

THE DEEP BLUE SEA: RETHINKING THE SOURCE OF LEADERSHIP

WILFRED DRATH

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

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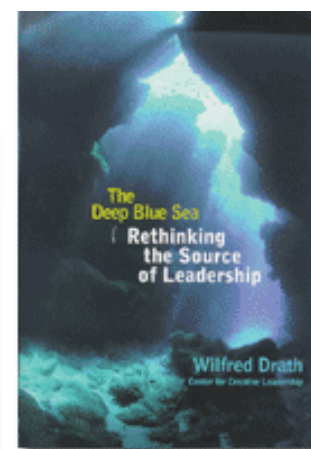
THE DEEP BLUE SEA METAPHOR...

“Too often in thinking about leadership we are like persons standing on the shore, captivated by the dancing, sparkling whitecaps on the ocean and entirely missing the deep blue sea. The whitecaps are real enough, but their sources lies within the action of the ocean itself” (p. xiv-xv).



Wilfred Drath, from the center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, has written a thought-provoking book that considers what he believes to be the emergence of a third leadership principle he has termed *relational dialogue*. *The Deep Blue Sea* was published in 2001.

This executive book summary will provide a quick overview of the main argument of *The Deep Blue Sea: Rethinking the Source of Leadership*. Wilfred Drath believes that leadership has become confusing since the source of leadership “is no longer so clear as it once was” (p. xiii). Since the source of leadership is now more complex, Drath states that “leadership is in fact changing in ways determined by changes in our ways of life, in our ways of understanding and especially in our ways of interrelating” (p. xiv). According to Drath, changes in the 21st-century have resulted in the emergence of a third principle of leadership that he has termed relational dialogue. Drath believes that relational dialogue redefines what leadership is and that it is “no longer a person who creates leadership but a person who is created by leadership [and] the requirement that many people [have to] ... take responsibility is also created” (p. 163). In any company or organization, leadership is and should be occurring at all levels through teamwork and collaboration. Drath believes that having people work together to achieve a common goal is what builds leadership. Therefore, it is with this emergence of a new leadership style that we all must remember to look beyond the waves and whitecaps to see the deep blue sea.



Introduction

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CHAPTER 1: Leadership Principles and Leadership Tasks

Drath begins this chapter by defining that a knowledge principle is a “comprise sets of taken-for-granted truths” (p. 8). Knowledge principles are different from definitions since it is these knowledge principles that help an individual understand definitions. Drath defines a leadership principle as “what gives meanings to definitions and styles in the sense that a principle is required for people to recognize and understand that leadership is what is happening” (p. 11-12). It is important to understand these differences and that taken-for-granted truths exist.

Drath outlines the three leadership principles that assist individuals to recognize leadership is occurring and the taken-for-granted truths that individuals have for each of these principles. They are:

1. Personal Dominance - traditional view of leadership

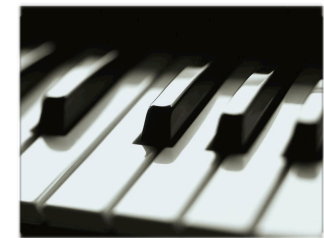
- Leadership is something a person possesses;
- Leadership is an expression of this personally possessed quality of characteristics;
- Leaders lead because followers are convinced of the truth of their leadership.

2. Interpersonal Influence - most common view of leadership

- Leadership is a role occupied by the most influential person;
- People possess or can acquire certain qualities and characteristics that enables them to be effective in such a role;
- Leadership involves followers actively in the process of negotiating influence;
- Leaders lead by influencing followers more than followers influence them.

3. Rational Dialogue - emerging view of leadership

- Leadership is the property of a social system;
- Individual people do not possess leadership; leadership happens when people participate in collaborative forms of thought and action;
- If there is an individual leader, the actions that person takes are an aspect of participation in the process of leadership.



A new owner comes with a new vision. How will the employees of the Zoffner Piano Company adapt and embrace the changing future of the company?

Table 1.1 Summary of Leadership Principles and Leadership Tasks

Tasks \ Principles	1. Personal Dominance	2. Interpersonal Influence	3. Relational Dialogue
Setting direction	Unified, clear direction that is based in the worldview of the leader.	Direction is based on a negotiation of differences integrated in the leader's perspective.	Direction holds differences and is multivalent.
Creating commitment	Commitment is to the leader personally.	Commitment is to the leader's integrating vision.	Commitment is to the shared crafting of possibilities.
Facing adaptive challenge	An adaptive challenge can be faced to the extent that the leader is pre-disposed.	An adaptive challenge can be faced through a renegotiation of influence.	An adaptive challenge can be faced through dialogue across worldviews.

This table summarizes the three different leadership principles and the leadership tasks that Drath examines throughout this book.

