



## The Leadership Landscape

May/June, 2007

A bi-monthly periodical published by the faculty of the [Federal Executive Institute](#) to help you continue your growth as a public sector leader.

*"In times of change, learners will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves well-equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."*

*Eric Hoffer*

### Upcoming Programs and Courses at FEI:



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[Leading Strategically: From Vision to Performance, July 17-19, 2007, Washington, DC](#)

[Leaders Growing Leaders, July 30-August 1, 2007, Charlottesville, VA](#)

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**Welcome from the Dean of Faculty:** *As social philosopher Eric Hoffer insists in the quote above, leadership and lifelong learning move in a perpetual dance. And given the pace of change and the flow of information in our modern, high-octane, technological world, learning is that much more crucial to success in any endeavor, particularly in the challenging area of leadership. And as a recent book like The Medici Effect points out, learning from outside one's area of expertise, in a true interdisciplinary spirit, is perhaps most important. With that, a lot to learn in this Spring edition of the Leadership Landscape – so read it all, even if an article or two might stretch you out of your "comfort zone." For previous issues of the Leadership Landscape, please check out our [new archives](#) hosted by the [Federal Executive Institute Alumni Association](#). Happy reading.*  
~Dr. Peter Ronayne, Dean of Faculty

**Values-Based Leadership:** FEI Faculty member Sheila Gant discusses Authentic Leadership, one of the most talked images for leadership in Federal service. [Read more...](#)

**Values-Based Leadership:** What does it mean to "be in the question?" FEI Faculty member Stephen Blair explores an alternative way of being a leader by investigating the art and practice of asking questions. [Read more...](#)

**Policy in a Constitutional System:** There has been a recent and noteworthy shift in the Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) for Conflict Management – Leading People. FEI Faculty member Michael W. Rawlings begins what will be an ongoing discussion of a higher calling for conflict management. [Read More...](#)

**Transforming Organizations:** Beverly R. Fletcher, FEI Faculty member,

[2007, Charlottesville, VA](#)

[\*\*Aspen Institute Leading Change in Government,\*\*](#)

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[\*\*The ABCs of Effective Relationships,\*\*](#)

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[\*\*Organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,\*\*](#)  
[August 21-24, 2007, Washington, DC](#)

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[September 9-14, 2007, San Diego, CA](#)

[\*\*Collaborating Across Organizational\*\*](#)

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and Alfred L. Cooke, Director of FEI's Center for Organizational Performance discuss part two of their own model for implementing an Action Research agenda to ensure continuous learning throughout your organizations. In this article they focus on how leaders can better perceive the need for change and begin to contract an agreement process. [Read more...](#)

**Wellness and Balance Tip of the Month:**

**3 MEALS PLUS**

I believe in the philosophy of eating that calls for 3 small meals a day plus a snack or two. My observations of close to 50 people per month for the past 15 years mirrors the research that shows that people who eat breakfast tend to be a healthier weight. The more overweight a person is, it seems the more likely they are to not eat breakfast and often not even eat lunch. They eat almost all their calories at night, and I suspect, there's some snacking in there somewhere. Not only does this pattern of eating lead to overweight, these people are not likely to be as energetic or as focused as they could be. And how could they possibly get all the nutrients they need for the day! It's better to think of your body as a furnace – it needs constant fuel throughout the day to operate at its best.

The meals and snacks of course, should be fairly small and balanced, with empty calories being rare. Recommending snacks is not a license to hit the vending machines for candy bars and chips. Your snacks should usually contribute to the nutrients you need for the day. Some ideal snacks include a handful of nuts and a piece of fruit, a container of yogurt and a piece of fruit, some veggies (you can find beautiful carrot and celery sticks already cut) and your favorite type of hummus.

You might also try some of the newer, healthier snack products that are out there. Although the ideas mentioned above are probably the most ideal, you can mix in some of the newer snack products with little guilt. The new Fiber One bars are delicious! All-Bran granola bars are good too. A brand-new product by Kellogg's is All-Bran Snack Bites, which I am eager to try. Kashi TLC Cookies, Oatmeal Raisin Flax flavor also have a good amount of fiber and no trans fat.

My usual snack is fruit with a healthy muffin or two that I make myself out of top-notch ingredients. My favorites are Blueberry/Cranberry/Orange Oat muffins with 100% whole-wheat flour and oats. They're incredibly moist and delicious. If you want the recipe, email me. Happy snacking!

