

**Handbook Thirteen**

**THE LEADERSHIP ROLE and COMPETENCY**

**Part One: Concepts, Principles, and Strategies**

**The Local Elected Leadership Series**

**Second Edition**

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## Introduction

*You cannot choose your battlefield,  
the gods do that for you.  
But you can plant a standard,  
where a standard never grew.*

Nathalia Crane

Leadership. It may be one of the world's most overused word and underused human attribute. It is a quality that has preoccupied philosophers, kings, scribes, religions, political parties, and just about all of us who, from time to time, hope someone will step forward and take care of the mess that others left behind in our communities, our environment, our country, and our world. It reminds us of that silly little tale about everybody, somebody, nobody, and anybody.

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Once upon a time, there were four people.

Their names were:

Everybody

Somebody

Nobody and Anybody

Whenever there was an important job to be done, *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would do it. *Anybody* could have done it, but in the end *Nobody* did it.

When *Nobody* did it, *Everybody* got angry because it was *Somebody's* job. *Everybody* thought that *Somebody* would do it, but *Nobody* realised that *Nobody* would do it.

So consequently, *Everybody* blamed *Somebody* when *Nobody* did what *Anybody* could have done in the first place.<sup>1</sup>

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Does this sound familiar? Probably. When we look at problems of urban poverty, degradation of our natural environments, the millions of homeless children that roam the streets of the world, the spread of HIV-/AIDS and other diseases, gender inequities, and ethnic and racial conflicts that fester in our midst, we realise that those four people in that silly little tale have in many of our communities become our leaders by default. These conditions also tell us that local elected leadership has never been more important. Fortunately or unfortunately for local governments and their community-based enablers, many of these most troubling problems can only be resolved from the bottom up – not the top down.

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, we can't attribute this literary gem to *anybody* because *everybody* wanted to claim authorship until *somebody* said that *nobody* wrote it.

Fortunately, help is on the way. We are encouraged by the numbers of local elected officials, appointed officials and employees, and local governments that have embraced the principles of good governance put forth by multiple international agencies as standards ~~to govern by~~ which to govern. The spotlight is also on corruption and beginning to overcome the darkness of greed that grips so many of our local and national governments and their private collaborators. And, citizens are becoming **enraged** and **engaged**. These are good signs. As Edmund Burke that great 18<sup>th</sup> century political activist said, “Nobody has ever made a greater mistake than those who do nothing because they feel they can do only a little.” We will relate later on an example of how some ordinary citizens in some difficult circumstances took Burke’s advice to heart by turning their lives around through a process of shared leadership within their respective communities. But first, a look at the other things we plan to cover in this capstone learning opportunity.

### A preview of coming events

In addition to a case study of good governance and elected leadership in practice, we want to look at some of the paradoxes of elected leadership and good governance, the seemingly contradictory ideas about these two interrelated concepts that often defy common sense. We will also look at some of the more interesting theories about leadership that have emerged in recent years as well as some leadership qualities that fall outside the good governance principles we have woven into all the competency discussions.

Before we begin this final journey into elected leadership territory, we want to remind you of the conceptual framework that has defined our approach to elected leadership. We have assumed that *representation* and *leadership* are the most important roles and responsibilities you have as a local elected official. Representation is the foundation of democratic self-governance, and leadership is the personal commitment, wisdom and actions you bring to your role and responsibility as your citizen’s representative.

In between these two foundation and capstone roles and responsibilities are the competencies and skills needed to bring good governance to your communities. We have focused on the ten we believe to be the most important but obviously there are more. As we said in the beginning of this series, your election to public office carries with it the assumption that you are a leader and that you will perform as a leader on behalf of your constituents. This assumption is tested by every decision you make and action you take as an elected official. This final handbook is an opportunity to look again at the big picture of elected leadership and to assess your own performance as an elected official and leader. We start with a look at some of the paradoxes of local elected leadership.

*After all, what is a paradox but a statement of the obvious so as to make it sound untrue?*

Ronald Knox

## The Paradoxes of Elected Leadership

Your roles and responsibilities as an elected official are full of paradoxes, those seemingly illogical contradictions that are intended to drive you crazy or out of office, or both. For example:

- You are expected to represent everybody and yet you often owe your election to the concerted efforts of a few faithful friends and supporters. If you don't cater to their demands, you might not get re-elected so you can represent everyone.
- You pride yourself for being decisive and yet many of your key decisions are reflected in formal votes of a collection of you and your elected colleagues that are recorded in meeting minutes that few ever bother to read.
- You are expected to believe that sharing your elected powers is not the same as giving them away. All this talk of civic engagement and enabling others seems like leadership in default.
- You are expected to be open and transparent in your opinions and actions and still get re-elected. Now that's really illogical!
- And then, it becomes apparent that leadership is more about followership than you ever realised when you were thinking about becoming an elected leader.

