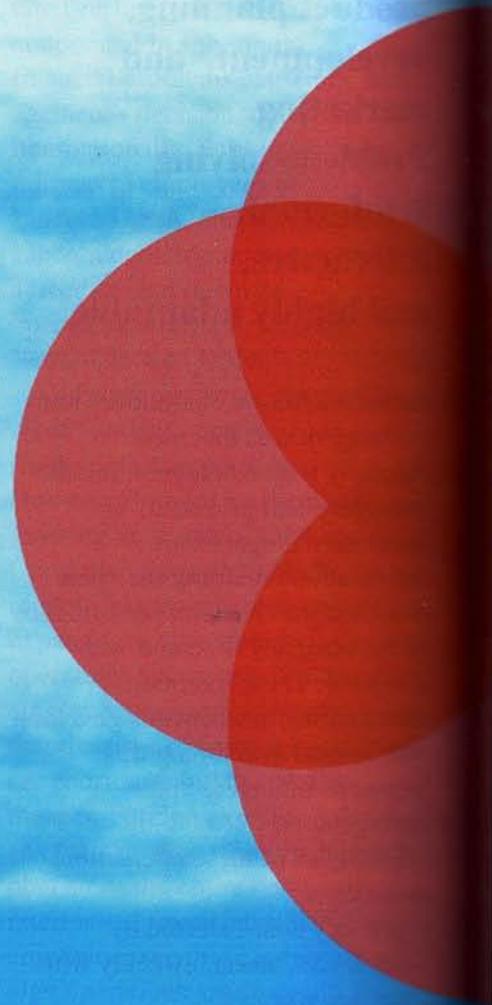


CONNECTIVE LEADERS

by Jean Lipman-Blumen

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As the twentieth century winds down, our disappointment with leaders is escalating rapidly. The evidence is clear and abundant. Corporate chieftains who recently sat atop some of America's most powerful companies have been deposed. Westinghouse's John Marous, General Motors' Robert Stempel, Time Warner's Nicholas Nicholas, Jr., Goodyear's Tom Barrett, IBM's John Akers, and Apple's Michael Spindler have all moved on, and the list continues to grow. In the political arena, as well, waves of popular protest toppled more heads of government between 1987 and 1992 than in the entire previous quarter century.¹ Even some religious leaders have



HIP: A NEW PARADIGM

fallen victim to accusations of financial and sexual improprieties.

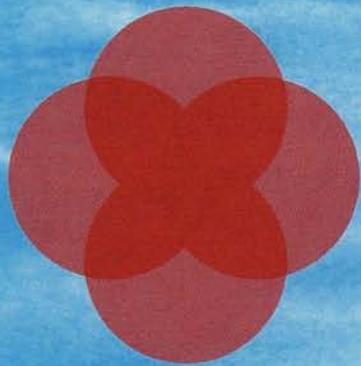
This ouster of leaders is not simply a matter of throwing out the bunglers or the bad guys. There have always been bunglers and bad guys, although today's media probably bring them into closer view. Our disappointment stems much more from the inexorable sea change in the conditions for leadership imposed by our new global environment. We stand on the cusp of a new era, a time in

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which, Václav Havel reminds us, "Something is on the way out, and something else is painfully being born."² At this moment in history, two antithetical forces—interdependence and diversity—are intensifying. Pushing relentlessly in opposite directions, these forces generate tensions that are fundamentally transforming the very circumstances under which leaders must lead.

Interdependence, driven largely by technology, connects everyone

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**The
tensions
generated by
interdependence
and diversity
are the
hallmark
of the
Connective
Era.**



and everything, everywhere. It drives us toward collaboration in alliances, networks, and coalitions. Interdependence focuses on overlapping visions, mutual problems, and common goals. It seeks out similarities and promotes universalism. Consequently, traditional authoritarian, competitive, and ruggedly individualistic leadership, which sees only its own vision, is faltering badly. Even the more recent leadership paradigm, which desperately seeks to fuse competition and collaboration, seems destined to fail.

