

# FOSTERING A LEADERSHIP CULTURE

*"The first responsibility  
of a leader is to define reality."*

*The last is to say thank you.*

*In between, the leader is a servant."*

*-Max DePree*



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Organizations need to foster a culture of leadership. The extensive body of literature on leadership agrees on at least one thing: we should encourage everyone to view himself or herself as a potential leader. Just as each person has a unique set of finger prints so does each person have a God given set of talents, dispositions, and experiences that at any given moment might be the exactly right mix of qualities needed to lead a group.

As I see it, if we are going to achieve our organization's missions and objectives, we have no other choice but to focus on developing a culture of ever rotating leaders. So how do we transform every person on into a leader? From my experience of working with organizations I have developed a list of eight key behaviors for emerging leaders. I believe the term emerging leaders is appropriate because it recognizes how little of our attention has gone to purposefully developing leaders at all levels of the organization.

1. Cultivate trust.
2. Delegate.
3. Manage boundaries.
4. Share passion to instill passion.
5. Recognize talent.
6. Park the ego.
7. Stop and listen.
8. Know when and how to take risks.

### **1. Cultivate Trust**

An organization is bankrupt without trust. In order to leverage all forms of capital (monetary and social) leaders must cultivate trust. People need to believe in one another and be willing to engage in intricate and intimate exchanges of knowledge, idea generation, and team effort. Likewise, people need to believe in their leader. Maintaining a positive reputation and exhibiting integrity are core parts of any leader's work, as is accepting responsibility for people. All of this ensures the organization's success along with the ongoing personal growth of its members and their satisfaction, resulting in a perpetual loop of renewable, sustainable energy and innovation.

Model trust and it will be reciprocated. Our ability to be agile depends upon it. In an environment besieged with rapid changes, maintaining tight reins of managerial control, whether hierarchical or lateral, interferes with our ability to be responsive. People need to know we trust them to act, even if they make a mistake.

It's the only way to maximize the intelligence and experience of our team. In a supportive environment full of trust, any mistakes made by members of our team accelerate learning and seldom become stumbling blocks. When people know it's OK to fail, because they are trusted, they are likely to perform better.

The trust we show each other will also send a signal to our partners. How can we expect our partners to trust us if they see we do not trust members of our own team? People pick up on negative dynamics very quickly. We will not be able to hide any dysfunction in our team from outside observers, therefore we cannot afford to undermine each other. Breaches of trust are inevitable, but they are not an excuse for us to withhold trust. Even when the culture of the organization at large is tainted by a degree of distrust, we can create a corner of the organization where trust reigns supreme. Our work succeeds or fails on the basis of relationships; and no relationship can thrive without trust.

### ***Practices***

- List the people you interact with in your organization. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 = little trust and 7 = lots of trust, rank the level of trust you perceive you have with each person.
- For any person with a rating of 4 or less, write down two to three things you believe you could do to begin to improve that level of trust.
- Identify any people on your list with whom it is unlikely you will cultivate greater trust (hint: look at anyone with a rating of 5 or higher). It's simply not possible to have the same degree of trust with everyone we work with. Some people may not be interested in or capable of high levels of trust, or we may have knowingly or unknowingly done something in the past to severely restrict a relationship.
- Before beginning a new relationship with anyone in your organization think about specific things you can do with this person to begin cultivating trust.
- The next time you have an opportunity to negotiate deliverables and a timeline for a project be realistic but modest in what you commit to doing—then surprise the recipient by giving more than he or she asked for and before the agreed-on deadline.

## **2. Delegate**

Distribution of work is a passive form of delegation and only scratches the surface of this management tool. Delegation also means sharing the baton of leadership. When leadership is shared, talents are maximized in an organization. People become more aware and willing to assume optional responsibilities, tasks, or initiatives that lie outside their work-defined domains.

Delegated leadership results in team members who seek to maximize the use of their unique gifts and talents by dovetailing them to the organization's current and future mission and objectives.

