

## Six Ways To Become A Wise Leader

by Prasad Kaipa and Navi Radjou, Adapted from their book

□ Our leadership perspective is based on the sum total of the knowledge, experiences, and choices we made before. It defines us, shaping our thoughts, decisions, and actions. It represents the way we see ourselves and situations, how we judge the relative importance of things, and how we establish a meaningful relationship with others and everything around us.

□ Smart leaders tend to look at the world through colored lenses that skew or limit their perspective, which affects their decisions and actions. Some have a perspective that's narrowly focused on short-term goals, deepening their depth of knowledge in their domain of interest. Other smart leaders are guided by broadly focused long-term visions that help them to differentiate various patterns and see how these will help them succeed. Both perspectives are limiting.

□ When they remove those lenses, smart leaders can gain a broader perspective. By changing their "smart" perspective and cultivating practical wisdom instead, they can lay the foundation for a wise leadership style that's more effective.

□ What is a wise leader perspective? Wise leaders are able to continually reframe and reinterpret events through integration and find new meanings within a rapidly changing context. Guided by a noble purpose, they develop a flexible and resilient mindset that makes them act and lead with wisdom--and become more influential leaders.

□ To move from a smart leader perspective to a wise leader perspective, start by seeing the world differently. Here are six ways to do it.

□ Become aware of your limitations, and transcend them.

□ Senior managers at Allianz Global Investors, a global asset management company, attended a workshop called Dialogue in the Dark, led by visually impaired trainers who conducted the entire workshop in total darkness. The goal of this experiential learning program was to shift leaders' perspectives by making them aware of their limitations, while increasing empathy for others. What is your biggest limitation of today? How did you get to have it and how do you plan to transcend it?

□ Learn from desperation, and spark epiphanies.

□ High desperation can spark epiphanies, so pay attention to what your next crisis has to teach you about perspective. While in a WWII German concentration camp for three years, Victor Frankl realized one day that although the Nazis could torture his body, they had zero control over his mind or spirit. This empowering shift in perspective helped him survive and then to inspire his fellow prisoners to take control of their own mindset. What

is the fear, high desperation, that you are attempting to run away from? How do you pay attention to it so that you can walk through the other side of desperation and discover something very new?

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□Act on inspiration from talks or books.

□The CEO of a well-known tech firm attended a talk on service-oriented organizations, including the generosity-driven Karma Kitchen, where your bill always reads \$0 because the meal is a gift from people who came before you, and you are invited to pay-it-forward for those who come after. He was so inspired by the talk that he acted completely spontaneously and drove straight to the hospital to spend four hours at the bedside of his 80-year-old neighbor. When did you last get inspired by a talk or a book? What actions did you take?

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□Take an extreme turn--out of your comfort zone.

□Getting outside your comfort zone is a quick way to experience leadership from a new perspective. In early 2000, while awaiting the court decision in the antitrust lawsuit against Microsoft, Bill Gates decided to step down as chief executive and focus on his passion for software. This jolted his perspective, and that same year, Gates and his wife established the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, taking his leadership in an important new direction. Where is it that you are holding on to an old and unworkable mindset? What extreme step you can take to experience and lead yourself differently?

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□Ditch your old glasses and look through fresh eyes.

□Sometimes, shifting one's perspective is as simple as really seeing what's in front of you. When Alan Mulally took over as CEO of Ford, the company was losing market share and facing deep losses because of increased competition and globalization. One day, when walking through the Ford parking lot at Detroit headquarters, Mulally suddenly noticed the hodgepodge of Ford brands that had no common attributes in shape or style. This moment of clear-sightedness led to Ford's trimming its bloated portfolio of 97 models to just 20, selling off Jaguar, Land Rover, and Aston Martin in the process, and focusing on smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. What do you need to "unlearn and let go of" so that increased focus on what you have could make you very effective and successful?

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□Pursue unlikely connections and look for odd juxtapositions.

□The eye surgeon Dr. Venkataswamy, also known as Dr. V, created a revolutionary approach to curing cataract blindness in India by studying McDonald's. He was able to develop a high-efficiency, standardized, replicable business model that organized patients in operating rooms and broke the procedure down into a series of discrete processes so that nurses and doctors could treat large patient volumes with high quality. His organization, Aravind, is now the largest eye care provider in the world. What unlikely metaphors and connections can help you come up with an innovative mental model and a business model for your work?