

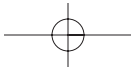
Chapter One

Leadership Principles and Leadership Tasks

When her father called her into his office, Elena had a sinking feeling. Her father had not been well in recent years and talked of retiring. Earlier in the day he visited the doctor to get the results of some tests. The tone of his voice on the phone just now was somber. Elena braced herself. She didn't feel ready.

The employees of Zoffner Piano Company referred to Elena's father as Mr. Karl. It was a sign of both their respect for him and their feelings of closeness to him. He knew everything there was to know about making and selling pianos. He was the brains and the heart and the soul of the company. He was also a person who cared about everyone individually, who had countless times come to the rescue of an employee, had provided wise counsel and emotional support. Over the years he tried to instill all of this in Elena, but she knew her father couldn't teach her how to command the attention of everyone on the shop floor when she walked in, or how to help each employee feel important, or how to make the salespeople laugh about a bad quarterly report. These were things that Elena simply couldn't imagine herself doing. Her father was a natural leader, and she was not.

Karl Zoffner had founded Zoffner Piano in 1947 with less than a thousand dollars and a specific idea (what in later years would be called a vision): to build quality pianos that a working person could



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afford to buy for a son or daughter. For over fifty years he guided the company through good years and bad by making shrewd decisions about whom to hire, what materials and craftsmanship to use, what markets to go into, where to obtain goods and supplies, which technologies to acquire. Through those years he earned the loyalty and commitment of employees who thought of Zoffner Piano as their second (in some cases, first) family. These people would do anything for Mr. Karl. There were many stories, told and retold, about times when Karl and his employees worked shoulder to shoulder to keep a promise to a customer or to solve a problem with a supplier. When competitors threatened the business, Mr. Karl always found a way to reposition (today we might say reinvent) Zoffner Piano, maintain his original vision, and keep it profitable and growing.

Elena came into the business fresh from an MBA program at a leading university. She had not been sure about this decision, and she and her father and mother had spent many a sleepless night discussing her future. In the end she realized that the company was in her blood, even though she was uncertain about her ability to take over from her father. But he insisted that she would learn all she needed to know about the business from helping him run Zoffner Piano until the time came for retirement. Then she would be ready.

Karl turned out to be both right and wrong. Elena did learn more than she ever thought she could about the materials that go into a piano, where to get them, how to get the best prices, and about how a piano is made. She learned about casting iron and fashioning wood into piano cases. She learned about marketing the instruments, who buys pianos and why, how much people will pay for a piano for their child, and how much they will pay for a concert instrument. She also

began to form some ideas of her own about the company and how she would run it when her father turned it over to her. She looked to him for guidance about leadership, but Karl was not very helpful on that subject.

Elena would ask him, "How do you get people to pull together all the time?"

He would look a little put out and answer shortly, "I just pull from in front."

In fact, her father didn't believe a person could usefully study leadership. "A leader is someone who never thinks about being a leader," he once said. "You just are."

This worried Elena. She knew she was not a leader. And that was why she felt uneasy and unprepared walking into her father's office that day.

Leadership Principles

If we're lucky, we have known someone like Mr. Karl who just naturally commands attention and respect and who, maybe without ever thinking about it, pulls in the right direction and gets people to follow. Knowing such people can have a lasting effect. Besides providing a model or even a hero to emulate, such people may help convince us that this is the true nature of leadership and that other kinds of leadership we have encountered are only pale imitations offered by people without true leadership ability. As a result we conclude that what we need in this world is more people like Mr. Karl, and that one of the problems we are having in our lives is a lack of true leaders like him. Like Elena, we are often tempted to think that if we can't be a leader like Karl Zoffner, we are not really a leader at all. But how do we come to this conclusion? How do we know that Mr. Karl is the real thing?

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Recognizing Thoughts, Words, and Actions as Leadership

In this book, the question of how we know leadership when we see it plays a central role. I propose that we know leadership when we see it because we share an organizing knowledge principle in common with other people. In other words, Mr. Karl's natural ability to command respect, and our admiration and appreciation of this kind of leadership, come from a way of thinking about leadership, a way of understanding when leadership is happening, that a group of people can share. It is a way of thinking and understanding that enables individuals and the group as a whole to recognize certain thoughts, words, and actions as being leadership.

This alters the usual way to approach the topic of leadership. Usually leadership is assumed to be something out there in the world that exists more or less independent of how we think about it. The way we think about it is mostly determined by the way leadership is. From this more usual point of view, we would think about Mr. Karl's leadership and understand it as being admirable and effective because it is admirable and effective. This view is perfectly usable most of the time. It raises the question of what it is about Mr. Karl's leadership that makes it admirable and effective. And that opens up a whole set of considerations as we try to describe and define what it is about Mr. Karl as a person and his approach to leadership that is admirable and effective and perhaps to work out how other people might emulate his approach to leadership.

This book takes the viewpoint that leadership is nothing at all—that even Mr. Karl's leadership doesn't really exist until we have some way of knowing it when we encounter it. If, when encountering certain thoughts, words, or actions, we don't in effect say "that's leadership," then leadership simply isn't what is happening at the moment as far as we are concerned. So in the view being offered here, leadership is not something out there in the world that we come to know because it impresses itself on our minds, it is something we create with our minds by agreeing with

other people that *these* thoughts, words, and actions—and not some others—will be known as leadership.