Technology both facilitates and complicates global interdependence. Like the rest of us, leaders are not immune to the effects of interdependence; the scope, speed, and impact of their decision making are held hostage to it. News of the decisions made by corporate and government leaders flicker instantaneously around the globe. In a modern-day version of jungle drumbeats, responses are communicated across corporate and government computer screens, and then by CNN into the living rooms of private citizens. Reactions reverberate in tightly coupled financial markets from Bangkok to Brussels.

A striking example of our complex technological interdependence can be seen in Germany's 1996 demand that CompuServe block pornography sites available to German users on the World Wide Web. Because the technology initially could not exclude only the German users, CompuServe was obliged to blanket its entire customer base in a pornography blackout for several days.

Decisions made in one part of the world can have political, economic, and environmental effects on strangers thousands of miles away. Autonomous decisions are no longer feasible or acceptable, as French president Jacques Chirac found in 1995 when he announced

France's intention to conduct tests of nuclear weapons near the Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific. The worldwide clamor—including protest marches in Paris—ultimately forced Chirac to cut short his nuclear-testing program.

Diversity, in contrast to interdependence, concerns the unique character of individuals, groups, and organizations. It stems from a set of complex factors, particularly the human need for identity. Diversity focuses on the special vision of each party, underscoring differences and highlighting conflicting agendas. Thus, diversity emphasizes independence and individualism. In the process, it calls into play separatism, tribalism, and nationalism.

At home and abroad, diversity provokes assertions of distinctive identities and individualism, as evidenced by the following:

- splintering nations (for example, the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia)
- disintegrating and reconstituted geopolitical alliances (such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact)
- restructured, downsized, and temporary organizations, with new structures, shapes, and life spans
- highly diversified workforces, with a greater mix of women and ethnic and racial minorities
- increasing group pride among women, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Eastern Europeans
- proliferation of narrowly defined, often single-issue political groups
- fragmentation of religious groups

In every case, diversity promulgates new, different, and often opposing values and visions. In these radically altered circumstances, new leadership strategies are sorely needed.

It is worth noting that while interdependence and diversity generate contentious effects, each, paradoxically, also stimulates the other's growth. To wit, the more we

become part of a large, often faceless group, the more we fear losing our individuality. This, in turn, increases our need to assert our identity and independence. Nevertheless, the more we insist upon our independence and difference from others, the lonelier we feel, and the more we are driven to seek community to answer the human yearning for belonging. Thus, each of these opposing forces—interdependence and diversity—actually intensifies the need for the other.

THE CONNECTIVE ERA

The tensions generated by interdependence and diversity are the hallmark of this new age, which I call the Connective Era. It is a time when inclusion is critical and connection inevitable. To succeed in this vastly altered environment calls for a more complex, but nevertheless attainable, leadership repertoire. Such a leadership model

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offers the possibility of distilling the most constructive elements of both diversity and interdependence.

To be effective, the new connective leaders will need to negotiate, persuade, and integrate conflicting groups. Inspiring both supporters and opponents to work together will be an important strategy for bolstering the common good. Leaders will have to reach out to long-standing enemies in order to accomplish mutual goals. In the Connective Era, leaders will need

to contribute to others' successes, to act as mentors, and to collaborate—but without forgetting how to compete, take charge, and do things themselves when necessary. Further, connective leaders will need to construct and call upon social networks and multiple, shifting coalitions. They also will find that entrusting their vision and major portions of their undertaking to others will be an important part of the new leadership paradigm.

Most importantly, leaders will need a connective eye to discern the connections between their own and others' visions. Connective leaders see connections everywhere—among people, among ideas, among institutions. Usually, they see connections where traditional leaders see only chasms. Consequently, they are able to find the common ground on which former enemies can begin to move toward broadening mutuality and solving common problems.

