

# LEADER CHARACTER BLOGS 2019



**IVEY**

Ian O. Ihnatowycz  
Institute for Leadership

© Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership, 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or information retrieval systems – without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Leader Character Blogs

Original publication: <https://www.ivey.uwo.ca/leadership/for-leaders/leadership-blogs/>

Booklet prepared by the Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership, Ivey Business School, Western University.

Author: Gerard Seijts, Kimberley Young Milani

Editor: Kimberley Young Milani

Images: Getty Images

Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership

Ivey Business School

1255 Western Road

London, Canada N6G 0N1

Tel: 519.661.3890

E-mail: [leadership@ivey.ca](mailto:leadership@ivey.ca)

Web: [ivey.ca/leadership](http://ivey.ca/leadership)

You can read more about leader character in the book [Developing Leadership Character](#) written by Ivey Business School professors [Mary Crossan](#), [Gerard Seijts](#) and [Jeffrey Gandz](#) (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Accountability: Accepting responsibility, taking ownership .....	4
Collaboration: Being a piece of the greater whole .....	7
Courage: Grace under pressure .....	10
Drive: Striving for Success, Requiring Caution.....	13
Humanity: We are not independent but interdependent.....	16
Humility: Valuing everybody's contribution.....	19
Integrity: Walking the Talk.....	22
Judgement: Body-checking good judgment in Coach's Corner .....	25
Justice: The benefit of an evolved morality .....	29
Temperance: Your personal braking system .....	32
Transcendence: The expansive view.....	35

## Accountability: Accepting responsibility, taking ownership

© Sep 23, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the dimension of accountability. On September 17, 2018, Peter Simons, Chief Executive Officer and President of La Maison Simons, had just gotten off the phone with Beverley McLachlin, Canada's longest serving and first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. She was upset with the company's marketing campaign which featured a bra named after her called the "Beverley Bralette". She wanted an apology from Simons for the inappropriate use of her name and reputation without her knowledge or consent. Earlier in the month, Simons had approved the marketing campaign for a new line of bras that featured the first name of an iconic Canadian woman, with a one-line tagline on her life and legacy that was written next to a young model wearing the bra. The bras were supposed to be honouring women who had made historical contributions to Canada. After spending many months and considerable funding towards what was supposed to be the development of an inspirational women's lingerie line, Simons quickly found himself apologizing for one of the worst marketing campaigns that his company had ever produced.

"As president of La Maison Simons, I allowed the use of the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin's name to market one of our products without her permission or knowledge," Simons said. "This initiative was in poor taste, and I offer my heartfelt and sincerest apologies for this inappropriate use of Ms. McLachlin's name as well as that of the other women." "I take full responsibility," he said. "I made a mistake, and I sincerely do regret it," he said. "Since 1840, five generations of my family have aspired to build an organization that never wavers from our values of respect, empathy and responsibility to the communities we live in," Simons said. "Realizing my error, I have discontinued and destroyed all material related to this campaign. Our organization will be meeting to ensure that we learn from this incident."

Simons modeled accountability. When you are accountable, you accept responsibility for your decisions and actions – and you do so promptly. You personally engage with the salient, important, and challenging issues. You don't hide behind lawyers. You are willing to step up and take ownership of difficult decisions. You reliably deliver on expectations, and you can be counted upon in tough situations. You acknowledge these obligations as part of your leadership role.

Arkadi Kuhlmann, HBA '71, MBA '72, reminds us that there is no time-out in life. When I interviewed Arkadi for the book *Good Leaders Learn: Lessons from Lifetimes of Leadership*, he told me that: "What I've learned as a leader is that life is a blackboard that you cannot erase. Everything counts. There's no such thing as a time-out. There's no such thing as "it doesn't count." There's a blackboard and it'll never be erased." We write on the blackboard every day—and we're accountable for those writings.

Consider the most recent college-admissions scandal in the U.S. and the behaviour of celebrities Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin. Felicity Huffman admitted her guilt in the courtroom. She also issued a public apology in which she accepted full responsibility for her wrongful actions: "I am in full acceptance of my guilt, and with deep regret and shame over what I have done ... and will accept the consequences that stem from those actions." Loughlin refused to do the same; and in fact, reports indicate, she is outraged by people who are saying that she is a cheater.

John Furlong, the former CEO of the Vancouver Olympic Committee, played a key role in bringing the Olympics to his home city in 2010, logging more than 1.2 million miles on airplanes in a far-ranging international effort. In his book Patriot Hearts, he recounted a story of accountability rewarded. The quest started at the turn of the new millennium, with the critical vote scheduled to be held at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Prague in 2003. At one point on his quest to land the Olympics for Vancouver, Furlong decided that the time had come to write personal thank-you notes to all the members of the IOC with whom he had met. It was an arduous task that he wasn't looking forward to, but he finally forced himself to begin writing the letters during his endless succession of flights. As he recalls:

I carried the letters in batches in my briefcase. As I was working, the flight attendants knew what I was doing and they left me alone to write. I was getting fed up with my own words, my hand hurt, and I was tired when the attendant arrived with a tray of water, accidentally spilling the whole thing over me.

I wanted to throw her off the plane! She got towels, but the damage had been done. She was heartbroken.

I threw away a number of letters and started over. It was painful. But, after I had mailed them, and then started receiving phone calls from people who were so touched by the letters that they were going to support us, it meant a lot. Writing these letters was an important detail and every single detail matters. I had finished the task and it was a burden off my shoulders, but I didn't know for sure how it would play out. Then, of course, we won by three votes in Prague.

Here is the real lesson: We can choose to make the effort or not. Much of the time, I think we ignore what needs to be done and accept less than the very best. I tried with the Games not to allow anyone to do that.

We've all been there: looking for a rationalization as to why we can't, or won't, or shouldn't be held accountable. Furlong had a ready-made excuse, when the flight attendant dumped a tray of water on his work: "Hey, I tried; but it clearly wasn't meant to be. I'll find some other way to follow up with those IOC members." Accountability may reside in the small details: the letters written over, painfully. But it may ultimately manifest itself in the three votes that change the course of sports history. Don't cut a corner, advises John Furlong—not now, not ever! Make the effort. Do what you know needs to be done, even if no one else will know what you did or didn't do. Because, ultimately, you will know.

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

## Collaboration: Being a piece of the greater whole

© Oct 10, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the leader character dimension of collaboration. Effective leaders must be capable of collaborating with others both inside and outside their organizations. Beyond this, leaders must be constantly striving to create collaborative networks and relationships that can be developed and mined to support creativity, innovation, and productivity to drive their organization's interests, as well as the common good.

Leaders who are unwilling or unable to collaborate with others—whether in formal teams, looser working groups or committees, trade associations, business government panels or myriad other contexts—are of limited value in our increasingly interdependent world where networks of people and organizations form the basis of so much economic activity. A deep, visceral, and intellectual understanding of the nature of interconnectedness, in combination with the development of a disposition to collaborate for mutual interest and the greater good, are critical to becoming and being an effective leader in a wide variety of contexts.

Legendary investor Warren Buffet offered an interesting perspective on interconnectedness when he observed that “someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.” But even if we agree with Buffett that we are interconnected—over time, and in real time at school and in the workplace—that agreement doesn’t necessarily bring about collaboration.

