

Leadership Initiative Papers

On Leadership & Business



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Best Posts & Ideas from [Takis Athanassiou](#) Blog

On Buisness & Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership, today, can be used both as a framework of thought and as a tool for bringing desired and intended changes to a personal and professional level. These changes, made intentionally in a personal and professional level, can propagate results and outputs in the areas of personal development, relationships, business, communities, policies, politics, etc.

Considering the present situation, with all the problems a modern person has to cope with, the changing of things that are not working anymore, as used to be, should and ought to be a task of personal responsibility. And for this reason, I believe that a broad initiative must be taken, in order to regain the insights that can lead us, to formulate a better social, political, business and personal environment. I believe that Leadership, as a principle and discipline, is a vital component in this procedure and can be used by anyone in order to enhance his/her personal and professional life.

Today, in a competitive market environment, with more demanding tasks and requirements a person can cope with, and with a widespread information overload demanding for attention, a person should he or she have a guide to support him/her in his/hers daily, short and long term goals.

This little book, moves to that direction. It consists of posts, have been published in the [Takis Athanassiou](#) Blog on Leadership Initiative, and I think that provide a framework of reference and discussion on topics related mainly to Business and Leadership.

I compile this book as a review of my blog posts and as an exercise in developing e-Books, an area I was not familiar with. When done though, I thought that some ideas can benefit more people and decide to give it free to my readers as a reference material on the ideas discussed in my blog.

My wish is, this small guide can be used for the support of everyday activities of every person, empower him or her with a framework of thought and action, developing more options and alternatives for everyday problems and permits him/her to do good things for his/her life.

A final thought. I consider this book, as version 1 of a series, which I'm going to update, when I think that more valuable content is been produced and can be published.

LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

An idea

Leadership Initiative is a concept grown out from simple, everyday actions and the challenges these presented in their implementation. From a personal quest of finding ways to work smarter, to be more productive, to make a difference, or providing better results towards others (my family, my friends, my coworkers, my associates, my clients, etc) this idea have grown faster into something that involved many interested parties.

The advance of social media provide me a point of reference and a platform, to check the validity of the approach, against real situations.

Its components are simple:

- **Leadership** & business ideas, principles, tools and methodologies that support the implementation of goals
- **Initiative for action**, and an
- **Personal ownership** of the actions performed and **responsibility** for the outcome

The Leadership Initiative framework provides a base for the communication of a very simple message. That **everyone can achieve his or hers goals, if he or she do it purposefully, with passion, new ideas, a proper methodology and with the right tools.**

As I have write in my blog:

Leadership, today, can be used both as a framework of thought and as a tool for bringing desired and intended changes to a personal and professional level. These changes, made in a personal level, can propagate results and outputs in the areas of personal development, relationships, business, communities, politics, etc. And for this reason, I believe that a broad initiative must be taken, in order to regain the insights that can lead us, to formulate a better social, political, business and personal environment. I think that Leadership, as a principle and disciple, is something that can be used by anyone in order to enhance his/her personal and professional life.

The concept

The **Leadership Initiative** approach, focuses in practical, ready to be used ideas and tools, deriving, its origins, by more rigor and formal methodologies from Leadership, Business, Management, etc, relying heavily on concepts developed by them.

BUSINESS

What Exactly Strategy Is? (and what it is not!)



"What exactly strategy is?" and "What it is not!"

Have you ever consider, what strategy is? We hear all the time about strategy by many official and unofficial channels. **Strategy** is one of those basic concepts (as [Leadership](#), [Productivity](#), [Personal Development](#), etc is) for personal, social and business development, people usually, use it wrong, and often for the wrong reasons. But why there is such confusion about what strategy is, since it is such important components in our modern way of thinking? And why it is so difficult to define what strategy is?

On Strategy

[Strategy](#) is a concept that most people find it an essential component (*or tool*) in the arsenal of every modern person (*either for business, professional or for personal use*) but rarely get into the trouble of define it or use it correctly.

For this reason a lot of the people discuss about political, social, cultural, personal, [life](#) or [business strategies](#) for getting this or that, but the most of the times they define it in a problematic way and as a result, use it wrongly.

Let's clear up, a little, the fog, surround the word **strategy** and see where can we go from here.

So first things first. Let's see, what strategy is not.

What Strategy Is and Isn't

What Strategy is not

For the most of the people, the word **strategy**, is an alternative of **long-term planning** and most of the companies or organizations use it in this context.

But long-term planning is quite different from [strategic planning](#) (as we will see!). So strategy is not equal to planning. Maybe strategy involves planning, but it does not equals to that.

Pursue this analogy, **strategy** it seems to be neither just:

- tactics,
- tool,
- method,
- design,
- scheme,
- approach,
- framework
- way of thinking
- ...

Still strategy encompass all (and much more of) the above. So what exactly **strategy** is. Let's see how we can define it.

Definition of Strategy

[Merriam-Webster](#) dictionary, defines **strategy** as:

a (1) : the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war (2) : the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions
b : a variety of or instance of the use of strategy
2 a : a careful plan or method : a clever stratagem
b : the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal
3: an adaptation or complex of adaptations (as of behavior, metabolism, or structure) that serves or appears to serve an important function in achieving evolutionary success
<foraging strategies of insects>

But this is a very general definition, hardly suitable for applying **strategy** principles (or *strategic thinking*) in our daily activities (something highly favorable, since, the implementation and use of strategic concepts in our life, would produce better results, in almost every situation, either professional or personal).

Why we need more functional definitions of strategy? Because we need a definition that would define its application and prescribe its usage in a simple, elegant and functional way, that everyone can follow and better his/her life (in all levels!). And exactly that is the goal!

So

What Strategy is?

As we discussed, **strategy** can be a lot of the things (*and have a lot of meanings for different people*). But we have to agree on what it is, in order to have a common ground for discussing about strategy and implementing it in the same way.

International literature (as various definitions of strategy) suggests, that there are 7 basic components that define strategy. Namely:

1. A measurable objective or goal to be reached (*situation to be reached, item to be gained, skill to be acquired, products to be sell or produced, etc*)
2. A scope of reference (*a content and a context*) for the pursue of the objective pursued (*a way of do's and don'ts for the achievement of the objective*). An ethical, moral, culture, system, business, economic, financial, etc framework of activities, out [*or beyond*] of which the reach of the set objective, can be considered as inappropriate, as unsuccessful, as not economic feasible, etc)
3. A time frame for the achievement of the objective.
4. A certain mindset, dictates the accomplishment of the set objective in a systematic and coherent way.
5. A desire, will or intention, of a logical entity (*a person, company, organization, community, etc*) to reach that objective in a certain systematic manner.
6. A way of reaching or getting the intended objective. A plan, schema, methodology, stratagem that can be designed, devised, or implemented for the pursue of the objective set.
7. A set (*or sum*) of predestinate intentional activities, organized and orchestrated in a manner that would considered able to accomplish the objective according to the plan used [*in 6*].

Based on the above, a functional definition of what strategy is, can be read as:

A designed set of intentional activities, undertaken by a logical entity with a certain mindset, and organized within a scheme, which aims at achieving a measurable objective within a given scope of reference and time frame

And this perhaps is a more functional definition of what strategy is?

Reference on the topic of “What Strategy Is?”

- [The Art of War](#), by [Sun Tzu](#)
- [A Book Of Five Rings](#), by [Miyamoto Musashi](#)
- [The Prince](#), by [Niccolò Machiavelli](#)
- [On War](#), by [Carl von Clausewitz](#)
- [I Have a Strategy \(No You Don't\): The Illustrated Guide to Strategy](#) by [Howell J. Malham Jr](#)

Do you think, the definition of strategy, provided further above, it was useful? Can these concepts be applied to daily activities and be used in an efficient way? Do you think that the so called strategic thinking can provide more results for every person, in comparison to normal thinking? Do you think, that after reading this post, you can answer more easily in the question of what strategy is, or not?

A New Economic Model – Some thoughts



Current Situation

Europe now days, and Greece in particular, faces a complex economic challenge sporting a lot problem in everyday life. This “crisis” is the result both of structural problems, embedded in European Economies, and of a colossal lack of leadership on behalf of most Governmental bodies.

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

Dale Carnegie

For this reason a new approach should be taken, a one that would implement a new “out-of-the-box” premises, for reinvigorate the economy as well as establish a new set of rules that would bring economic development and promote spill-over effects in various sectors of the economy.