~ Sumner Brown, Wellness Coordinator - *Leadership for a Democratic Society*, can be reached at [sumner@healthyself.org](mailto:sumner@healthyself.org)

[\*\*Values-Based Leadership\*\*](#)

**Authentic Leadership**

By Sheila Gant, Ph.D., FEI Faculty

Authentic leadership is all the rage. A simple web-search brings up thousands of articles and books, most written in the last few years. [Bill George](#), former CEO of Medtronic, is perhaps the best known for his two books and numerous articles on this topic. Often quoted, George has argued: **“We need new leadership—authentic leaders, people of the highest integrity committed to building enduring organizations: leaders who have a deep sense of purpose. We need authentic leaders who are driven by passion and purpose, not by greed.”**

In [Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value](#), George suggests the following as essential dimensions of authentic leadership: **purpose, values, heart, relationships and self-discipline**. According to George, these five essential dimensions are the foundation for mission-driven organizations. As a private sector leader, George is concerned with the desires and expectations of employees as well as customers. For those of us who are leaders in government, we must demonstrate effective and ethical stewardship of the peoples’ money and trust in meeting objectives and strategic goals because our organizations are inherently mission-driven.

When the members of Stanford’s Graduate School of Business’s Advisory Council were asked to recommend the most important capability for leaders to develop, their answer was nearly unanimous: self-awareness. **Self-exploration and self awareness take time. It requires patience and courage to look deeply**. A difficult thing to do when most leaders’ days are taken up with immediate needs and tasks. As our list of successes grows, we as leaders often discover that something is missing. Taking time for self reflection is an opportunity for growth and for realigning your values with your behaviors. These are the first steps to being or reconnecting with our self as an authentic leader.

The Gallup Institute recently conducted research on how best to maximize an individual’s potential. Some of their findings defied conventional wisdom: “each person’s talents are enduring and unique;” and, “each person’s greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strength.” The real tragedy, according to Gallup, is that we fail to use all the strengths we have, and that most of us “obsess about and overestimate the power of weakness, and fail to recognize and underestimate the power of our strengths.” ([Buckingham & Clinton, 2001](#))

**Think about the impact of your organization’s culture on your performance.** Most organizations focus on what went wrong rather than what went right. We are quick to criticize each other and/or ourselves when something goes awry. We are black belts in naming wrongs and novices in recognizing what is right, unless it is 100% right. One often uses the tactic of the first to put ourselves down. Some of us have been so well trained in the art of self-effacement that we can incapacitate ourselves as leaders, and we often neglect to give the helpful and needed feedback and support to develop others. Nan Henderson, a social worker and trainer, suggests moving away from a focus on the negative to “giving ourselves the credit we are due.” This is not as easy as you might think. We too often are adept at feeling like a failure rather than a learner, and too often unskilled in giving the helpful feedback that can support another’s growth.

Henderson suggests that **leaders can develop a great place for people to work by supporting personal and family life outside the office and by recognizing the efforts of their employees to be resilient in overcoming challenges**. In an effort to assess our authenticity as a leader, we should ask ourselves a few questions:

- When was the last time, we stopped by someone’s desk or office and thanked him/her for what he/she does?
- When was the last time we did this for a team effort?
- When was the last time we celebrated meeting a challenging deadline as a team?

- What have we done to identify and surface our underutilized skills and abilities and those of our peers, and direct reports?
- When was the last time we started an after action review with “what went right”?

Maximizing the learning and appreciation from some of these activities creates a safe place for people to learn and grow. Authentic leaders make possible a sustainable environment for success and provide security for increasing their organization’s capacity for learning and self-reflection.

[Martin Seligman](#) and colleagues are spearheading [a new branch of psychology](#) that seeks to “create a science of human strength” to compliment the science of healing. Their early research shows that healing and positive change occurs more readily for people when their strengths are supported. “The most powerful message we can give as authentic leaders is to tell people what is right with them,” Henderson concludes; “That is the most important message to give to ourselves as well.”