For example, say a young child falls and skins her knee. Her mother runs from the house, sweeps the child in her arms, and with hugs and kisses, comforts the child and takes her into the house to nurse her little wound. Is this an example of leadership? Take a moment to think about this before reading the next paragraph. Try to decide one way or the other.

What was your first response, before you took time to think it over? Did that first response change? What entered into your thinking on this question? How did you come to a conclusion about whether this is an example of leadership or not? If the story had been told to you in some completely different context, would the question of this act being leadership ever have entered your head? How did you deal with the fact that you were being asked to determine if this is an example of leadership or not?

The task I set before you was a way to get at how you may recognize leadership. For some of you, this may have been a rather irritating no-brainer. “Of course that’s not leadership, and if this guy thinks it is, I may not read the rest of this book.” (Please hang in, however.) Others may have thought it was not leadership at first, but upon reflection, certain aspects of the story, it seemed, might have touched on leadership: the mother is like a leader in that she has a goal in mind (comforting and caring for her child) and she leads the child toward that goal (takes her in her arms, takes her into the house). Or others might have thought it was only minimally like leadership because the mother is caring and concerned, and a leader should be caring and concerned; but otherwise it was not an example of leadership.

All of these ways of answering the question draw on some organizing principle that, in effect, admits certain ideas as being leadership (or possibly being leadership) and blocks other ideas as not being leadership. Thus, if you thought the mother was like a leader because she had a goal in mind and led the child toward that goal, then perhaps you know leadership when there is a person who leads

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others toward a goal. For you, this would be part of a principle for organizing knowledge of (recognition of) leadership. When you see a person leading others toward a goal, you may recognize that leadership is happening. On the other hand, thoughts, words, and actions that are not recognized as leadership simply cannot be leadership. Maybe nothing in the example seemed remotely close to being leadership. Then leadership was not happening in the story. Only thoughts, words, and actions that are recognized as leadership can constitute leadership.

From this point of view, leadership is not something independent of the way we think. Just the opposite: it is dependent on the way we organize what we take for granted as real and true. The presence or absence of leadership depends on the presence or absence of some knowledge principle that enables a person or a group or a community or organization to say, "That's leadership."

In other words, in this book, we will look at leadership in terms of what makes some thoughts, words, and actions *meaningful as leadership* to people. We will be concentrating on specific ways of knowing and understanding leadership that I believe people share in groups, communities, and organizations. To approach the question of how Mr. Karl manages to make the shop floor fall silent when he passes through, we will address the question of how the people on the shop floor (and Mr. Karl, and we) *come to understand* his very presence as an act of leadership. What are the patterns of ideas and underlying assumptions that cause people to fall silent and that cause us to admire the way Mr. Karl makes people fall silent?

Leadership principles, as these ways of recognizing leadership will be called, are a shared achievement. They are created by people interacting with one another; they are not created in each individual person's mind alone. So there are not as many leadership principles as there are people. And since people interact in many different ways, it is likely that there is not just one master principle from which all other leadership principles are derived. The way of understanding and knowing leadership that brings about Mr. Karl's leadership is just one way to recognize leadership, and there are

other ways of understanding and recognizing leadership that are not poor relations to this “real” kind of leadership, but are qualitatively different ways of knowing that leadership is happening. These other ways of understanding leadership bring about thoughts, words, and actions that some people (but not all people) recognize as leadership, but that don’t look like Mr. Karl’s leadership at all.

To summarize: in this book leadership will be approached as something that is brought into being by a shared knowledge principle that enables people to recognize (know) that leadership is happening. This approach will allow us to talk about leadership as something that can come into being or go out of being because of the presence or absence of some organizing knowledge principle. People share in these knowledge principles as ways of organizing reality about leadership. If they didn’t, a group of people would never be able to make leadership happen. So there are not as many principles as people, but there is not just one either. What will be important here is just what such leadership principles are like, how they work or fail to work, what happens when the leadership principle that a group of people has been using becomes less useful to them, and how leadership principles change and evolve.

Later in this chapter I will go into a little more detail about three knowledge principles of leadership. (These are the main topics in later chapters.) But because this talk of principles can be confusing—and because approaching leadership in terms of knowledge principles is such a central idea in this book—it is important to distinguish the idea of leadership principles from two other ideas with which it could be confused, namely, leadership *definitions* and leadership *styles*.

Principles Distinguished from Definitions

A *knowledge principle* is a set of ideas, a set of rules, if you will, about the nature of reality and life that are taken for granted to be true. Right away, the difference between a knowledge principle and a definition becomes apparent, because most definitions of something

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as complex as leadership are by their nature subject to debate, doubt, and challenge. Knowledge principles, on the other hand, comprise sets of taken-for-granted truths, truths that are obvious to those who hold them.

