaden and deepen our ways of attending, perceiving, and seeing patterns in our minds. In a way, our minds are like tapestries with patterns that allow us to fit new threads into them. (52)

The danger is that we may prematurely assign an event to a pattern and miss variations that could take our thinking and responses in new directions. (53) The obvious changes attract everyone's attention, but only the best Prepared Minds note the subtle ones. (55) The composite picture is always richer than yours alone. (58) What gets in the way of our ability to attend to, perceive, and recognize patterns from the information in our environment? Some of the obvious ones are: •Information overload •Limited cognitive load capacity •Routines •Underusing the skills of Learning and Reflection •Fixation on today. Prepared Minds become strategic about their information intake. (60) Unfortunately for many of us, our education did not prepare us to reason. It was focused on the memorization of facts, not the development of mental processes.

⁵ Ellen Langer, *Mindfulness: Choice and Control in Everyday Life* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1989).

⁸ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1890) p. 403

(71) We know from everyday experience that this conceptually simple process of reasoning is fraught with difficulties—for example: • *Reasoning to achieve the wrong goal.* • *Not looking past the first opportunity.* • *Coming to a conclusion based on weak or missing evidence.* (72) • *Building an argument based on bad assumptions.* (73) We will either create a new mental map of our opportunity space or modify an existing map. The bad news is that sometimes we deny what we are sensing and keep using the old mental map for making a decision. (83) Complex problems do not react well to simple solutions, and simple solutions are often the result of incomplete mental maps. ...we don't dig deep enough to make our mental map complete enough to reflect reality. Consider this: a major role of people in a leadership position is to position their organization for the future.

Yet the great majority of management time is spent on the problems of today—much of which is simply “noise” that should be handled by someone with less responsibility. (85) Ask yourself, “What’s new in my opportunity space? Am I seeing events that are not aligned with my existing mental maps? If so, is it because my mental maps are wrong, or is it that events have caused my maps to need to expand?” The danger here is that we will deny what we are seeing and fall back on mental maps that no longer support our reality. (87) Unfortunately too few of us take the time to think through our problems and opportunities. We just want to get (91) to the next item on our to-do list. The longer you have been in a company or a position, the finer the line is between being “in the groove” and being “in a rut.” We have not included the skill of humility in the Prepared Mind, but perhaps we should. A stance toward learning and enabling, though, necessarily opens one to learning from others and enabling others by letting them teach us. (92) Unless you went to art school or drama school, your education probably did not encourage imagining. Of the eight skills of the Prepared Mind, the ability to imagine is the maverick. We may agree that it’s needed for the arts, but many of us live in the fact-based, objective world of business. We have a (95) love affair with data. But life is so much more exciting if you can dream, and this may be the most fundamental difference between leaders and the rest of us. Leaders have a dream. (96) Imagining is the skill of picturing something mentally that may or may not have been represented physically before in our experience.

Imagining is the prerequisite skill for creativity and innovation that take what we imagine and turn it into an object or experience that others can observe. (97) Sometimes we reach conclusions that are less painful rather than face the facts that are evolving (however slowly) in front of our eyes. (107) We need to groom our future leaders by giving them new problems and opportunities to tackle. (109) Time spent imagining a future state of our business has been supplanted by time spent building spreadsheets. Numbers have replaced dreams. (112) “Time starvation” could be nominated as a killer to all the skills. So take a tip from a small business owner we worked for years ago. He scheduled “library time” every week and went to the public library to think about his business. The point is that he faced up to his time constraint and fit thinking time into his busy schedule. Keep a pad of paper and a pen nearby, and write down ideas that you imagine when you don’t think you are thinking but you really are. (113) The idea is to free up people from their usual physical constraints and images that keep them thinking in terms of status quo. (117) We challenge you to also think of challenge as an invitation to

consider something new and not necessarily something opposite. Challenging means to offer different ways of seeing or difference views altogether of what is real and actionable. (121) But when you look at leaders who are actually good at challenging, you see a set of requirements that go beyond tools and techniques. We see five basic requirements: •Courage to step out of the mainstream •Commitment to values •Curiosity about their opportunity space •A desire to improve •Self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses (126) Children are great at challenging us; their "weapon" is their curiosity and the word that they use with great effectiveness: "Why?" You were that way once, but the quest for "the answer" has driven a lot of your curiosity out of you, and, consequently, many of us have forgotten the power of "Why?" (127) When Leon Festinger proposed cognitive dissonance theory in 1957, he used it to explain the attitude change that often takes place in a person after he or she has performed an action inconsistent with one or more of his or her attitudes or beliefs.⁶ (128)