So what do we mean by collaboration? When you are collaborative, you value and actively support the development and maintenance of positive relationships among people. You encourage open dialogue and don’t react defensively when challenged. You are able to connect with others at a fundamental level in a way that fosters the productive sharing of ideas. And finally, you recognize that what happens to someone, somewhere, can affect everyone, anywhere.

Hollywood presented a sentimentalized version of some of these elements of collaboration in the 2005 drama *Coach Carter*. In the film, members of a basketball team—after watching their weakest player be humiliated by a stern coach (played by the formidable Samuel L. Jackson)—stepped forward to do the sprints and push-ups that their exhausted team member simply couldn’t do. “You said we’re a team,” said one of the athletes, explaining their action. “One person struggles, we all struggle. One person triumphs, we all triumph.”

That scene may have been polished to a high gloss, but the real world sometimes presents similar lessons. The 2014 Canadian women’s Olympic hockey team exemplified what great teamwork looks like. Before the team went to Sochi, they had made special gold necklaces that each team member wore throughout the games. The necklaces were puzzle piece shaped. Every four pieces joined together to make a square. On each necklace was written: “Unity in Adversity.” The women worked as a team and realized that they were each a piece of a greater whole. As Chantal Bechervaise wrote: “That is how everyone in the workplace should see themselves ... that they each form a piece of a greater whole and that each person is contributing to the overall success of the company. We are stronger, more innovative, and creative, and can accomplish more as a team than we can individually.”

George Cope— former president and CEO of Bell Canada Enterprises Inc. and Bell Canada—Canada’s largest telecommunications company—draws a similar lesson from the career of hockey legend Wayne Gretzky, who won four Stanley Cup championships with the Edmonton Oilers between 1984 and 1988:

I’m a sports junkie, and I find it interesting that the Edmonton Oilers won the Stanley Cup after Wayne Gretzky left, but Wayne Gretzky never won the Stanley Cup again after he left. That was a profound lesson for me. Gretzky is the best hockey player the world has ever seen, but he never won the cup without that team. There’s no individual who’s bigger than the team. It’s always about the team.



Cope is underscoring the fact that the end product—in this case, a Stanley Cup—requires the whole team to work together. A team will not reach its full collaborative potential if the participants, and especially its leaders, don't believe deeply that collaboration is essential for success.

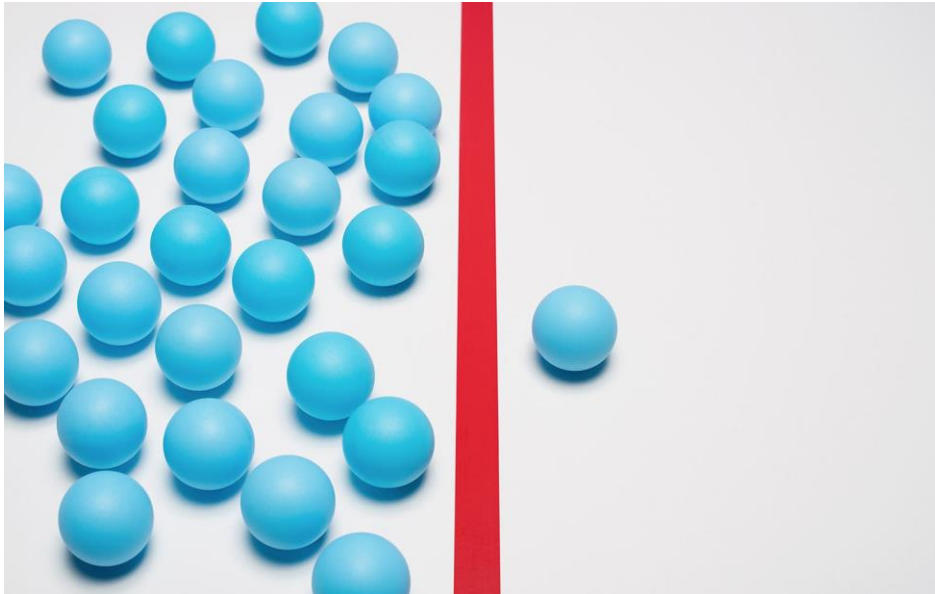
These examples illustrate the following key lessons: Being collaborative requires being open-minded and flexible, otherwise, you are simply asserting your own point of view.

- Being interconnected fosters collegiality and cooperation since you more readily acknowledge and appreciate other perspectives.
- Being interconnected also allows us to remain receptive and open-minded when others challenge our thinking.
- Collegiality and being open-minded facilitates cooperation.

Further, having worked at the Ivey Business School for almost two decades, it has never been more clear to me that success depends on the compassion, empathy and respect you show towards your fellow students; the courage to call out unacceptable behaviour; your sense of justice to act equitably and fairly; and your ability to engage in true collaboration, devoid of exclusion or stereotyping. [An excellent example of integrity and collaboration is Patrick Hickey, HBA '19.](#) Patrick briefly explains the importance of collaboration in this short video.

# Courage: Grace under pressure

© Oct 1, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the dimension of courage. Individuals with courage do the right thing even though it may be unpopular, actively discouraged, or result in a negative outcome for them. They show an unrelenting determination, confidence, and perseverance in confronting difficult situations, and they rebound quickly from setbacks. [Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela](#) became a symbol of courage for almost everyone. [Malala Yousafzai](#) is a name that is synonymous with courage. At a young age, she realized that education is essential for girls and women. She became an activist for female education and began to speak out against suppression in her homeland – Pakistan. She was shot by a Taliban gunman in 2012. She survived and went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. [Greta Thunberg](#), 16 years old, from Sweden, has been making headlines since 2018 when she took time off school in order to raise global awareness of the problems posed by climate change. Since then, Thunberg has inspired thousands of people to join her, collecting numerous accolades for her courageous attitude and countless public appearances during which holds politicians to account for their lack of action on the climate crisis.

What happens to an organization when the people within it show courage? Decisions are made despite uncertainty. There is opposition to

counterproductive behavior and bad decisions. Politics and bureaucracy wither; innovation thrives. Adam Silver, the commissioner of the National Basketball Association, has shown a commitment to using the power of sport to effect change beyond the basketball arena. For example, just two months into his position he penalized then-Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling with an NBA-maximum \$2.5 million fine and a lifetime ban. Sterling was caught on tape making racist comments. Silver is committed to building a diverse and inclusive league for staff, players and fans alike. [NBA reporter Ramona Shelburne discussed how Silvers actions facilitated an entirely new culture between owners and players.](#)

Conversely, what happens to an organization when people lack courage? People tend to “go with the flow”—even when the flow is based on bad decisions and headed in a bad direction. A kind of muteness prevails as people understand that the contrarian view is not welcome. The two fatal accidents of Boeing 737 Max jets provides a compelling illustration. The [New York Times](#) reported that workers in one of the plants were pushed to maintain an overly ambitious production schedule and fearful of losing their jobs if they raised concerns. [Harvard professor Amy Edmondson explained that this is a textbook case of how the absence of psychological safety — the assurance that one can speak up, offer ideas, point out problems, or deliver bad news without fear of retribution — can lead to disastrous results.](#)

American novelist and short-story writer Ernest Hemingway defined courage as “grace under pressure.” The compelling thing about that definition is that it brings together both the actor and the act. A leader who provides true meaning to Hemingway’s definition of courage is New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Arden. She showed tremendous courage by exhibiting compassion and vulnerability as well as openness in communication in the aftermath of an unspeakable act of violence. On March 15, 2019, over 50 people were massacred at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, by a suspected white supremacist.