These premises prescribe a new model of “doing” business in Europe, and lay out a basic set of rules that would bring spill-over effects across all the economy. This new model of economics, aims at bringing a new [paradigm shift](#) (in the epistemology sense) and new

rules of contact and engagements that would permit to the everyday civilian to move easily from the old economic model to the proposed one.

The New Economic Business Model Approach

In order a new economic model to be structured and implemented, various elements should be synergize, cooperate and employed. Among them are:

- *Emphasis on human factor not only as an economic unit and a client but as well as an involving living actor, partner and collaborator of the economic structure and ecosystem*
- *Shift from strictly economic terms to parameters such as ecology, culture, self development, "clean" technologies, constant economic, personal development, lifelong learning, etc*
- *Breaking of the rule of the "more profit" clause in favor of the rules of sustainability, development, integration and provision/development of more [value added services](#) based and customized on the individual needs of the people/participants/cooperators*
- *Development of social networks, providing and exchanging more and innovative value added services*
- *New Business premises taking account more the cooperative model rather than the competitive one for the formation of win-win business networks and cooperation.*

Basic Premises of the proposed business model

Even though it is difficult to describe with strict terms a New Economic Business Model envisioned here, some directions can be described, and namely those that already today gaining some momentum. Based on that assumption, I think that the new model of economy should be structured, based on premises such as:

- Multiplication of virtual enterprises, serving both domestic and international needs
- Small initial investment in hardware and internet services in order to be provided virtual spaces that would host small and medium shops and enterprises
- Heavy usage of free services and cloud computing for everyday operation
- Very small prize lists, permitting a free and inexpensive focus in business, semi-business, social (like blogging, communication, networking) or such, virtual based, activities and attracting more "clients/cooperators"
- Community based provision of services in a model of free hardware provision or per month – small fee – payment (s) for those cannot afford



Business, more than any other occupation, is a continual dealing with the future; it is a continual calculation, an instinctive exercise in foresight.

Henry R. Luce

the rent or buying the necessary hardware. Some community provision models, also, should be taken into account.

- Initial personal investment of time on the basis of a part time profession in the virtual area (side by side with ordinary jobs) for many people (especially the young ones, who are most literate with technology), and capitalization of the vast accumulate expertise in the operation of virtual organization, projects, etc
- Financial schemes that provide an initial base of economic reference and viability
- Provision of services in a digital economy as hosting, services, etc and development of new, innovating value added services.
- Establishment of virtual enterprises and shops in virtual spaces leased under several schemes (payment, trial base, limited trial, etc) in order to provide an initial momentum for financial or semi-financial activities to many people.
- Cooperation, business and social networking for branding and promotion services
- A gradual shift from traditional economy to a virtual one depend on the initial exchange of virtual services and goods and the augmentation of similar trends with main objective the spillover of the earnings from the virtual transaction to “real” economic transactions
- A well established set of connections with the real everyday economy (such as traditional services for Home working – delivery, distribution, bank services, groceries, etc.) For example a home based operation (family – virtual SME) in a village or small town would transfer a part of the earnings in the small town grocery, post office, delivery services, developing thus the local economy. The same scheme can be applied to a larger area as long the lines of contact are well defined and established.
- Public demand for a clear and small regulatory framework from the European Governments, able to lift the obstacles, establish small taxation and attract more potential “users”.
- Broad dissemination of schemes promoting and propagating the proliferation of necessary skills and aptitudes to a larger amount of people (especially to those not very familiar with the new technologies), perhaps in the form of e-Learning, continuing education schemes, etc.
- Supplementary requirements would may be:
 - A different shift in education focusing on soft skills, initiative, decision making, etc
 - A better legal framework for the rapid creation and operation of virtual enterprises
 - A support on the value of tele-working, flexible working schemes, distance working, etc and clear decisions and commitment from the companies and governments on such models, in order to guarantee the rights (legal, insurance, financial, etc) of the participants.

Of course these are some thoughts and scenarios for deliberation, based on today’s observations and not an exhausted description of all the parameters that may or may not

form the new model of doing business, contact economic transactions and ultimately living and working in the new economic environment.

Do you think, you can exploit a model such this?

Towards a culture of change



The one think that is constant in our life is change.

We change constantly. Sometimes in directions we cannot control. Effortless, without signs the most of the times, we become a different person day by day. The changes in our society are constant, and continuing. And with them, want it or not, we changing as people, persons, roles, professionals, trying to cope to the alterations of our environment. We naturally move towards a culture of change.

That, though, is **NOT** the problem.

The problem arises when these changes affect us, without have a saying about them. Most people let things passing by, without notice. They usually rely on the famous [plasticity](#) of the brain, to cope and adjust to the new situations. Right or wrong, we cannot have a total control in every stimuli, information, incentives we receive. At least not all the time. But we can have some control, sometimes, by using specialized filters (to safeguarding some stimuli and information of importance for us) and by training our minds to cope successfully with the external and internal changes the outside environment, may cause to out usual way of living, doing and thinking.

These moments, usually, define our character. Choosing is the act of selecting an item from all the other that surround us. It is an act of will. And for that has a gravity and an importance that defines the who we are.

Selecting to live in a changing environment is exactly such as the swimming. In sea, we can have control on the moves we can make, we are responsible for them and we can

compensate the changes in the environment (if any). This is and an analogy of our era. Too much information overload, tasks to be dealt with, constants that suddenly have been changed, little room for reactions or maneuvers, less valid guiding direction for navigating us in a more solid ground. All the time we have to re-align with the new conditions and compensate with the changes and the effects these bring to our life. Is a mess, isn't. Or not?

There are always guiding rules, if chosen to be applied, to be used effectively in our business or in our personal life. They involved the development of a [culture](#) that can incorporate, propagate and disseminate the possible changes.

For instance, in our professional life, if you want to build, employ and sustain a new culture in an organizational level (as a leader, as an employ, or simple as a concerned worker [!!!]) you should be determine to:

1. Analyze the new trends and select with your team or a close group of peers, the best alternative trends or mini – cultures to serve best in any future situation as generators of valid ideas, concepts, [memes](#), incentives and approaches. Select the most suitable trends for reinforcing, and ignore the ones that, at present, are not look very promising (*perhaps they need more time, in order to reach a mature state, but in any event you cannot focus on that now*). Develop a sense of urgency and an environment in which the new cultural changes can address old problems successfully.
2. Based on this analysis, engage the most appropriate shareholders and key players (*interested parties, leadership teams, management & marketing teams, close communities, the society (perhaps, hopefully !!!) etc*) in the collaboration development and implementation of a new vision, reflecting the desired future culture and outcomes for all the involving parties, as well as for society as whole. In this level you should positively affect a desired behavioral change, reflecting the new direction, to all the people involved in the procedure (*If they cannot adopt the new changes, it would be made extremely difficult to propagate the model to others, for lack of clarity, trust and integrity*).
3. Develop a new story line and stories that would embodied the vision and would answer all the pains caused by the old situations. Pitch this story in all possible and reachable channels your group can manage. Along with that you should develop, outsource or commission new banners, signs, symbols, logos, etc that would express, embody and present the new situation (*as for instance, creating a new branding, to serve the advancement of the new cultural changes, in a tangible and pictorial way*).
4. Set the strategy and tactics, goals, objectives, values, stages, services, products, etc to serve this vision and the supporting story in the long run (*i.e. the operational stream that would be able to lead towards the new foreseen future*) and design/select the systems, the approaches, the procedures the methodologies and the appropriate tools that would help the implementation of the new vision and sustain its growth towards larger audiences and over expanded time periods. You should make sure that your vision, strategy, goals and values are aligned with the behavior and objectives you have set in the process. Initiate and develop mechanism, schemes and structures for:
 - Practice and propagate the new culture, case studies, stories, logos, symbols, etc to all possible levels of the organization, society, company, etc. Share, communicate and cultivate any new behavioral change derived by the practicing of the new culture.

- Build solid structures of support and communities that would engage and empower more people in coping with their problems based on the new premises have been initialized by the adoption of the new cultures.
- Layout new learning mechanisms that would train and educate the people in the new constantly changing environment and in the ways they can adapt to that
- Effect more desirable changes, if you can, and abandon old habits not longer serve.
- Create new communities or practice and support, societal structures, companies, organizations directed outwards, aiming at supporting the people to their goals within the new environment

Finally, measure the results and the outcomes and collaboratively refine the proposed model as appropriate.

