

How to Become a Technical Leader



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Can You See How You Look to Others?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) sometimes
- D) how could I possibly know?



Some types of leaders

Visionary Thought Leader



Genuine visionary who influences where the technology is going. Deep technology strength, knowledge, expertise. Leading edge thinker, innovative. Can captivate customers. Trades on reputation and brings high customer value. Comfortable with concepts, “right brain”, may be viewed as “academic” - writes papers, conference speaker. Strong consulting capability.

Relishes thought leadership role over operational management responsibilities.

Technical Expert



Absolute subject matter expert of highest quality. Not necessarily a visionary thought leader. Deep expertise may be in one or more areas of competence-technology. Likely to have project oversight responsibility. Can move easily from technologist to consultant. An engineer at heart rather than a consultant. High customer insight. Effective at “cold call”. Actively coaches and develops others.

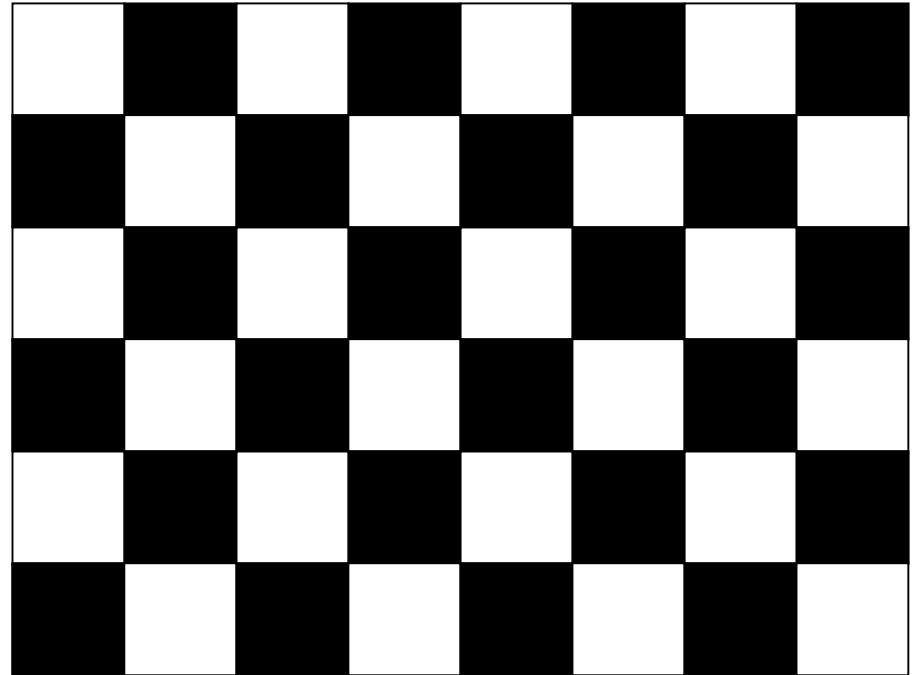


Branding

What is the new world of careers?



OR



Brand Called You

- Do you anticipate and solve problems?
- Does your customer or team become more productive, more efficient by having you on the team?
- Do you meet your commitments?
- Do people ask for you first?



Some Quick Lessons

Lesson #1: Create atmosphere of trust

- People stop bringing you their problems which means they have lost confidence in you or believe you don't care
- You create barriers to upward communication as leaders make themselves available and accessible
- Create an environment where problem analysis replaces blame

Lesson #2: Become a Benevolent Dictator

- Must make decisions without all the data
- Some people will not like your decisions
- Trying to get people to like you makes you avoid tough decisions
- Procrastination to avoid risk actually increase risk
- Favoring too much information gathering in order to make decision results in “analysis paralysis”

Lesson 3: Pay attention to details

- Strategy works only with execution
- Ideas and visions that cannot be implemented rapidly and efficiently are worthless
- Obsessive routine in carrying out details begets mediocrity and dulls the mind
- Encourage people to challenge the process

Lesson 4: Become an Optimist

- Ripple effect of leader's enthusiasm is awesome
- Impact of cynicism and pessimism is deadly
- Leaders who whine engender these same behaviors among their colleagues
- The unrealistic aspirations of the optimist should be favored over the grim litany of the realist



IBM's Technical Leadership

IBM's Technical Leadership Competencies

- Customer Insight
- Breakthrough Thinking
- Drive to Achieve
- Team Leadership
- Straight Talk
- Teamwork
- Decisiveness

IBM's Technical Leadership Competencies

- Building Organizational Capability
- Developing Talent
- Personal Dedication
- Passion

