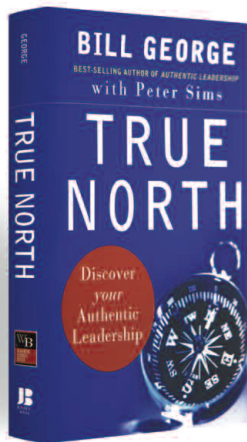


# SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®



by Bill George with Peter Sims

## Discover Your Authentic Leadership

# TRUE NORTH

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

According to Warren Bennis, as the world becomes more dangerous and our problems become more complex and dire, we long for truly distinguished leaders, men and women who deserve our respect and loyalty. *True North* is about this kind of leader.

True North is the internal compass that guides you successfully through life. It represents who you are as a human being at your deepest level and is based on what is most important to you.

Author Bill George shows how anyone who follows his or her internal compass can become an authentic leader. This leadership examination is based on research and first-person interviews with 125 of today's top leaders — with some surprising results.

The leaders interviewed for *True North* ranged in age from 23 to 93 and were chosen based on their reputations for being authentic and successful. They make up a diverse group of women and men from an array of racial, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds and nationalities. Among them are Howard Schultz of Starbucks, Andrea Jung of Avon and Chuck Schwab, founder of Charles Schwab & Co. Half of the group are CEOs, and the other half includes a broad range of nonprofit leaders just starting on their journey.

Discovering your True North takes a lifetime of commitment and learning. But as long as you are true to who you are, you can cope with the most difficult circumstances that life presents. When you are aligned with who you are, you find coherence between your life story and your leadership. Can you recall the time when you felt most intensely alive and could say with confidence, "This is the real me"? When you can, you are aligned with your True North and are prepared to lead others authentically.

### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The five dimensions that make up an authentic leader.
- How to identify the five types of leaders who have derailed.
- How to build your support team.
- How to empower people to lead.
- How to optimize your leadership effectiveness.
- How to link your leadership style with your sense of power.

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: TRUE NORTH

by Bill George with Peter Sims

## Learning From Authentic Leaders

It is understandable why academic studies have not produced a profile of an ideal leader. Leaders are highly complex human beings, people who have distinctive qualities that cannot be sufficiently described by lists of traits or characteristics.

Authentic leaders not only inspire those around them, they empower people to step up and lead. Thus, there is a new definition of leadership: *The authentic leader brings people together around a shared purpose and empowers them to step up and lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders.*

There are five dimensions that make up an authentic leader:

- **Pursuing purpose with passion.** Without a real sense of purpose, leaders are at the mercy of their egos and narcissistic vulnerabilities.
- **Practicing solid values.** Leaders are defined by their values, and values are personal — they cannot be determined by anyone else.
- **Leading with heart.** Authentic leaders lead with their hearts as well as their heads.
- **Establishing enduring relationships.** The ability to develop enduring relationships is an essential mark of authentic leaders.
- **Demonstrating self-discipline.** Authentic leaders know competing successfully takes a consistently high level of self-discipline in order to produce results.

There are two key steps to becoming an authentic leader. First, you have to understand yourself, because the person you will always find hardest to lead is yourself. Second, you must take responsibility for your own development. You must devote yourself to a lifetime of development in order to become a great leader. ■

## The Journey to Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders consistently say they find their motivation through understanding their own stories. What makes leaders' stories different from everyone

else's? Many people with painful stories see themselves as victims, feeling the world has dealt them a bad hand. Or they lack the introspection to see the connection between their life experiences and the goals they are pursuing. The difference with authentic leaders lies in the way they *frame* their stories. Their life stories provide the context for their lives.

Many learn the hard way that leadership is not a simple destination of becoming CEO. Rather, it is a marathon journey that progresses through many stages until you reach your peak leadership. Of all the leaders over 40 who were interviewed, none wound up where they thought they would.

**Phase I: Preparing for Leadership.** The first 30 years is the time to prepare for leadership, when character is formed and people become individual contributors or lead teams for the first time.

**Phase II: Leading.** The second phase of your leadership journey begins with a rapid accumulation of leadership experiences and culminates in the 50s, when leaders typically reach their peak leadership.

**Phase III: Giving Back.** Many leaders are bypassing retirement to share their experience with multiple organizations. They serve on for-profit or nonprofit boards,

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Peter Sims established "Leadership Perspectives," a course on leadership development at the Stanford Graduate School of Business while earning his MBA. He also helped found the London office of Summit Partners.

