

Contents

Introduction	7
Leadership versus management	17
A leader is always a 'coach'	29
The 'charismatic' leader	35
The 'negotiating' leader	43
The 'inspiring' leader	57
The 'efficient' leader	65
The 'structured & disciplined' leader	73
The search for the 'perfect' leader	87
The 'L-pad'	91
Conclusion	101
References	103

Introduction

Some professionals inspire and motivate others but fail miserably to engage their employees or their own team. Some bosses run a highly effective team, yet their employees live and work in fear. Have you seen the movie *Horrible Bosses*?¹ It follows the story of three friends who decide to murder their overbearing and abusive managers. From the man-eater to the psycho, the entertainment industry seems to have created the ultimate formula for the ‘bad boss’ character.

Some of the most important lessons you learn during your first decade working in ‘the real world’ come from the school of hard knocks. There are professional failures you cannot predict, opportunities that end up being too good to be true and moments when you don’t live up to your potential. The best bosses I have witnessed became great by taking a genuine interest in every team member. Not only do they want the company or project to succeed, but also the individual employee. Ultimately, a bad boss can teach you the type of behavior to avoid and help you envision the kind of leader you want to become.

In this book, I have tried to describe my vision of the skills required to make the perfect boss, the perfect leader. Wouldn’t it be great if there was a manual with guidelines on how to become a good boss or a booklet with instructions on what to do if you want to be called a great leader? Wouldn’t it be fantastic to receive that handbook at the start of your professional career, so that you can understand (and solve) the pitfalls of many leadership situations, allowing you to become an excellent team leader or boss at work?

Taking matters a step further, wouldn't it be brilliant to have an app that can guide you through the world of business, both towards your colleagues and, more specifically, towards your clients? Wouldn't it be interesting if we invented the 'L-pad'; an app that potentially can help you to become the perfect leader?

The first time I started to reflect on the power and importance of good leadership was when one of my superiors explained to me how frequently project work is 'unmanaged', often with highly negative consequences.

That day, he told me all about Parkinson's Law.² My first thought was that he wanted to talk about medicine, but it was not that kind of Parkinson's (the chronic disorder of the brain that leads to stiffness, shaking and slowness of movement) that he meant. He was talking about the 'economic' Parkinson's Law. This law states: "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion". This is a commonplace observation, or so you might think. It means, for example, that an elderly lady of leisure can spend the entire day in writing and sending a postcard to her niece: one hour to find the postcard, another to find her spectacles, half-an-hour searching for the address, an hour and a quarter in composition and twenty minutes deciding whether or not to take an umbrella for the walk to the pillar-box in the next street.

The same happens at work. People fill up their time so that they are always 'busy', assuming that this is 'compatible' with the needs of the project and the wishes of the company. This is especially true in consulting. Consultants take all the time offered to them to carry out a particular task, until they are requested to perform another one. In other words, there are plenty of people in the business world who can benefit from guidance – they need help and they need to be observed.

Ever since that talk with my boss, I have been fascinated by management, leadership and the difference between both disciplines. In the course of my research and investigations, I have become convinced that it is possible to guide and coach people; that it is possible to be a good boss, by taking account of the fact that people are different in many ways. I have also discovered many different styles of leadership, based on the character of the leader and his (or her) vision about life and work. For example, some leaders are strategically astute: very clever and mature, always performing professionally. Others are patient and forgiving: when something bad happens, they see it as ‘water under the bridge’, something that cannot be controlled or undone but must be accepted, forgiven or even forgotten. Yet others base their leadership on precise and direct communication, seeing this as the best way to avoid misunderstandings and prevent disagreements.

Whatever the style of leadership, they all have one thing in common: it is a process of growth. Everybody needs to grow to become a better leader and we all need to learn from our mistakes.

This learning process helps good leaders to see things in advance and accurately predict the likely outcome, both of results and consequences. In the end, a good leader will ultimately become a great leader. Moreover, great leaders are usually great people: always full of energy, fun to be around, with interesting ideas and a firm belief in their ability to get the right results.