IBM's Technical Leadership

FELLOW	DISTINGUISHED ENGINEER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovator, inventor, visionary, researchers, scientist• Contributor to "body of knowledge" or breakthrough the world will notice• Established reputation & influence externally - Industry & Academia• Defines future direction of expertise, drives new thinking• Exhibits technical leadership competencies & nurtures technical community• Activities support business direction, but may have management agreed to latitude to explore future directions• Large numbers of patents and publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hands on practitioner, applied technologist• Drives implementation of new technologies, processes, product deliveries, architectures• Focused operationally, but maintains foresight on future• Exhibits technical leadership competencies & nurtures technical community• Hands-on technical leader, with broad responsibility to resolve technical issues in support of established business direction• Fewer number of patents and publications• Less external involvement



How do I Become a Leader

Curiosity - Self Assessment

- I keep a journal to record my insights
- I take adequate time to reflect
- I am a voracious reader
- I learn from little children
- I solicit feedback from friends, colleagues and family
- My friends would describe me as open-minded and curious
- I am skilled at identifying and solving problems

Arte / Scienza

- I like details and lists
- I write clearly
- I am almost always on time
- I read a book starting at page one and go through in order

- I read a book by skipping around
- I often lose track of time
- I am good at brainstorming

Demonstration - Self Assessment

- I learn from my mistakes and rarely make the same one twice
- My closest friends would agree that I am willing to acknowledge my mistakes
- I question conventional wisdom and authority
- I can articulate my most fundamental beliefs and the reasons I hold them
- I persevere in the face of obstacles
- I view adversity as an opportunity for growth

Sfumato - Self Assessment

- I am comfortable with ambiguity
- I thrive with change
- I have a tendency to “jump to conclusions”
- I appreciate the importance of conflict in inspiring creativity
- I trust my gut
- I see the humor in life everyday
- I spend sufficient time on my own



Skills

Skills of Technical Leaders

- Communication
- Abstract thinking
- Quick learner
- Politically Astute
- Understands the need to fill holes
- Understands technology
- Recognizes patterns
- Open Minded
- Facilitator



Some parting thoughts

Some thoughts

**He who is good with a hammer thinks
everything is a nail**

Maslow

**Beware of the trash bin of your
experience**

Some thoughts

I was always careful never to let my schooling interfere with my education

Mark Twain

**Where there is no vision, the people
perish**

Proverbs 29:18

Some thoughts

Even in war moral power is to physical power as three parts out of four

Napoleon

**Nothing in this world was so powerful
as an idea whose time has come**

Victor Hugo

Some thoughts

**That the birds of worry and care fly
above your head, this you cannot
change; but that they build nests;
but that they build nests in your hair in
your hair, this you can prevent**

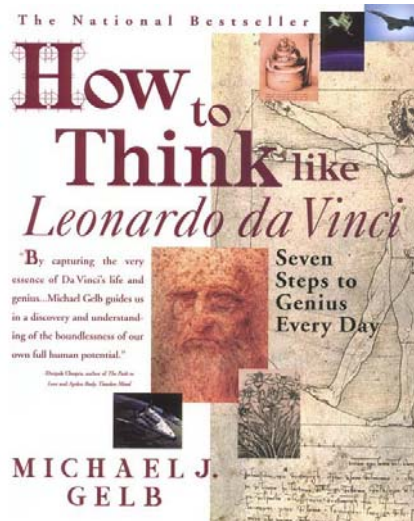
Chinese Proverb

Some thoughts

When you sit with a nice girl for two hours, you think it's only a minute. But when you sit on a hot stove for a minute, you think it's two hours. That's relativity

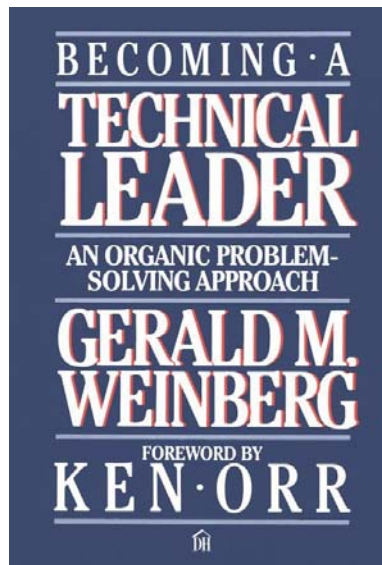
Albert Einstein

Sources



- **How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day**

by [Michael J. Gelb](#)



- **Becoming a Technical Leader: An Organic Problem-Solving Approach**

by [Gerald M. Weinberg](#)

Some thoughts

Beware of allowing a tactless word, a rebuttal, a rejection to obliterate the whole sky.

Anais Nin