WILSON LEARNING®

Mastering the Role of Leader

A Definitive Guide for Developing Leaders at All Levels of Your Organization

A discussion with Tom Roth, Michael Leimbach, PhD, and David Yesford, Wilson Learning

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Some see leadership as command and control.
Others see inspiration and values.

The purpose of a leader is to engage others in committing their **full energy** to the **creation** of **value** and **success**.

Executive

Mid-Level

First-Level

Who Are Leaders in the Organization?

Arguably, everyone in an organization who is in a position to influence the actions of others is a leader.

When most organizations think about developing leaders, it's generally in three accepted levels.

First-level leaders: Managers and supervisors of individual contributors

Mid-level leaders: Managers of departments or functions

Executive leaders: Executives responsible for the overall leadership of the organization
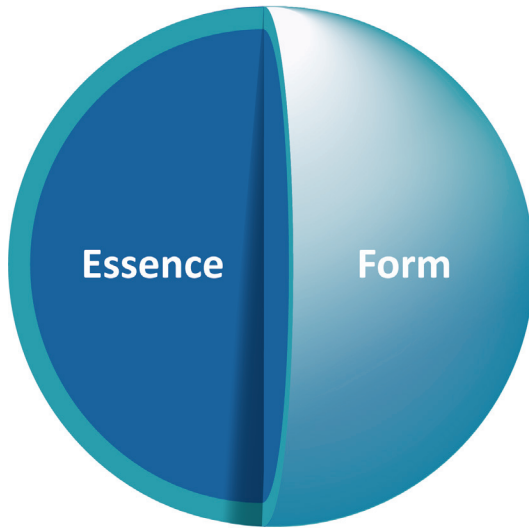
Most leadership development providers view the differences between levels of leadership as primarily a skill issue—that is, as you move to higher levels of leadership, you need to acquire additional skills.

While this is true, it is not the complete challenge for leadership development.

Our view is slightly different.

Executive

Mid-Level

First-Level

Form and Essence

At Wilson Learning, we believe effective leadership requires both **skills**, what we call **Form**, and **character,** what we call **Essence**.

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Essence is who you want to BE as a leader.
This includes your philosophy, beliefs, values, and sense of purpose that guide who you want to *be* as a leader.

Form is what you need to DO as a leader.
This includes the skills and behaviors you exhibit, consistent with your philosophy, beliefs, and values.

The integration of skills and character is required to be effective at all three levels of leadership. What leaders need to focus on, and how skills and character are implemented (and the balance of the two), is different at each level.

First-Level: Leadership Survival Skills

Moving from an individual contributor, climbing onto the **first step** of the **leadership ladder** . . .

The Form (or Skill) requirement most important to a new first-level leader is to quickly acquire the necessary skills to succeed—what we call *Leadership Survival Skills*.

Before my new job as supervisor, I was responsible for my performance only—and, after being here for eight years, I was respected for knowing the lab floor inside and out.

First-Level

Mid-Level

Now I'm responsible for leading a team's performance. I feel like all I am doing is reacting to problems and questions. It's like they can't think for themselves and rely on me to fix what they are ultimately getting paid to do.

You **can't just get the job done yourself** anymore;
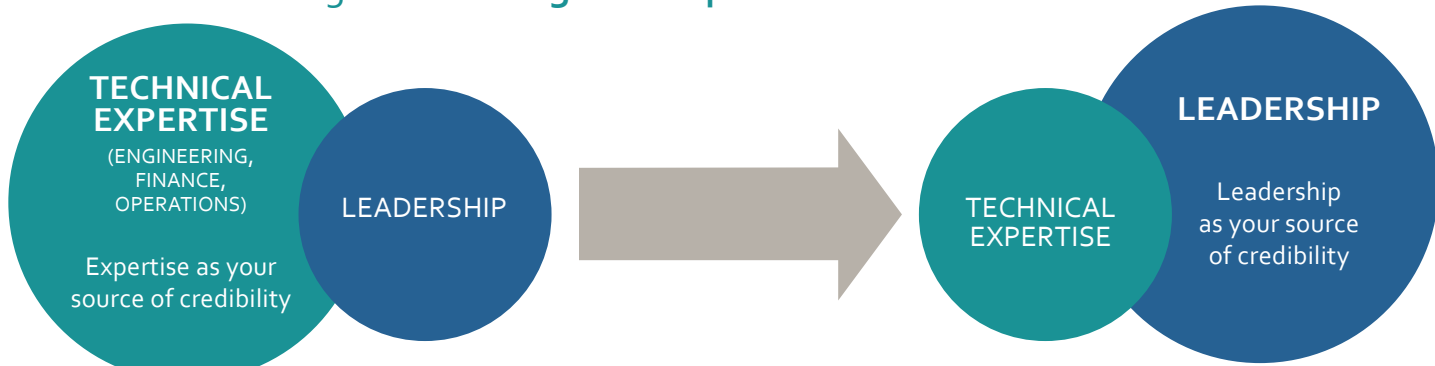you need to **do it through others**.