Leadership is about people. How could it be otherwise? Everywhere we go, we interact with other people. In everything we do – in our job, at home, hanging out with friends, in our free time – we are obliged to deal with other human beings, each with their own different personalities and characters. In all of our daily activities, we need to relate to others. When we are at the butcher’s or the baker’s – waiting in line to be served – we frequently start a conversation with someone else in the queue, even if we don’t know them. When we are playing sport, we are also confronted with other people’s

opinions and skills. During the break between games in tennis, we have direct contact with our opponent. When shaking hands after team games, we communicate with others, often without the need for many words. When playing golf, we share our time with the other players for several hours. Whether we like it or not, in all these cases there is an exchange of feelings, thoughts and opinions. Moreover, this exchange is frequently targeted in our direction; it is meant for us. Whether as members of a club, in our personal lives, at school or on holiday, in most of the things we do, we are confronted with others: there is interaction with other people.

In our personal lives, we are relatively free to choose how much we interact and how we deal with those interactions. With family members and good friends, we adjust ourselves easily (or so, at least, it seems). For example, you can pick your own friends and this makes it easy (or easier) to control your interactions. However, it is a different story at work. There, we are more restricted by rules and obligations. There is a code of conduct. We cannot do whatever we please; we cannot ignore the things and people we don't like. We are expected to interact with others, irrespective of differences in character, origin, interests, personality, etc. When you work on large projects (as I have done, both as a consultant and as a manager), you work with a lot of different people. How can they all be managed in a way that makes everybody happy? How can we make sure that they feel comfortable at work, so that they will not leave for a new opportunity elsewhere? How can we encourage them to work in the best possible way, so that output and results are optimal? Every person has his or her role to play and everybody has his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

In life and at work, we need managers to plan and organize tasks, just as we need supporting staff to implement those tasks. We need colleagues with all sorts of different skills, but above all we need leaders. They show us new horizons, they bring 'light' to show us the way. Leaders try to inspire others, so that they will join them on their journey.

Management is about direction and vision; it is about making good decisions. Leadership is about charisma and inspiration. Leadership is less about your own needs and more about the needs of the people and the organization you are leading.

Leadership styles are not something that you can try on like a pair of shoes, to see which one fits you the best. Instead, your style of leadership needs to be adapted to the particular demands of the situation, the particular requirements of the people involved and the particular challenges facing the organization.

In 2012, I followed training at the Vlerick Business School in Ghent. The Middle Management Program was an inspiration to me. The courses and the professors were outstanding. One day during a lecture, one of the professors stated that: “statistics show that 44 % of every organization is out to destroy that organization”.³ That means that 44% of the people working for a company are not committed to that company. Whether they are dissatisfied, or are looking for a better job, or disagree with company policy, 44% do not have the company’s best interests at heart.

At first, I must admit that I was quite surprised by this statement, but on the other hand it seemed like an explanation for many of my unanswered questions. Why are some people more motivated than others? Why do some people resign, even though they have a clear horizon and plenty of opportunities? Why can it sometimes be so hard to cooperate with people, especially at work?

The answer to all these questions is to be found in the quality of the leadership. So what can you do to develop your own leadership style into one that will be highly prized by others? I once read some guidelines about how to become a good leader. Here is a summary.

First of all, be bold. Boldness is essential for leading people onwards and upwards. To seize the attention of your bosses, you need to make your points confidently and with as little ambiguity as possible. Few

would describe industrialist Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic Airways, as a great communicator – but he is certainly a great visionary. His boldness can be breathtaking. And most of it stems from not really caring about what others might think of him. You could even say that bold leadership needs to be a little selfish, perhaps even egotistical. At the same time, it is also important to stretch your leadership style. As well as playing to your strengths, actively work to stretch into the leadership style(s) you find harder. Always give the impression that you are ‘going somewhere’. You can call this being visionary, or setting direction, or having a compelling point. It all comes down to creating hope for the future and helping people to see the way forward, which is one of the top four basic needs of followers, according to Gallup’s latest research.⁴ In this respect, always try to be ‘follower-focused’. The best leaders are human and socially conscious. Recognizing the contribution of others and giving the team room to innovate is the best way to lead them to a more resilient future. Remember also to be balanced, to strive for sustainable solutions in both thought and deed. The ‘do it and be damned’ approach may still be fashionable in some quarters, but great leaders know that this won’t wash in the long term. Keep on asking yourself: “What unintended impact might my actions have?” Balance at work must be matched by balance in your private life. Give priority to the things outside work that keep you sane. Create ‘golden time’ in your agenda that cannot be touched. Last but not least, be true to yourself. Google lists 8.5 million web pages that all claim to have ‘the best’ chocolate cake recipe in the world and presumably every single one of them is someone’s favorite! Like chocolate cake, there is no such thing as ‘the best’ leadership style in absolute terms. There is, however, such a thing as the best leadership style for you in a given situation. Never try to be something that you are not. If you are not authentic, people will see straight through you. Genuine passion and pride create a fast-track to building connection and trust. Integrity, authenticity and ‘walking the talk’ are the cornerstones for excellent internal and external relationships. The most valuable thing you have to offer is yourself. Whatever style of leadership you adopt, it is uniquely yours. Own it, have confidence in it, trust it.