For example, when we say something like, “I can’t define beauty but I know it when I see it,” we are basing our knowledge on some principle by which we recognize and understand beauty. We simply know beauty in this way, without conscious effort. We can recognize and understand beauty when we see it because we apply some knowledge principle of beauty, some set of rules about the nature of reality that implicitly tells us, “It’s obvious that this is beautiful.” (Of course, different people may use different knowledge principles and thus what is obviously beautiful would be different.) If we were to try to sit down and write a definition of beauty (not recommended) to say what beauty means, the sense of meaning would be afforded by whatever knowledge principle we use to organize what we take to be the reality of beauty. There would be some ideas that we would take for granted as true without question, such as, for example, that natural things—flowers, waterfalls, birds—are beautiful. Thus we might say something like “things in nature are obviously beautiful” and this idea would be part of our beauty principle and would underlie all our thoughts, feelings, responses, and attitudes about beauty. We use knowledge principles all the time, whenever we take it for granted (it is obvious to us) that something is true: nature is beautiful, people are basically good (or bad, or self-interested), God is all powerful, murder is evil.

In the same way, there are leadership principles—principles that allow anyone to say, “I can’t define leadership, but I know it when it happens.” A leadership principle is thus deeper than a definition of leadership; it is the set of ideas, taken for granted as true, even obvious, that organize and describe the reality behind a definition. To say what leadership means, a definition must make use of some meaning-creating knowledge principle. For example, here is a definition of leadership from F. H. Allport’s 1924 *Social Psychology*: “Leadership is personal social control” (cited in Bass, 1990,

p. 12). This definition, like all definitions, is meaningful because it draws on ideas assumed to be true but not dealt with in the definition itself: that a person can exercise social control, that the distinction between what is personal and what is social is useful in leadership, that leadership happens when control happens. If the definition strikes you as being insightful and helps you understand leadership better, if it succeeds in saying what leadership means, it may be because you use the same or a very similar underlying principle for knowing that leadership is happening as the one the definition writer used. Because you share this principle with the writer, the definition helps you articulate something you knew but couldn't put precisely into words. The sharing is critical and makes the definition mean something to you. The definition helps you understand leadership better because it is based on a knowledge principle, a set of taken-for-granted truths, you and the writer share.

If, on the other hand, the definition seems wrong in some way to you, if you respond with "Yes, but—," it may be because you use a different knowledge principle from the one used by the definition writer. You and the writer differ on what you each take to be the reality of leadership. Maybe this definition strikes you as being too narrow; or maybe it seems to describe an outmoded idea of leadership; or maybe it seems to describe power, not leadership. Focusing on the idea of knowledge principles helps us see how these reactions to the definition arise less in an argument over whether it defines leadership effectively and more over differences in taken-for-granted assumptions about reality. That particular definition is a good definition of leadership (it says what the reality of leadership is to you) if, when you see "personal social control" happening in your life, you say "this is leadership." If you don't say that when you see "personal social control" happening, it's not a good definition (it fails to describe what you know the reality of leadership to be).

Here's another definition of leadership, one I think is based on a knowledge principle different from that underlying the definition in the last paragraph: "[Leadership is] a relation between leader and led in which the leader influences more than he is influenced."

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(This one is from a 1952 article by H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, "A Sociological Note on Leadership," cited in Bass, 1990, p. 13.) This definition does not even refer to the same ideas as the first. There is no mention of control and no underlying assumption that leadership is personal. Instead, a different way of knowing is being applied: that leadership is interpersonal, a relationship; mutual but unequal influence is what is happening when leadership happens. Assuming that readers of this definition share some of these ways of knowing with the writer of the definition, the definition will make sense to them. In other words, a definition says what leadership means because it makes its assertion within a context of a shared knowledge principle, a sense of what is obviously true that is shared between the definition giver and the definition consumer.

Principles Distinguished from Styles

So the principles I will present here are not definitions of leadership, although they are the basis of definitions of leadership. They are whole ways of knowing that leadership is happening. This still leaves a question: How is a leadership principle different from a leadership style? It might seem that because differing principles can be expected to bring about differing ways of thinking about leadership, and because differing ways of thinking about leadership could be expected to bring about differing ways of enacting leadership, and given that such differences constitute what we mean by differing leadership styles, it could be argued that a principle and a style are nearly the same. But there is a critical and useful difference between the two. A leadership style is usually thought of as an approach to leadership that a leader (or a follower) chooses to take. A leader chooses to be task-oriented or relationship-focused, or a leader chooses to decide alone or allow followers to participate in a decision. The leader is understood to choose a style depending on the situation, the task, the maturity of the followers, and other considerations. In other words, the idea of style refers to something that a leader can put on or take off, that a leader has control over.

A leadership principle is a different idea. Because a principle is what is required for the leader (and followers!) to recognize that leadership is happening, it is not something you choose to use or not use from one situation to another. Assuming that the leader and the followers want leadership to happen, they are more or less stuck (at least for the present) with whatever leadership principle will allow them to recognize certain thoughts, words, and actions as leadership. This principle will disallow recognition of certain other thoughts, words, and actions as leadership. Without a leadership principle, the people would be unable to recognize any words or actions as leadership—they would be unable to distinguish between what was and was not leadership.

A multitude of differing enactments, approaches, and consciously chosen styles can be understood as leadership from the meaning afforded by a single leadership principle. Likewise, a multitude of enactments, approaches, and styles will not be recognized as leadership, even some that arise from some other leadership principle. Leaders who change their leadership style such that their thoughts, words, and actions are still recognized as leadership are likely still making sense of leadership from the same leadership principle as before. The style has changed, but the principle stays the same. Unlike a leadership style, a leadership principle is changed only slowly and with difficulty, because people don't easily part with a way of making sense of something as important as leadership. As we will discuss later in this book, when a person or a group of people changes their leadership principle, we will view this as the basis for leadership development.