We wear lots of hats, some of them better than others. We hope we have a good mix of talents and experiences on our team, but if we don't we need to develop a strategy for diversifying that team. When delegation operates well within our team, people are proactive. People naturally gravitate to the things they do well. We have a responsibility to bring out the best in each other. We do not need to compete with each other. Recognize and enable the gifts of others. If a member of our team shines we all benefit. The spotlight can move from one contributor to the next. None of us has the full set of talents that will ensure the team's success.

Make a point of identifying the capabilities and strengths of everyone on the team. Enable people to take the initiative for deciding the best way to be an invaluable contributor to the team.

***Practice***

- During a staff meeting take a few minutes to ask everyone to write down strengths and skills that he or she has noticed and appreciated in other team members.
- Ask each person to make a note of how his or her strengths and skills complement those of others.
- Ask each person to write a list of things he or she currently does as part of the job that he or she could teach others to do.

### **3. Manage Boundaries**

Boundaries are necessary and not necessary. As learning architects we are challenged today to develop a keen appreciation for the porous relation between an organization and its various ecosystems. Knowing how and when to construct and retain clear boundaries and also how and when to demolish unnecessary ones is an art without simple rules. Managing boundaries becomes even more complex when it comes to the realm of interpersonal relationships. Use this as a general rule: when a boundary is impeding the flow of communication, is eroding trust, has become an end in and of itself, or is in any way preventing us from achieving our objectives, then that boundary needs to be modified. Likewise, there may be times to erect boundaries in order to formalize relationships, protect our interests, or minimize confusion.

**Practice**

- Draw a map of all the natural boundaries that exist in your organization and that affect your role. Write a short description of each one. Determine which ones are out of your control.
- Identify any boundaries you have artificially created. How can you remove them?
- Are there any boundaries you feel are necessary but not currently in place? Think about how you will know if any of the boundaries that are either missing or in place will need to be changed.

**4. Share Passion to Instill Passion**

Tuning into the fires of the heart is a mission-critical ingredient for success. Without passion the organizational actors are just reading their lines from teleprompters on a bare stage. In whatever personal form it takes, leaders must find ever-new ways to share their passions. They must do this not simply for the purposes of rallying others to be illuminated by the leaders' brilliant blaze but to model and encourage others to stoke their own fires. Having lots of fires ensures that the organization is bright, alive, and warm and that it contains a plethora of inviting interpersonal places for people to gather around and share their stories of how things have been and dream about how things can be.

**Practice**

- Take a piece of paper and draw a large heart. In the center of the heart write down all the things you are most passionate about in your organization.
- Describe how the role you play in the organization relates and contributes to these areas of passion.
- During a team meeting ask people to share these pictures of their passions.
- Discuss how various team members' passions overlap. Discuss any gaps between people's passions and the organization's current goals and direction.

**5. Recognize Talent**

Talent is everywhere, and everyone has unique gifts and talents. Recognizing talent can be a challenge, however; requiring leaders to suspend their biases, values, judgments, worldviews, expectations, and perspectives. In order to recognize talent, a leader may have to work with what

on the surface appear to be shortcomings or liabilities to the organization and transform them into positive skills.

***Practice***

- Make a list of people you find it challenging to work with. Next to each name write a short description of why you find it difficult to work with that person.
- Now imagine how some of these traits you see as negatives might be seen as assets. Can you develop a game plan for doing a better job of leveraging these traits?

## **6. Park the Ego**

Conviction and self-confidence are key attributes of a leader, and as such they help her develop a healthy ego. However, when ego consumes a leader's perceptiveness and becomes a tool of power versus inspiration, it has ceased to serve the leader well and has become dangerous to all. Leaders must learn how to draw internal strength from their egos while simultaneously parking them out of the way. Leaders who put others first do so by attending to the egos of others and not to theirs.

***Practice***

- Reflect on things about yourself (skills, abilities, qualities, experience, knowledge, and so forth) that you are very confident about. Then reflect on areas where you are less sure of yourself. Our egos tend to be more dominant in areas where we lack true self-confidence and self-esteem. Identify these areas in yourself and others, and be watchful. These are the areas where our egos can easily get out of control.
- Give other people the opportunity to take the lead in areas where you have more experience. Act as a coach rather than as a doer all the time.

