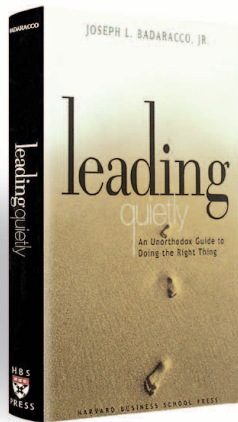


# SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

FILE: LEADERSHIP



Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr.

## An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing

# LEADING QUIETLY

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

*Every profession and walk of life has its great figures, leaders and heroes, people who are exalted for their achievements and treated as role models. Yet, in day-to-day life, we often find that the most effective leaders are rarely public heroes; they maintain a low profile, yet they do what is right (for themselves and their organizations) inconspicuously and without casualties.*

*These are the “quiet leaders” Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr. studies and celebrates in his book, those whose modesty, restraint and patience are in large part responsible for their impressive achievements. Through four years of research, Badaracco identifies a set of common guidelines all quiet leaders follow, and notes how the seemingly small steps these leaders take often result in the biggest, most successful actions of an organization. Leading Quietly offers a broader perspective on what constitutes responsible, effective leadership.*

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### What You'll Learn In This Summary

Among the guidelines of effective quiet leadership are the following:

✓ **Don't Kid Yourself.** Effective leaders are honest about how well they understand a situation, or how much they control.

✓ **Trust Mixed Motives.** In difficult situations, effective leaders expect their motives to be mixed and even confused. This conflict can actually be useful in solving problems or forging compromises.

✓ **Buy a Little Time.** If a situation is uncertain or hazardous, leaders may find it necessary to engage in stall tactics or organizational games, to gain enough time to think a situation through.

✓ **Invest Wisely.** Truly effective leaders count their political capital before proceeding in an uncertain situation and spend that capital wisely.

✓ **Drill Down.** Any given situation may involve a morass of technical, bureaucratic or legal details, all of which a leader should understand fully before proceeding toward a solution.

✓ **Craft a Compromise.** Quiet leaders see the crafting of creative compromises as an invaluable practical art and the essence of responsible leadership.

# LEADING QUIETLY

by Joseph L. Badaracco, Jr.

## — THE COMPLETE SUMMARY

### Don't Kid Yourself

Quiet leaders are realists; they see the world as it is, and, in the process, tend to have similar ways of viewing their professional environment. They recognize that anything can happen and, in the course of doing business, people and events can surprise, dismay and astonish. Things can turn out to be better or worse than expected, requiring leaders to move carefully and seize opportunities while they can.

Quiet leaders view the world as a kaleidoscope, rather than a fixed target or a well-mapped terrain; self-interest, shortsightedness and chicanery often tumble together with shards of loyalty, commitment and integrity. The churning is continuous, propelled by forces as far-reaching as the global economy, or as personal as human nature.

#### *A Personnel Crisis at St. Clement's*

In 1997, Rebecca Olson became CEO of St. Clement's Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. Although there were several longstanding hospital executives who might have filled the role, Olson's management experience was viewed as just the panacea the hospital needed to turn around its troubling finances. Within days of taking office, however, Olson was faced with a troubling personnel issue — the hospital's vice president of operations, Richard Millar (one of the executives many thought would get the CEO position) was about to be the subject of a sexual harassment complaint.

Olson immediately went to work on the problem, engaging the hospital's lawyer to conduct an investigation, the result of which left little doubt in Olson's mind that Millar should be fired. Rather than letting him go, however, Olson decided to try to get Millar to resign. She prepared a detailed report on the investigation, spent hours with legal counsel and convinced key members of the board that Millar had to go. Finally, Olson presented Millar with the case against him and offered a severance package if he would resign. He grudgingly did, leaving Olson with the impression that her first big problem as CEO had been conquered.

A month later, however, Millar went to the press to complain about his "firing" and unfair treatment. Both Olson and the woman who initially charged Millar with harassment received threats, and the hospital's overall morale was rife with feelings of paranoia and persecu-

tion. Only after Millar took another job on the West Coast did things settle down.

