

SEMESTER – IV SEC – II

LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Module – I – LEADERSHIP SKILLS

a. Understanding Leadership and its importance

- What is leadership?

Leadership is a process by which an executive can direct, guide and influence the behaviour and work of others towards accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. Leadership is the ability of a manager to induce the subordinates to work with confidence and zeal.

Leadership is the potential to influence behaviour of others. It is also defined as the capacity to influence a group towards the realization of a goal. Leaders are required to develop future visions, and to motivate the organizational members to want to achieve the visions.

According to Keith Davis, "Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals."

The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines leadership as: 'the action of leading a group of people or an organization'; 'the state or position of being a leader' (NODE, 2001).

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines leadership as 'the office or position of a leader, the capacity to lead, and the act or instance of leading' (Merriam-Webster, 2007).

According to Dwight D Eisenhower (1988) "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

Bass (1990, p.19) defines leadership as 'an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members'.

Gardner (1990, p.1) defines leadership as 'the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader and his or her followers'.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) identify leadership as a learnable set of practices.

Many others have defined leadership in terms of behaviors, traits, competencies, activities and results of leaders. Bennis (1994, p.1) notes that "To an extent, leadership is like beauty; it's hard to define, but you know it when you see it".

Characteristics of Leadership

1. It is an inter-personal process in which a manager is into influencing and guiding workers towards attainment of goals.
2. It denotes a few qualities to be present in a person who includes intelligence, maturity and personality.
3. It is a group process. It involves two or more people interacting with each other.

4. A leader is involved in shaping and moulding the behaviour of the group towards accomplishment of organizational goals.

5. Leadership is situation bound. There is no best style of leadership. It all depends upon tackling with the situations.

Leadership is an important function of management which helps to maximize efficiency and to achieve organizational goals. The following points justify the importance of leadership in a concern.

1. **Initiates action-** Leader is a person who starts the work by communicating the policies and plans to the subordinates from where the work actually starts.
2. **Motivation-** A leader proves to be playing an incentive role in the concern's working. He motivates the employees with economic and non-economic rewards and thereby gets the work from the subordinates.
3. **Providing guidance-** A leader has to not only supervise but also play a guiding role for the subordinates. Guidance here means instructing the subordinates the way they have to perform their work effectively and efficiently.
4. **Creating confidence-** Confidence is an important factor which can be achieved through expressing the work efforts to the subordinates, explaining them clearly their role and giving them guidelines to achieve the goals effectively. It is also important to hear the employees with regards to their complaints and problems.
5. **Building morale-** Morale denotes willing co-operation of the employees towards their work and getting them into confidence and winning their trust. A leader can be a morale booster by achieving full co-operation so that they perform with best of their abilities as they work to achieve goals.
6. **Builds work environment-** Management is getting things done from people. An efficient work environment helps in sound and stable growth. Therefore, human relations should be kept into mind by a leader. He should have personal contacts with employees and should listen to their problems and solve them. He should treat employees on humanitarian terms.
7. **Co-ordination-** Co-ordination can be achieved through reconciling personal interests with organizational goals. This synchronization can be achieved through proper and effective co-ordination which should be primary motive of a leader.

- **Why Leadership required?**

No successful organization would have been where it is today without effective leadership. Effective leadership is almost always one of the main and primary drivers for growth, development and innovation. Leadership isn't about the titles, or even the accolades. Effective leadership is much more meaningful, impactful and profound. It's earned and worked for. There is no set formula or step-by-step plan, it depends on the culture and needs of the organization.

Being a good leader isn't something everyone can do. It's not easy. Every effective leader needs to possess and/or work towards their goals and vision. Good leaders are keys to improved productivity and morale among members of an organization. Leadership plays an important part in the success of any organisation. In the absence of effective leadership no organisation can work

efficiently. An organisation is created with the purpose of achieving certain objectives through a human group; it becomes essential to control this human group.

The importance of leadership is highlighted by the following facts:

1. Helps in Influencing the Behaviour of People:

A manager influences his subordinates with his leadership ability. He brings them under his control in such a way that they put in their best efforts to achieve the goals of the organisation. Good leaders always get good results through their followers.

2. Helps Followers in Fulfilling their Needs:

A leader establishes personal relationship with his followers and tries to fulfil their needs. Why does a human group follow a particular person? It can be said in reply to this question because that particular person provides them security and the opportunities to earn wealth, gives them the right to work and tries to understand their feelings.