The paradox of elected leadership really begins to sink in when you realise that your legacy as a local elected leader is largely dependent on the efforts of others. This interdependency of your leadership role is made even more binding with the growing acceptance of civic engagement and wide-spread participation of citizens as fundamental principles of good governance. Your greatest contributions as an elected leader may never be known to others when you: communicate for consensus; negotiate behind the scenes to help the poor; insist on equity for the down-trodden in your community; decide not to run for re-election so a woman candidate can win and bring more gender balance to local governance; and enable others to assume more decision making for their communities.

*One need ask only one question:  
"What for?" What am I to unify my  
being for? The reply is: Not for my  
own sake.*

Martin Buber

Living with the paradoxes of public leadership is not always comfortable or easy. Charles Handy likens it to walking in a dark wood on a moonless night.

*It is eerie and, at times a frightening experience. All sense of direction is lost; trees and bushes crowd in on you; wherever you step, you bump into another obstacle; every noise and rustle is magnified; it seems safer to stand still than to move. Come the dawn and your path is clear; trees define your path instead of*

*blocking it. The wood is a different place. So will our world look different and less frightening if we can bring light to the paradoxes.*<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps because of its paradoxical nature, leadership looms large in the classic writings that define cultures, religions, political and social revolutions, and philosophies through the ages. Bernard Bass, who has written extensively about leadership, says that “myths and legends about great leaders are important in the development of civilised societies...all societies have created myths to provide plausible and acceptable explanations for the dominance of their leaders and the submission of their subordinates. The greater the socioeconomic injustice in the society, the more distorted the realities of leadership-its powers, morality, and effectiveness-in the mythology.”<sup>3</sup> One of our challenges in the next few pages is to cut through some of the myth that has defined leadership and find a few gems you can use as an elected leader. We will start by suggesting it may be time to give *leadership* a new name. But first, take a moment to reflect on the paradoxes of your elected leadership experience.

### **A Reflective Opportunity**

What aspects of your elected roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to the principles of good governance, strike you as being paradoxical? In other words, what are the situations that you believe put you in a double bind of being “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t?”

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What have you found most frustrating about these situations?

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What do you think you might do to overcome these frustrations?

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**A paradoxical tale worth repeating** Do you remember Robin Hood, that mythical and clever bandit who stole from the rich and gave to the poor? As the story goes, he was captured by the Sheriff of Nottingham on one of his safaris beyond the safety of Sherwood Forest. The Sheriff, who was fond of games and riddles, made Robin Hood a proposition. He told Robin that he was allowed to make one statement. If that statement contained the truth he would be shot through the heart with an arrow set in flight by the Sheriff’s best archer. On the other hand, if his statement contained a lie, he would be hanged. After some thought, Robin Hood said, “I am going to be hanged.”

<sup>2</sup> Handy, Charles, *The Age of Paradox*, (Boston, MA, Harvard Business School Press, 1994), p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Bass, Bernard, “Concepts of Leadership: The Beginnings” in *The Leader’s Companion*, (New York, The Free Press, 1995), pp. 49-50.

Of course the Sheriff was trapped by his own paradoxical proposition to Robin Hood. Whatever he did in response to Robin's statement would be wrong. He created a situation without objective reality or an obvious answer. We suspect there are times when you feel like the Sheriff of Nottingham.

### **Stewardship: Trading Your Kingdom for a Horse**

*Arrange whatever pieces come your way.*  
Virginia Woolf

Peter Block in his reflections on leadership within formalised settings like organisations and governments suggests we change the context and language of this thing we call leadership. He takes part of his argument from the pages of *governance*, something we have been talking about throughout this series. The other part of his conceptual reorganising tosses the term leadership aside in favour of *stewardship*. What Block has to say about stewardship, and by inference leadership, is germane to our discussion. It also sheds some important light on the paradoxes mentioned earlier.

Peter Block starts his discussion of stewardship with a line from Shakespeare's play Richard III. Dismounting from his horse in the middle of a battle where his life hung in the balance, the self-centred and inhumane king cried out, "My horse! My horse! My kingdom for a horse!" While this is a dramatic statement about the paradoxes of leadership, have you ever thought about trading in your seat on the governing body for something a bit less demanding? Or, trading in your *leadership* role for *stewardship* status? Let's see what that might look like.

