A GUIDE TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

"It takes a deep commitment to change and an even deeper commitment to grow. — Ralph Ellison

By Murray Johannsen (2009). Feel free to connect with the author by LinkedIn, Google+ or by email

Transformational leaders has been written about for thousands of years—being both praised (Christ and Buddha) and cursed (Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan). And transformational leaders are increasingly in demand when you want to:

- Escape the trap of the status quo,
- Grow a small business in to a larger one
- Create and Innovate, and
- Change Others & Change your Self.

Why Organizations Need Transformational Leaders

"The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on transformational leadership. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develop them." — John C Maxwell (2001) The 17th Irrefutable Laws of Teamwork, page 185

Over 40 years ago, a German psychologist grew interested in how humans learn. He ran an experiment where he taught a six-step process to transfer water between two containers. After the explanation, he had people practice this technique a few times. He then demonstrated a 3-step process to transfer the water. Despite the obvious ease of the new and improved
method, only fifty percent of the group used it. Luchen’s realized that humans quickly form habits. Unfortunately, once a habit forms it’s difficult to modify, even when the new behavior is clearly better than the old.

Habits also form in organizations. The U. S. steel industry is a perfect example of companies refusing to do business differently. The seeds of decline were sown over many years. The crisis started when Japanese steelmakers began to produce high quality steel. It deepened when Japanese companies could beat the price offered by most U.S. manufacturers. This occurred despite high transportation costs. The Japanese had to transport scrap iron from the Great Lakes to Japan. In Japan it was turned into a finished product and shipped back to the United States. Once the quality and productivity advantage was lost, it was just a matter of time until profit margins started eroding and jobs started disappearing.

Organizational dry rot takes many forms. A particularly insidious form consists of a state of complacency were individuals believe, “It ain't broke,” and "It doesn't need fixing.” This love of the status quo is especially dangerous in industries with a rapid rate of technical change.

To survive, organizations must grow and adapt. They must continually try out and adapt new ideas. And that is why they need transformational leaders.

**Transformational Leadership Definitions**

It would be wonderful if this were true, but the same words often have different meanings. To understand what it means to be a transformational leader, take a look at some of the definitions presented below.

"Transformational leadership is a type of leadership style that leads to positive changes in those who follow." — psychology.about.com

"Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. Wikipedia"

"A style of leadership in which the leader identifies the needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group." - BusinessDictionary.com

"A leadership style that involves generating a vision Or the organization and inspiring followers to meet the challenges that it sets. Transformational leadership depends on the leader's ability to appeal to the higher values and motives of followers and to inspire a feeling of loyalty and trust.” - Encyclopedia.com
Common Elements of the Definition

It's a Leadership Style. Transformational leadership is a leadership style — one of many different leadership styles.

It Involves Change. Transformational leadership and those who follow it are change oriented. They are not creatures of the status quo. Transformational leaders are men and women of action who understand that "good enough" never is. And what works, could always be made better. That progress is not a dirty word to be resisted in the name of tradition, of order, of the routine. Sometimes they live within the status quo but their minds see what could be changed.

Elements Lacking A Consensus

Orientation Toward The Greater Good. Certain writers assume transformational leaders are always good and that the changes they bring always positive. From a standpoint of teaching the young, we want to emphasize the positive. However, this viewpoint excludes many transformational leaders who made the world a worse place.

The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership

"A rotting fish begins to stink at the head." - Italian Proverb

Hitler was an extremely effective, charismatic leader who turned a weak democratic state into a strong totalitarian one. He remained an amazing popular leader who retained power until the very end. Few Germans questioned his decisions, goals, methods and the vision of a thousand year Reich. However, that vision brought ruin to Germany and much of Europe. In fact, the greatest mass murderers were transformational leaders. On a short list of 20th Century leaders that wanted to transform people by killing them would be:

- Mao Tse Dung
- Joseph Stalin
- Adolf Hitler
- Pol Pot.
transformational leaders is who make a judgment on whether the changes they initiated made life better or worse. As one can see from the list above, change does not always mean a society prospers. Sometimes the transformational efforts lead to the destruction of those taking up the call. This is an important thing to understand about transformational leadership — sometimes these leaders do not always make things better — sometimes they can make things worse. Progress is not assured. (The Economist: The Idea of Progress).