At a personal level, embracing a culture of change, is something much more valuable than mere dealing with the change or simply absorbing and compensate its repercussions. Essentially it means you have:

- To setup some anchor points for future reference (values, directions, etc)
- To act in pro-active manner and remove the reaction habits of older conditions no longer exist
- To evaluate and re-evaluate the changes not only for compensation but for gaining control over them as well
- To assume the responsibility of our actions (in their total effect)
- To own your future
- To Learn new ways and disseminate them via all reachable communication channels, in order to propagate them throughout the society
- To educate more people for living in a new constantly changing environment and in the ways they can use for adapting, adopting and effectively use the new conditions
- To affect more desirable changes, if you can, and abandon old habits not longer serve.
- To finally assume the driver's seat, at least in your life, if not in the life of others

All these, are approaches that can support effectively the adoption of a culture of change either on professional or on personal level. Whether it could be implemented or not, rely entirely on the possible outcomes we/you want to bring in our/your life and in our/your society.

Do you think that you could live within a culture of constant change or not? This approach can or would serve you as a tool for coping with the future changes or do you think that there are more approaches to consider?

Business Startups – An approach

Business Startups

Necessity or demand?

In today's competitive market, business, [have to change](#), in order to adapt. The same and the human capital. Today the old patterns have changed, the work shifting out from its traditional boundaries, covering more levels of everyday living, the old ways have been either abandoning or changing and new opportunities arise, for the ones want to benefited most from the new rules of the game. This situation, it seems to be a global trend usually experienced either as necessity or as a popular demand.

[Business](#), in modern society, is out of tune (*to say the least!!!*). The market conditions leave behind a highly skilled human capital, without many alternatives in the traditional paths, searching for new opportunities. The shifting of old correlations leave societies with many gaps in the market and business while the new demands of the consumers provide more pressure in an already saturated market. These “gaps” though, leave room for new models of doing work, business, living.

The new working profile includes:

- Vision
- Passion
- New [niche markets](#)
- Small initial capital and funding for new companies
- Flexible legislative framework
- Small business formations (1 to 10 people, most of the times)
- Rising of demand for electronic services and innovative products
- Developing of new schemes for doing things in more efficient ways
- New ways for synergies and collaboration

- Innovation
- Social media presence
- Aggregation of ability, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in small groups or, even, in individuals
- High demand for steep curves of learning and new tools for just-in-time [business](#) & [learning](#)
- [Convolution](#) of business and social activities
- etc

As high expertise unemployment rises, the [new models of work](#), develop an enormous momentum. These models signify the shifting towards:

- Electronically connected and geographically dispersed groups
- Electronically based products and services
- Dependence on specialized social or business networks for finding clientage, contacts, associates, exploitation or development of new markets, etc.
- Heavy use of new technologies and methodologies based upon them
- Rise of novel ways of marketing or selling
- Formation of specialized, loose int their organization, “tribes”, often around persons, products, companies, ideas, methodologies, etc
- New forms of employment or even a tendency towards self-employment
- Tele-working practices
- Flexible hours of working
- Passion for excellence
- Balance between personal and professional life
- Emphasis in personality and character
- Advance learning ways and tools accompanied with constant learning procedures and routines
- Focus in the acquirement of new, highly specialized, knowledge and skills
- An urge for education/training and quick dissemination of the acquired knowledge and results
- Integration of various roles in less, in the traditional sense, working profiles or even to individuals (i.e. a businessman who is also, business developer, marketer, promoter, product developer, promotion specialist, designer, publisher, etc)
- Outsourcing of various tasks and delegation of traditional business procedures in 3rd parties (other peer groups, small companies, specialized networks, or other).
- New strategic alliances, formations and coalitions, often from different business paths.

With the advance of these models or trends, came and new channels for communication and distribution as well as new **PoP** ([Points of Presence](#)), used in many different and novel ways. These include:

- Blogs
- Sites
- On-line specialized shops
- Social media
- etc.

along with the traditional channels, resources and means.

Today we witness, the rise of the “**really small business owners**” (*many modern companies have only 1 to 5 persons, running all the traditional company functions*). The new workers usually have a blog as a base of communication and presence, are administrators, photographers, design their own graphics and visual communications, handle the management and market, the contacts with associated 3rd parties, the promotion and public relationships, etc.

This trend, presents, today a new area of employment and it seems large enough, to host many people. It also presents a new challenge, or opportunity for many has the talent and the skills to exploit these “new frontiers”.

Do you think that the new working trends are constituted demand or just a necessity, derived from the new market conditions? Would you think you can find a new role, in these conditions? Do you believe that such trends would even grow in the future, or after while they would diminished?

About DJ's and Decks



[Disk Jockeys](#) (or DJ's for short) have changed the view and the perception of modern music industry, by combining and merging old and new music trends and genres, and developing new ones. In order though, DJ's to reach in today's state, a lot of experimentation, having been taken place, already from the 30's (!!!), both in the expression as well as in the technology used ([decks](#), records, tapes, CD-ROM, etc).

Modern businesses are in analogous state, trying to strive after an acute competitive market, with limited resources and with [new models of doing business](#) to emerge, all the time. The **DJ's** [*Data Jockeys or Digital Journalists*] of today's digital economy include a new generation of information led and services oriented persons, aiming at re-forming (or reformatting if you like) the old model of business, and striving after the validity and effectiveness of this attempt, in financial, personal, philosophical, business and effectiveness terms.

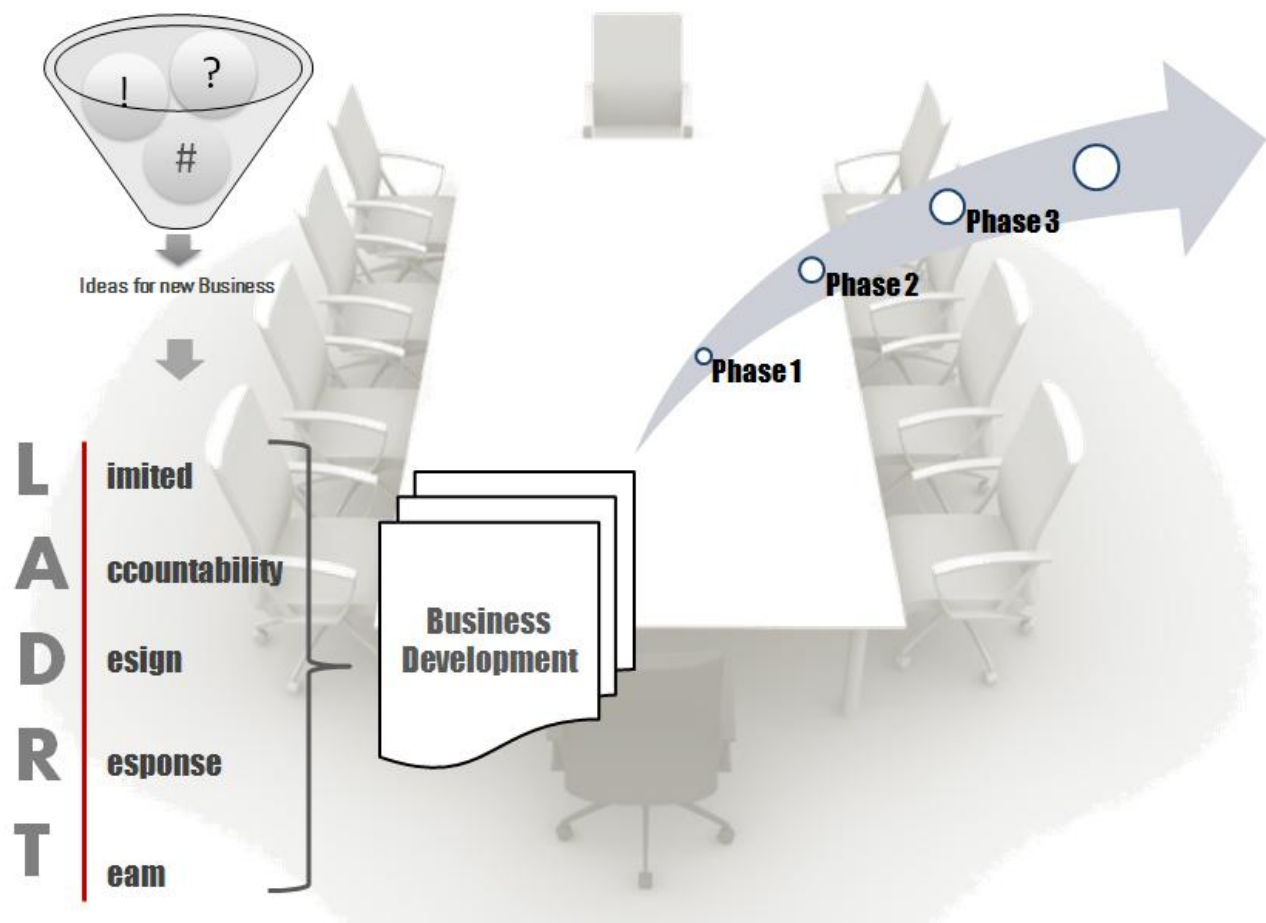
This forwarding moving DJ's and **Decks** [*Digital economy's captains of knowledge*] trend includes digital journalists and bloggers, passionate hobbyists, social media marketers and managers, information and business experts, etc, all loosely organized in tribes, genders, likes and dislikes, favorite products, groups of direct or indirect influences, each one with its own special requirements, aims, products and outputs and all of which in constant interaction among them. This activity, even so scarce, formative or not, creates today a "loosely coupled" **cloud network** comprising by clusters of "front-line" news organizations and blogs, social networks of influence (measured by likes and dislikes), click-economies, new financial lines of credit, new strategies for management and marketing, different ways of sales, etc.