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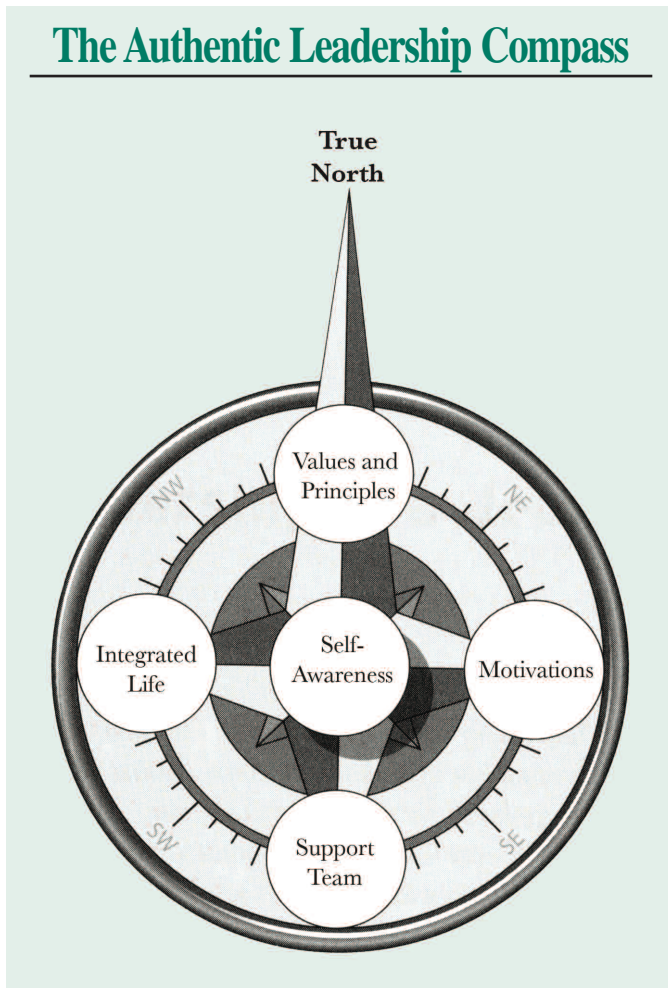
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## Summary: TRUE NORTH

### The Journey to Authentic Leadership

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#### The Authentic Leadership Compass



mentor young leaders, take up teaching or coach newly appointed CEOs.

Lord John Browne, who led BP to new heights in his 11 years at the helm, supports the idea of giving back. In announcing he would step down as CEO, Browne said, “I don’t believe in retirement. The idea seems a touch out of date.” He suggested he would be looking for an interesting new position with a purpose. ■

### Why Leaders Lose Their Way

Why do people with excellent potential get derailed just as they appear to be hitting the peak of their leadership? People who lose their way are not necessarily bad leaders. They have the potential to become good leaders, but somewhere along the way they get pulled off course.

Before people take on leadership roles, they should first ask themselves two fundamental questions: “What motivates me to lead?” and “What is the purpose of my leadership?” If honest answers to the first question are

simply power, prestige and money, leaders risk being trapped by external gratification as the source of their fulfillment. There is nothing wrong with desiring these outward symbols as long as they are combined with a deeper desire to serve something greater than oneself.

While many leaders have a deep-seated fear of failure, the irony is that they learn the most from their failures. Some rising leaders have such a fear of failing that they avoid risks. When they reach the top, they are not prepared to cope with the greater challenges they face.

#### *Derailment: Losing Sight of Your True North*

In observing leaders who have derailed, five types who lose sight of their True North have been identified.

**Impostors** rise through the organizational ranks with a combination of cunning and aggression. They understand the politics of getting ahead and let no one stand in their way. They have little appetite for self-reflection or for developing self-awareness.

To people outside their organizations, **Rationalizers** always appear on top of the issues. When things don’t go their way, they blame external forces or subordinates or offer facile answers to their problems. They rarely step up and take responsibility themselves.

**Glory Seekers** define themselves by acclaim of the external world. Money, fame, glory and power are their goals as they pursue visible signs of success. Often it seems more important to them to appear on lists of the most powerful business leaders than it does to build organizations of lasting value.

**Loners** avoid forming close relationships, seeking out mentors or creating support networks. They believe they can and must make it on their own. Not to be confused with introverts, loners often have a myriad of superficial relationships and acolytes, but they do not listen to them.