## **7. Stop and Listen**

The importance of this simple and powerful technique cannot be stressed enough. Leaders must learn how to listen on many different levels. Hearing others' words is only one facet of listening. Leaders must also discover techniques and practices for tuning into the actions of people around them and unscrambling their observations into insightful reflective patterns that guide their interactions with others. Self-reflection is another crucial form of listening that gets overlooked. Leaders with the capacity to retreat into the stillness of their heart, mind, and gut in the frenzy of change and chaos around them can act from a place of fuller knowledge than can leaders who work principally from their heads.

***Practice***

- Set aside ten minutes a day to rewind the day and review your interactions with others. Consider how any of your interactions with others might have altered your mental model of them.
- Look for any interactions that might have resulted in misperceptions.
- Determine the best way to follow up and alleviate the potentially negative impacts of these interactions.

**8. Know When and How to Take Risks**

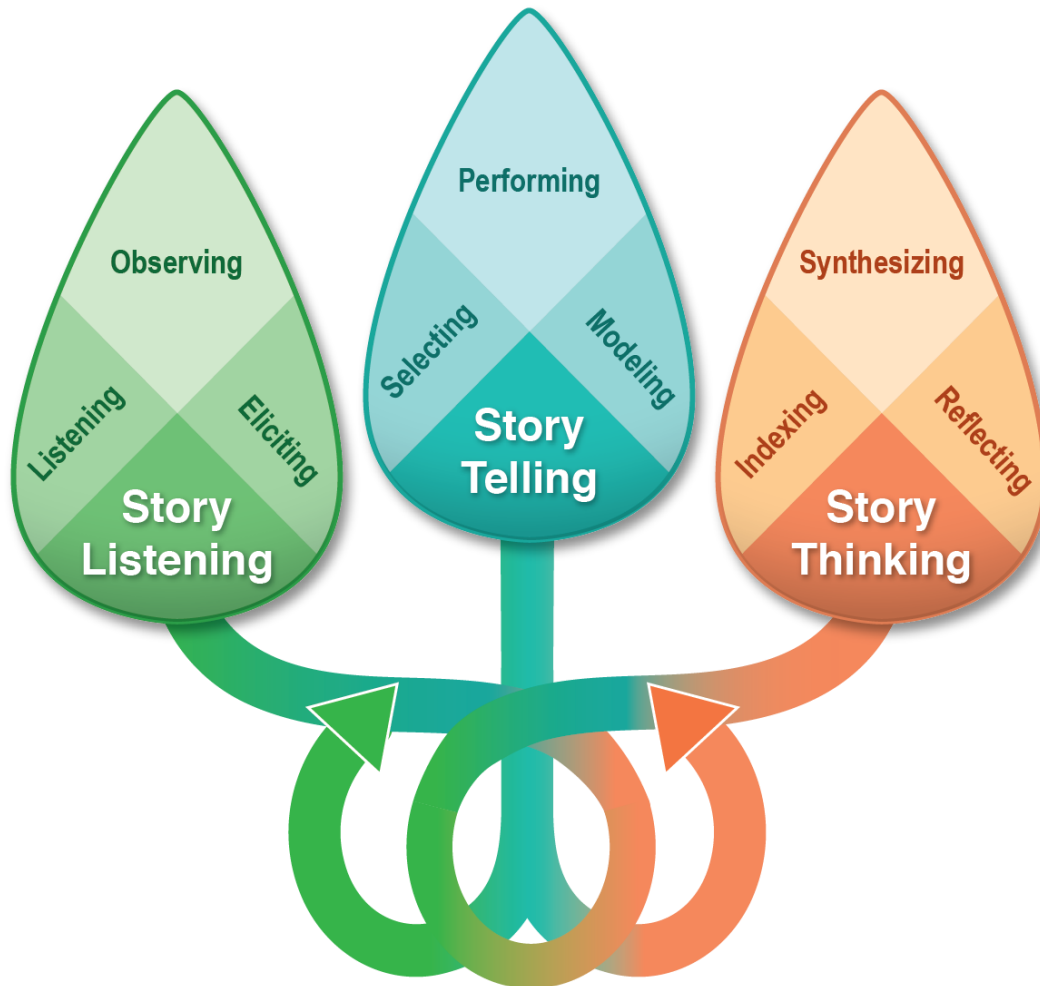
Without risk and uncertainty very little can be achieved. Jumping into a situation with reckless abandon is seldom fruitful and may simply be a different face of the same malady afflicting those who are paralyzed with fear and unable to ever take a risk. So there is a delicate balance between risk and safety. A leader must learn how to decide when to take a risk and how to take it in such a way as to minimize its potential damage. Part of success in risk taking lies in allowing others to take risks and trusting their judgment, especially when the risky action being considered lies closer to their realm of experience and knowledge than to yours.