According to Block, *governance* as a term recognises the political nature of our lives and our communities. It is a process by which we redefine the purpose of our communities, determine who holds power, and how the wealth of our communities can be balanced to include all citizens not just the privileged few. Stewardship is the fulcrum by which we can leverage a more inclusive governance. Block says:

*Stewardship, as a set of principles and practices, has the potential to make dramatic changes in our governance systems. It is concerned with creating a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes at the extremities of our communities. It means giving control to citizens and creating self-reliance on the part of all who are touched by their local governments.*

*While we know there is need to reform, we are less clear about how to achieve it. Most of our theories about making change are clustered around a belief in leadership. We think that leadership is the key to good governance. If our local government fails, throw the rascals out! It is this pervasive and almost religious belief in leaders that slows the process of genuine reform. Dependency is the antithesis of stewardship. To overcome this leadership tendency, the good*

*governance principles of civic engagement, enabling, equity, and inclusion become all that more essential.*<sup>4</sup>

The principles of good governance we have so faithfully woven into our discussions of your representation role, and the ten competencies we have suggested you master, have in part created the leadership paradoxes mentioned earlier. Block's concept of stewardship is an alternative to leadership. While it may not be perfect, it helps to strip away some of the mythology that surrounds the principle of *leadership*. Robert Greenleaf, in his book on *Servant Leadership* says, "The first order of business is to build a group of people who, under the influence of the institution, grow taller and become healthier, stronger, and more autonomous." Not a bad description of local government and the elected leadership role in relation to the community.

*There is a strange charm in the thoughts of a good legacy.*

Miguel de Cervantes

### **Stewardship, Good Governance, and Elected Competencies**

In the previous discussions of your representation role and the ten competencies associated with elected leadership, we have woven into the fabric of each the unifying strands of good governance. Assuming these principles of good governance are now firmly embedded in your conscience, we are going to refrain from repeating them in this discussion although they are the foundation stones of elected leadership. Rather, we want to relate a tale of good governance that embodies most, if not all, of these principles and competencies. While we could have chosen many examples from the best practice literature assembled by UN-HABITAT and other international organisations over the past few years, we think this tale of four Asian cities captures the essence and reality of good governance. As you read it, make some mental notes on how it reflects good governance principles and the ten elected leadership competencies we have included in this series.

#### **SEALSWIP: The Southeast Asia Local Solid Waste Improvement Project**

SEALSWIP is a project funded in part by the Canadian International Development Agency and managed by the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC). While the initial thrust of this project came from outside the participating cities, it embodies enough good governance principles and local government competencies to warrant discussion in terms of elected leadership.

Six cities from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines were selected in the late 1990s to be part of an integrated approach to sustainable development that would address a wide

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<sup>4</sup> Block, Peter, *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest*, (San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishing, 1993), pp.3-21. (Our apologies to Peter for altering his rhetoric, but not his wisdom, to fit the context of our discussion about local elected leadership.)

range of social, economic, and environmental issues while involving all sectors of these communities in a participatory process. By 2002, four cities had successfully implemented the programme. They were: Udon Thani, Thailand; Rantepao and Makale, Indonesia; and Bacolod in the Philippines. The objectives of the project were very ambitious:

- To address garbage issues across the entire spectrum of the communities involved;
- To improve the quality of life and livelihoods of the scavengers and the children living on the dumpsites and those individuals who were buying and selling recyclables;
- To help the cities move from uncontrolled dumps to sanitary landfills;
- To establish solid waste management plans;
- To introduce recycling and composting programmes;
- To introduce a multi-stakeholder decision-making process involving the private, public, and civil sectors; and
- To engage citizens and school children through public awareness campaigns.

As you can quickly see, these were complicated programmes. They not only cut across the range of institutions in their respective communities, they also were taking on a complex set of issues that most urban communities face and rarely resolve to their satisfaction. Let's look at how they did it.

**Laying the foundation** ICSC initially signed letters of agreement with the cities and then established multi-stakeholder committees. This was followed by workshops where all the parties identified priority actions to be taken, the barriers and opportunities they could expect to encounter, and the resources needed for implementation. This open and participatory process included government officials, representatives from the private sector, local educational institutions and NGOs, waste pickers, project staff, and technical experts. Attention was paid to ensure that women were represented on various committees and their involvement would be possible throughout the programmes in each of the urban areas.

All projects started with a public participatory process where the solid waste management priorities and objectives were established and various multi-stakeholder committees formed to deal with priority issues. These committees formed task forces that established their own work plans and budgets that would in turn set in motion the allocation of financial, technical, and human resources. Based on these arrangements, the local governments and ICSC signed memoranda of agreement documenting the partnerships, responsibilities, and funding. In addition, the various stakeholder committees worked with national government, private sector and NGO representatives to identify cash and in-kind resources needed to carry out the projects.