The lives of **Shooting Stars** center entirely on their careers. To observers, they are perpetual motion machines, always on the go, traveling incessantly to get ahead. They rarely make time for family, friends, communities or even themselves. As they run ever faster, their stress mounts. They move up so rapidly in their careers that they never have time to learn from their mistakes. ■

### Transformation From ‘I’ to ‘We’

To become authentic leaders, we must discard the myth that leadership means having legions of supporters following our direction as we ascend to the pinnacles of power. Only then can we realize that authentic leadership is about empowering others on their journeys.

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### Transformation From ‘I’ to ‘We’

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This shift is the transformation from “I” to “We.” It is the most important process leaders go through in becoming authentic. How else can they unleash the power of their organizations except by motivating people to reach their full potential? Only when leaders stop focusing on their personal ego needs are they able to develop other leaders.

#### *Jaime Irick on Transforming*

Jaime Irick, a West Point graduate and rising star at General Electric, offered insight into the process of transforming from “I” to “We.” “You have to realize that it’s not about you,” he explained.

“We spend our early years trying to be the best. To get into West Point or General Electric, you have to be the best. That is defined by what you can do on your own — your ability to be a phenomenal analyst or do well on a standardized test. When you become a leader, your challenge is to inspire others, develop them and create change through them. If you want to be a leader, you’ve got to flip that switch and understand that it’s about serving folks on your team. This is a very simple concept, but one many people overlook. The sooner they realize it, the faster they will become leaders.” ■

### Knowing Your Authentic Self

In their interviews, leaders said that gaining self-awareness was central to becoming authentic leaders. For this reason it is at the center of your compass. When you know yourself, you can find the passion that motivates you and the purpose of your leadership.

#### *Your Emotional Intelligence*

Self-awareness is the first element of emotional intelligence, or EQ. While intellectual intelligence, or IQ, has long been thought of as an essential characteristic for managers, EQ may be more important for authentic leaders. Leaders with an exceptionally high IQ get too intellectually involved and have trouble being tolerant of others. You have to have a certain level of intelligence at the top. Above that level, you need leadership skills, interpersonal skills and teamwork.

Dirk Jager, the former CEO of Procter & Gamble, is an example of a failed leader because he imposed his intellect on others. Jager was a brilliant strategist who had excellent ideas about the strategic and cultural changes needed at P&G, but his style was so abrasive that he threatened the essence of P&G’s culture. As a result, his management team rebelled, and the board asked him to step down in less than two years as A.G.

Lafley, a longtime P&G executive, took his place. Using a combination of wisdom, humility and personal engagement with employees, Lafley is transforming P&G into one of the great success stories of the 21st century.

#### *Why Knowing Yourself Is So Important*

The better you know yourself, the more likely you are to choose the right role. When leaders know themselves well, they become comfortable in their own skins, act consistently in different situations and gain the trust of others. Most leaders see the process of gaining self-awareness as crucial to their ability to build strong relationships. Those who are comfortable with themselves tend to be more open and transparent. Leaders who know their strengths and weaknesses can fill their skill gaps with colleagues who complement them.

#### *Becoming Self-Aware*

Without self-awareness, it is easy to get caught up in chasing external symbols of success rather than becoming the person you want to be. It is difficult to regulate your emotions, control your fears and avoid impulsive outbursts when you feel threatened or rejected. Without being aware of your vulnerabilities, fears and longings, it is hard to empathize with others who are experiencing similar feelings.

One of the most difficult things in becoming self-aware is seeing ourselves as others see us. Although it can be difficult to hear, leaders need accurate feedback to identify their blind spots. When you can do that and be open to new ways of doing things, the change you can accomplish is almost unlimited.

#### *Accepting Yourself*

Self-awareness is only half the challenge. You still have to accept yourself. But with self-awareness, accepting your authentic self becomes much easier. You see yourself clearly and accurately, and you know what you truly believe. The key to self-acceptance is to love yourself unconditionally. This level of self-compassion enables you to get to the source of your True North and to accept yourself as you are. ■

For additional information on self-awareness, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Practicing Your Values and Principles

In gaining a clear awareness of who you are, you must understand your values and the principles that

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### Practicing Your Values and Principles

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guide your leadership. Staying centered on your values is not easy. You can easily drift off course as the temptations and pressures of the outside world pull you away. But if you are centered by a high level of self-awareness, your compass can help you get back on track.

