



Successful leadership is achieved by nurturing a leader's healthy underlying qualities—or roots—and personal characteristics.

HEALTHY leaders




BY BOB ROSEN AND KATHIE ROSS

From the stepped-up pace of technological advances to the effects of intensifying globalization, leaders face a world more complex and volatile than ever before. But the skills needed to meet these escalating challenges are significantly different from those that were required previously.

In fact, today's tumultuous times call for a dramatically recast leadership model. Quite simply, the old approach is broken, incapable of meeting today's demands. As a result, there's a steep gap between the leaders we have and the leaders we need.

As it happens, trainers are on the front lines of this leadership crisis, positioned to play an urgent and crucial role in helping organizations adapt. Although leadership can't be taught, it can be learned—and trainers are uniquely positioned to create successful opportunities for this learning. What's more, the lessons are relevant to all individuals in an organization.



HEALTHY LEADERS ARE ABLE TO CONVERT HARD WORK INTO REAL RESULTS, REACH THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL, AND SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS IN THE ORGANIZATION.

The foundation of great leadership

The problem with the old leadership model is that it has a fundamentally flawed focus—a counter-productive emphasis on short-term results and behavior. But extensive research with 500 CEOs in 50 countries during the past two decades has shown that the real issue stems from something much deeper: certain essential underlying qualities—or roots—forming the foundation of great, healthy leadership. In other words, it's who we are that determines what we do and, ultimately, drives performance. Leaders grounded by these crucial roots can make tough decisions, forge bonds of trust, motivate others, and thrive in today's environment.

Why? When people focus on the roots of who they are, they can better align their personal emotions and thoughts with their behavior. Leaders who pay attention to and develop the roots of their personal health have a clarity and honesty about who they are and what they can accomplish. They know to measure themselves by what's inside, not by the flashy, superficial exterior. The result is a leadership that is highly personal, deeply grounded, and strong enough

to handle the pressures of relentless change—without resorting to a style that leaves a person arrogant, drained, or fearful.

For trainers, the implications are clear: They need to understand the crucial personal qualities that lie at the foundation of great leadership and how best to nurture these roots. At the same time, the approach needs to be highly personalized, calling for great flexibility on the part of trainers. What may be well suited to one person may not be optimally effective for someone else.

With that in mind, we've pinpointed six critical personal characteristics or dimensions needed for successful leadership—physical, emotional, intellectual, social, vocational, and spiritual health—along with important ways trainers can help leaders grow.

Physical health

It may sound basic, but leaders need to be in good shape physically. Without that, they lack the energy and stamina needed to meet the fierce demands of a world experiencing constant upheaval. Also important is understanding the interconnected systems of mind and body, an awareness that real health requires the two to work together as a whole. And physical health involves a long-term strategy for maintaining resilience.

What trainers can do: Introduce wellness programs that reward employees for taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Such efforts, which generally should start with a health risk assessment, provide an incentive to people at all levels of an organization to reduce the risk of getting sick. Reinforce the importance of a healthy lifestyle by offering healthy meals and snacks, frequent breaks, and movement throughout training events.

Emotional health

Effective leaders can stay optimistic and stop negative feelings from clouding their judgment, while not allowing themselves to get carried away by enthusiasm. At the same time, they understand their strengths and weaknesses clearly and without self-recrimination—not an easy feat in a society that values action over introspec-

tion. They also embrace uncertainty, perhaps the central characteristic of today's world.

An emotionally healthy leader, comfortable living in an environment of ambiguity, is able to bounce back from adversity quickly—a resilience that is essential for navigating in the face of uncertainty. In fact, perhaps the one quality that is most important to leadership success is a belief in the power of adaptability and an acceptance of change.

New scientific findings back us up on this. Take the concept of neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to rewire itself. Scientists have shown that we can remake the brain's architecture through repetition, which underscores the healthy leader's belief in the ability to change.

What trainers can do: Implement consistent feedback and development plans that are tailored to the needs of the individual, and accomplish several vital goals: foster self-awareness, provide opportunities to practice and strengthen new ways of looking at the world, and help leaders stay upbeat, while controlling potentially destructive negative (or positive) emotions.

Intellectual health

In the face of lightning-quick change and increasing complexity, leaders need to approach situations with a level of nuance that might not have been necessary before. That calls for intellectual health, which is at the foundation of a leader's ability to evaluate the difficult issues she tackles every day and, ultimately, to make sound decisions. And it helps people address potentially contradictory or paradoxical information, synthesize it, and come up with a conclusion.

