

Intentional Leadership: 12 Lenses for Focusing Your Strengths, Managing Your Weaknesses, and Achieving Your Purpose

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Seeing ourselves as we truly are is difficult, especially when we're trying to understand our blind spots. They're called blind spots for a reason! In the book *Being Wrong* (2010), Katherine Schultz details how we recognize mistakes others make far faster than our own—and, how we tend to dismiss new information that contradicts our decisions or beliefs, no matter how trustworthy the source.

Leaders, whose decisions and actions have far-reaching effects, need tools that help them look in the mirror and recognize not only the strengths on which they build their style, but those blind spots that, if not managed, have the potential to harm their careers and the work, morale, effectiveness and futures of those they lead.

Jungian type is a valuable mirror for both strengths and blind spots. In my upcoming book *Intentional Leadership: 12 Lenses for Focusing Strengths, Managing Weaknesses, and Achieving Your Purpose* (Triple Nickel, 2012), leaders at all levels of organizations can use the tools to identify priorities, map them against 12 key leadership considerations, reflect on whether any blind spots could undermine their effectiveness in a given role, and plan action steps to manage those blind spots.

Chart 1 summarizes these 12 key tasks of leadership and the related priorities. The following process is designed to help a client—or yourself—be *intentional* about leadership.

1. Think about a specific leadership position, either your current role or one to which you aspire.
2. Consider each of the Leadership Priorities (Chart 2)
3. Quickly sort the Priorities into two groups:
 - a. Yes, this priority will help me be successful in this particular leadership situation
 - b. No, this priority isn't essential in this particular situation
4. Then, concentrate on your "Yes's." Which are most essential? Choose no more than **ten**. This is a bit harder than it sounds, for as you read through the list, you'll find that all have merit.
5. On Chart 1, underline your Top Ten Priorities.

Now, look at the patterns. Have any type preferences been left out, i.e., none of your Top Ten Priorities match that preference's side of the lenses? For example, have you marked several Priorities that match the Extraverted side of Lenses 1, 2, and 3, but few or none on the Introverted side? If so, what might that mean in this particular leadership position? The full model also includes the EQi 2.0™ subscales.

This is the heart of intentional leadership: thinking in advance about what your natural preferences and priorities bring to your role *and* what you might naturally overlook. For the latter, how might those blind spots hinder effective leadership in a particular situation?

Note that intentional leadership isn't about using each preference equally, or equally well. *Balance*, in the world of psychological type, means using each preference appropriately. Intentional leaders work to gain *conscious control* of their preferences, recognizing when their own style is working and when they need to adjust to meet the needs of their followers, cope with difficult circumstances, or strategize to alleviate stress, conflict or other workplace dilemmas that may derail the best-laid of plans.

Here's an example of an "unintentional" leader—someone who didn't think through the consequences of leading exclusively from his own style. Back in my financial consultant days, I interviewed all the employees of a small bank before beginning the full strategic planning process. As I debriefed the senior officers about the trends and themes I'd heard, I pointed out, "The tellers are asking for a change to the policy that they stand all day in order to greet customers. Several are having health problems."

The bank president, who preferred Sensing and Thinking, responded, "If they don't stand, they can't see customers coming in. We tried stools but the tellers couldn't see the door then. The teller station design's the problem, but we don't have thousands of dollars sitting around for remodeling. I've told them and told them, there's no alternative."

After a bit more discussion, I convinced the officers to let the tellers meet to discuss alternative solutions. Two days later, I heard from the president. "One of them talked to a builder. It'll cost a total of \$300 to remove the marble tops, cut eight inches off each counter, and put the marble back on. I'm a bit embarrassed that I didn't ask for input earlier. I guess I hadn't listened seriously when the head teller told me that three of them had been regularly seeing their doctors because of back problems due to standing all day. I'll be apologizing to all of them."

