

# Developing Leadership Skills

## INTRODUCTION

Whether it is playing the guitar, a video game, or the stock market, most of life's activities require us to have skills if we are to be successful. The same is true of leadership—skills are required. As was discussed in the first chapter, leadership skills refer to learned competencies that leaders are able to demonstrate in performance (Katz, 1955). Leadership skills give people the capacity to influence others. They are a critical component in successful leadership.

Even though skills play an essential role in the leadership process, they have received little attention by researchers (Lord & Hall, 2005; T. Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007). Leadership traits rather than leadership skills have been the focus of research for more than 100 years. However, in the past 10 years a shift has occurred, and leadership skills are now receiving far more attention by researchers and practitioners alike (M. Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000; Yammarino, 2000).

Although there are many different leadership skills, they are often considered as groups of skills. In this chapter, leadership skills are grouped into three categories: *administrative skills*, *interpersonal skills*, and *conceptual skills* (see Figure 6.1). The next section describes each group of skills and explores the unique ways they affect the leadership process.

 ASK THE  
AUTHOR  
Leadership  
Skills

 Developing Leadership  
Skills

FIGURE 6.1 Model of Primary Leadership Skills



## ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS EXPLAINED



Women  
Leaders

While often devalued because they are not glamorous or exciting, **administrative skills** play a primary role in effective leadership. Administrative skills help a leader to accomplish the mundane but critically important aspects of showing leadership. Some would even argue that administrative skills are the most fundamental of all the skills required of a leader.

What are administrative skills? Administrative skills refer to those competencies a leader needs to run an organization in order to carry out the organization's purposes and goals. These involve planning, organizing work, assigning the right tasks to the right people, and coordinating work activities (Mann, 1965).

### Administrative Skills in Practice

For purposes of our discussion, administrative skills are divided into three specific sets of skills: (1) managing people, (2) managing resources, and (3) showing technical competence.

### Managing People

Any leader of a for-profit or nonprofit organization, if asked what occupies the most time, will reply, “Managing people.” Few leaders can do without the skill of being able to manage people. The phrase *management by walking around* captures the essence of managing people. An effective leader connects with people and understands the tasks to be done, those skills required to perform them, and the environment in which people work. The best way to know this is to be involved rather than to be a spectator. For a leader to deal effectively with people requires a host of abilities such as helping employees to work as a team, motivating them to do their best, promoting satisfying relationships among employees, and responding to their requests. The leader also needs to find time to deal with urgent staff matters. Staff issues are a daily fact of life for any leader. Staff members come to the leader for advice on what to do about a problem, and the leader needs to respond appropriately.

A leader must also pay attention to recruiting and retaining employees. In addition, leaders need to communicate effectively with their own board of directors, as well as with any external constituencies such as the public, stockholders, or other outside groups that have a stake in the organization.

Consider the leadership of Nate Parker, the director of an after-school recreation program serving 600 kids in a large metropolitan community. Nate’s program is funded by an \$800,000 government grant. It provides academic, fitness, and enrichment activities for underserved children and their families. Nate has managers who assist him in running the after-school program in five different public schools. Nate’s own responsibilities include setting up and running staff meetings, recruiting new staff, updating contracts, writing press releases, working with staff, and establishing relationships with external constituencies. Nate takes great pride in having created a new and strong relationship between the city government and the school district in which he works. Until he came on board, the relationship between the schools and city government was tense. By communicating effectively across groups, Nate was able to bring the entire community together to serve the children. He is now researching the possibility of a citywide system to support after-school programming.

### Managing Resources

Although it is not obvious to others, a leader is often required to spend a significant amount of time addressing resource issues.



Valuable  
Resources



Recruiting  
and Retaining  
Employees

Resources, the lifeblood of an organization, can include people, money, supplies, equipment, space, or anything else needed to operate an organization. Managing resources requires a leader to be competent in both obtaining and allocating resources. Obtaining resources can include a wide range of activities such as ordering equipment, finding work space, or locating funds for special projects. For example, a middle school cross-country coach wanted to replace her team's outdated uniforms, but had no funds to do so. In order to buy new uniforms, the coach negotiated with the athletic director for additional funds. The coach also encouraged several parents in the booster club to sponsor a few successful fund-raisers.

In addition to obtaining resources, a leader may be required to allocate resources for new staff or new incentive programs, or to replace old equipment. While a leader may often engage staff members to assist in managing resources, the ultimate responsibility of resource management rests on the leader. As the sign on President Harry S. Truman's desk read, "The buck stops here."