This new networked ecosystem is an entirely new system, flexible, adaptable in different needs and always in a constant flow. Its limits and its margins have not yet been evaluated entirely, while new outputs are produced by this system every day, either in personal, or in professional, or in market, or in community, or in society level.

But whatever the future of this trend will be, as analogous trends have done in the past, it is certain that it, in a smaller or a larger degree, would initiate a complete different set of perspectives and approaches that might lead towards a new [paradigm shift](#), beneficial for the entire international society.

What do you think? This trend is strong enough to impose new [memes](#) and culture incentives to form new ways of living and doing business, or not?

What exactly a LADRT is, and what it can do for my business?



The development of a [new business](#), is a major function for the companies. Most of the companies striving today to diversify their products and services and enhance the value and the quality of their products and services, towards, their clientele. If you are [or were] responsible for the creation of a new service, product, software, operation, or any other item of commercial value, you would know how difficult it is the process of developing something new. A “**product**” or service that potentially would influence the course of your company and of your present and future clients.

In order, though, for you to start a procedure such as this, (*and you can follow any exemplary, well documented, professional procedure for the development of new business*) you usually need the support and the assistance, of a **Limited Accountability Design Response Team** (LADRT, for short) which would look all the available data, in a “fresh” look and provide new insights, before the “**professional**” look, approaches and views takes ownership of the procedure. An explanation for a **LADRT** is needed here.

A **LADRT** is my own interpretation of a necessary link in the new business creation process, that during my “*corporate days*” I found very useful. When I and my colleagues we had to start a new service, business, software, or something else, we usually follow the “typical” steps for the creation of a service, as described by the international literature. At the time, I recall, that the [ADDIE](#) model was, one of the mostly used in e-Business and e-Learning fields, because it was reflecting most accurate the requirements involved, and help us predict some future behaviors (*as a proper business model should do!*).

But before the employment of any procedure for the development of a new business area, I was felt and (still I’m feeling) that someone needs and a different kind of input, besides raw data, in order to design and implement a business. It needs an “amateurish” like enthusiasm about what have to be done (*product, service, or else*), coupled with a higher order birds view of the situation involved and a freedom to suggest all kind of wild, crazy or illogical ideas to be implemented within a given framework.

It needs a group of people to assume this role (*having limited to none accountability, as the process’s output concerns, in order to have the freedom to explore all possible angles of a situation*) and carried out a pre-design, pre-brainstorming phase, that would lay down the basis for the design process to be followed, later on. That why and the name of that (*suggested hypothetical*) group or team is deriving from its base functions (“**limited accountability**“, *i.e. the team is not accountable of the final decisions to be reached and “**design response**” as a first input in the design directions should be pursued later*). This, of course, was (and when I use it today as a consultant, is) an [ad hoc](#) team, without membership and formal rules and without limitations. Simple, you make sure you have include all the representative agents for the business, you want to formalize.

When I call a **LADRT** session (*formally or informally*) and use it as a consultant for further the development of a business, I don’t even call it a group or business session, but rather I prefer to label it as discussion with an open agenda (or something similar) and I usually function as a member of the team without special tasks or privileges, except to note down the useful staff and ideas that may arise.

I make sure from the start that is not a brainstorming session, but is a meeting with strict time boundaries, no formal rules and only one central topic, that generally follows the following steps:

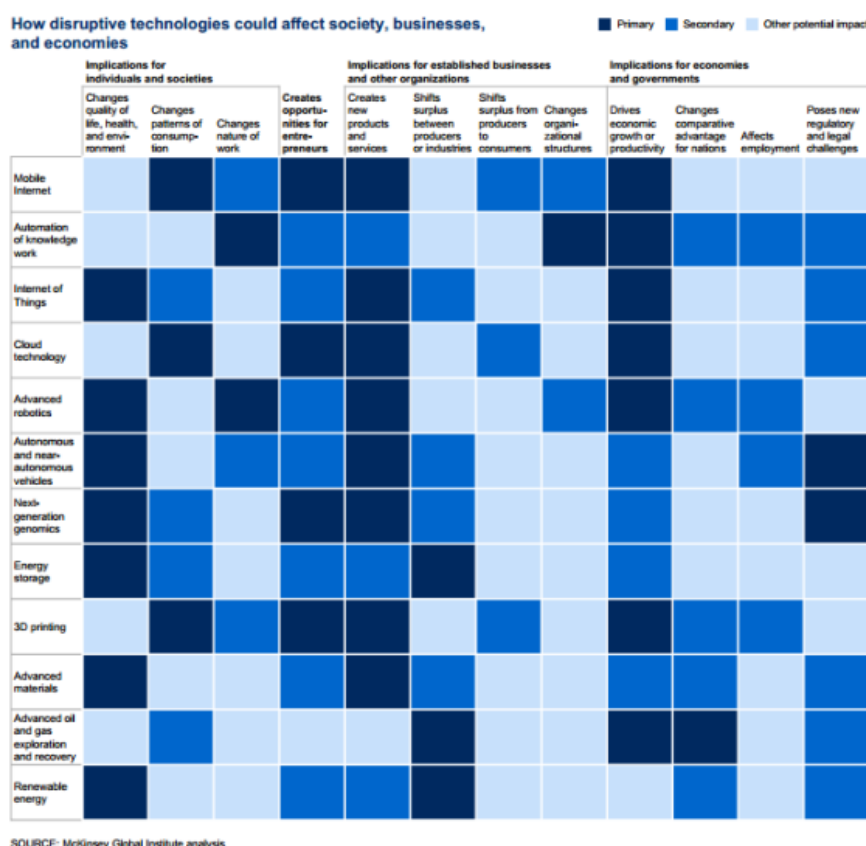
1. Provision and presentation of the central topic, framework, idea, concept, or other in a written or spoken form. An introductory statement on the why they are there and what they will do, a general and quite abstract initial statement and 2 or 3 explanation sentences about the business to be developed should be suffice (*an early, small, [elevator pitch](#) of the service to be formed later, if you like*).
2. Free discussion on concept and ideas about the [USABILITY](#) of the proposed business (I usually encourage the participants to further their ideas towards usually unassociated areas – *a legacy, I guess, by the brainstorming principles, I used to employ[!!!]*)
3. Their estimation and feelings towards that business or service (It is certain, that they will not use something they don’t like and thus this group becomes an initial control group for later evolvement of the business (*if any will exited!!!*))
4. Their expectation about a business like that, how much they would pay for its usage, evaluation of other factors of interest, etc

- Gathering of all related ideas, concepts, etc in a paper, in the form of free association or temporal directions.

The above process provides some valuable design directions for further development of a piece of business, new services, etc, that even if they do not use for immediate implementation, can provide design commitments for later use. Furthermore, this procedure involves a lot of interested parties in the process of developing a new business, while it is in positions to postpone or interrupt the evolution of a lengthy and not profitable procedure, saving time, effort and man power from an organization.

What do you think? A LADRT could operate in your company or in your area of business, or find it completely unnecessary? Do you think that an ad hoc group as that, can save money and resources by stopping the development of unnecessary products or services or add up a new complexity factor, most of the companies cannot use it effectively?

12 technologies that will transform the economy and the society



Graphic courtesy of McKinsey Global Institute [from *Disruptive technologies: Advances that will transform life, business, and the global economy Report*]

In May (**May 2013**), [McKinsey Global Institute](https://www.mckinsey.com/global-institute), published a very interesting report, named: “**Disruptive technologies: Advances that will transform life, business, and the global economy**” by James Manyika, Michael Chui, Jacques Bughin, Richard

Dobbs, Peter Bisson, and Alex Marrs. In this report are identified 12 technologies that might transform the economy and the society of tomorrow.