Arden lead her country with humanity and resolve. [Images of Arden in a headscarf were picked up internationally and have come to symbolise her leadership in the aftermath.](#) People observed that “her poise, her steely resolve and most importantly her language of inclusiveness and diversity was admirable.” [She reassured the country’s migrant communities that “New Zealand is their home — they are us.”](#) And she told U.S. President Donald Trump that the only thing she needed from him was “sympathy and love for all Muslim communities.”

Arden called for swift changes to the nation’s gun laws. Her determination to tighten gun laws amounts to a bold political move in a country where acquiring a semi-automatic weapon is relatively easy. [Arden articulated that the tragedy serves as a transformative moment – “Now is the time for change.”](#)

New Zealand journalist Sam Sachdeva said the tragedy allowed the Arden's "clarity and decisiveness" to come to the fore, while the New Zealand Herald described her leadership as displaying "solace and steel". [The Crisis magazine, the publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the US, tweeted of Arden: "Grace. Dignity. Courage ... Real leaders do exist."](#)

There will be moments in your personal and professional lives when you have to choose whether to be silent or to stand up. Courage has always been important to the effective functioning of individuals, teams, organizations, and societies. But I think we can all come up with at least five reasons why courage is more important than ever before in today's world. [Yet leading with courage is difficult and requires vulnerability.](#)

I urge you to reflect on three questions. First, can you think of situations in the past where you did not, in retrospect, match up to your own standards of courage? What stopped you from doing so? What did you learn from those incidents? Second, what acts of courage have you seen in your personal and / or professional lives? What forces acted on those people to influence their actions? What did you learn from those people? Third, how can you encourage those whom you work with to be courageous in their actions?

[I invite you to watch a short video of Mona Malone HBA '94, Chief Human Resources Officer and Head of People & Culture, BMO Financial Group, in which she reflects on the importance of courage in managing your career.](#)

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

# Drive: Striving for Success, Requiring Caution

© Nov 18, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the leader character dimension of drive. If you have drive, you strive for excellence. You have a strong desire to succeed, you tackle problems with a sense of urgency, and you approach challenges with energy and passion. Drive arises from an internal, positive wellspring of energy that can be harnessed and put to good use.

One individual who has demonstrated drive in a business leadership position is Jack Ma Yun, the recently retired executive chairman of Alibaba. The e-commerce giant is celebrated today as one of China's biggest companies. But it was no easy climb to the top. At the end of the 20th century, Ma, originally an English teacher from Hangzhou who had tried and failed to start a Chinese version of the Yellow Pages, became convinced that the internet would "level the playing field," and enable small companies to compete successfully in a business-to-business marketplace.

In 1999, along with 17 like-minded colleagues, he founded the web-based Alibaba to test that vision. In subsequent years, Ma's overtures to potential backers in Silicon

Valley were rejected more than 30 times, until he finally secured a billion-dollar investment from Yahoo in 2005. “Once you meet an entrepreneur like Jack Ma,” Yahoo’s Jerry Yang said, “you just want to make sure you bet on him. It’s not a hard decision.” Drive, no doubt, played a major role in Yang’s assessment of Ma.

When Alibaba held its initial U.S. public offering in September 2014, it raised an astonishing \$25 billion—the biggest IPO ever, anywhere. And for good reason: In 2013, two of the company’s websites registered a combined \$240 billion in sales: *twice* Amazon’s volume, and *three times* that of eBay. More than 60 percent of the packages delivered in China today originate from one of Alibaba’s websites.

As Ma once confessed to an audience in Hong Kong, he never thought he would be the head of one of the world’s most dynamic companies—nor did he anticipate how difficult the journey would be to earn that distinction. It was drive that helped Ma overcome his obstacles and reach the top. It was also drive—that internal wellspring of positive energy—that helped Ma continue to expand his vision, year by year, even as his original dreams were being realized.

What many people may not know is that Ma is a true rags-to-riches story. He grew up poor in communist China, failed his college entrance exam twice, and was rejected from dozens of jobs, including one at KFC, before finding success with his third internet company, Alibaba.

Successful business leaders such as Mary Barra, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos also emerged as individuals who have astounding drive. At the Ivey Business School we have seen and heard from leaders who demonstrated exceptional drive. Yvonne Camus is a former H. J. Heinz executive vice president who participated in the 2000 Eco-Challenge Adventure Race in Borneo: a grueling 500-kilometer race through the jungle that had to be completed within twelve days. Jeremiah Brown shared his story from becoming a young parent while studying business at McMaster University, to moving across the country to British Columbia to pursue his Olympic dream. And we heard the inspiring story of Beverley McLachlin who despite myriad challenges became the first and only woman to be Chief Justice of Canada as well as the country’s longest-serving Chief Justice.

In business, as well as at the Ivey Business School, we encounter many individuals with high drive. However, drive without the support of the other dimensions of leader character, is a cautionary tale. Drive alone can lead to aimless, reckless and/or manic activity. At its worst, it can be undirected, unfocused energy that feeds on itself—constantly requiring additional physical and emotional investment to sustain it. Here is how drive manifests when unsupported:

- *Drive without integrity:* we can often find ourselves moving down a path that does not align with our core values and alienates people as a result of poor interpersonal relationships.

- *Drive without humanity:* High drive combined with a lack of humanity can prevent us from behaving personably or with a lack of compassion. In an organizational sense, we may then be willing to pursue our goals at any cost, without considering the implications on our ability to act with empathy. Remember famed conductor Terence Fletcher from the movie *Whiplash*? He is excessively harsh on his students to achieve both personal success and develop his students so that they might become famous jazz musicians.
- *Drive without collaboration:* Individuals who have high levels of drive may give short shrift to collaboration. They may simply take over projects or deliverables because they want to “get things done ... now.” But this is perilous. Without collaboration we are unable to build humanity, and often take on more than we can handle.
- *Drive without justice:* If individuals demonstrate high drive but lack a sense of justice, they may behave inequitably towards others in order to achieve individual or organizational goals. Followership may be sacrificed. Resentment—or worse—may result.
- *Drive without temperance:* Like collaboration, temperance may be imperiled in individuals with high drive. They may take on more than a healthy amount of work, and, as a result, may quickly lose patience with others and be unwilling to see other perspectives.
- *Drive without humility:* In high-drive individuals, humility is critically important to understanding our leadership character and weaknesses or strengths in the other dimensions. Self-reflection and awareness help keep our drive in check. Without humility, high drive individuals may not see the error in their processes, to the point where it becomes mentally damaging, and could lead to excessive or very low courage.

So I hope you reflect on your behaviour and leadership and consider the following question: Is my drive controlled and exercised with good judgment, so that it does not overwhelm other important dimensions of character, such as collaboration, humanity, humility, justice and temperance?

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

# Humanity: We are not independent but interdependent

© Oct 17, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the dimension of humanity.