That is why people follow him. A person who takes care of the above-mentioned needs of the employees, they willingly accept him. Consequently, they work with complete dedication and enthusiasm.

3. Helps in Introducing Required Changes:

These days the business environment is changing rapidly. In order to face the changing environment, many changes have got to be introduced in the organisation.

Since the people already happen to be under the influence of the leader, he readily makes them agree to implement these changes. In this way, the possible opposition to the change is eliminated with the strength of leadership ability.

4. Helps in Solving Conflicts Effectively:

A leader can solve every type of conflict (employee's vs. employees and employees vs. employer) effectively under the weight of his influence. A leader always allows his followers the freedom to express their views.

That is the reason that he easily understands the reality of the conflict, in this way, by understanding the nature of the conflict he tries to provide timely solution and minimises the possibility of adverse results.

5. Helps in Training and Development of Subordinates:

A leader proves helpful in the training and development of his subordinates. He provides them the information about the modern techniques of work. Not only this, he makes it possible for them to be good leaders in future.

- **Whom do you consider as an ideal leader?**

The ideal leader has vision, charisma, integrity, emotional intelligence, an inspiring delivery and sterling character. But if there are leaders who don't fit this image, then we cannot use our ideal to define leadership in general.

Here are some leaders who don't match our ideal:

1. The teenage gang leader who has "street cred" is tough and prepared to defy the law, even if it means shooting his way out of trouble.
2. Stalin, admired by some Russians who like tough leaders, even if ruthless.
3. Technical leaders, whose new product ideas induce change even if they have no vision, an abrasive style and little emotional intelligence.
4. Leaders in scientific or professional functions who exert quiet influence based on hard evidence but who are personally uninspiring.

If these are genuine examples of leadership, then our image of the ideal leader can't be about leadership in general. Our ideal is biased in two ways: first it is culturally relative, and second, we narrowly focus on larger-than-life characters such as chief executives and heads of state, the heroic, glamorous end of the spectrum.

Idealizing leadership blinds us to its real essence. We need to stop viewing the leader as a type of person in charge of a group. Instead, we need to see how leadership can come from anyone who shows it as in an occasional, discrete act of influence. Leadership must be better aligned with a world that is too complex and fast changing for one person to provide all the answers. If crowds are wiser than individuals, then the lone, heroic, ideal leader is a liability.

b. Traits and Models of Leadership

- Are leaders born or made?

Some believe that true leaders are born that way— naturally charismatic, influential, and inspiring individual who are destined to make a mark. But while certain people may be naturally predisposed to leadership, just as they're naturally predisposed to athleticism or musicality, we believe it's absolutely

possible to cultivate the characteristics and skills necessary to call yourself a leader. As legendary American football coach Vince Lombardi once said: “Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work.”

So whether you were born with the “special sauce” or not, if you want to be a leader you’re going to have to work to develop and refine the characteristics of the greats. Read on to learn some of the specific traits that are critical for leadership—and how any one of us can work on nurturing them in our careers.

Key characteristics of an effective leader

There are 6 traits that distinguish effective leaders from non-leaders:

- Integrity/dependability/drive. This characteristic includes endurance and enthusiasm. It means that the individual is willing and able to exert energy to achieve a goal, and can be depended upon to do so.
- Self-confidence. Someone with a noticeable bearing or presence who has the ability to influence others and pursue goals will be a good leader. This person needs to have strong beliefs and be decisive—traits associated with self-confidence.
- Desire to influence others. This desire is frequently seen as a willingness to accept authority. In other words, this person is happy to be in authority and does not shirk responsibility. They can use the authority to build trusting relationships and influence others.
- Ethical and moral character. To be an effective leader, one must be honest and have a good moral character.
- Intelligence. This relates to the ability to follow and interpret the vision and mission of the organization. It also incorporates smart decision-making and effective communicating because a leader needs to synthesize, interpret, and communicate information to be successful.
- Relevant knowledge. Going beyond intelligence, an effective leader must also have relevant knowledge for the role. This includes technical, theoretical, and conceptual knowledge. The person must have the ability to conceptualize. He or she must know the entire operation well enough to lead the team.

- **Leadership Styles**

At first glance, we may think that some leadership styles are better than others. The truth is that each leadership style has its place in a leader's toolkit. The wise leader knows to flex from one style to another as the situation demands. Leadership styles are on a continuum, ranging from autocratic at one end, to laissez-faire at the other, with a variety of styles in between.