#### *Lessons from Rebecca Olson's Approach*

Although the law was on her side, Olson took what many might term a "cop-out" method toward solving the hospital's problem, but which was actually an unsentimental, realistic approach, one that helped resolve the problem in a practical and responsible way. She saw the situation for what it was, and viewed people and situations in terms of four guiding principles:

- **Recognize that you don't know everything.** To survive and succeed in situations that require quiet leadership, you must be realistic and not exaggerate how much you really understand. Olson was new at the job when the Millar case was brought to her attention; she didn't know who her allies were, who was competent, or how the harassment fight was going to pan out. In a situation rife with uncertainty, you must likewise approach your problems with modesty and humility, and be willing to accept how much you don't know.

- **Realize you will be surprised.** Quiet leaders try to see a few moves ahead on the chessboard, taking great care to analyze, prepare, plan and think about unknowns before making judgments about them. Even after all this effort, though, these leaders still expect people and events to surprise them.

- **Keep an eye on the insiders.** Most organizations are divided into relatively secure insiders (those who wage a long, intense struggle for senior positions) and expendable outsiders (those who operate in distant, tangential orbits, usually under the watchful eyes of the insiders).

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### Don't Kid Yourself

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When Olson, an outsider with a position typically reserved for insiders, moved to get rid of Millar, she had to get the blessing from insiders on the board, building relationships and credibility in a short period of time.

● **Trust, but cut the cards.** For quiet leaders, trust resembles a fine piece of crystal—it is hard to create, very valuable and very fragile. They give their trust carefully and work hard to earn the trust of others, expecting them to do the same. Quiet leaders proceed very carefully with those whose trust they know they will never earn. ■

### Trust Mixed Motives

Why do some men and women take action when the safe and sensible thing to do is get out of the line of fire? The answer is that sometimes people find they can't walk away from a person or a situation — something engages them, then they go to work, resolutely and creatively, and persevere despite inconveniences and other professional hazards.

Other times, people have basic instincts that are less noble and more complex. In other words, while we might care about others, chances are we care more about ourselves, our organizations and our jobs.

For a couple of reasons, mixed and complicated motives are, in fact, key to a quiet leader's success:

● **Mixed motives make for more effective leadership.** Quiet leadership is a long, hard race, run on obscure pathways, not a thrilling sprint before a cheering crowd. If leaders did not act with mixed motives — if they acted only out of a spirit of altruism and self-sacrifice — they would act less often and less effectively.

● **Sustained leadership usually means becoming an insider.** This gives leaders the opportunity to use power and influence responsibly, on many issues and over extended periods. They must, however, also look out for themselves, protect their positions and stay at the table so they can continue to lead.

Leaders who embrace complexity, both in the world around them and within themselves, are more likely to succeed at difficult everyday challenges than individuals who try to airbrush away those stubborn realities and mixed motives.

#### *The Mixed Motives of Elliot Cortez*

Elliot Cortez was an experienced marketing executive at a major pharmaceutical firm, who felt uneasy when his company asked its reps to start promoting a popular depression drug for other uses. While the company encouraged reps to discuss unapproved uses in sales meet-

### The Implications of Motives On Leadership

The best way to realistically judge the motives of leaders is to look at their implications; for men and women who want to do the right thing in difficult, shifting, or turbulent circumstances, four lessons stand out clearly:

- ✓ **Have a bias for action and don't get bogged down in the morass of motives.** Because motives are complicated, they can be the subject of much speculation and interpretation, and these discussions can go on interminably, leading to passivity and inaction. When this happens, it's time to take a break, talk with someone and then move on to a plan of action.
- ✓ **Don't think you are disqualified or exempt from exercising leadership because your motives are mixed or complicated.** In order to really understand why people do what they do, we have to be realistic and see others and ourselves as we really are. Recognize character and motivation are fluid and complicated, and do not be afraid to act.
- ✓ **Trust yourself and your motives, especially when they pull you in different directions.** Internal conflicts are often telling you something important. If you can stay calm when everyone else is confused and upset, you may not really know what's going on.
- ✓ **Before taking on a serious ethical challenge, be sure you really care.** Quiet leaders get off the sidelines and take action because they care about helping others AND because their interests are at stake.

ings, Cortez limited himself (at least initially) to answering questions about these alternatives only when doctors raised those questions on their own. While he didn't want to break any federal laws barring such discussions, he also didn't want to limit his pay or promotion prospects.

