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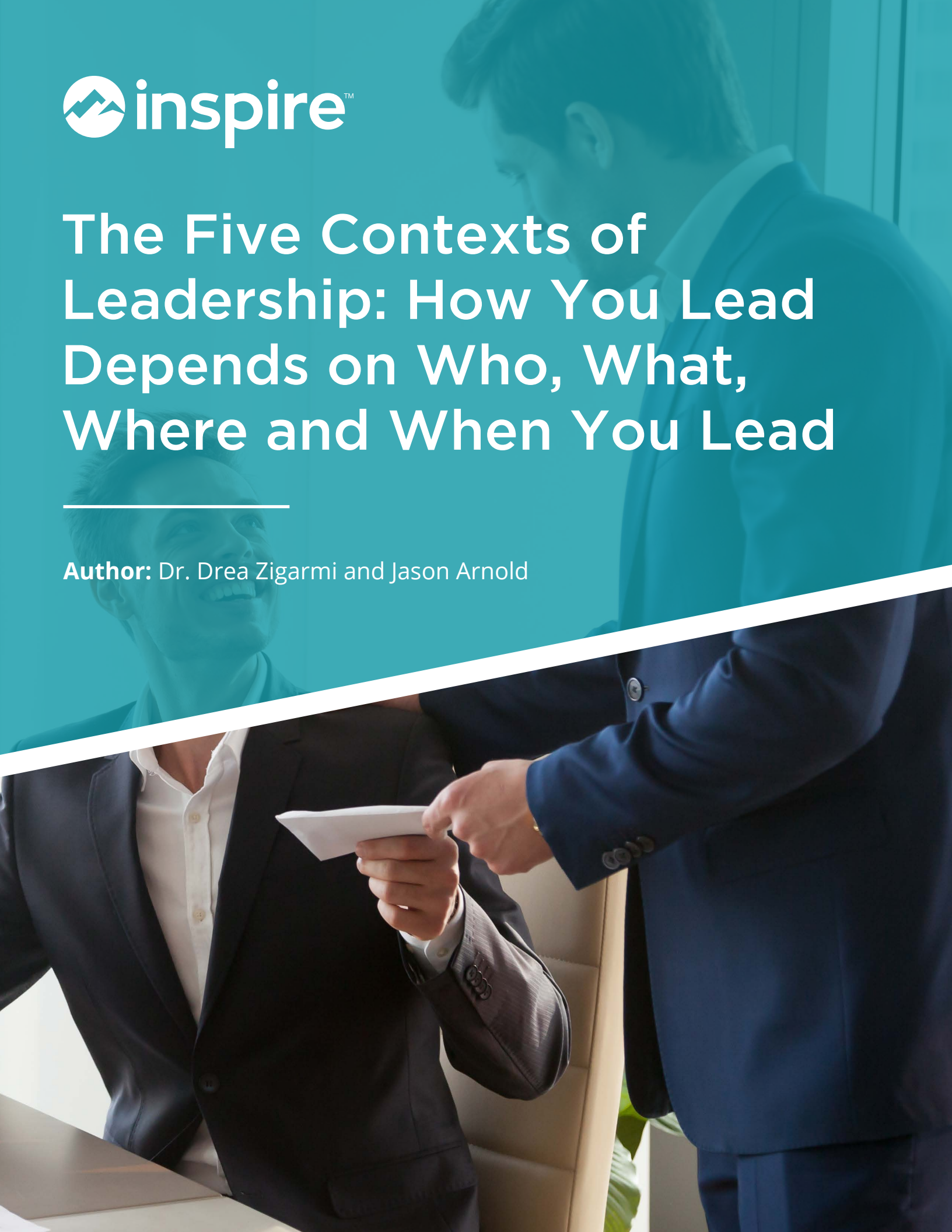
The Five Contexts of Leadership: How You Lead Depends on Who, What, Where and When You Lead

Author: Dr. Drea Zigarmi and Jason Arnold

Introduction

At the top of the great American mountain view, 7,000 feet above the Jackson Hole Valley, nomadic Paleo-Indians developed a community from the environment they lived. They drew inspiration from the land they hunted on, the homes they created, and the people they encountered. The culture grew by fostering their friends, their families, the community, and themselves. They became leaders in multiple contexts and learned to pursue their goals as a team.

Like the Grand Tetons, successful leadership comes in many forms and across five contexts. Leadership is more than management. It's more than working in groups. And it's far more complicated than making decisions for everyone. Leadership is empowering yourself to develop individuals to work in teams for the purpose of your organization and, potentially, go even further with other organizations. Leadership takes place in the Self, One-to-One, Team, Organizational, and Alliance Context (SOTOA), and it consists of who, what, where and when you lead. We're going to go in-depth for each context, what they mean, the challenges you face and how to be an inspiration for everyone including yourself.
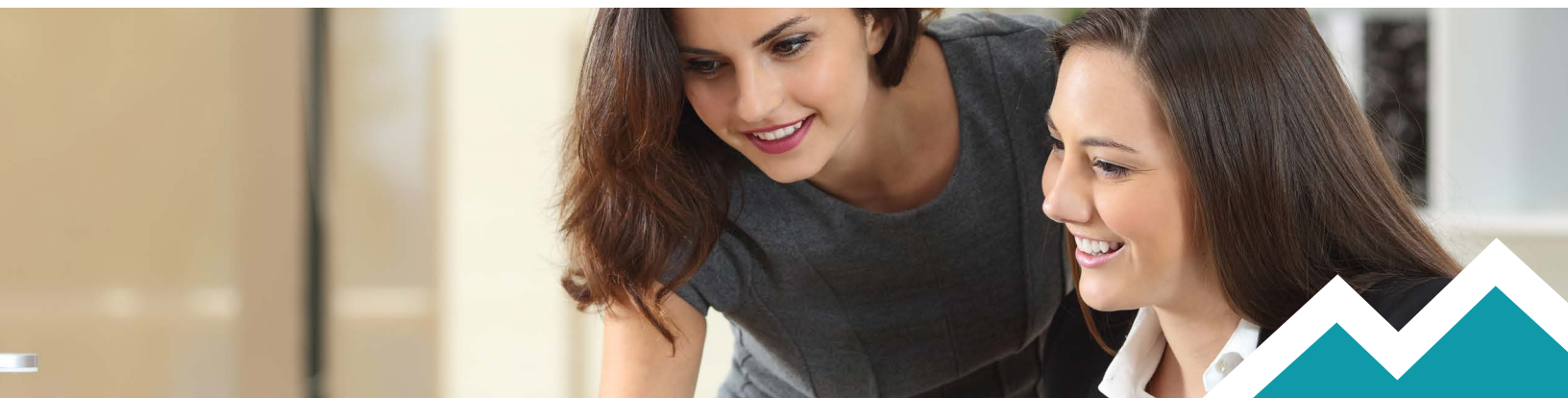
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Section #1
Self Context

Leadership is not just for those with a corner office or an MBA hanging on the wall. Leadership is not just for those with the title "Chief" or "Vice President." The reality is that leadership happens in different contexts, including in the self-context, and at every level of an organization.

One of the most often overlooked, underinvested in, and biggest gaps in developing human capital in an organization is Self Leadership--an individual who is intentional about influencing themselves and others toward a common objective.

Self leadership is about developing and managing your individual energy to initiate, motivate and perform at a high level, improving and sustaining your organization's leadership philosophy at an individual level. It's everything from how you wake up and conduct your morning routine to the strategies you use to keep your daily life flowing and organized. It's the reflection of yourself other people see that inspires and empowers everyone to pursue excellence in every activity performed **toward a common goal.**

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Figure 30.1

50,000-Mile View
SOTOA: The Five Contexts of Leadership

Self

Team

Alliance

S O T O A

One-to-One

Organizational

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Understanding Your Individual Role in Leadership Development

For a leadership development program to thrive in your organization, self leadership must be a foundational development strategy. Investments in leadership can't be only at one level of an organization, but accessible at every level, from the executive team, to middle managers, to frontline employees. If you don't foster individuality and encourage your employees to express their thoughts and ideas about performance, through a common language, how can you expect them to foster an environment of true collaboration?

83% of organizations say it's important to develop leaders at all levels. The development of all leadership begins at an individual level.

"The significance of self leadership is this: Empowerment is a concept; self leadership is what makes it work. Empowerment can't exist, won't work and is meaningless without self leaders – people who possess the ability, energy and determination to accept responsibility for success in their work-related role."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

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When you align your leadership goals with your organization, you're actually creating a system for organization-wide leadership. But in order for these goals to succeed, they must empower the people of the organization first. If the way you lead is a reflection of the goals you set, incorporating strong, well-grounded self leadership tactics will give employees an example of the type of leadership it takes on the individual level to move the organization forward as a whole.

