

# The Seven Levels of Leadership Consciousness

By Richard Barrett

Leaders grow and develop by learning to master the Seven Levels of Personal Consciousness *and* the Seven levels of Organisational Consciousness. An authentic, full spectrum leader must understand and master his or her personal dynamics, as well as the dynamics of the organisation or team, business unit or division he or she leads.

The seven levels of leadership consciousness in an organisational context are summarized in the following table, and described in detail in the following paragraphs. The focus of this table is on the leadership of a for-profit organisation. The differences between this type of organisation and other types of organisation are relatively few and are mainly focused at the survival and relationship levels of consciousness. This table should be read from the bottom up.

Service	7
Making a difference	6
Internal cohesion	5
Transformation	4
Self-esteem	3
Relationship	2
Survival	1

Levels of consciousness		Characteristics
7	Service	<b>Wisdom/Visionary:</b> Service to society, humanity and the planet. Focus on ethics, social responsibility, sustainability, and future generations. Displays wisdom, compassion and humility.
6	Making a difference	<b>Mentor/Partner:</b> Strategic alliances and partnerships, servant leadership. Focus on employee fulfilment, and mentoring and coaching. Displays empathy, and utilizes intuition in decision-making.
5	Internal cohesion	<b>Integrator/Inspirer:</b> Strong cohesive culture, and a capacity for collective action. Focus on vision, mission and values. Displays authenticity, integrity, passion, and creativity.
4	Transformation	<b>Facilitator/Influencer:</b> Empowerment, adaptability, and continuous learning. Focus on personal growth, teamwork and innovation. Displays courage, responsibility, initiative, and accountability.
3	Self-esteem	<b>Manager/Organiser:</b> High performance systems and processes. Focus on strategy, performance, excellence, quality, productivity and efficiency. Displays pride in performance.
2	Relationship	<b>Relationship Manager:</b> Employee recognition, open communication, and conflict resolution. Creates employee and customer loyalty, and treats people with dignity.
1	Survival	<b>Crisis Manager:</b> Financial stability, organisational growth, and employee health and safety. Displays calmness in the face of chaos, and decisiveness in the midst of danger.

In the first three levels of leadership consciousness we encounter both healthy behaviours and unhealthy behaviours. The unhealthy behaviours derive from the existential fears of the leader's ego: not having enough money, protection or security to satisfy the ego's need for safety; not having enough love, caring or acceptance to satisfy the ego's need for belonging; and not having enough power, authority or status to satisfy the ego's need for respect or recognition. These personal fears play out in the context of the organisation as personal entropy, and significantly impact the cultural entropy of the organisation, thereby undermining its performance.

The unhealthy aspects of the first three levels of consciousness begin to dissipate at level 4 consciousness as the leader learns to let go of his or her fears. This may require substantial self-leadership work. The ego must confront the subconscious fear-based beliefs learned in childhood about not feeling safe, not feeling loved, and not feeling

respected, and either manage, master, or release them. These are the fears that keep us locked into the motivations of the first three levels of consciousness that represent our deficiency needs.

As the subconscious fears diminish, the leader's ego becomes free to take on the higher motivations of the soul. The soul yearns to find meaning in life through a cause or purpose that lies close to its heart. It wants to find fulfilment by giving its unique gift, and exploring its own creativity. At level 4 consciousness the ego begins to learn how to blend its motivations with those of the soul.

An individual is able to access level 5 consciousness when the ego and soul reach internal cohesion—when the leader learns to manage or master his or her subconscious fears, and finds his or her transcendent meaning to life. When we uncover our soul's purpose we can establish a mission and a vision for our lives and tap into our deepest levels of passion and creativity. As we learn to collaborate with others to implement our vision we access level 6 consciousness and we begin to make a difference in the world. When making a difference becomes a way of life, we access level 7 consciousness.

Here in detail are the attributes of each of the Seven Levels of Leadership Consciousness.