MANAGING INTERDEPENDENCE AND DIVERSITY

Connective leaders understand that no easy mix of authoritarianism, competition, and collaboration can meet the serious challenges posed by the Connective Era. Several key areas highlight the special approach connective leaders take to managing interdependence and diversity.

1. Denatured Machiavellianism: Ethical Political Savvy

Connective leaders draw upon a set of political or instrumental styles in which one uses oneself, others, situations, and resources as instruments for accomplishing goals. Because connective leaders use these politically savvy instrumental styles both ethically and altruistically, I refer to this usage as denatured Machiavellianism. Denatured Machiavellianism invokes the wisdom of Machiavelli, but with an immense-

ly important difference. Here, Machiavellianism has been denatured of cynicism and freed up to harness the centrifugal forces of diversity and interdependence.

Guided by a strong moral compass, connective leaders use denatured Machiavellianism to navigate turbulent organizational currents. They negotiate conflicts for the community's benefit. They exploit people and processes not to increase their own power, but to solve group problems. Connective leaders engage constituents through dramatic, unexpected symbols and gestures that hit the emotional solar plexus. Moreover, they amplify supporters' abilities and loyalty by entrusting them with challenging tasks.

Traditionally, we have rejected instrumentalism—using the self and others as instruments for accomplishing goals—as unethical manipulation. That approach has been tainted by its association with Machiavelli's advice to the prince.³ Nonetheless, used in good faith for the benefit of the larger community, instrumental strategies can be extremely effective, particularly when one is dealing with the complex political realities of the Connective Era. Thus, we might think of denatured Machiavellianism as a term for principled instrumental action, action that uses the self and others ethically as the means to mutually beneficial ends. Drained of self-aggrandizing toxins, this type of political behavior is particularly relevant to a complex, diverse, and interdependent world. It is a key facet of connective leadership.

Connective leaders depart from the Machiavellianism of *The Prince* not only in operating from a consistently ethical base, but in other significant ways as well. These include the following:

- joining their vision to the dreams of others by connecting and

combining rather than dividing and conquering

- striving to overcome mutual problems rather than to defeat common enemies, whose danger is exaggerated in order to corral frightened followers behind an authoritarian leader
- creating a sense of community, one where many diverse groups can hold valued membership
- bringing together diverse cadres of leaders and constituents to achieve common purposes
- encouraging active constituents to assume responsibilities at every level, rather than manipulating passive followers
- joining with other leaders (even former adversaries) as colleagues, not as competitors
- nurturing potential leaders, including possible successors
- renewing and constructing broad-based democratic institutions, rather than creating dynasties and oligarchies
- demonstrating authenticity through consistent dedication to non-egoistic goals
- demanding serious sacrifice—first from themselves, and only then from others

Like servant leaders,⁴ connective leaders serve their societies, not themselves. Using ethical instrumentality, however, connective leaders act with greater personal agency than servant leaders usually do. They concentrate less self-consciously on their stewardship and obligations to the organization. These leaders focus more pragmatically on their instrumental skills in order to turn the connections among people, organizations, and dreams to the advantage of the world around them. In the hands of connective leaders, instrumentalism takes on a fresh, unsullied meaning.

2. Authenticity and Accountability: Imperatives of the Connective Era

Connective leaders fortify their denatured Machiavellianism with a strong dose of authenticity and accountability. They recognize that a leader's complex behaviors can confuse supporters. Because their actions are often more complicated than those of their more traditional predecessors, connective leaders appreciate the special significance that authenticity and accountability hold for them.

Authenticity is one of those inefable qualities we can instantly detect but rarely define. Emanating from an ethical core, authenticity sustains supporters' faith in the person of the leader, even when the leader's behavior seems confusing or contradictory. Thus, it stems the corrosion of cynicism. It helps us determine whether a leader's policy change stems from new information or from a failure of will.

Authenticity is palpable when leaders harness their egos to the chariot of the greater cause. Constituents intuitively sense authenticity when their leaders consistently place organizational or societal goals above their personal glory and even, if necessary, above their lives.