These self leadership tactics can be as simple as learning how to create effective goals that are aligned with their role and their team's highest priorities to meet the client's needs. It also includes their ability to manage their time well by tracking daily progress on the goals they set and following through with your daily to-do's or maintaining an organized schedule for performance feedback. By empowering individual employees in the leadership process, by training them that successful leadership strategies cultivate autonomy and build their competencies while collaborating more effectively with their managers and team members.
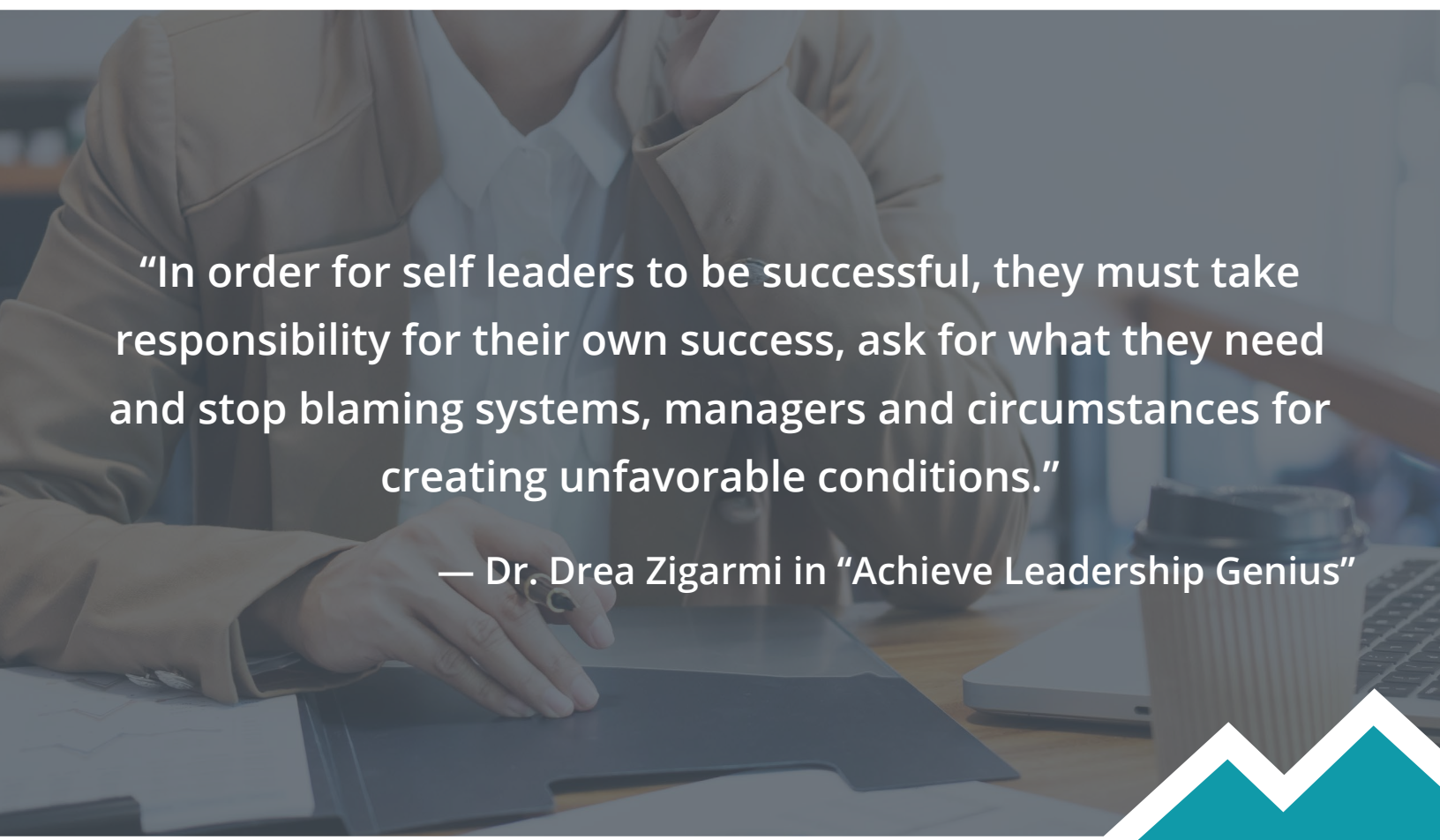
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The Challenges of Self Leadership

Don't wait to lead. Business is moving too fast to wait around for direction and support to achieve an objective. Once a goal is set and approved upon between a manager and a direct report, it's the responsibility of the individual to set out to achieve the goal. Individual's without self leadership training can naturally default to a victim mindset – waiting for someone else to give them the power to change things. Managers are not mind readers and can not be expected to intuitively know what the individual's needs are without the individual "managing up" to help get those needs met.

While 93% of managers feel they need training on how to coach their employees, it's important to be speaking the same leadership language when coaching them. Only when individuals know what skills their manager is using during the collaboration process, will they be able to understand the process of working through the challenging phases in pursuit of their key objectives. When individuals understand the same leadership skills being used by their managers, they will be empowered to freely pursue their goals with a mutual understanding and trust with their team leader and other contributing team members.

"In order for self leaders to be successful, they must take responsibility for their own success, ask for what they need and stop blaming systems, managers and circumstances for creating unfavorable conditions."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

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The Three Choices of Self Leadership

But leadership success is more than just taking the initiative. Self leadership is a constant balancing act between meeting your needs and the needs of your organization. To develop as a self leader you have to maintain the mindset to meet both. As a self leader, you will eventually face three choices:

1 **Do it your way.**

2 **Do it the organization's way.**

3 **Do it in a way that helps you and the organization grow and improve over time.**

Sometimes your individual needs don't align with the strategies of the organization. The key is to determine if you can optimize your motivation use your skills and knowledge to align the goals of your vision to what the organization can accommodate or improve. While your goals may look great on a dashboard, there's a difference between being hopeful for what your organization can accomplish, and realistic about what it can actually do with the current scope of production or ability. It's important to keep negotiating the terms and demands of your goals, and what you can accomplish, with the agile, every changing needs of the organization and the clients they serve.

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How to Create Organization-Wide Success through Self Leadership

Balancing short and long-term objectives is not an easy task, especially when it comes to leadership development. Self leaders need to be able to manage and adapt to constant change throughout the business to achieve sustainable results and cultivate continuous growth.

Here are 5 self leadership strategies that can translate into organization-wide leadership success:

1   **Be Clear About Your Values.**
The way you lead is reflected in the relationships you have with colleagues. Set a clear personal mission statement and values that guide day to day decisions and are aligned with what organizational goals, as well as your own goals. Encourage employees at every level of the organization to do the same.

2   **Change Your Mindset.**
Goals are fluid and evolving, just like our daily lives. Plans change unexpectedly and require adjustments to realign leadership strategies to meet the demands of those changes. Take 15 minutes every day engage your mindset, evaluating where you're at in pursuit of your goals, then have a simple plan that is both focused and flexible to work with your team and easy pivot to meet your organization's changing needs.

3   **Establish a Common Leadership Language.**
No leadership development plan is an island – all plans require some consistency. If managers are using a common set of leadership competencies, it should be clear to everyone in the organization as to what is trying to be achieved through those competencies. It helps to be speaking the same language and evaluating performance in the same way to have truly effective collaboration and build leadership skills at every level of the organization.

4   **Plan Your Performance.**
Just as goals should naturally flow from your role in the organization, all of your daily tasks and activities should contribute to those goals. Without a plan for performance, you're just reacting and not being intentional about how you manage your day. Take charge of your schedule, your time, and your daily leadership development plan. List and review key tasks and activities you plan to accomplish that day and cross them out when you complete them. Make sure you are mapping how your daily activities are aligned with your goals and improving your organization.

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5 **Be Proactive.**
With clear roles, goals, and a plan to perform on a day to day basis, you should be ready to react to anything that comes your way during the day, while staying on track toward your goals and the strategy of the organization. When challenges or setbacks occur, don't wait for others to solve the problem, use self leadership skills to identify where you're at in progress toward the goal, what has shifted, what the problems are, and how you plan to solve them. This doesn't mean that you act in isolation, but that you're prepared to take action--ready to lead.

Leadership development starts from the ground up. That means honing and leveraging your self leadership skills to fuel organizational leadership success. What organizational goals can your professional goals align with? How can you work with your team to achieve them? For a leadership development program to truly succeed it needs change, innovation, and a common foundation to operate from. The more people developing and using self leadership skills, the greater the pool of innovation your leadership development program will have to draw from. Once you've done this, you can move onto individual leadership and how you lead others.

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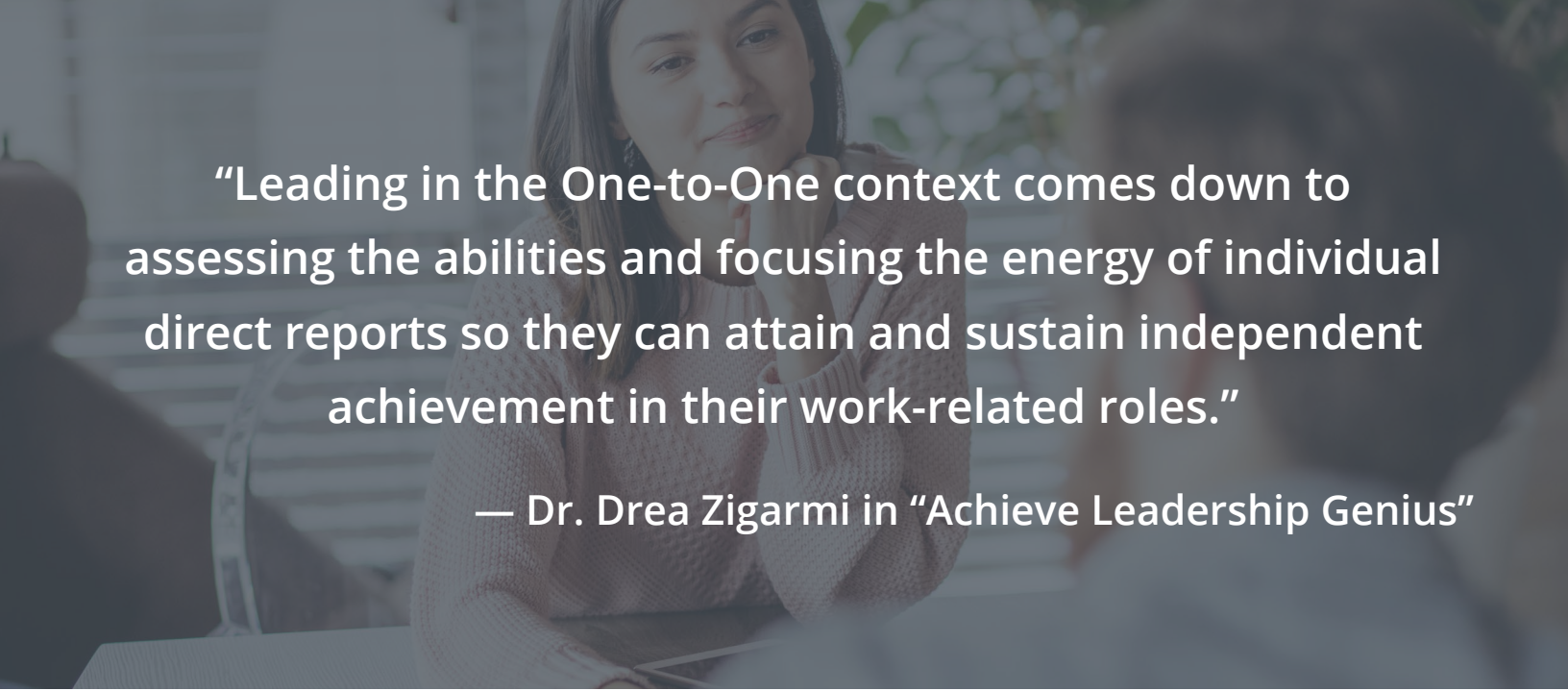
Section #2
One-to-One Context

Your role as a leader has a major impact on the lives of the people you are attempting to lead. One of the most critical contexts of leadership is practiced in the One-to-One relationship between a leader and the people that report directly to them. The One-to-One context of leadership is the most written about and discussed topics in the world of of leadership. Generations of research have been poured over in trying to understand the nature and best practices of leading individuals toward common objectives.