This [report](#), puts in perspective, 12 basic technologies, that can bring a huge impact, in personal and professional life, by transforming the life, economies and societies. The selection of these technologies based on the following premises:

- The technology is rapidly advancing or experiencing breakthroughs,
- The potential scope of impact is broad,
- Significant economic value could be affected, and
- Economic impact is potentially disruptive

These technologies are:

1. Mobile Internet
2. Automation of knowledge work
3. Internet of Things
4. Cloud Technology
5. Advanced Robotics
6. Autonomous and near-autonomous vehicles
7. Next-generation genomics
8. Energy storage
9. 3D printing
10. Advanced materials
11. Advanced oil and gas exploitation and recovery
12. Renewable energy

This report, is an excellent reading for everyone would like to take a look at the technologies that could affect the economic, social and personal ecosystem of the future, as well as for the professional, consultant, worker, or entrepreneur who would like to identify the future business, work and life opportunities and leads.

A well documented report and even more an excellent guide on the future, high-impact, technologies that would bring a huge [Return on investment](#) (ROI).

What do you think? This report can be any use for yourself or for your work? How you can exploit any of these technologies? Do you think, there is a working or business opportunity in any of the sectors described in this report, or not?

Business development as a Sudoku puzzle

		2			3		1	
				5		8		7
	1		8					6
						9		3
			6		4			
4		5						
3					7		8	
1		7		2				
	5		9			6		

In today's business, you have to be flexible in order to cope with the demands of your clients and your business. In addition to that, you usually need a different kind of [mentality](#), in order to face the challenges presented by the development of new business. In these situations, there is an uncharted area, which the most of the time, it may cost you a lot, in resources, time, money, effort and manpower.

This procedure, seems like the [Sudoku](#) puzzle, where you were given only a few numbers, and you were expected to solve the puzzle, by the given numbers (*in the classical version of the game*) and the support of the standard rules[!!!]. Easy, isn't it?

A lot like the business development, you would say? Yes, but not exactly !!! Sudoku may have some similarities with business development. But just that. Only some similarities. Usually, the development of a new business, requires a detailed analysis and balanced of various factors, with a huge range of [uncertainty](#) (*unlike Sudoku, where you have only a limited set of numbers or letters*).

In Sudoku, you usually need to:

- Analyze the existing numbers
- Brainstorm or figure out how to find the remain ones
- Select a strategy of solving which, in correlation with the game's rules, would give you, in a valid manner, the missing numbers
- Preparation (*design*) of your way of solving (i.e. you try to solving by missing numbers you are certain of, you would make some educated guesses, or something in between [!!!])
- Actually, fill in the numbers, starting by the ones that are easily found out (by the rules, the strategy you follow, the surrounding numbers, etc) and proceeding to the more "difficult" ones!
- Error correction (*if it is needed one*)
- Fill in the puzzle!!!

In business development (*as in Sudoku*) you usually have or you were given some or a lot data and information (*perhaps some market analysis data, customer's trends data, etc*), some rules (*yes, off course there are rules in business development !!! – Check and reference section*) and you were expected to build a very successful (and profitable, needless to say) new business [!!!]. Simple as that! Or not?

Since there are a lot of “*error variables*” in this equation and a lot of design or other potential flaws to be considered, when you developing a new business scheme, you usually need to pay a close attention to the:

1. Analysis of the hard-core data of the new area(s) you want to exploit
2. [Brainstorming](#) of the ways a new business can be made in the area, based on the market and the possible clients
3. Select a strategy of implementation of the new business or service
4. Design & preparation of the business or services you want to develop (*with specific timetables, milestones, and deliverable*)
5. Small scale implementation and piloting of you new business, service, software, etc
6. Communication, dissemination of the new business to the potential clients, and feedback by all interested parties
7. Error and flaws correction
8. Effort versus gaining invested or [ROI](#) (*Return of investment*) analysis, in order to see the profitability, validity and viability of the business, (it is a business, after all [!!!]), and finally
9. (if **ROI** proved successful), Roll-out of the new business in full-scale.

It is a little much more lengthy procedure, than the one you could use for solving a Sudoku puzzle. Or is it not?

What do you think? New business development looks like a Sudoku puzzle or not? Do you find useful this analogy? Can you use this approach for developing a new business?

Storytelling in Business Practices?



**"Great stories
happen to those
who can tell them."**

*Ira Glass,
in his tribute to David Rakoff.*

Story is the oldest most proven way humans [learn](#) and remember information.

The [storytelling](#) as a business practice that can enhance the way we see the world and business practices. I found this interesting site in web ([Story at Work](#)) searching for Knowledge Management practices.

It has a strong point about certain thing, displaying various very interested quotes such as the:

The world is nothing but my perception of it. I see only through myself. I hear only through the filter of my story." – Byron Katie

He who tells the stories rules the world" – Hopi proverb

and the

*Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives — the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change — truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts." — **Salman Rushdie***

which intrigue me in various directions.

Take a look and draw your conclusions about the paths that can be employed in a business environment.

Instructional Design as a Discipline



Instructional Design: A Discipline or a Tool?

[Instructional design](#) is a multi-disciple domain, involving [pedagogy](#), training, [design](#), systems' knowledge, [mentoring](#), community building, [mediation](#), [leadership](#), distance, *on-the job and at hand*, learning, knowledge elicitation, facilitation management and channeling, human development, creativity, out-of-the box mental framework, tools mastering, presentation skills, to name only a few. All these (and some more) are vital and legitimate components of the **Instructional Design** practice.

Instructional Design from an Engineering Point of View

Instructional Design can best be viewed as an engineering approach. It tries to:

- Assemble all the knowledge elements, activities, actions, tasks, support material, etc that can structure a specific autonomous knowledge (or [skill](#)) "**unit**",
- Craft a general [strategy](#) that would build these units in a logical and augmental way towards a certain, measurable, learning objective,
- Produce an, ***on the chosen strategy based***, scheme that would direct someone to acquire that knowledge via certain, pre-designed learning paths and activities,
- Pave a smooth path that would lead someone, in the best possible way (*i.e. easily and, if possible, effortless*), through the learning path have been chosen for the gaining of the certain (*knowledge or other*) objective, and
- Evaluate the chosen course of action (and promoting the necessary corrections if, something, needs to be changed)

Where Instructional Design Can Be Used?

Its range of application in the [learning](#) development sector is vast, and its goal is to provide all the necessary resources, in order to support and sustain a learner, towards his/hers

training objectives (*either be the acquirement of a new skill, knowledge, attitude, or something completely different !*).

No one learns as much about a subject as one who is forced to teach it.” —Peter F. Drucker

To acquire someone, a certain knowledge, skill or attitude, though, is not the same as learning the specific knowledge, skill, etc. [Training](#) is about **behavior change**. You cannot learn anything, if you don't have change the way you do certain things. Learning a new thing, is not like piling up new information on top of the existing ones, but rather is the small changes in behavior, ways of perceive, doing, act, respond, pro-act, integrated through out your whole **YOU** [!!!].

What Instructional Design Is?

In a learning process, **Instructional Design** can help in clear up the difficult edge, pave a pre-destined way and setting the learning ecosystem in promoting your learning path according to your objectives.

In this environment, Instructional Design, can:

1. Evaluate existing knowledge
2. Fill in the identified skill or knowledge gaps in a methodologically and pedagogical correct and acceptable way
3. Lay out the roadmap for the acquirement of the new knowledge
4. Smoothing the transition and the eventual “transformation”.

In this context, **Instructional Design**, can both be used as a discipline and as a tool for gaining new knowledge of the world surround us.

Do you think, that Instructional Design can support effectively someone to learn more easily certain things or not? Do you think you can use creatively Instructional Design principles, to help you in learning difficult subjects or skills?

LEADERSHIP

Why Leadership Initiative



I decide the development of the “**Leadership Initiative**” blog as a main loci for ideas, tools, practices that could be easily implemented by everyone and streamlined in the everyday life in the form of principles, habits, tips and hacks. Small, every day, changes in mainstream activities can bring a significant impact on the final outcome. Especially when these activities are intentional and directed towards goals, or even better when follow general principle-based life strategies. (see and: [Kaizen](#), [Kaizen: Small Changes for Big Results](#), [What is Kaizen?](#) and [Small Changes in Life](#), to name a few).