Motivating  
People

### *Showing Technical Competence*

**Technical competence** involves having specialized knowledge about the work we do or ask others to do. In the case of an organization, it includes understanding the intricacies of how an organization functions. A leader with technical competence has organizational know-how—he or she understands the complex aspects of how the organization works. For example, a university president should be knowledgeable about teaching, research, student recruitment, and student retention; a basketball coach should be knowledgeable about the basics of dribbling, passing, shooting, and rebounding; and a sales manager should have a thorough understanding of the product the salespeople are selling. In short, a leader is more effective when he or she has the knowledge and technical competence about the activities subordinates are asked to perform.



Technical  
Competence

Technical competence is sometimes referred to as "functional competence" because it means a person is competent in a particular function or area. No one is required to be competent in all avenues of life. So, too, a leader is not required to have technical competence in every situation. Having technical skills means being competent in a particular area of work, the area in which one is leading.

The importance of having technical competence can be seen in the example of an orchestra conductor. The conductor's job is to direct rehearsals and performances of the orchestra. To do this, the conductor needs technical competence pertaining to rhythm, music composition, and all the many instruments and how they are played. Technical competence gives the conductor the understanding required to direct the many different musicians to perform together successfully.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS EXPLAINED

In addition to administrative skills, effective leadership requires interpersonal skills (see Figure 6.1). **Interpersonal skills** are people skills—those abilities that help a leader to work effectively with subordinates, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goals. While some people downplay the importance of interpersonal skills or disparage them as “touchy-feely” and inconsequential, leadership research has consistently pointed out the importance of interpersonal skills to effective leadership (Bass, 1990; Blake & McCanse, 1991; Katz, 1955).



Interpersonal  
Skills

### Interpersonal Skills in Practice

Interpersonal skills are divided into three parts: (1) being socially perceptive, (2) showing emotional intelligence, and (3) managing interpersonal conflicts.

#### *Being Socially Perceptive*

To successfully lead an organization toward change, a leader needs to be sensitive to how her or his own ideas fit in with others' ideas. **Social perceptiveness** includes having insight into and awareness of what is important to others, how they are motivated, the problems they face, and how they react to change. It involves understanding the unique needs, goals, and demands of different organizational constituencies (Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991). A leader with social perceptiveness has a keen sense of how employees will respond to any proposed change in the organization. In a sense, you could say a socially perceptive leader has a finger on the pulse of employees on any issue at any time.



Emotional  
and Cultural  
Intelligence

Leadership is about change, and people in organizations often resist change because they like things to stay the same. Novel ideas, different rules, or new ways of doing things are often seen as threatening because they do not fit in with how people are used to things being done. A leader who is socially perceptive can create change more effectively if he or she understands how the proposed change may affect all the people involved.

One example that demonstrates the importance of social perceptiveness is illustrated in the events surrounding the graduation ceremonies at the University of Michigan in the spring of 2008. The university anticipated 5,000 students would graduate, with an expected audience of 30,000. In prior years, the university traditionally held spring graduation ceremonies in the football stadium, which, because of its size, is commonly known as “the Big House.” However, because the stadium was undergoing major renovations, the university was forced to change the venue for graduation and decided to hold the graduation at the outdoor stadium of nearby Eastern Michigan University. When the university announced the change of location, the students, their families, and the university’s alumni responded immediately and negatively. There was upheaval as they made their strong opinions known.

Clearly, the leadership at the university had not perceived the significance to seniors and their families of where graduation ceremonies were to be held. It was tradition to graduate in the Big House, so changing the venue was offensive to many. Phone calls came into the president’s office, and editorials appeared in the press. Students did not want to graduate on the campus of another university. They thought that they deserved to graduate on their own campus. Some students, parents, and alumni even threatened to withhold future alumni support.

To correct the situation, the university again changed the venue. Instead of holding the graduation at Eastern Michigan University, the university spent \$1.8 million to set up a temporary outdoor stage in the center of campus, surrounded by the University of Michigan’s classroom buildings and libraries. The graduating students and their families were pleased that the ceremonies took place where their memories and traditions were so strong. The university ultimately was successful because it adapted to the deeply held beliefs of its students and their families. Clearly, if the university had been more socially perceptive at the outset, the initial dissatisfaction and upheaval that arose could have been avoided.