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"Leading in the One-to-One context comes down to assessing the abilities and focusing the energy of individual direct reports so they can attain and sustain independent achievement in their work-related roles."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

The One-to-One context of leadership places emphasis on your leadership mindset and your efforts and actions that are focused on teaching, encouraging, guiding and supporting that person. Having focused, one-to-one conversations with individuals to discuss their goals where feedback and recognition are open and transparent toward their end goals, this is critical to developing trust, optimizing motivation and keeping individuals moving in a positive direction toward their objectives.

Because leading in the One-to-One context is so critical to an individual growth and success, it's important to consider how to create a motivating culture for employees so they are encouraged to develop to their fullest potential and stay satisfied with their work over time.
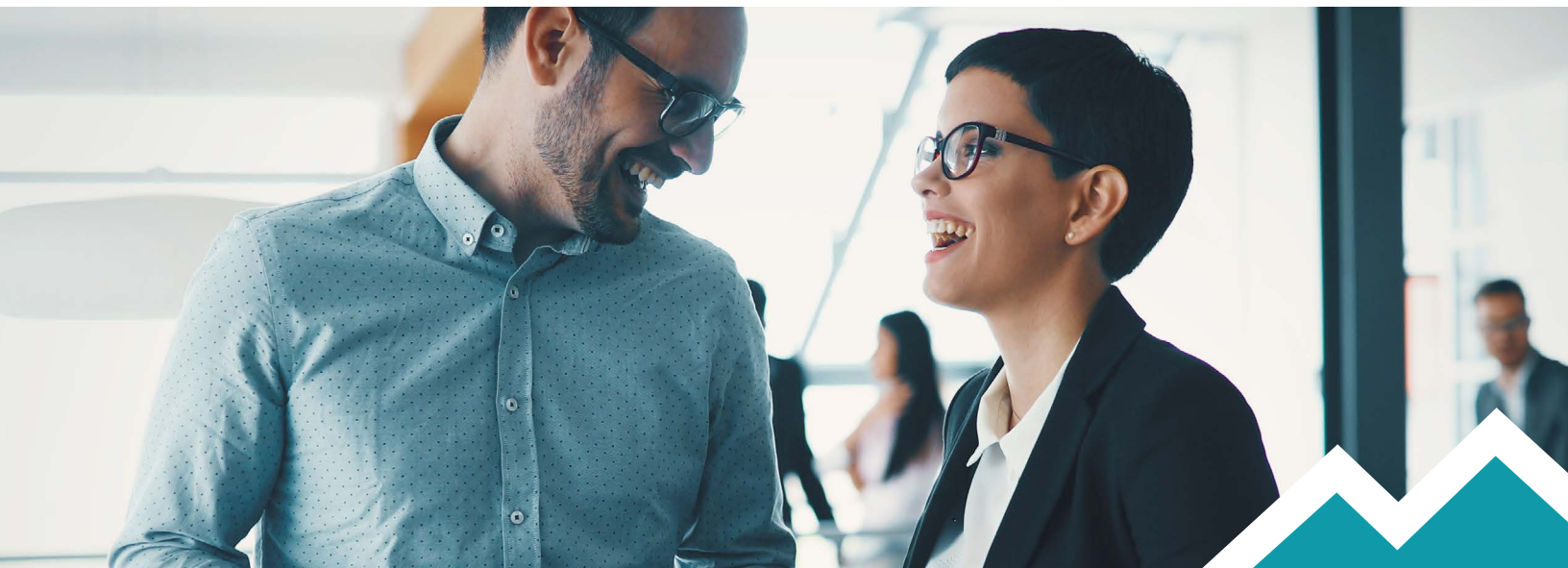
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"I once took a salsa dance class with my wife, a seasoned dancer herself, and it was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. Salsa is reliant with one person leading the dance and the other one following the flow of the music. Without the proper training and skills, I was helpless in leading the dance with my wife. It took time, effort and patience to get to a point where she was able to follow my lead on the dance floor. I still have a lot to learn!"

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

The One-to-One context is like a couple's dance. It takes focus, concentration and consistent effort. It requires an ebb and flow of energy, and consistent timing. Regular One-to-One meetings between a leader and individual's direct reports are where the heart of leadership takes place. Taking time to assess each individual's needs and provide a leadership style that fits the needs of that moment is critical to their success and overall development.

The One-to-One Mindset

The ultimate purpose of leading in the One-to-One context is to develop the ability and energy of the individual to achieve their own goals while aligning those goals with the needs of the organization. Research tells us that when an individual sets out to pursue a goal, they go through a series of phases on their journey to achieve that goal. The biggest challenge for leaders is to consistently stay in tune with the needs and attitudes of the people they are attempt to lead toward that goal and common objective. It's the leader's responsibility, at least once every other week, to determine and discuss the individual's abilities towards achieving the goal. Depending on what stage the individual is in, this will require the leader to adapt and respond to their direct reports needs in the moment.

The challenge for today's leaders, in the One-to-One context, is not only to find the time to meet individually with their people on a regular basis, but also to prepare for meaningful and effective conversations about their goals with them. This is one of the most overlooked and unperformed aspects of leading in the One-to-One context - having that prepared, focused One-to-One time to discuss key insights and challenges of helping individuals reach their goals and meet the needs of the organization and the clients they serve.

Many managers claim to have one-on-one time with the people reporting directly to them. However, with today's flatter organizational structures, manager's need to perform multiple roles at one time. Conversations can be rushed and unfocused, if any conversation takes place at all. This rush leaves little room to develop the individual by exercising key leadership skills, practices or competencies to help their people grow and achieve their goals with efficiency. Dr. Zigarmi researched and evaluated 5 key skills to improve One-to-One performance conversations.

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The One-to-One Skillset: The Five Key Skills

1 **Initiate Effective Goals**

Good performance starts with **effective goal setting**. It's a leader's responsibility to initiate that process and help individuals set goals that are aligned with their roles, skills and ultimately aligned with the team, department or organization's overall strategy. Helping individuals learn how to set effective goals that are specific and measure key results set a positive motivational outlook toward their performance toward those goals. Most managers and teams have goals and individuals are asked to contribute to them, but it's foundationally important to help individuals set their own clear objectives and discuss how they are aligned.

2 **Deliver Effective Feedback**

The second critical skill of leading in a One-to-One context is the ability to deliver quality feedback. The goal of feedback is to **inspire your workers**, not to discourage them. Many leaders give their opinions, suggest ways their team members could do a better job, or offer course corrections to the people they lead. However, feedback is often given to individuals ineffectively. Leaders need to focus their feedback on goals rather than just giving them feedback on comments they made during a meeting or a way they come across to others. Effective feedback on performance is delivered in a safe, One-to-One environment based on a combination of pure observations about the pursuit of the goals and personalized details on how they might address any challenges, questions or concerns they have about making progress on the goal.

3 **Listen to Your People**

Listening is a skill! Some may consider it to be the **most underrated skill** a leader needs. Most leaders don't realize that there are actual fundamentals they can exercise to become a better leader in the One-to-One context. Many leaders think they listen to their people simply by allowing them to express their thoughts and opinions on their personal goals or projects the team is working on. However, there is more to listening than just hearing what your people have to say. Great leaders take the time to listen to challenges their people are having on a goal by paraphrasing key points they heard in a discussion or through a threaded conversation online. Leaders become better listeners by summarizing what they heard the individual say during a meeting and ask if they have a clear understanding of what the individual is discussing. Listening in the One-to-One context is a critical leadership skill that can help individuals identify and solve critical business issues related to the goals they are pursuing.

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4

Facilitate Problem Solving

Every pursuit of a goal is fraught with challenges, setbacks and concerns. It's important for leaders to help individuals effectively identify and solve problems on their own. The common tendency for leaders is to control the circumstances of the business challenges by either identifying what they think the problem is or offering solutions to a problem, prematurely, before engaging the people they are seeking to help achieve their goals. One of the most core adult learning competencies needed for today's workforce is centered around problem-solving. Adult learning must be viewed as an interactive activity based on questions instead of lessons. Leaders must guide the transfer and application of concepts of real-life work problems that need solutions. Additionally, it needs to be effectively influenced, not controlled by the manager. Empowering individuals to generate potential solutions, with pros and cons to each solution, increases the motivation and engagement of the individuals pursuing their goals.

5

Optimize Motivation

The days of simply becoming a cheerleader for your team to achieve success is over. Managers need to do more than just praise people's progress. Today's leader needs to be more sophisticated on how they optimize the motivation of their people in a One-to-One context. Leaders need to recognize positive progress and express gratitude for people's contributions, but they also need to offer feedback that helps build their energy and ability as they pursue their objectives.