#### **Level 1: Crisis Manager**

**Healthy Aspect:** Level 1 leaders understand the importance of profit and shareholder returns. They manage their budgets meticulously. They look after the health and safety of employees. They are appropriately cautious in complex situations. They maintain a long-term perspective while dealing with short-term issues and goals. They promote a culture of compliance. Normally, they will go no further than they have to in satisfying legal regulations. One of the most important attributes of Level 1 leaders is the ability to handle crises. When the survival of the organisation is threatened, they know how to take control. They are calm in the midst of chaos and decisive in the midst of danger. In such situations the leader may need to take on the mantle of the authoritarian.

**Unhealthy Aspect:** When leaders operate as authoritarians on a regular basis, they quickly lose the trust and commitment of their people. Very often the reason leaders use a dictatorial style to get what they want is because they find it difficult to relate to people in an open and effective way. They are afraid to let go the reins of power because they have difficulty in trusting others. The greater their existential fears regarding their survival and safety, the more risk-averse they become. Authoritarians can be quick to anger and are unable to discuss emotions. They bottle up their feelings and hide their true selves behind their position of authority. They can be very lonely people. If they have insecurities around money, they will exploit others for their own ends. They are greedy in the midst of plenty and for them enough is never enough.

They are always pushing the limits of what is possible. They focus exclusively on short-term results. Fear-driven authoritarians create unhealthy climates in which to work. They hardly ever relax. They are consumed by their subconscious fears.

### **Level 2: Relationship Manager**

**Healthy Aspect:** Relationship managers handle conflicts easily and invest a lot of time in building harmonious working relationships. They do not run away or hide from their emotions. They use their relationship skills to handle difficult interpersonal issues, and they use their communication skills to build loyalty with their employees. They deliver good news and bad news to all staff indiscriminately. They believe in open communication. They acknowledge and praise staff for a job well done. They give people recognition. They are accessible to their employees and not stingy with their time. They are actively involved with customers and give priority to customer satisfaction—either internal or external.

**Unhealthy Aspect:** When leaders hold subconscious fears about not belonging they are afraid to deal with their own or others' emotions, they avoid conflicts, are less than truthful in their interpersonal communications, and resort to manipulation to get what they want. They either try to mask their true emotions behind humour or they protect themselves by blaming others when things go wrong. Relationship managers are often protective of their people, but demand loyalty, discipline and obedience in return. They are often enamoured by tradition and operate as paternalists. Paternalists find it difficult to trust people who are not part of the "family". They are secretive and engage in mafia politics. They will get even by seeking revenge. Their lack of trust in outsiders can severely limit the pool of talent that the organisation can draw on. Because paternalists demand obedience they tend to crush the entrepreneurial spirit of employees. Paternalism frequently shows up in family-run businesses.

### **Level 3: Manager / Organiser**

**Healthy Aspect:** Managers bring logic and science to their work. They use metrics to manage performance. They build systems and processes that create order and efficiency and enhance productivity. They have strong analytical skills. They think strategically and move quickly to capitalize on opportunities. They are rational in decision-making. Inwardly focused managers are good at organising information and monitoring results. Outwardly focused managers anticipate workflow problems and get things done. They plan and prioritize their work and provide stability and continuity. They create schedules and enjoy being in control. They are focused on their careers and willing to learn new skills and capabilities if it will help them in their professional growth. They want to learn the latest management techniques so they can drive towards quality and excellence. They want to be successful and they want to be the best. They have a healthy pride in their work.

**Unhealthy Aspect:** When a manager's self-esteem needs are driven by subconscious fears, they become hungry for power, authority or recognition. They either build empires to display their power or they build bureaucracies and hierarchies to demonstrate their authority. They can be achievement oriented and compete with their colleagues so they can come out on top and thereby gain status. They will play office politics to get what they want. Their self-esteem is derived externally from others. Image therefore becomes very important. They will want to buy a big house, join the best golf club, or drive the flashiest or most exclusive car. And they will want to show off. They will be meticulous about their wardrobe. They are often more concerned about how things look rather than how they are. Very often they derive their self-esteem through their work. Consequently, they tend to work long hours and neglect themselves and their families. They sometimes lead unhealthy lives because they are out of balance. They are consumed by their work because this is where they find their self-esteem.