So a leadership principle is deeper than a definition, and is also deeper than a leadership style. A single principle could be used to create definitions of leadership different enough for people to argue over, because people who take the same underlying ideas to be true can still argue over how those taken-for-granted truths apply in life situations. Likewise, a single leadership principle could be the basis for many differing leadership styles. A leadership principle is what gives meaning to definitions and styles in the sense that a principle

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is required for people to recognize and understand that leadership is what is happening.

Three Principles for Recognizing Leadership

I have at this point painted myself into a kind of corner. Having proposed the idea of knowledge principles of leadership, I face the task of articulating, spelling out, such principles. The catch-22 in doing this should be obvious after all this discussion of knowledge principles. Whatever articulation of knowledge principles I choose must in itself come from some knowledge principle. Like everyone, I have to take something for granted as true. And what is this knowledge that I myself must take for granted as obviously true? It is the third of the three leadership principles that I will articulate. I cannot see through what I take to be the obvious truths of that principle, and all of my articulation of the first and second principles is based on what I take for granted as being true in the third principle. In this sense, the destination of the whole book is the third principle, and everything else in the book is asserted from the perspective of the understanding of leadership afforded by this third principle.

Having said that, I propose to plunge right in, as if naming and articulating leadership principles were useful and productive. The names I propose for the three leadership principles are *personal dominance* (first principle), *interpersonal influence* (second principle), and *relational dialogue* (the third, and for me, the embedding principle). The following sections will introduce these principles in their basic form. The rest of the book is devoted to a more detailed exploration of the meaning and usefulness of each principle.

Personal Dominance

Mr. Karl's and his employees' way of recognizing and understanding leadership illustrates an enactment of the first principle: personal dominance. Personal dominance is a way of understanding

leadership as the personal quality or characteristic of a certain kind of person called a leader. The particular thoughts, words, and actions of this kind of person can vary along many dimensions without affecting the person's status as a leader because leadership is assumed to come from within, from an inner quality or characteristic, not from this or that behavior. Leadership from this perspective is whatever the (true) leader does: leaders create leadership by expressing an inner quality toward followers.

This principle takes the following truths for granted:

- Leadership is something a person possesses.
- Leadership is an expression of this personally possessed quality or characteristic.
- Leaders lead because followers are convinced of the truth of their leadership.

Dominance does not necessarily mean the same as domination (although it may). *Dominance* refers to the idea that the leader is the source of leadership and the followers are the receivers of leadership. I propose that this is historically the oldest and conceptually the most basic leadership principle.

Interpersonal Influence

The second leadership principle, interpersonal influence, is a way of understanding that leadership happens when a group of people agree and disagree, ally and contend, concur and argue, plan and negotiate until someone emerges as the most influential person and thus claims the role of leader.

Because this is a different leadership principle from the first principle, I propose that this is a whole different way of creating the meaning of leadership. It is not simply a different approach to leadership that is, say, less power-oriented and less instrumental than

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the first principle. It is a qualitatively different way to recognize that leadership is happening. The emergence of a leader from a process of negotiation differs from personal dominance because from the perspective of the second principle a person becomes a leader by achieving influence, whereas in the first principle a person is the leader by possessing the quality or characteristic of leadership. In the first principle, leadership is in the leader; in the second principle, leadership is in the greater influence created by the process of negotiation. In the first principle, influence is one of many tools the leader possesses as an aspect of personal leadership. In the second principle, influence must be achieved, and in its achievement, one takes on leadership.

This principle takes the following truths for granted:

- Leadership is a role occupied by the most influential person.
- People possess or can acquire certain qualities and characteristics that enable them to be effective in such a role.
- Leadership involves followers actively in the process of negotiating influence.
- Leaders lead by influencing followers more than followers influence them.

I propose that this second principle comes into being because of certain limitations of the first principle, and that historically it arose in human life later than the first principle and as a response to these limitations.

Relational Dialogue

The third leadership principle, relational dialogue, is a way of understanding that leadership happens when people who acknowledge shared work use dialogue and collaborative learning to create contexts in which that work can be accomplished across the dividing

lines of differing perspectives, values, beliefs, cultures, and more generally what I will refer to as differing worldviews. Again, this is yet another qualitatively different way to recognize that leadership is happening.

This principle takes the following truths for granted:

- Leadership is the property of a social system.
- Individual people do not possess leadership; leadership happens when people participate in collaborative forms of thought and action.
- If there is an individual leader, the actions that person takes are an aspect of participation in the process of leadership.

This third principle may strike the ear strangely. It is less familiar than the first two principles, I propose, because it has just begun to emerge and is not yet fully formed. It is emerging, however, in response to certain limitations in the second principle that are calling this third principle forth, and people in communities and organizations are already beginning to make sense of leadership in this way.

With the idea of leadership principles in mind, and remembering that we will be visiting each of the three principles later in detail, let's return to the story of Elena Zoffner, her father, and the Zoffner Piano Company.