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**FEI offers many courses on decision making strategies. Please attend or recommend our [Power Thinking for Leaders](#) program that will be offered July 10-11<sup>th</sup>, 2007, in Charlottesville, VA**

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### Values-Based Leadership

#### **To “Be in the Question”**

By Stephen Blair, FEI Faculty

In the “command and control” model of leadership the more decisive and immediate the choices the more the perceive effectiveness of the leader. On the down side, command and control carries with it high stress, high likelihood of error, lack of creative solutions and tendency towards isolation of the leader. Many of us don’t realize that we are subject to these “down side” issues, because we do not know that there is an alternative to leadership from that perspective. We were taught to lead in that way, and that is the way we lead.

To ground yourself in an alternative way of being a leader, you might want to ask yourself some questions: Have you ever had to repair a decision that was not correct, partially correct, or missed the point completely? How much time did that cost? Do you have time to always be the one giving out “the answer?” What is the impact upon the organization, if everyone has to come to you? Do you ever feel like you are “stuck” in the alternative directions you have to choose from? What is the cost when you have unintended consequences of decisions or policies?

So often, because of time pressures or expectations, when a problem presents itself, as senior executives we immediately move to give the answer or create a solution. What would happen if you stepped back, and, rather than move to the answer, simply be in the question?

Suppose you stopped before quickly going to solution, and asked yourself a set of questions: Begin by examining the problem: Is this the real problem? This may be the most important question to ask. If we do not get this correct, then the most brilliant solution will be for the wrong problem.

What would happen if we then asked, what are the interests of the stake holders? Do we even know who all of the stakeholders are? What are their interests in this issue? What are their expectations? What are mine? “Being in the question” means questioning these assumptions.

What would happen if when we brainstormed the possible options, we pushed beyond the already known answers? Then, and only then, would we move to the solution. And, once we have “the solution,” what would happen if we took a step back to examine the solution in the larger context of the environment? This then, is what it means to start “being in the question.”

### **So why is this important?**

*“The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”*  
Albert Einstein.

Each situation is different. Prior experiences are prior experiences with different people, circumstances, constraints, challenges, and environments. It is necessary to look at each situation as new – challenge previous assumptions, look at the challenges from different perspectives – to see the complexities as they currently exist. Yes, tap into prior learning and experiences, but do not assume - be in the question: how is this problem familiar, how is this situation different, what might this solution look like from different perspectives?

*“The only person who acts sensibly is my tailor. He takes my measure anew every time he sees me. Everyone else goes by their old measurements.”* Oscar Wilde

In order to create this “being in the question” paradigm, we need to develop skills in systems thinking, being at observation, and inquiry that uses “open-ended “questions. Let’s spend a little time with each of these concepts:

- **Systemic Thinking:** *“You can observe a lot just by watching.”* - Yogi Berra. Stepping back from a problem, opportunity or challenge and asking what might be impacting this situation enables you to create a broader picture, and stepping back yet again with the same question now starts to give you a better sense of the context of this issue you are addressing. Play with questions after you come to preliminary answers: What might be the unintended consequences of this answer? Systems thinkers are “in awareness” of the contexts and consequences of their actions. They are aware of their environment and build solutions that recognize the importance of interconnected relationships.
- **Being at Observation:** *“We don't see things as they are; we see them as we are.”* - Anais Nin. The way the human brain works can sabotage our decisions. We cater to our own biases and our mind can distort our reasoning ability. “Being in the question” provides the space to step back and observe how our focus, perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, paradigms and mental models are limiting or distorting our view of the situation, and most importantly, other possibilities.
- **Being at Inquiry.** *“You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.”* - Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, 1988. The leader who is able to “be in the question” opens him/herself up to possibility and creates the possibility for a better, more informed decision-making process within their team. Using open-ended questions is at the heart of learning to coach others to discover for themselves new possibilities, and, for your team and organization to become aware of the assumptions, values and beliefs that might be

constraining individual and group creativity.

**Being in the Question is not “paralysis by analysis.”** We all know that decisions must be made. “Being in the question” is action-based learning to make effective and timely decisions. By being at observation of your limitations and recognizing their presence; by being aware and engaging in systems thinking; and, by being at inquiry using questions, you will be able to develop new and effective alternatives and possibilities that will enhance your ability to make the timely, tough and valued decisions.

*“Don't play what's there, play what's not there.” --Miles Davis*

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To learn more or register for FEI's ***“Leadership for a Global Society”*** course September 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at FEI in Charlottesville, VA, please call Barbara Goldman 434/980-6383 or Bonnie Boston 434/980-6277

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### **Policy in a Constitutional System**

#### **Conflict Management – A Higher Calling**

By Michael W. Rawlings, J.D., FEI Faculty

This is the first in a series of articles on Conflict Management and Collaborative Problem Solving.

