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Healthy Leadership: A Better Path to Business Success

An interview with Bob Rosen, Author of Grounded: How Leaders Stay Rooted in an Uncertain World

In our efforts to be successful, leaders have "lost perspective," according to Bob Rosen, author of the new book Grounded: How Leaders Stay Rooted in an Uncertain World.

"We focus way too much on what we need to do in the short term to get results, sabotaging the long term of who we are as healthy human beings," says Rosen.

Rosen is a CEO advisor, organizational psychologist, and founder of Healthy Companies International. In *Grounded*, Rosen presents the research-based Healthy Leader Model to help leaders become more self-aware, develop their untapped potential and, in turn, drive significantly better results and solve complex problems.

Rosen recently spoke with CCL about his book and the six dimensions of healthy leadership that predict a leader's effectiveness.

CCL: Why did you write *Grounded*?

Rosen: All of my books have looked at leadership through the integration of business and psychology. This book is a deeper, more personal, more holistic model of leadership that is sustainable and effective. I argue that we need to shift our paradigm from "what we do drives who we are" to "who we are as people drive what we do in business."

This shift is important because of changes facing leaders today, and because we have a personal and public emergency in leadership. We are not solving the problems we need to solve.

CCL: Where does the idea of healthy leadership come from?

Rosen: We created the Healthy Leader Model from our research — both qualitative and quantitative. We developed a 360 assessment and found that each of the six dimensions of health predicts leadership performance — and one of the attributes, spiritual health, surprisingly predicted performance more than the others. So, we are on solid ground in saying who you are as a human being really does drive what you do as a leader.

CCL: Touch on the six dimensions of leader health: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, vocational, spiritual.

Rosen: First, just like the health of your body, these six elements operate like an interconnected system. You have to have them all in some way to be a healthy leader.

Each month the Premium subscribers of *Leading Effectively* have access to an

interview with a thought leader, author or expert. Through these interviews, we offer different perspectives on topics related to leadership. Featured in the December, 2013 issue was author Bob Rosen.



Let's start with *physical health*. This addresses the issue of rapid change and the need for agility and balance in our lives. If you are not physically healthy, it is easier to get overwhelmed by the demands of leadership. Healthy leaders learn to manage their energy and stress and how to revive and rejuvenate themselves.

The second area is *emotional health*, which is how you feel. This involves deep self-awareness. Emotionally healthy leaders lean toward positive emotions and they manage well the negative emotions. Emotionally healthy leaders are also resilient. They have the ability to bounce back, to be calm and collected through adversity. Having emotional health gives us the confidence and the courage to navigate through all the uncertainty around us.

The third dimension is *intellectual health*, which is how you think — and it's a prescription for dealing with complexity. Intellectual health starts with deep curiosity. Then intellectually healthy leaders translate that curiosity into having an adaptive mindset — the ability to see your mental models and transform or reinvent or change them. The third part of intellectual health is moving toward paradoxical thinking — holding opposing forces in your mind at the same time. Are you realistic and optimistic? Are you confident with your own power and yet humble enough to listen and learn from others?

Next is *social health* — this is all about relationships and how we interact. In the new world order, intimacy and integrity and authenticity and connection really matter. You need leaders who are very comfortable living in a very transparent environment and being vulnerable. Be present and authentic. Develop relationships that are mutually rewarding. Create and maintain nourishing communities.

The fifth area is *vocational health*, which is how you perform. It starts with leaders who are in touch with what enables, inspires and motivates them to work. Vocationally healthy leaders also have a deep commitment to self-improvement and a drive for achievement. It's not an obsessive drive for winning; it's a drive to succeed.

Lastly is *spiritual health*. This is not so much your relationship to God or religion in the traditional sense, although some people develop their spiritual health around that. Spiritual health is how you see the world. Are you globally connected? Do you feel that you are part of something bigger than yourself? Do you show generosity of spirit and gratitude?

CCL: And, you say, spiritual health is the strongest predictor of performance?

Rosen: These six dimensions of leadership health and the three roots underneath them form the system of leadership health, of who leaders are; and we have found that those leaders who excel in more of those roots are not only better people, they are more fulfilled in their life and they are much better performers. In the 360 assessment, all six predicted leadership performance, but the strongest predictor was spiritual health.

CCL: Help us tie individual leader health to having a positive impact on our companies and organizations. If we are strong in the six dimensions, what changes?

Rosen: In our advising executives, developing leaders and research, we noticed that those six dimensions defining who you are connect to six actions healthy leaders take. They:

- Tap into a higher purpose for their team or company.
- Forge a shared direction.
- Foster productive relationships.
- Unleash human energy.
- Seize new opportunities.
- Drive high performance.

These actions are pretty consistent with what most large companies and research have defined as high-performance organizations. So health equals success.