Chris Abani is a novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter, and playwright who grew up in Afikpo, Nigeria in the 1980s. He and many others in his age cohort were determined to bring down the military dictatorship that then ruled the country. Imprisoned three times by the Nigerian government, he transformed his harrowing experiences into a series of powerful novels, including *GraceLand* and *The Virgin of Flames*.

“What I’ve come to learn is that the world is never saved in grand, messianic gestures,” he told a [TED conference in Monterey, California, in February 2008](#), “but in a simple accumulation of gentle, soft, almost invisible, everyday acts of compassion.”



He discussed “Ubuntu”—a concept of the South African Nguni Bantu people—which translates literally into “human kindness,” but more generally refers to a sense that all humanity is joined by a universal bond of sharing and reciprocity. There is no way for us to be human, Abani argued, without relating to other people: “The only way for me to be human is for you to reflect my humanity back at me.”

So what do we mean by humanity? Individuals who exhibit humanity empathize with and support colleagues. Having empathy means you have the capacity to deeply understand what others are going through because you can place yourself in their shoes. You ask people what they need, offer encouragement, and check in. For leaders, this also means promoting an environment where this type of team bonding and communication is encouraged and valued. You have a capacity to forgive, and not hold grudges. You understand that people are fallible, and you offer opportunities for individuals to learn from their mistakes.

In 2011, Martin Pistorius—the author of *Ghost Boy*, who was trapped in his body with a neurological disorder for a decade—wrote about what he had learned from the experience. As he was returning to consciousness, he was aware of others; however, those around him assumed he had no awareness. The exception was his massage therapist, who always spoke to him as if he was aware—and, perhaps not coincidentally, was the first to sense he was responding.

Being unable to respond and yet still aware of others taught Pistorius a lot about humanity. “I think being seen and having another person validate your existence is incredibly important,” he explained, “not just for me in that moment, but for everyone. In a sense it makes you feel like you matter.”

These two stories illuminate the importance of humanity. It needs to be honoured and exercised in our personal lives, in the workplace, and in society. An example of an organization that learned to appreciate the importance of behaviours associated with humanity is Google, an organization dominated with engineers (who don’t always appreciate the importance of management and leadership). [In 2008, an internal team of researchers launched Project Oxygen – a data driven effort to determine what makes a leader great at Google.](#) Through this research, the team identified a number of human-first behaviours (behaviours that are rooted in and display a sense of humanity) that make for highly effective leaders. As a result, Google has been working to create and foster a culture driven by these behaviours. Examples of behaviours rooted in humanity include:

- Creating an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and well-being
- Being a good communicator — listening and sharing information
- Being a good coach

A remarkable finding was that technical skills came in last. And so the researchers concluded that while it is important that managers have the needed technical level to guide employees, human-centered skills such as creating an inclusive team environment and communication are absolutely essential.

But here's the rub. Recent research revealed that college students who hit campus after 2000 have empathy levels that are 40 percent lower than those who came before them. For example, more students than ever before say it's not their problem to help people in trouble, not their job to see the world from someone else's perspective. Another survey found that people also think that others around them are less compassionate. So what can be done about what former President Barack Obama labeled the "[empathy deficit](#)"? The key thing is to recognize the value of relationships and the fact that we are not independent but interdependent. We all need each other. I hope you take this lesson to heart as you continue on your leadership journey. [In this short clip, Franca Gucciardi, CEO, McCall MacBain Foundation, provides a compelling example how to make humanity and empathy come alive through our actions.](#)

# Humility: Valuing everybody's contribution

© Oct 24, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the dimension of humility. It is easy to think of situations where strong egos have contributed to the success of individuals and the organizations they lead. Examples include Steve Jobs at Apple, Jamie Dimon at JP Morgan, and Arianna Huffington, author, syndicated columnist, and businesswoman. But, sadly, there are also many examples in which outsized, uncontrolled egos have gotten leaders into trouble, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. At that time, an abundance of stories circulated about ego-driven CEOs and executive teams whose actions prior to the meltdown put their organizations, shareholders, and indeed the global economy at risk.

History has shown us time and again that without some measure of humility, leaders can fail through overconfidence, arrogance and hubris. But what exactly do we mean by humility?

Humble people let their accomplishments speak for themselves. They acknowledge limitations, understand the importance of thoughtful examination of their opinions and ideas, and embrace opportunities for personal growth and development. They don't consider themselves to be more important or special than anyone else. They are respectful, and understand and appreciate the strengths and contributions of

others. And finally, humility is the key to continuous learning; for without it, people aren't driven to seek out new knowledge or education, feeling that they already know enough, or worse, know it all. This perspective was well articulated by Andy Grove, one of the founders of Intel, in his biography [Only the Paranoid Survive](#). Grove was not paranoid but he surely understood that in the fast moving tech world, arrogance, hubris or any sense of invulnerability would surely lead to downfall.

I had the privilege of meeting Narayana Murthy, former CEO and executive chairman of Infosys Limited, a global software consulting company headquartered in Bangalore, India, when I did the research for my book *Good Leaders Learn: Lessons from Lifetimes of Leadership*. Murthy cofounded the company in 1981, ran it as CEO until 2002, and served on its board until 2014. Infosys was, and is, an astounding business success story. Infosys invented the delivery model that led to India's establishment as the global center for IT services outsourcing. Murthy is extraordinarily accomplished – and celebrated – in his own right.

Murthy told me there is one thing he does without fail every night when he returns home—away from the fanfare, hoopla, awards, deference, and power. [He makes a point of helping clean the bathrooms at his home](#). Why does he pick up a toilet brush? Taking a lesson from Gandhi, he tries to perform tasks that might be considered beneath his elevated station in life—as a reminder that all contributions to society should be valued. "In the corporate context," he says, "it shows that you have respect for everybody's contribution." Murthy believes that sustainable success requires CEOs to recognize that there are people who are smarter than they are, and who—given the chance—can do things better. "Once you have that humility," he explains, "once you have that openness of mind, even when you are doing well, it is possible to learn from people who are doing better than you both within the organization and outside the organization."

But simply recognizing that you can benefit from other people's honest opinions isn't enough, Murthy explained, because most employees won't risk disagreeing with the boss. As a result, the biggest challenge a leader has is to create channels for feedback and keep them open. "The day a leader closes those feedback channels," he says, "is the day when a leader's power starts diminishing and he or she starts doing things that are completely wrong."

[One of the all-time most watched videos on TED.com documents a talk given in 2010 at TEDx Houston by researcher and author Brené Brown](#). She argued that healthy and happy people—people she defined as "wholehearted"—have four key attributes: the courage to be imperfect, the compassion to be kind to themselves and to others, and connection with others, as a result of authenticity. "They were willing to let go of who they should be," she told her audience, "in order to be who they were."

We are imperfect, says Brown, and we are wired for struggle, and we are worthy of love and belonging. But we have to let ourselves be “seen”—deeply seen. We have to practice gratitude. We have to stop yelling, and start listening.

