



# ➡ Face Change with Poise



An Ecstasis White Paper



## Face Change with Poise

The pace of change continues to accelerate. The world works at a faster and faster speed with each passing day. One thing may be certain as we make our way through this dynamic economic reset, things are never going to go back to the way they were.

We believe that people don't fear change; they fear loss. In times of dramatic change, people fear they are no longer in control of their situation. They may also fear that they don't know where things are headed or why things may be happening as they are. Some may feel that they lack the talent to compete and survive in the emerging business environment. Still others may fear that they will lose their connections with their team or organization.

## Leading with Poise

Leading through change requires a different skill set than leading in times of stability. The skills required for leading in a stable environment have more to do with managing a process. We need to be good at analyzing, planning, directing activity, and monitoring situations. Those skills are still important; however we also need to grow a skill set that enables us to lead in a constantly changing environment. These skills have more to do with uncertainty and engaging people to allay fear. In a changing environment we want to be good at providing clarity and reassurance, experimentation, communication, and developing others.

The goal is an engaged and high performing workforce in a constantly changing business environment. The way to get there is leadership that can remain calm in the face of change and employ a new skill set for change with aplomb. At the heart of this new skill set, will be the leader's capacity to lead with poise.

## Leading with Poise

In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2005), poise is defined as “a stably balanced state, an easy self-possessed assurance of manner, gracious tact in coping or handling, a particular way of carrying oneself.” Poise is not something the leader does; it is who the leader is. Poise happens from the inside out.

Leaders seeking to lead with poise will need to create the threshold occasion for themselves and their teams, facilitating the ‘ecstasis’ necessary to compete in the new world in which we live and do business. Organizations will need leadership at all levels with leaders capable of managing complexity: thinking clearly, making smart decisions, motivating themselves, and remaining calm in a fast-paced and hectic reality that is the norm for most of us.

The leader with poise has self-awareness and social awareness and a strong capacity for self-management and relationship management. The leader with poise also has a sense of purpose, and the knowledge, will, skill, and presence to engage others and lead them toward fulfillment of that purpose. We have previously spoken of this capacity as leadership presence. The leader with poise has leadership presence as a result of growing both the doing and being aspects of who they are as leaders.



We can also break down the word poise to specific competencies associated with strong leadership presence and our understanding of innovation leadership and make a closer examination of each competency.

#### P is for Perspective

Leadership involves making decisions. To make decisions we learn the facts and choose a course of action. The problem is that most decision-making is based on the past (e.g., What did I do before in a similar situation?) The leadership presence competency for expanded *perspective* is the ability to hold a challenge, problem, or situation in working memory and extend thinking not only into the past to recall a prior solution or situation, but into the future to imagine a possibility not yet present.

By reaching into the future and imagining alternate time paths and remembering the course of action

already chosen, we expand our perception of the present. The stronger this competency is the greater the likelihood the leader can overcome the tendency to “see what we’re prepared to see (Senge, et. al., 2004).”

Perspective enables the leader to avoid the trap of blindly applying old solutions to new situations. Innovative thinking and decision-making require the ability to “recall” into the future and imagine all the possibilities that exist. Innovation is not possible without this leadership presence competency of perspective. Simply reaching back into one’s past to address current and future business needs will no longer suffice. The new leadership called for in the changing business environment with a high level of complexity will require a strong sense of perspective.

## O is for Organization

Another leadership presence competency is *organization*. This competency has to do with the ability to take an issue apart, analyze the pieces, reconstitute and organize it into new ideas. Organization involves logical inquiry. In every waking moment of every day we use this skill because in each moment we are making decisions. Effective and productive decision-making requires organizational skills. Leaders must be able to carefully examine a problem, situation, challenge, or opportunity quickly and from all sides and then put it all back together. It's never a good thing to have leftover parts when assembling something. "Leave no stone unturned" is the mantra of the leader with strength in this leadership presence competency. Competence with organization is vital for complex problem solving.

## I is for Initiation

Entrepreneurs are extremely competent when it comes to initiation. The leadership presence competency of initiation is the ability to get started on, pay attention to, and finish work. It is the ability to focus attention on a task or series of tasks and sustain that level of attention over a long period of time, even when the work is less than stimulating. To manage complexity as organizations evolve leaders will have to have an entrepreneurial spirit and mindset. Like a successful entrepreneur, the new leader must be a self-starter able to initiate projects without external influence (directions, instructions, orders, etc) while remaining open to supportive interaction and dialogue.