Accountability, authenticity's twin imperative, involves two obligations: first, to explain one's actions, and second, to be held responsible to a widening jury of stakeholders. Accountability means that a leader knows that every choice will be seriously scrutinized. Coupled with authenticity, accountability blocks unethical, irresponsible, or simply thoughtless action. In the Connective Era, a diverse set of constituents expects full disclosure, making accountability a *sine qua non*.

If this makes connective leaders sound like saints, that is rarely the case. Connective leaders can be as stubborn and ornery as anyone else. They can get angry. They can be totally exasperating, and at

times they may even be so infuriating that their constituents drive them out of the group. Generally, however, they more than make up for traits that are less than endearing by their capacity to lead in exciting, effective ways.

3. Building Community: The Politics of Commonalities

Connective leaders prefer the

Used in good faith for the benefit of the larger community, instrumental strategies can be extremely effective, particularly when dealing with the complex political realities of the Connective Era.

politics of commonalities to the politics of differences so frequently favored by traditional, divisive leaders. Connective leaders build a context of community in which the most diverse groups can enjoy a sense of belonging. In a world connected by technology but fragmented by the forces of diversity, connective leaders foster community, with everyone winning something at least some of the time. They create an environment in which individuals and groups representing the very broadest band of ideas and values can enjoy rewarding membership.

To encourage community requires leaders to take the very widest view of what is needed and of who needs what. It means forgoing competitive, zero-sum games, particularly against other leaders, where some must lose when others win. To build community in organizations, leaders must take a broadly inclusive, total-system view. This perspective ensures that

everyone's needs are reasonably met, if not simultaneously, then at least sequentially. Community must include even those passionately committed groups bound together by the most narrowly defined ideology, like the Trotskyites of an earlier epoch. To achieve this, connective leaders deliberately fashion a politics of commonalities that searches for similarities and common ground.

The complex issues generated by diverse groups, particularly those newly formed, frequently tear the connective tissue of organizations and societies. Only leaders who can assemble multiple and frequently changing coalitions rather than enduring elites will find the common ground within divisive issues. It is such leaders who can best repair the social membrane and regenerate community.

Leaders who can work effectively with other leaders—that is, with multiple networks of leaders—know the algorithm for developing community. Achieving community goals requires leaders who won't trip over their egos, who can resist seeking to become the leader of all leaders. An interdependent environment calls for leaders who can relate as peers to other leaders in other institutions worldwide.

One particularly intriguing aspect of connective leadership involves unexpected rapprochements with former adversaries, as well as with other nontraditional constituents. Connective leaders reach out to avowed foes to expand the touching points of their different agendas. Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin all stunned the world and confused their constituents by stepping across the inherited divides between themselves and their countries' sworn enemies. These actions risked Gorbachev's political career and

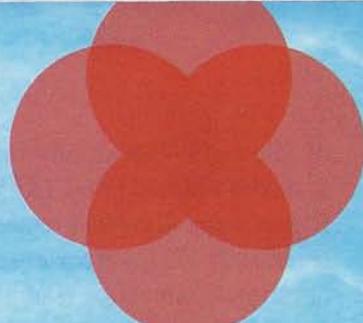
cost Sadat and Rabin their lives. With dramatic initiatives, each of these nascent connective leaders unexpectedly joined forces with former opponents to advance intersecting agendas.

Forging community is not easy. It demands altruism on the part of leaders themselves. Allowing room for the needs of others, sharing scarce resources, protecting alternatives for generations yet unborn, accepting critical challenges that may threaten the leader's place in history: all these require large quantities of character, not ego. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, connective leaders represent our last great hope for creating community.

4. Adopting a Long-Term Perspective

Despite the turbulent immediacy of the Connective Era, creating community also means taking a long-term view. Such a perspective is necessary to ensure that today's choices do not bar actions that may be required in the future by unanticipated events. Here we feel the rub of balance. Connective leaders need to commit themselves steadfastly to the long term, even when the envisioned future may unsettle the short-term arrangements of powerful community members. A future-oriented vision demands that the leader transcend his or her ego to ensure that the organization will prosper after the current leader has departed. Some observers feel that the responsibility for growing new leaders falls to existing leaders.