## LEADERSHIP SNAPSHOT: Coquese Washington, head coach, Penn State women's basketball



It was apparent early on that Coquese Washington had skills that would take her places. She

grew up in Flint, Michigan, where she played seven musical instruments in high school, was an All-State selection for girls' basketball two years in a row, and was awarded a scholarship to attend Notre Dame. She finished Notre Dame in three years, earning a bachelor's degree in history. After taking a year off to be a high school special education teacher in her hometown, she returned to her alma mater to earn a juris doctorate from the Notre Dame Law School.

But where she ended up . . . well, not even she saw that coming.

Washington was a gifted basketball player, and although she excelled at the sport in high school and it is what brought her to play at Notre Dame, she says her dream was always to practice law.

But after law school, she took a left turn, being recruited and chosen to play for the Portland Power of the ABL (American Basketball League), a short-lived women's professional basketball league. A year later she joined the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association), playing first for the New York Liberty and then moving to Houston, helping the Comets win the WNBA title. She was traded to the Indiana Fever

and guided that team to its first ever play-off berth, becoming the first player in WNBA history to lead three different teams to the postseason tournament.

Former teammate Rebecca Lobo describes Washington as "a smart teammate who liked to learn. She could fit in with any crowd and had everyone's respect because she could blend without compromising who she was" (Haverbeck, 2007).

The WNBA season is in the summer, which allowed Washington to begin coaching at Notre Dame as an assistant under her former coach Muffet McGraw in the off-season. "She did not have any experience, but I thought she'd be great at it," McGraw says. "I wanted to give her that opportunity and just see if I could try to talk her into trying it out and she was just good at it. I think she found her passion" (McKenna, 2013).

It was also during this time that Washington's legal skills were called into action. She had been working as an attorney for a New York law firm, so when the WNBA players decided to form a union, she brought her litigation skills to the effort. She became the founding president of the WNBA Players' Association and negotiated the players' first collective bargaining agreement. Lobo said that Washington was "a godsend" during the negotiations. "She was levelheaded and bright and also had her law degree" (Haverbeck, 2007).

It was in law school that she learned to research, analyze situations, and develop strategies, and Washington admits she always thought she



Coquese Washington

(Continued)

would return to being a lawyer, but somewhere along the way that changed.

“I thought ‘Man, I like coaching, you know. I like the relationships that I have with the players. I like being in the gym,’” Washington said. “I loved basketball. I love being around basketball. I never thought I would enjoy coaching as much as I have, but I really do enjoy it” (McKenna, 2013).

In 2007, Washington was tapped to be the head coach of Penn State’s women’s basketball team. Her success there has been steady; by 2013, she led the Lady Lions to three consecutive appearances at the NCAA Women’s Division I Basketball Championships.

But the winning isn’t what’s keeping Washington on the court. It’s the opportunity to be a mentor and leader to her players.

“Mentoring them and helping them learn to become powerful, dynamic women—that’s the thing I love best of all.

“We use basketball as a vehicle, but I’m probably most proud of our kids’ ability to achieve. I’ve learned over the years that that is a skill that’s developed, not something you’re born with. Perseverance, persistence, belief—there are so many skills that have to be nurtured to become an achiever” (Nilsen, 2009).

It’s a philosophy her players respond to. “I think the biggest thing that coach does is not only tell us what to do, she does it herself,” says Penn State player Alex Bentley. “She has been through the WNBA, she has been through coaching at the top institutions already. She knows the game and I have been picking her brain ever since I was a freshman stepping on the court.

“She is the epitome of a great woman. We just see that and want to be like that, she is a role model and a mentor. Us as women, we want to be like that one day” (McKenna, 2013).

### *Showing Emotional Intelligence*

Another important skill for a leader is being able to show emotional intelligence. Although emotional intelligence emerged as a concept less than 20 years ago, it has captivated the interests of many scholars and practitioners of leadership (Caruso & Wolfe, 2004; Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1995). **Emotional intelligence** is concerned with a person’s ability to understand his or her own and others’ emotions, and then to apply this understanding to life’s tasks. Specifically, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to manage emotions effectively within oneself and in relationships with others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

The underlying premise of research on emotional intelligence is that people who are sensitive to their own emotions and the impact their emotions have on others will be more effective leaders. Since showing



Leader Emotional  
Intelligence



emotional intelligence is positively related to effective leadership, what should a leader do to enhance his or her emotional skills?

First, leaders need to work on *becoming aware* of their own emotions, taking their emotional pulse, and identifying their feelings as they happen. Whether it is mad, glad, sad, or scared, a leader needs to assess constantly how he or she is feeling and what is causing those feelings.