Drath examines two leadership definitions based on different knowledge principles. They are both correct but seem very different. Leadership defined by F. H Allport in 1924 was seen as “social control” (p. 8) and by H. Gerth and C.Wills in 1953 as “a relation between leader and led in which the leader influences more than he is influenced” (p. 10).

These leadership principles consist of:

1. Recognizing that these thoughts, words, and actions as leadership
2. That principles are distinguished from definitions
3. That principles are distinguished from styles

The story of the Zoffner Piano Company

Drath introduces the reader to the story of a fictional piano company, Zoffner Piano, whose owner/leader, Mr. Karl retires and hands the company over to his well-educated daughter, Elena. This story is weaved throughout the book to help illustrate the strengths and limitations of the different leadership principles. The limitations of the first leadership principles become apparent within Zoffner Piano when Elena tries to create a new vision for the company. Drath explains in detail how the employees are experiencing a change in leadership style from Mr. Karl's personal dominance to the principle of interpersonal influence. Once the employees establish new shared knowledge principles Zoffner Piano emerges in the principle of rational dialogue.

CHAPTER 2: Personal Dominance

“Even in a leadership principle based on personal dominance, leadership requires a deeply shared understanding” (p. 40).

Drath begins this chapter by explaining the meaning of the principle of personal dominance and how individuals learn that these taken-for-granted truths begin at a very young age. Drath also discusses how individuals form these shared knowledge principles based on experiences.

Personal dominance is understood as a “shared knowledge principle for understanding leadership” (p. 32).

Drath explains how the knowledge principles of personal dominance are learned and become truths because individuals learn that:

1. Dominance is natural
2. Dominant people are natural leaders
3. Leadership is personal
4. Leadership happens when a leader expresses leadership towards followers
5. The leader’s job is to accomplish the leadership tasks
6. Followers depend on the leader

“Dominance and charisma come from this perfect attunement between leader and follower in the shared creation of a kind of leadership that creates a leader who is irreplaceable” (p. 65-66).

This table presented in chapter two summarizes the capacities of the first principle of personal dominance and what Drath refers to as the “built-in-limits”.

Capacities and Limits of the Personal Dominance Principle with Respect to the Leadership Tasks		
<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Capacities of Personal Dominance</i>	<i>Limits of Personal Dominance</i>
Setting direction	The leader is understood to possess as a personal quality the knowledge of what is needed and the right thing to do.	Increasing complexity or changes in context impede the leader from knowing the right direction, and followers lose their belief in the leader’s ability to lead.
Creating commitment	Followers commit to the leaders personally (they are loyal to the leader) and commit to one another by virtue of their commitment to the leader.	When the leaders fails personally to deserve the commitment to the loyalty of followers, commitment to the community or organization overall is threatened.
Facing adaptive challenge	The leader adapts personally and teaches the community or organization how to adapt; followers adapt as the leader adapts.	When challenges arise that the leaders cannot adapt to personally, the community or organization fails to adapts.

Limits of Personal Dominance

The Zoffner Piano Company’s employees and Elena experience the limits of personal dominance when Elena becomes the new owner and tries to take the company in a different direction. Drath explains that when these built-in limits are reached, the second principle of interpersonal influence begins to emerge and how the second principle builds on the first principle. The second principle keeps the useful aspects of the first principle but adds different aspects to help overcome the limitations that exist within the principle of personal dominance.

CHAPTER 3: Interpersonal Influence

“The [leadership] principle moves from a personal understanding of leadership to an interpersonal understanding” (p. 91).

the leader, interpersonal influence emphasizes the relationship among the hearts and minds of people in a community” (p. 68).

Drath returns to the Zoffner Piano Company story to explain how the retirement of Mr. Karl (i.e., a personal dominance leader) demonstrates how a knowledge principle can also “retire” when a leader leaves the company or organization. Drath describes the issues that the company is currently experiencing due to the loss of this knowledge principle and also describes what has to occur in order for the Zoffner Piano Company to be successful again. These detailed explanations allow for the reader to fully understand the limitations of the first principle and how and why the second principle emerges. Even though is it still the leader who has the most influence, the degree of mutual influence has changed in the second principle.

The first principle uses the power of the leader as a source of leadership compared to the second principle which uses influence as a major part of the source of leadership. Drath explains an important difference in the second principle is the leader’s “ability to connect to, shape, and make use of the perspectives of others” (p. 72).

The second principle is more complex (i.e., dynamic interactions between leaders and followers and also there are multiple view points). Compared to the first principle, this complexity allows the limitations of the first principle to be addressed. Although this complexity has advantages, there are also disadvantageous such as this “often produces slower and less decisive action” (p. 89).