Take the example of the First Emperor of China. One can argue the end (unifying China) was admirable. However, to achieve that end, the means used by the Emperor was war — wars resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands. (Qin Shi Huang, Wikipedia)

For transformational leaders to always make things better, we would have to assume a set of virtues and an ability to make wise decisions. However, it is often the case that they lack both wisdom and virtue (Capital Virtues, Second Exodus)

**Transformational Leadership In Everyday Life**

"Lead, follow or get out of the way. " — American Saying

**Parents.** One can argue that parents are transformational leaders within a small group called the family. They have the task of turning an extremely selfish entity called a child into a human being. I had a friend say to me once that children are animals, they must be transformed in human beings by good parents.

**Coaches.** The transformational task of a coach is dual in nature. First, one must install in players the skills and motivation to
keep trying despite many setbacks. And in some sports such as basketball and soccer, one takes selfish individuals and turns them into team players.

**Religious Leaders.** A tougher challenge here. They seek to turn the flawed into the moral and the selfish into the ethical.

**Entrepreneurs.** Almost all the writing focuses on the managerial side of being an entrepreneur. However, they must also exhibit transformational leadership or their organizations fail to grow. It is as simple, and as complex, as that.

Most theories of leadership development stress how to be effective within the status quo—what's called transactional leadership. A leader using this style can be very influential, but they change very little. To use a popular expression, these people are good at "rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic", but they can't keep the ship from sinking.

Unfortunately, many organizations run lean on transformational leaders, the vast majority of the leaders inside organizations being transactional. Thus we see organizations decline as there is an increasingly disconnect between "the way things should be done" and "the way we do things here."

**Transformational Leadership And Emotional Intelligence**

There are a number of leader styles, some relatively easy to do. But still others require a great deal of practice along with determined effort to build the component skills. This is the case with transformational leadership.

All individuals who aspire to become great transformational leaders must master their own emotions. After all, would you want to follow someone who has anger management problems? Effective transformational leaders understand how another will respond to a persuasive or motivational attempt. And when they do not correctly anticipate, they have enough empathy to adjust.

One might say this theory is a correction for the assumption made in business schools that
humans are rationally. In fact, this is a key assumption underlying the dominant theories held by the field of economics.

Transformational leaders cannot assume logic and rationale in responding to change, one will have to deal with illogic and negative emotions. And so, the importance of being high on emotional intelligence.

"Only those who do not seek power are qualified to hold it." — Plato

Technically, emotional intelligence is not about leadership. The Emotional Intelligence approach stresses five developmental areas:

- Self-regulation
- Social Skills
- Empathy
- Self-Awareness, and
- Achievement Motivation

Leader's need to have a number of different types of skills. One of the practical skills transformational leaders need to develop this the ability to read people's emotions. It's not as easy as it sounds, and different cultures have different facial expressions for different types of emotions.

Take the short test and see how good you are.

Is Emotional Intelligence Genetic or Learned?

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is assumed to be learned (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). It therefore is an extremely important skill set to being an effective transformational leader (Goleman, 2013). Even so, EQ still is not an easy thing to master.

Unlike IQ, it is thought that your EQ can keep growing throughout life—and in some it does. However, since most of us will never be a diplomat, we don't develop our human relations skills fully. A macho male (or female) will not develop empathy since it's too "touchy feely." And partly lack of growth has to do with inbuilt problems associated with an immature Ego, one symptom of which is low self-awareness and self-discipline. Of course, many of us would like to make self-improvements, but there never seems to have enough energy left over at the end of the day.

It has yet to be shown that extremely high IQs are not that important in transformational leadership. Nor has it been determined what personality traits are necessary elements with this style.

In any case, since both of these have a pretty high genetic component, maybe they aren't worth changing. For example, one could argue that it's nearly impossible to change IQ. But while traits can be changed, it this is a difficult thing to do..
The four theorists in America associated with the development of a set of theories describing transformational leadership.