It's important to have ongoing conversations about competence toward achieving a goal, whether they feel connected to others on the team during the pursuit of the goal and whether they are in control of how the goal is being pursued. If an individual's internal motivations are not being consistently discussed, leaders may be missing a major opportunity to help individuals grow and remained engaged in their work.

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The Power of One-to-One Leadership

People matter most in organizations. Leadership development is so much more than compliance training. In fact, it's a viable business investment to help leaders develop and guide their people toward common objectives. Helping individuals define and achieve meaningful goals is at the heart of professional performance. Leaders play a significant role in developing the most important resource within organizations - their people. Influencing your people in a One-to-One context increases individual performance, leads to higher engagement in their work, retains the best talent and ultimately fuels the achievement of important business objectives for the organization.

The ultimate goal for a leader in the One-to-One context is to develop an individual's ability and maximize their energy the key competencies discussed above. In order to lead in the One-to-One context, you must be able to connect each of the competencies together. Without defined goals, how will you deliver effective feedback? How will you aid in problem-solving if you do not understand the dilemma your employee is experiencing? How will you motivate your lead if they are discouraged? The key to individual development within the One-to-One context is by understanding how to implement these competencies and ultimately transforming them into life-long learners. Once you're able to develop individuals, you need to understand how they work as a group.

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Section #3
Team Context

Leadership can be tricky when you add more people. It's less customized and more standardized. You can lead one-to-one. Now you have to lead when people disagree with each other and not just you. Not only do you have to lead single meetings, but you have to ensure team members aren't disregarded in the long-term or taking advantage of each other. Social issues may arise between factions of your team and it's your job to unify everyone. Leading in the Team Context means fulfilling your role for your team.
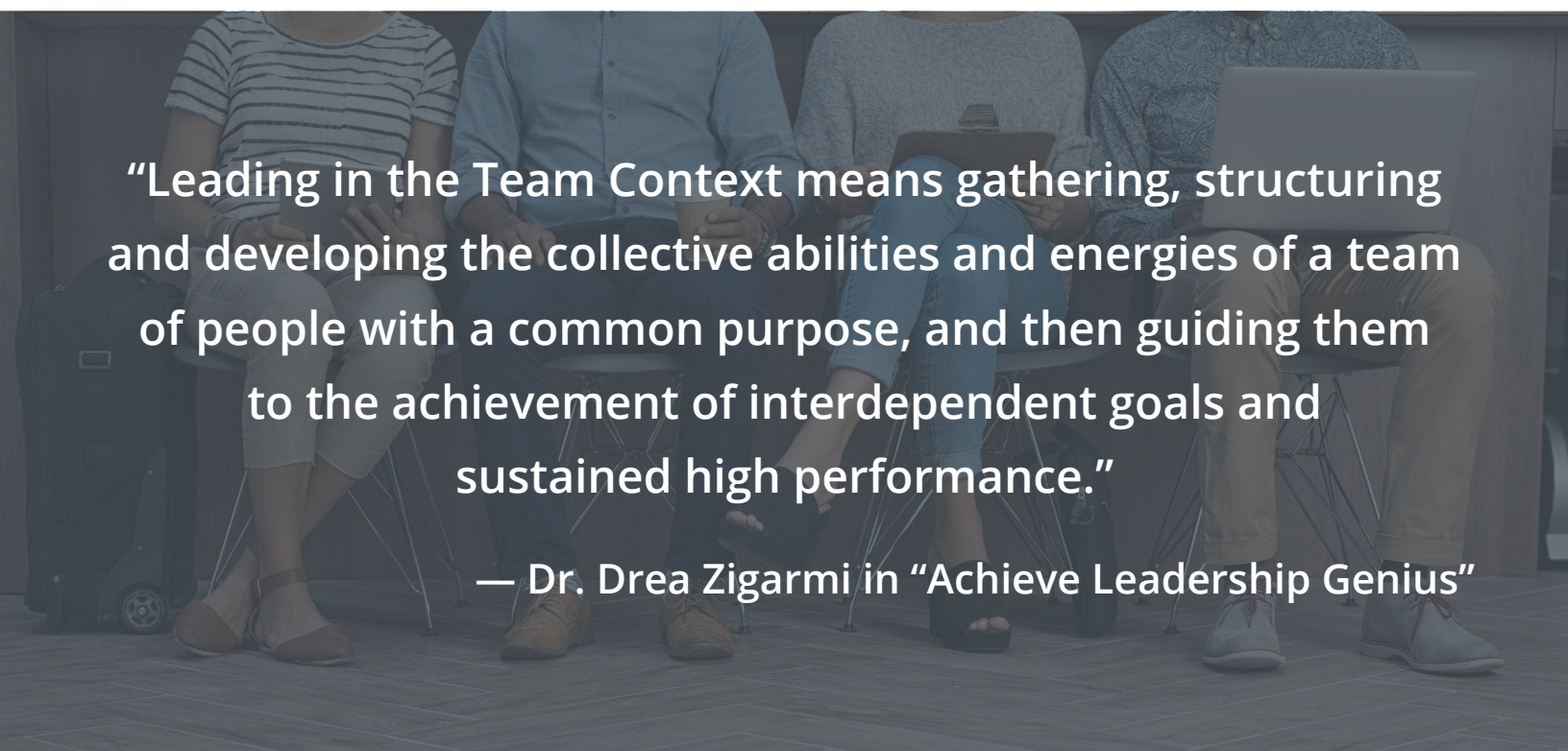
The Challenge of Team Leadership

A lot has been written on Teams over the past few decades as the workforce has evolved from a hierarchical command and control approach to performance, to a flatter team based approach to creating new products and services for the organization's client base. Patrick Lencioni's break through book, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, put the dynamics of leading teams front and center in the world of business, exploring the fundamental causes of team failure and its negative impact on bottom-line business results. Lencioni's parable generated an international dialogue about the complicated dynamics of leading in a team context, beyond leading in a One-to-One context explored two decades earlier in Ken Blanchard's, The One Minute Manager.

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Are You Ready to Lead a Team?

Do you believe, that based on your past success as a individual contributor, or even as a manager, you have the experience to lead a team toward a common objective? Dr. Drea Zigarmi and his co-authors assert that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach to influences others. He and his team have discovered that leadership occurs in five different contexts - Self, One-to-One, Team, Organizational, and Alliance. Specifically, he discusses how to excel in the Team Context. He goes in-depth about leading a team and what to look out for. The overlooked challenge of the team context is how the team works together to complete the goal.

"Leading in the Team Context means gathering, structuring and developing the collective abilities and energies of a team of people with a common purpose, and then guiding them to the achievement of interdependent goals and sustained high performance."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

Leading high-impact teams involves how you organize the individual abilities of your team to set them up for success. While it seems like effective leadership is about your leadership skills, it really comes down to how you organize the team, then how you use those skills to guide the team through the process of achieving a common objective. There are many challenges to this which change and vary depending on the individuals you are working with, the group goal which needs to be met and the degree in which the members share this goal.

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The Difference Between a Team and a Group

Leading in a Team Context is different than leading a group of individuals in a One-to-One context. While a leader may use transferable skills, like listening and giving feedback, they dynamics of how and when you use those skills will differ in the context of guiding the team toward collective success. One of the biggest mistakes Team Leaders make is similar to how a high-performing individual moves from a role as a contributor to the role of managing individuals. Great managers don't automatically make great team leaders, without a clear understanding the differences between managing individual pursuing their goals, versus a group of individuals working toward a common goal.

"A team is three or more people associated in a joint action whose interdependent goals cannot be achieved without mutual cooperation and effort. A group is a collection of people who are related in some way."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

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Groups consist of members who can succeed on their own. Teams consist of members whose success is dependent on other members. There are many people who view a group as a team and waste their efforts. At the same time, there are leaders who sit back and do not recognize the needs of a team, because they view the team as a group. There are three things which can happen when groups and teams are mistaken for each other:

> Using team-building efforts on a group may be wasted since members don't have a common goal that requires interdependent actions and shared knowledge.

> If you assume you are in a group and do not provide the necessary team leadership, it will most likely fail.

> Implementing collective group leadership can lead to overlooking the need for one-to-one leadership that is still necessary for individual success.
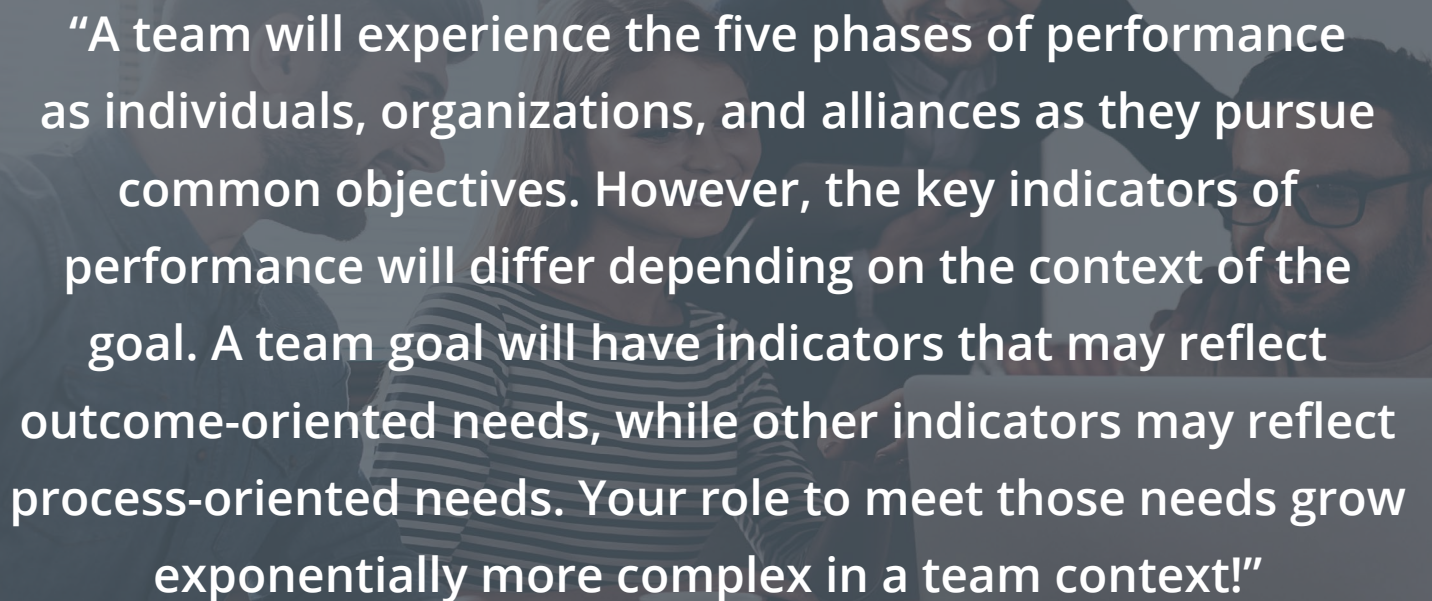
It is important to recognize the goal of your team at any given time. Make sure individuals you are working with are aligned and effectively contributing to these goals, and provide the appropriate leadership necessary to effectively complete them while meeting critical business needs.