***Practice***

- Challenge yourself to learn or try something new. Look for opportunities to get out of your comfort zone.
- Seek people who can act as your coaches.

## Story-based Communication Skills of Leaders

Stories are fundamental to the way we communicate, learn and think. They are the most efficient way of storing, retrieving, and conveying information. Since hearing stories requires active participation on the part of the listener, stories are the most profoundly social form of human interaction communication, and learning. Telling stories for any organizational purpose only scratches the surface. Through my research and consulting I have learned how to use stories as powerful vehicles for eliciting people's experiences and knowledge, helping people to hear to each other and themselves in deeper ways to promote reflection and learning in organizations.





# Story Listening



## Story Listening Description

Story Listening contains the central skills that are at the heart of using stories effectively to be a better communicator and learner. All the skills in the model build off of the central ones of eliciting, listening, and observing. Listening is the common thread to the three skills. For example, being able to elicit stories demands sensitivity and attentiveness to the stories around oneself. Drawing stories out of others requires astute observation skills.

The observation skill is broken down into five parts:

1. Care/Intention – cultivating genuine interest in others.
2. Self-Awareness – examining impressions observed, assumptions made, conclusions drawn, and behaviors.
3. Sensitivity – increasing our attention to external stimuli.
4. External Focus – shifting and purposefully directing the focus of our attention.
5. Story Thinking Dialogue – tracking how perceptions are being formed.

We discover what questions to ask or what stories to tell in order to stimulate the story telling of others by watching for cues in their words and actions. We must also be equally aware of our own thought processes. Listening ties them all together and involves more than hearing. As we gather information, listening engages our imaginations. What we hear is fused with our experiences. The new information co-mingles with the old to become relevant and immediate; otherwise, it is dead on arrival. We can communicate more by

eliciting stories than by telling them. Consequently, a greater value is given to the skills found in the Story Listening than the Storytelling ones found in the model.

The model represents three levels of personal story skills related to communicating and learning. Each area consists of three skills. The Storytelling area characterizes the skills we use to engage with the external world. Many people mistakenly assume that using stories well requires little besides knowing what stories to select and being good at telling them. Although these are useful skills they are superficial compared to the others. The Storytelling area also houses the modeling skill.

There are two levels to the skill of modeling. The first level describes how our actions model our beliefs, attitudes, and values. Through our actions we create stories. People are far more likely to remember our actions than our words. Whether they do it consciously or unconsciously, people observe our actions and look for incongruence between our words and behaviors. We have the ability to create stories by being mindful of how our actions impact the people around us. Memorable actions become part of other people's stories. Furthermore, our actions have the potential to cause others to reflect. The second level to the modeling skill is our ability to create compelling representations of the concepts we try to communicate to others. Developing a familiarity with analogies, metaphors, word pictures, and visuals are a few of the subcomponents of this skill.