“Where personal dominance emphasizes the inner quality of

Limits of the First Principle and the Corresponding Capacities of the Second Principle

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Limits of First Principle</i>	<i>Capacities of Second Principle</i>
Setting direction	When the complexity of the context makes the leader’s decisions unclear or ambiguous, the leader loses legitimacy.	Ambiguity can be understood as an aspect of the situation, not just the result of the leader’s decisions.
Creating commitment	When the leader behaves in ways that fails to maintain the loyalty of followers, commitment is threatened.	Commitment is understood to be to a perspective shared in a community, not given to the leader personally.
Facing adaptive challenge	Challenges unrecognized by the leader cannot be addressed by the community or organization.	More challenges can be recognized and addressed because multiple perspectives are enabled; the climate for innovation can improve.

When the second leadership principle begins to emerge there are keys changes that occur. Drath examines six different processes that occur:

1. The negotiation of meaning is at the heart of interpersonal influence
2. The leader’s perspective is the container of the negotiation
3. The leader’s perspective is open to question and doubt
4. Parenthetical comment on leadership and management
5. The leader becomes the repository of differing perspectives
6. Differences are aspects of leadership

Drath explains how the interpersonal influence principle has its own set taken-for-granted truths. He states the following as truths for this second principle:

1. Leadership is a process of social control
2. The leader is one with the most influence
3. The leader plays a role and acts with followers



CHAPTER 4: The Limits of Interpersonal Influences

According to Drath, the limits of interpersonal influence may be occurring due to the changing context of our world.

Drath explains that limits of the interpersonal influence are reached “when influence can no longer be negotiated interpersonally” (p. 119).

Drath states that there are “different kinds of things ... happening that tend to result in the loss of leadership” (p. 98).

These include:

1. Unity embracing diversity
2. Limiting contexts in American communities
3. Limiting contexts in organizations
4. Collaborative relationships with suppliers and customers
5. Cross-functional teams

Drath also establishes that sense-making capacities and the power of the second principle begin to experience challenges when the changing nature of senior level management changes (i.e., hierarchal to increased vertical communication) and by increased diversity in organizations (i.e., embracing differing cultures, values and world views) (p. 104-107).



Capacities and Limits of the Interpersonal Influence Principle with Respect to the Leadership Tasks

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Capacities of Interpersonal Influence</i>	<i>Limits of Interpersonal influence</i>
Setting direction	The leader is understood to create a shared vision be encompassing and integrating a variety of differing perspectives.	When direction becomes equivocal as a result of sharing work across differing world views, the capacity of a leader to negotiate some unifying vision is greatly reduced.
Creating commitment	Commitment is created to the shared vision held and articulated by the leader.	When the leader's vision can no longer hold and articulate multiple world views, commitment is greatly reduced.
Facing adaptive challenge	More challenges can be recognized and addressed because multiple perspectives are enabled; the climate for innovation can improve.	Challenges arising in contexts of equivocal difference fail to be recognized as tasks approachable by leadership.

Even though the second leadership principle is what most readers will be able to relate to, Drath describes the built-in limits that exist with this principle. He accomplishes this by using examples of what is occurring at Zoffner Piano as well as using recent real life examples.

At Zoffner Piano the X Project teams different ideas of a new product demonstrated the difficulty that unity embracing diversity and cross-functional teams can present. This, therefore, articulated some of the built-in limitations of the interpersonal influence principle. Drath also points out that “the interpersonal influence principle does not provide effective tools for creating commitment across certain kinds of boundaries because influence is not likely to flow across boundaries that separate ways of making sense of the world” (p. 118).

Drath's example of the crash of EgyptAir Flight 990 and the subsequent joint investigation by American and Egyptian officials is used to help illustrate the limits of contexts of the second principle and ultimately what he claimed to be lead to a lack of leadership in this investigation (p. 99-100).

Drath explains that a third principle emerges when the second principle is “inadequate for the context” (p. 124) because the required leadership tasks have become too complex.

CHAPTER 5: Relational Dialogue

Drath believes that a third leadership principle emerging because of a challenging context of “when there is shared work among people who make sense of that work and the world from differing world-views, [and questions] how can those people accomplish the leadership tasks while holding their differing world views as equally worth and warrantable?” (p. 125)

Drath states that “this lack of leadership comes about not because of a lack of leaders who could provide leadership in these contexts, but because the principles of leadership we already have are not capable of making leadership happen in these contexts ... [and] only a new principle of leadership can make leadership happen in contexts” (p. 129).

For the examples that Drath references there are common aspects that emerge to support what he believes is the emergence of the third principle. They are:

- People holding different world views are involved in mutually acknowledgment of shared work
- Differing world views are held as if they were equally worthy, true and real
- The leadership tasks are relevant, but not capable of being accomplished across world views
- No person can be the leader and create leadership without giving up the equal gravity of the differing perspectives

“New forms of leadership, new approaches and ways of thinking, talking, and acting together will help people work together in a highly diverse world - unity embracing diversity. This way of thinking about all leadership (including dominance and influence) as shared leadership by recognizing leadership as a relational process of sense-and meaning-making is an approach I will call relational leadership” (p. 151).