The President's leadership priorities revolved around Efficiency and Fair-Mindedness, at the expense of Empathy and Openness. Take a look at Lens 6, Balancing Facts and Clarity with Possibilities and Ambiguity, and Lens 7, Balancing Logic with Values. The tools of *Intentional Leadership* helped him see that his natural strengths, so key to his success in his role, sometimes blinded him to other sources of wisdom (the tellers) and the impact of cut-and-dried decisions. As coaches and consultants, we can use these tools to help leaders be intentional about recognizing where their strengths may become problematic.

Chart 1: 12 Lenses for Leadership with Associated Leadership Priorities

Note: In the book Intentional Leadership, the Leadership Priorities are each printed on separate cards, making the process of choosing one's Top Ten Leadership Priorities a tactile exercise. The definitions on the cards clarify how each ties to a specific lens.

Extraversion		Introversion	
1. Balancing Outer Focus <i>Networking, Relationships</i>	with	Inner Focus <i>Individuality, Personal Development</i>	
2. Balancing Breadth of Environment <i>Variety, Influence</i>	with	Depth of Effort <i>Depth, Legacy</i>	
3. Balancing Leadership <i>Mentoring, Promoting</i>	with	Listening <i>Empowerment, Connecting</i>	
Sensing		Intuition	
4. Balancing Reality <i>Loyalty, Accountability</i>	with	Vision <i>Visioning, Optimism</i>	
5. Balancing the Known <i>Experience, Creativity with the Known</i>	with	The New <i>Challenge, Creativity with the New</i>	
6. Balancing Facts and Clarity <i>Efficiency, Dependability</i>	with	Possibilities and Ambiguity <i>Openness, Originality</i>	
Thinking		Feeling	
7. Balancing Logic <i>Fair-Mindedness</i>	with	Values <i>Empathy</i>	
8. Balancing Outcomes <i>Results</i>	with	People <i>Harmony</i>	
9. Balancing Individual Trust <i>Expertise, Autonomy</i>	with	Team Trust <i>Appreciation, Collaboration</i>	
Judging		Perceiving	
10. Balancing Planning <i>Organization</i>	with	Flexibility <i>Adaptability</i>	
11. Balancing Goal Orientation <i>Achievement, Perseverance</i>	with	Engagement <i>Enjoyment, Fulfillment</i>	
12. Balancing Limits <i>Balance</i>	with	Opportunities <i>Discovery</i>	

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Chart 2: The Leadership Priorities

Consider how important each of these is to effective leadership in your current or future role. Then, choose your Top 10 Leadership Priorities. Note that all of these might be important in different roles; your purpose in choosing your Top Ten is to think intentionally about a specific role. The Priorities and Lenses are a guide in pondering, If these are my top priorities, what accompanying blind spots might surface? How can I leverage my strengths to ensure that none of these create significant problems?

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Accountability | ___ 23. Expertise |
| ___ 2. Achievement | ___ 24. Fair-Mindedness |
| ___ 3. Adaptability | ___ 25. Fulfillment |
| ___ 4. Appreciation | ___ 26. Harmony |
| ___ 5. Autonomy | ___ 27. Individuality |
| ___ 6. Balance | ___ 28. Influence |
| ___ 7. Challenge | ___ 29. Legacy |
| ___ 8. Collaboration | ___ 30. Loyalty |
| ___ 9. Connecting | ___ 31. Mentoring |
| ___ 10. Challenge | ___ 32. Networking |
| ___ 11. Collaboration | ___ 33. Openness |
| ___ 12. Connecting | ___ 34. Optimism |
| ___ 13. Creativity with the Known | ___ 35. Originality |
| ___ 14. Creativity with the New | ___ 36. Organization |
| ___ 15. Depth | ___ 37. Personal Development |
| ___ 16. Dependability | ___ 38. Perseverance |
| ___ 17. Discovery | ___ 39. Promoting |
| ___ 18. Efficiency | ___ 40. Relationships |
| ___ 19. Empathy | ___ 41. Results |
| ___ 20. Enjoyment | ___ 42. Variety |
| ___ 21. Empowerment | ___ 43. Visioning |
| ___ 22. Experience | |