Leadership is one of the rarest resources in need today, scarce but critical, aiming to transform, in a positive way the modern society and people. Today people face a lot of challenges that leave them in most cases out of balance, render them unable to cope with the situation at hand. The difference between the “*I’m always ready*” attitude against the “*I cannot cope with it*” situation is really a small but constant one activity that could read as “**constant cultivation**“. Cultivation of self, of relationships, of tools, of procedures. Every day, all the time. It means the negation and challenge of everyday comfortable concepts, the change of familiar mental paths and attitudes and in total the change of behavior.

■ *We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” - Aristotle*

For these reasons the “**Leadership Initiative**”.

Leadership Initiative, without the fuzz!

Leadership, because is a general “umbrella” like term, that incorporates a multitude of resources necessary for the transformation, such as:

- Vision and planning
- Goal settings
- Guidance based on principles
- Positive Influence
- Positive commitment
- Collaboration and management
- Self management
- Motivation
- Constant Learning & training
- Self development and the drive to better yourself
- A solid state of principles that can direct the process to desire outcome
- Tools that can support and sustain a procedure
- Methodologies, techniques, approaches and ideas that can transform the way we view and perceive things and situations
- Clever mind hacks that can shorten the way we do things
- Resource management
- Logistics and economics
- Coaching, facilitation, mediation and consulting techniques
- etc

Initiative, because we need to produce, each and every one and all as a group, more initiatives that can propagate and multiple scarce today’s commodities as:

- Novel ideas generation
- New approaches
- Innovation
- [Work – life balance](#)
- Personal development
- Positivity
- Life trends
- Focus and concentration on basic principles
- Monitoring and guarding of things that considered as given
- Development of new approaches that might lead to new social, political and business approaches and economic models of practice and profit (both personal and professional and not only with the monetary sense)
- New ways of interaction with face-2-face and electronic media
- and many more

Leadership Initiative formula (there is one?)

The aspired, operative, formula of Leadership Initiative is an old and a simple one. Consists basically from a formula reads:

(Leadership + Initiative) X (Networking + Propagation of new ideas, concepts, methodologies, tools) = Positive outcomes in personal and professional life (*i.e. transformation first in personal level and then to a social level*).

First and foremost this blog is a place that would collect my ideas and insights for Leadership, Productivity, and Effectiveness in Personal and Professional Life. At the same time may support and enhance similar efforts, providing context and content, in everyone might find any use in the ideas presented here.

Leadership is ...



This is a question with a lot of levels and not a singular answer. Webster defines Leadership in a descriptive way, i.e.

Leadership is¹:

1. *the office or position of a leader*
2. *capacity to lead*
3. *the act or an instance of leading*

But those definitions do not grasp the other connotations, carried out by the word. At least as it is used today.

¹ Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leadership>

Personal Approach

As I have mentioned [elsewhere](#), I think that there are a lot of ideas and “don'ts, a Leader (or an everyday person, for that matter) should employ in his/hers everyday life and business. [Self-determination](#) off course, [things](#) he/she should or shouldn't indulge in, etc.

For me, though, leadership is the skill, art, science, discipline of someone to:

self-directed in indented, principle-based, goals, influencing at the same time, in a positive manner, his/hers relationships or circles (personal, friends, work, business, etc.)

Therefore I'd like to see the term as a wrapper or a “catch-all term”, that indicates a cluster of different varied principles, such as

- Vision development
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Personal development and effectiveness
- Execution discipline
- Trust
- Intention
- Commitment
- Productivity
- (Self) Management
- decision Making
- Communication
- Skill development
- Technical proficiency

All of that, and even more perhaps, constitute aspects of what Leadership is, and every one participates in a larger picture, we can define it, from outside, as Leadership. Instead of define ([ergo](#) limit it in context, content and depth) leadership, though, I would like to furnish a different approach, aloof from the “formal” path.

Leadership is the intended actions of a responsible and accountable person, in order to define, design, develop, orchestrated and carried through his life (personal and professional life) in a mode that enhance his/her life and those of around him/her.

What do you think? This description can help you in broaden your actions and thoughts, towards your goals?

Start up on empty



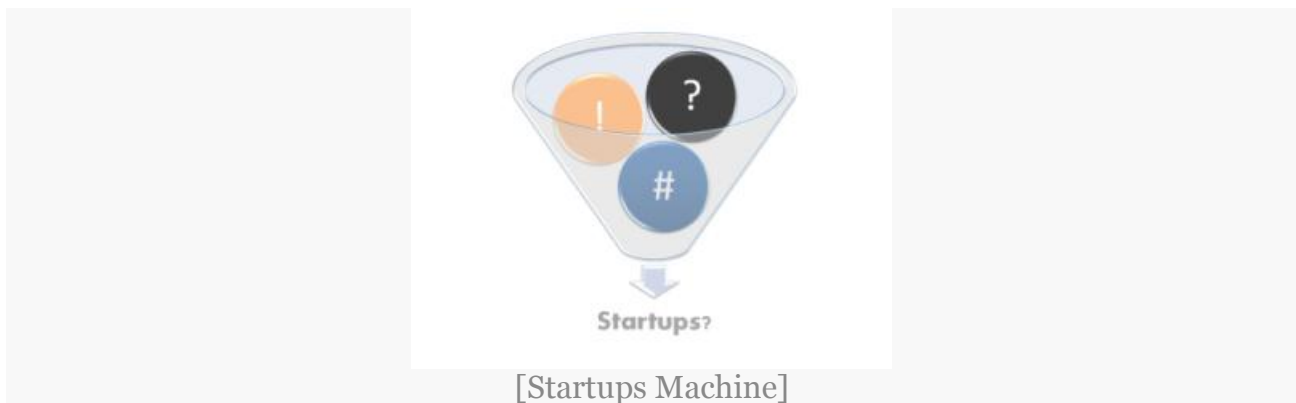
Startups are not always [easy](#). Most of the times bring a lot problems and frustration. And questions. A lot and lot of questions. With doubts and sometimes guilds of what would have happen. This is the normal process. A circle of excitement, at first, before kick in the rational side of yourself, of what is best (for you, your family, your life, etc).

But this is normal. The most of the times, during a new [beginning](#), you find yourself in a roller coaster moving circularly between excitement, depress, despair, energy, enthusiasm. And then, again, the circle begins all over again.

Why we have to make new startups. Is it our [choice](#) or something imposed by outside conditions? The answer is different for every person, but, at the bottom line, it can be summed up in only one, little statement. “**Because you have to**“. Either we realize it or not, we made new startups all the time.

- The moment we pick up a new idea, product, service, book, paper for “*broadening our horizon*“
- The moment we commit time and effort to a friend, a marriage, a relationship
- The moment we keep our word towards a friend, a colleague, a partner
- The moment we start a new hobby, learning a new skill, leave an old habit, adopt a new attitude
- The moment we wish to change career, work, life, house, car
- The moment we dream for our self, our family and our society
- The moment we criticize something against another thing

- The moment we put up new life, business, personal, health, financial, social goals in front of our horizon
- The moment we uphold our value, self-respect, personality, character and not drifting aside
- The moment we avoid to exploit someone weaker from us
- The moment we select new partnerships, associates, collaborators, groups and teams
- The moment we form new [win-win strategies](#) for our self and our clients
- The moment we start consider our clients as colleagues and collaborators rather than income resources
- The moment we commit to the creation of a new business, a quality service or product, a value added network, a value enhanced community



All the time and everywhere we do new startups. Whether we realize it or not, all that “moments” [direct](#) our attention to new fields and prepare a new behavior that [change old habits](#) (in our behavior, thoughts, ideas, approaches). Sometimes these startups are [intentional](#). Other times, are not and are [enforced](#) to us by external conditions (a job loss, the death of a loved person, a sickness, a life or death problem, etc). But the point here is that each startup brings a new set of rules and conditions, for which, the most of the times, we have not prepared for.

Since, the change became more of a constant to our personal and business life, rather than an exception, it is imperative:

1. To acknowledge its existence in everyday life
2. To embrace it , and
3. To [channel it](#) in more desirable conditions

It is not easy of course! It needs a lot of a preparation, commitment, creativity, out-of-the-box thinking and a proactive state of mind. And there are not quick fixes or patches, there are not magic solutions. There are different approaches for different people.