Leadership Survival Skills

- **Motivating employees**
- **Communicating effectively**
- **Defining tasks and goals**
- **Delegating with confidence**
- **Observing behavior**
- **Providing feedback and coaching**
- **Resolving conflict**
- **Helping others solve problems**

First-Level: Establishing Leadership Credibility

The Essence of first-level leadership is the shift of moving from **solving** others' **problems** . . .

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE
(ENGINEERING, FINANCE, OPERATIONS)

Expertise as your source of credibility

LEADERSHIP

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

LEADERSHIP

Leadership as your source of credibility

. . . to helping employees **learn** how to **solve problems** themselves.

First-level leaders often resort to "leading with their technical expertise." The challenge for new leaders is to rely less on their functional credibility and instead establish their credibility as a leader—something they must earn in their new role.

From a leadership Essence (character) perspective, new first-level leaders require the wisdom to make leadership their source of credibility.

Mid-Level: Shifting to Growing Others

Let's step up to the next level, mid-level leaders . . .

While first-level leadership requires one-to-one survival skills, mid-level leaders need to include more one-to-group, or team development, skills.

> *I feel like I'm the only one really committed, and the team is doing just enough to get by—just enough to stay under the corporate radar. It stresses me out.*

Mid-Level

First-Level

> *I wish I could delegate more and not do it all, but I'm not confident the work will get done.*

As leaders move into mid-level leadership, their focus shifts.

A mid-level leader needs to shift more to Growth Skills (Form) to help grow others' capabilities and help the department and, ultimately, the organization grow.

This critical shift requires leaders to understand the importance of building capability in others, rather than being a Heroic Manager who controls or micromanages people.

Leadership Growth Skills

- Team goal-setting
- Problem-solving facilitation
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Negotiation
- Delegation

Mid-Level: Clarifying Leadership Essence

The transition from first-level to mid-level requires the development of Purpose- and Value-Centered Leadership.

Leaders develop their Essence by clarifying their:

o Purpose for being a leader

o Leader philosophy

o Beliefs and values

They use these elements to guide their leadership actions.

This transition starts by understanding where they get their signals that guide them as leaders—from external sources or internal sources.

Many new leaders tend to rely on getting their signals from external sources.

Moving into mid-level leadership is usually a big step. There is often a big increase in responsibility and greater span of control, causing leaders to focus on what they think they need to succeed.

As a result, many leaders start taking their signals from external sources.

EXTERNAL

Have

I need to **have** power, authority, and control.

Do

So I can **do** more, create change, and improve.

Be

Then I will **be** successful.

Powerful leaders have learned to focus on internal, not external, signals.

Rather than taking their signals from external sources—"I must *have*, so I can *do*, and therefore *be* successful"—the job of mid-level leaders is to take their signals from internal sources.

This leads them to consider . . .

Be

Do

Have

INTERNAL

What kind of person/ leader do I want to **be** remembered as?
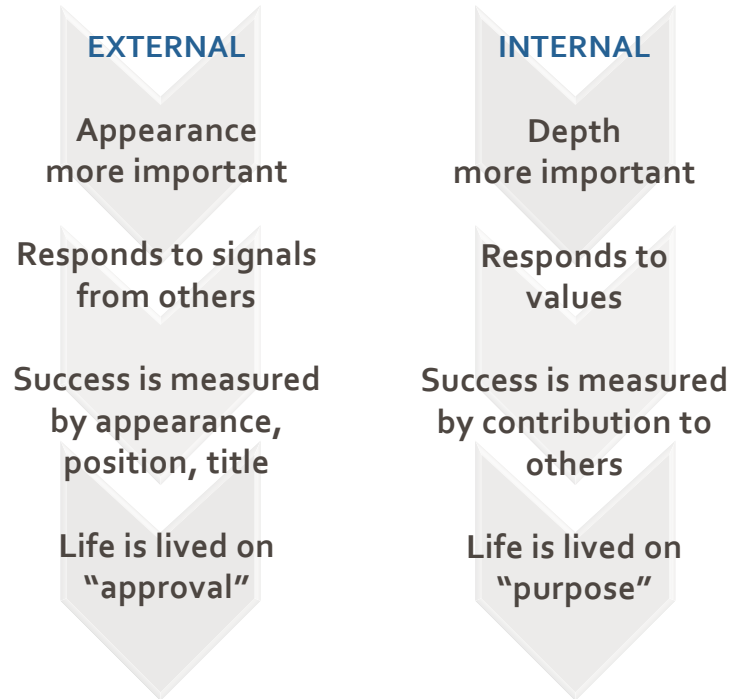
Therefore, what do I need to **do** as a leader?