In Karl Zoffner's office that day, Elena received the news that she was the new head of the company. Her father was stoical, as always, but she could tell it was a profoundly sad day for him. Her own feelings were more complex: a combination of sadness and excitement, a sense of something lost and something just on the verge of coming into being. That very day she overheard a long-time employee talking to a younger worker. The announcement of Mr. Karl's retirement and her taking over had just been made.

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"The girl is a good kid, but she knows nothing. I tell you, without Mr. Karl we're in big trouble."

Elena was long past letting this kind of remark bother her too much. And anyway she agreed that her knowledge of the business could never equal her father's. The remark did, however, drive home to her that somehow she had to get out from under her father's shadow as soon as possible. As long as she was compared to her father, she would always be found wanting in the eyes of the employees. So she struck out to make an impression on people in her own right. She figured that she needed to take the company in a new direction, one that her father would never have contemplated. Elena decided that Zoffner Piano would get into the business of making digital pianos.

The reaction at the weekly management meeting when Elena made this intention clear was one of stony silence. Her words were greeted with a variety of hard looks ranging from puzzlement to dismay to outrage. No one dared to say a word. They simply stared at Elena, seemingly embarrassed for her.

"Of course we will continue to make the same fine pianos we always have. We'll add the digital piano to our line of products. This will mean opening a new plant and hiring more employees. It's a whole new direction for us, and I'm very excited about it."

They shifted in their seats uncomfortably. No one spoke.

"It's the future." Elena continued, feeling somehow more confident in herself despite them. "Digital instruments are growing in popularity. It's an enormous opportunity for us to grow."

John, the marketing manager, found his voice. "So you want me to do some research on this, Elena? I could study the digital market and find out how well positioned we would be to enter it."

“You do your study, John, but the decision is made. This is where Zoffner is headed. I take full responsibility for this. It’s my call.”

“Of course it’s your call, Elena. I was just thinking that we might want to look first before we, you know, before we leap.”

“Too late, John, we have already leaped.”

The next day, unknown to Elena, the head foundryman, an old-world craftsman responsible for casting the iron pin boards, went to see Karl.

“So now we are going to make toy pianos, Mr. Karl?”

Karl was surprised by Elena’s decision and by the foundryman’s visit. He had expected that Elena might take Zoffner in some new directions, but not this. He believed making digital pianos would lower the value of the Zoffner piano in the eyes of the customer, and they would not be able to maintain their margins. He had discussed this with his daughter several times in the past. He was filled with doubt about her decision and what to do about it, but he knew exactly what to say now.

“This is Elena’s decision, Anthony. She’s in charge now.”

“But Mr. Karl! What will become of us? What will happen to us when people see that we make these things?”

“You know that’s not your concern, and frankly I’m surprised at you, Anthony. You never questioned one of my decisions like this. What has gotten into you?”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Karl. Very, very sorry.”

When word got around that Anthony had quit because of Elena’s decision, morale at Zoffner fell. Employees grumbled among themselves and the rumor mill started working overtime. “Mr. Karl is coming back” was, of course, the leading rumor. Karl took Elena aside and tried to get her to change her mind, but Elena was ready for

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this. She reminded Karl of his own words. "You said it was mine now, Father. These are my decisions now, just like they were your decisions in the past. Don't expect me to be you. I've got to be myself." For all his doubt about her business judgment, Karl felt utterly proud of his daughter at that moment.

The employees were not so easy to deal with. They became increasingly distrustful of Elena, and their poor attitude began to show up in production problems and absenteeism. For the first time in the company's history, turnover was becoming a problem. Elena saw that people were not committed to their work the way they had once been. The new people hired to replace those that left seemed to want no more out of a job than their paycheck. To Elena, they had no pride in their work. She became obsessed with maintaining the quality of their product and instituted a number of work procedures and rules to ensure quality that had never been needed in her father's day. The world was changing, and so was Zoffner Piano.

Leadership Tasks

We discussed the idea that for certain thoughts, words, and actions to be recognized, understood, and known as leadership, people in a community or organization must share some knowledge principle that allows them to agree that leadership is happening. But no matter what leadership principle is used to recognize leadership, the call for leadership arises in the need to accomplish certain tasks.

The Work of Leadership: Direction, Commitment, Adaptation

The tasks of leadership will be articulated here as setting direction, creating and maintaining commitment, and facing adaptive challenge. It is the need to accomplish these tasks that calls forth lead-

ership based on whatever principle people in the community or organization hold in common.

Notice that these are the very tasks that the people at Zoffner Piano are having a hard time accomplishing since Mr. Karl's retirement: the direction of the company is unclear, a matter of doubt and debate; people are not committed to the company or to Elena; and they are facing a challenge (the retirement of Mr. Karl and the move to digital keyboards) to which they are having a great deal of trouble adapting. When the leadership tasks of a community or organization are not being accomplished, people in the organization or community will say that they lack leadership. Exactly what thoughts, words, and actions constitute leadership, and what they therefore see themselves as lacking, depends on the leadership principle they share in common and use to know when leadership is (and therefore when it is not) happening.

The three leadership tasks as expressed here—setting direction, creating commitment, and facing adaptive challenges—are intended to be merely representative of a broad range of leadership tasks, which could be articulated in many different ways—defining mission, setting goals, creating vision, motivating followers, forging community, creating alignment, creating change, managing change, fostering innovation, and so forth. Leadership tasks seem to center on three kinds of tasks related to direction (mission, goals, vision, purpose), commitment (alignment, motivation, spirit, teamwork), and adaptation (innovation, change, dealing with paradigm shifts). Thus we will simplify by working with the three leadership tasks of setting direction, creating commitment, and facing adaptive challenges as if these three were an adequate representation of leadership tasks in general.