Dialectical thinking has its origins in philosophy and refers to the classic cycle of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. More recently, the ability to hold two seemingly paradoxical ideas in one's mind and find an integrating "third way" that rises above the two opposites yet reflects points made in each has been labeled the hallmark of adult thinking and maturity.¹² (131) The point is that if you challenge your own thinking or challenge others' thinking with an eye toward synthesis, you will likely see a wider opportunity space for both of you... In the moment of challenging, whether of ourselves or someone else, the ability to take perspective and communicate (132) our consideration of the other person's interests and the big picture adds credibility to our challenge because it shows we have truly thought through the different angles of the situation and declared that we want to arrive at a view that takes into account the different angles of an issue. (133)

Hearing the whys of others can open us to their perspective, which is necessary if we are going to challenge them with graciousness and respect. (134) We need to challenge our view of the world for accuracy and completeness and remember that *our* view of the world is not *the* view of the world. We just need to remind ourselves every now and then to lift our heads and take an objective look at the world. (138) Why is challenging so difficult? We see five reasons:

- Time pressure
- Industrial age models of authority (141)
- Fear of losing face
- Poor listening skills
- Fear of change.

People who are focused on their own way or getting their point across do not listen (142) well for the truth in the other person's statement. This is difficult in personal relationships, and it is certainly difficult in work relationships, especially in highly internally competitive or low-trust

⁶ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957).

¹² Mark Tennant and Philip Pearson. *Learning and Change in the Adult Years* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995)

cultures. (143) The team can set ground rules for challenging that, for instance, insist that everyone around the table take a different perspective so the discussion is guaranteed not to fall into group-think. (145) Many innovations come about by breaking the rules that everyone else is following. Rules often take the form of assumptions or industry truths. (147) Deciding is the process for committing to a particular course of action. How leaders turn thought into action depends on how they come to understand or make sense of the situation. And once they have decided on a course of action, they have to find ways to communicate it effectively, engage the stakeholders, and enable those who will be called on to execute the decision. In the history of decision-making research from a social science perspective, four metaphors have emerged to explain the limitations found in the process of deciding.² We think that there is a fifth metaphor to use when considering the role that the skill of deciding takes among the eight skills of the Prepared Mind. The metaphors are: •The Economic Actor •The Satisficer •The Intuitive Decision Maker •The Emotional Decision Maker •The Prepared Mind Decision Maker (149) Real experts often describe their decisions as intuition, but more often than not, they are basing their decision on subtle patterns they detect or mental simulations that fly through their heads.³ The fourth decision-making metaphor, known as the "slave to motivational forces," says that people employ faulty decision-making processes because they are emotional and stressed. Unlike Economic Actors, Emotional Decision Makers bypass their brain and make decisions based on feeling. These are the people who fire employees on the spot when they are under pressure to make their numbers.

They don't want to consider options; they just want to "do something." Daniel Goleman, the author of the best-seller *Emotional Intelligence*, refers to this as "emotional highjacking."⁴ (152) Controlled dissent and debate are hallmarks of a good decision-making process. However, the risk is that the debate gets out of hand and instead of a healthy give and take, we end up with warring camps. (164) For purposes of the Prepared Mind, we will define learning as a process for changing the content, and the connections between the content, of one's mental map, expanding capacity and capability for a variety of actions. (174) Think of the Prepared Minds you know. Isn't there something of a self-starter characteristic to them? They are motivated to think, do, and learn beyond, or even in spite of, what their immediate environment tells them to do. Our ability to spontaneously construct meaning on the spot and figure out a plan of action based on that meaning is uniquely human, and is more and more what is being called for in today's leaders and workers at all levels. (180) One of the unique capabilities of a leader with a Prepared Mind is that he or she learns to sense, make sense, decide, and act more quickly and with better alignment between core values and environmental changes, resulting in leading the way versus reacting to others' actions. (181) In the world of work, there is an implicit assumption that the more experience a person has had, the more the person knows. Experiences give us information that we can choose to let fall by the wayside or that we can process and turn into a bank of knowledge for the future. (182) Experience needs to be

² L. L. Thompson (ed.), *The Social Psychology of Organizational Behavior* (New York: Psychology Press, 2003).