Strength with this competency presupposes a keen ability to discern what deserves to be initiated and carried through to fruition. Finally, this competency provides a grounded-ness that enables the leader to self-impose

a structure and discipline to allow the corporate entrepreneurial vision to be realized.

### S is for Self-Dialogue

Self-dialogue is the ability to engage in an inner conversation to guide one's behavior and direct future actions. The internal desire for self-awareness and self-leadership drive self-dialogue. This leadership presence competency is a critical element in the three above-mentioned competencies.

The pace of business is fast. Our first instinct is to act without reflecting in order to expand our perspective and therefore our organizational abilities may be limited and our results negatively impacted. Our capacity for self-dialogue will strengthen our ability to slow ourselves enough to effectively respond to the uniqueness of each situation.

As important as this self-dialogue competency is to our ability for perspective, organization, and

initiation, the last leadership presence competency is the keystone, the one competency that determines our ability to develop and increase the others.

### E is for Emotional Intelligence

Just as developing the competency of perspective enables the leader to suspend pre-conceived notions and recall the past and the future in decision making, so too, the self-awareness associated with higher emotional intelligence enables the leader to more fully engage each situation, problem, challenge and opportunity and see the infinite possibilities that exist in that connection.

The journey of self-discovery that grows emotional intelligence will also bring a deeper or new understanding of purpose. A sense of purpose and the ability to engage and lead others toward fulfillment of that purpose are aspects of higher leadership presence.

We cannot underestimate the importance of emotional intelligence as a core competency for leaders. "His (Daniel Goleman) own reviews of data involving business and governments leaders suggest that the most successful people have a strong sense of how emotions affect their decisions and workplace relationships. "What you see in these star performers that you don't see as often in average managers are emotional competencies: empathy, sensitivity, whether the person's tuned in, can cooperate well, takes initiative. Technical skill is important – but you can hire other people to do that.' (*Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 2004)"

### Leadership and the Brain

Perspective, Organization, Initiation, Self-Dialogue, and Emotional Intelligence, the leadership presence competencies outlined above, are brain processes known

collectively as the "executive function." In our brains, the prefrontal cortex is the site of executive function brain processing. Executive function describes a set of mental processes that enables such abilities as planning, organizing, strategizing, self-dialogue for emotional self-regulation, impulse control, and paying attention and remembering details, in short many of the elements vital to innovation leadership and being a strong Cisco 3.0 leader. They combine to enable a stronger connection with the world, an increased ability to organize, and an enhanced capacity to plan and direct action toward a stated goal. Developing these competencies will differentiate the new leader from the rest and enable their organizations to move toward their stated goals (increased value) with greater agility and alacrity.



Is there a way to develop our executive functions and grow our leadership presence competencies,

including our emotional intelligence? Of course there is. Our brains are hardwired to make connections. That is how, as we learn and make more and more connections, we make sense of the world. Neuroscience tells us that the brain is plastic, that is, moldable throughout the lifespan. Therefore, it follows that if the leadership presence competencies are in fact brain processes, then we can develop and grow these competencies by focusing our intention on doing so. That's not to say it will be easy; but it is possible. Growing leadership presence means intentionally seeking *ecstasis*, creating threshold occasions and stepping through over and over again.

### Three Steps (Over and Over Again)

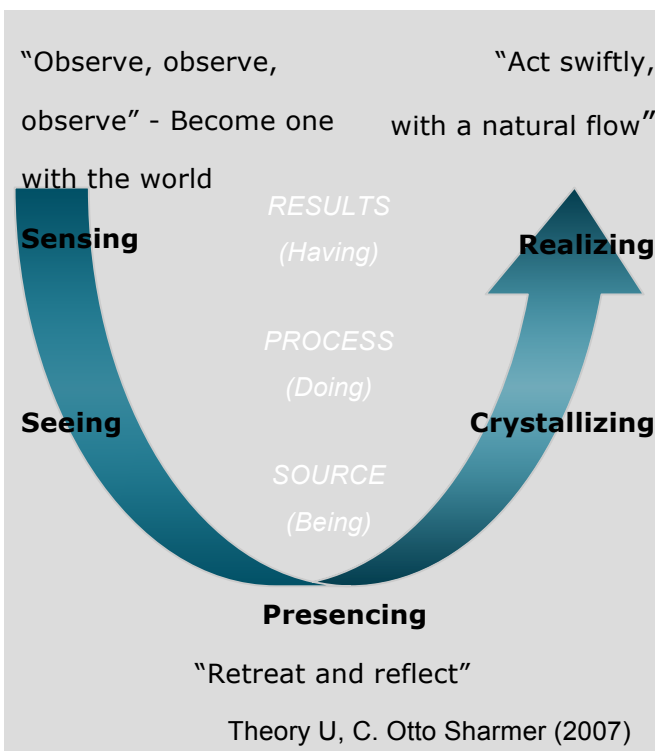
One of the skills we are developing as leaders is to see the systems in which we operate and make sound decisions, which requires poise and