I have written this book because I think that many of the problems in today's business world can be solved by leadership and by being a good leader. But this inevitably leads on to a number of questions. What is a leader? What makes a good leader? What are the best tips and tricks for inspirational leadership? These are the questions that I will try to answer in this book.

There are many types of leaders. For instance, some leaders have charisma, so that they can make you believe in what you are doing and what you need to do. But is being charismatic enough to be a good leader? Some leaders are inspiring, so that they give you a desire to do your work in a different and more efficient way. But the same question applies: is the skill of being able to inspire sufficient on its own? You can also act as an effective leader, someone that is focused on the result. But is effectiveness possible without charisma and inspiration? In many cases, a good leader needs to be an excellent negotiator, able to create a 'win-win' situation for all parties. Or sometimes he must work in a structured and disciplined way. So which way is the best way? At the end of the book, I will offer you my own definition of the ultimate leader.

Throughout my career, I have noticed two other things that are also very important for good leadership: to have plenty of discipline and to work in a structured way. The purpose of my book is to summarize the skills and characteristics that a good leader might or maybe even should have. The book is built up in chapters that examine the different competences of the good leader, so that we can identify the core characteristics and (hopefully) apply them to ourselves. Each chapter is illustrated with real-life examples.

1: The difference between 'management' and 'leadership'

What makes a good manager and a good leader? Can you be both?

2: The 6 competence wheels of the perfect leader

- A leader is always a coach
- The charismatic leader
- The negotiating leader
- The inspiring leader
- The efficient leader
- The structured and disciplined leader

3: The search for the perfect leader

The 'L-pad'

And while we are on the subject, what about yourself? Do you ever wonder if you are seen as a good leader or even as an excellent one? Do you ask yourself how you can change to become a better leader? If so, keep on reading this book. The world is changing every day. People are born and people die, yet life still goes on. But within this broad span of everyday normal existence, you occasionally come across people who have the flair and ability to influence other people in large numbers. These are the leaders – and we need them desperately.

At the same time, we need to recognize that not all leadership is universally beneficial. There has always been a 'nature versus nurture' debate about leadership. Not everyone with charisma and influence uses these powerful characteristics for good.

Of course, this remains a very subjective issue, but the following examples of great leaders – who influenced not only their own countries but also the entire world – will give some idea of the main arguments.

Fidel Castro was the face of the Cuban Revolution, which started in 1953. In spite of huge external opposition and diplomatic isolation, he went on to become the president of his country for over half a century. His vision, courage and strategic-analytical reasoning has made Cuba what it is today – accepted and respected throughout the world, even by their arch-rival, the United States. Over the years, Castro has proven himself to be a great leader and a great commander – whatever you might think about his Communist ideology.

The most crucial time for a leader to show his true worth is in the face of adversity. This was the great strength of **Winston Churchill**, the British Prime Minister during the Second World War. He was an able leader and an emotional man, but his greatest achievement was to motivate his fellow-countrymen to defend themselves against the Nazis. His determination, perseverance and patriotic devotion to the nation inspired the British to hold on go when they stood alone against the might of Hitler's Germany. "Keep Calm and Carry On," was his message – a message that won the hearts of his people and later helped to win the war.

But what about Churchill's great rival, **Adolf Hitler**? Many people will find it distasteful to call a man like Hitler a great leader. But if we can look beyond his hideous crimes against humanity (which, admittedly, is not easy to do), it has to be conceded that his leadership skills were matched by few in the world. His personal magnetism and oratory skills persuaded his people to follow him first in a bold series of economic growth plans and later in an expansionist war, both of which – viewed from the German perspective of the time – were highly successful for many years. The 'credit' for this was his and his alone. Hitler's meticulous planning, use of propaganda and strategic flexibility helped to shape the power politics of the world as we know it today.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an activist and a leader of the civil rights movement in the United States. Courage, perseverance and the will

to fight for what is right until the very end made him a great leader. He deservedly won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Much the same can be said about another Peace Prize winner – **Nelson Mandela**, who was the first democratically elected President of South Africa.