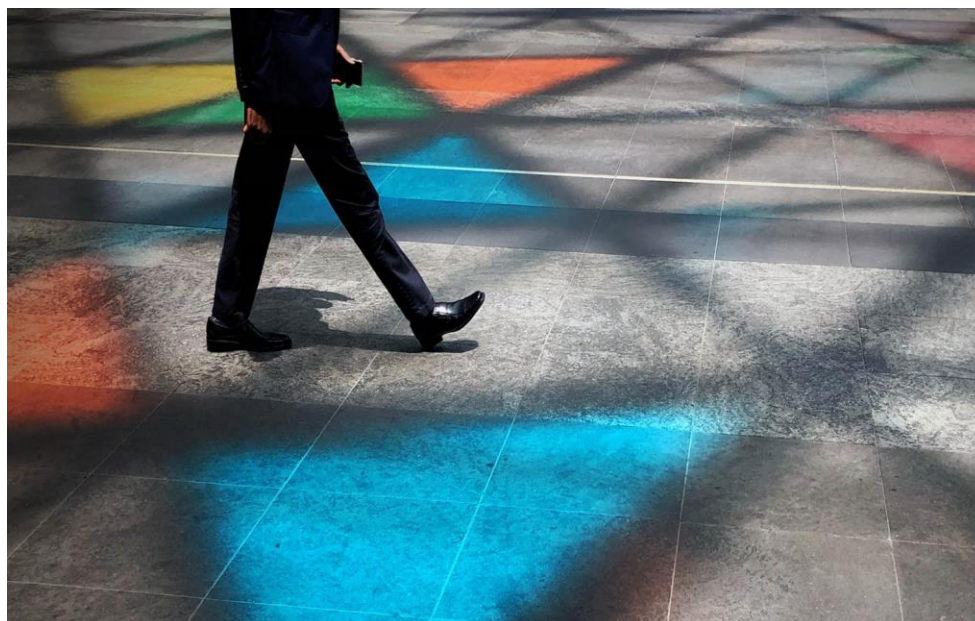
Nowhere in her talk did Brown use the word “humility.” But it is the implicit undertone in all that she advocates: listening, learning, showing respect, being vulnerable, acknowledging and accepting imperfection. “There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man,” Ernest Hemingway once wrote. “True nobility is being superior to your former self.”

Humility is as critical for leadership positions in the public, private, and not for profit sectors as it is during your time at the Ivey Business School. [Please take a minute to watch Barbara Stymiest HBA '78 elegantly explain why she believes fulfilling the role of leader requires humility.](#)

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

## Integrity: Walking the Talk

© Sep 9, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the leader character dimension of integrity. When we refer to a building's structural integrity, we are talking about the ability of that building to hold itself together under a load—including the load of its own weight—without collapsing. Personal integrity shares a fundamental quality with structural integrity: It can't come and go. It has to be there whether people are looking or not or you risk a calamity. So, what do we mean by personal integrity? People with integrity hold themselves to a high moral standard and behave consistently with ethical standards, even in difficult situations. They walk the talk. Integrity is about bringing the organization's values to life through your own behaviour. It's about refraining from asking others to do things that are morally objectionable—and calling others out when they stray. Integrity is about being honest and transparent in your actions.

Let's look at an example of integrity in action.

In June 2013, public allegations surfaced regarding a series of unacceptable behaviours by active members of the Australian Army. Allegedly, a group of officers had produced and distributed material that demeaned women, using both

Department of Defence computer systems and the internet. The members of this group secretly photographed themselves having sex with women, and then emailed those photos to a variety of recipients.

In addition to the content of the revelations, their timing was horrendous. Only three months earlier, the Australian Army had launched a new campaign to recruit more women soldiers. A great deal of work had gone into making the army more female and family friendly. Now, all that work was in jeopardy.

A key player in that effort of institutional transformation had been Chief of Army and Lieutenant General David Morrison, a second-generation Australian Army officer whose father had distinguished himself both in Korea and Vietnam. Morrison had joined the army in 1979, rising steadily through the ranks over the ensuing three decades. Personable, businesslike, and forthright, “straight-shooter” was the phrase most often used to describe him. “He’s got integrity a mile deep,” as one of his former commanders put it, and he “calls it like it is.”

What did Morrison do when he was confronted with allegations of sordid and criminal behaviour in the ranks below him—allegations that, if true, would strike at the heart of the army he was trying to build? First, he held a press conference. “It’s on me,” he told the assembled reporters—and by extension, the nation. “I’m responsible for this. I’m the chief of the Australian Army. The culture of the army is in my hands during my tenure, and I am doing as much as I possibly can to improve it.”

Then he went on TV. Staring directly at the camera, he delivered a three-minute, straight-from-the-heart statement. First he spoke to his fellow Australians, assuring them that the alleged misdeeds were in direct contravention to every value that his army stood for. Then he spoke directly to the perpetrators, and any sympathizers they might have. [The video went viral.](#)

Those who think that that it’s OK to behave in a way that demeans or exploits their colleagues have no place in this army . . . If that does not suit you, then get out. You may find another employer where your attitude and behaviour is acceptable, but I doubt it. The same goes for those who think that toughness is built on humiliating others. Every one of us is responsible for the culture and reputation of our army, and the environment in which we work. If you become aware of any individual degrading another, then show moral courage and take a stand against it . . .

I will be ruthless in ridding the army of people who cannot live up to its values. And I need every one of you to support me in achieving this. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. That goes for all of us, but especially those who by their rank have a leadership role . . . If you’re not up to it, find something else to do with your life. There is no place for you amongst this band of brothers and sisters.

I want to underscore a core message, well stated by Morrison: “The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.” Integrity is about not walking past an unacceptable standard. Integrity is about being authentic, candid, transparent, principled, and consistent. It is about owning the problem. It is about setting and communicating the right standard. This is what we expect from HBAs at Ivey and their future careers. An excellent example is Pat Horgan, MBA ‘82. [Pat explains](#) how his integrity has helped him through his long and distinguished career at IBM.



IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

## Judgement: Body-checking good judgment in Coach's Corner

© Nov 22, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the dimension of judgment. Judgment is at the very heart of the constellation of the character dimensions. When you have good judgment, you make sound decisions in a timely manner, based on relevant information and a critical analysis of the facts. You appreciate and integrate the broader context when reaching decisions. You show flexibility when confronted with new information or situations, and you have an implicit sense of the best way to proceed. You can see into the very depth of challenging issues, and you can reason effectively in uncertain or ambiguous situations.

Years ago, in a Harvard Business Review [article](#), Noel Tichy and the late Warren Bennis wrote that “Any leader’s most important role in any organization is making good judgments—well informed, wise decisions that produce desired outcomes. When a leader shows consistently good judgment, little else matters. When he or she shows poor judgment, nothing else matters.” The most recent uproar involving

Don Cherry shows the importance of good judgment and how its lack can quickly land people in hot water.

Don Cherry is a Canadian hockey commentator, sports writer, as well as a retired professional hockey player and National Hockey League coach. Cherry co-hosted a segment called *Coach's Corner* that was a staple feature of CBC's iconic Saturday-night NHL broadcast *Hockey Night in Canada* from 1986 until November 9, 2019. During the November 9<sup>th</sup> segment, while attempting to remind viewers of the importance of Remembrance Day, Cherry proceeded to accuse immigrants of not honouring the sacrifice – in life and in death – of Canada's troops. Apparently, in Cherry's maple-syrup coated, imaginary world, all homegrown Canadian citizens wear Remembrance Day poppies. Furthermore, he posited that this poppy-less *habillé* signals a newcomer's lack of commitment to the Canadian way of life and an insufficient level of indebtedness for the *dolce vita* they have been gifted by their new country. "You people love ... you that come here ... you love our way of life ... you love our milk and honey ... at least you could pay a couple bucks for a poppy or something like that ... these guys paid for your way of life that you enjoy in Canada ... these guys paid the biggest price," he ranted.