In time, however, doubts crept in, and Cortez stopped answering questions about unauthorized uses, told several other reps about what he was doing and brought the issue up with his manager. He was afraid someone would get hurt by using the drug for something other than depression, but he was also concerned that, if he were reported for breaking any federal laws, his company would absolve itself of any responsibility for encouraging this marketing strategy, leaving him to face charges alone.

#### *Lessons from Elliot Cortez's Actions*

It is clear that Cortez acted out of a combination of altruism and self-interest, leaving us with several lessons to be learned from this case study in mixed motives:

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### Trust Mixed Motives

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● **Stop playing “Gotcha.”** When discussing others, some people like to counter noble motives with low ones, or good deeds with bad ones, in order to cut the subject of the conversation down to size. This game of “Gotcha” assumes that genuinely ethical people act for reasons uncontaminated by their own self-interest; in reality, however, this is rarely the case.

● **Be sure you really care.** Successful leaders do not merely think they should act; they feel they must. They need to test the strength of their motives, as well as the morality of their motives. In Cortez’s case, his self-interest was fused with a concern for others; had he not had that concern, he would have been less likely to act.

● **Don’t try to save the world.** Some might ask why Cortez didn’t do more to change the way his company was pressuring reps to act. Because his motives were mixed, he focused on what was reasonably attainable and avoided making a grand gesture that would have been less effective. He recognized that he had been dealt a modest hand, and he played it carefully, prudently and honorably. ■

### Buy a Little Time

When faced with a challenge, effective leaders rarely rush forward with “The Answer”; instead, they often look for ways to beg, borrow and steal a little time. They recognize the positive effects time can have on a difficult situation:

● It lets turbulent waters settle and clarify, giving people the opportunity to discuss their situations with others and think things through on their own.

● It gives people a chance to assess their real obligations, giving sound instincts a chance to emerge.

● It gives people the opportunity to observe and learn, understand the subtleties of interaction and look for patterns and opportunities in the flow of events.

The dynamic, unpredictable nature of our times often makes it impossible to instantly design answers for fluid, multi-faceted problems. You don’t want to miss the options, nuances, contingencies, ripple effects or pitfalls that might have greater effect on you further down the line; buying time gives you the chance to see all those things, by creating a buffer zone before you make a decision or take action.

#### How to Buy Time

Buying time sometimes means playing some basic organizational games, taking steps to delay action, dissipate pressure, or divert the attention of superiors who

might be breathing down your neck. No one views these games as the ideal ways to deal with problems; at best, they are a second or third option. But responsible managers recognize the need, on occasion, to play these games to buy the time required to make the right decision.

#### Games Managers Play

The games that managers play fall into two categories: quick fixes and strategic stalling.

Quick fixes are the small things that enable you to deflect or delay something or someone. They involve few risks, and buy just a little time, but they can be effective. They might include the following:

- **“I’m booked; can I get back to you on that?”**
- **“The server has been losing my e-mails.”**
- **“Look, I’m late for another meeting.”**
- **“Can we settle this in the morning?”**

In most cases, these tactics also have the advantage of being true or close enough to the truth; most people are indeed busy, for example, and computers are notoriously unreliable.

Strategic stalling involves tactics that buy large amounts of time — increasing the challenge and level of risk proportionally. In such cases, the rationale for a significant delay should be substantive and should look like and be something that an effective manager would do in a particular situation. Some typical strategic stalling techniques include the following:

● **Get the Staff Involved.** Ask for a meeting with a staff members outside your normal operations — human resources, for example — to learn about the policies, procedures, or processes that must be addressed in order to proceed with a course of action.

