



MANAGEMENT SERIES

# White Paper

## **Leadership Success: Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities That Produce Positive Results**

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### **Part 2 – Competencies**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Competencies</b> .....	2
<b>Communicating Collaboratively</b> .....	2
<b>Making Effective Decisions</b> .....	2
<b>Applying Emotional Intelligence</b> .....	3
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	3
<b>References, Books and Web Sites</b> .....	4
<b>About Learning Tree International</b> .....	5
<b>About the Author</b> .....	5

## Introduction

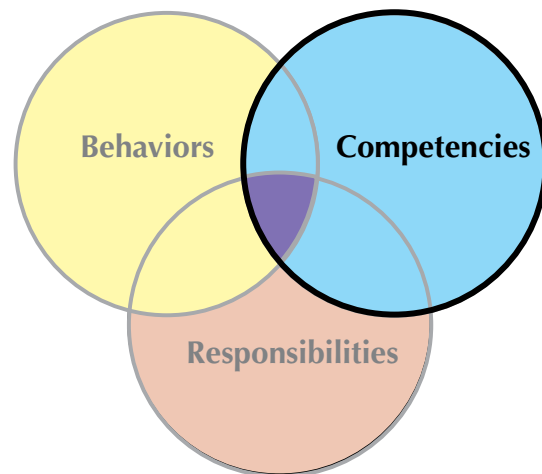
*“The person who knows ‘how’ will always have a job. The person who knows ‘why’ will always be their boss.”*

**Diane Ravitch**

(author and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education)

One of the great strengths that defines a successful leader is the ability to build teams that can deliver products and services faster, better and more cost-effectively. Developing this strength, however, requires a successful balance of several factors. In 2005, my colleague David Williams and I designed and developed what we termed the Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities (BCR) approach to leadership to identify these very factors. As you can see from the diagram below, when the three critical elements of behaviors, competencies, and responsibilities come together—as they do in the center purple area—you get effective, successful, productive, powerful, thoughtful, prudent, strong and wise leadership results.

I’ll be exploring each of these aspects individually as they relate to successful team leadership in three successive White Papers. The first Paper, Part 1, focuses on **Behaviors**. Here, in Part 2, we address **Competencies**.



## Competencies

In practice, competencies are what leaders are good at: knowledge, skills, abilities, expertise, capacity, qualification, experience, and know-how. The following participative competencies are exhibited by successful leaders: communicating collaboratively, making effective decisions, and applying Emotional Intelligence (EI).

### Communicating Collaboratively

Communication is hard work. The job of a successful leader is to become more analytical about planning communication and more objective about how it is likely to be received. This section covers Peter Drucker's four fundamental communication principles that should be a conscious part of every leader's communications planning and execution.<sup>1</sup>

**1. Communication is perception.** "In communicating, whatever the medium, the first question has to be 'Is this communication within the recipient's range of perception? Can he receive it?'"<sup>2</sup> What is it about the receiver's abilities—emotional state, perceptual filters, etc.—that enables him to decode the message? Only what has actually been understood by the receiver will have been communicated.

**2. Communication is expectation.** "A gradual change, [one] in which the mind is led by small, incremental steps to realize what it perceives is not what it expected to perceive, will not work."<sup>3</sup> In other words, getting people to see something from an entirely new perspective can be best achieved by "jumping in" as opposed to "wading in." Of course, the leader has to supply the impetus but, to do that, he/she needs to know what preconceptions and expectations the audience has to begin with.

**3. Communication makes demands.** "[Communication] always demands that the recipient become somebody, do something, and believe something."<sup>4</sup> In other words, communication requires the recipient to give—as in, give attention, understanding, insight, support, information, and/or money.

### 4. Communication and information are different, and indeed largely opposite, yet interdependent.

Plenty of pieces of information are available. How does the leader identify them and sort the important from the unimportant? The answer can be simply to view the information from the perspective of the recipients, judging what is relevant to their needs and what is not.

To support these principles, leaders themselves can actively create communication opportunities by providing a forum where teams can—without fear—fully express their concerns and criticisms. Even if the issues cannot be resolved immediately, it is often enough for the team to know that the leader has listened and knows what the team is going through. The key is to have a safe place where teams can communicate in full voice.<sup>5</sup>

Another facet of communication that promotes organizational well being and positive team morale is simply to congratulate, thank and acknowledge people, as often as possible, who are displaying the behaviors that support organizational values. In this same vein, leaders should speak positively about change efforts, privately and publicly, and avoid inadvertent statements that undermine the importance of the effort or that of organizational values.<sup>6</sup>

In summary, a leader must be an honest broker of information. Leaders need to be willing to provide the information that team members need to hear. They need to explain the challenges the team faces, the decisions they need to make and the consequences associated with making those decisions. They must also be willing to remind the team of decisions they have already made and help them deal with the consequences.

