



GETTING GILLIGAN OFF THE ISLAND

Michael V. Jenkins, Ph.D., MBA

DEFINING LEADERSHIP

The body of research provides a myriad of definitions for leadership. Some of the most compelling are provided below:

Inspiring people...to participate with you in building a community of trust and then to follow you and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision (Lingenfelter, 2019).

One sees a need, based on one's governing convictions, and exercises initiative to address that concern: influence is then brought to bear on others to join in and contribute to accomplishing a stated objective (Howell, 2003).

lead·er·ship defined

Here is our working description of leadership for today:

*By leveraging **social** and relational **influence**, leadership is the art of inspiring others to **partner** in a compelling vision and then **complete** it.*

People fail at the task of leadership because (1) they rely on management tactics, (2) they don't understand the necessity of leadership, or (3) they can't identify the skills they need to influence others.

MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP

Though often confused as synonymous, management differs from leadership. Leaders master the context, and managers **surrender** to it (Bennis, 2009). A manager inherits a context to govern and works within the defined culture to administer the environment.

The manager is concerned with the owner's happiness over the employee's needs. There is an inherent level of unfairness involved when the person charged with hiring, mentoring, and retaining you is also charged with putting the interests of the business over yours. Accordingly, managers had to prove they deserved their subordinates' respect and trust (Hill, 2003). Managers often start from a position of distrust, but the exact opposite is often true of leaders.

Leaders are anointed because they have already earned the trust of the people they lead. When managers rely on formal authority, they may get **control** but seldom get **commitment** (Hill, 2003). In the traditional sense, managers are the administrators of their organizations, focusing on systems and structures, and are concerned with the bottom line.

The manager asks how and when. Conversely, the leader asks who and why (Bennis, 2009). Leaders are often shepherding innovators that coach creative and agile teams. Leaders are concerned with vision, and managers are fascinated with deadlines. Leaders lead others to some goal (large or small) that they might only have achieved because the leader modeled, motivated, or guided them (Sampson, 2011).

People fail at the task of leadership because (1) they rely on the management tactics described above, (2) they don't understand the necessity of leadership, or (3) they can't identify the skills they need to influence others.

THE NECESSITY OF LEADERSHIP

Bennis lays the foundation of leadership as he details how one person can exist in **isolation** absent leadership. As Bennis' desert island increases in population from one to two, he theorizes that they can only escape defined leadership with zero disparity between them. When the population of that island increases to three (or more), that island needs leadership.

Bennis provides a numerical framework for establishing the need for leadership. Guidance, even if informal, is mandatory even among the smallest groups. Eventually, someone must step up and assume the role of leadership.

lead·er·ship in practice



Just sit right back, and you'll hear a tale—a tale of a fateful trip that started from this tropic port aboard this tiny ship. The mate was a mighty sailing man, the skipper brave and sure. Five passengers set sail that day for a three-hour tour.

The weather started getting rough. The tiny ship was tossed. If not for the courage of the fearless crew, the Minnow would be lost, the Minnow would be lost. The ship set ground on the shore of this uncharted desert isle, with Gilligan, the Skipper too, the millionaire and his wife, the movie star, the Professor, and Mary Ann here on Gilligan's Isle.

Bennis' Desert Island

- If Gilligan is alone, he doesn't need a leader.
- When you add the Skipper, they must agree on absolutely everything or have a leader.
- When the Professor, the Howells, Ginger, and Mary Ann join the 15-year and three-hour tour, you must have a leader!

Can you imagine Gilligan trying to get off the island alone? How many times did the Professor, the Howells, Ginger, and Mary Ann save Gilligan from the wrath of the Skipper?

People fail at the task of leadership because (1) they rely on the management tactics described above, (2) they don't understand the necessity of leadership and think they can accomplish their vision alone, or (3) they can't identify the skills they need to influence others.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Every leader needs specific skills to leverage social and relational influence effectively and inspire others to partner in a compelling vision and complete it. A good leader has at least three ordinary virtues: humility, hunger, and people-smarts (Lencioni, 2016). To recognize and cultivate humble, hungry, and smart leaders or to become one yourself, you first need to understand precisely what these deceptively simple words mean and how all three work together.

hu·mil·i·ty: the lack of **excessive** ego.

Humble leaders are quick to point out the contributions of others and slow to seek attention for their own. Humility is the most significant and indispensable attribute of a leader.

Humble leaders distinctively demonstrate these disciplines:

- Sharing **credit**.
- Emphasizing service over self.
- Define success collectively rather than individually.

"Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." – C.S. Lewis

Poor leaders lack humility and tolerate inflated egos in others. They promote self-centered people and fail to confront inflated egos, citing that person's individual contributions as an excuse. The problem is that leaders aren't considering the effect of an arrogant, self-centered person on the organization's overall performance.

People who lack humility are one of two basic types, and it's essential, even critical, to understand them because they look pretty different from one another and impact an organization differently.

1. The overtly arrogant.

These people make everything about themselves. They are easy to identify because they boast and soak up attention. This is the classically ego-driven type, and it diminishes teamwork by fostering resentment, division, and politics. Most of us have seen plenty of this behavior in our careers.

2. People who lack self-confidence but are generous and positive with others.

They are much less dangerous but still worth understanding. They tend to discount their talents and contributions, so others mistakenly see them as humble. But this is not humility. While they are certainly not arrogant, their lack of understanding of their own worth is also a violation of humility.

Truly humble people do not see themselves as more significant than they are, nor do they discount their talents and contributions. A person with a disproportionately deflated sense of self-worth often hurts organizations by not advocating for their own ideas or failing to call attention to problems they see. A lack of confidence is less intrusive and evident than overt arrogance, but it still detracts from optimal organizational performance.

Both types struggle with **insecurity**, making some project overconfidence and others discount their talents. And while these types are not equal when creating problems in an organization, they each diminish performance.

Growing Humility: Deep-rooted insecurities drive the impulse to boast and seek validation.

- Ask employees who struggle with this quality about their anxieties.
- Find out why they ignore others' recognition.
- Are they worried about losing visibility if others shine? Why does it matter?
- Keep asking "why" until you find the problem. Listen, support, and help the person solve their concerns.
- Model humility yourself. Your team needs to see you "being" what you expect from them.

hun·ger: a manageable and **sustainable** commitment to doing a job well and going above and beyond when it is genuinely required.

Hungry leaders rarely must be pushed to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent. They constantly think about the next step and the next opportunity to serve.

Few senior leaders will knowingly ignore a lack of hunger in their people, most likely because unproductive, dispassionate people tend to stand out and create apparent problems in an organization. Unfortunately, undiscerning leaders too often deploy these people because most people know how to falsely project a sense of hunger – until we need them to perform.

Finding an Appetite: Employees without passion are usually unhappy and need a deeper sense of purpose.

- Find ways to align hunger with the organization's mission.
- What made them join the organization in the first place?
- What will help them feel their work has meaning?
- Check for burnout!

smärt: interpersonally appropriate and aware

Of the three virtues, this one needs the most clarification because it is not what it might seem; it is not about intellectual capacity. In the organizational context, smart refers to a leader's emotional intelligence (EQ).

Smart people tend to know what is happening in a group situation and how to deal with others most effectively. They ask good questions, listen to others, and actively engage in conversations. In short, they handle people well.

Smart people have good judgment and intuition around the subtleties of group dynamics and the impact of their words and actions. This only comes naturally to some leaders. Instead, this is learned over time and with great experience.

Getting Smarter: Developing EQ requires practice in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management.

- Leverage training opportunities to boost EQ.
- Be upfront with offending staff about how their behavior affects the team.
- Create regular coaching sessions to review progress.

People fail at the task of leadership because (1) they rely on the management tactics described above, (2) they don't understand the necessity of leadership and think they can accomplish their vision alone, or (3) they can't identify the skills they need to influence others.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

CBS DROPPED THE BALL

In 1967, the curtain closed on this beloved show. For nearly 60 years, First Mate Willy Gilligan, Captain Jonas Grumby, Thurston Howell, III, Eunice "Lovey" Howell, Ginger Grant, Professor Roy Hinkley, and Mary Ann Summers have been stranded somewhere in the Pacific Ocean.

The fundamental reason they never managed to leave the island after 99 episodes is likely that the wrong person(s) was enabled to lead without sufficient skill to find a way off it.

By consensus, let's see if there are any candidates for leadership that we can eliminate immediately.

PROFILE: WILLY GILLIGAN

Willy Gilligan, affectionately called "little buddy" by the "Skipper," is the bumbling, dimwitted, accident-prone first mate of the SS Minnow. During a storm, he throws an anchor overboard without a rope attached, leaving the Minnow shipwrecked. Gilligan's character is noted for inadvertently undermining the castaways' attempts to get off the island.