Our current traditional leaders, however, may be the least able to develop the necessary means of broad-based selection criteria and a strong succession mechanism. They are too frequently prone to selecting successors who are clones of themselves. They are also quite likely to scuttle any succession planning. The Disney presidency



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of Michael Ovitz, widely rumored to have foundered on CEO Michael Eisner's unwillingness to share leadership, raised precisely this question. Connective leaders do not fear their young; they nourish and groom them for leadership.

5. Leadership through Expectation: Entrusting, Enabling, and Ennobling

Connective leaders encourage the widest set of participants to join in the leadership process. They spread the burden of leadership and entrust responsibility to others, rather than commandeering the troops and micromanaging. They even entrust their visions to others

who they sense can expand the initial concept and grow in response to the challenge.

The connective leader's gift of trust, wrapped in the compliment of confidence, is usually reciprocated by the recipient through outstanding performance. Recipients of the leader's trust feel enabled. By these more subtle acts, connective leaders exercise leadership through expectation.

Leadership through expectation takes reasonable risks. Connective leaders are not blind to the rigors of learning and the time demands for growth. They know that new missions sometimes fail, so they

allow a moderate margin for failure. Connective leaders value the good near-miss. They provide the constant support that those entrusted with new challenges need if they are to hit the target the next time.

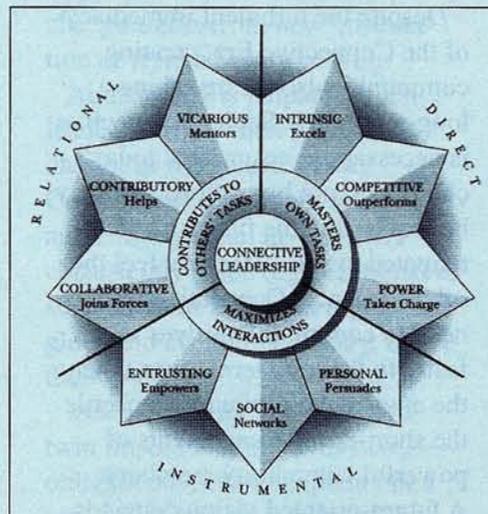
Leaders who stimulate conditions that allow others to ennoble themselves will find eager recruits and loyal supporters. Leaders who call supporters to dedicate themselves to important causes provide those constituents with a chance to ennoble themselves. That opportunity for self-transcendence is, for many, the greatest gift of all. It permits the largest expression of individualism in the Connective Era—an

THE CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

The Connective Leadership Model consists of three major sets of behavioral styles: direct, relational, and instrumental. Within each set are three achieving styles, or behavioral strategies, that individuals learn to use to accomplish their personal goals. Each of the nine styles includes a wide array of related behaviors.

People who prefer the direct set of behavioral styles tend to confront their own tasks individually and directly (hence the "direct" label). The three styles within the direct set emphasize deriving intrinsic satisfaction from mastering the task, outdoing others through competitive action, and using power to take charge and coordinate everyone and everything. These are the styles most closely linked to diversity and its various expressions of individualism.

People who prefer to work on group tasks or to help others attain their goals draw on behaviors described in the relational set. The three relational styles emphasize taking vicarious satisfaction from facilitating and observing the accomplishments of others, as mentors do; taking a secondary or contributory role to help others accomplish their tasks; and working in a collaborative mode on a group task. At



the individual level, these relational styles are analogous to the societal force described in the accompanying article as interdependence.

The instrumental set reflects those behaviors described in the accompanying article as denatured Machiavellianism. The political savvy embedded in the instrumental styles helps to diminish the sparks created by the friction between direct and relational behavior.