## Story Listening Sample Skills & Behaviors

<b>Eliciting</b>	<p><b>Asking effective questions. Finding ways to draw out meaningful and relevant information from others.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I encourage others to share their personal and professional experiences.</i></li><li>• <i>I seek to create a climate of sharing.</i></li><li>• <i>I am willing to be vulnerable with others.</i></li><li>• <i>I tell my experiences to others in ways that encourage them to be open with me.</i></li><li>• <i>I help others to recall their experiences by rephrasing questions.</i></li><li>• <i>I help others to recall their experiences by mirroring their language.</i></li></ul>
<b>Listening</b>	<p><b>Invoking the imagination to enter a teller's point of view in a deep way.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I paraphrase the statements of others as a way of confirming what they are communicating to me.</i></li><li>• <i>I paraphrase the statements of others as a way of validating what they are communicating to me.</i></li><li>• <i>I ask questions to clarify that I am accurately hearing what others are saying.</i></li><li>• <i>I ask follow-on questions to better understanding information that is being communicated.</i></li><li>• <i>I refrain from making premature decisions about the value, importance, or quality of another person's experience.</i></li><li>• <i>I try to see situations and experiences from the eyes of others.</i></li></ul>
<b>Observing</b>	<p><b>Practicing mindfulness to become aware of the implicit meaning in other people's words and actions.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I care about the success of the people around me.</i></li><li>• <i>I have a strong sense of my own strengths.</i></li><li>• <i>I have a strong sense of my own weaknesses.</i></li><li>• <i>I am sensitive to the energy, moods, and thoughts of others.</i></li><li>• <i>I purposefully review the details of my interactions with others.</i></li></ul>

# Storytelling



Modeling

Selecting

Telling

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## Sample Storytelling Skills & Behaviors

<b>Modeling</b>	<p><b>Employing a variety of analogical techniques to bring an idea or concept alive. Being aware of one's actions and using them to create lasting impressions in the eyes of others.</b></p> <p>Some examples...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I spontaneously use or create analogies to help people connect with me or with the information that I am sharing.</i></li><li>• <i>I make room for back-and-forth exchanges in communicating with others to jump start the generation of new meaning.</i></li><li>• <i>I acknowledge others for the contributions they make.</i></li><li>• <i>I validate others' experiences.</i></li></ul>
<b>Selecting</b>	<p><b>Picking words that are appropriate to the context of a situation to clearly communicate experiences, concepts, ideas, or feelings.</b></p> <p>Some examples...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I can always find a relevant experience to share.</i></li><li>• <i>The experiences I share add to the conversation.</i></li><li>• <i>I can find experiences to share that communicate who I am.</i></li><li>• <i>I can find experiences that resonate with my listeners.</i></li></ul>
<b>Telling</b>	<p><b>Relaying information with authenticity. Paint a vivid, engaging picture for listeners.</b></p> <p>Some examples...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I use anecdotes when I communicate.</i></li><li>• <i>I vary the tone and volume of my voice when I communicate.</i></li><li>• <i>I allow others to interject their own thoughts and experiences during a conversation.</i></li><li>• <i>I invite my listeners to interact with me by adding details, anticipating the direction of the conversation, and contributing comments.</i></li></ul>

# Story Thinking



Indexing

Reflecting

Synthesizing

## Story Thinking Description

Story Thinking encompasses all of the internal things we do in our minds when we are conscious of our stories and the stories around us. It is hard to discuss the skills in any causal order since these internal processes of indexing, synthesizing, and reflecting happen most of the time in parallel. The reflection skill is the discipline we develop in stopping to notice our stories. To paraphrase a Greek philosopher, “an unexamined story is not worth having.” Reflection can be broken down into four parts:

1. Reflection – the manner in which we use stories to visualize and relive our experiences.
2. Sitting – being still to linger in our experiences.
3. Inviting - involves actively looking for new insights.
4. Sifting – the review and analysis of the insights that emerge.

While we gather new insights from our own stories, a highly developed capacity for reflection also makes us more mindful of others and their thoughts, feeling, and experiences. We are less likely to react to people. Reflection gives us a chance to behave proactively and continually revise our perceptual filters.

The second skill in the Story Thinking area is synthesizing. By reflecting on our stories, we begin to find connections with other stories and other domains of knowledge. Through synthesis we discover relationships between previously unrelated experiences, ideas, concepts, and knowledge. We take the new pieces of information and transform them into insights. The link between learning and stories is found in this skill. Being effective at doing this requires all three skills of reflecting, synthesizing, and indexing.