**Burns, James MacGregor**

James McGregor Burns (1978) is a Pulitzer Prize author who wrote a classic book titled *Leadership*. He eloquently described qualities transformational leaders possess in different fields of endeavors ranging from the military, to business, to politics.

**Bass, Bernard**

in many articles and in his book, *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*, Bass talked about the fundamental theoretical qualities that define transformational leadership from its polar opposite, transactional leadership. According to Bass, these individuals possess:

- **Inspirational Motivation.** This is one of those leadership qualities that is hard to define; like beauty, you know it when you experience it. I remember a quote, about a charismatic individual by the name of Oliver North. One of his men once said about him, "I would follow him to hell since he is the only man I know who could get me back."

- **Individualized Consideration.** This involves the creation of a compelling picture of the future, a desired future state that people identify with. By creating this vision, the leader provides a means for people to develop commitment, a common goal around which to rally, and a way for people to feel successful.

- **Intellectual stimulation.** Transformational leaders show new ways of looking at old problems, they challenge the existing boundaries and the mental prisons people put themselves into.

- **Idealized Influence.** To inspire is difficult, requiring as as it does a decent understanding of psychology.

**Goleman, Daniel**

What does a psychologist know about leadership? Quite a lot in this case. Of the many psychologists who wrote in this area is Daniel Goleman. His name is most associated with this concept primarily because of two widely read books he wrote. He has also written a third book on emotional intelligence called, "Primal Leadership."

**Johannsen, Murray**

Mr. Johannsen mainly focuses on the elements of learning to be a transformational leader. It is focused on four competencies, four transformational catalysts that one can develop. These include:

- The Skill of Building a Skill
- The Transformational Mind-set
- Using Social Influence
- Striving Toward Self-Mastery
Performing successfully as a transformational leadership requires characteristics above and beyond those leaders who function within the status quo. For example, it requires a great deal of courage and quite a lot of wisdom—both of which are commonly in short supply. This can best be symbolized in the Patron Goddess of Ancient Athens: Athena.

**Transformational Leadership Case 1: Queen Elizabeth I of England**

*There are similarities between managing a corporation and running a country. The most obvious difference—countries are much harder to run.*

*When Elizabeth began her reign, England vies, to put it mildly, a mess. Ascending to the throne at a particularly chaotic time of British history, she vies beset by enemies from without and within. A betting man would have put good odds on her getting through the first Mc-years alive.*

*However, at the end of her 45 year reign, England had become the richest and most powerful nation in Europe and was well on its way to becoming one of the great powers of the modern age.*

*Bottom line: No Elizabeth—No British Commonwealth.*

- **Images.** A page of portraits of Elizabeth at various points of her reign.
- **Quick Overview.** The Britannia one-page overview.
- **Elizabeth I: Life and Times.** An entire site dedicated to the life and times of one of the daughters of Henry the VIII.
- **Speeches and Writings.** A few choice words from a long career of writing.

**Case #2 of Transformational Leadership: Alexander The Great: King of Macedonia, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, Persia and Afghanistan**

*How can one so young accomplish so much? By the time Alexander died in 323 BC, he had not yet reached his 33rd birthday. Yet, in that short time, he had created an empire that stretched from Greece to India.*
In an age where tyrants ruled by brute force and fear, he defied the conventional political wisdom of the time. Rather than cleaning out the treasury of a conquered nation and then taxing them to the max, he built new cities (often called Alexandria’s), libraries; established mechanisms for communication and commerce; had engineers build new roads, and had scientists capture new knowledge.

Known as much for his sound strategy and tactical innovation in the military arena as his wise statesmanship in the political sphere, he was the student of Aristotle who went on to became even greater than his teacher.

**Alexander the Great. The ORB: An on-line reference book.**

**Alexandros from Plutarch's Lives. A chapter from the one of the great classic works of all time.**

**Illustrated Chronology of Events. It contains numerous hot links to more detailed information on key people, events and places during that period of history.**

**Case #3: The Evolution Of A Great Transformational Founder: Bill Gates, Former CEO Of Microsoft**

There is a certain type of transformational leader that many try to be, but few succeed. This type of personal, the Great Founder, also requires a set of skills not taught in the university. In fact, one of the most successful entrepreneurs ever, Bill
Gates, decided to drop out of Harvard and start a business called Microsoft. One can almost image how that conversation went. The future entrepreneur saying, "Mom, I want to drop out of school so that I can work on an entrepreneurial venture for 80 hours a week, for now pay, that has a high probability of failure."