Mandela peacefully resisted the Apartheid regime all his life, fighting relentlessly against racial discrimination and oppression. His determination, focus and will-power were so great that even after serving almost 30 years in jail, he was able to forgive those who had imprisoned him and work with them to create a better future for everyone in the country.

Who do you regard as a great leader? Are there public figures who inspire you or do you know inspirational people at work or in your personal life? After reading this book, you should be able to identify them more easily. You will also be able to see what progress you have made in your own personal journey towards becoming a good leader.

So let's start our great leadership voyage of discovery at the beginning, by defining the twin concepts of management and leadership is. What is the difference between the two of them? What does it take to be good in each of them? And is it possible to be good at both of them?

Leadership versus management

We often make the mistake of mixing up leaders and managers. Leadership and management are not the same process – or at least they do not have the same objectives and approach. Leadership is about realizing goals through charisma and inspiration. Management is about realizing goals by being efficient and effective. We therefore need to start by investigating the difference between leadership and management. This is important, since in this book we will focus mainly on leadership. Managing people is not the same as acting as a leader. A manager wants to get things done; a leader wants to inspire people to follow him. In this chapter we will therefore look in more detail at each activity and at the main differences.

Leadership

Leadership has been described as: “a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”. As a result, some see a leader simply as someone who people want to follow or as somebody who guides people in a certain direction, while others focus more on leadership as “the organization of a group of people to achieve a shared goal”. Research studies have produced many theories of leadership based on matters as diverse as individual traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision, values, charisma and intelligence, to name but a few. Leadership and management go hand in hand, but they are not the same thing. They are, however,

necessarily linked and complementary. So before discussing leadership, it is important to realize that any effort to separate the two is likely to cause more problems than it solves.

Management

Management is the function that coordinates the efforts of people to accomplish goals by using available resources efficiently and effectively. Management therefore comprises planning, organizing, staffing, leading, directing and controlling an organization to accomplish its chosen objectives.

In order to understand the difference between leadership and management, it is first necessary to look in more detail at management. During my Vlerick Middle Management Course, I learned that management and the way managers think has changed over the years. Management has always been about completing tasks and objectives, about getting results, but in the past this was approached in a number of different ways.

An excellent example is Ford, the American multinational car company. Henry Ford developed and manufactured the first automobile that many middle class Americans could afford. In doing so, Ford transformed the automobile from an expensive curiosity into a practical conveyance that would profoundly impact the landscape of the 20th century. He did this through the mass production of inexpensive goods, coupled with high wages for the workforce. Ford had a global vision, with consumerism as the key to peace and prosperity. This was a pure example of what we now call **first generation management**.⁵ First generation management is machine-organization with a plethora of rules, all geared towards maximum efficiency. There is a strong hierarchy and plenty of command and control. It is the production mindset where, to use the modern vernacular, ‘my shit is your challenge’, coupled to a ‘my way or the highway’ mentality. That being said, it is quick, efficient, predictable

and clear and can still help in times of crisis or in cases where there is a difference in knowledge. In general, however, it leads to external blindness, difficult learning processes and learned helplessness. First generation management, as practiced in companies like Ford, is about being rational, stable and controlling.

Another great exponent of first generation management was Frederick Winslow Taylor⁶, an American mechanical engineer who sought to improve industrial efficiency. Taylor was one of the intellectual leaders of the so-called Efficiency Movement and his ideas, broadly conceived and summarized in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management*, were highly influential in the Progressive Era. Early on in his career as a labourer and machinist, he recognized that workmen were not working their machines or themselves nearly as hard as they could (which at the time was called ‘soldiering’). This resulted in high labour costs for the company. Taylor believed that he could change all this and in this respect he became one of the world’s first professional consultants. In 1898, he joined Bethlehem Steel in order to solve an expensive machine-shop capacity problem.