He often interrupts discussions with meaningless childhood stories or recommendations. The Professor remembers a useful fact or suggests a course of action when Gilligan interrupts, despite the Skipper's repeated chastisement. He sometimes makes recommendations but is interrupted by another castaway instructing him to be quiet. Examples include the incident where he develops temporary waterproof glue and the boat sinks. His warning goes unheeded until the boat's boards break. When a butterfly collector arrives on the island and refuses to signal until he has what he wants, the castaways fight and ignore Gilligan until he says he took the flare pistol.

Gilligan's innocence makes others forgive his blunders despite his clumsiness. He does almost all island manual labor without complaint. Gilligan was often the Howells' golf caddy, castaways' pedal-powered automobile chauffeur, and "Howell Private Country Club" waiter.

In "The Big Gold Strike," the Professor urges the castaways not to put gold on the raft due to weight concerns after finding and repairing the life raft and finding gold on the island. Still, every castaway (except Gilligan) smuggles gold, causing the raft to drown. Gilligan laughs and says, "That's a switch. Usually, I'm the one left holding the bag."

<input type="checkbox"/> Humble	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungry	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on the information written above and discussed in your group, is there anyone else who might be the leader to get them off the island? _____

PROFILE: THURSTON HOWELL, III & EUNICE "LOVEY" WENTWORTH-HOWELL

Thurston: He was a classic New England Yankee with a Locust Valley lockjaw accent. He's from Newport, Rhode Island, and graduated from Harvard. This man owned several significant enterprises. In the pilot episode, the radio announcer proclaims Mr. Howell a billionaire after reading the lost passengers' identities. The Great Depression cost him most of his billionaire status, and his wife says he "became just a millionaire." In his will, he left his fellow castaways a diamond mine, coconut plantation, railroad, oil well, and 40 acres in Colorado, including downtown Denver. After learning that an imposter would sell his firms for cash, he tries to swim back to the mainland three times, but Gilligan, the Skipper, and Lovey stop him. Thurston's sleeping with a bear named "Teddy" is one of his most peculiar traits. Other castaways let Thurston avoid work.

Lovey: She is socially concerned but kind and generous, considering other passengers her inferiors. Her hometowns were New York, Palm Beach, and Paris. The Vassar College student spoke French and Italian fluently. According to her husband, she was a heiress and "loaded" in her own right. Despite being privileged and consumed with social position, Mrs. Howell was friendly and cared for her fellow castaways. As Ginger and Mary Ann's mother figure, she counseled them but also displayed jealousy toward them. She cared for Gilligan, psychoanalyzing, adopting, and praising him when no one else did. Despite appearing feeble and often declining to do manual labor, she resorted to back-breaking work to recover gold from a mine on the island.

Together: When an egocentric Hollywood producer "visited" the island, the Howells had to wait on him as butler and maid in return for a promise of rescue. Thurston Howell said that their brilliance together was exceeded only by their greed. They had a house in each state and numerous servants, including an upstairs maid, a downstairs maid, and a butler who served Thurston breakfast in bed. They planned to steal/access/manipulate other survivors' belongings multiple times. They took hundreds of thousands of dollars and several clothing changes for a three-hour boat tour. They must constantly be reminded that their money is useless on the island.

<input type="checkbox"/> Humble	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungry	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on the information written above and discussed in your group, is there anyone else who might be the leader to get them off the island? _____

PROFILE: GINGER GRANT

Ginger is a "movie star" and would casually mention some of the top movie stars of the day as her co-stars or acquaintances to the castaways, implying she was one too. Ginger, fresh off performing in a Waikiki club, boarded the Minnow in an evening gown. Ginger originally wore only her distinctive evening gown in every episode. Her clothing changed in later episodes – usually to a lab coat and glasses as she assisted the Professor with his many experiments.

Ginger led the impromptu island band The Honeybees. She also had to contend with Eva Grubb, her bland, mousy lookalike. She has a knack for using experiences from film roles to help the castaways get out of messes. Ginger often sides with Thurston Howell III, testifying in a treasure trial, spying on Gilligan by scratching his back and enabling herself to be bribed by Howell during the island's presidential election. Her island roles include performer, fortune-teller, and hairstylist. She was a magician and secretary before becoming an actress.

Her lack of swimming and cooking skills makes her one of the least island-ready. She and Mary Ann share a hut. The island's mysteries and scary wildlife—especially bats—frighten her. She is the island's resident nurse since she would have been a nurse if Hollywood hadn't summoned her. One of the most self-centered castaways. Her appearance, wardrobe, career, and rumors worry her constantly. Despite her glamour, this makes her seem more approachable.