With greater clarity also comes a heightened ability to innovate quickly and evaluate new circumstances. More than that, in the current environment, intellectual health requires a different approach to analysis: Instead of emphasizing the usual linear thinking, which attempts to apply logic and rules to all situations, leaders need to adopt a more flexible approach, one that requires them to question themselves, as well as others, and consider ideas from a variety of angles.

Healthy Roots Means Grounded Leadership Outcomes

The roots of healthy leadership make successful action possible. In fact, it's leaders with these qualities who can take the critical steps needed to meet today's challenges. Here are the actions:

Tapping into a higher purpose. By doing so, leaders inspire their people to feel that their actions matter. But it requires creating a culture of trust and connection.

Forging a shared direction. Drawing on their authenticity, ability to build trust, and keen intellectual powers of analysis, healthy leaders are able to unite the organization around a common goal.

Fostering productive relationships. Forming the relationships that are the lifeblood of any successful business requires having all six roots operating at full speed. For example, social health helps leaders to empathize with different people, while emotional health provides the self-awareness needed to form strong connections.

Unleashing human potential. Thanks to their social, intellectual, emotional, and vocational health, successful leaders know how to engage their people and encourage them to work to their full potential.

Seizing new opportunities. Pursuing, say, a new strategy or an unfamiliar market requires a mix of decisiveness, curiosity, the ability to inspire others, and a willingness to take chances, among other qualities.

Driving high performance. Leaders need to draw on all their roots to drive high performance throughout the organization. For example: With physical health, they have the stamina to respond to fast-moving circumstances; emotional health gives them the resilience and optimism needed to inspire action in others; and intellectual health provides the ability to help people evaluate the current market.

A deep curiosity also helps leaders address the continual demands they face. An in-depth study of leaders from such companies as Hewlett-Packard, Procter & Gamble, and IBM, conducted by Healthy Companies International and the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, revealed that leaders who are curious and constantly learning have an easier time handling rapid change. What's more, curious people tend to be more eager to learn and have a better ability to retain information.

What trainers can do: Provide access to and encourage participation in continuous learning, formal and informal, both inside and outside the workplace.

Social health

Strong personal connections lie at the heart of all lasting enterprises. In fact, organizations can't function without them.

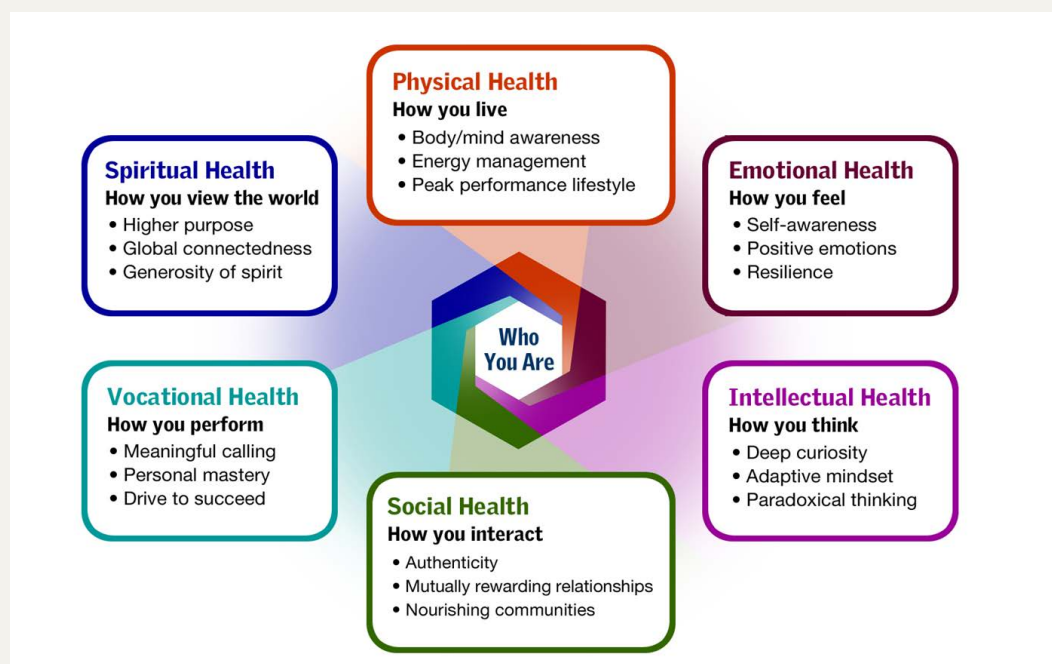
Without such bonds, it's impossible for

leaders to be fully connected to their teams, something that is essential for fostering trust and commitment to the organization's goals. It's of particular urgency now, when public confidence in established institutions is at an alarming low. What's more, in today's flatter organizations, leaders need to exert influence through more informal networks than in a previous era, and that can only happen through the establishment of strong personal connections.