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The Core Skills of a Team Leader

While the dynamics of leading a team differ from leading in a One-to-One context, the pursuit of a team goal remains similar to an individual's journey toward achieving a goal. Just a individual will experience a series of phases in their pursuit of a goal, research validates how typical it is for team to evolve through stages when pursuing a collective objective. As the team's leader, you need to distinguish the common indicators that reflect a team's phase of performance.

"A team will experience the five phases of performance as individuals, organizations, and alliances as they pursue common objectives. However, the key indicators of performance will differ depending on the context of the goal. A team goal will have indicators that may reflect outcome-oriented needs, while other indicators may reflect process-oriented needs. Your role to meet those needs grow exponentially more complex in a team context!"

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

A team leader needs to be able to continually and effectively assess the collective ability and energy related to the goal they are pursuing. Good team leaders will know how to effectively read the team and offer proper amount of direction for the team, without taking away their autonomy to achieve the objective, and inspire them when the energy and motivation of the team is wavering due to outcome or process oriented needs.

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The Micro Skills of a Team Leader

Once a Team Leader learns to effectively assess the needs of the team, it's the leaders role to offer the most effective direction or support of that team in order to optimize the pursuit of the team goal. Several key skills a team leader needs to effectively demonstrate to improve the overall efficiency of a team include:

> Facilitate a team charter

> Assess the DISC (dispositions or personality) of team members to communicate more effectively when pursuing team goals

> Facilitate effective team meetings

> Facilitate team problem solving

> Resolve team conflicts

Team Charter (Purpose and Process)

Part of achieving team goals includes creating a team charter. Team charters guide how teams work together around the goals. Many people think a team charter is ineffective. However, it is the thinking process that is essential. Creating a team charter together helps clarify the purpose of the team, the scope of the project, the duties and roles of each member, the strategy and the expected outcome. The more clarity you put into your charter, the more clarity you give for your team. Creating a team charter is useful beyond the charter itself and helps the team understand their own purpose and process.

In Jesse Stoner's book, Full Steam Ahead, she warns leaders about the dangers of leading without a clear direction and process for achieving objectives, "Leadership is about going somewhere," she says. "If not serving a shared vision, your leadership efforts are in danger of becoming self-serving." Taking time up front to charter a team can seem to slow things down. It's difficult work to create a shared vision and agreed process on how to achieve that vision. But slowing down things to create an effective charter can help you lead agile over the course of time and ensure your moving fast in the right direction, with smarter decision that the entire team is motivated by.

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DISCover Team Members (DISC for Teams)

There are many factors that can influence the effectiveness and overall performance of a team, but perhaps the most important factor that can impact a team are the individual personalities that make up that team. A good team leader must not only understand the individual disposition of each team member, but also know how those personalities are actively engaging, or disengaging one another. Using a DISC assessment tool is the first step to understanding the makeup of your team and the possible conflicts that could arise based on how you and team members communicate to the different DISC types. A greater understand of team members disposition can help cultivate creativity, resolve conflicts effectively, build on each other's strengths, and ultimately work toward a common vision.

DISC is a behavioral analysis tool used to help understand and improve team performance. The most effective teams require comprise of different types of team members, the knowledge and the capability to work with each other while recognizing these behavioral styles.

> Dominant: completes tasks, may overstep authority, likes challenges
> Influencing: strong communication, motivational, people-oriented
> Compliant: fact/data-oriented, detail-oriented, traditional approach, more passive
> Steady: reliable, team player, traditional approach, slower paced, cautious

These styles have different degrees of trust, communication, common goals, mutual respect and tolerance. Effective leaders and team members recognize these in others. When team members are lacking trust, it must be earned. If communication is creating problems, effective teams must clarify the issues creating the problem. Using DISC can help teams perform better to reach their goals.

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Figure 7.1

The DISC Model

Extroversion

Control

Accept

D

I

Direct
Risk Taking
Change-Oriented

Fight
Judge
Be Pessimistic

Flight
Perceive
Be Optimistic

C

S

Continuation-Oriented
Risk Assessing
Indirect

Introversion

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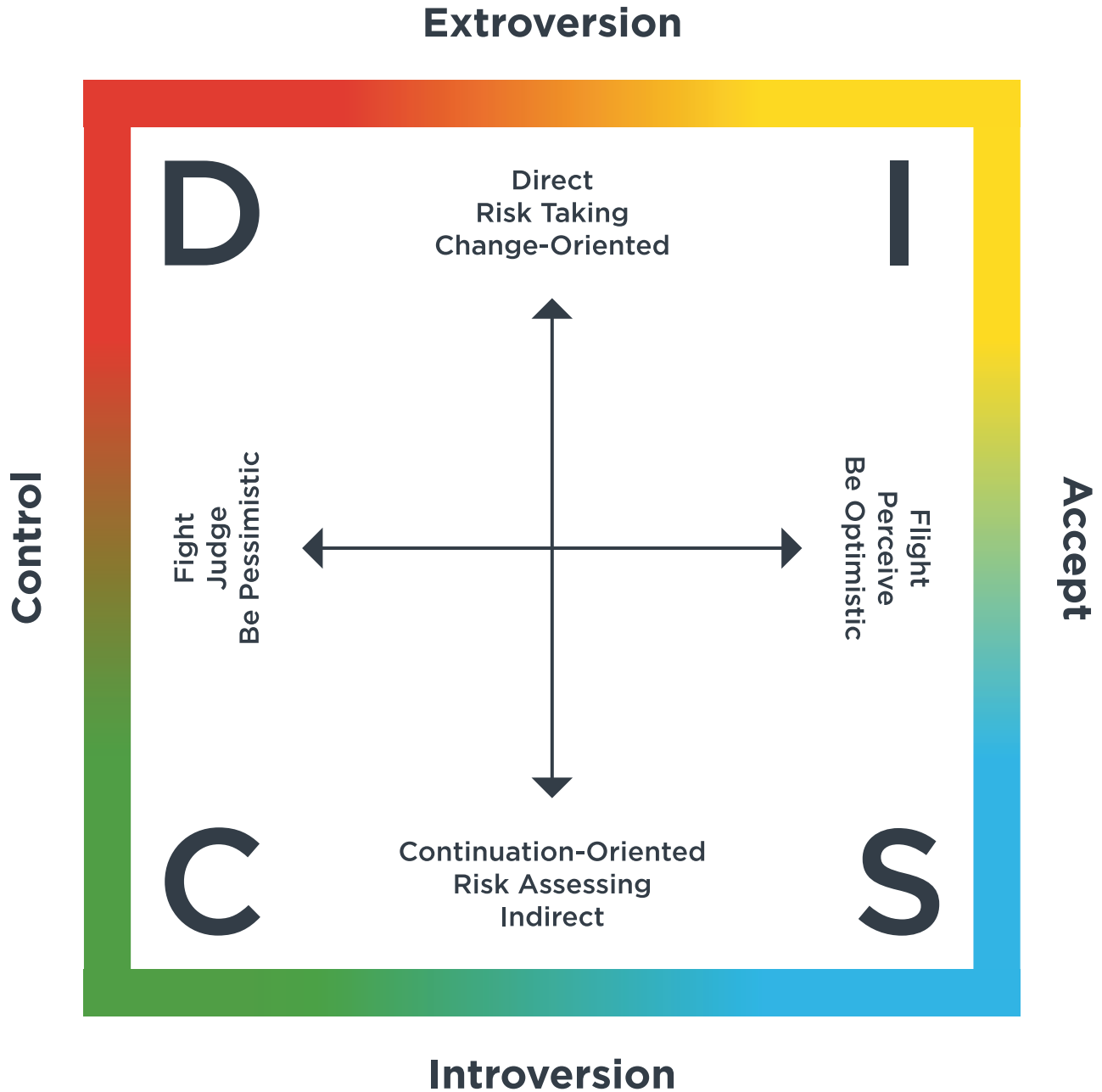
Facilitate Effective Team Meetings

Team Meetings are a blessing and a curse. They can be a powerful opportunity to discover key issues facing the team goal or to share updates on overall progress. Poorly facilitated meetings can kill the workflow of a team and have a negative impact on the motivational outlook of team. Whether you take a more modern agile approach to team meetings, or the traditional face to face meeting room approach, you're never going to stop having meetings altogether. There is still great value in getting team members together in a room, face-to-face or virtually, to work things out in real time.