**The process of decision making and problem solving** As the projects got underway, it was apparent that governance and sustainability issues were as important as solid waste management concerns. Many of the major challenges involved issues of transparency in

making decisions and assuring that committee initiatives were not diverted for personal gain. By assuring a balanced approach among the stakeholders in evaluating proposals, several proposals were investigated and dropped even though they had the support of high level officials. Prior to adopting this participatory approach to decision making, there had been issues of accountability in budgeting decisions reached by some of the participating local governments. The multi-stakeholder model helped confront corruption and other issues of governance.

In order to build sustainability into the programmes beyond the life of external support, ICSC and its partners worked to introduce, improve, and implement various solid waste management policies and regulations. These changes in policies and regulations were made as it became evident they were needed, demonstrating the importance of responding to needs as they arise rather than dealing with them in some abstract manner. In all the cities, benchmarks such as daily waste collection in tonnage per day, costs per tonne collected, and amounts of waste being recycled and composted were established to assess performance and to make comparisons among the cities. The lessons that were learned in each of the projects were disseminated widely among all the cities involved in the project as well as those beyond the project.

**Results-oriented achievements** These programmes achieved an amazing array of tangible and important results, including the following:

- Increased managerial and technical capacity of local government officials;
- Reductions in landfill waste through composting, recycling, and waste reduction projects;
- Improved health and safety for workers and waste pickers through vaccinations and hazardous waste training;
- Increased incomes and literacy for waste pickers and their children;
- Construction of financially and environmentally sustainable solid waste infrastructures; and
- Capacity to design and implement public policies and regulations through participatory decision making processes; and
- A multi-stakeholder process involving private, public, and civil society sectors that proved to be viable and transferable to other urban issues.

*In these cities, garbage is no longer perceived as the mayor's problem but as everybody's responsibility.*

While the results just listed were common to all the cities, each programme unearthed unique challenges. To illustrate these challenges, we are focusing only on the successes achieved in Bacolod, Philippines. A basic literacy programme was introduced in Bacolod when the organisers realized the waste pickers and their children were illiterate. When the waste pickers rejected sending their children off-site for schooling because of the cost of fees and uniforms, and the possibility that they would be discriminated against by other children, a one-room school was established near the landfill. Training programmes were organised to help the waste pickers overcome their literacy deficiencies and learn new trades. A cooperative of junk scavengers was formed and a micro-lending scheme

established to help them build their businesses. At the policy level, a workshop was held where participants developed a solid waste management plan for the city. Women were full participants in these programmes.

By involving citizens and local companies in the initial planning of these programmes, new and creative solutions were developed that might not have been possible if the local governments had been working independently. The focus on involving women and children in these programmes helped to bring them on board as active partners in various spin-offs resulting from the programme. The local governments learned it is more effective to address policy and governance issues when the focus is on specific problems that to address them from the top down. On-the-ground experiences helped government decision makers realise what was possible and practical in terms of policies and programmes.

Those who initiated the programmes soon learned the importance of listening to participants and responding to their needs as they saw them. It demonstrated the importance of starting from where the major stakeholders were at the time and not from where the local governments thought they should be. This openness and transparency helped to build trust among the many participating stakeholders. One of the most important lessons learned from these programmes was the need for reciprocity. As the organisers caution, “Don’t give anything away for free, even to the poorest of the poor. Contributing sweat equity allows everyone to maintain their dignity and respect. Confront dependence and dishonesty and use these experiences to engage in collaborative problem solving.”<sup>5</sup>

These programmes demonstrated many of the principles of good governance as well as the ten elected leadership competencies we have been discussing throughout this series. Before we move on we suggest you take a reflective break and list the good governance principles that were involved and the competencies that were used to make these programmes in South-eastern Asia so successful. A summary of both the good governance principles and elected competencies can be found in Handbook One, *Introduction to the Series*.

### **A Reflective Opportunity**

We want to give you an opportunity to cross reference the case study with the good governance principles and the elected leadership competencies we have been discussing throughout the series. For each of the following good governance principles, jot down examples from the case study where you believe each principle played an important part. If you’re not clear about the meaning of some of the terms, check them out in Handbook I, *Introduction to the Series*.

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<sup>5</sup> The information about the SEALSWIP project was taken from the International Centre for Sustainable Cities website: [www.icsc.ca/sealswip](http://www.icsc.ca/sealswip)



from the expert user group’s perspective, was the need to address the good governance principles, to focus on ethics and integrity as leadership responsibilities, and to explore other qualities that were overlooked in the first edition, such as vision, trust, and fairness.