First let's take a closer look at each of these critical leadership tasks, and then we will look ahead briefly to a main topic of this book: how each leadership principle approaches the accomplishment of these tasks.

Setting Direction. The task of setting direction answers some basic questions: Where are we going? What are we going to do?

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Why are we doing it? What purpose will we serve? What will we become and do in the future? How will we get there? These are all questions of direction that people ask one another in some form all the time, whether it's a small group of friends planning an evening together or a huge multinational corporation devising a long-term strategy. Direction as a leadership task is related both to the destination and the path toward the destination. It involves the articulation of mission, vision, purpose, values; the naming of goals, outcomes, criteria of effectiveness; the devising of strategies, tactics, modes, methods. Direction tells people what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they will do it. In a small group of friends going out for the evening, the question of direction can be answered quickly and easily because the question of what to do usually implies and answers the questions of why and how. But in contexts such as a large community or organization, direction becomes more complex. Answering the question of what to do can leave unanswered the questions of why and how; people can agree on what and disagree on why and how. This complexity argues for breaking out the various aspects of direction in thinking about leadership, and usually this is what happens. Considerations of mission and vision are separated from considerations of strategy and effectiveness. For simplicity in trying to understand the idea of leadership principles, however, the leadership tasks will be presented here in a generalized form.

Creating and Maintaining Commitment. The second task of leadership is creating and maintaining commitment. How can a group, community, or organization stay together, work together, cooperate, become aligned and coordinated? How will everyone pull together in the same direction when things get tough, when some degree of self-sacrifice is required? How can people in a group or community or organization know that they can count on one another? Commitment is related to cohesion, coordination, and investment. It involves creating the tie that binds, the organizational glue, the sense of togetherness. It also involves what many

thoughtful people prefer to think of as a management function rather than a leadership task: coordination and alignment. (I propose that what we think of as management has its own knowledge principles that are more or less independent of leadership principles, and yet much of the work of management and leadership overlap. Hence the confusion between management and leadership: the two are aspects of overlapping work that must be accomplished according to more or less independent working principles.) The leadership task of coordination and alignment has to do with creating a context in which people will allow themselves to be in the service of the plans and needs of others. (The management aspect of this task deals more with the technical aspects of structuring coordination and alignment.) Finally, creating commitment involves maintaining commitment, that is, keeping people together and aligned when forces arise that would pull them apart.

Facing Adaptive Challenge. The third leadership task is facing adaptive challenge. The phrase *adaptive challenge* here is being used in the sense that Ron Heifetz uses it: a challenge confronting a community or organization for which it has no preexisting resources, remedies, tools, solutions, or even the means for accurately naming and describing the challenge. Thus most challenges are not adaptive, they are merely problems or decisions needing to be made. Everyday problems present situations for which the community or organization is prepared, or for which it has the means to get prepared. Such everyday problems might require a high degree of creativity and resourcefulness and may be quite difficult to solve, but they are fundamentally approachable using means that are already available or can be marshaled. Solving such everyday problems is not taken here to be a leadership task. Making such everyday decisions is not what is meant here by facing adaptive challenges. An adaptive challenge causes confusion. Its challenge is precisely this: that people in the community or organization cannot agree on the nature of the challenge, the degree of its significance, or sometimes whether a challenge exists or not. The organization has no tools for

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approaching an adaptive challenge because it has no widespread, agreed-on understanding of the challenge. Differing ways of understanding the challenge are being offered and each differing understanding implies different responses. To face an adaptive challenge the group or organization must first create a shared sense of what it is and what it means before people can begin to create the resources for responding. Facing an adaptive challenge will therefore fundamentally change the community or organization.

All three leadership tasks are framed as being related to the very existence of a group, community, or organization. Setting direction can and often does bring a community or organization into being; losing direction or failing to set direction can mean losing meaning and the very reason for being. Creating and maintaining commitment sustains the community or organization and enables people to serve their own needs and the needs of others. When this task is not accomplished, the community or organization can literally fall apart—the most inspiring direction cannot hold it together because, without commitment, there is no way to reach the destination. Facing adaptive challenges is critical to the long-term viability of a community or organization. Failing to accomplish this task can mean that the context in which a community or organization has set direction and created commitment changes such that the direction and the basis for commitment are nullified. Even in accomplishing this task, a community or organization faces fundamental change that may significantly alter the identity of the community—and this new identity might imply the loss of the community that once was.

How Each Principle Approaches the Leadership Tasks

Thus these three leadership tasks can be articulated in a general sense. But, as I hope is becoming clear, such leadership tasks are not likely to be understood in the same way from the perspective of each of the principles outlined earlier. The interpretation and understanding of each of the tasks will differ depending on the

principle, as does the interpretation and understanding of leadership itself. This creates a distinctive capacity and limitation for each leadership principle with respect to accomplishing the leadership tasks. A brief overview of the way each leadership principle approaches the accomplishment of the leadership tasks will be helpful before we move on to a closer examination of the leadership principles themselves.