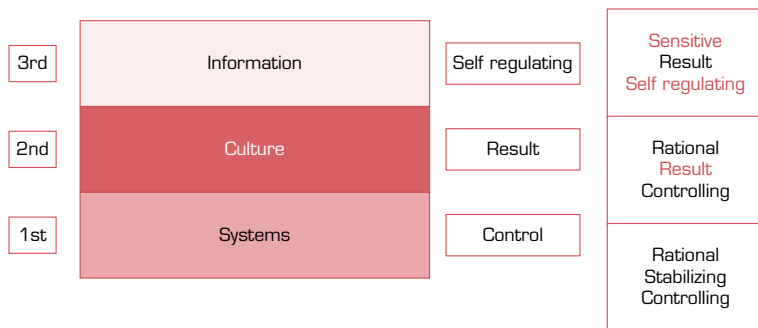
Together with Maunsell White and a team of assistants, he developed the methods for high speed steel production, paving the way for greatly increased mass production in other fields. One of his measures was to say exactly when and for how long all the employees could take a break, in order to make their work more efficient! This rigid-style of first generation management is no longer with us, except in a limited number of very specific circumstances.

Second generation management developed after the Second World War and had more of a market mindset. It was typified by the statement of the American President John F. Kennedy, when he said: “We will put a man on the moon!” It is about being flexible, which leads to new opportunities and the development of a real management culture. The disadvantages are defensive routines and the need for delegation, which results in plenty of stress. Second generation management is about results. Good examples include

General Motors and Dell, the computer technology company. Dell is well-known for its innovations in supply chain management and electronic commerce, particularly its direct-sales model and its ‘build-to-order’ approach to manufacturing, which delivers individual PCs configured to customer specifications. They produce affordable laptops for a large public by simply letting the customer choose the lay-out of the lap-top they want.

Second generation management still exists today but has become outdated. We are now in the era of **third generation management**. We work ‘out of the box’. We know the world is flat! What we do is conceptual. It is about emotion. It leads to branding. It leads to hypes. It is all about communication. But it is also demanding, so that we need to work hard. Third generation management is self-regulating and sensitive. This is the philosophy of companies like Apple, Google and Facebook. They innovate; they are fresh and new.

The following diagram gives a summary of the different management generations:



Much ink has been spilt delineating these differences. But at the end of the day, the manager’s job remains the same: his task is to plan, organize and coordinate, whereas the leader’s job is to inspire and

motivate. In his 1989 book *On Becoming a Leader*⁷, Warren Bennis drew up a list of the differences:

- The manager administers; the leader innovates.
- The manager is a copy; the leader is an original.
- The manager maintains; the leader develops.
- The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people.
- The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.
- The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
- The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why.
- The manager has his or her eye always on the bottom line; the leader's eye is on the horizon.
- The manager imitates; the leader originates.
- The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.
- The manager is the classic 'good soldier'; the leader is his or her own person.
- The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

There was a time when the calling of the manager and the calling of the leader could be separated. A foreman in an industrial-era factory probably didn't have to give too much thought to what was being produced or to the people who were producing it. His or her job was to follow orders, organize the work, assign the right people to the necessary tasks, coordinate the results and ensure the job was completed as required. The focus was on efficiency.

But in the new economy, where value increasingly comes from the knowledge that people possess and where workers are no longer undifferentiated cogs in an industrial machine, management and leadership are not so easily separated. People no longer expect their managers simply to assign them a task, but also to define a purpose related to that task. Modern managers must organize workers not only to maximize efficiency, but also to nurture skills, develop talent and inspire results. The late management guru Peter Drucker was one of the first to recognize this truth (as he recognized so many

others). He identified the emergence of the ‘knowledge worker’ and understood the profound changes this would bring in the way business was organized. With the rise of the knowledge worker, “one does not ‘manage’ people,”⁸ Mr. Drucker wrote. “The task is to lead people. And the goal is to make productive the specific strengths and knowledge of every individual.”

In other words, there needs to be a mix between management and leadership. Management is about direction, taking decisions and steering towards results. Leadership is more about charisma and inspiration. You can be good or bad at one or the other, or both! Here are some examples:

Good leaders and good managers include Marc Coucke of Omega Pharma, Michael O’Leary of Ryan Air and Jack Welch from General Electric.

Good leaders but less good managers include Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi, Steve Jobs and Richard Branson.

Less good leaders but good managers include Wouter Beke, Tim Cook from Apple and Henning Kagermann, former CEO of SAP.

Less good leaders and less good managers include professors, surgeons and fiscal experts.



Fortunately, many people are good at both – because they need to be. They have management jobs, but realize that you cannot ‘buy’ people’s hearts, especially if you want them to follow you down a difficult path. And so the managers act as leaders, too.