The last skill in the Story Thinking area is indexing. Our experiences recorded as stories in our memories do not fit into neat categories. Every experience can be indexed, re-indexed, and cross indexed in a variety of ways. This is further complicated by the fact that each of us develops our own indexing schemes. You and I will not use the same keys to codify our experiences and the learning or knowledge that result from them. Developing a rich index enables us to quickly see the applicability of our stories in different situations. We can uncover patterns of relevance and encounter greater resonance between others' experiences and our own by deliberately maintaining a diverse index.

## Story Thinking Skills & Behaviors

<b>Indexing</b>	<p><b>Developing a flexible, vast, mental schema for retrieval of experiences, and knowledge.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I find myself thinking about what I learned from my experience.</i></li><li>• <i>I can identify life experiences that have contributed to the development of my values, beliefs, and attitudes.</i></li><li>• <i>I am aware of my values, beliefs, and attitudes and how they shape my understanding of new information and experiences.</i></li><li>• <i>I share past experiences with others to help them understand my worldview. I reflect and assess situations as they are occurring.</i></li><li>• <i>I review with circumspection my interpretations of what I hear and see around me.</i></li></ul>
<b>Reflecting</b>	<p><b>Reviewing experiences with circumspection and extracting knowledge from them.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I review my experiences to learn from them.</i></li><li>• <i>I relive the thoughts and emotions of my experiences.</i></li><li>• <i>I consider my experiences without judging them.</i></li><li>• <i>I consider my experiences without interpreting them.</i></li><li>• <i>I am open to learning from my experiences in new and different ways.</i></li><li>• <i>I consciously work to understand my experiences in as many ways as possible, which results in a rich variety of insights.</i></li><li>• <i>My current actions are influenced by my insights.</i></li></ul>
<b>Synthesizing</b>	<p><b>Finding familiar patterns of information in new experiences and creating connections between them and old ones.</b></p> <p><b><i>Some examples...</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I see interrelationships between all of my experiences.</i></li><li>• <i>I make sense of new situations by actively searching and extracting knowledge from previous experiences.</i></li><li>• <i>I use my experiences to develop new and lasting wisdom.</i></li><li>• <i>I use other people's experiences to develop new and enduring wisdom and insight.</i></li><li>• <i>I connect my insights from one domain of activity to another.</i></li><li>• <i>I search my mind for similar past experiences to help me make sense of novel situations.</i></li><li>• <i>I search my mind for previous experiences to help me to see new and different possibilities in present situations.</i></li></ul>



## Terrence Gargiulo



Terrence earned his Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Brandeis University. The Thomas J. Watson Foundation of IBM awarded him a fellowship for a year of independent study and research in Hungary on peak performance. Shortly thereafter, Terrence earned his Masters of Management from Brandeis University.

Terrence is the former Chief Storyteller of Accenture. He is the author of eight books several of which have been translated into Chinese, Korean, and Spanish. For his creative use of narrative, INC Magazine awarded Terrence their Marketing Master Award. His work as an internationally recognized organizational development consultant earned him the 2008 HR Leadership Award from the Asia Pacific HRM Congress for his ground breaking research on story-based communication skills. He was the recipient of Training Industry's Magazine's 2018 best article of the year.

Highlights of some of his past and present clients include, Pfizer, Astra Zeneca, Visa, VMware, GM, HP, DTE Energy, MicroStrategy, Citrix, Fidelity, Salesforce, Federal Reserve Bank, Ceridian, Countrywide Financial, Washington Mutual, Intel, Guidance Software, Dreyers Ice Cream, US Coast Guard, Boston University, Raytheon, City of Lowell, Arthur D. Little, KANA Communications, Merck-Medco, Coca-Cola, Harvard Business School, and Cambridge Savings Bank.

Terrence wrote the libretto for his father's opera Tryillias which was accepted for a nomination for the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in music. In 2009, Terrence and his sister Franca founded the Occhiata Foundation. The Occhiata Foundation brings arts engagement to Monterey County schools through the multi-discipline prism of opera (<http://www.occhiata.org>).

Terrence enjoys scuba diving, cooking, singing, and the sport of fencing. He was Junior National Champion, member of three US Junior World Championship teams, NCAA All American and an alternate for the 1996 Olympics.