Die-hard Don Cherry fans are not misguided to be passionate about supporting an individual's right to free expression. But what they fail to understand is that employers need to be equally passionate about ensuring employees espouse their organization's values when engaging in public discourse. And that's why Sportsnet, the producer of *Hockey Night in Canada*, felt compelled to fire the flamboyant broadcaster on November 11<sup>th</sup> after he refused to apologize for making xenophobic comments on his long-running segment. Bart Yabsley, the president of Sportsnet, released a written statement on November 10<sup>th</sup> in which he stated: "Don's discriminatory comments are offensive and they do not represent our values and what we stand for as a network."

Cherry insists he lost his job due to overly sensitive ears. "I know what I said, and I meant it. Everybody in Canada should wear a poppy to honour our fallen soldiers," he told the Toronto Sun after being fired. Cherry played victim again on Fox News, telling Tucker Carlson that the silent majority—including police, soldiers and firefighters (because apparently, they are also homogeneous in their views and opinions)—understands why everybody should wear poppies. But that's not what he said. Indeed, regardless of what the former Boston Bruins coach meant, the words he used came across as a racist diatribe.

As Globe and Mail columnist Cathal Kelly noted, Cherry's career was made out of his willingness to say controversial things. Cherry had been in hot water many times before, which is why his son once noted that even some fans were "waiting for the train wreck. They're waiting for him to say something that'll be the end of him."

That said, it is important to note that Cherry wasn't fired for being politically incorrect. He was fired for using poor judgment—twice—while serving as a high-profile corporate personality, not to mention a role model for Canada's future leaders.

Simply put, Cherry's lack of temperance and selective empathy led him to imply that immigrants are a uniform group that don't respect our soldiers as much home-made Canadians. And when faced with the genuine hurt that his words caused—intentionally or not—Cherry's lack of humility prevented him from being accountable. Instead of offering an apology, he tried to justify his offensive comments. In other words, unlike his co-host Ron McLean, who apologized for remaining silent during the rant, Cherry doubled down on poor judgement.

According to Cherry, he could have kept his job, but only by agreeing to become “a tame robot who nobody would recognize.” But apologizing for offending others isn't robotic. It is a humble, courageous and human thing to do, not to mention highly recognizable as a required behaviour for good leaders and representatives. Ironically, for a person and personality like Don Cherry, apologizing would have shown the kind of courage he so passionately admires in the women and men of our Canadian Forces.

Certainly, judgment on its own provides critical thinking, but without the insight that arises from the other aforementioned character dimensions, it may be misdirected. For example, without justice or accountability, you can quickly become detached from the issues you are analyzing. Hence, when all of character dimensions are present and active, they serve to balance each other, ensuring an individual's decision-making is:

1. Situationally aware: You demonstrate an appreciation for unique circumstances that may dictate unique approaches.
2. Cognitively complex: You analyze, make clear sense, and draw sound conclusions in uncertain, complex, and ambiguous circumstances.
3. Analytical: You skillfully analyze situations, and employ logical reasoning.
4. Decisive: You make astute, level-headed decisions in a timely way, and you show clear-sighted discernment of what is required in a given situation.
5. Skilled at critical thinking: You apply sound analysis and logical reasoning to evaluate ideas, decisions, and outcomes.
6. Intuitive: You understand things without an apparent need for conscious reasoning.
7. Insightful: You grasp the essence of situations, and see into the heart of challenging issues.
8. Pragmatic: You understand, develop, and implement workable solutions under varied circumstances.
9. Adaptable: You modify plans, decisions, and actions to adjust to new conditions. This has both personal and business implications.

But when some of the character dimensions are lacking, decision making has a high likelihood of being negatively impacted. Being a courageous and outspoken individual doesn't make Cherry a bad person, but when combined with his lack of humility and humanity, alongside selective empathy, the result is an inability to be situationally aware or develop the filter required to choose words wisely.

The Honourable Perrin Beatty recently delivered the annual Thomas d'Aquino Lecture on Leadership at the Ivey Business School. His presentation was entitled "Canada Adrift in a World without Leaders." But the title was somewhat misleading because, as Beatty noted, there is no shortage of leaders either in Canada or on the global stage. The issue is whether the quality of leadership we see is up to the existential challenges that confront humanity.

One of the challenges Beatty identified is "the rise of dangerous xenophobic movements that regard engagement with the world not as an opportunity, but as a threat." And so, with all due respect to Cherry's contributions to the game of hockey, his hubris and lack of judgment isn't something any organization worthy of respect should tolerate.

I encourage you to [watch a short clip by my former colleague, Professor Emeritus Jeffrey Gandz](#), in which he reflects on an error he made – an error rooted in his lack of judgment – that eventually led to his firing from a job.

The challenge for leaders – upcoming and seasoned – is straightforward. Think of one or more judgment calls that you or someone you know had to make. What factors entered into the decisions? What made them right or wrong? What did you learn? How will the lessons embedded in the decisions help you to become a better leader?

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

# Justice: The benefit of an evolved morality

© Nov 11, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the leader character dimension of justice.

Leaders who are committed to justice ensure that individuals are treated fairly and that consequences are commensurate with contributions. They remain objective and keep personal biases to a minimum when making decisions. Further, they provide others with the opportunity to voice their opinions on processes and procedures. Leaders provide timely, specific, and candid explanations for the decisions they made. And, lastly, they seek to redress wrongdoings inside and outside the organization or in society as a whole.

Although justice and injustice play out in many arenas in today's world, one longstanding and enduring area is gender inequality. In our Western society, stark injustices are easily identified and no longer deemed acceptable (even though they persist) – such as domestic and sexual violence, harassment in the workplace or even income/pay inequality. And yet, there are ongoing daily acts or transgressions, often perpetrated and perpetuated unconsciously, that continue to undermine women's experience of the world as just and fair.

Serena Williams is arguably the greatest female tennis player of all time. There can be little doubt that she redefined women's tennis with her power, athleticism, and skill. Williams has also spoken out repeatedly when confronted with what she perceives as injustice, both on and off the tennis court. One of her most memorable incidents occurred during and after the 2018 U.S. Open final. when Williams declared there is a double standard for men and women regarding on-court decorum. Williams was given a third violation in the final for berating the umpire and calling him a thief for a one-point deduction. As Williams put it in her post-match interview: "I've seen other men call other umpires several things. I'm here fighting for women's rights and for women's equality and for all kinds of stuff ... He has never taken a game from a man because they said thief." Legendary professional tennis player Billie Jean King, who is an advocate for gender equality and social justice, thanked Williams via social media for making the overdue point, tweeting: "When a woman is emotional, she's 'hysterical' and she's penalized for it. When a man does the same, he's 'outspoken' & there are no repercussions. Thank you, @serenawilliams, for calling out this double standard. More voices are needed to do the same." Research seems to back up King's assertion. Studies have revealed a significant gender bias effect in elite sport refereeing, finding that male referees make harsher decisions in the female compared with male games. So what may be one of the reasons behind this gendered difference within a profession whose very role is to be objective, unbiased, and impartial? Research suggests harsher penalties occur because observers attribute women's anger to internal characteristics (e.g., "she is an angry person" or "she is out of control") while attributing men's anger to external circumstances (e.g., "he's having a bad day" or "things were out of control so someone had to take charge").