● **Dot I’s and Cross T’s.** Once you understand the full set of requirements and procedures you must follow to complete a task, you should begin to comply with them—slowly, carefully, bureaucratically, asking questions along the way, just to ensure you’re getting things right.

● **Scenario Planning.** Make sure you’re considering all possible scenarios, evaluating all options, gathering all relevant data, putting contingency plans into place and getting the right people involved. Such planning tactics can add copious amounts of time to any endeavor.

● **Communicate by Pony Express.** Select slower means of communication, such as face-to-face meetings, using regular (“snail”) mail rather than voicemail, voicemail rather than e-mail. Make sure all steps you take in the process are documented, under the guise of protecting the company against further hassles, lawsuits and the like. ■

For an example of a successful quick fix, go to:  
<http://my.summary.com>

## Invest Wisely

Before effective leaders get involved in risky or uncertain efforts, they check to see just how much political capital they have — an intangible entity consisting mainly of the person's reputation and relationships at work, the perception others have of that person. When quiet leaders take action on a difficult problem, they pay close attention to how much of this intangible capital they are risking and the likely returns on their investment.

Quiet leaders know that problems that seem simple and familiar are sometimes risky and complicated; hence, before they put their political capital at risk, they think about those risks and the possible rewards, considering what course of action would have the greatest possible impact with the least risk and cost. In the best case, doing what they feel is right will improve their reputations and relationships.

### Three Key Questions

The risk-return approach involves asking and answering three questions:

● **How much political capital do I have in the bank?** This question is not easily answered, because political capital is so intangible, and so often not connected with the quality of one's work (how many merely adequate workers get advancements over better-qualified counterparts, simply because they have a stronger reputation?). Your reputation is enhanced by getting consistently excellent results, and by getting them the right way — by being a team player, "playing the game," and avoiding moral grandstanding.

● **How much political capital am I placing at risk?** Does the situation require that you stake your reputation on something, or risk losing face in front of your peers and/or superiors? Do others have their reputations or relationships on the line, or in some way connected to the decisions you make? The answers to these questions help leaders determine how much effort to inject into a course of action, or how loudly to speak against or in favor of something.

● **What are the likely rewards, for others and myself?** This question asks people to think clearly and specifically about the returns they are seeking on their investment. This means one must make choices and set priorities, just as investors have to choose between short-term and long-term stocks, or between risky, high potential stocks and more stable, secure ones.

This question is largely a matter of probabilities—how likely are you to achieve what you're setting out to accomplish? How complicated are the motives and actions of others involved in the situation, and how likely are they to be amenable to your actions?

## The Unwanted Perfect Score

Captain Jill Matthews was company commander of a headquarters group of 75 soldiers in the Airborne Corps of the U.S. Army. The staff officers who reported to her were responsible for particular activities such as operations, intelligence and supply. Matthews' group supported five battalions that maintained transportation equipment and transported troops.

Captain Matthews' group underwent an Annual General Inspection (or AGI) that covered every area of Matthews' responsibilities — vehicle maintenance, safety, barracks maintenance, arms room controls and supplies. It was in supplies accountability and maintenance that Matthews knew her operation had its greatest deficiency and, although she and her staff worked hard to overcome it, she figured it would be graded poorly on the AGI.

Matthews was surprised, then, when the supplies operation was given a perfect score on the inspection. Her first sergeant told her why — inspectors had merely entered the supplies warehouse, filled out their score sheets and left, without truly inspecting anything.

Matthews then faced a dilemma — accept the perfect score and stay quiet about the bogus inspection, or report the problem to the inspector general and risk hurting her career, as well as those of her battalion commander, her sergeants and the inspectors.

She reported the incident, and, instead of getting into trouble, received all assurances from the inspector general that the incident would be investigated. She could also keep her company's perfect score, on the condition that she continue to work on her supply area's problems.