We believe the first two concerns have been addressed in previous handbooks in this series. What is left to cover in this final handbook is an idea that floated around the table in Kenya but never was nailed down as a specific recommendation in the report. And, that idea has to do with sharing some new or less well-known ideas about this thing called *leadership*. The intent of these new and off-beat thoughts on leadership is three-fold. First, we hope they will provide insight into and support for many of the principles associated with *good governance*. Second, the concern for covering other governance principles such as vision and trust is prominent in some of the newer writings about leadership. Finally, we want to “rattle your brains” with some ideas that might seem farfetched now but could become mainstream before your elected—leadership career ends. We start this journey into some lesser known concepts of leadership by looking at the role of followership.

### **Leadership and followership**

There is an old adage that leaders are only as effective as those who follow them. Leadership requires followership. It’s all very logical, or is it? James MacGregor Burns, who has spent a professional lifetime studying leadership, stresses the importance of the transactional relationship between leaders and followers. He defines *leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and followers.*<sup>6</sup>

The genius of leadership, according to Burns, lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations. This is not a new idea. Lao-Tzu, the sixth century B.C. Chinese philosopher, said, *To lead the people, walk behind them.* However, David Nicoll wants to turn this leadership-followership idea on its head. He says *there are no followers.* He argues that most theories of leadership, including the one by Burns that we just quoted, are based on Newtonian mechanics and linear, hierarchic, and dualistic thinking.

*Leaders can no longer presume simply that they are the people who step out first, who take initiative and the first risk, who come up with the new idea. They can no longer believe, unquestioningly, that they are the ones who express the new vision, who arouse the new awareness, who evoke the new excitement. Nor can they assume automatically that they are the ones who engage the new commitment, who build the new invention, who point us in the new direction.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Burns, James MacGregor, *Leadership* (New York, Harper and Row, 1978), p.19.

<sup>7</sup> Nicoll, David, “Leadership and Followership,” in John Adams (ed), *Transforming Leadership: From Vision to Results*, (Alexandria, VA, Miles River Press, 1986), pp.29-38.

Assuming there are no followers, of course, creates a real dilemma for leaders. According to Nicoll, leaders will need to accept and believe that *followers use leaders to make the path*. Leaders must come to believe that followers are not passive, reactive tools of the system but rather the creators of energy. In the case of local government, citizens are the agents who show their leaders where to walk...who validate their leaders stepping out in a direction that has meaning for all of us.

Nicoll readily admitted at the time he wrote his article that none of us really believe this.

*We are too tied up in the passive-follower concept to accept the idea of active, meaningful roles for everyone...Only when we change the focus of our thoughts from solitary acts of leadership to mutual action-dialogues, and the foundation of our beliefs from followers to shapers will we let ourselves come to terms with such issues as fear and surrender.*<sup>8</sup>

These rather obtuse and somewhat jarring thoughts about leadership, which were made in the mid-~~1980s~~ ~~nineteen eighties~~, have gained more validity and understanding in the interim. Many rapid advances in computer and biological sciences have not been driven from the top but rather from the bottom, from not followers in the traditional sense but rather from those who belong to the *there-are-no-followers* school of thinking. Bill Gates and others have been, in Nicoll's words, the *agents who showed their leaders where to walk...who validated their leaders to step out in a direction that has meaning to all of us*.

The same could be true of the gender pioneers. Mary Robinson, Ireland's Prime Minister in the mid-~~1990s~~ ~~nineteen nineties~~ said:

*A woman leader often has a distinctive approach as the country's chief story teller, personifying a sense of nationhood and telling a story that also helps to shape people's sense of their own identity. This is leadership by **influencing** and **inspiring** rather than by commanding.*<sup>9</sup>

Professor Nancy Adler with McGill University in Quebec, Canada, has been researching the influences of women on global leadership. She says more than half of all women who have ever served as national political leaders have come into office since 1990. At this rate of increase, it is expected that almost twice as many women will become national heads of state in the first decade of the twenty-first century than have ever served before.<sup>10</sup>

Of course you are saying to yourself as you read this, "So what does this have to do with Nicoll's notion that 'there are no followers?'" Well, nothing until you re-read his rationale.

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<sup>8</sup> Nicoll, p.38.

<sup>9</sup> Pond, Elizabeth, Women in Leadership: a letter from Stockholm, *The Washington Quarterly*, 1996: # 4: p.59.