Second, a leader should train to become aware of the emotions of others. A leader who knows how to read others' emotions is better equipped to respond appropriately to these people's wants and needs. Stated another way, a leader needs to have empathy for others. He or she should understand the feelings of others as if those feelings were his or her own. Salovey and Mayer (1990) suggested that empathy is the critical component of emotional intelligence. Empathy, and how to demonstrate it, is discussed further in Chapter 9, "Listening to Out-Group Members."

Third, a leader needs to learn how to regulate his or her emotions and put them to good use. Whenever a leader makes a substantial decision, the leader's emotions are involved. Therefore, emotions need to be embraced and managed for the good of the group or organization. When a leader is sensitive to others and manages his or her own emotions appropriately, that leader increases the chances that the group's decisions will be effective. For example, a high school principal sensed that she was becoming extremely angry with some students who pulled a prank during an assembly. Instead of expressing her anger—"losing it"—she maintained her composure and helped to turn the prank into a learning experience. The key point here is that people with emotional intelligence understand emotions and incorporate these in what they do as leaders. To summarize, a leader with emotional intelligence listens to his or her own feelings and the feelings of others, and is adept at regulating these emotions in service of the common good.

### *Handling Conflict*

A leader also needs to have skill in handling conflict. Conflict is inevitable. Conflict creates the need *for* change and occurs as the result *of* change. Conflict can be defined as a struggle between two or more individuals over perceived differences regarding substantive issues (e.g., the correct procedure to follow) or over perceived differences regarding relational issues (e.g., the amount of control each



How to  
Manage Conflict

individual has within a relationship). When confronted with conflict, leaders and followers often feel uncomfortable because of the strain, controversy, and stress that accompany conflict. Although conflict is uncomfortable, it is not unhealthy, nor is it necessarily bad. If conflict is managed in effective and productive ways, the result is a reduction of stress, an increase in creative problem solving, and a strengthening of leader-follower and team-member relationships.

Because conflicts are usually very complex, and addressing them is never simple, Chapter 10, “Handling Conflict,” provides a more thorough examination of the components of conflict and offers several practical communication approaches that a leader can take to constructively resolve differences.

## CONCEPTUAL SKILLS EXPLAINED

Whereas administrative skills are about organizing work, and interpersonal skills are about dealing effectively with people, **conceptual skills** are about working with concepts and ideas. Conceptual skills involve the thinking or cognitive aspects of leadership and are critical to such things as creating a vision or strategic plan for an organization. A leader with conceptual skills is able to conceive and communicate the ideas that shape an organization from its goals and mission to how to best solve problems.

### Conceptual Skills in Practice

Conceptual skills for leaders can be divided into three parts: (1) problem solving, (2) strategic planning, and (3) creating vision.

#### *Problem Solving*

We all know people who are especially good at problem solving. When something goes wrong or needs to be fixed, they are the first ones to jump in and address the problem. Problem solvers do not sit idly by when there are problems. They are quick to ask, “What went wrong?” and they are ready to explore possible answers to “How can it be fixed?” Problem-solving skills are essential for effective leadership.

What are problem-solving skills? **Problem-solving skills** refer to a leader’s cognitive ability to take corrective action in a problem



Problem-Solving  
Skills

situation in order to meet desired objectives. The skills include identifying the problem, generating alternative solutions, selecting the best solution from among the alternatives, and implementing that solution. These skills do not function in a vacuum, but are carried out in a particular setting or context.

TABLE 6.1 Steps in Problem Solving

1. Identify the problem
2. Generate alternative solutions
3. Select the best solution
4. Implement the solution

**Step 1: Identify the problem.** The first step in the problem-solving process is to identify or recognize the problem. The importance of this step cannot be understated. Seeing a problem and addressing it is at the core of successful problem solving. All of us are confronted with many problems every day, but some of us fail to see those problems or even to admit that they exist. Others may recognize that something is wrong but then do nothing about it. People with problem-solving skills see problems and address them.

Some problems are simple and easy to define, while others are complex and demand a great deal of scrutiny. Problems arise when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens. Identifying the problem requires awareness of these differences. The questions we ask in this phase of problem solving are “What is the problem?” “Are there multiple aspects to it?” and “What caused it?” Identifying the exact nature of the problem precedes everything else in the problem-solving process.