Matthews risked a great deal of political capital on reporting the incident, getting very little in return—there was never any proof that the inspectors who passed her company were ever investigated; in fact, her reporting the problem might have simply driven the shoddy inspections further underground. Her courage, conviction and quiet leadership cannot, however, be denied.

Unfortunately, the complexities and obscurities of organizational life can sometimes make the answer to this question difficult. ■

For Aristotle's viewpoint on risk and reward, go to:  
<http://my.summary.com>

### Drill Down

Something important is missing from most stories of heroic leadership: the technological and bureaucratic complexity that pervades life and work today.

The absence of this attribute simplifies the stories we hear, making them more vivid and powerful at the cost of realism and relevance. All around us, life and work are rapidly subdividing into ever more focused spheres of specialty. Because of these developments, people working in organizations face problems made more complex by technological, bureaucratic and legal issues. Under these conditions, stories of heroic endeavors are of little use to leaders; the basic need isn't to summon courage, moral vision, or the corporate credo — it is to understand what is really going on.

#### Four Guidelines

Quiet leaders know that moral commitment and high principles are no substitute for immersion in the complexities of a particular situation — they recognize that a responsible effort to execute their duties as decision makers can only happen when they possess the specialized knowledge required to inform those efforts. They drill down into complex problems, using four basic guidelines:

- **They remember their responsibilities.** Complexities cannot obscure responsibilities; corporate and political history is rife with people who use complexities to hide their own nefarious actions [see sidebar].

For people with sound ethics, complexity creates another problem: it can lead to fatigue and confusion. Sorting out complicated issues is draining work, and often places greater responsibilities on the ones who delve deeper into the issues (since they are likely the only ones who understand it in any great detail).

Ironically, this responsibility often leads to further complexity. When a problem is complicated and technical, it is tempting to think that the solution lies somewhere in the details — if only you could find the right formula or read the fine print correctly all would be well. However, once you grasp the full realm of complex issues inherent to a situation, you must still make choices and/or commitments, then take action. Understanding alone does not relieve you of that responsibility.

- **They work hard and continuously.** Drilling down can be hard work. Understanding complexities in technological, bureaucratic or legal matters may require gaining valuable perspectives from experts in other areas. It may require taking your knowledge and your need to other, higher, layers of leadership in your company. It may require revisiting ideas or policies you already know, or reinterpreting them in new contexts.

Drilling down can cause a leader to be obsessive, a trait that often enables people to bore deeply into com-

### When Scoundrels Use Complexity to Hide

Complexities should not be allowed to obscure leaders' responsibilities. One popular example of this is Michael Milken, the legendary financier, felon and philanthropist. Some of Milken's financial transactions were so novel and complicated, he was often the only person who truly understood their intricacies. This enabled him to bury violations of securities laws so deeply, it took investigators years to unearth them. In this instance, Milken showed just how well complexity can serve as a smokescreen for wrongdoing.

In another, less publicized incident, a talented but unscrupulous chemist in charge of handling quality control for his company, regularly faked the results of important tests required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Even though his work was checked by both the EPA and his company, he was able to get away with his actions for years, simply because he understood the tests and their underlying science better than anyone else around him.

In short, complexity creates elaborate mazes, with lots of places for skunks to hide.

plicated, intimidating problems and emerge with ways of seeing things that they never anticipated.

- **They enlist the assistance of others.** Effective leaders avoid the impulse to be a hero and resolve complex problems on their own. No amount of obsessive behavior can substitute for training, experience and expertise. People with training and experience simply know more about particular problems; they also tend to have a "feel" for problems, an intuitive sense of what is really happening and how to search for answers.

- **They are not afraid to back off.** Sometimes a problem is so complex that no amount of reflection, analysis, or consultation can provide a solid basis for action. In these cases, the responsible thing for leaders to do is to wait, buy more time and try to get the problem into the right hands. This is not another way of saying leaders should shirk their responsibilities; it is, quite simply, common sense. If you're in over your head, do not be afraid to back off.