My, **temporary** (*until to be reviewed!!!*) approach, says:

- **Observe, monitoring** and **watch** the trends as they formed, think about where the output may resulted to, and **design** your appropriate responses, by **adopting** new habits within your thought framework, values, and long-term goals, **employing** baby steps towards short-range mini-goals and **review** the process in order, if have to, to change it

- **Educate yourself** in the new ideas, business, lifestyles, social trends, tools, **select** the most appropriate and **implement** them in your everyday life
- **Cultivate** a proactive state of mind and life rather than a reactive one, in order to be ready to cope effectively with the changes that may arise
- **Startup on empty** every time you monitor a change in patterns that may affect you. i.e:
 - **Vision** your objectives, leads, prospects and perspectives within the new conditions, how these might match your long-term goals and how the new conditions might be exploited in favor of your desired or intended future outcomes.
 - **Align** the new desired behaviors against your long-term life goals, and make appropriate adjustments
 - **Evaluate** your strengths and weaknesses, their effect in the new conditions, **enhance** the most suitable traits that would help you in the new conditions and either **try to remedy** your weaknesses by eliminating them (if you can) or **use them** as a base of reference for the things you have to work with yourself
 - **Plan** from the start and **create** a pro-active and flexible course of action and a strategy towards the new objectives, creating accordingly [S.M.A.R.T.](#) goals, “life tasks” and timetables.
 - **Abandon** old ideas, beliefs, attitudes, that may become a problem
 - “[Declutter](#)” your mind, ideas, attitudes, tools, office and home environment, habits and beliefs are no longer of service and **organize** what is worth keeping in a new context and content, appropriate for your “new model of living and doing business”
 - **Set** short-term landmarks against which you could check your progress and timetables for their accomplishment
 - **Check** always their validity against your goals and vision
- **Review** the results, monitor your reaction towards these results and **amend** accordingly if needed

Just an approach, of course!

Do startups concern you? Do you believe that you can employ successful startups in your life and business? Do you think that you have what it takes, to start up on empty?

A raw model for leadership



Lead Life

A raw model for leadership

Today, we experience a shift in the traditional structures of life, business and work alike to the situation and events described in the film [Modern times](#) by [Charlie Chaplin](#) (*unemployment, introduction of new technologies in production, job seeking, financial shortage, etc*). This shifting in the events and circumstances, brings along and an analogous change in the way we used to define the things around us. New conditions require a new definitions of concepts, ideas, approaches and, of course, a new definition of leadership, a one that would integrated all the many facets and roles, reserved by the society for modern man and woman.

This new definitions of leadership should balance, encompass and engage in a consistent course of action, all the different aspects of someone being or aspiring to be an effective and influencing agent of a group of people. of a community or of a society (*i.e. a leader or someone aspiring to be a one*).

Today, we live in times of change ([interesting times](#) as the old Chinese proverb says), and changing, it seems to be the only constant we have to deal with, in the future. Both in our personal as in our professional life. This, usually, means that a lot of things have to be abandoned, if we wish to have the courage to stand up, today, as leaders, warriors, scholars, trainers, workers, employees, educators, directors, consultants, entrepreneurs, business person, etc.

There are a few models in the international literature, attempt to define [leadership](#) in our modern society, some of which have been [discussed](#) elsewhere. But one of the most

promising, according to my opinion, model, trying to include the different aspects and roles of a leader in the present conditions of market and society, comes from the area of [e-Learning](#) and [Tutoring](#).

This model has been presented before, in this [blog](#), with the title: “[The 11 hats of an online learning coordinator](#)“. In that post, I tried to present the basic characteristics and roles of a coordinator in the online process of learning. But reviewing the same characteristics and roles I find striking resemblances and similarities with the roles, a leader should he or she embodied in our modern digital economy.

In short, today, a leader (*not only in the strict sense, but as well as someone who wish to take control of his/hers personal and professional life*) should be:

- **content and context facilitator:** a leader should be able to give content and context to any given situation, support friends, colleagues, co-workers to understand more easily and handle effectively the emerging and pressing situations in personal and professional life.
- **metacognition facilitator:** a leader should encourage the reflection, by all the involved parties, of the processes involved in any given situation, providing goals, outcomes, skill development paths, aiming at the best comprehension of the events and the situations and drawing valid conclusions to be served as guides for future actions.
- **process facilitator:** a leader provides always operational support towards the others, aid them in the development and implementation of the required process and systems, removing the obstacles may arise in the course of action and align the outcomes with the strategy, goals and values of the organization, of the company, or of the society.
- **advisor/counsellor:** a leader always provides advice, mentoring, facilitation, coaching and support to anyone wishes to benefited by he or her contribution.
- **assessor (formative and summative):** a leader is responsible to offer the necessary feedback to his/hers followers, circles of influence, to motivate them towards desired directions, to support them in their activities, to evaluate them on their progress, etc.
- **technologist:** a leader usually have to be a valuable resource of knowledge related to the proper use of the required technologies and tools might help an operation or an activity.
- **resource provider:** a leader should be responsible for providing all the necessary resources deemed as necessary for all the participants in a formal or informal procedure, trying to leverage the lack of required skills to the demands of the new situation for all the people involved in a process.
- **manager/administrator:** a leader is usually responsible for the management or administration of one or more procedures, projects, activities in the framework of an organization or in his/her life. In this level he or she should be able to monitoring, evaluating, checking and re-adjust the flow of implementation of a give procedure or project, and re-adjusted it, if deemed necessary.
- **designer:** a leader, usually is the designer and the source of various leadership initiatives, schemes, strategies, etc that should be started or proceed in the framework of a situation. In this role he or she provide help, experience, goals, and activities towards others involved in this situation .
- **co-leader:** a leader or someone aspire to be one, usually, is a part of a group of leaders, following their steps, monitoring the problems, dealing with the situations

and the problems may arise and proposing proper win-win solutions for the best resolution of any given situation.

- **researcher:** a leader, usually, is a pro-active participant and researcher in the leadership development process, trying to merge in the learning process, knowledge, skills, attitudes and leadership experience that would support more efficiently the developing of leadership skills and experience to the people involved in that learning process. In such way prepare the future leaders of a community, organization, company, etc.

Do you think that a model such that can be used effectively for the development of leadership skills in everyday life?

4 words for leadership and personal development



An old Arabian proverb states that:

*“Four things come not back — the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, and the neglected opportunity” ~ **Arabian Proverb***

These 4 elements exactly are the leadership traits, that in my opinion, among others, should characterize a leader and a person in our time.

More specifically a leader should or ought to:

1. Take care of the words he/she utters
2. Use his/hers tools & resources with scarcity, intentionality and deliberation
3. Contemplate his/her past life, drawing experience for action, for now and the future
4. Utilize, according to his/hers principles the opportunities arise, keeping in mind that every crisis fosters two elements, namely “**danger**” and “**opportunity**”.

All these four leadership/personal traits, can support effectively the personal development of everyone and formulate an environment for everyone to evolve, cope with everyday challenges and brighten his/her environment and that of the others. And, if intentionally, incorporated to someone life would form daily habits, effective codes of contact, changes in the society as a whole.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit” ~
Aristotle

What do you think? is that difficult for everyone to put these elements in his/hers everyday life?

2 Quant rants to lead your decisions



I found myself, lately, to consider more and more, the ways and practices for “**good**” decisions. The decision we made influence not only our actions, but as well and those of the people we interact with and eventually influence (in a positive or negative way) their life. Potentially, “**bad**” decisions can influence negatively, not only our life but, that of others as well. Good decisions on the other part, can multiply positive effects for us and many more other individuals (*even people we don't know about!!!*).

But, mind you, that decision is not just a course of action. It is first and foremost selection. Selection of A versus B or even C. Selection of a whole cluster of mutually influencing events you wish to come true in your life. And, the most of the time, not every bit of the wishful events come together. Sometimes, tend to come with lateral events that are not desired or wish for. Cause and effect. Nothing can be selected, isolated, by its surroundings, even if you have planned it thoroughly and meticulously. For this, you should lay down good foundations.