The seven primary leadership styles are:

1. Autocratic Style

The phrase most illustrative of an autocratic leadership style is "Do as I say." Generally, an autocratic leader believes that he or she is the smartest person at the table and knows more than others. They make all the decisions with little input from team members. This command-and-control approach is typical of leadership styles of the past, but it doesn't hold much water with today's talent.

That's not to say that the style may not be appropriate in certain situations. For example, you can dip into an autocratic leadership style when crucial decisions need to be made on the spot, and you have the most knowledge about the situation, or when you're dealing with inexperienced and new team members and there's no time to wait for team members to gain familiarity with their role.

2. Authoritative Style

The phrase most indicative of this style of leadership (also known as "visionary") is "Follow me." The authoritative leadership style is the mark of confident leaders who map the way and set expectations, while engaging and energizing followers along the way.

In a climate of uncertainty, these leaders lift the fog for people. They help them see where the company is going and what's going to happen when they get there.

Unlike autocratic leaders, authoritative leaders take the time to explain their thinking: They don't just issue orders. Most of all, they allow people choice and latitude on how to achieve common goals.

3. Pacesetter Style

"Do as I do!" is the phrase most indicative of leaders who utilize the pacesetter style. This style describes a very driven leader who sets the pace as in racing. Pacesetters set the bar high and push their team members to run hard and fast to the finish line.

While the pacesetter style of leadership is effective in getting things done and driving for results, it's a style that can hurt team members. For one thing, even the most driven employees may become stressed working under this style of leadership in the long run.

An agile leadership style may be the ultimate leadership style required for leading today's talent.

Should you avoid the pacesetter style altogether? Not so fast. If you're an energetic entrepreneur working with a like-minded team on developing and announcing a new product or service, this style may serve you well. However, this is not a style that can be kept up for the long term. A pacesetter leader needs to let the air out of the tires once in a while to avoid causing team burnout.

4. Democratic Style

Democratic leaders are more likely to ask "What do you think?" They share information with employees about anything that affects their work responsibilities. They also seek employees' opinions before approving a final decision.

There are numerous benefits to this participative leadership style. It can engender trust and promote team spirit and cooperation from employees. It allows for creativity and helps employees grow and develop. A democratic leadership style gets people to do what you want to be done but in a way that they want to do it.

5. Coaching Style

When you having a coaching leadership style, you tend to have a "Consider this" approach. A leader who coaches views people as a reservoir of talent to be developed. The leader who uses a coach approach seeks to unlock people's potential.

Leaders who use a coaching style open their hearts and doors for people. They believe that everyone has power within themselves. A coaching leader gives people a little direction to help them tap into their ability to achieve all that they're capable of.

6. Affiliative Style

A phrase often used to describe this type of leadership is "People come first." Of all the leadership styles, the Affiliative leadership approach is one where the leader gets up close and personal with people. A leader practicing this style pays attention to and supports the emotional needs of team members. The leader strives to open up a pipeline that connects him or her to the team.

Ultimately, this style is all about encouraging harmony and forming collaborative relationships within teams. It's particularly useful, for example, in smoothing conflicts among team members or reassuring people during times of stress.

7. Laissez-Faire Style

The laissez-faire leadership style is at the opposite end of the autocratic style. Of all the leadership styles, this one involves the least amount of oversight. You could say that the autocratic style leader stands as firm as a rock on issues, while the laissez-faire leader lets people swim with the current.

On the surface, a laissez-faire leader may appear to trust people to know what to do, but taken to the extreme, an uninvolved leader may end up appearing aloof. While it's beneficial to give people opportunities to spread their wings, with a total lack of direction, people may unwittingly drift in the wrong direction—away from the critical goals of the organization.

This style can work if you're leading highly skilled, experienced employees who are self-starters and motivated. To be most effective with this style, monitor team performance and provide regular feedback.

Choosing Leadership Styles

Knowing which of the leadership styles works best for you is part of being a good leader. Developing a signature style with the ability to stretch into other styles as the situation warrants may help enhance your leadership effectiveness.

1. Know yourself.

Start by raising your awareness of your dominant leadership style. You can do this by asking trusted colleagues to describe the strengths of your leadership style. You can also take a leadership style assessment.

2. Understand the different styles.

Get familiar with the repertoire of leadership styles that can work best for a given situation. What new skills do you need to develop?