#### Are You Over Your Head?

Some signs that you might be in over your head include the following:

- **Consultation leads nowhere.** When your experts can't agree about what's going on and what can be done, you must proceed with extreme caution.

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### Drill Down

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● **Inability to simplify an issue.** The odds of succeeding at almost anything are much lower if you cannot break a problem down into simple, easily understood issues or facts.

● **Conflicting instincts.** When you are pulled one way and then another on an issue, barreling forward is the wrong thing to do.

● **The last piece doesn't fit.** If you have a nagging detail that simply will not be resolved on its own, make sure you get it nailed down before proceeding. ■

To learn how “looking at the fish” helps uncover details, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Bend the Rules

Bending the rules isn't something we associate with responsible leadership; real leaders, according to the conventional view, obey the law and play by the rules, because they see it as their duty and it sets the right example for others in their organization. Day-to-day life situations are, however, often more complicated, revealing cases in which strict adherence to the rules may do more harm than good.

#### *Seize Opportunities*

Because the world is ambiguous and uncertain, quiet leaders must respond in a particular way. They typically are reluctant to break the rules, but they don't want to obey them mechanically and cause harm. In these instances, they look for imaginative or creative ways to bend the rules without breaking them. When they find a way to bend the rules, they seize the opportunity and use it to uphold their values and commitments. They all tend to follow a certain set of guidelines:

● **They take rules very seriously.** When quiet leaders find themselves in complex ethical dilemmas, they follow two modes of thought. One tells them to take the rules very seriously, and the other tells them to look for ways to follow the spirit of the rules while simultaneously bending them. While less ethical people cast rules aside, quiet leaders obey them because of their strong moral weight. They also know the consequences of violating rules, and avoid violations in order to protect their reputations, networks and career prospects.

● **They look for “wiggle room.”** Quiet leaders realize that following rules sometimes can have harmful results, so they try hard to find some room to maneuver, doing so within the boundaries set by the rules. Life seldom presents challenges and problems in the form of stark, either-or choices. Yet, rules also provide security,

a needed commodity in certain stressful situations. In these cases, it takes courage and determination to find that “wiggle room” and do the right thing, even though it may mean bending a set policy or guideline.

● **They practice entrepreneurial ethics.** Sometimes, following either guideline can present a leader with problems. Some people in leadership positions hide behind rules, evading responsibility by taking the rules too seriously. For quiet leaders, taking the rules seriously doesn't mean treating them as a paint-by-numbers exercise. When things get complicated, quiet leaders take initiative, trust their creativity and work hard to create room to maneuver. They approach ethical problems as entrepreneurs, not clerks, enabling them to address the multiple levels and deep intricacies of many day-to-day problems. ■

### Nudge, Test and Escalate Gradually

Despite their best, most careful efforts (such as drilling down or checking how much political capital they have), a leader's commitment to solving a problem might lead them into situations in which the path ahead is far from clear, leaving them with no choice but to improvise to find a solution. This means finding ways to nudge, test and carefully escalate their efforts. Instead of trying to crack the case, they look for ways to work the problem.

#### *Prudence and Modesty*

There are several reasons quiet leaders take this approach. One of them is prudence — they would rather not risk their careers and reputations by betting all their political capital at once. Another reason is modesty — quiet leaders often do not believe they are smart enough to answer difficult questions solely by thinking about them, so they drill down, gather facts, perform analysis and look for creative ways to find room to maneuver.

In fluid situations with many contingencies, the solutions to problems aren't always readily apparent. In these cases, successful leadership depends on learning, and learning, in turn, involves taking the right small steps, getting a sense of the flow of events, hazards to be avoided and opportunities they can exploit.

Nudging, testing and escalating gradually are often the best and fastest ways to make the world a better place. At some point, however, nudging and patient escalation must come to an end, and choices must be made. Even when the moment of choice arrives, quiet leaders continue to avoid taking strong stands, preferring instead to craft compromises that work. ■

To learn how Charles de Gaulle nudged, tested and escalated, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Craft a Compromise

When principles are at stake, compromise is morally suspect; it smacks of mutual back scratching and the transactions of politicians and lobbyists in smoky rooms. People with strong values don't wheel and deal on matters of principle and deep conviction.