Accomplishing the Leadership Tasks with Three Leadership Principles			
Ways of Understanding Leadership	Dominance * Leadership happens when a leader acts.	Influence * Leadership happens when a person influences others more than he or she is influenced.	Dialogue * Leadership happens people make sense together of shared work.
Ways of Practicing Leadership			
Personal * Leadership is a personal endowment of leaders	Personal Dominance Principle: The leader embodies direction, inspires commitment, and personally faces challenges.	Influence is recognized as a <i>tool</i> the leader may use to gain agreement or compliance.	Dialogue is recognized as an <i>intimate approach to communication</i> .
Interpersonal * Leadership is a process of negotiating social influence.	The leader <i>has the insight into</i> direction, <i>motivates</i> people to become committed, and <i>facilitates</i> the facing of challenges.	Interpersonal Influence Principle: A leader <i>emerges</i> from <i>reasoning</i> and <i>negotiating</i> as the person with the <i>most influence</i> over direction, who is thus best able to gain commitment and create the conditions for facing adaptive challenge.	Dialogue is recognized as <i>perspective taking, reframing, suspending assumptions</i> .
Relational * Leadership is meaning-making in communities of practice.	The leader is the <i>central participant</i> in the <i>communal construction</i> of direction, commitment, and facing adaptive challenge.	Difference in relative influence <i>are products of the communal construction</i> of the meaning of direction, commitment, and facing adaptive challenge.	Relational Dialogue Principle: People sharing work <i>create leadership</i> by constructing the meaning of direction, commitment, and adaptive challenge.

CHAPTER 5: Relational Dialogue

Once Drath establishes that there are features that are supporting the development of a third principle, he discusses what he believes are four “truths-in-the making for use as a third leadership principle” (p. 135).

Drath refers to this third principle as the relational dialogue:

1. People make sense of reality through relational processes i.e., “people construct reality through their

interactions within world views” (p. 136).

2. Leadership across world views requires relational dialogue i.e., that “leadership can be recognized (and happen) across world views only to the extent that meaning, values, and thus direction, commitment, and adaptive responses can be constructed relationally across world views” (p. 143-144).

3. Leadership happens when a conversation across world views makes sense of a new subject i.e., “this kind of leader cannot create leadership, but must be created by leadership, by the relational dialogue processes between world views” (p. 148).

4. All leadership is a process of shared meanings-making i.e., “let leaders see “their” leadership as shared leadership” (p. 150).

“All leadership is shared leadership” (p. 61).

Drath also provides a detailed explanation of how “all ways of understanding and recognizing leadership are interpretable from the perspective of the third principle, the leadership tasks can be understood to be accomplished in a wide range of ways” (p. 154).

Finally, Drath discusses four approaches that he and his research colleagues at the Center for Creative Leadership have found to be

successful for bringing this “third principle ... into being in our communities, groups, and organization *new truths that we take for granted*, a new leadership principle to make a new kind of leadership make sense” (p. 156).

The four approaches are:

1. Cultivate sense-making processes i.e., “requires a change in mind-set, a change in how meetings are framed,

and a change in actual behavior during meetings” (p. 156).

2. Explore narrative modes of understanding i.e., to introduce this “narrative mode of thinking and talking into meetings” (p. 159).

3. Develop the capacity for dialogue.

4. Increase personal responsibility for leadership i.e., responsibility compared to accountability (p. 163).

The Reader’s Final Thoughts on The Deep Blue Sea...

Due to our quick-paced, ever-changing and increasingly globalized lives, Drath has raised a strong argument that the leadership styles that we have been used to may no longer be sufficient, due to their limitations. In this book, Drath successfully establishes a strong argument for the emergence of a third leadership principle for what he calls relational dialogue. Although this third principle is not easy to explain, Drath is able to provide a handful of real life examples that demonstrate the limits of the second principle and clearly support his argument. By providing these examples and presenting the reader with justifiable truths-in-the making, Drath is able to dissolve almost all confusion or questions that a reader may have had regarding this third leadership principle. By using the story of the Zoffner Piano Company, Drath is able to help guide the reader through why Elena and her employees are facing leadership challenges. Even though this is a fictional story, readers are able to relate to these situations and the struggles that a change in leadership can present. By weaving this story throughout the book, the reader is able to stop and think about the different capacities and limitations that the different leadership styles present. Readers should embrace this emerging leadership principle when they are experiencing it, as relational dialogue allows us all to take part in this idea of shared leadership. The Deep Blue Sea is a thought-provoking book and may even change the way a reader thinks about the sources of leadership. The metaphor of the deep blue sea could not be more appropriate for explaining the concept of relational dialogue leadership.