emotional intelligence. To make decisions we learn the facts and choose a course of action. The problem is that most decision-making is based on the past (e.g., Downloading what I did before in a similar situation?). Innovative thinking and decision-making require the ability to recall into the future and imagine all the possibilities that exist.

Otto Scharmer of MIT has developed a theory of different levels of perception and change, using the image of a U to distinguish different levels of perceiving reality and different levels of action that follow from that. (Senge, et. al., 2004, p. 87) All thought follows a U. The problem is that for many the U looks like this  or like this .

Clear thought and movement through a U-shaped process results in aligned, innovative decision making and clear action. It does this by guiding the thinking process to widen the person's focus from results only to

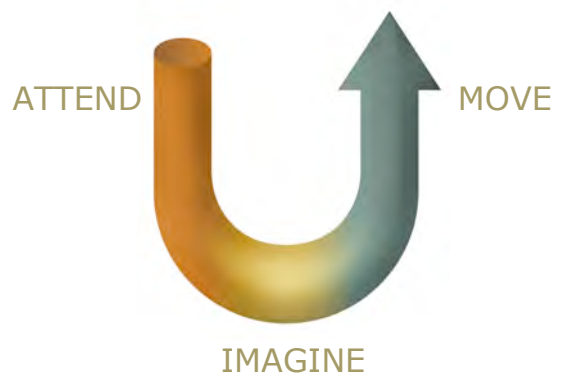
see what processes might be altered to enable the results we desire. Scharmer describes the five aspects of the 'U' movement as extensions of what happens in all learning processes: *Seeing, Sensing, Presencing, Crystallizing, and Realizing.*



Moving through the U takes us to our source (or self) to explore what interior shifts are necessary for us to use the processes that will give us the

results we seek. The bottom of the U is where *ecstasis*, necessary for *autopoiesis*, happens. Structuring our inner dialogue using the U process to provoke and evoke real disruptive change in ourselves can be a powerful way to grow our emotional intelligence and lead with poise.

We've simplified Scharmer's U down to three steps. The three steps are a path of inquiry that results in greater self-awareness, smarter decision-making, and faster action (POISE).



### Step One - Attend

As we go through life, somewhere along the way we begin thinking we know all we need to know to maintain our relationships, do our jobs, and find

success. This knower's attitude is deadly to innovation, creativity, and real success. We will not grow as leaders with a knower's attitude for we are skating along the surface, not allowing the time and space for reflection that takes us to the bottom of our own U to connect with the truest sense of who we are.

Developing 'poise' and growing emotional intelligence begins with self-awareness. We grow our self-awareness through intentional self-reflection, by paying attention to our important questions. This first step is something we've been told all our lives by our parents and teachers - Pay Attention! It is amazing how frequently many of us stop paying attention to what is going on around us and in us. Questions at Step One might include:

- What is my highest purpose in life?
- What do I value?
- What have I learned along the way and come to hold as facts about myself, others, and the world?

- What emotions drive my decisions and how effective am I at containing my negative emotions?
- Where is the experience and result I am hoping for in life?
- How am I getting in the way of my own success?

#### Step Two – Imagine

When we pay attention to who we are, we may find that, to paraphrase Marshall Goldsmith, "what got us here, won't get us there." At step two, we engage our imaginations. We ask questions like, "What does the best possible future look like? What is success? What will I need to let go of to create the best possible future?" Answering these questions allows the future to factor into our decision-making. The bottom of the U, the 'threshold occasion' is where the past and future intersect.