#### *Values, Leadership Principles and Ethical Boundaries*

The values that form the basis for your True North are derived from your beliefs and convictions. In defining your values, you must decide what is most important in your life. When you have a clear understanding of your values and their relative importance, you can establish the principles by which you intend to lead. *Leadership principles are values translated into action.*

Your ethical boundaries set clear limits on what you will do when you are tempted or are under pressure or when you start rationalizing a series of marginal decisions. One way leaders understand their ethical boundaries is to use the *New York Times* test. Before proceeding with any action, ask yourself, “How would I feel if this entire situation, including transcripts of discussions, were printed on the first page of the *New York Times*?” If your answers are negative, then it is time to rethink your actions; if they are positive, you should feel comfortable proceeding. ■

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### What Motivates You to Be a Leader?

Chuck Schwab’s strengths, talents and motivations all came together when he founded Charles Schwab & Co. He combined his investment research skills with the persistence and resilience learned from years of suffering with dyslexia and an upbringing that instilled an enormous respect for individuals who want to achieve financial independence.

Building a company with a cause in which he passionately believes, he has helped millions become more confident while achieving financial independence himself. Schwab’s company is an American icon, with 14,000 employees and market capitalization of \$20 billion.

Like Chuck Schwab, you need to know what motivates you and have a realistic understanding of your strengths and weaknesses so you can put your best capabilities to work.

#### *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations*

There are two types of motivation — extrinsic and intrinsic. *Extrinsic motivations*, such as getting good

grades, winning athletic competitions or making money, are measured by the external world.

*Intrinsic motivations*, on the other hand, are derived from your sense of the meaning of your life — your True North. They are closely linked to your life story and the way you frame it. Examples include personal growth, helping other people develop and making a difference in the world. Schwab’s passion for helping Americans achieve financial independence is an intrinsic motivation, even if the end result made him wealthy.

#### *Avoiding Traps*

Moving away from external validation of personal achievement is not easy. Achievement-oriented leaders grow so accustomed to successive accomplishments throughout their early years that it takes courage to pursue their intrinsic motivations.

But at some point, most leaders recognize that they need to address more difficult questions in order to pursue their true motivations. As a star consultant for global management firm McKinsey & Company, Alice Woodwark had achieved success at every stage of her life by age 29. She noted: “My version of achievement was pretty naive, born of things I learned early in life about praise and being valued. But if you’re just chasing the rabbit around the course, you’re not running toward anything meaningful.” Many leaders turned down higher-paying jobs in early career decisions in order to pursue roles they would enjoy. They came out ahead in the end — in both satisfaction and compensation — because they were successful in doing what they loved.

However, many young leaders are tempted to take high-salaried jobs to pay off loans or build their savings, even if they have no interest in the work and do not intend to stay. Some become so dependent on maintaining a certain lifestyle that they get trapped in jobs where they are unmotivated and unhappy. Locked into the high-income/high-expense life, they cannot afford to do work they are passionate about. Ironically, not one of the leaders interviewed wound up taking a position predicated upon establishing wealth early. This course enabled them to later pursue roles they would enjoy. ■

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### Building Your Support Team

Your support team is a key element of your personal development plan. Members of your team help you stay focused on your True North, keep you grounded in reality and provide the support you need as you venture on your leadership journey. Leaders do not succeed on their

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### **Building Your Support Team**

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own; they must give as much to their relationships as they get from them.

#### ***The Most Important Person to Your Leadership***

Your support team starts with having at least one person in your life with whom you can be completely vulnerable and open. Often that person is the only one who can tell you the honest truth. Most leaders have their closest relationships with their spouses, although some develop these bonds with other family members, a close friend or a trusted mentor.

#### ***Mentors***

Many authentic leaders have had a mentor who has changed their lives by helping them develop the skills to become better leaders and the confidence to lead authentically. But what some people, especially aspiring leaders, fail to recognize is the importance of the two-way relationship with their mentors. *Lasting relationships must flow both ways.* The best mentoring interactions spark mutual learning, exploration of similar values and shared enjoyment.

Current chairman and former CEO of Intuit Bill Campbell is the dean of mentoring in Silicon Valley. Many venture capitalists and board members in northern California will not hire a new CEO without first checking with Campbell. Although he keeps a low public profile, “Coach Campbell” is one of Silicon Valley’s most respected executives.

