

Developing Leadership in an Interdependent World

How four arts create cultures of collaboration

Everything in our world is, or will be, connected. In this interdependent new reality, what does leadership need to look like to succeed and thrive?

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) has been asking this question – and finding answers through action research and development practices. We believe that new ways of learning and working are needed to foster **leadership in an interdependent world**.

CCL's current thinking is described in the chapter "Developing Interdependent Leadership" by Charles J. Palus, John B. McGuire and Chris Ernst in the recently released book, *The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being*.*

Interdependent Leadership Requires an Evolution in Leadership Thought

The journey begins with an outcome-based definition of leadership. Leadership is a social process that creates three essential outcomes: *shared direction, alignment and commitment* (DAC).

Direction, alignment and commitment can happen in various ways, driven by the prevailing leadership logic: *dependent-conformers, independent-achievers or interdependent-collaborators*. Leadership develops in whole systems, and so people must develop DAC at four levels: *society, organization, group and individual* (SÖGI).

Leadership Cultures Must Evolve

Increasingly, our work and our world require interdependent leadership. Interdependent leaders have grown beyond conformance to authority and independent thinking and are more concerned with whole systems, collaboration and beliefs and practices for collective success. Interdependent cultures are most capable of dealing with complexity, ambiguity and change. In these cultures, people work effectively across organizational boundaries. They are successful in adapting to rapid changes, drawing on internal expertise and insight, and that of external partners and stakeholders.



Leadership is a **collective** activity



Leadership emerges out of **individual expertise and heroic action**



people in authority are responsible for leadership

Interdependent Leadership is Needed Within and Across Four Levels: Society, Organization, Group and Individual

Four “practical arts” allow us to work effectively across these levels: *dialogue*, *creating headroom*, *boundary spanning* and *inside-out development*.

1. Dialogue. Through inquiry and creative conversations, people are able to reflect on unquestioned assumptions and difficult topics, find common ground and come up with multiple solutions that allow the best ideas to win.

2. Creating headroom. Organizations need to have the time, space, risk-taking, learning and modeling to “lift up” the entire leadership culture to a new order of thought and action. This requires public learning in the collective, and slowing down to power up. With the headroom to explore, experiment and practice, people are able to break out of old patterns and try new behaviors.

3. Boundary spanning is the art of seeing, bridging and leveraging five types of group boundaries: horizontal, vertical, demographic, geographic and stakeholder.

4. Inside-out development focuses on the values, beliefs, identity, emotions, intuition, imagination and leadership logic, or mindset of each individual.

Interdependent Leadership Can Be Learned

The four arts can be adapted for all kinds of situations. In organizations, senior management is often unsure of how to begin or how to get traction. The process isn’t simple, or one-size-fits-all. We’ve identified five steps – using the analogy of a complex game – that build toward interdependent leadership at the organizational level:

1. Discover. Assess the level of leadership culture and capability required by the direction of the business strategy.

2. Develop strategy. Focus on the relationship between leadership strategy and business strategy – and how an expanding leadership mindset can build needed organizational capability.

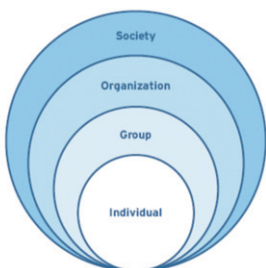
3. Develop the players. Practice the four arts with the senior team.

4. Set up the game board. Align the leadership and business strategies, and integrate human capability requirements with the key work of the organization. Rearrange, recreate and reassess the game board as senior players learn and gain new skills and perspectives.

5. Play the game. Take the four arts to the middle, and then build commitment everywhere in the organization. Now, leadership is developing, while the real work of the organization is getting done.

When the four arts are learned, tried, applied to organizational work, then used and used again, the door opens to new possibilities for developing more collaborative, connective, adaptive and vital – interdependent – forms of leadership.

Four Arts for Developing Interdependent Leadership



- **Society:** the art of *dialogue*
- **Organization:** the art of *headroom*
- **Group:** the art of *boundary spanning*
- **Individual:** the art of *inside-out development*

To learn more about CCL’s work in developing interdependent leadership among individuals, groups, organizations and society, visit www.ccl.org/leadership/solutions/change.aspx. You may also contact us at **800-780-1031**, or e-mail John McGuire at m McGuire@ccl.org.

*The Handbook for Teaching Leadership: Knowing, Doing, and Being (Sage Publications, 2012) draws on the expertise of leading international scholars and the insight of its editors Scott Snook, Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, leadership faculty at the Harvard Business School. The chapter authors are members of the ongoing Teaching Leadership Seminar at the Harvard Business School.