**Step 2: Generate alternative solutions.** After identifying the problem and its cause or causes, the next step in problem solving is to generate alternative solutions where there is more than one possible resolution to the problem. Because problems are often complex, there are usually many different ways of trying to correct them. During this phase of problem solving, it is important to consider as many solutions as possible and not dismiss any as unworthy. For example, consider a person with a major health concern (e.g., cancer



or multiple sclerosis). There are often many ways to treat the illness, but before choosing a course of treatment it is important to consult a health professional and explore all the treatment options. Every treatment has different side effects and different probabilities for curing the illness. Before choosing an option, people often want to be sure that they have fully considered all of the possible treatment options. The same is true in problem solving. Before going forward, it is important to consider all the available options for dealing with a problem.

**Step 3: Select the best solution.** The next step in problem solving is to select the best solution to the problem. Solutions usually differ in how well they address a particular problem, so the relative strengths and weaknesses of each solution need to be addressed. Some solutions are straightforward and easy to enact, while others are complex or difficult to manage. Similarly, some solutions are inexpensive while others are costly. Many criteria can be used to judge the value of a particular solution as it applies to a given problem. Selecting the best solution is the key to solving a problem effectively.

The importance of selecting the best solution can be illustrated in a hypothetical example of a couple with marital difficulties. Having struggled in their marriage for more than 2 years, the couple decides that they must do something to resolve the conflict in their relationship. Included in the list of what they could do are attend marital counseling, receive individual psychiatric therapy, separate, date other people even though they are married, and file for divorce. Each of these solutions would have a different impact on what happens to the couple and their marital relationship. While not exhaustive, the list highlights the importance in problem solving of selecting the best solution to a given problem. The solutions we choose have a major impact on how we feel about the outcome of our problem solving.

**Step 4: Implement the solution.** The final step in problem solving is implementing the solution. Having defined the problem and selected a solution, it is time to put the solution into action. Implementing the solution involves shifting from thinking about the problem to doing something about the problem. It is a challenging step: It is not uncommon to meet with resistance from others when trying to do something new and different to solve a problem. Implementing

change requires communicating with others about the change, and adapting the change to the wants and needs of those being affected by the change. Of course, there is always the possibility that the chosen solution will fail to address the problem; it might even make the problem worse. Nevertheless, there is no turning back at this phase. There is always a risk in implementing change, but it is a risk that must be taken to complete the problem-solving process.

To clarify what is meant by problem-solving skills, consider the following example of John and Kristen Smith and their troublesome dishwasher. The Smiths' dishwasher was 5 years old, and the dishes were no longer coming out clean and sparkling. Analyzing the situation, the Smiths determined that the problem could be related to several possible causes: their use of liquid instead of powdered dish detergent, a bad seal on the door of the dishwasher, ineffective water softener, misloading of the dishwasher, or a defective water heater. Not knowing what the problem was, John thought they should implement all five possible solutions at once. Kristen disagreed, and suggested they address one possible solution at a time to determine the cause. The first solution they tried was to change the dish detergent, but this did not fix the problem. Next, they changed the seal on the door of the dishwasher—and this solved the problem. By addressing the problem carefully and systematically, the Smiths were able to find the cause of the dishwasher malfunction and to save themselves a great deal of money. Their problem-solving strategy was effective.

### *Strategic Planning*

A second major kind of conceptual skill is **strategic planning**. Like problem solving, strategic planning is mainly a cognitive activity. A leader needs to be able to think and consider ideas to develop effective strategies for a group or an organization. Being strategic requires developing careful plans of action based on the available resources and personnel to achieve a goal. It is similar to what generals do in wartime: They make elaborate plans of how to defeat the enemy given their resources, personnel, and the mission they need to accomplish. Similarly, athletic coaches take their knowledge of their players and their abilities to create game plans for how to best compete with the opposing team. In short, strategic planning is about designing a plan of action to achieve a desired goal.



Strategic Planning

In their analysis of research on strategic leadership, Boal and Hooijberg (2000) suggested that strategic leaders need to have the ability to learn, the capacity to adapt, and managerial wisdom. The *ability to learn* includes the capability to absorb new information and apply it toward new goals. It is a willingness to experiment with new ideas and even to accept failures. The *capacity to adapt* is about being able to respond quickly to changes in the environment. A leader needs to be open to and accepting of change. When competitive conditions change, an effective leader will have the capacity to change. Having *managerial wisdom* refers to possessing a deep understanding of the people with whom and the environment in which a leader works. It is about having the good sense to make the right decisions at the right time, and to do so with the best interests of everyone involved.