These findings transfer and are applicable to the workplace. For example, research by Michele Gelfand and Virginia Choi has shown that female employees responsible for trivial to small missteps are subject to far worse penalties than males. They describe how female advisers, despite being equally productive as their male peers on the job, were found to be 20% more likely than male advisers to get fired for engaging in any transgressions. Further, after their firing, women faced longer unemployment spells than their dismissed male colleagues. Ironically, as research showed, male advisers with a past record of misconduct were roughly two times more likely to be future repeat offenders than female advisers; and resolving the misconduct of males was 20% more costly on firms.

Ever heard of the words *hepeat* and *bropropriation*? Maybe not. But you – especially women – may be familiar with the following scenario. Did you or a female colleague ever say something in a meeting to a cool reception, only to have your boss or colleagues fawn over the same idea when raised a few minutes later by another male member of the team? The observation that a man appropriates a woman's ideas – either purposefully or accidentally – and gets credit for them is not new; in fact, it is quite common. This sexist behaviour undermines team effectiveness by failing to fairly attribute, include, and value the contributions of all members. In

addition to bropropriating ideas, research has also shown myriad ways men often dominate conversations: they interrupt women more than other men in conversations; men tend to interrupt women to assert power; men dominate conversations during professional meetings; and men and boys dominate conversations in the classroom.

Another example of social justice in the workplace occurred when Howard Schultz, the former chairman and CEO of Starbucks, was once challenged by a shareholder when he affirmed the company's support for same-sex marriage. Schultz responded by asserting that Starbucks stock had performed well over the past year and articulating that not all corporate decisions were based purely on economics. Schultz also told the shareholder that if he thought the company's social policies were hurting its financial performance and he could get a better return for his money elsewhere, he was free to sell his stock and invest in a different company. Not stopping at his own organization, Schultz spoke out clearly and often to other business groups, taking the view that leadership does not stop at your own organization and that a large, influential organization has the responsibility to try to shape society for the better. Justice may be an altruistic concept, but it is also a source of sustainable corporate performance.

Primatologist Frans de Waal and his team put two capuchin monkeys from the same extended family in adjacent cages - fully visible to each other - to test the animals' sense of fairness. As a reward to performing a simple task, they gave both monkeys cucumbers. In the next round, they continued to give one monkey cucumbers as a reward but began giving the other monkey grapes for the same task: a much-preferred food, among capuchins. As a video of the experiment illustrated, as soon as this inequitable behavior began, the disadvantaged monkey began hurling the proffered bits of cucumber back at the researcher in fury, grabbing the bars of the cage and rattling them in apparent fury, and otherwise eloquently displaying its sense of justice betrayed. "This is basically the Wall Street protest, that you see here," de Waal joked, at the end of the video. But continuing in a more serious vein, he described several pairs of monkeys in which the "favoured" monkey—the one getting the grapes—actually began turning down the grapes when it realized that its fellow monkey was being shortchanged by the system. This, in de Waal's view, was evidence that primates have the benefit of an evolved morality – one that helps them cooperate to survive.

The logical extension is clear: Humans, too, have the benefit of an evolved morality. And by another logical extension, the individual who embodies and taps into our innate sense of justice is likely to be a highly effective leader. Janet Bannister, HBA '92, partner at Real Ventures, passionately explains the importance of justice in her leadership.

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

# Temperance: Your personal braking system

© Nov 1, 2019



Temperate people conduct themselves in a calm, composed manner. They maintain the ability to think clearly and respond reasonably in tense situations. They complete work and solve problems in a thoughtful, careful manner. They are prudent—resisting excesses and staying grounded. Temperance is essential to good judgment and yet my research on and consulting with leaders from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors consistently reveals that they score lowest on this character dimension. This is a problem. For example, a high level of drive and/or courage without the corresponding capacity for temperance risks reckless decision-making. As my colleagues Mary Crossan and Jeffrey Gandz have stated on many occasions, this lack of balance and integration between character dimensions is analogous to having a sports car with a highly tuned, powerful engine but a poor braking or suspension system. Sooner or later you may hit a wall at 180 kilometers per hour – will you survive the impact? I like to share two examples of temperance—and intemperance—in action and the leadership lessons embedded within them.

Chip Wilson is a serial entrepreneur who has been celebrated as one of Canada's most creative business practitioners in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He founded several retail apparel companies, most notably the yoga-inspired athletic apparel company Lululemon Athletica Inc. What's interesting about Wilson, for the purposes of this blog, is how over the course of his impressive career he not only



has mastered myriad business challenges, but also has created other problems by losing control over his emotions, and his tongue. For example, in 1980, Wilson founded Westbeach Snowboard Ltd., a surf, skate, and snowboard vertical retailer. He served as its CEO until 1995, when the private equity group to whom he had sold Westbeach ran out of patience with the company's lack of profitability:

I remember being in Hong Kong and getting a fax conveying the fact that I had been removed as CEO and that they had decided to put in their own CEO. I did the predictable. I complained. I jumped up and down. I called my lawyers. And then, you know, I just settled down and started to reflect.

What Wilson realized, but only upon reflection, was that his board of directors—which had been imposed upon him by his venture capitalists—was right. The directors were older, more experienced individuals who were interested in giving back their knowledge in life and to mentor and to teach. It was time for him to get out of the way.

He then started Lululemon. Over the next decade or so, as the leader of Lululemon, Wilson went down a road roughly similar to the one he had traveled at Westbeach: from pioneering entrepreneur to somewhat disaffected manager, sometimes prone to blurting out what was on his mind without considering the consequences. [In 2013, for example, Lululemon came under fire when some of its women's yoga pants turned out to be unexpectedly transparent under workout conditions; Wilson's public response was that some women's bodies simply weren't appropriate for Lululemon's products.](#) In the ensuing firestorm, one analyst—citing Wilson's misstep—downgraded Lululemon's stock, and Wilson was savaged in the media. Eventually, and despite being the founder and largest shareholder in the company, he was pressured to resign from the board.

An example of a business leader who demonstrated temperance during difficult circumstances is [Halla Tomasdottir](#) – her approach to financial services in Iceland stood in stark contrast to the approaches of most other Icelandic financial firms. Tomasdottir and a colleague, Kristin Petursdottir, founded Audur Capital in Reykjavik in 2007. Both had been investment bankers in the U.S. and had experienced firsthand the giddy, irrationally exuberant mood then prevalent on Wall Street. Convinced that the global financial party—which by that point had fully engulfed tiny Iceland—was bound to end, they set up Audur, a boutique investment bank explicitly designed to take a more prudent and temperate approach. “We believed that we had a set of values,” Tomasdottir explains, “and a way of doing business that would be more sustainable than what we had experienced until then.” Those values, she added, were “feminine values.” She and her colleagues at Audur conducted what they called “emotional due diligence,” as well as the financial equivalent. They engaged in straight talk with their clients, including straight talk about the ever-increasing risks in the investment environment. They argued in favor of long-term profits that took into account social and environmental benefits. And

while she doesn't blame men, as a gender, for the giant economic swoon that began in 2008, she does believe that a "lack of diversity, and sameness, leads to disastrous problems." Her prescription, going forward? We need to start embracing the beauty of balance," she says. "That's the only sustainable future." Balance paid off well at Audur, which successfully protected its own capital and that of its clients throughout the meltdown.