<sup>10</sup> Adler, Nancy, Global Leadership: Women Leaders in *Management International Review*, Volume 37, (no.1), 1997, pp.171-196.

*Leaders will need to accept and believe that followers use leaders to make the path. Leaders must allow themselves to believe that followers are not passive, reactive tools of the system but rather the creators of energy. They are the agents who show their leaders where to walk...who validate their leaders stepping out in a direction that has meaning for all of us.*

### A Reflective Opportunity

Think about what Nicoll is saying in relationship to the good governance principles of civic engagement, inclusion, and equity, and the enabling competency. Jot down your thoughts on how these principles, when put into practice, are changing the traditional notion that leaders need followers.

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*To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.*

Anatole France

### Spiritual leadership

The next rather off-beat leadership idea we encountered was this one. No, spiritual leadership, as the author defines it, is not about religious leadership. It is about the leadership of spirit. James Ritscher takes us down a very different path in terms of leadership. It's one we think is germane to elected leadership. Moreover, it includes a number of the principles the expert group suggested we add to the good governance principles that are currently shaping the local government agenda worldwide. Let's see what he has to say about *spiritual* leadership.

Ritscher says all organisations and communities have *spirit*. It has to do with their very nature-their vitality, energy, purpose, and vision. Spiritual leadership involves an unusual set of skills, or competencies.<sup>11</sup> Since most are quite different from the ten we have outlined in this series of leadership handbooks, we thought they would be of interest to you and your elected colleagues. While the author proposes ten leadership skills or principles, we will focus only on those we believe are germane to your local elected leadership roles and responsibilities.

- **Inspired vision:** Inspired visions transcend present reality. They create a mental image of a community that aspires to greatness. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech broke the backbone of racial discrimination in the United States. Granted, the inspired vision didn't provide civil rights immediately, but it paved the way for major social and legislative changes. Likewise, Mohandas Gandhi

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<sup>11</sup> Ritscher, James A. "Spiritual Leadership" in John Adams (ed), *Transforming Leadership: From Vision to Results*, (Alexandria, VA, Miles River Press, 1986), pp. 61-80.

brought one of the world's greatest empires to its knees because he had an inspired vision of a new India. He had no formal power, wore no uniform, [and](#) held no public office. As Keshavan Nair tells us in *A Higher Standard of Leadership*, Gandhi reminded the world that **the human spirit is indomitable and that courage and love are more powerful than force**. His life was not governed by policies but rather by principles and values.<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, the Hindi word for leader is *netratwa*. And, *netra* means “eye.”

- **Clarity of mind:** The elected official's life is hectic, disruptive, and prone to petty and dramatic crises. It tends to clutter the mind with trivia and immediacy. It is a work and life-style that defies clarity of mind which is important if you are going to have “inspired visions.” Both imply focus, being clear about priorities, and being able to think rationally and clearly without closing the door to your intuition and creativity. Ritscher uses a poem by the Sufi poet Rumi to help explain.

*The moment I'm disappointed, I feel encouraged.  
When I'm ruined, I'm healed.  
When I'm quiet and solid as the ground, then I talk  
The low tones of thunder for everyone.*

As Ritscher explains, “the first two lines exhibit a kind of detachment from life. They are similar to the idea ‘work hard to achieve the result you want, but don't waste time with disappointment if you fail.’ The last two lines express the essence of leadership. Great leadership falls on the shoulders of people who have great solidity and clarity.”<sup>13</sup>

- **Will, toughness, and intention:** We discussed the need for willity in the Institution Building handbook as the companion to ability. Without the will to act, the ability to act as a leader becomes meaningless. By toughness, the author is not referring to macho behaviour but rather *maintaining sensitivity; while strengthening the ability to accept and deal with situations as they are*. When citizens are yelling at you during a governing body meeting, toughness is the ability and willity to listen carefully without getting upset. *Intention* can be linked to the first skill of *inspired vision*. While it may be your intention to follow through on your inspired vision, it's your willity and toughness that makes your intention a reality. Willity gives your intentions life; toughness helps you sustain them.
- **Low ego, high results:** Ego is the overemphasis on self. While many individuals in positions of power have large egos, it is not a sign of personal strength. Ego is me versus you. The antithesis of ego is caring, service, cooperation, and dedication to results. Low ego is directly associated with your enabling competencies and enabling actions as a governing body.

<sup>12</sup> Nair, Keshavan, *A Higher Standard of Leadership: Lessons from the Life of Gandhi*, San Francisco, Berrett Koehler Publishers, 1994), p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Ritscher, pp. 64-5.

