

Interview with David T. Kyle, Ph.D., author of *The Four Powers of Leadership*

What is so important about leaders and leadership?

At the very beginning of the book I suggest that there is an emotional pull that we all have toward leaders. We want someone to help us define our purpose, whether it is finding some ultimate "truth" or "revelation", accomplishing some great goal, or simply making a lot of money. We want leaders who know how to tap a larger, more exciting purpose that we can connect to our individual and unique purposes. There is enough research that shows that people want leaders who are capable of inspiring and motivating them to follow a strong articulated vision. This seems to be a unique characteristic of leadership.

Define leadership a little more.

Leadership is something one develops and grows into, not something one is born or trained to do. No particular personality trait—like being an extrovert or introvert—makes or breaks a leader. No level of IQ or intuitive ability determines whether one can become a leader. It is also clear from countless studies that good managers of people or things do not necessarily become good leaders. In my view, being a leader is not about acting out a role, but rather about accessing the power to maximize one's unique and individual capacities and potentials. Leading is not primarily about doing something, but rather about being something. The development of leadership is about becoming conscious of both the power within oneself and the power inherent within the position one holds. In a fundamental sense, the challenge of being a leader is about integrating personal power with one's positional power.

What is this power you are talking about?

Power is the primary definer of leadership. The dictionary defines power in four interrelated ways. First, it is the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively. Second, it is a specific capacity, faculty, or aptitude. Third, power is a strength or force exerted or capable of being exerted. And fourth, it is the ability or official capacity to exercise control or authority. The first two definitions represent personal power that is an inherent part of a person. The second two definitions represent the use of power through position. Using these definitions, power is a condition of both being and doing. In positional leadership, the power the person exercises is given through the role. The role of president of the company, master of the scout troop, or Prime Minister defines the scope of powers and rights the person has over the situation. In personal power, one does not have to hold a title or be given the power through some authoritative agency. Rather, power comes from some inner source within the person through a specific capacity, faculty or aptitude as the dictionary defines it. This power is what we call charisma or presence. When you're around these "power" people you feel pulled toward them. We feel more energized and motivated to do things when around them. We like being with them, talking with them and doing things for them.

You talk about a gap between personal power and positional power. What is this gap?

When people are promoted or seek a higher position because their skills and competencies have made them successful at one level, their leadership behavior often changes dramatically once they assume their new position. When shifting from one level of positional power to a higher level of positional power and responsibility, a gap emerges. This gap occurs between the inherent and defined power of the new position and the personal power and influence the person has developed that created access to the new position. This gap is a chasm for many people. What they each achieved as leaders in their previous respective positions seems impossible to achieve in their new ones.

The difference between what these individuals imagined the new positions to be and what the positions actually demand from them may be frightening. Many people come to feel they are "faking" the job. Others put in longer hours, thinking that more time will help. Still others hide behind the new authority of the position, becoming abusive to employees or, rather than motivating people, order them around because they are the boss. This tension between the personal and positional power not only activates the shadow or negative characteristics of their personality, but also fundamentally reveals how and where people need to grow and develop.

Given a new positional challenge, an individual must develop the strength to meet the overwhelming intensity of his or her leadership environment, improve the capacity to penetrate an ever-changing set of problems, and open the unconscious doorways to their own emotional and behavioral conditioning.

What are the four powers you describe in the book?

The four powers I describe—Intention, Wisdom, Compassion and Presence—are what psychologists call archetypes or primordial images that all of us hold deeply within our unconscious. These "powers of leadership" are four among many different kinds of psychic structures potentially within us. These "powers," or structures, are patterns and images (gestalts) that are somehow held within a person and that cause one to respond, react and behave in specific ways. These four archetypes are the Warrior, Magician, Artist and Sovereign. I've given them more modern names. There are negative manifestations to these powers, but let me state them in their positive characteristics.

Intention is the power of the Warrior archetype. Most leaders begin to build their career upon this archetype. The Warrior has learned to be self-disciplined, intensely task-focused, and committed to the time and energy required to fulfill whatever the leader or organization needs of him or her. A person with Intention is willing to sacrifice for some larger, transpersonal purpose. This individual demonstrates strong loyalty to people and principles, and is faithful in fulfilling whatever is required to serve the "kingdom" — the organization or the leader.

Wisdom is the action of the Magician archetype. When someone says, "That's like magic. How did you do that?" we are experiencing Wisdom in action. Wisdom appears magical because it is a combination of skill and knowledge about something that, through much experience, has moved from practice to art. To master the art of something means a person has gained a certain level of control and has the ability to use art to transform situations.

Compassion is the power of the Artist archetype. Understanding this power in leadership requires understanding the meaning of the word compassion. The Latin *com-* means "with," while *passion* comes from *passure* or *pati* - "to suffer." Compassion is literally having the passion to suffer with people. Empathy and creativity are the means by which the Artist confronts difficult and challenging situations. The core of the Artist's passion is the tendency toward strong feelings and emotions as well as love for people and things. At the heart of the Artist is spontaneity and spirituality.

Presence is the archetype of the Sovereign, or king and queen characteristics of leadership. The power of Presence in a leader provides context—an energetic, compelling force—from which a person can create an emotional bonding or personal relationship to a project, company or country. For a leader, the power of Presence within him or her embodies qualities of personal and organizational ambition, and provides vision that gives meaning to an immediate activity. Presence nurtures others through mentorship. It encourages diversity, risk taking and vulnerability in others. Presence expresses stewardship of the enterprise and provides order for the organization as well as affirming, recognizing and "blessing" people. Most of all, Presence is that intangible quality of identification that people make with a leader who motivates, inspires and excites them.

How does a person develop these powers?

The process of cultivating the Four Powers works through the dynamics of opposite polarities. Presence is balanced by Wisdom, while Intention and Compassion balance each other. At any given point in a leader's development, one power may pull on its opposite in order to express itself. Or the conditions of the "realm"—the organization, community, etc. — may demand that the leaders emphasize and use one or two powers more than the others for the good of the people or projects at hand.

In the book I describe each of the positive and negative aspects of the power and give a variety of tools and methods for cultivating these powers. However, rather than just a theory I've drummed up I am giving the observations of many leaders past and present and the natural process they've hit upon for development. Powerful and successful leaders — leaders who maintain their position for a long time — go through a natural developmental, learning and maturing process. They take their original leadership qualities or special expertise and consciously work on developing it. There are six things that I've observed and studied:

- 1) They learn to reflect on themselves.
- 2) They learn to see into and beyond what others see around them in the conditions and situations of their environment.
- 3) They learn to focus less on themselves and more on the people who are attracted to working with them.
- 4) They gain perspective on and develop humility regarding the depth of their innate capabilities.
- 5) They continually attempt to access other hidden parts of themselves, which in turn engenders a fuller capacity for leadership. Finally,
- 6) these leaders discover that leading is a practice to be worked on every day.

*Finally, David, what would you like people to get from reading *The Four Powers*?*

The promise of the book is to provide some insight and an opportunity for self-reflection, and to increase a person's motivation so that they continue to cultivate their own leadership and fulfill the next natural step in their development. I hope that one or two ideas, a story here and there, or some of the models or techniques will help a person further their own development process and give them more enthusiasm to trust their own powers.