Team Leaders need to set the norms for facilitating effective team meetings. Having a purpose for the meeting, with clear outcomes, and the type of team meeting being conducted (preview, review, or refinement) can go a long way in making the meetings more productive. Explore meeting formats that consistently make the meetings more valuable for the entire team, not just you as a Team Leader. Team meeting should make everyone's input and contribution to the team goal feel valued, understand the priorities of the moment, and always leave room for opportunities to discuss how the team could improve on the pursuit of the team goal.

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Facilitate Effective Team Meetings

There are few skills as important to business success than the skill of problem-solving. Problem solving in teams requires three important things:

> Team diversity for thinking
> Social support for creativity
> Removing complex systems

Team members thinking process and ideas should be diverse. It's important to have a devil's advocate and avoid groupthink. Furthermore, the wider the teams thinking, the more ideas people will have. Members should also feel supported and safe to share these ideas. If member a has an opposing idea, they should feel safe enough to share it. This can help develop team trust and create new ideas. Finally, teams should look to solve problems while removing entire sets of problems. If an issue is much more complex than it needs to be, you should consider simpler options to make it easier.

Problem solving ranges in the width of areas it can be used and depth in which it solves problems. Furthermore, the more areas of complexity a problem is spread, the greater problems are spread out. The deeper issues which can't be restructured require a deeper level of problem solving skills. "There are few practices as widespread, and as crucial to business success, as problem solving," according to Jeff Pruitt in his article, 3 Surprising Ways to Develop Problem Solving Teams. No matter what context you are attempting to lead in, the ability to have an effective and concise problem solving process is critical to the success of an organization. A Team Problem Solving process is vital to a Team Leader and should reflect a consistent approach to problem solving learned in a self or one-to-one leadership context.

Resolving Team Conflicts

Conflict happens! One of the most important skills a team leader can develop is the skill of effectively resolving conflicts on a team. As a team leader, your primary focus is on the overall progress and performance of the team toward the team goal, but unresolved conflicts can have a serious negative impact on the motivation and productivity of the team. It may be a temptation to simply dismiss the conflict, especially if your natural disposition as a leader is to avoid conflict. It may be even easier to dismiss the conflict as simply a personal issue, rather than an opportunity to clarify and improve the process and norms of the team, which may be the source of the conflict. A good Team Leader is skilled at recognizing conflict on a team, identifying the source of the problem without labeling individuals as the problem, then effectively, consistently, and justly resolving the conflict in order to continue the effective pursuit of the team goal and ensure the team remains optimally engaged in the purpose of the team.

The Essence of a Team Leader

When you consider the complexity of teams and the skill required by both the leader and the team members to collective contribute to a common goal, it's natural to question if it's worth leading a team at all. When the purpose of a team is simply a series of individual job descriptions toward an unclear or uncommon goal, it's easy to see how conflict can quickly rise in a team setting. The feelings and frustrations of team members are legitimate when their is not a skilled leader effectively guiding them through a process that brings meaning and purpose, not only to the organization, but all of the team members contributing to the goal.

When the combined skills and talents of individuals come together, teams create an extraordinary product that no individual could have accomplished on their own compared to acting independently from the collective knowledge and skills of the team. In fact, the art of team leadership is a powerful way to understand the importance and growing need for effective teams in today's workforce. Team leadership is the great opportunity to help people with diverse skills, backgrounds, talents, and passion come together for a common purpose greater than themselves as any individual on the team. When you've mastered the self, individual leadership, and leading teams effectively, you need to know where you're leading everyone.

Section #4:
Organizational Context

Executive leadership is perhaps the most glamorous and the most challenging of all contexts of leadership. You have the authority to make the most critical decisions as it relates to the direction of the organization, but you're also responsible for the people who are employed to serve the vision, and the clients they serve.

"The whole notion of how you build a company is fascinating. When I got the chance to come back to Apple, I realized that I would be useless without the company, and that's why I decided to stay and rebuild it."

— Steve Jobs

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The Great Irony of Leading an Organization

As a leader in the Organizational Context, your primary responsibility is to effectively shape the environment for those who think, feel and work in that organization -- cultivating an environment that is not only financially healthy but also develops the ability and energy of all it's employees toward a common purpose. "The great irony of executive leadership is, themore senior your level of leadership is, the more indirect your leadership becomes," says Dr. Drea Zigarmi, Co-author of Achieve Leadership Genius and The Leader Within. "Your influence comes far less through one-to-one relationships, and more through the vision, values, policies, and structure that shape you indirectly through your role at this level."

Leadership at the organizational level must be more sophisticated than when you are leading in the Self, One-to-One and Team leadership contexts because there are far more complex issues competing for the mindshare of those you seek to influence throughout the organization and beyond.

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The Mindset of Organizational Leadership

As an executive leader, it's important to develop the mindset of having equal responsibility to foster the economic health and effectiveness of the organization through the indirect methods of strategic thinking while ensuring the effective execution of those strategies. While strategic thinking and established processes and policies are your stock in trade, you also need to learn how to shape individual work patterns common throughout the organization, yet be flexible enough to meet the unique needs/demands individuals/teams are dealing with through their roles and goals.

How Organizational Leadership Differs from Other Leadership Contexts

The best leaders know how to work in each context, but you need to know how to align your strategy from the 30,000-foot view. Why do most organizations fail? Organizational leadership requires a strong perspective at the executive level. Each part of the strategy must support the rest.

"Leading in the Organizational Context means directly and indirectly influencing and aligning individual and team efforts toward fulfillment of the organization's purpose through systems, processes and structures."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

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Organizational leadership requires a strong perspective from the head of the organization. Each part of the strategy must support the rest. While there are challenges organizational leaders should recognize and overcome, there are fundamental indicators to analyze the performance of the company, agency, institution, etc.

The Organizational Framework for Leaders

The Organizational Framework will be essential in analyzing your company. Every company with a clear vision, mission, values and principles, can use a framework to connect their overall strategy with their operational activities.

Organizations are created in response to either a demand or an opportunity in a particular market. A demand is something the market desires/needs whether it is lacking a product, service, lower price, etc, and an opportunity acts on something the market greatly benefits from. For example, a company may provide tropical fruit in urban areas needing more agricultural products due to the demand for it. A group of software engineers building productivity software to improve company processes and taking it to market would be an opportunity.

FIGURE 4.1

Refer to page 35 for the Organizational Framework chart.

Once the organization is created from demands and opportunities in a market, that organization needs to have a clear, compelling and energizing vision. Every organization has a vision to know what the company is and does. It needs to be laid out so it doesn't succumb to prevailing forces which stray away from the vision. These could include shifting the focus of the organization to the wrong market, focusing on profits instead of providing for customers or expanding market dominance while losing quality control. If the vision isn't written in stone and exists as an unwritten idea, it can be shaped and affected by challenges and conditions.

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The vision is supported by the values and principles of the organization. If the company loses focus of its vision, the values and principles which support the vision will no longer be supporting what the organization originally stood for. Thus, the values/principles will fail to optimize the energy of the workflow of the organization.

Once the values and principles support the vision, strategic factors can be looked at. Strategic factors provide the framework for performance including processes, systems and infrastructure to support performance. Performance dimensions include initiatives and goals that determine the day-to-day activities.
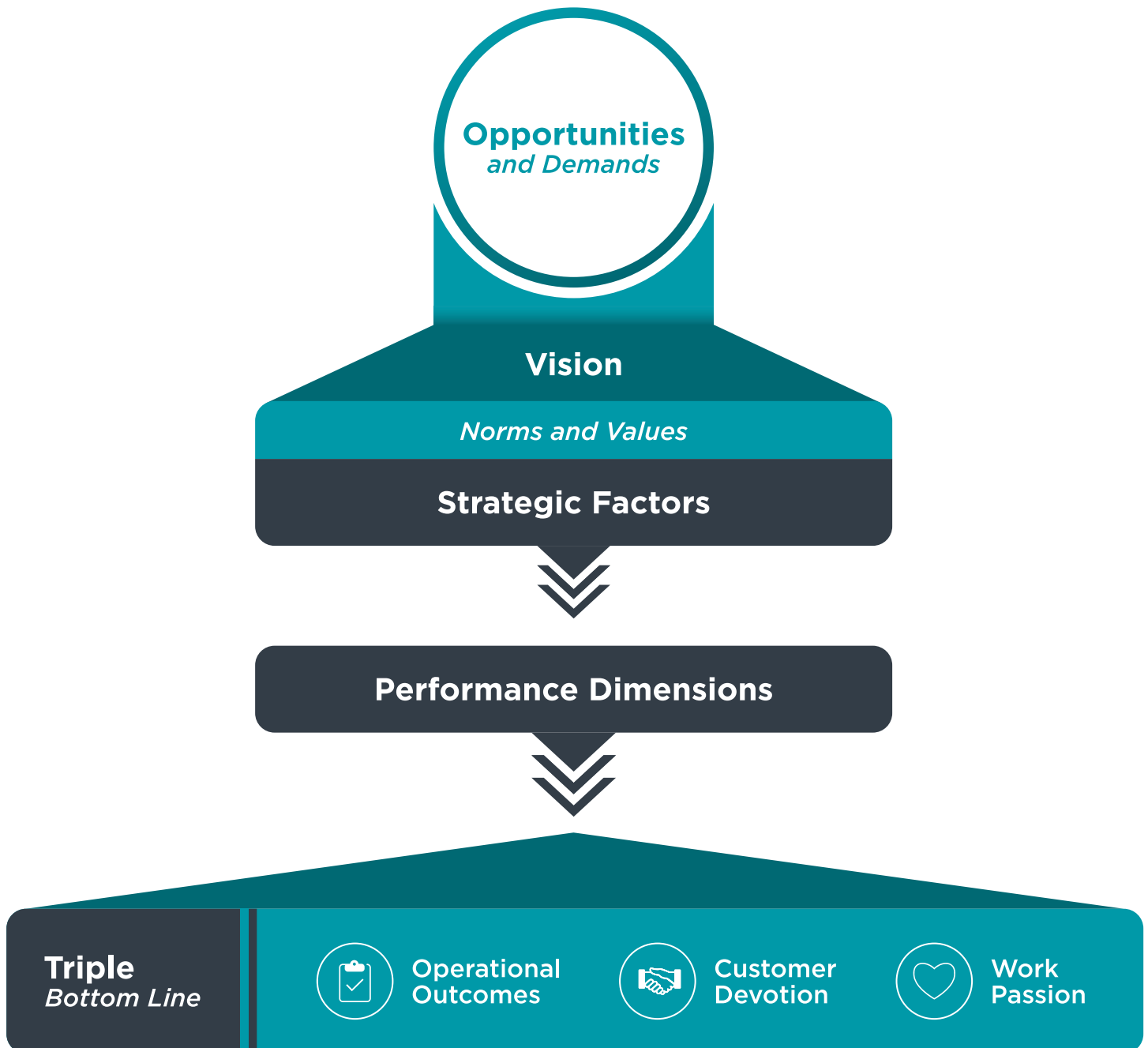
Some of the outputs include a triple bottom line. In the Organizational Context, this includes measuring achievement against organizational outcomes, customer devotion and employee engagement (among financial metrics). These are three important outputs to look at when determining how well your organization is performing.