To illustrate the complexity of strategic planning, consider the following example of how NewDevices, a startup medical supply company, used strategic thinking to promote itself. NewDevices developed a surgical scanner to help surgical teams reduce errors during surgery. Although there were no such scanners on the market at that time, two companies were developing a similar product. The potential market for the product was enormous and included all the hospitals in the United States (almost 8,000 hospitals). Because it was clear that all hospitals would eventually need this scanner, NewDevices knew it was going to be in a race to capture the market ahead of the other companies.

NewDevices was a small company with limited resources, so management was well aware of the importance of strategic planning. Any single mistake could threaten the survival of the company. Because everyone at NewDevices, including the sales staff, owned stock in the company, everyone was strongly motivated to work to make the company succeed. Sales staff members were willing to share effective sales approaches with each other because, rather than being in competition, they had a common goal.

Every Monday morning the management team met for 3 hours to discuss the goals and directions for the company. Much time was spent on framing the argument for why hospitals needed the NewDevices scanner more than its competitors' scanners. To make this even more challenging, the NewDevices scanner was more expensive than the competition, although it was also safer. NewDevices chose to sell

the product by stressing that it could save money in the long run for hospitals because it was safer and would reduce the incidence of malpractice cases.

Managers also developed strategies about how to persuade hospitals to sign on to their product. They contacted hospitals to inquire as to whom they should direct their pitch for the new product. Was it the director of surgical nursing or some other hospital administrator? In addition, they analyzed how they should allocate the company's limited resources. Should they spend more money on enhancing their website? Did they need a director of advertising? Should they hire more sales representatives? All of these questions were the subject of much analysis and debate. NewDevices knew the stakes were very high; if management slipped even once, the company would fail.

This example illustrates that strategic planning is a multifaceted process. By planning strategically, however, leaders and their employees can increase the likelihood of reaching their goals and achieving the aims of the organization.

### *Creating Vision*

Similar to strategic planning, creating vision takes a special kind of cognitive and conceptual ability. It requires the capacity to challenge people with compelling visions of the future. To create vision, a leader needs to be able to set forth a picture of a future that is better than the present, and then move others toward a new set of ideals and values that will lead to the future. A leader must be able to articulate the vision and engage others in its pursuit. Furthermore, the leader needs to be able to implement the vision and model the principles set forth in the vision. A leader with a vision has to “walk the walk,” and not just “talk the talk.” Building vision is an important leadership skill and one that receives extensive discussion in Chapter 7, “Creating a Vision.”

## SUMMARY

In recent years, the study of leadership skills has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners alike. Skills are essential



Leadership Development

to being an effective leader. Unlike traits that are innate, leadership skills are *learned* competencies. Everyone can learn to acquire leadership skills. In this chapter, we considered three types of leadership skills: administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills.

Often thought of as unexciting, *administrative skills* play a primary role in effective leadership. These are the skills a leader needs to run the organization and carry out its purposes. These are the skills needed to plan and organize work. Specifically, administrative skills include managing people, managing resources, and showing technical competence.

A second type of skills is *interpersonal skills*, or people skills. These are the competencies that a leader needs to work effectively with subordinates, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goals. Research has shown unequivocally that interpersonal skills are of fundamental importance to effective leadership. Interpersonal skills can be divided into being socially perceptive, showing emotional intelligence, and managing interpersonal conflict.

A leader also needs *conceptual skills*. Conceptual skills have to do with working with concepts and ideas. These are cognitive skills that emphasize the thinking ability of a leader. Although these cover a wide array of competencies, conceptual skills in this chapter are divided into problem solving, strategic planning, and creating vision.

In summary, administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual skills play a major role in effective leadership. Through practice and hard work, we can all become better leaders by improving our skills in each of these areas.



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## 6.1 CASE STUDY

### Sweet Caroline's

It started with cupcakes. As a teacher at Oak Park Elementary, Caroline would often make cupcakes for the school's teachers and staff. Everyone raved about her baking expertise, and a colleague asked Caroline to make cupcakes for her son's birthday party. The treats were such a hit that many of the parents at the party asked Caroline for her phone number, and she quickly found herself baking for multiple parties a week.

After a year of baking for private parties, an opportunity arose for Caroline to take her business to the next level. After a local coffee shop went out of business, Caroline signed a contract for its space and opened Sweet Caroline's, a bakery featuring her cupcakes, muffins, Danish, and other baked goods.