Campbell has mentored dozens of entrepreneurs and business leaders. People are drawn to him because they consider him a great mentor and leader who has helped them unleash their own leadership potential. His selfless spirit, cultivated on the football fields of his youth, has enabled him to develop a loyal network of mentees, supporters and friends.

The best mentors put the interests of those they are mentoring above their own. These relationships can grow into strong personal friendships, especially when the participants are no longer in the same professional context. The cycle then continues when those who benefited from strong mentoring mentor others.

#### ***Creating a Professional Support Network***

Many leaders develop professional peer networks both within and outside their organizations to consult with about important issues and to provide counsel and guidance. Having a peer support structure within your organization can be invaluable, because colleagues may

be facing comparable experiences, have insights about things you do not see or be in a position to offer you real-time feedback on your leadership. ■

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### **Staying Grounded: Integrating Your Life**

Integrating their lives is one of the greatest challenges leaders face. To lead an *integrated life*, you need to bring together the major elements of your personal life and professional life, including work, family, community and friends, so that you can be the same person in each environment.

Authentic leaders are constantly aware of the importance of staying grounded. In doing so, they avoid getting too arrogant during the high points and forgetting who they are during the low points. Spending time with their families and close friends, getting physical exercise, practicing spirituality, doing community service and returning to places where they grew up are all ways they stay grounded. This grounding is essential to their effectiveness as leaders because it enables them to preserve their authenticity.

#### ***Measuring Success***

Have you defined what success means for you and for your life? Unless you have thought through the answer to that question, you are at risk of letting others define success for you. Only when you can define what is most important in your life can you set the right priorities and become an integrated leader. ■

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### **Leadership With Purpose and Passion**

In 1998, Andrea Jung was facing the most difficult decision of her long and successful career. Four years after joining Avon Products, she had been passed over for promotion to CEO in favor of one of the company’s outside board members. “I had an offer to become CEO at another company, but Ann Moore, CEO of Time Inc. and an Avon board member, advised me to stay,” she recalled. “She told me, ‘Follow your compass and not your clock.’”

Jung decided to stay, becoming president of Avon and a board member. The decision changed her life. Just 20 months later, the new CEO retired, and Jung was named his successor in November 1999, becoming Avon’s first female CEO.

What is the purpose of *your* leadership? Are you fol-

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### Leadership With Purpose and Passion

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Following the True North of your compass or the timetable of your clock? If you examine your True North again, you will find that it points the way to the purpose of your leadership. When you understand your purpose, you are ready to find an organization — or create one — where you can fulfill that purpose.

#### Discerning Your Passions

How do you discern your passions? For most leaders passion comes from their life stories. By understanding the meaning of key events in your life story and reframing them, you can discern your passions. Following your passions will enable you to discover the purpose of your leadership. Leaders can sustain their effectiveness only if they empower employees around a shared purpose. As a leader, you must convey passion for the business every day while maintaining clarity about the mission of your organization. ■

### Empowering People to Lead

If mutual respect provides the foundation for bringing out the best in people, what are the steps needed to empower them? Effective leaders use the following approaches at different times, depending on the capabilities of the people involved and the situation they are facing:

- Showing up
- Engaging people
- Helping teammates
- Challenging leaders
- Stretching people
- Aligning everyone around a mission.

Woody Allen once remarked, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.” Surprisingly, many leaders get so busy they don’t take the time to be there for people. Showing up at important events or at unexpected times means a great deal to people and enables them to take their leaders off their proverbial pedestal and see them as real people.

The most empowering leaders are those who engage a wide range of people. That means being with them face-to-face; inquiring about their work, their families, their personal lives and their careers; and being open and vulnerable with them. Authentic leaders help their teammates, whether it is with a personal problem or a career problem, by counseling them, offering suggestions or assisting them in making vital contacts.

Most people want to be stretched in assignments that

enable them to develop. The leader’s key is to sense when people are ready for such challenging experiences. Yet it is important for your team to know that you will be there to support them if necessary.

The most empowering condition of all is when the entire organization is aligned with its mission and people’s passions and purpose are in sync with each other. Individuals usually have their own passions. If the organization’s leaders can demonstrate how they can fulfill their purpose while achieving the organization’s mission, then alignment can occur. ■

For additional information on helping teammates and challenging leaders, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Honing Your Leadership Effectiveness

Once you empower people to lead around a shared purpose, you are well positioned to achieve superior results through your organization. The final step in maximizing your effectiveness as an authentic leader is to hone your leadership style and make authentic use of your power. The process produces a virtuous circle that will encourage others to join you and sustain your effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

#### Optimizing Your Leadership Effectiveness

The style of an effective leader must come from an authentic place. That will only happen when you have a high level of self-awareness, are clear about your values and understand your leadership purpose. Without this clarity, your style will be shaped by the expectations of your organization or the outside world, and will not be seen as authentic.