#### **Level 4: Facilitator / Influencer**

This is the level where leaders focus on growing the healthy aspects of who they are by learning how to manage, master or release the fears that keep them locked in the lower levels of consciousness.

Facilitators readily seek advice, build consensus and empower their staff. They recognize that they do not have to have all the answers. They give people responsible freedom; making them accountable for outcomes and results. They research and develop new ideas. They consistently evaluate risks before embarking on new ventures. They resist the temptation to micro-manage the work of their direct reports. They promote participation, equality and diversity. They ignore or remove hierarchy. They are adaptable and flexible. They embrace continuous learning. They actively engage in their own personal development and encourage their staff to participate in programmes that promote personal growth. They are looking to find balance in their lives through personal alignment. Balance leads to detachment and independence, and allows them to become objective about their strengths and weaknesses. They are learning to release their fears so they can move from being outer-directed to being inner-directed. They are in the process of self-actualization. They are on a journey of personal growth. As they let go of the need for outer approval, they begin to discover who they really are. They become enablers of others, encouraging them to express themselves, and share their ideas. They encourage innovation. They focus on team building. They enjoy challenges and are courageous and fearless in their approach to life. Facilitators are in the process of shifting from becoming a manager to becoming a leader.

### **Level 5: Integrator / Inspirer**

The integrator/inspirer is a self-actualized individual who builds a vision and mission for the organisation that inspires employees, customers and society. They promote a shared set of values and demonstrate congruent behaviours that guide decision-making throughout the organisation. They demonstrate integrity and are living examples of values-based leadership. They walk their talk. They build cohesion and focus by bringing values alignment and mission alignment to the whole company. In so doing, they enhance the company's capacity for collective action. They exploit opportunities for collaboration. By creating an environment of openness, fairness and transparency, they build trust and commitment among their people. The culture they create unleashes enthusiasm, passion and creativity at all levels of the organisation. They are more concerned about getting the best result for everyone rather than their own self-interest. They are focused on the common good. They are creative problem solvers.

They view problems from a systems perspective, seeing beyond the narrow boundaries of cause and effect. They are honest and truthful and display integrity in all they do. They feel confident in handling any situation. This confidence and openness allows them to reclassify problems as opportunities. They clarify priorities by referring to the vision and mission. They display emotional intelligence, social intelligence and intellectual intelligence. Integrator/Inspirers are good at bringing the best out of people.

### **Level 6: Mentor / Partner**

Mentor/partners are motivated by the need to make a difference in the world. They are true servant leaders in that they recognize and focus on building a working environment where individuals can find their passion and fulfil their potential. They create mutually beneficial partnerships and strategic alliances with other individuals or groups who share the same values, vision and goals. They collaborate with customers and suppliers to create win-win situations. They recognize the importance of environmental stewardship, and will go beyond the needs of compliance in making their operations environmentally friendly. They display empathy. They care about their people, seeking ways to help employees find personal fulfilment through their work. They create an environment where people can excel. They are active in building a pool of talent for the organisation by mentoring and coaching their subordinates. They are intuitive decision-makers. They are inclusive. They are on top of their game. They may also be active in the local community, building external relationships that create goodwill.

### **Level 7: Wisdom / Visionary**

Wisdom/visionary leaders are motivated by the need to be of service to the world. Their vision is global and they have a holistic perspective on life. They are focused on the questions, "How can I help?" and "What can I do?" They are concerned about the

state of the world. They also care about the legacy we are leaving for future generations. They are not prepared to compromise long-term outcomes for short-term gains. They use their influence to create a better world. They see their own mission and that of their organisation from a larger, societal perspective. They are committed to social responsibility. For them, the world is a complex web of interconnectedness, and they know and understand their role. They act with humility and compassion. They are generous in spirit, patient and forgiving in nature. They are at ease with uncertainty and can tolerate ambiguity. They enjoy solitude and can be reclusive and reflective. Level 7 leaders are admired for their wisdom and vision.