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# THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE FOR BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

SEPTEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

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“Exemplary leaders don’t impose their visions of the future on people, they liberate the vision that’s already in their constituents. They arouse the belief that we can achieve something grand.”

—from *The Leadership Challenge, 4th Edition* by Jim Kouzes & Barry Posner

## Welcome to The Leadership Challenge Newsletter!

This monthly publication shares stories, examples, and information about the impact of The Leadership Challenge in all kinds of organizations. As always, [please let us know how we are doing](#), we may even contact you about featuring your ideas and stories in future editions of this newsletter.

## Stay in touch with The Leadership Challenge Community!

Follow us on Twitter [@TLCTalk](#).

### Thoughts on the Model

With three simple yet powerful questions, Certified Master Jody Rogers lays out a blueprint for helping leaders build a solid foundation of knowledge—of self, of others, of the team. [More](#)

### Tips and Techniques

Building skills of collaboration and teamwork can be entertaining *and* educational with this quick activity, created by Certified Master Mary Cooper in the spirit of our own Leadership Challenge dynamic duo, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. [More](#)

### Ask an Expert

Focusing specifically on leadership *within* developing world cultures, Barry Posner shares findings from a study he recently conducted across economically-distressed Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines that offers unique insights into whether culture, as represented by national boundaries, affects how leaders behave and the outcomes those differences, if any, generate. [More](#)

### Rants and Raves

Last month’s Rants and Raves saw a flood of activity for the just released, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It, 2nd Edition*. And this month, there’s even more—from CIO and Training magazines to a solid recommendation from Booklist. [More](#)

### What We’re Watching

#### **Rise of the Planet of the Apes**

Viewing the world with an eye for leadership is a terrific way to become familiar with The Leadership Challenge model. Look around—do you see any of The Five Practices exhibited in the shows you’re watching or the books you’re reading? As part of Pfeiffer’s editorial team, I am constantly looking at the world through that lens, and I have found it to be a great exercise for learning to *think* like a leader. The more we practice identifying The Five Practices in action, the easier it is to implement them ourselves. And once you start looking,

you might be surprised to find that you come across examples of exemplary leadership in even the most unsuspecting places.

For example, I went to see Rupert Wyatt's [Rise of the Planet of the Apes](#) recently. After my awe of the massive San Francisco-based action scenes and dazzling CGI animation wore off, I found myself thinking that this story, at its most basic level, was really a tale about leadership—both failed and remarkable—and how the choices of a leader can change history.

As a genetically-enhanced ape whose burst of aggression lands him in a primate sanctuary, Caesar, the movie's protagonist, is incarcerated, abused, and alone. Caesar's narrative arc to leadership begins with the realization of one of Kouzes and Posner's most essential points: *you cannot do it alone*. In a pivotal moment, Caesar signs to a fellow orangutan, "Ape alone weak. Ape together strong." Or as *The Leadership Challenge* puts it more elegantly: "individuals need to understand that by working together they will be able to accomplish something that no one can accomplish on their own."

Although Caesar's story is fictional, those who dreamed it up are not—and they know very well that in order to make believable the tale of a single creature accomplishing extraordinary things, they needed to tell a tale not of a leader opting to act alone, but of a leader enlisting others in the mission and finding a way to collaborate.

Taking an even closer look, there are any number of ways that scenes from [Rise of the Planet of the Apes](#) put The Five Practices into action. In one sequence, for example, Caesar hands cookies out to all of the wary apes in order to build trust and camaraderie among the incarcerated primates—essentially Encouraging The Heart. He Models The Way by encouraging others to mimic him and hand cookies out to each other. And he Enables Others To Act by sharing the brain-stimulating virus that empowers others with the ability to think for themselves.

In addition to the film's many lessons of exemplary leadership, it also can be useful to practice identifying instances of poor leadership—occasions in which The Five Practices were neglected, which can be found among the human characters. One of the central points of conflict arises between two employees of the pharmaceutical company—an executive and a researcher. The two have extraordinarily different visions for their organization's purpose: the researcher wants to change the world with good science, while the executive simply wants to make money. This misalignment ends up resulting in a breach of protocol and irresponsible science, allowing the virus to get out of the lab and out of control. The company suffers because it lacks a Shared Vision. There it is again—The Five Practices.

Thinking critically about leadership stories—even stories as silly as [Rise of the Planet of the Apes](#)—can help us all become more familiar with The Five Practices model and how each practice can play out in life (whether real or imagined!).

Within the field of leadership development, there has long been the concern that what learners read in a book or are taught in a workshop stay in that book or workshop: learning what the practices are intellectually, but not knowing how or when to apply them in life. If we make it a habit to look at both real leaders and those found in our cultural media through the lens of The Leadership Challenge, we can help ourselves build that essential bridge between learning something and understanding how to use it.

So, do this exercise yourself one day. Look for a great leader in a book or a movie and think critically about his or her strategies—I bet you'll find that The Five Practices are there, too.

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