As we've stated earlier, leaders have a responsibility to seek *ecstasis* – to create a 'threshold occasion' for themselves, their teams, and the organization. The second step of the

reflective process can be that 'threshold occasion.' By taking the time to stop and reflect before jumping into action, we align our actions with our truest selves, our values and purpose. We open the door to more possibilities and reduce the likelihood of missteps or inauthentic living. This second step doesn't have to take an inordinate amount of time. It is vital however, and cannot be skipped.

### Step Three: Move

When we move it is either in the right direction or not. The first two steps greatly increase the likelihood that our movement is in the right direction. The third step involves laying out a strategy and creating a game plan that takes us in the direction we want to go. This step ensures real clarity. Questions at this step include, "Given where I want to go, what is the best way forward? What might I do to sustain my focus as I move forward?"

Moving up the "U," we gain speed as we move from *Presencing* to *Realizing* (Scharmer, 2007). After paying attention to our current realities and imagining the best possible future, at the third step we choose the optimal solution rather than the obvious one and begin to chart it out.

### A I M

Putting it together we come up with some questions that we can ask ourselves over and over again to ensure our actions are aligned with our truest selves and strongest desires for the future.

- Where do I want to go?
- Where am I now?
- What does the best possible future look like?
- What is the best way forward?

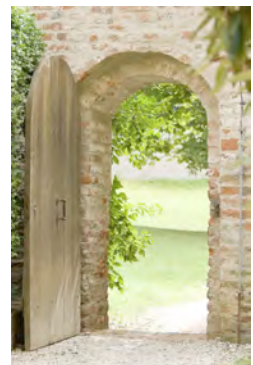
Success or failure in this work relies on a leader's level of curiosity. Successful leaders are curious. Curiosity leads to inquiry. Inquiry is a way of listening and asking questions

and one of the leader's most important skills. Inquiry helps us reduce the risk of downloading and ensure that we move down to the bottom of the U and back up the other side. If we discipline ourselves to use these questions as a way of practicing leadership, we may find that we grow our emotional intelligence and lead with poise. Asking these questions facilitates growth, our own and the growth of each system in which we live, work, and play in the world.

Why bother? Peter Senge, et. al. in the book Presence (2004) put it this way, "As models of leadership shift from organizational hierarchies with leaders at the top to more distributed shared networks, a lot changes. For these networks to work with real awareness, many people will need to be deeply committed to cultivating their capacity to serve what's seeking to emerge (p. 192)." Leadership is the final determinant to success. Howard Gardner, in Leading Minds: An

Anatomy of Leadership defines a leader as "an individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors of a significant number of individuals (1995)." Effective leadership that positively affects the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals and teams (perturbs the system to evoke and sustain real disruptive change) involves more than knowing how to manage the tasks of leadership. Senge, again in Presence (2004) writes, "A new kind of leadership is called for. If you want to be a leader,....You must understand yourself first."

"Wherever you are is the starting point."  
Kabir





## Emotional Intelligence: A Self-Survey

On the following pages you will find a self-survey of emotional intelligence. The survey is based upon Daniel Goleman's model of emotional intelligence. There are four categories in the survey: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management.

Scoring is on a scale of one (1) to five (5). Determine your score for a category by dividing the total score by the number of capabilities listed in that category. For example, in the Self-Awareness category there are 12 items listed. Divide your total by 12 to get your score for Self-Awareness.

Each number in the scale represents the following descriptors of your level of ability regarding an element of emotional intelligence:

- 5 – Masterful
- 4 – Excellent
- 3 – Proficient
- 2 – Adequate
- 1 – Ineffective

At the conclusion of the survey there will be some questions to spark your reflection and action planning to grow your emotional intelligence in the areas where you identify development opportunities.

Growing POISE

## Self Awareness

I recognize how my emotions affect me and impact my job performance.	1	2	3	4	5
I know what is most important to me and use my core values to apply perspective in complex situations.	1	2	3	4	5
I can easily talk about my feelings with candor and authenticity.	1	2	3	4	5
I can easily convey my highest purpose in life to others.	1	2	3	4	5
I am fully aware of my strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
I am able to laugh at myself.	1	2	3	4	5
I am open to feedback and seek it out on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a strong desire to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
I play to my strengths.	1	2	3	4	5
I welcome challenges.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel a strong sense of self-confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a strong presence.	1	2	3	4	5
Add circled items to calculate total score. Divide total by the number of items (12) to get your Self Awareness score.					

