



Seven Transformations of Leadership

by David Rooke and William R. Torbert

Leaders are made, not born, and how they develop is critical for organizational change.

The idea in brief

Every company needs transformational leaders those who spearhead changes that elevate profitability, expand market share, and change the rules of the game in their industry. But few executives understand the unique strengths needed to become such a leader. Result? They miss the opportunity to develop those strengths. They and their firms lose out.

How to avoid this scenario? Recognize that great leaders are differentiated not by their personality or philosophy but by their action logic how they interpret their own and others' behavior and how they maintain power or protect against threats. Some leaders rely on action logics that hinder organizational performance.

Opportunists, for example, believe in winning any way possible, and often exploit others to score personal gains. Few people follow them for long. Other types prove potent change agents. In particular, Strategists believe that every aspect of their organization is open to discussion and transformation. Their action logic enables them to challenge perceptions that constrain their organizations and to overcome resistance to change. They create compelling, shared visions and lead the pragmatic initiatives needed to realize those visions. Though Strategists are rare, you can develop their defining strengths. How? Diagnose your current action logic and work to upgrade it. The payoff? You help your company execute the changes it needs to excel.

The idea in practice

Type	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunist	Wins any way possible. Self-oriented; manipulative; "might makes right."	Good in emergencies and in pursuing sales.	Few people want to follow them for the long term.
Diplomat	Avoids conflict. Wants to belong; obeys group norms; doesn't rock the boat.	Supportive glue on teams	Can't provide painful feedback or make the hard decisions needed

			to improve performance.
Expert	Rules by logic and expertise. Uses hard data to gain consensus and buy-in	Good individual contributor	Lacks emotional intelligence; lacks respect for those with less expertise
Achiever	Meets strategic goals. Promotes teamwork; juggles managerial duties and responds to market demands to achieve goals.	Well suited to managerial work.	Inhibits thinking outside the box
Individualist	Operates in unconventional ways. Ignores rules he/she regards as irrelevant.	Effective in venture and consulting roles	Irritates colleagues and bosses by ignoring key organizational processes and people.
Strategist	Generates organizational and personal change. Highly collaborative; weaves visions with pragmatic, timely initiatives; challenges existing assumptions	Generates transformations over the short and long term.	None.
Alchemist	Generates social transformations. (e.g. Nelson Mandela). Reinvents organizations in historically significant ways.	Leads society-wide change.	None.

Changing your Action Logic type

To change your action logic type, experiment with new interpersonal behaviors, forge new kinds of relationships, and seize advantage of work opportunities. For example:

To advance from . . .	Take these steps
Expert to Achiever	Focus more on delivering results than on perfecting your knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become aware of differences between your assumptions and those of others. For example, practice new conversational strategies such as “You may be right, but I’d like to understand what leads you to believe that.” • Participate in training programs on topics such as effective delegation and leading high-performing teams
Achiever to Individualist	Instead of accepting goals as givens to be achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the worth of the goals themselves, with the aim of improving future goals • Use annual leadership development planning to thoughtfully set the highest-impact goals

<p>Individualist to Strategist</p>	<p>Engage in peer-to-peer development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mutual mentoring with members of your professional network (board members, top managers, industry leaders) who can challenge your assumptions and practices, as well as those of your company and industry. <p>Example: One CEO of a dental hygiene company envisioned introducing affordable dental hygiene in developing countries. He explored the idea with colleagues across the country, eventually proposing an educational and charitable venture that his parent company agreed to fund. He was promoted to a new vice presidency for international ventures within the parent company.</p>
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