Starting small with birthday parties and graduations and growing to wedding receptions and banquets, Sweet Caroline's quickly became the most sought-after caterer in the city. As the demand for catering cupcakes and cakes outside of regular business hours grew, Caroline expanded her staff and the services they offered. In just five years, Sweet Caroline's morphed from a small bakery into a full-service restaurant and catering company.

Although Caroline had no plans of ever going into business, Sweet Caroline's has been very successful. Caroline is very personable and genuine, which has been instrumental in creating a large and loyal customer base. Furthermore, Caroline's intuitive sense for how to tailor her services to fit the needs of the community has fueled the company's growth. Despite her success, however, Caroline has struggled with certain aspects of running Sweet Caroline's.

Now five years after Sweet Caroline's opened, it has become a highly complex operation to keep organized. Caroline's staff has grown to 40 employees, some who work in the bakery, some in the restaurant, and some in both places. There are five drivers who deliver cupcakes, cakes, and other catered goods to private parties and businesses six days a week. In addition, Caroline runs weekly ads in the local media, on the radio, and on the Web. Her 22-year-old daughter manages the company's Facebook page and Twitter account, which boasts more than 3,000 followers.

Caroline is a skilled baker, but she is finding that the demands of her growing business and client base are creating challenges that are out of her area of expertise. Many of these fall into the administrative area where she hasn't the patience or knowledge to deal with detail-oriented aspects of managing her business.

For example, Dale, Sweet Caroline's delivery driver, is often frustrated because the company does not have a system for how orders are to be delivered throughout the city. Dale worked for another company that had a "zone system" so that each driver delivered all orders in one specific area on a given day. In addition, Caroline has opted not to use computers at her company, so all delivery orders are written by hand and then rewritten on clipboards for the drivers when the order is ready. There are often mistakes including duplicate deliveries or a delivery that gets missed completely.

Caroline also struggles with scheduling. Employees' work schedules are developed the weekend before the start of a workweek so that employees often are unaware of their upcoming shifts. As a result, Sweet Caroline's

is constantly understaffed. The food and baked goods are so good that patrons rarely complain about the wait, but staff members get frustrated with the lack of notice regarding their schedules, the lack of staffing, and the stresses these issues cause.

When it comes to catering events, there is often chaos as Caroline chooses to work on food preparation, while leaving staff members, who are not trained to do so, to plan the events, manage client concerns and issues, and execute the event. While the quality of the food is consistently superb, clients are often surprised by the disorganized style of the catering staff. The staff feels it, too; many have commented that they feel like they are “running blind” when it comes to the events because Caroline gives very little direction and is often not around to help when issues arise.

Caroline, however, has a good working rapport with her staff, and they acknowledge that Sweet Caroline’s can be a fun place to work. For her part, Caroline knows that working in a

bakery can be difficult and demanding, and she consistently praises the efforts and dedication of her staff members. Caroline is also very good about pitching in and working with staff on the production of cupcakes, cakes, and food items, working side-by-side with them on big orders, while providing them with positive encouragement.

Caroline truly enjoys the novelty of being a business owner and handles all the accounting and payroll duties for the company. Unfortunately, this aspect of the job is becoming more demanding, and Caroline spends an increasing amount of time on these duties, leaving more and more of the day-to-day operations and catering to her staff.

Caroline has been approached about opening a second Sweet Caroline’s in a neighboring town, and while she would like to build on her success, she already feels overwhelmed at times by her current operation and is not sure she can take on more. But she also knows the opportunity to expand won’t last forever.

## Questions

1. Based on the Model of Primary Leadership Skills (Figure 6.1), how would you describe Caroline’s skills? In what skills is she strongest, and in what skills is she weakest?
2. Sweet Caroline’s bakery and restaurant seemed to emerge out of nowhere. What role did Caroline play in this? Do you think Caroline could improve her business with more strategic planning?
3. Have you ever worked at a place that was very successful but felt quite chaotic and disorganized? How did you handle it?
4. If you were a consultant to Caroline, would you recommend she open a second location? If so, what three specific skills would you have Caroline develop in order to help manage her business better?

## 6.2 LEADERSHIP SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

### Purpose

1. To identify your leadership skills
2. To provide a profile of your leadership skills showing your strengths and weaknesses

### Directions

1. Place yourself in the role of a leader when responding to this questionnaire.
2. For each of the statements below, circle the number that indicates the degree to which you feel the statement is true.