## Self Management

I have a strong capacity for managing negative emotions and counterproductive impulses.	1	2	3	4	5
I can calm myself fairly quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
I remain clearheaded in stressful situations.	1	2	3	4	5
I handle confrontations easily and with a calm directness.	1	2	3	4	5
I live my values.	1	2	3	4	5
I easily share my feelings, beliefs, and motivations.	1	2	3	4	5
I freely admit my mistakes and shortcomings.	1	2	3	4	5
I address unethical behavior when I see it.	1	2	3	4	5
I can juggle multiple demands without losing focus or energy.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable with uncertainty.	1	2	3	4	5
I easily adapt to new challenges and adjust my thinking and behavior in the face of change.	1	2	3	4	5
I have high personal standards that drive me to continuously improve.	1	2	3	4	5

## Self Management

I regularly set personal and professional goals for myself and work to achieve them.	1	2	3	4	5
I am in control of my destiny.	1	2	3	4	5
I create opportunities rather than wait for them to arrive.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not hesitate to cut through red tape or bend the rules to achieve success.	1	2	3	4	5
I roll with the punches.	1	2	3	4	5
I see opportunities in setbacks.	1	2	3	4	5
I expect the best of people.	1	2	3	4	5
I see the glass as 'half-full.'	1	2	3	4	5
Add circled items to calculate total score. Divide total by the number of items (20) to get your Self Management score.					