## Making Effective Decisions

Decisions must be made with a commitment to seeing them through. Effective decisions can be made by fixing attention on a few major decisions rather than a lot of little ones, along with focusing on making “right” decisions. Good decision makers define these four attributes for more effective decision making:

1. **Understand the problem.** Is the problem specific or general in nature? Is the right solution being applied to the right problem?
2. **Understand the limits.** What are the correct objectives? What conditions *must* be satisfied? The clearer the goals, the more likely a decision will accomplish what is intended.
3. **Convert the decision into action.** What action *needs* to be taken? Who needs to know about this decision and who will implement it?
4. **Devise a feedback loop to measure results against expectations.** Decisions must be examined and reexamined continually. Examination and feedback are both a necessity.

While these factors can aid decision making by clarifying issues and providing guideposts, some decisions require more in-depth consideration. Leaders must often measure and evaluate alternatives so that divergent opinions can be weighed and facts tested before reaching any conclusions.

Finally, it would be remiss not to mention another valid alternative in the decision-making process: Doing nothing. Not every decision requires action.<sup>7</sup>

## Applying Emotional Intelligence

There was a time when intelligence quotient (IQ) was considered the leading determinant of success. In *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, Daniel Goleman argues that our IQ-idolizing view of intelligence is far too narrow. Instead, Goleman makes the case for Emotional Intelligence (EI)—a subcategory of social intelligence—as being a strong indicator of an individual’s ability to lead successfully.

To achieve a more succinct definition, the authors John Mayer and Peter Salovey identified the following attributes as the key elements comprising EI:

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to recognize emotional components in one’s thoughts or physical states, as in noticing feelings, labeling them, and connecting them to their source.
- **Social-Awareness:** The ability to recognize emotional components behind another’s communications, often through sound, appearance, or behavior.
- **Self-Management:** The ability to recognize and accurately communicate information without undue influence from one’s emotions.
- **Relationship Management:** The ability to have (and exhibit) sensitivity to another’s feelings and concerns.<sup>8</sup>

According to Mayer and Salovey, there is a direct relationship between Emotional Intelligence and effective leadership. A leader with high EI will create an environment where people feel liked and respected—where they enjoy their work and feel better about the organization.

The key to strong EI is having a balanced and appropriate approach to emotions. For leaders, especially when under stress, taking a moment to consider EI can be helpful and even essential. To this end, leaders should adapt their emotions to facilitate better communication with team members and colleagues. Along these same lines, understanding how emotions impact communication—and then managing that impact—can eliminate unnecessary or unproductive responses. In particular, EI is a key to being successful in responding to, and interacting with, team members.

Numerous tests and questionnaires can be used to help explore one’s EI, and they are widely available in book form and online. The information gathered from these sources can facilitate efforts toward establishing a benchmark for the improvement of one’s EI.

## Conclusion

As with the **Behaviors** aspect of the BCR approach detailed in Part 1, the topic of Part 2—**Competencies**—represents another building block to leadership success. Effective communication, decisiveness, and the ability to identify and employ Emotional Intelligence when dealing with others are critical competencies that need to be cultivated by potential leaders.

The third element of the BCR Approach—Responsibilities—will be the focus of our final White Paper, Part 3.

## References

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6. NASA Leadership Development Program,  
<http://www.nasa.gov>
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8. Palmer, Benjamin, Walls, M., & Burgess, Z., Emotional intelligence and effective leadership, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 22, #1, pgs. 5-10, 2001.

## Books:

### **Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ**

by Daniel Goleman  
(ISBN: 978-0553375067)  
Publisher: Bantam Books

### **Working with Emotional Intelligence**

by Daniel Goleman  
(ISBN: 978-0553104624)  
Publisher: Bantam Books

### **The Tao of Leadership: Leadership Strategies for a New Age**

by John Heider  
(ISBN: 978-0893340797)  
Publisher: Humanics Limited

### **The Art of Possibility:**

#### **Transforming Professional and Personal Life**

by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander  
(ISBN: 978-0142001103)  
Publisher: Harvard Business School Press

## Web Sites:

### **Ninth House Network:**

Provides the latest news and resources related to improving leadership and management skills.  
<http://www.ninthhouse.com/home.asp>

### **FastCompany.com:**

A monthly journal that features articles about leadership challenges and experiences.  
<http://www.fastcompany.com/homepage/index.html>

### **The CEO Refresher:**

A monthly newsletter concentrating on topics in leadership and high-level management.  
<http://www.refresher.com/ceo.html>

### **The Harvard Business Review:**

For those who want to delve a bit further into the latest research about today's workplace.  
[http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b01/en/hbr/hbr\\_current\\_issue.jhtm](http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b01/en/hbr/hbr_current_issue.jhtm)

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James L. Haner is the head of Ultimate Business Resources Consulting, an independent firm offering business consulting and project management services. James has more than 30 years of experience in business and IT. His responsibilities have included establishing a corporate Web presence for a Fortune 500 company, creating a successful organization-wide employee development plan, and developing the IT infrastructure for a start-up company in both project management and leadership roles. He earned an MA degree in Management from the Claremont Graduate School and took classes with Peter F. Drucker, “the father of modern management.” James is also an instructor, author and technical editor for Learning Tree as well as a certified Project Management Professional.