3. Practice makes a leader.

Be genuine with any approach you use. Moving from a dominant leadership style to a different one may be challenging at first. Practice the new behaviours until they become natural. In other words, don't use a different leadership style as a "point-and-click" approach. People can smell a fake leadership style a mile away—authenticity rules.

4. Develop your leadership agility.

Traditional leadership styles are still relevant in today's workplace, but they may need to be combined with new approaches in line with how leadership is defined for the 21st century.

Today's business environments are fraught with challenges due to the changing demographics and the employee expectations of a diverse workforce. This may call for a new breed of leader who is an amalgam of most of the leadership styles discussed here.

As the Chinese proverb goes, the wise adapt themselves to circumstances, as water moulds itself to the pitcher. An agile leadership style may be the ultimate leadership style required for leading today's talent.

Perspectives of different leaders

Bass (1990) who reviewed literature of the previous thirty years believes that the hunt for a true definition of leadership seems to be fruitless because the appropriate definition depends on the methodology used to observe leadership, the philosophical beliefs of the observer and the purposes of the definition.

He provides an overview of the definitions taken from the literature and classifies 13 different perspectives of leadership.

For example, the roles of leadership can be seen:

- as the focus of group processes,
- as a personality attribute,
- as the art of inducing compliance,

- as an exercise of influence,
- as a particular kind of act,
- as a form of persuasion,
- as a power relation,
- as an instrument of goal achievement,
- as an effect of group interaction,
- as a differentiated role,
- as the initiation of structure, or
- as some combination of all these

Basic Leadership Skills

- **Motivation**

Leaders need to inspire their workers to go the extra mile for their organizations; just paying a fair salary to employees is typically not enough inspiration (although it is important too). There are a number of ways to motivate your workers: you may build employee self-esteem through recognition and rewards, or by giving employees new responsibilities to increase their investment in the company.

Leaders must learn what motivators work best for their employees or team members to encourage productivity and passion. Skills related to effective motivation include:

Allowing employee autonomy
 Asking for input
 Assessing the interests of staff
 Convincing
 Mentoring
 Open to employee concerns
 Persuasive
 Providing productive and challenging work
 Providing rewards
 Recognizing others
 Setting effective goals
 Team-building
 Thanking staff
 Understanding employee differences

- **Team work**

Effective leaders can bring their team closer together by encouraging collaboration and facilitating healthy working relationships between employees. When team members trust each other, they work better together and are more productive.

Teamwork is a compound word, combining team and work. Teams are a form of group normally dedicated to production or problem solving. That leaves us with the work. This is where our previous example on problem solving can serve us well. Each member of the team has skills, talents, experience, and education. Each is expected to contribute. Work is the activity, and while it may be fun or engaging, it also requires effort and commitment, as there is a schedule for production with individual and group responsibilities. Each member must fulfill his or her own obligations for the team to succeed, and the team, like a chain, is only as strong as its weakest member. In this context we don't measure strength or weakness at the gym, but in terms of productivity.

Teams can often achieve higher levels of performance than individuals because of the combined energies and talents of the members. Collaboration can produce motivation and creativity that may not be present in single-contractor projects. Individuals also have a sense of belonging to the group, and the range of views and diversity can energize the process, helping address creative blocks and stalemates. By involving members of the team in decision-making, and calling up on each member's area of contribution, teams can produce positive results.

Teamwork is not without its challenges. The work itself may prove a challenge as members juggle competing assignments and personal commitments. The work may also be compromised if team members are expected to conform and pressured to go along with a procedure, plan, or product that they themselves have not developed. Groupthink, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities and competition can play a role in a team's failure to produce.

We can recognize that people want to belong to a successful team, and celebrating incremental gain can focus the attention on the project and its goals. Members will be more willing to express thoughts and opinions, and follow through with actions, when they perceive that they are an important part of the team. By failing to include all the team members, valuable insights may be lost in the rush to judgment or production. Making time for planning, and giving each member time to study, reflect, and contribute can allow them to gain valuable insights from each other, and may make them more likely to contribute information that challenges the status quo. Unconventional or "devil's advocate" thinking may prove insightful and serve to challenge the process in a positive way, improving the production of the team. Respect for divergent views can encourage open discussion.