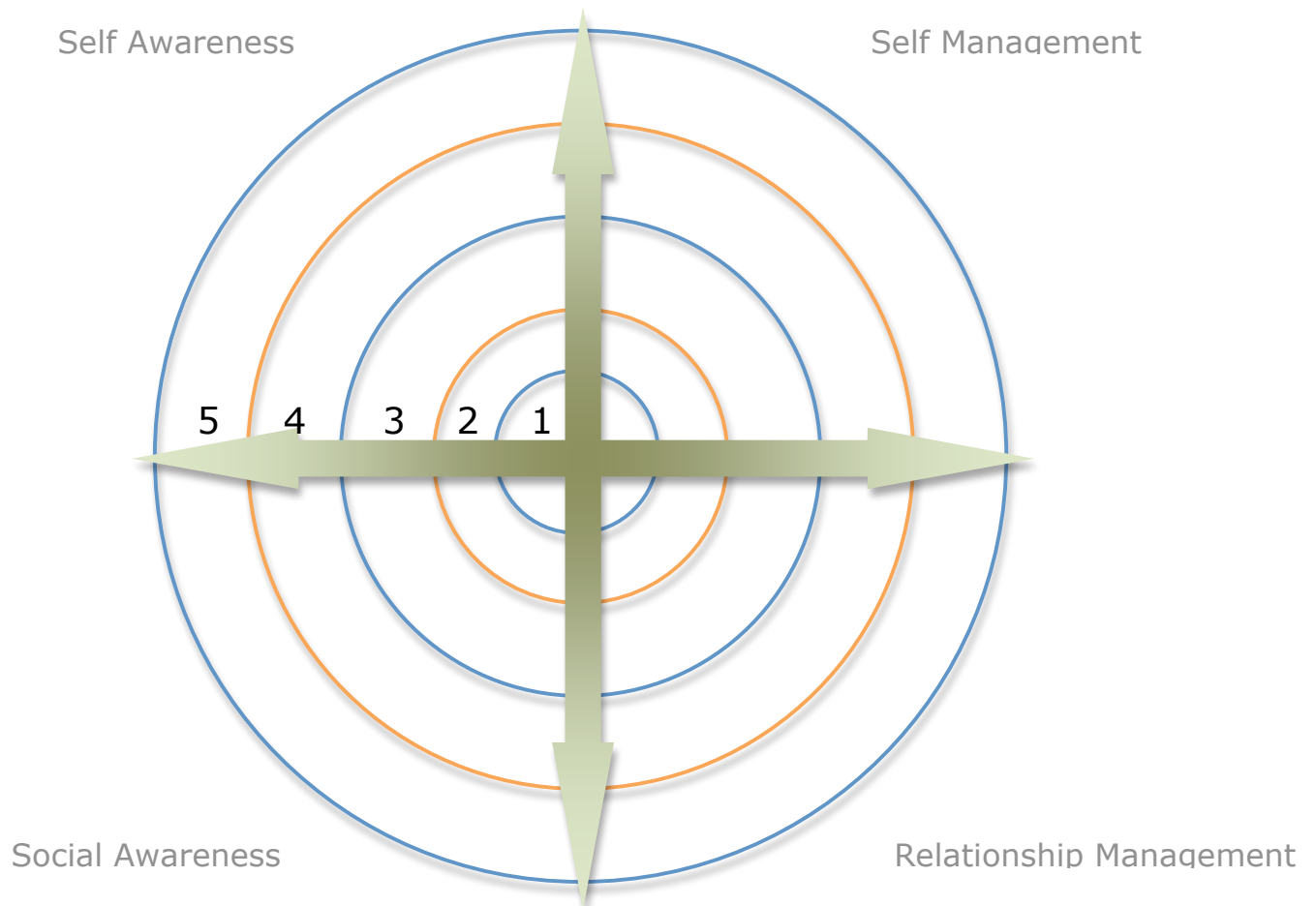
## Social Awareness

I easily connect with others.	1	2	3	4	5
I easily sense what others are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5
I easily see other people's perspectives and points of view.	1	2	3	4	5
I get along well with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good sense of the political realities at work in my organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the unspoken rules of our organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I foster an emotional atmosphere in which people working with our customers can keep those relationships on the right track.	1	2	3	4	5
I carefully watch customer satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
I make myself available to team members, stakeholders, and internal and external customers.	1	2	3	4	5
Add circled items to calculate total score. Divide total by the number of items (10) to get your Social Awareness score.					

## Relationship Management

I easily communicate my vision of the future with others.	1	2	3	4	5
I lead by example.	1	2	3	4	5
I engage others with a sense of purpose, making work exciting and engaging.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to create buy-in from my team and key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
I maintain a strong network of support.	1	2	3	4	5
I am concerned with the development and success of those around me.	1	2	3	4	5
I coach and mentor others.	1	2	3	4	5
I readily give timely and constructive feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
I easily recognize when it is time for change.	1	2	3	4	5
I challenge the status quo.	1	2	3	4	5
I face conflicts directly, acknowledging all sides and looking for the mutually beneficial solution.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a responsible team player.	1	2	3	4	5
I work to create close relationships that go beyond work obligations.	1	2	3	4	5
Add circled items to calculate total score. Divide total by the number of items (13) to get your Relationship Management score.					

## Emotional Intelligence Results



Plot your emotional intelligence scores on this chart. You can arrive at a total score for this survey by adding the category scores and dividing by four (4).



## EI Inquiry

Using the results as a starting point, here are some questions to guide your inquiry to increase awareness, grow emotional intelligence, and lead with poise.

### Attend

- What is the lesson learned about your level of self-awareness?
- What is your network telling you about your emotional intelligence and impact?
- What triggers negative emotions in you?
- How do you calm yourself?
- What significant events have shaped who you are and how you show up as a leader?
- What beliefs do you have about yourself, others, your work, or the world that have become counterproductive and now hold you back?
- What interferes with your ability to motivate yourself?
- What gets in the way of your empathizing with others?
- How does your skill level in social situations impact your performance and advancement?

### Imagine

- What are your highest purpose and core values? How are these consistent or inconsistent with your role and how you approach your work?
- What might you do to begin or restart and sustain a practice of self-reflection and discovery to grow self-awareness?
- What are some ways you can grow your capacity to contain the emotions that arise in you and negatively impact your interactions with others?
- Who would you invite to give you feedback on a regular basis?
- How might mentoring or coaching new leaders facilitate your growth?
- What would it look like if you were an amazing networker?

### Move

- What change to your routine (daily, weekly, monthly) would facilitate your growing your emotional intelligence?
- What can you/will you do to remind yourself of the need to show more empathy and to actually develop a greater ability to demonstrate empathy toward others?
- How will you model leadership that encourages teamwork and collaboration?
- How will you expand and interact with your network to effectively manage your relationships?



## References

Gardner, Howard	<u>Leading Minds</u>	(1995)
Goleman, Daniel	<u>Primal Leadership</u>	(2002)
Senge, et al	<u>Presence</u>	(2004)
Scharmer, C. Otto	<u>Theory U</u>	(2007)