Statements	Not true	Seldom true	Occasionally true	Somewhat true	Very true
1. I am effective with the detailed aspects of my work.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am effective at problem solving.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Filling out forms and working with details come easily for me.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When problems arise, I immediately address them.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Managing people and resources is one of my strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am able to sense the emotional undercurrents in my group.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Seeing the big picture comes easily for me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. In my work, I enjoy responding to people's requests and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I use my emotional energy to motivate others.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Making strategic plans for my company appeals to me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Obtaining and allocating resources is a challenging aspect of my job.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The key to successful conflict resolution is respecting my opponent.	1	2	3	4	5



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## 6.2 LEADERSHIP SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

(continued)

Statements	Not true	Seldom true	Occasionally true	Somewhat true	Very true
15. I enjoy discussing organizational values and philosophy.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I am effective at obtaining resources to support our programs.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I work hard to find consensus in conflict situations.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am flexible about making changes in our organization.	1	2	3	4	5

### Scoring

1. Sum the responses on items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16 (administrative skill score).
2. Sum the responses on items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17 (interpersonal skill score).
3. Sum the responses on items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 (conceptual skill score).

### Total Scores

Administrative skill: \_\_\_\_\_

Interpersonal skill: \_\_\_\_\_

Conceptual skill: \_\_\_\_\_

### Scoring Interpretation

The Leadership Skills Questionnaire is designed to measure three broad types of leadership skills: administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual. By comparing your scores, you can determine where you have leadership strengths and where you have leadership weaknesses.

If your score is 26–30, you are in the very high range.

If your score is 21–25, you are in the high range.

If your score is 16–20, you are in the moderate range.

If your score is 11–15, you are in the low range.

If your score is 6–10, you are in the very low range.

### Building Your Leadership Profile

If you have the interactive eBook version of this text, log in to access the Leadership Profile Tool. After completing this chapter's questionnaire, you will receive individualized feedback and practical suggestions for further strengthening your leadership based on your responses in this questionnaire.

## 6.3 OBSERVATIONAL EXERCISE

### Leadership Skills

#### Purpose

1. To develop an understanding of different types of leadership skills
2. To examine how leadership skills affect a leader's performance

#### Directions

1. Your task in this exercise is to observe a leader and evaluate that person's leadership skills. This leader can be a supervisor, a manager, a coach, a teacher, a fraternity or sorority officer, or anyone who has a position that involves leadership.
2. For each of the groups of skills listed below, write what you observed about this leader.

Name of leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative skills	1	2	3	4	5
Managing people	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Managing resources	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Showing technical competence	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good

Comments:

Interpersonal skills	1	2	3	4	5
Being socially perceptive	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Showing emotional intelligence	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Managing conflict	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good

Comments:



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## 6.3 OBSERVATIONAL EXERCISE

(continued)

Conceptual skills	1	2	3	4	5
Problem solving	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Strategic planning	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Creating vision	Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Comments:					

### Questions

1. Based on your observations, what were the leader's strengths and weaknesses?
2. In what setting did this leadership example occur? Did the setting influence the kind of skills that the leader used? Discuss.
3. If you were coaching this leader, what specific things would you tell this leader about how he or she could improve leadership skills? Discuss.
4. In another situation, do you think this leader would exhibit the same strengths and weaknesses? Discuss.

## 6.4 REFLECTION AND ACTION WORKSHEET

### Leadership Skills

#### Reflection

1. Based on what you know about yourself and the scores you received on the Leadership Skills Questionnaire in the three areas (administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual), how would you describe your leadership skills? Which specific skills are your strongest, and which are your weakest? What impact do you think your leadership skills could have on your role as a leader? Discuss.
2. This chapter suggests that emotional intelligence is an interpersonal leadership skill. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with this assumption. As you think about your own leadership, how do your emotions help or hinder your role as a leader? Discuss.
3. This chapter divides leadership into three kinds of skills (administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual). Do you think some of these skills are more important than others in some kinds of situations? Do you think lower levels of leadership (e.g., supervisor) require the same skills as upper levels of leadership (e.g., CEO)? Discuss.

#### Action

1. One unique aspect of leadership skills is that they can be practiced. List and briefly describe three things you could do to improve your administrative skills.
2. Leaders need to be *socially perceptive*. As you assess yourself in this area, identify two specific actions that would help you become more perceptive of other people and their viewpoints. Discuss.
3. What kind of problem solver are you? Are you slow or quick to address problem situations? Overall, what two things could you change about yourself to be a more effective problem solver?



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