John Thill and Courtland Bovee Thill, J. V., & Bovee, C. L. (2002). *Essentials of business communication*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. provide a valuable list to consider when setting up a team, which we have adapted here for our discussion:

Select team members wisely
Select a responsible leader
Promote cooperation
Clarify goals
Elicit commitment
Clarify responsibilities
Instill prompt action
Apply technology
Ensure technological compatibility
Provide prompt feedback

- **Negotiation**

Leaders should possess strong negotiation skills. Bargaining is not just a matter of buying and selling, it's more about doing everything that needs to be done for your company to thrive. Sometimes, you can only achieve your goals if you're ready to sit down and negotiate. Internal meetings for example, are common situations wherein leaders must use their negotiation skills. You will have to discuss about technical specifications, timetables, staff management, and financial incentives.

Whenever you're settling for terms, fixing a problem or dividing tasks, you are negotiating. These are common situations that happen anywhere; leaders are used to dealing with people - whether we're talking about employees, vendors, investors, HR - so they shouldn't hesitate to speak their mind in an email, on the phone, or during a formal meeting.

Leaders should master the art of negotiation

To master the art of negotiation you have to be good at influencing people. Leaders can do that, however it's equally important to sway perception while maintaining positive relationships and outcomes with employees, customers, partners, vendors, and investors. Believe it or not, it's easy to make people like you. All you have to do is make them trust you first. Cater for the needs of your people, understand their desires and fix small issues before they turn into giant dilemmas.

Are you ready to build rapport? Just because you should. Good relations lead to increased trust, and when people trust their leaders, they're more open to negotiating perks. For example: you know your top 5 employees should get a salary raise. However, sudden company issues doesn't allow you to offer them that raise. What do you do to convince those people that working with you is the right thing to do?

It's simple: you bargain. Give them something equally satisfying without having to talk about money. Better working hours, a nice office, a paid vacation sometime in the future, are perks that will convince employees that your company can offer them work satisfaction.

The mind-set of a negotiator is authoritative

There's nothing more powerful and compelling than the mind-set of a negotiator. As a leader, you should have an authoritative attitude without taking things too far. You may be in charge, but that doesn't mean you have to abuse that power. The mind set you convey in every possible negotiation is just as significant as the strategies, tools, and tactics you're planning to use in the process. Are you a leader who's willing to listen in order to become a master negotiator? Here are 5 traits you should possess:

- Flexibility - you may have to change your beliefs to reach an agreement and close a good deal
- Patience - keep your cool, let others make mistakes
- Resilient attitude - no matter what happens, keep your feelings under control
- Emotionally proactive - control your emotions and don't let them interfere in the negotiation process
- Listening abilities - skilled negotiators are excellent listeners because they know they can use an opponent's data to their advantage

Are all leaders' good negotiators? No, they are not. Negotiation is an art, a skill that needs time to develop. Without this skill business people, mostly executives won't be able to make sensible decisions. Leaders are the extremely important for a company because their goal is to inspire, motivate, and engage employees, vendors, and investors.

If you're not ready to bargain for what you want, and deserve, than your whole company's productivity may be compromised. Always be ready to fix conflicts, listen to all complaints, and try to find a way to please everyone; while that might be hard to achieve, you can always negotiate to solve issues and make sure your company stays productive.

- **Networking**

Networking is the process of building and maintaining a network of contacts, and successful networking needs to be on-going. It needs to happen all the time, in your casual contacts with people by email, on the phone and face-to-face as you go about your everyday life and work.

“Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting.”

“In business terms, networking is the process of speaking to professional contacts and sharing information with them.”

These are very ‘formal’ definitions that make networking sound quite hard work. It may be easier to think of it as simply building and maintaining a network of relationships with people that you have met through work, or socially.

Networking is based on the idea that you can build a relationship with people from a point of common interest. This might be, for example, your professional background, membership of an institution, club or college, or a business interest.

Networking is important because we all prefer to do business with people we know, or who are known to people we know. Broadening your network therefore opens up your business opportunities, whether to sell, buy, recruit or get a job.

The Three Forms of Networking Managers who think they are adept at networking are often operating only at an operational or personal level. Effective leaders learn to employ networks for strategic purposes.

Operational Networking

All managers need to build good working relationships with the people who can help them do their jobs. The number and breadth of people involved can be impressive—such operational networks include not only direct reports and superiors but also peer within an operational unit, other internal players with the power to block or support a project, and key outsiders such as suppliers, distributors, and customers. The purpose of this type of networking is to ensure coordination and cooperation among people who have to know and trust one another in order to accomplish their immediate tasks. That isn't always easy, but it is relatively straightforward, because the task provides focus and a clear criterion for membership in the network: Either you're necessary to the job and helping to get it done, or you're not.