So what may be the lessons embedded in these stories for you? First, self-control is essential – remain disciplined and stay on track. Second, be patient – recognize that not everything that needs to be accomplished, and accomplished well, can be done immediately. And third, remain composed – maintain your presence of mind and focus, especially in challenging situations; learn to address the inevitable frustrations without reacting with anxiousness, agitation, or anger. For example, during the campaign for the U.S. presidency Barack Obama almost never got upset, or panicked, by the day-to-day shifts in momentum, and the ups and downs of opinion polls. His campaign mantra was "No Drama Obama." Up until the end of his presidency, Obama maintained his self-control and temperance.

Andy Chisholm, MBA '85, director of Royal Bank of Canada, and former senior global strategy officer, Goldman Sachs, explains how temperance and humility were critical success in his career.

IAN O. IHNATOWYCZ INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP

## Transcendence: The expansive view

© Dec 2, 2019



Character is an indispensable component of sustainable leadership performance. Ivey research has identified 11 dimensions of leader character: accountability, collaboration, courage, drive, humanity, humility, integrity, judgment, justice, temperance, and transcendence. In this blog, I explore the leader character dimension of transcendence. For many people, the first person who comes to mind as an embodiment of transcendence – inspired and purposive - is Oprah Winfrey. Life magazine named her the most influential woman of her generation. However, to many people, transcendence seems like a funny word. What exactly do we mean by transcendence?

People with transcendence draw inspiration from excellence or have a deep appreciation of beauty in such areas as sports, music, arts, and design. Some businesses—including Chicago-based Metropolitan Capital Bank & Trust—deploy works of art in lobbies and other common areas to provide exactly that kind of inspiration to their employees. But, does a business leader really have to be an aesthete, drawing inspiration from sublime works of art or the wonders of nature? While it may not be an obvious criterion, such inspiration often underscores great leaps forward in business strategies or in the design of products. For example, Steve Jobs took a calligraphy course at Reed College; it had such a profound impact on him that he insisted that his revolutionary Macintosh computer include a large array of custom typefaces. These calligraphy classes were largely responsible for the seismic shift in computing typeface that the Mac has been responsible for. Jobs

discussed dropping in on a calligraphy course at Reed College and how it influenced design at Apple in his 2005 Stanford commencement speech (see 01:56 – 05:17).

So, how do we cultivate a transcendent culture within our workplaces, especially if they aren't readily infused with works of art or other such features? Tony Schwartz, President and CEO of The Energy Project and the author of *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*, suggests that simply feeling appreciated in the workplace lifts people up. As such, by showing appreciation to our colleagues, we help to foster a purposive and inspirational atmosphere that prevents people's perspectives and attitudes from getting too bogged down in the day-to-day grind of the job.

People with transcendence see possibility where others do not. For example, as explained in the book *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*, Nelson Mandela understood that the game of rugby could be at the vanguard of reconciliation and of South Africa's return to the international community. Furthermore, those high in transcendence have an expansive view and effortlessly integrate long-term and broad factors. At the same time, transcendent leaders possess a healthy level of optimism that maintains their hope for a better future and fuels their impetus to seek positive change. Optimism is especially important in challenging times; optimistic people believe that not only is change possible— but more importantly— that they are capable of creating it. Former President Barack Obama exemplified this by harnessing the power of optimism in his 2008 campaign. Specifically, after delivering an inspirational message of hope and change in his address to supporters after decisively winning the Iowa Democratic caucuses, a watershed moment in his campaign for the nomination, optimism for change seemed to become Obama's core brand. In fact, years later, after having left the White House, Obama continued to espouse this same message in a speech he gave for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's "Goalkeepers" event: "Your response has to be to reject cynicism and reject pessimism and push forward, with a certain infectious and relentless optimism".

And, finally, people with transcendence demonstrate a sense of purpose in life. You have a strong sense of personal mission or orientation in life. You derive meaning from your work. This tends to foster optimism and release creativity. It is important for each of us to have a sense of purpose, but it is particularly essential for leaders. Not only do leaders need to feel personally purposive, but they must ensure that their followers or those within their organization commit to a shared purpose. According to author, motivational speaker and organizational consultant Simon Sinek, great and inspiring leaders and organizations are successful because they focus on what the vast majority of their competitors do not: the "why" instead of the "what." They generate and communicate a strong sense of purpose and it is exactly that to which their followers, employees, customers, etc. connect. The Walt Disney Company is perhaps the ultimate example of an organization with a clear purpose. Disney's key to creating magical guest interactions stems from its common purpose: "We create happiness by providing the best in entertainment for people of

all ages everywhere.” Jeff James, Vice President and General Manager, Disney Institute, wrote that: When our Cast Members understand that their primary goal is to create happiness they become empowered to create, what we like to call, “magical moments.” From park greeters to attraction attendants to those in backstage support roles – every decision they make regarding a guest interaction is focused on, “creating happiness.” When an organization is clear about its purpose, and articulates that purpose clearly to its employees, individual, departmental, and corporate actions become focused and better performance results.

To some leaders however, transcendence and its elements—inspired, appreciative, purposive, optimistic, creative, future-oriented—may be scoffed at as fluffy or simply “feel-good” sentiments when they just want to get the job done. But a lack of transcendence does impact the job: productivity wanes, retention diminishes, an organization’s vision narrows and becomes myopic, and results decline. This high-octane clip from *The Newsroom*, an American television drama series, poignantly captures what happens when individuals, organizations or countries move into a lack of transcendence. In it, Jeff Daniels, starring as Atlantis Cable News anchor Will McAvoy, goes on a public tirade and asserts America is no longer the greatest country in the world. Ironically, the clip offers another leadership lesson, one inspired by a quote from author Catherine Aird: “If you can’t be a good example, then you’ll just have to be a horrible warning.” Do you and / or the teams or organizations you lead ever move from the example to the warning?

So, does a business leader have to be an aesthete, drawing inspiration from the beauty they find around them? Yes ... if they want to be successful. Do business leaders need to see possibility where others do not? Check. Do they need to be optimistic, and foster optimism? Absolutely. Do they need to be creative, and foster creativity in others? Sure do. Although some of the elements of transcendence may seem distant from business leadership, they are all, in fact, integral when the dimension comes into play. Given the importance of transcendence to leadership success, consider the following two questions and think on how they can help you to develop this dimension of character:

1. What or who has ever made you think beyond what you thought was possible? How did they do that?
2. What experiences could you give yourself and your employees that would inspire them to “think bigger and more broadly” about what could be done to move your organization to a new, higher trend-line?

Pat Horgan, MBA '82, explains how transcendence applied to his leadership and time at IBM.