



# The Role of Leadership

By Mark D. Sauter, author, *Bringing Meaning into Monday™*

*“Creating value is an inherently cooperative process ... people can’t act in isolation. To create value, a business must align itself with customers, suppliers, employees, and many others. That’s the way to develop new markets and expand existing ones.”*

Adam M. Brandenburger and Barry J. Nalebuff, Authors  
*Co-opetition*

In order to improve performance and fully engage their workforce, leaders must structurally enable a more collaborative and creative work climate. This can be achieved by aligning employees with organizational priorities, organizational priorities that are directed at creating value for others.

## The question is *How*

At the risk of over-simplification, there are two sides to this challenge; side A, a more tangible and visible side, and side B.

As parents, side A emphasizes behavior, grades, achievements and athleticism and/or special gifts. Side B, while less tangible and immediate, focuses on integrity and trust, relationship quality and depth, and sense of service or duty. *Effective* parents realize both sides, together, provide a balanced foundation for a productive and meaningful life, yielding prosperity, emotional health and happiness.

The same can be said in business. Where side A reflects tangible bottom line performance (e.g., profit, growth and customer satisfaction). And side B is expressed via ethics, social responsibility, teamwork, quality of life, and value creation and delivery.

Unfortunately, given today’s societal and economic pressures, coupled with lack of visibility and training on side B, many business leaders, and parents for that matter, frequently overlook and/or under develop side B.

While technology investments, cost cutting, process improvements and outsourcing (side A examples) result in short-term results, over-reliance on these approaches is neither healthy nor sustainable. In today’s faster and flatter world, trust, social responsibility, relationship quality and sense of service (side B traits) are having a profound effect on organizational results, in terms of productivity, teamwork, resilience and creativity.

The emotional or softer-side competencies (side B acumen) of today’s leaders are becoming increasingly more important. In today’s electronic era, where quality of response is being judged in seconds and minutes, not days, organizations need to reduce handoffs and/or turf wars. Leaders need to improve teamwork and equip their people to analyze and respond to the increasingly dynamic needs of the marketplace and fellow coworkers.

Yet with that said many leaders are busy fighting today’s fires; their immediate concern is surviving in the current world not necessarily preparing for a flatter one. They may intellectually agree with the growing importance of side B; however the fact is they are byproducts of a side A world, wherein logic, facts and bottom line results rule the day.

While leadership attributes such as listening, empathy and encouragement will always be important, by themselves they are insufficient. Effective leaders, in addition to establishing strategies and objectives, must also align their people closer to the ever-changing voice of their external and internal clients – the recipients of their products and services. Rewarding employees based on their individual and collective ability to capture, analyze and react to the dynamic needs and priorities of those they serve – customers and/or fellow coworkers. This in turn improves their ability to achieve more (side A), while simultaneously instilling greater social responsibility, teamwork, creativity and sense of service – side B traits – within the workforce.

In terms of profitability, growth and innovation, bottom line performance will improve, addressing the immediate concerns of today’s leaders. While at the same time employees’, due to this value-oriented approach, will extract more meaning and fulfillment from their jobs, which results in higher quality relationships and a more sustainable, healthy and productive work climate. *Bringing Meaning into Monday™* offers a process that can help leaders achieve it.

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