The three instrumental styles emphasize using one's personal strengths to attract supporters, creating and utilizing social networks and alliances, and entrusting various aspects of one's vision to others. Individuals who use themselves and others as instruments for accomplishing organizational goals prefer the instrumental styles.

No individual style is intrinsically better than any other. Rather, the purpose of the model is to identify leadership strategies based on achieving styles and to call attention to the wide range of behaviors available to all leaders. Those leaders who employ the broadest and most flexible leadership repertoire are most likely to meet the complex challenges of the Connective Era.

Connective leaders reach out to avowed foes to expand the touching points of their different agendas.

individualism that augments, rather than fragments, community.

These connective strategies, so clearly founded in ethical instrumental action, increase leadership strength at every level. They also develop leadership for the future.

6. Connective Leaders and the Search for Life's Meaning: The Personal Odyssey

Throughout human history, we have sought leaders. That endless quest is part of our larger search for the meaning of life. Living in the shadow of inevitable death colors everything we do. It drives us to seek security through gods, ideologies, and mortal leaders. It compels us to explore life's central meaning and to instill our own lives with more significance.

As we mature, the growing awareness of our mortality stimulates a commitment to broader, more altruistic goals through which we may symbolically transcend physical death. Undertaking life-expanding enterprises helps to obscure our fear of death. We turn to leaders to guide us through these complicated, life-enhancing challenges.

Most connective leaders, too, are embarked upon personal odysseys. They are committed to a life long search for a deeper understanding of themselves, their constituents, and the organizations they lead. They invite their constituents and other leaders to join the quest. Connective leaders dedicate themselves to larger purposes through which they can exceed their finite limitations and set extraordinary examples for others.

The result: the enterprises they lead afford supporters many opportunities to liberate their spirits.

By attracting supporters to challenging causes, connective leaders enable constituents to stretch themselves beyond their own expectations. By calling supporters to dedicate themselves to altruistic endeavors, to efforts to change their world for the better, connective leaders offer constituents the chance to make ennobling sacrifices. We saw Mahatma Gandhi, a nascent connective leader, summon both Hindus and Muslims to join in the crusade for India's independence. Later, we witnessed Martin Luther King, Jr., drawing other Black leaders into the search for equality. King then challenged the entire American nation to untie the noose of racial divisiveness.

Corporate leaders, too, have inspired employees to make serious sacrifices for a company's survival, as well as for the well-being of customers. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* recently described the near-death experience of the Pratt & Whitney aerospace plant in North Berwick, Maine. It was plant manager Robert Ponchak who pushed and prodded, implored and inspired employees to think lean, cut costs, and improve quality. As a result, Ponchak's plant has not only been spared the downsizing ax, but it has also won the Product Center Excellence Award for three consecutive years.⁵ Steven Jobs, co-founder of Apple Computer, galvanized his team of engineers and programmers to change the way the world used computers. He spurred them to design a computer small, inexpensive, and user-friendly enough to sit on virtually everyone's desk.

In the not-for-profit world, Bill Shore, president of the Washington, D.C.-based organization Share Our Strength, brings

poets, chefs, restaurateurs, and scientists together to eradicate hunger through multifaceted contributions. Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America, attracts teachers to commit two years of their lives to teaching in under-resourced schools in urban ghettos and rural areas.

In sum, connective leaders tame diversity and interdependence by marshaling the special qualities just described. They act with ethical, political savvy (i.e., denatured Machiavellianism), buttressed by authenticity and accountability. They build community through the politics of commonalities and a long-term perspective. They practice

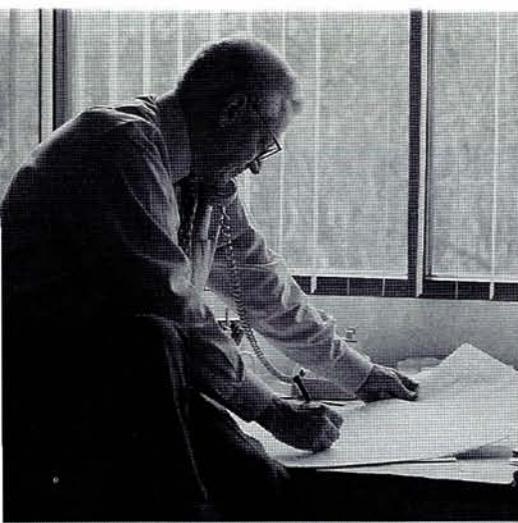
For contemporary leaders, the greatest danger is to remain caught in the quagmire of outdated leadership styles.