Ritscher uses the term *transformational leadership* to demonstrate the importance of low ego-high results. This combination of personal qualities encourages individuals to give up petty, egotistical needs to work for the common good and vision. It encourages the enabling of communities and organisations to transform themselves based on shared visions of what is possible.

- **Trust and openness:** Trust is having faith in yourself and others. Trust is believing that others will think and act appropriately. By openness Ritscher means being unguarded, candid, and truthful. In this context it is somewhat different from the “openness” principle in the good governance portfolio of values. Here it is more personal and tied closely to trust. He states that these two skills or personal qualities can be seen as transforming into somewhat irrational behaviours. Elected leaders are often perceived as not being trustworthy, and they reciprocate by not “trusting” citizens. These reciprocal perceptions often close the door to openness.

Trust and openness is therefore one of those paradoxical pairs of behaviour that takes time and energy to instil into the political process and community. Nevertheless, these are two principles that make it possible to have meaningful and productive democratic dialogues. As the author reminds us, *a predisposition to trust creates a powerful energy field around a leader. People are drawn to this energy because they experience themselves as bigger people in the leader’s presence. The leader’s trust bolsters their confidence, creating a sense of stability and safety.* Inspired visions ~~on the part of leaders~~ will fall on ~~barren~~ fallow ground if they are not backed by mutual trust and openness.

- **Integrity:** Integrity is tied closely to trust. We rarely trust an individual who lacks integrity. But what exactly is integrity? It has at times been described as “what you see is what you get.” In other words, there is complete congruency between what you say and what you do. For elected officials, integrity is sometimes problematic if they as individuals are tied to a political party or group that has a tendency to want to “spin the rhetoric” to gain advantage over its competition. This puts you in a position of asking yourself, “Which is more important to me: my relationship with myself or my political colleagues?” The person who chooses the former often gets both while the person who chooses the later gets neither. However, the choices don’t always look this clear at the time.
- **A context of personal growth and fulfilment:** Spiritual leadership is not just taking care of your own personal growth and fulfilment but the growth and fulfilment of your local government’s employees and your citizens. It’s a very tall order, but anything less diminishes the potential of the local government organisation and the community. Ritscher points out the personal needs of each of us as individuals. They include: a source of livelihood; a sense of personal effectiveness; personal direction; the

**Komentár [PC1]:** “Fallow” may not be the greatest word choice here. It means to stay unplanted for a year to basically rejuvenate with more minerals, etc. Seed that falls on fallow ground will root. Perhaps “infertile” would be better.

experience of fulfilment; the experience of community and cooperation; happiness; ~~and~~ "aliveness"; emotional support; personal growth; and success. Perhaps not so surprising is the congruence between these personal needs and the needs of organisations and communities. Spiritual leadership is not just tending to one's own personal needs for growth and fulfilment but also those of the local government and the community.

*The winds of grace blow all the time.  
All we need to do is set our sails.*  
Ramakrishna

### **A Reflective Opportunity**

Before we move on, reflect on what James Ritscher calls spiritual leadership and the individual qualities as they relate to your roles and responsibilities as an elected official. Which ones are most important? Which ones would be the most difficult to achieve?

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Take the most important and jot down some actions that you and your governing body might take to fulfil it.

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*Leadership is not a position.  
It's a job.*  
Max De Pree

### **Leadership and the performing arts**

Max De Pree wrote a book called *Leadership Jazz* many years ago. As we poured over hundreds of publications in our efforts to define the crux of leadership, we kept coming back to some of the things he had to say about leadership. What impressed us from the standpoint of this set of elected leadership handbooks was his use of some of the principles of good governance. And, De Pree was pitching his thoughts about leadership to his fellow corporate executives. In closing this discussion of your leadership role and responsibilities as a local elected official, we want to share some of his thoughts about leadership.

De Pree associates leadership with a jazz band, thus his metaphor.

Jazz band leaders must choose the music, find the right musicians, and perform in public. ~~(Just like elected officials!)~~ But the effect of the performance depends on so many things: the environment; volunteers playing in the band; the need for everyone to perform as individuals and as a group; the absolute dependence of the leader on the members of the band; and the need of the leader for the followers to play well. What a summary of an organisation.<sup>14</sup> ~~(And, we would add--a community of citizens that can make beautiful music together.)~~

**Komentár [PC2]:** If this is your comment, okay, but punctuate the quoted sentence like it was in the source. I imagine a period, but check to make sure.