Yet your use of style and power must fit the situation you are facing, and you have to be versatile to maximize your effectiveness in *that situation*. In the aftermath of the attack of 9/11, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani acted decisively to get urgently needed resources in place. He had no time to build consensus. In situations like these, people need decisive leaders to guide them efficiently and calmly to solutions. In other instances, such as when trying to create a future vision for their organizations, leaders need to use a more participative style that involves a wide range of people and gets them engaged and committed to that vision.

As you think about your leadership style and power, ask yourself these questions:

- Is your leadership style consistent with your leader-

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## Honing Your Leadership Effectiveness

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ship principles and values? Is it ever inconsistent?

- How do you adapt your style to the circumstances facing you and to the capabilities of your teammates?
- How do you optimize the use of your power in leading others?
- In situations in which you used your power over others inappropriately, how did they respond?
- How do you respond to powerful people who use their power over you?

### Your Leadership Style

How do you know what leadership style fits you best? Many organizations work hard to get young leaders to embrace the company's normative leadership style, sending them to training programs to bring their styles into line. If you simply adopt an organization's normative style or try to emulate someone else's style, your lack of authenticity will show through. That's why you should find a leadership style that is authentic to you and continue to refine it.

### Using Power Wisely

The effective use of power in relationships is essential to achieving one's goals. Many leaders in high-level organizational roles use their positional power to dominate others. They do not realize that their intimidating style and excessive use of power shuts down the contributions of others.

The irony is that the more power one accumulates, the less it should be used. By exerting your power, you are taking away the power of others. Authentic leaders understand they need power to get things done, but they learn to use it in subtle ways. They prefer to persuade others to adopt their point of view or to build a consen-

## Linking Leadership Style and Power

Your style conveys your sense of power, just as your use of power reflects your leadership style.

- **Directive leaders** create dependent relationships with their subordinates, who obediently carry out their orders and respond to their demands.
- **Coaching leaders** create interdependent relationships.
- **Consensus leaders** use power in subtle ways to reach agreement without hurting others' feelings or isolating people with different points of view.
- **Affiliative leaders** are embraced by others for their highly empathic relationships.
- **Expert leaders** believe knowledge is power and being right and efficient is more important than relationships.

sus rather than force subordinates to go along with them.

### Adapting to the Situation and to Your Teammates

As leaders mature through multiple experiences, they develop an authentic primary leadership style that works well for them. That style is effective as long as their situation or context stays the same. But what happens when the context changes?

In leading, you must always understand the situation in which you are operating, as well as the performance imperative. Once you understand the context, you can adjust your leadership style to get results.

In determining the style and power you want to use in a given situation, you should consider the readiness of your teammates to accept greater power and authority. For example, teammates who are used to taking clear direction may not be ready to adapt to a leader with a consensus style; conversely, followers who are highly creative and independent will not respond positively to a directive style. You should also think carefully about the kind of relationship you want to have with your teammates and what type of relationship will enable your team or organization to achieve its business imperatives. These relationships generally fit one of three types: dependent, independent or interdependent.

In creating *dependent relationships*, leaders must recognize that their teammates will rely entirely on their direction and their decisions. *Independent relationships* give teammates the autonomy and freedom to act on their own, but there is little bonding or group support. In creating *interdependent relationships*, expert, coaching, consensus and affiliative leaders share power with teammates and bring out their best qualities. They believe interdependence creates better decisions and greater commitment to ensuring success.

The bottom line for all leaders is to optimize their effectiveness to achieve superior long-term results. Authentic leaders are more effective at doing this because they have a clear sense of their moral compass and are explicitly committed to building their organizations over time. By developing an authentic leadership style, they get the best from their teammates and their organizations. ■



If you liked *True North*, you'll also like:

1. ***How Full Is Your Bucket?*** by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton. An exploration of how positive psychology used in everyday interactions can dramatically change lives.
2. ***A Leader's Legacy*** by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. The authors show how a legacy is more than a link to a position or place in an organization.
3. ***The 360° Leader*** by John C. Maxwell. You can learn to develop your influence from wherever you are in an organization by becoming a 360-degree leader.