Personal Dominance. The first leadership principle makes sense of direction as the clear and univocal expression of the leader's vision. As an extension of an ability that is understood to be personally possessed by the leader, direction is the leader's personal, and therefore unified, vision. In a community or organization that understands leadership from the perspective of the first principle and possesses an effective dominant leader, direction is synonymous with leadership because both direction and leadership flow from the leader. The discourse of this principle is that of personality, belief in personal power, the language of character, vision, and inspiration. As we will see, this capacity of the first principle to create clear direction can also put limitations on its efficacy in some contexts. When the leader's personal direction proves to be less than effective, the basis of leadership itself is undermined.

Followers commit directly and personally to the leader—not just because of their belief in the efficacy or rightness of the leader's vision but because of their belief in the leader's being as a leader. Mr. Karl was able to create powerful commitment and keep it over a long period because the employees of Zoffner Piano believed in him personally as their natural and inevitable leader. Followers who understand leadership from the perspective of the first principle commit to what they sense as the inner quality, the personal strength, and the integrity of character of the leader. This can forge a powerful bond between leader and followers, but, again, it can also pose a critical limitation—loss of commitment to the leader personally, for whatever reason, severely undermines leadership itself.

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Because an adaptive challenge is understood here as one requiring a fundamental change in understanding, a shift in values, a sea change in direction that faces the whole community or organization, such a challenge is unlikely to be recognized as a leadership task from the perspective of the first principle. To the extent that an adaptive challenge is not recognizable and interpretable in terms the leader already understands, an adaptive challenge is more likely to be understood as a cataclysm, an event or circumstance beyond the control of the leader and thus of the community or organization. The community or organization as a whole will therefore lack the capacity not only to accomplish this task but even to understand it as a leadership task.

Interpersonal Influence. Direction is understood and approached from the perspective afforded by the second principle as a negotiated outcome, a vector of differing perspectives resolved in the vision of the leader—the person who emerges as having the most influence. This is a marked departure from the way the first principle makes sense of direction. The inclusion of perspectives outside of the leader's means that direction is no longer univocal, a single voice speaking from a single worldview. Instead, the voice is that of a leader who has taken account of other perspectives in articulating a perspective for the group. There is still a unity in the direction, but it is a unity composed of the convergence of parts, the relativizing of differing perspectives into a whole. The discourse of science and engineering is strongly invoked from the perspective of the second principle—direction is a theory of how multiple perspectives can be unified by an overarching perspective.

Commitment is created in the second principle through the negotiation of influence. Participating in this process binds its participants to one another because each person stands to gain (although in practice not everyone does, of course) a double payoff—personal fulfillment and communal or organizational fulfillment. The second principle makes sense of commitment by enlisting the self-interest of individuals and linking it to the accomplishment of

collective work. Commitment from the perspective of the second principle is not follower to leader only, but also leader to follower and follower to follower.

The capacity to frame an adaptive challenge—a challenge requiring fundamental transformations in the community or organization—as a task that can be accomplished by leadership is perhaps the key achievement of the second principle. Such transformation of a community or organization becomes at least possible from the perspective of the second principle. Influence can, after all, be renegotiated, new patterns of understanding and new leaders can emerge. However, as we will see in later chapters, it is in attempting to accomplish this task in the face of unresolvable difference that the second principle encounters a key limitation.

Relational Dialogue. The third principle recognizes leadership as an embracing of differences, an openness to the continuous unfolding of possibility. Direction is therefore multivalent and holds differences without resolving them. It is radically open to multiple interpretations and evaluations and derives its efficacy from this very openness. Such direction comprises ambiguity, uncertainty, and multiple meanings. This requires movement away from the second principle's reliance on the convergent discourses of science and engineering and toward the realm of art, where divergent, ambiguous multiple meanings can be crafted into a sensible, though unresolved, whole. Setting direction is accomplished through shared exploration of deliberately polysemous tools such as narrative, symbol, picture, and metaphor.

Commitment is created and maintained through participation in the shared creation of an unknown future. Whereas in the second principle people commit to one another in the expectation of some personal and communal benefit that is more or less spelled out, in the third principle people commit to the process of crafting a future in which individuals have no way of knowing what the personal outcome will be. Commitment is to transformation toward an unknown future. Letting go of the self, seeking a completion of

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the self in an unknown-but-shared future shapes commitment in the third principle. This may seem unlikely at first and against simple reason with respect to a person's presumed self-interest. But remember that people commit to such unknown potentiality all the time, when they explore and invent, when they innovate and invest, when they fall in love and marry, bear and raise children. We have not in the past seen these forms of commitment as aspects of accomplishing a leadership task. From the perspective of the third principle, they become recognized as such.

Because the third principle recognizes leadership as the crafting of a sensible but unresolved whole out of differing and even conflicting worldviews, its capacity for flexibility of understanding in the face of an adaptive challenge is great. A wide range of possible interpretations and evaluations of worldviews and paradigms is available to the community or organization, coupled with modes of discourse that do not privilege one worldview above another but seek ways forward while holding difference. From the perspective of the third principle, accomplishing the leadership task of facing an adaptive challenge is an ongoing feature of leadership.