By definition, managers have subordinates (unless their title is honorary and given as a mark of seniority, in which case the title is a misnomer, since they have no formal authority). Managers therefore have a position of authority vested in them by the company. Their subordinates work for them and are largely expected to do as they are told. Consequently, management is transactional, in that the manager tells the subordinate what to do and the subordinate does it, not because they are a blind robot but because they have been promised a reward of some kind (usually their salary). Managers are also paid to get things done (in this sense, they are subordinates, too), often within tight constraints of time and money. Naturally, they pass on this work focus to their subordinates.

An interesting research finding about managers is that they tend to come from stable home backgrounds and live relatively normal and comfortable lives. This leads them to be risk-averse, so that they seek to avoid conflict wherever possible. In terms of their dealings with people, they generally like to run a ‘happy ship’.

Leaders do not have subordinates – at least not when they are leading. Of course, many organizational leaders do have subordinates, but only because they are also managers. When they want to lead, they have to give up formal managerial control, because to lead means having followers and following is always a voluntary activity. Simply telling people what to do does not inspire them to follow you. You have to appeal to them, show them how following you will also be good for them. They must want to follow you enough to stop what they are doing and take on situations they would not normally risk in other circumstances.

Leaders with charisma find it easier to attract people to their cause. As a part of their persuasion technique, they typically promise transformational benefits; for example, that their followers will not just receive extrinsic rewards, but will somehow become better people. Although many leaders have a charismatic style (to some extent, at least), this does not require a loud or dominating personality. Quiet leaders who give credit to others (and take the blame on themselves) are also very effective at creating the loyalty that great leadership engenders.

Leaders are always good with people, but this does not necessarily mean that they are friendly with them. In order to maintain the mystique of leadership, they often retain a degree of separation and aloofness. Nor do their abundant people skills mean that leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the tasks in hand – in fact, they are often very achievement-focused. However, they also realize that success can only be achieved by enthusing others to work towards the common vision.

Some managers are risk-averse, some other leaders are seen as risk-seeking, although they are not blind thrill-seekers. When pursuing their vision, they consider it natural to encounter problems that must be overcome along the way.

Now it is your turn!

As a good leader:

- ✓ Show deep respect for your colleagues: there is no place for manipulation. You need to be generous with both information and your time.
- ✓ Be yourself and be authentic at all times.
- ✓ Always communicate!
- ✓ Add enough 'SPICE' to your message:

S: Simple

- Less is more, compact, super-synthesis, (visual) analogues, essence
- "I am writing you a long letter, because I don't have time to write a short one." (Blaise Pascal)

P: Positive

- What do you expect? Mission Statement!

I: Interesting

- A hint of the unexpected with a little bit of tension

C: Concrete

- The 'Velcro' theory of memory/**Made to Stick** by Dan Heath
- Abstractness is the enemy of stickiness

E: Empathic

- **Emotional**, try to address more than one sense, avoid negative examples
- Names, names, names
- Refer to the better ME (sometimes a bit egoistic)

If you listen to Barack Obama's *A more perfect Union* speech on YouTube⁹, you will discover that it is a classic example of a speech with SPICE. At a certain point in his address, he states:

“I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived the Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War Two and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners – an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on earth is my story even possible.”

The effectiveness of Obama's speech rests upon four related rhetorical strategies:

- ✓ The power of allusion and its patriotic associations
- ✓ The oratorical resonance of parallel constructions
- ✓ The 'two-ness' of the texture, the sense of always looking at yourself through the eyes of others
- ✓ His ability to include himself as a character in a narrative about race

Exercise

Communication is very important for a leader: using the right volume, the right words and the right amount of positivism. Try this exercise which shows how difficult good communication can be – by not communicating!

The exercise involves role playing with two people. One of them is asked to leave the room and to come back in a few minutes. The person who remains in the room is asked to explain to the other person upon their return that they are not angry with them. However, they must do this non-verbally, with no spoken words. When the other person comes back in the room, the non-verbal communication starts...

It will soon become clear that good communication is not easy and that a lot of different messages will be understood – and misunderstood. Some people will think they are being fired or that there is bad news; others will think that there is nothing wrong...

Being a good leader is not easy. There are many skills and characteristics required – and good communication is just one of them. We will be looking at some others as the book progresses.