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He says that leadership is hard, exciting, ~~and~~ good work. It's also, he reminds us, a serious meddling in other people's lives. What you do as an elected official does meddle in the lives of your citizens. Hopefully, most of it is good meddling, but at times, it's seen as not so good meddling as well. Democracy is not anarchy where everyone can do as they please, often at the expense of others. Democratic self-governance must weigh the consequences of public actions. Most often the decisions and actions you take as an elected official benefit the many. But, other times they justifiably benefit the few. Public leadership is hard work, but good work.

According to De Pree, a jazz band is an expression of servant leadership. The leader has the opportunity to bring out the best in his musicians, but it is the musicians that contribute to his success as their leader. Jazz, like leadership, or leadership like jazz, "combines the unpredictability of the future with the gifts of individuals." De Pree believes we have the right as citizens to ask our leaders to not only be successful but *faithful*. Now, that's a word we have not seen or heard before in the discussions of leadership and one reason we were drawn to his thoughts about leadership: ~~in~~ addition to his love for jazz, that is. By his own admission, measuring success of our leaders is mysterious enough, and judging faithfulness, well, that's another matter.

Nevertheless, De Pree provides us with five criteria to start thinking about the *faithfulness* of our servant leaders.

1. *Integrity in all things.* This precedes all else. The open and transparent demonstration of integrity is essential to leadership. For public leaders, like locally elected officials, perceptions are a fact of life. To perceive our leaders as being unfaithful makes them unfaithful.
2. *The servanthood of leadership.* This reverse role of follower needs to be felt, understood, believed, and practiced faithfully for leaders to be faithful. According to De Pree, the best description of servant leadership can be found in the book of Luke. "The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules, like the one who serves."
3. *Accountability for others.* Note that this is different from the good governance principle of being accountable to others. Nevertheless, it hits at the heart of programmes to alleviate poverty and to include the afflicted within the grasp of public leadership. *Leaders should encourage and sustain those on the bottom rung first and then turn to those on the top.*

<sup>14</sup> De Pree, Max, *Leadership Jazz*, (New York, Doubleday Publishing, 1992), p. 3.

4. *The practice of equity.* While equity should certainly guide the apportioning of resources, it is far more important in our human relationships.
5. *Leaders must be vulnerable.* As a leader you need to offer others the opportunity to do their best. In these enabling initiatives, you necessarily become vulnerable. *Leaders become vulnerable by sharing with others the marvellous gift of being personally accountable.*<sup>15</sup>

“Leadership begins not with techniques but with premises, not with tools but with beliefs, and not with systems but with understanding...It’s often difficult, painful and sometimes even unrewarding, and ~~it~~sits work. There are also times of joy in the work of leadership, and doing the work of a leader is necessary in our society.” As Karl Wallenda, the late, great circus performer said, “*Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting.*”

### A Reflective Opportunity

We have come a long way together in our pursuit of local elected leadership. In this last discussion we have deliberately tossed your way a number of “off-the-beaten-path” looks at your role of leadership—from followership—to spirituality—to jazz. It’s been quite a journey. Before saying goodbye, we think another opportunity to reflect about leadership is not only appropriate but deserved.

In the space below, and hopefully more, find a quiet spot and say in your own words what *leadership* means to you. Put it in words that mean the most to you. Max De Pree talked about it in terms of something he loves and admires-jazz. Pick your own metaphor for leadership and let your thoughts flow.

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*Seek the ways of the eagle,  
not the wren.*

Omaha proverb

### Key Points

- Leadership is the antithesis of Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.
- Leadership as an art form in paradox.

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<sup>15</sup> De Pree, pp. 17-9.

- Elected leadership is managing the paradoxes within the principles of good governance.
- If you yearn to leave a leadership legacy for your service to local government and the community, think *stewardship*.
- Stewardship is the fulcrum by which you can leverage ~~a-~~more~~more~~ inclusive governance.
- Elected leadership is the ability to infuse complex community problems with governing principles, practical competencies, and measurable and sustainable results. See SEALSWIP case for verification of this truism.
- Leadership is about followership in theory and recognising that there are no followers in practice. See bullets one, two, and three for verification.
- Followers show their leaders where to walk. Validation of this weird notion is found through authentic civic engagement in every neighbourhood you govern.
- Spiritual leadership is not about religion; it's about community spirit and how to harness its vitality and energy to create inspired visions of not what is but what can and will be.
- Add inspired visions, clarity of purpose, integrity, will, and trust to your collection of good governance principles. Without these essential ingredients, there can be no good governance and no elected stewardship.
- *Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting.*
- Being on the elected leadership tightrope is not a position, it's a job.
- Nevertheless, it is a job worth doing in the best tradition of principled stewardship.

*Never, for the sake of peace and quiet,  
deny your own experience or conviction.*

Dag Hammarskjold