<input type="checkbox"/> Humble	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungry	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on the information written above and discussed in your group, is there anyone else who might be the leader to get them off the island? _____

PROFILE: DR. ROY HINKLEY

The Professor was an expert botanist. His purpose in joining the ill-fated voyage that stranded the castaways was to write a book. For unexplained reasons, the Professor brought many books on diverse subjects, such as chemistry and the anthropology of the South Sea Islanders, on a three-hour pleasure cruise in Hawaii. On many occasions, he conveniently pulled out a book that had exactly the facts needed to fix or explain a particular problem they were having.

His main contribution to the show was to devise ways for the castaways to live more comfortably on the island. Many of his inventions (including a method for recharging the batteries in the ubiquitous radio) used coconuts and bamboo, both of which were in plentiful supply. Aside from his scientific proficiency, he was adept and well-versed in law, literature, social sciences, and the arts. He held a B.A. from USC, a B.S. from UCLA, an M.A. in Psychology from SMU, and a Ph.D. from TCU. He was also a research scientist, well-known scoutmaster, chess player, and scuba diver.

The Professor was often neutral and level-headed and usually displayed more patience with Gilligan than the other castaways. He was also often called on to settle disputes. As a result, he often served as a guide for the castaways whom the others respected because of his great store of knowledge, although the castaways rarely mentioned this.

In several episodes, electric power for phonographs or washing machines is generated by employing someone (usually Gilligan) to manually pedal or turn a pulley, which the Professor has engineered. A running joke about the Professor was his ability to build nearly anything from coconuts and bamboo. The professor tried many times to repair the Minnow using available island resources, but they ultimately proved inadequate.

<input type="checkbox"/> Humble	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungry	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on the information written above and discussed in your group, is there anyone else who might be the leader to get them off the island? _____

PROFILE: MARY ANN SUMMERS

Ginger Grant's counterpoint and friend, Mary Ann, was a simple girl next door. She is vital to the group due to her practical housekeeping skills, general store knowledge, and common sense. Mary Ann was a Winfield, Kansas-born country girl, and Dorothy Gale allusion (sometimes wearing pigtails and a gingham dress).

Mary Ann is late teens to early 20s. She was alone on her "three-hour tour," which she won in a contest. Mary Ann briefly describes her mother and father, such as her father falling bankrupt before the catastrophe due to a dishonest business partner. However, she repeatedly mentions her Aunt Martha and Uncle George, suggesting she resided with them and that her parents may have died, another Wizard of Oz connection.

She generally does all the tasks. Mary Ann may be the island's most humble woman. She looks out for Gilligan, baking him special pies, cheering him up, building his confidence, and voting him president of the island. Mary Ann and Gilligan usually reunite when the castaways split. Mary Ann considers the Skipper her big brother and Ginger her sister despite their conflicts. They cook, sunbathe, and perform chores together. She admires Ginger so much that she imagines she is Ginger when she gets amnesia. Helping the Professor and consulting Mrs. Howell were also her habits. She sometimes shares exceptional expertise and insight into island challenges.

<input type="checkbox"/> Humble	<input type="checkbox"/> Hungry	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Based on the information written above and discussed in your group, is there anyone else who might be the leader to get them off the island? _____

REFERENCES

Bennis, W. (2009). *On becoming a leader: The leadership classic*. Basic Books.

Hill, L. A. (2003). *Becoming a manager: How new managers master the challenges of leadership*: 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Howell, D. N. (2003). *Servants of the servant: A biblical theology of leadership*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.

Kouzes, J. M., Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*.

Hill, L. A. (2003). *Becoming a manager: How new managers master the challenges of leadership*. Harvard University Press.

Sampson, S. J. (2011). *Leaders without titles*. Human Resource Development Press.

FOR ADDITIONAL READING

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. Random House Business Books.

Diab, D. L., Walters, K. (2016). Humble leadership: Implications for psychological safety and follower engagement. *Journal of Leadership Studies.*, 10(2), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21434>

De Pree, M. (2004). *Leadership is an art*. Currency.

Metz, I., Kulik, C. T., Cregan, C., & Brown, M. (2017). The manager as employer agent: The role of manager personality and organizational context in psychological contracts. *Personnel Review*, 46(1), 136–153. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2015-0087>

Wang, Y., Liu, J., & Zhu, Y. (2018). Humble leadership, psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and follower creativity: A cross-level investigation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1727. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01727>