Why focus on Conflict Management? There has been a recent and noteworthy shift in the Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) for Conflict Management – Leading People. The old ECQ reads: “Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflict and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.” The new ECQ reads: “Encourages creative tension and differences of opinion. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.”

Before we move too far ahead, let's start with a working definition of conflict. One industry standard definition of conflict is “those inevitable differences that arise between people that cause challenges or concern.” This comprehensive definition includes disputes that might need to be resolved, yet it also includes the much more frequent daily tensions between and within individuals, teams and organizations that are pregnant with possibility if well-managed.

The ECQ shift from, “Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations,” to “Encourages creative tension and differences of opinion” is significant. Arguably, the old CM ECQ contributed to a culture of conflict avoidance – even rewarded it. While conflict avoidance can be useful and appropriate, as a default reaction it can have detrimental effects. In practice this has led individuals and teams to tolerate the consequences of impasse, or alternatively

passing off even the most basic of conflicts and disputes to managers or to trained professions in the Legal, Ombudsman, OCR, and Mediation areas. Resulting problems included clogging these offices with issues that were not necessarily within their purview and burdening the system with lengthy and costly processes. Surveys have shown that managers spend up to 25% of their time dealing with conflicts, which many managers find is not a very good use of their time.

As Federal executives under the new ECQ we are being called to creatively engage the tensions of inevitable conflict and to encourage those in our organizations to do the same. The trend is an expectation that leaders create environments where everyone learns and applies skills of conflict management and collaborative problem solving. This allows us to positively alter our cultures and to increase efficiency while creating healthier working environments. For most of us, this means brushing up on or perhaps learning for the first time, effective conflict management skills.

What's possible is tapping the tension of conflict and effectively managing it for growth, creativity and productivity. Creating a conflict competent culture is becoming a key vision of many executives in the public sector. Creating such a culture requires leadership support, skills development and establishing a structure where all members of the organization have a variety of ways and places to manage conflict and resolve disputes effectively and efficiently.

In this series we'll be looking at ways to build cultures of conflict competence from the perspective of the individual, the team and the organization. Before joining the Senior Faculty at FEI in July 2006, I served as Conflict Management Program Officer at TSA/DHS from 2003 to 2006 where I helped build TSA's Integrated Conflict Management System. I would like to acknowledge the great people of TSA and its Model Workplace Program leadership, staff and consultants for the pioneering work in this field within the Federal government.

As you think about conflict management under the new ECQs, it might be helpful to begin by asking a few questions. The following questions may guide you in thinking on the "higher calling" to manage conflict in the workplace:

- a) What would an organization look like after years of conflict culture defined by the old Conflict Management ECQ?
- b) What is possible for your team or organization as a result of the new Conflict Management ECQ?
- c) How can leadership influence the transition to a culture of conflict competency in your team and in your organization?
- d) What is your team or organization already doing well in this area? What are the areas for improvement?

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[Transforming Organizations](#)

## Action Research

### A Guide to Change and Continuous Learning in Organizations (The second article in a series)

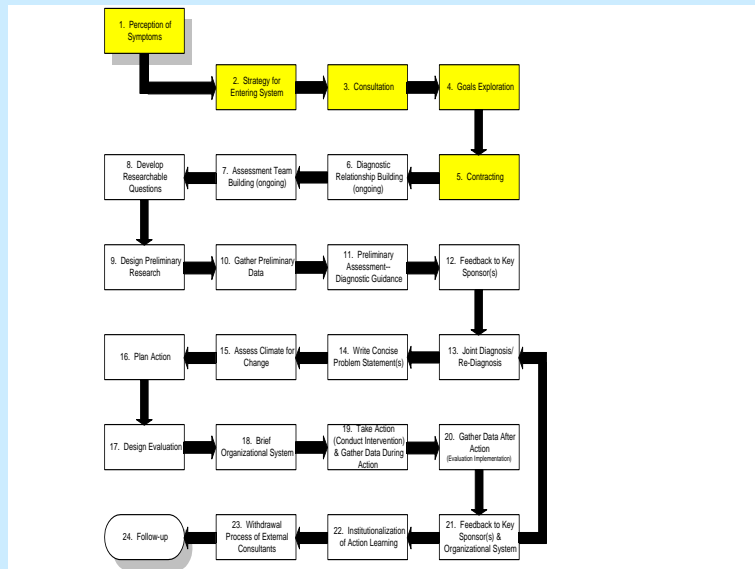
By Beverly R. Fletcher, Ed.D., FEI Faculty and Alfred L. Cooke, Ph.D., Director Center for Organizational Performance