The attribute of most importance is authenticity. In this day and age of relentless marketing messages, people crave the real thing. Being authentic involves an honesty and consistency in action and communication, a record of following through on promises, and a willingness for leaders to admit when they've made a mistake.

What trainers can do: Offer opportunities for formal and informal mentoring, and provide leaders with one-on-one coaching.

The Healthy Leader Model



Copyright © 2014, Healthy Companies International. Reprinted with permission.

Vocational health

Healthy leaders are able to convert hard work into real results, reach their highest potential, and set an example for others in the organization. Vocational health requires that they pinpoint the areas holding the most meaning for them and then tap into that personal calling.

This is important because reaching such an understanding provides the strength to keep on going no matter what. And leaders demonstrate a desire for personal mastery—the actions required to thoroughly understand an action or topic, as well as the discipline needed to reach that outcome—which provides a model for the power of continual learning.

What trainers can do: Boost performance management initiatives with plans that direct leaders' efforts toward reaching certain goals, including ongoing feedback and coaching.

Spiritual health

Spiritual health involves recognizing a higher purpose, something bigger than meeting the organization's objectives. By doing so, leaders not only can connect more easily to diverse groups of people and build trust, but also are better able to tackle the complex challenges of globalization and avoid petty distractions.

What trainers can do: Emphasize social responsibility by helping leaders to turn their organizations into enterprises aimed at creating a greater good, not just making money.

Providing effective learning opportunities isn't an easy task, however. For trainers unsure of where to start, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you offer learning opportunities that help in understanding your marketplace and customers?
- How can you guide people so they can be more self-reflective?
- What steps can you take to boost a comfort with uncertainty?
- Do people in the organization understand their own learning styles?
- How can you help leaders to veer away from routine thinking and stimulate new ideas and flexibility?

The bottom line

Ultimately, our research shows that nurturing a leader's healthy roots has real financial results. The foundation of our work is a research program studying hundreds of CEOs about their leadership and the challenges they face. The first part involves sitting face-to-face with CEOs of companies ranging from Toyota to Boeing, and using those findings as the primary measurement tool for leader evaluation. The second is a quantitative assessment combining a psychological approach with behavioral parameters that measures people's leadership character and performance as gauged by who they are, what they do, and how they perform.

The bottom line: Leaders with healthy roots outperform others. In fact, the higher the score, the better the leadership performance as rated by bosses, peers, and staff. Healthy leaders seem to be more resilient and fulfilled, build higher performing organizations, and help to create a healthier society. These leaders are able to achieve great market reputations, provide outstanding shareholder value, create profitable growth, become effective talent magnets, and have a positive societal impact.

For trainers, then, as well as the organization as a whole, the stakes for successfully providing learning opportunities aimed at strengthening leaders' vital roots are high. It is the individuals grounded by the essential qualities of healthy leadership who can take the steps needed for high performance. Ensuring they have a full complement of healthy roots is critical to effective leadership—and to success in today's highly competitive, fast-changing environment.

■ **Bob Rosen** is founder of Healthy Companies International. He also is a CEO advisor, organizational psychologist, and author of six books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Grounded: How Leaders Stay Rooted in an Uncertain World*; bob.rosen@healthycompanies.com.

■ **Kathie Ross** is a senior consultant with Healthy Companies International, where she counsels clients on a wide range of leadership and human resource issues. She also is adjunct faculty at George Washington University and New York University; kathie.ross@healthycompanies.com.

Copyright 2014
ASTD



YES!

I would like to subscribe to **T+D** magazine—12 monthly issues that keep me at the forefront of workplace learning and performance.

- Individual rate \$150 (\$216 outside the U.S.)
- Institutional rate \$300 (\$366 outside the U.S.)

Order Information

TD0833

Name: _____

Title: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Province: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Country: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

- Check One:**
- \$150 (Individual USA)
 - \$216 (Individual Outside the US)
 - \$300 (Institutional USA)
 - \$366 (Institutional Outside the US)
 - VISA
 - MasterCard
 - Amex
 - Discover
 - Check (USD)
(Payable to T+D)

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Fax this form to 1.205.995.1588 OR Mail to:
American Society for Training & Development
 Subscription Office, P.O. Box 11806
 Birmingham, Alabama 35202-1806, USA

Order online at **store.astd.org**
 Phone: 1.866.802.7059

Orders processed within three business days.
 If you have questions, please contact **td@subscriptionoffice.com**

Prices valid through 12/31/2013. If you should wish to cancel your subscription for any reason, you will receive a refund on all unmailed issues. Your subscription to T+D may be a tax deductible business expense. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks to receive your first issue.

T+D is published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)

061201.63250