But unlike most entrepreneurs, he never failed and Microsoft was never unprofitable. For example, It was said that he took on a 5% equity investment from a venture capitalist, not because the money was needed, but because they wanted more expertise on the board.

Transformational Leadership Books

"A leadership book typically teaches you what, but life teaches you how. — Unknown

Good books can be invaluable to the study and development of transformational skills. There are many good books and new one come out more all the time. This list focuses more on the classics.

James MacGregor Bums (2003). Transforming Leadership, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press. Twenty-five years after the publication of Leadership, Bums expands his theories on how leaders cultivate transformational leadership skills in themselves and in their successors. He starts with the explaining the two opposing styles: those who occupy the position (they arrange the deck chairs on the Titanic) and those who transform not only their own position, but those around it (they fix the ship). Bums draws on numerous examples from history, citing meaningful examples from the lives of great political transformational leaders. Unlike many writers, he possesses deep insight into recent psychological approaches and so has a more profound understanding of transformational leadership.
Burns, James MacGregor. (1982). Leadership. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics. Considered a classic by many, the book was the winner of both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award after it was published in 1978. It focuses on the many different types of leadership. Burns argues that the type of leadership exercised by a general in the military is in many respects different from that used by an executive in a multinational corporation, a mayor of a city or the head of a religious organization. Two chapters of the book cover power and purpose of leadership, three chapters on the origin of leadership, four chapters are dedicated to understanding transformational leadership and five chapters cover transactional leadership. On the change side of things, he covers heroic, moral, revolutionary and reform styles of transformational leadership. He illustrates his points with vivid historical stories on Joan of Arc, Freud, Gandhi, Mao, the Roosevelt's, Stalin and others. He also puts forth his belief that great leaders play to mutual need, empathy and growth; whether one lives within the status quo or tries to transform it.

- Paperback: 544 pages


- Participative Leadership
- Leaders and Their Followers
- Power and Influence
- Traits and Skills
- Charismatic and Transformational Leadership
- Leading Change in Organizations
- Strategic
- Leading Change in Organizations
- Developing Leadership Skills

Goleman, Daniel, et. al. (2002). Primal Leadership. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press. In his recent book Primal Leadership, Goleman presents the theory on why emotional intelligence is an important foundation for leader effectiveness it makes sense that leaders are not only be aware and in control of their own emotions, but also able to influence individuals at an emotional level. Can you take someone who is feeling “down” and leave them feeling “up?”

Kouzes. James and Posner. Barry (2007). The Leadership Challenge, 4th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. By James Kouzes and Barry PosnerThere is a story of a rather old professor who was adamant about not having his students read the first edition on any textbook. It was his belief that good theory only gets better with age and reprints. While not a textbook. The Leadership Challenge continues to get published and republished since it first came out in 1989. The book presents five leadership principles. These five are:

- Challenge The Process
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Model the Way
- Enable Others to Act, and
- Encourage The Heart.

While not claiming to be a book on transformational leadership, these principles lend themselves to its implementation.

Bass, Bernard, and Riggio (2005). Transformational Leadership, 2nd Edition. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. This is a book written from the academic side of view strong on theory and strong on research. Bass, unlike with Burns, has developed a very strong reputation as a scholar in the area of transformational leadership.
World-Class Level, Journal of Management. Spring, vol. 13 no. 1 7-19

Bradberry, Travis & Greaves, Jean (2009). Emotional Intelligence 2.0, TalentSmart.


_Goleman, Daniel (2013). Social Intelligence Competencies Predict Transformational Leadership Style and Effectiveness. LinkedIn.com._


Legatee (ND). Famous Transformational Leaders


Time, Person of the Year Covers, 1927 to 2011