³ Gary Klein, *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

⁴ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995).

combined with the skill of reflection in order to be internalized and take on meaning that can then turn into principles, attitudes, skills, and ideas to be used and reused later. (183) We are so focused on doing that as soon as one project is over that we go on to the next without real time for reflection or consideration as to where to store and how to share what we learned. (185) Peter Vaill coined the term "permanent white water" in an effort to provide (188) a meaningful metaphor for today's business and social environment.⁴ (189) Most organizations do a dismal job of learning from past decisions. If things work as planned, we move on. If things do not work as planned, we forget and then move on. (190) Some of us are so fascinated with the world at large that we scurry about learning a bit of everything, but without developing expertise in anything. The Prepared Mind, though, moves us to decide and act so our learning has a purpose. Learning more than one thing and how to apply expertise in different situations is imperative for staying relevant. (191) Also, learning is not necessarily training. We can learn anytime, anywhere we are weighing new information against what we know and are open to reconsidering what we know or how we know it. Learning, for many Prepared Mind leaders, is a way of life. What we have noticed is increased interest in events that focus on thinking processes rather than the acquisition of predigested "knowledge." (192) Running an effective operation is hard work, and we need to surround ourselves with effective people. (198) The best way to get help in any organization is to enable those around you. Enabling is about helping others to experience, know, and do things differently. (199) You enable others when you provide them with the means to accomplish their job. We would never expect a carpenter to build a house for us using only a hammer. So why do we deny people in our organizations the tools they need to get their job done? "How do you enable your team members?"

- Sharing the vision of project success (knowledge)
- Sharing the "why" behind the project—not necessarily for approval or acceptance but for understanding (knowledge)
- Engaging in dialogue about the pros and cons of the project (opportunity)
- Giving the team members boundaries, but not telling them how to operate within the boundaries (opportunity)
- Explaining and discussing her expectations of the person in the role (opportunity)
- Removing roadblocks (means)
- Engaging the sponsors and key stakeholders on behalf of the project (means). (200)

How many people in your organization collect a paycheck but have no sense of pride of their role in the organization? What opportunities do people in my organization need? In general, they need the opportunity to:

- *Try new things and learn from both successes and failures.*
- *Be heard and valued.* • *Challenge and give input to decisions.*
- *Work with a variety of people.*

⁴ Peter B. Vaill, *Learning as a Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1996)

- *Teach others.*
- *Develop their skills.* (202) ...they need:
- *Time to think.*
- *Systems that eliminate non-value-added work.*
- *The means by which they can build their own knowledge and skills.*
- *Appropriate tools and technologies.*
- *Clear pathways for growth and development.*
- *A voice.* (203)

Give people new tasks with the right tools, and in theory, they should work better. (204) Leaders who enable others challenge those they lead in a positive way to stretch and dig more deeply to realize what one or two key things could really move the person and the group to a higher level of analysis, synthesis, and ambition.

Let's say you are enabling someone by giving this person a new role. She almost always has to tailor the role to fit what she can do now, what she can learn to do in the near future, and where she sees herself going in line with the strategic direction of the company. (210) The role of the leader is to support people during their exploration and execution of opportunity space, not just test them and punish them if they do not measure up after the first few tries. (211) Through our consulting and research, one of the most consistently used methods of enablement by people considered great leaders is that of giving those around them stretch assignments. Choosing an assignment that (1) builds on someone's strengths, (2) exposes the person to new issues and opportunities that require the development of knowledge and skills she can use in her professional and personal life, (3) being clear about why she was chosen for the task, (4) providing expectations and boundaries in terms of time lines and desired outcomes, and (5) making clear links to support systems all speaks to the Prepared Mind leader as designer and motivator. (212) We enable others by asking them good questions and really listening to their answers, without imposing our own answers. (216)

We have found that leaders who have Prepared Minds tend to rely heavily on the use of story, metaphor, analogy, imagery, matrices, chunking categories, and other organizing and memory devices to store and share knowledge and information. (217) Being in charge can be frightening, especially during times of rapid change. Sometimes we find comfort in our knowledge and experience and want to show the rest of the organization that we still have what it takes. And so, at times, we are tempted to skip the make-sense phase of the Sense-Response Cycle and fall back on experience. Unfortunately, this can have two negative side effects. First, we might be wrong, and nobody will tell us because we made it clear that we are not to be challenged. Second, and more damaging over the long run, we stifle the problem-solving abilities of the people in our organization. They don't have to think because we do all the thinking for the organization. Even if this works in the short run, it is hurtful in the long run. (219)

If you want to show people that you trust them, let them take on responsibility and give them the authority to accomplish activities that are significant to them. to you. and to the

organization. (221) It's hard to let go. Some of us are very hands-on leaders, and we like it that way. However, that may not be best for the organization. (222) *"By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest."* CONFUCIUS (226)