The ethical problem with compromise is that it seems to be basically a matter of splitting the difference, as a salesperson and a customer would in a negotiation over a product (each side has a starting offer, from which they negotiate a deal somewhere between the two points). When important principles are at stake, however, such an approach seems wrong; people should, in other words, do the right thing, not half of it.

Quiet leaders accept this view of fundamental moral principles, but they don't find it particularly useful in most situations. They know there are times when matters are clear-cut and a basic principle must be defended; in these cases, most men and women will draw lines they will not, under any circumstances, cross.

Quiet leaders view these approaches as last resorts, because they view compromise in a different light. They regard them as challenges to their imagination and ingenuity and as occasions for hard, serious work. They believe that crafting a compromise is often a valuable opportunity to learn and exercise practical wisdom, and to defend and express important values in enduring, practical ways. The other guidelines that quiet leaders follow are all critical steps toward this final goal of developing workable, responsible ways to resolve everyday ethical problems. Crafting a compromise is often the best way to do this.

#### Four Critical Factors

There are four critical factors toward achieving compromise:

- **Pragmatism.** The first guideline of quiet leadership — “Don't Kid Yourself” — applies when forging a compromise. In any given situation, there might be a wide range of uncertainties, risks and interests between you and the party or parties at the other end of the compromise. Recognize these things and prepare to deal with them.

- **Honesty about conflicting motives.** Responsible compromises begin with courageous honesty, and this honesty often reveals conflicts of feelings and interests within a person's heart. These conflicts can create biases and preconceptions and, as a result, they must be addressed and overcome. Such conflicts can also help people understand, fully and realistically, the problems they confront. This knowledge keeps people from sweeping away the complexities of a problem and succumbing to an oversimplified, one-sided cure.

- **Refusal to accept either-or choices.** Quiet leaders

recognize the ethical stakes in the situations they face, but they move beyond thinking about their situations in purely ethical terms and see them in another light — as challenges to their imagination, managerial skills and ability to navigate difficult, sometimes treacherous waters.

- **Rethinking, reimagining and recasting.**

Compromises sometimes hinge on a leader's ability to get involved parties to see the situation from a different angle, and to use that new line of vision as the basis for redefining the issue and achieving compromise. When Abraham Lincoln gave his famous Peoria speech against extending slavery to free territories in the United States, he recast the entire issue of slavery, moving it from the ethical plane to the economic one, opposing it as an unfair competitive practice rather than a morally wrong action. By recasting the issue and avoiding an either-or moral presentation of it, he achieved buy-in from a core economic constituency, thus enabling him to push toward winning the moral battle. ■

To access a copy of Lincoln's Peoria speech, go to:  
<http://my.summary.com>

### King Solomon's Compromise

When King Solomon had to decide which of two women was really the mother of an infant they both claimed to be their own, he proposed cutting the child in two. The baby's real mother cried out at this horrible idea and offered to give up the child. Her reaction told the king everything he needed to know. He understood that people with strong values do not haggle with others when principle and conviction are at stake.

King Solomon's actions teach us additional lessons about leadership and compromise. He was the leader of his community, a man trusted with the welfare and safety of his people, yet he had no way to determine which of the two women was truly the baby's mother, and an error on his part would forever separate a family. He seemed doomed to make a momentous decision by flipping a coin.

He could have tried to fake it by pretending that his ruling was grounded in fact and law, but he would know the truth. Moreover, others would suspect or know what he had done, undermining his authority and the system of justice.

Fortunately, King Solomon did not hide behind a show of judicial or kingly authority, nor did he look for some technicality on which to base a decision. He dug deeply into the problem, moving beyond the legal and factual issues to create a creative, ingenious response. As a result, one woman revealed her bitterness and detachment, the other her love and devotion. Moreover, there were no doubts about the king and the community's system of justice.