Although operational networking was the form that came most naturally to the managers we studied, nearly everyone had important blind spots regarding people and groups they depended on to make things happen. In one case, Alistair, an accounting manager who worked in an entrepreneurial firm with several hundred employees, was suddenly promoted by the company's founder to financial director and given a seat on the board. He was both the youngest and the least-experienced board member, and his instinctive response to these new responsibilities was to re-establish his functional credentials. Acting on a hint from the founder that the company might go public, Alistair undertook a reorganization of the accounting department that would enable the books to withstand close scrutiny. Alistair succeeded brilliantly in upgrading his team's capabilities, but he missed the fact that only a minority of the seven-person board shared the founder's ambition. A year into Alistair's tenure, discussion about whether to take the company public polarized the board, and he discovered that all that time cleaning up the books might have been better spent sounding out his co-directors.

One of the problems with an exclusive reliance on operational networks is that they are usually geared toward meeting objectives as assigned, not toward asking the strategic question, “What should we be doing?” By the same token, managers do not exercise as much personal choice in assembling operational relationships as they do in weaving personal and strategic networks, because to a large extent the right relationships are prescribed by the job and organizational structure. Thus, most operational networking occurs within an organization, and ties are determined in large part by routine, short-term demands. Relationships formed with outsiders, such as board members, customers, and regulators, are directly task-related and tend to be bounded and constrained by demands determined at a higher level. Of course, an individual manager can choose to deepen and develop the ties to different extents, and all managers exercise discretion over who gets priority attention. It’s the quality of relationships—the rapport and mutual trust—that gives an operational network its power. Nonetheless, the substantial constraints on network membership mean these connections are unlikely to deliver value to managers beyond assistance with the task at hand.

As a manager moves into a leadership role, his or her network must reorient itself externally and toward the future.

The typical manager in our group was more concerned with sustaining cooperation within the existing network than with building relationships to face non-routine or unforeseen challenges. But as a manager moves into a leadership role, his or her network must reorient itself externally and toward the future.

Personal Networking

We observed that once aspiring leaders like Alistair awaken to the dangers of an excessively internal focus, they begin to seek kindred spirits outside their organizations. Simultaneously, they become aware of the limitations of their social skills, such as a lack of knowledge about professional domains beyond their own, which makes it difficult for them to find common ground with people outside their usual circles. Through professional associations, alumni groups, clubs, and personal interest communities, managers gain new perspectives that allow them to advance in their careers. This is what we mean by personal networking.

Personal networks are largely external, made up of discretionary links to people with whom we have something in common. As a result, what makes a personal network powerful is its referral potential. According to the famous six degrees of separation principle, our personal contacts are valuable to the extent that they help us reach, in as few connections as possible, the far-off person who has the information we need.

In watching managers struggle to widen their professional relationships in ways that feel both natural and legitimate to them, we repeatedly saw them

shift their time and energy from operational to personal networking. For people who have rarely looked outside their organizations, this is an important first step, one that fosters a deeper understanding of themselves and the environments in which they move. Ultimately, however, personal networking alone won't propel managers through the leadership transition. Aspiring leaders may find people who awaken new interests but fail to become comfortable with the power players at the level above them. Or they may achieve new influence within a professional community but fail to harness those ties in the service of organizational goals. That's why managers who know they need to develop their networking skills, and make a real effort to do so, nonetheless may end up feeling like they have wasted their time and energy. As we'll see, personal networking will not help a manager through the leadership transition unless he or she learns how to bring those connections to bear on organizational strategy.

Strategic Networking

When managers begin the delicate transition from functional manager to business leader, they must start to concern themselves with broad strategic issues. Lateral and vertical relationships with other functional and business unit managers—all people outside their immediate control—become a lifeline for figuring out how their own contributions fit into the big picture. Thus strategic networking plugs the aspiring leader into a set of relationships and information sources that collectively embody the power to achieve personal and organizational goals.

Strategic networking can be difficult for emerging leaders because it absorbs a significant amount of the time and energy that managers usually devote to meeting their many operational demands. This is one reason why many managers drop their strategic networking precisely when they need it most: when their units are in trouble and only outside support can rescue them. The trick is not to hide in the operational network but to develop it into a more strategic one.