Action research is a powerful way to approach action learning and change in organizations. The action research model provides a logical and practical approach to plan and implement change. This is the second in a series of four articles:

- Article #1: Overview of the Action Research Model (previous issue Vol. 2, Issue 2 – March/April)
- Article #2: Perception of Symptoms → Contracting (this issue Vol. 2, Issue 3 – May/June)
- Article #3: Diagnostic Relationship Building → Write Concise Problem Statement (look for next issue Vol. 2, Issue 4 – July/August)
- Article #4: Assess Climate for Change → Follow-up (Vol. 2, Issue 5 – September/October)

In the previous article we discussed the purpose of action research, key assumptions made by the model, skills and knowledge areas needed to conduct action research, and some preliminary things to do in preparation for using the model. The following are the first five steps of our expanded action research model:

### The Expanded Action Research Model (Phases 1 through 5)



**1. Perception of Symptoms:** *Symptoms* are the pain that cause awareness, alerting key individuals that there is a problem in the organization. This is the preliminary identification of the “presenting problem” or symptoms by those in leadership positions who have the authority to take action. It is important for leaders not to assume that the presenting symptoms are the same as the core problems.

**2. Strategy for Entering the System:** Even before leaders have undertaken an assessment, they must plan a strategy for entering the organization to gather preliminary data to test their assumptions about what is going on in the organization. In this initial phase leaders should thoughtfully plan strategies to establish a good relationship between themselves and their data providers. Such a strategy will enhance the quality of the data gathered as well as provide an avenue for continued quality data gathering. This

involves *proactively* planning ways to:

- Establish open communication
- Build trust

These strategies are critical to the success of any research effort, and need continual thought, updating and revision as the action research relationships unfold.

**3. Consultation:** The leader as action researcher is in essence a "*behavioral scientist.*" Knowledge and skills in human interactions are important tools for the leader who must consult with, actively listen to, and appropriately influence and motivate people in the organization. Hearing and understanding both what is said and the underlying feelings about what is "wrong" are essential skills.

**4. Goals Exploration:** This pre-data collection activity is necessary to bring out the different and often conflicting goals various stakeholders have. It produces the information needed to discover common ground and mutual interests as well as stimulate creative problem solving. The process lends itself to conflict resolution by creating goals, strategies, and action plans that are responsive to multiple needs, expectations, and underlying interests. In exploring goals, the leader must answer a few questions:

- Do various stakeholders have a vision of the end results of the change process?
- What do various stakeholders (including the leader) expect regarding the change process? What are their underlying interests?
- What are the conflicting interests among various stakeholders?
- What are the mutual interests of the various stakeholders?
- Given the various expectations and mutual and conflicting interests, to what goals might all (or a critical mass of) stakeholders agree?

To ensure success of the action research process leaders must take the time to identify conflicting goals prior to launching a change effort within the organization.

**5. Contracting:** Contracting is an important step that leaders often overlook. It establishes the organizations commitment of time and resources to the change effort. One must remember that *contracting is an agreement process.* A physical contract or document may or may not be the end result of that process. There are several things that the leader must explore in contracting:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the action research team, sponsors, data providers, data users, and decision makers
- Establish the goals of the action research effort.
- Establish the appropriate time frame for various stages of the process (diagnosis, analysis, implementation, post data gathering, etc.). This may also be a contingency framework based on completion of certain benchmark actions.
- Establish the extent of the research team's access to the organizations resources, records and other employees.
- Establish the research team's space needs in the organization.

In summary, the leader must create a clear agreement with key stakeholders in the organization as a starting point for assuring the effectiveness of the action research process.

Article number three of the series will continue developing the model by discussing the next nine steps, beginning with *Diagnostic Relationship Building* and ending with *Write Concise Problem Statement(s)*.

If you want assistance with implementing the action research process in your agency, contact Dr. Alfred Cooke, Director of the Center for Organizational Performance at the Federal Executive Institute ([Alfred.cooke@opm.gov](mailto:Alfred.cooke@opm.gov) or 434-980-6360).

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