The Organizational Framework can help you determine your performance and see where problems lie. It can ensure your organization maintains its original purpose and doesn't lose focus.

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Figure 4.1

Organizational Framework

Opportunities
and Demands

Vision

Norms and Values

Strategic Factors

Performance Dimensions

Triple
Bottom Line

Operational
Outcomes

Customer
Devotion

Work
Passion

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Challenges for Organizational Leaders

Like the other contexts, there are challenges strategic leaders must overcome in order to align the parts of their strategy. Companies go through life cycle stages and, if not led effectively in an organizational context, and this can lead to failure and sub-optimal employee engagement. These stages of company life cycle stages are infancy, growth, adolescence, primacy, stability, death. Organizations also go through the five Phases of Performance toward achieving business initiatives. Lastly, leaders must recognize there are five critical skills: Understanding the Work Passion of the Organization, Communicating a Compelling Message, Managing Organizational Problem Solving, Promoting Organizational Justice and Celebrating Success, they need to be successful in leading an organization.

Some of the challenges leaders should be aware of:

> Many leaders aren't aware of these stages or what stage their company is in. They fail to ask if their organization is functioning the way it should given the size and level of operation.

> Most leaders don't take the time to asses the Phases of Performance that an organization goes through toward achieving a business initiative. Like the Self, One-to-One and Team Context, assessing the Phase of Performance are essential to determine what leadership behaviors are necessary for leading in the organizational context.

> Leaders must develop different skills than in the Self, One-to-One and Team context to be able to lead effectively in the Organizational Context. These skills are very different because you are involving a broader audience and are using certain leadership skills based on the organization's Phase of Performance for a specific initiative.

Also, recognizing yourself as a leader, you need to shift your leadership to make sure you're using the appropriate skills for the context in which you are leading.

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What Organizational Leaders Need to Know about Performance Predictors

While there are many indicators of performance, there is a handful of predictors which can help lead to long-term success of an organization. These include:

> Employee intention to leave/turnover is low

> Employee citizenship behavior/morale is high

> Employee trust in leaders is high

Employee engagement and work passion both predict long-term performance for an organization. When the criteria above are met, organizations can predict higher performance. However, higher organizational performance does not indicate employees are engaged. This is short-lived. In other words, happy employees may indicate higher performance. Just because your company is succeeding doesn't mean employees are happy.

Higher employee passion is also an indicator of high customer devotion. When employees are engaged in their work, they provide a meaningful product/experience for customers. There are strong connections between employees and customers. Better engaged employees put in more work for customers to be happy. However, when financial and economic factors become the indicators of output, the organization can begin to struggle. Leaders shouldn't lose focus by using these as performance indicators and focus on solely making money.

How to Lead Your Organization with Strong Employee Engagement

> **Practice What You Preach.** Leaders who set expectations and visions for the company need to demonstrate those for employees. This shows that leaders are serious and have expectations they don't follow through with themselves. Along with being a representational model, this helps establish respect with employees.

> **Be Transparent.** Transparency helps establish trust with employers and leaders. If employees and team members are involved in an employer's decisions, they can understand the reasoning and process of these decisions. When employees are left in the dark, a lack of trust can build. They aren't given a sense of trust and are left to their own reasoning and the result of leaders' decisions.

> **Genuinity Goes a Long Way.** Showing employees are more than functional workers is vital. They make leaders money, but they will perform much better if you show them you care and treat them like a person. Say "thank you," show appreciation, listen when it counts and show who you are to them.

> **Engage With Employees.** Nothing's worse than being a worker who routinely dislikes going into their cubicle everyday and not talking to anyone. Engage employees from day one. Offer fun events such as volunteering, workday events, appreciation programs, holiday parties, after work socials, etc. Be part of this process and don't expect every employee to engage on their own. Create an engaging environment where employees enjoying being part of this culture. Be part of this process too.

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The Business Case for Investing in Organizational Leadership

Leaders must master the practices of organizational leadership and learn to respond to the needs of the organization through the various stages of growth it will naturally go through. Having a formalized vision and performance framework helps keep a clear, long-term strategy front and center during the day-to-day operations and execution of that strategy. Overcoming the challenges of lifecycle stages is necessary as leaders move forward, especially when serving their original purpose to serve customers and employees. This can be done by measuring employee engagement, passion and commitment to the organization. Create a workplace where people feel privileged to work and customers feel privileged to use your products and services. Revenue will follow. Once you've aligned these four contexts, you may reach limits on how far you can go. This is where alliances can help take you to the next level.

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Section #5
Alliance Context

Have you traveled anywhere recently? Did you take a plane to get there? Stay at a hotel? Rent a car? Eat at a fast food restaurant or sip on a cup of coffee along the journey? You have most likely benefited or experienced some type of service within the past few days that is brought to you by a strategic alliance.

"A strategic alliance is an agreement between two or more parties to pursue a set of agreed upon objectives needed while remaining independent organizations. A strategic alliance will usually fall short of a legal partnership entity, agency, or corporate affiliate relationship."

— Dr. Drea Zigarmi in "Achieve Leadership Genius"

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In recent years, companies have shifted from hierarchically-based, unilateral power within an organization to a reliance on strategic alliances and partnerships to achieve common business objectives across multiple organizations. This new type of business relationship has led to one of the more complex contexts of leadership - leading an alliance. Leading in an alliance is the fifth context that Dr. Drea Zigarmi discusses in his book, written with Susan Fowler and Dick Lyles. Forming these alliances poses an important question:

"How do I forge, nurture, and manage collaborative relationships that expand and leverage my organization's assets, services and potential?"

Once you understand your **individual role as a leader** and how that works in a One-to-One context with direct reports with a team of individuals or an organization as a whole, you're better positioned to lead an alliance between two or more organizations to achieve one common business objective.

The Two Different Types of Alliances

Alliances can occur on any of several levels. An alliance could be as simple as a partnership between two individuals or between an individual and an organization like a third-party contractor. But most alliances in today's business world are likely between two organizations or two organizational units within an organization. There are two different types of alliances organizations can form: internal and external.

Internal alliances are formed between business units, who have their set of responsibilities and duties but need to work together to achieve a common objective. When Marketing and Sales work together with a Product Development unit to help shape and create a product or service to meet the needs of their ideal client - that is considered an Internal alliance. External alliances are formed when two different corporate entities work together by **aligning their values and establishing goals.**

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How Are Alliances Formed?

Strategic networking is at the heart of forming these strategic alliances. Alliances are formed based on a common purpose, working together to achieve a common goal. The difference between a strategic alliance and a basic relationship is that the strategic alliance is defined by purpose, while a relationship is based on an emotional connection or physical proximity to someone else. You have a relationship with your neighbors because you live near them, but you form an alliance with them because you need to achieve a common objective, like form a neighborhood watch program to keep the neighborhood safe.
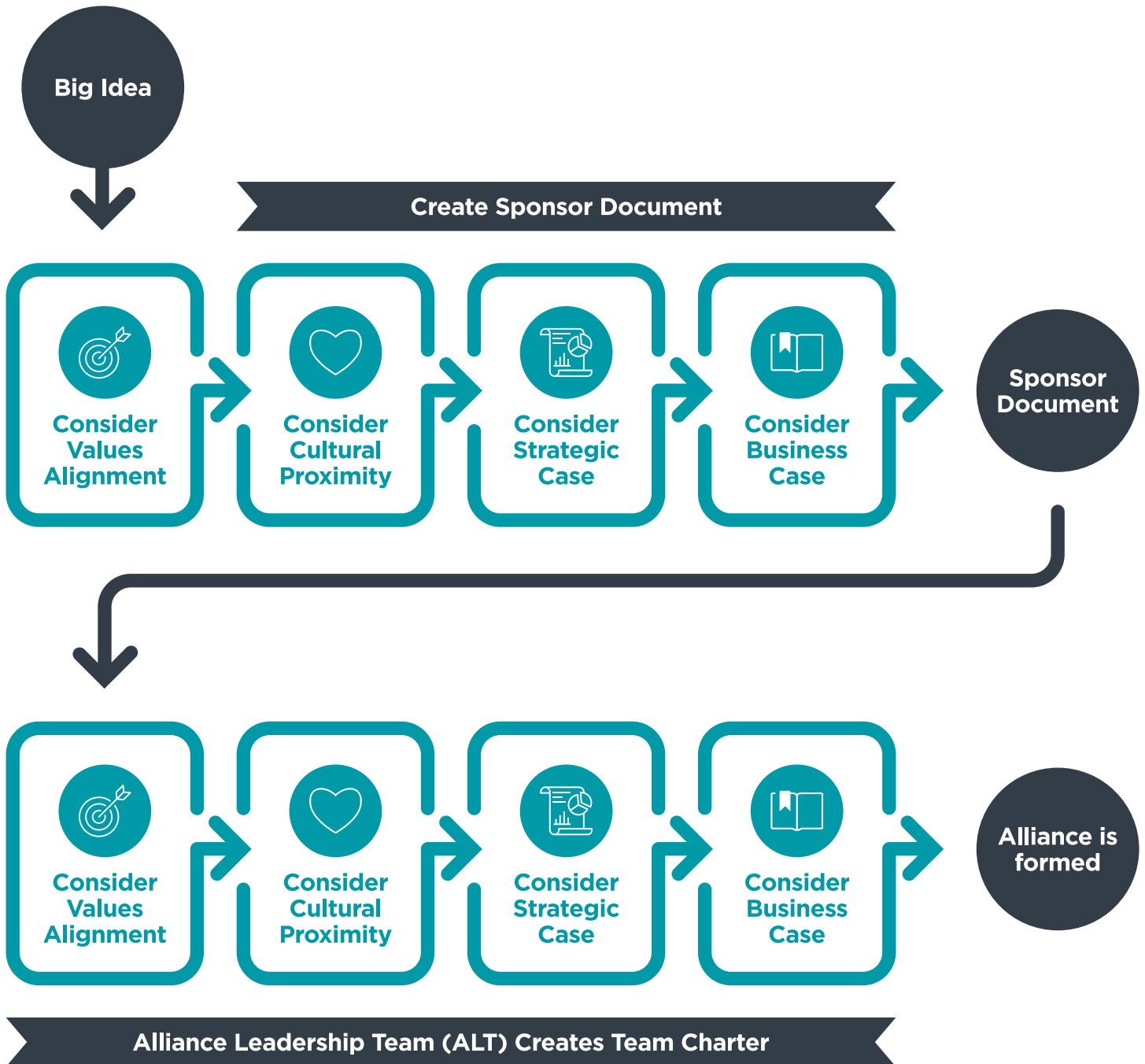
Although internal alliances are formed to accomplish immediate purposes like complete a project or release a new product, external alliances are generally focused on accomplishing long-term objectives that generate a significant market share and profitability for an extended period of time that could not be achieved as two individual organizations. An alliance formed between an airline and a hotel chain will serve the ongoing needs of a certain market segment of tourists.