Then I will **have** a sense of how to contribute to the success of others.

For a Purpose- and Value-Centered Leader, an internal focus leads to a renewed set of values.

Having a clear sense of Essence (character) provides the foundation that makes their leadership skills (Form) effective.

EXTERNAL	INTERNAL
Appearance more important	**Depth more important**
Responds to signals from others	**Responds to values**
Success is measured by appearance, position, title	**Success is measured by contribution to others**
Life is lived on "approval"	**Life is lived on "purpose"**

What about the C-suite, executive leaders?

The good news? I have a strong team of leaders responsible for managing people on a day-to-day basis.

Executive

Mid-Level

My challenge is how to grow the organization and ensure sustainable performance, while at the same time acting as a positive role model for the kind of leadership we want to cultivate and the culture we desire. I know all eyes are on me.

The focus is **less on leading individuals and teams** and **more on leading the culture** of the organization.

Executives have layers of other managers/leaders to direct others' performance and growth.

Executive leadership is needed to ensure there are systems, processes, and a culture in place to sustain the organization's performance over time.

Therefore, the executive level requires strategic skills focused more at the organizational level than the individual level.

Leadership Strategic Skills

- Creating strategy
- Communicating strategy and organizational passion
- Creating a culture of engagement
- Leading an executive team

When history points to **great failures and great successes** of companies, it always points to the **character of the leader**.

Character takes on
even more **importance**
for executive leaders, as they are **responsible** for the
**consistency of communication, action,
integrity, transparency**,
and being the example for other leaders
and employees to follow.

We refer to this as **Culture-Centered Leadership**.

Consider the balancing act of an executive leader, as Pathfinder and Steward, at the helm of the organization.

As a **Pathfinder,** an executive is expected to promote change and continually renew the organization—blazing new trails and taking people where they would not go without being led.

As a **Steward,** an executive is expected to protect the constants—the organizational heartbeat that does not change.

PATHFINDER   STEWARD

Ways to take the organization forward:

o Vision
o Strategy
o Systems/processes
o Sustainability

Enduring tenets that do not change:

o Values
o Mission/purpose
o Culture
o Leadership as role models

The essence of executive leadership is balancing the Pathfinder and Steward roles.

The Wilson Learning Leadership Development Framework . . .
a picture is worth a thousand words.

Leadership development through the lens of the framework:

o Both Skills (Form) and Character (Essence) are important at all levels of leadership.

o Skill needs dominate at first-level leadership; character is based on leading from the leadership credibility.

o At the executive level, few additional skills are required and the dominant development need is developing their Character: leading from a Culture-Centered Essence.

o Leadership development, at all levels, must address both Form and Essence.

Levels	First-Level Leadership	Mid-Level Leadership	Executive Leadership
Focus	Getting work done through people	Getting work done with people in a way that builds their ability to do it themselves	Ensuring systems and processes to sustain performance
Skills (Form)	Survival Skills	Growth Skills	Strategic Skills
Character (Essence)	Establishing Leadership Credibility	Purpose- and Value-Centered Leadership	Culture-Centered Leadership

Essence | Form

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Character at all leadership levels is the culmination of the leadership Essence journey.

Leaders at all levels must make the transition from:

o A leader who, instead of seeking power, **empowers**

o A leader who, instead of seeking control, **frees you up**

o A leader who, instead of being served, **serves**

o A leader who has a **strong sense** of his or her **essence**

o A leader who is seen as **courageous**

"Ultimately, you will not be judged
so much by how well you lead,
but by how well you
are followed."

Next Steps

Further explore how to best develop leaders who drive your business, visit
www.wilsonlearning.com/wlw/leadership

Submit an inquiry online, visit
www.wilsonlearning.com/wlw/contact

Call Wilson Learning at **1-800-328-7937**

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About Wilson Learning

Our work with thousands of organizations has taught us that every organization is uniquely shaped by its history, culture, mission, values, lore, leadership, and, ultimately, its people. Every organization has a pulse.

For more than 50 years, Wilson Learning has partnered with organizations around the world to consult on, assess, design, develop, deliver, reinforce, and sustain learning solutions, fueled by our passion and vision for "Helping People and Organizations Achieve Performance with Fulfillment."

Our broad-reaching capabilities include:

o Providing learning services that help address human performance needs, including performance consulting, instructional design, customization, and flexible delivery of learning solutions using every available modality

o Leveraging the wellspring of our Intellectual Property to produce double-digit percentage performance improvement in salesforces, leadership, and workforce ranks

o Bringing our implementation "know-how, can-do, and will-do" expertise to every learning initiative to fully engage key stakeholders and provide transformational learning that is recognized, reinforced, and sustained

o Employing our global presence to meet your needs for consistent learning solutions around the world, ensuring local and cultural adaptation while working in over 50 countries and 30 languages

For more information, contact us at 1.800.328.7937.

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