Conclusion

I propose that something like these three leadership principles (along with the related ways of interpreting and approaching the leadership tasks) constitutes the totality of what we think of as leadership in any complex community or organization. I propose that a systemic view of leadership, that is, a view of leadership as the property of a social system, is most usefully framed not in terms of a single and ultimately unified phenomenon (social influence, for example), no matter the degree of complexity in that framing, but in terms of distinctly and qualitatively differing shared meaning-making principles.

Table 1.1 summarizes this totality of leadership in terms of the three principles and the three leadership tasks as I have articulated them.

Table 1.1 Summary of Leadership Principles and Leadership Tasks

<i>Principles</i> <i>Tasks</i>	<i>1. Personal Dominance</i>	<i>2. Interpersonal Influence</i>	<i>3. Relational Dialogue</i>
Setting direction	Unified, clear direction that is based in the worldview of the leader.	Direction is based on a negotiation of differences integrated in the leader's perspective.	Direction holds differences and is multivalent.
Creating commitment	Commitment is to the leader personally.	Commitment is to the leader's integrating vision.	Commitment is to the shared crafting of possibilities.
Facing adaptive challenge	An adaptive challenge can be faced to the extent that the leader is pre-disposed.	An adaptive challenge can be faced through a renegotiation of influence.	An adaptive challenge can be faced through dialogue across worldviews.

I hope this brief preview of the ideas presented in this book has invited your curiosity and interest. To repeat, the hypothesis is this: particular thoughts and actions become “leadership” and accomplish leadership tasks because of some underlying and organizing knowledge principle, usually unconsciously held, that affords people a sense that those particular words and actions “simply are” leadership—“I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it.” Different people in a community or organization may understand and recognize leadership from differing perspectives afforded by different leadership principles. These people will tend to disagree with one another not simply on the effectiveness of certain thoughts and actions as leadership, but on the point of whether those thoughts and actions constitute leadership at all. They speak different languages of leadership, in effect. This has critical implications for the accomplishment of the leadership tasks. If there are people who,

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because of the principle from which they view certain thoughts and actions, do not see leadership happening, then for them the leadership tasks cannot be accomplished—for them direction cannot be set, they cannot become committed, they cannot face an adaptive challenge. The purpose of this book is to articulate leadership principles in hopes of helping people in communities and organizations learn to create meaning and accomplish leadership tasks across, not just within, these knowledge principles. The last chapter deals with this question of simultaneously “holding” all three leadership principles within a single community or organization.

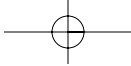
A couple of disclaimers are in order here. First, the leadership principles are not intended in and of themselves to be recipes for effective leadership. As I hope is becoming clear, leadership effectiveness is related more to the sharing of meaning in a community than it is to any particular style or approach to leadership. Thus leadership effectiveness is a matter of developing shared discourses—shared ways of understanding how the leadership tasks can be accomplished—and is not primarily a matter of getting leaders to display certain attitudes or act in certain ways.

When I’m talking with people about these ideas, they often ask me, What does the third principle look like? How would we do this? My answer is invariably unsatisfying, and for good reason: I don’t know. But neither do I know with certainty what the first principle looks like, if we take this to mean that certain words and actions definitely reflect meanings as constructed in the first principle. This is something we can never be sure about based on a view from outside a community. Only by entering into the community and inquiring into the shared meaning-making languages and processes of the community can we find the principle. Principles in practice can take many different forms. I suspect there are forms of the first principle that might look like consensus and total involvement of followers by the leader; likewise there may turn out to be forms of the third principle that look like a dominant leader taking charge. Such forms are not, at any rate, ruled out by the idea of leadership-constituting principles.

Second, I am not claiming that the leadership principles as I articulate them are empirically verifiable as the real and true principles of leadership, or as the only way to articulate leadership principles. This expression of principles is based in my experience of talking to managers and executives in organizations about leadership and leadership development, and my reading about the theory of leadership, its practice and development. Inevitably, then, it is my way of understanding that gives voice to these leadership principles. On the other hand, I do not believe that my way of understanding or my voice is unique or idiosyncratic. My understanding emerges from my participation in a reality that is the co-creation of many people who enact leadership, develop leadership, and think and write about leadership.

Finally, I am not claiming that leadership principles are capable of being expressed universally to all people at all times—in fact, I am pretty sure they are not. It would be interesting for someone from another culture to try to articulate leadership principles in that context. Would we learn that such principles would not cause us in our culture to recognize leadership at all? Or would we find similarities and parallels in how leadership is recognized in differing cultures?

Looking at the plight of Elena and the people of Zoffner Piano Company in terms of leadership knowledge principles, I suggest that one of the things happening at this moment in their history is that a new principle of leadership is being called forth. Mr. Karl and the employees for many years made sense of leadership from the perspective of the first principle. Elena's feeling that she "is not a leader" in the same sense as her father initiates her growing recognition that some different principle of leadership will be required to accomplish the leadership tasks at Zoffner. We will be following along as she and the employees of the company develop what is for them a new way to understand leadership, a new principle. As we will see later on, this is what I am proposing is the foundation for leadership development at a systemic level in a community or organization: the emergence of a new leadership principle in response



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to encountering limits of an existing principle, followed by the integration of existing and new principles. But before we go down that path, let's look more deeply at the principle that Zoffner Piano used to accomplish leadership with such great effect for so many years: the personal dominance principle.