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Figure 16.1

Alliance Building Process

Big Idea

Create Sponsor Document

Consider Values Alignment → Consider Cultural Proximity → Consider Strategic Case → Consider Business Case → Sponsor Document

Consider Values Alignment → Consider Cultural Proximity → Consider Strategic Case → Consider Business Case → Alliance is formed

Alliance Leadership Team (ALT) Creates Team Charter

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The Significance of Alliance Leadership

Larry E. Greiner was one of the first to thought leaders on the formation of alliances in his studies on the growth of organizations during the dawn of the 21st century. In his article, **Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow**, Greiner noted that the collaboration phase of an organization is the highest phase of organizational transformation. The collaboration phase entails spontaneity in management action through teams and the skillful confrontation of interpersonal differences.

Much like interpersonal relationships, inter-organizational relationships thrive on a similar collaboration phase. The most important aspect of an alliance is not confronting interpersonal differences, but the integration of core competencies to successfully master this level of organizational relationships. Leadership in an internal or external alliance context takes a skillful integration of core competencies that exist in separate units or organizations and bring them together for one common purpose.

Even if you think you are **a successful leader** in other contexts and keep up with best practices in leadership, your ability to lead an alliance can still fail. When they do, it could be because of three factors:

1. The strategic purpose was unclear

2. The leader failed to ensure compatibility

3. The alliance charter was not explicitly defined and agreed upon

With that being said, it is not easy maintaining an alliance. They tend to face many challenges.

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The Challenges of Alliance Leadership

Many challenges an alliance can face outside of overcoming a common purpose are operational in nature. Much like **challenges that hinder professional growth** within your own company, you must overcome them with your skills to lead an alliance. After alliances are formed by overcoming the challenges associated with defining purpose, the face significant operational challenges. Because alliances are often created between two different organizations or business units, the biggest challenge they face is often the issue of accountability

> How will they hold each other accountable?

> How will they hold themselves accountable?

> Who decides on what they should be held accountable for?

> How do you bring together different entities that have different purposes and have them focus on one common purpose?

> What steps must be taken or what resources are needed for the alliance members to rely upon if one of their partners falls through?

> How does the alliance maintain vibrancy and commitment over time?

> What happens when the alliance faces partner turnover with inexperienced newcomers?

Ambiguity is a common hurdle when it comes to alliances. Alliance leaders must understand four key aspects when guiding a strategic network to ensure it will not fail. They are:

1 How decisions will be made

2 How problems will be solved

3 How they will communicate

4 Where authority within operations lies
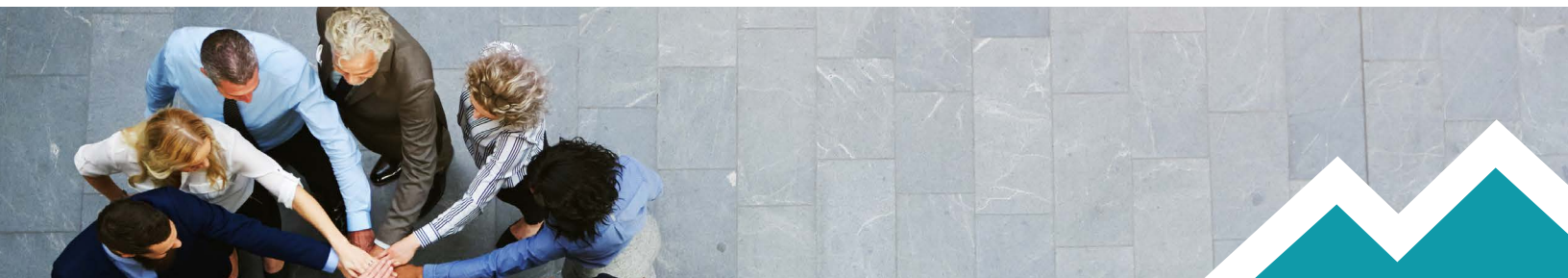
Participate in an Alliance Properly

Alliances are tricky to manage. You think you're doing everything right, but your partner confronts you about something you didn't expect. They may be passive-aggressive which only gets worse if you don't layout clear communication and how you should both function when problems arise. No alliance didn't work properly without great effort and care for the other organization. Keep these **tips for participating in an alliance** to heart in order to progress your organization towards your goals:

> **Form Mindfully.** When you form an alliance, you need to sit down and deeply consider (1) why you need an alliance, (2) who you could form an alliance with, (3) how this alliance benefits your partner, the customer and your organization.
>
> Are you forming an alliance to progress your organization much more than your partner is actually benefiting? Many companies prepare themselves for pitching partnerships that they hope other companies will want, but it provides little value to them or it's something the potential partner doesn't value. Furthermore, make sure you're picking the most appropriate partner and you have a solid reason to form this alliance. When you form, lay the relationship out in thorough detail.

> **Communicate for Clarity and Trust.** Your partner and you can agree on what needs to be done together. Make sure you do regular checkups or maintain constant communication with your partner. If you have a rebuttal to what they're doing, professionally and sincerely identify this with them. Get on the same page and clarify your tactics. Even if you think you're doing things according to their plan, check in with your partner on what you've done. Don't let them accept things they didn't agree to without talking about it. Over time, this may lead to passive-aggressive behaviors and hurt the partnership.
>
> Recognize different cultures and communication styles each of you have, and work with them appropriately. To build a strong amount of trust, cover your partner when they're struggling. Don't overdo it or let them abuse your participation in the partnership, but they will appreciate it when they need it most. Most importantly, don't play the blame game. Have a laid out exit strategy with your partner if it doesn't work out.

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> **Things Change. Be Flexible.** Market conditions will change, competitors will pivot and dependent variables will crumble. For both your partner and you, recognize that things will change and hurt either organization. Recognize how these threats have hurt your partner or you, and know how to help or ask for assistance. Furthermore, opportunities may open up for either one of you which won't necessarily benefit the other. Know when to let your partner reap these benefits or if it's too out of scope for you. Both of these should be recognized when a partnership if formed. Make sure your partner knows to be flexible when things don't go well for you either.

As you face challenges in your alliance, it's easy to overlook these. So, make sure you keep these in mind. You're going to have to champion your partnership before you win the market.

The Promise of Alliance Leadership

When alliances are led properly to conquer the obstacles in the way, there is no better tool to leverage. When IBM went from being a sole company in the 1990s to a powerhouse with nearly 90,000 strategic alliances, it was not just happenstance. It took great leadership in the alliance context to grow IBM without losing it's brand identity and foundation. Companies are discovering **professional growth** and an acceleration of growth in an economic downturn thanks to strategic networking. Since this is a fairly new concept in terms of leadership and organizational operations, leading in the alliance context may be the most important competency for leaders to master in the coming decades.

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It's Your Turn to Inspire

Leadership isn't easy. The Grand Tetons were an inspiration, because they developed a community in an environment where they intuitively excelled in all five contexts. Their successes followed after they put in the care and effort they put into the land. They overcame challenges, because they didn't stop leading themselves. They became the inspiration many companies are missing today. Organizations overlook the fundamental contexts the Grand Tetons executed.

Starting inwards with the Self Context and moving outwards to the One-to-One, Team, Organizational and Alliance Context, you can execute your leadership roles and perform like the Grand Tetons. Recognize and overcome the challenges most leaders can't even identify, and become the successful leader your organization needs. Develop your skills by looking back and checking your performance in each context (SOTOA). Your daily tasks may change, but your leadership should stand its ground and be solid. Know who, what, where and when you lead. Master these five contexts. Lead with results.

Want to learn more about the intricacies of inspirational leadership and how to achieve it? Take a demo with Inspire Software today and apply the contexts and practices from Dr. Drea Zigarmi's book, Achieving Leadership Genius, to your everyday interactions.

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