We need organizational greatness, but we can't wait for the single leader to build, rally, and command an organization. We need leadership distributed throughout our organizations. Steep hierarchies have given way to flat, distributed organizations. Furthermore, we need these distributed leaders to possess an understanding of the organization's goals and to have the skills to move their part of the organization toward those goals in this environment of speed and change. (227) When we searched for "leadership" on the Amazon.com Web site in early 2005, we obtained more than fourteen thousand hits. (228) Reflection helps us look backward. Reflection helps us look forward. But most of all, reflection helps us look inward for the balance between our inner world and the outer worlds we create. Acts of reflection look very much like acts of learning, imagining, and even challenging. The skills are interdependent, with reflection typically being the integrator of what we learn, what we imagine, what we challenge, what we believe, and who we are. (229)

Henry Petroski, the author and engineering historian, wrote... "No one *wants* to learn by mistakes, but we cannot learn enough from success to go beyond the state of the art."³ How do we make reflecting a practical skill that gets used daily in our organizations as a guide to action? Consider these four questions: 1. What did I/we expect to accomplish? 2. What, in fact, did I/we accomplish? 3. Why are the answers to questions 1 and 2 different? (Notice that the question is not, "Who's to blame?") 4. What actions do we have to take to make sure this does not happen again? In other words, what did we learn? (231) Reflecting may mean looking "out there," but it must include some time looking in a mirror. (232) One simple formula that individuals or groups can use consists of asking yourself these questions: (237)

1. What was my goal or intention?
2. What happened?
3. How did what happened meet my goal or intention?
4. What else entered into the process and had an impact on the outcome?
5. If I had it to do over again, what would I keep? What would I change?

Before you decide or act, ask yourself these questions (again, this method can be used by a group as well as by an individual):

1. What is my goal or intention?
2. What do I already know about the situation that could be used to improve the chances of my goal or intention?
3. What is the risk of acting? Of not acting?
4. What are various scenarios I see happening if I act? If I do not act?

³ Petroski *To Engineer Is Human* p. 62

5. Are they worth the risks?
6. What don't we know about the situation that we need to learn before we act?
7. What will I be content with seeing and hearing as a result of my action?
8. How willing and ready am I to be a leader of change that may ensue? (238)

Another method for reflecting backward and forward is one we have seen practiced by both famous and quiet leaders we admire. It is a values- or principle-based reflection method: 1. Establish a short list (three to seven) of key principles or values you want to guide your day and all the decisions and actions you take on that day. 2. Early in that morning, look at the list and at your calendar and imagine how you see those principles being employed as a part of each of your tasks. Also be open to opportunities to employ them in spontaneous ways to events and interactions that are not on your calendar. 3. Review the list and your day at midday to see how well you are doing at employing your principles and where it was difficult to do so. 4. At the end of the day, use your principles as a checklist for reviewing the day. The areas that were particularly tough may point out areas in your life that could benefit from the skill of learning. (239) Here is a short set of questions that focuses the feedback: "If you were in my position, how would you think about this?" "Tell me what important information you see me not considering or skimming over." "What went right about what just happened?" "How could we have seen the consequences in advance?" (240)

Whether you take a spiritual or principle-based approach, make explicit to yourself one or two deep values that you wish to practice across all domains of your life. Stop yourself three times each day and replay the day, asking yourself, "How am I doing against these values?" One of the most profound biases we share is the bias of belief preservation. When we succumb to this bias, we often make objective evidence subservient to our beliefs. This bias is seen nearly every time an old and proud organization doesn't face the facts of a changing reality. (242) People and organizations are notorious for saying the right words to describe values and principles but acting without regard to them. (243) All projects and programs *should* have a close-out phase during which we uncover lessons learned that *should* be used to improve our performance on the next program or project. We would be surprised if more than 15 percent of large projects lead to real learning for their organization. We are too busy to take the time to improve. What a shame. (244) Because reflective people keep the big picture in their minds and are able to see and articulate connections between a particular action or piece of information and the big picture. (245)

As we see the demand for leadership and more thoughtful work at all levels rising, we realize that reflection is a necessity for leadership. (247) An executive from one of the world's largest oil companies once shared a story about his father that he had incorporated into his daily practice. While he was growing up, he observed that every morning after breakfast, his dad went into his study for five minutes, closed the door, and then came out and carried on his day. The oil executive waited over fifty years to finally ask his dad what he did in his study each morning. His father's reply was that every morning, he asked himself two questions: "What is my purpose in life? How am I going to carry it out today?" (249)

Consider Peter Drucker's point of view: there is a set of assumptions that define an organization's theory of business and there are certain steps to be taken to make sure the theory is valid.²

² Peter F. Drucker, "The Theory of Business, in *Managing in a Time of Great change* (New York: Truman Talley Books/Dutton 1995)