leadership through expectations in a way that entrusts, enables, and ennobles their constituents. Finally, they pursue life's deepest meaning on a personal odyssey that attracts supporters to broad, non-egoistic, life-enhancing enterprises. These are the overarching characteristics that distinguish connective leaders from their traditional predecessors.

THE PRAGMATICS OF CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP

To bring this leadership model down to a very pragmatic level, let's look at how we can assess our own connective leadership behavior. The concepts of ennobling ourselves and confronting our existential demons sound abstract and philosophical. Yet, the underlying

(continued on 38)



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(Connective continued from 19) behaviors required to engage in these and other aspects of connective leadership are drawn from our ordinary, everyday actions.

Early in childhood, we learn different behaviors for getting what we want. These behaviors become personal technologies for doing what we want to do, be it studying algebra or designing new aircraft. I call these behaviors "achieving styles."

The limited set of achieving styles that most of us use seems adequate until leadership roles prompt us to expand our repertoire. While most of us restrict ourselves to a much narrower slice of the behavioral pie, connective leaders continually broaden their leader-

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ship strategies [see sidebar on 18].

Research spanning more than half a century has demonstrated that leadership is not reducible to a set of inborn traits. Despite the greater natural leadership talent of some individuals, leadership expertise can be learned and expanded. Our own studies of more than 35,000 organizational leaders over more than two decades have convinced us that learning to be a connective leader is not only possible but absolutely necessary.⁶

Developing connective leadership ability is an innovative process. Adopting more effective personal technologies is similar to embracing any technical innovation. It requires exploring new per-

spectives, as well as loosening one's grasp on familiar technologies—in this case, traditional leadership behaviors.

In a world where diversity and interdependence pose serious threats for leaders, connective leadership brings an ethical instrumentalism to bear on the politics of human interaction. Still, it does not throw away everything else.

Indeed, it revitalizes traditional leadership behavior. Through principled deployment of political strategies, connective leaders harness individualism and teamwork.

For contemporary leaders, the greatest danger is to remain caught in the quagmire of outdated leadership styles. Leaders who do so risk missing the enormous strategic opportunities offered by the Connective Era. Of course, risk always keeps company with opportunity. To brave the storms of change, leaders must be bold enough to redefine the very terms of leadership. Accepting this challenge may be our last real chance for gaining the connective edge. ■

¹ A. S. Banks, T. C. Muller, S. M. Pelan, E. Tallman, and A. J. Day, eds., *Political Handbook of the World: 1993* (Binghamton, N. Y.: CSA Publications, State University of New York, 1993).

² V. Havel, "The New Measure of Man," *New York Times*, 8 July 1994, Op-Ed page.

³ In a less well-known work, *The Discourses*, Niccolò Machiavelli articulated a strong ethical and democratic prescription for leadership. He envisioned leaders who were devoted not to the selfish acquisition of political power, but to the community's well-being. Unfortunately, because the manipulative Machiavelli of *The Prince* is more widely read than the more principled Machiavelli of *The Discourses*, any action smacking of Machiavellianism continues to prompt revulsion.

⁴ R. K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); M. DePree, *Leadership Is An Art* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1989).

⁵ Joseph B. White, "How a Creaky Factory Got Off the Hit List, Won Respect at Last," *Wall Street Journal*, 26 December 1996, 1-2.

⁶ The instrument we used for measuring connective leadership profiles was the *L-BL Achieving Styles Inventory*, developed by the Achieving Styles Institute, Pasadena, California.