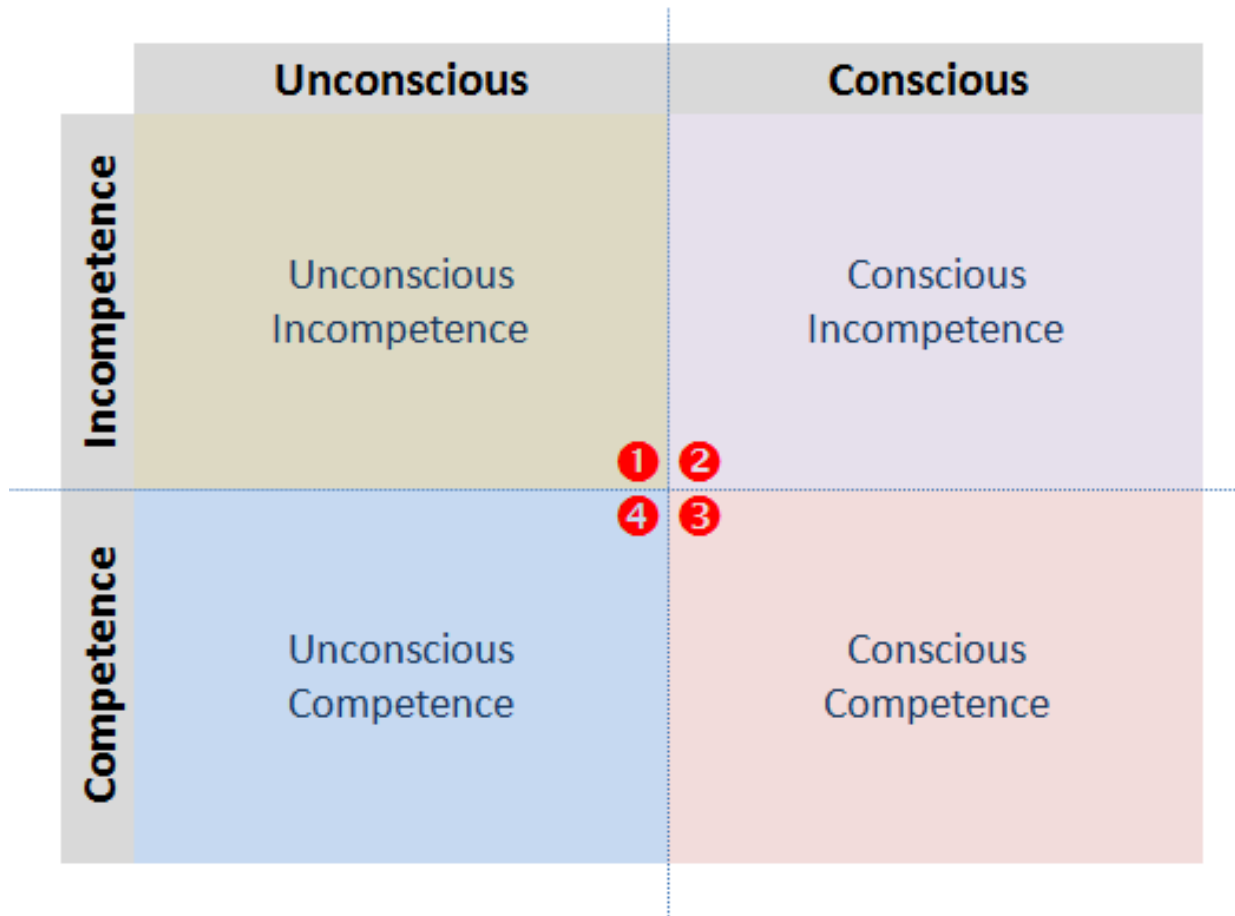
One of the best foundation to base your decision, in my opinion, is a concept taught by [Neuro-linguistic programming](#) (NLP), stating that for each decision you should produce at least 3 different alternatives and course of actions. One alternative is one way road and a compulsory one (i.e. you don't have any option), two alternative decisions are constitute a [dilemma](#), but three and more alternatives can constitute a real decision process, aiming at required results and providing you all the freedom you need of selecting and implementing the best one (*for you*).

Beyond that approach, there is a plethora of tools to lead you in good decisions and ones you can employ, for guiding you in the decision process. Some of that are difficult to cope with, some are too technical and some are cumbersome to incorporate it to your life. All, though, have their value. Two of the best tools you can use in order to enhance your decisions and your life, are the **Four Stages of Competence Model** and the **Covey's Time Management Matrix**.

Four Stages of Competence Model (Quadrant)

The [Four Stages of Competence Model](#) refers to the self learning and skills development, covering “*the process of progressing from incompetence to competence*” [from Wikipedia: [Four stages of competence](#)]. As a descriptive tool, is valuable in describing the process for the mastery of a new skill or knowledge and as a decision tool can support and direct our thoughts and actions towards the objective of **unconscious competence**, in which we can practice or implement our new knowledge and skills, effortlessly.

Four stages of competence

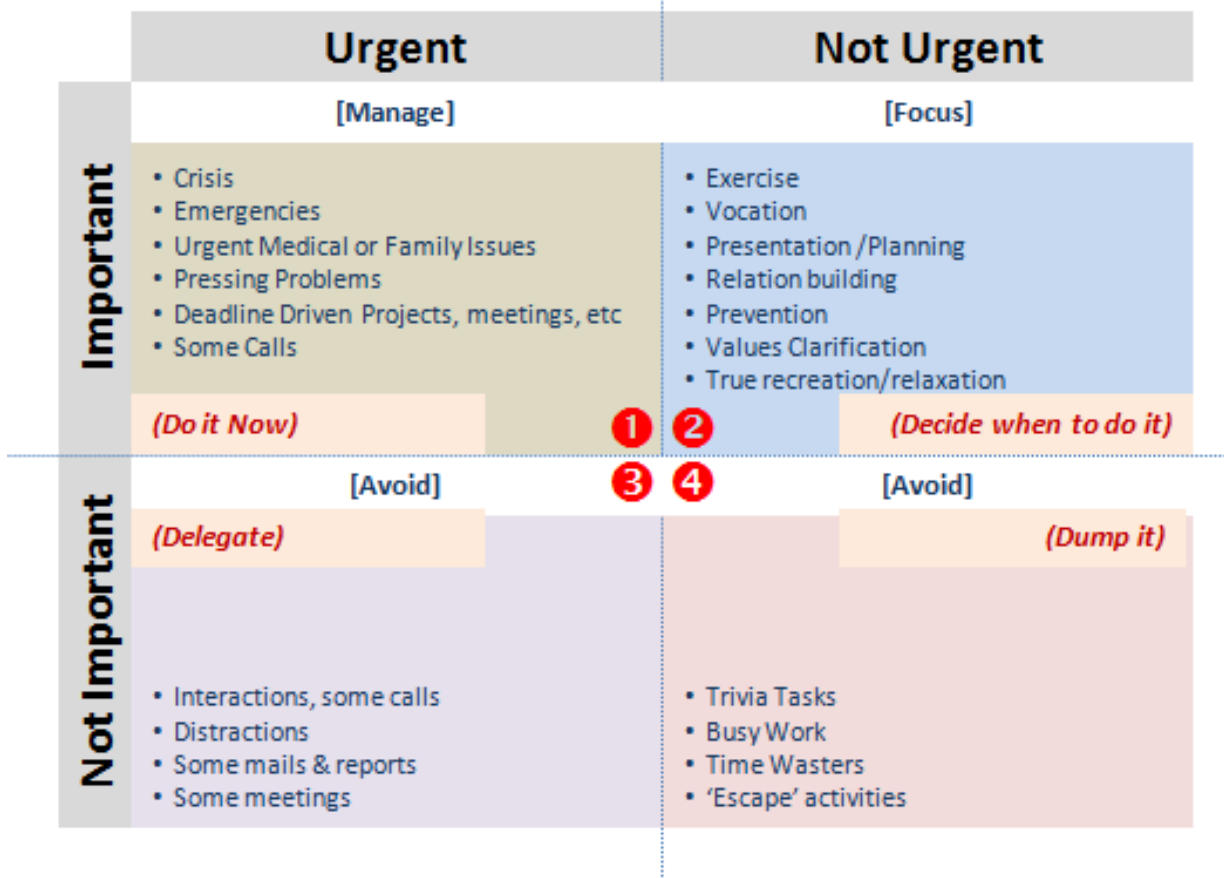


Following this line of thought, as individuals we should incorporate our new skills, attitudes, principles, goals, objectives in our life in a manner that these can become characteristic attributes of our everyday workflow, and leave us more time and space for focusing in our goals. In this sense, the aforementioned model becomes a valuable asset in our way of thinking about self-development and leadership, while providing a structure of thought that can influence many others (thus, proving itself as a valuable component for true leadership, along with our principles, objectives, etc).

Covey's Time Management Matrix (Quadrant)

I think, though, that this ability, or skill cannot be empty of content, and should be matched, with an equal most potent, principle, that briefly can be summarized as “**do the important stuff**” first, and eloquently have been demonstrated by [Covey's Time Management Matrix](#). [Stephen Covey](#) along with [A. Roger Merrill](#) and [Rebecca Merrill](#) in their book “[First Things First](#)” present a more efficient quadrant for deciding what the important things are for us and what we do with them.

Covey's Time Management Matrix



More specifically

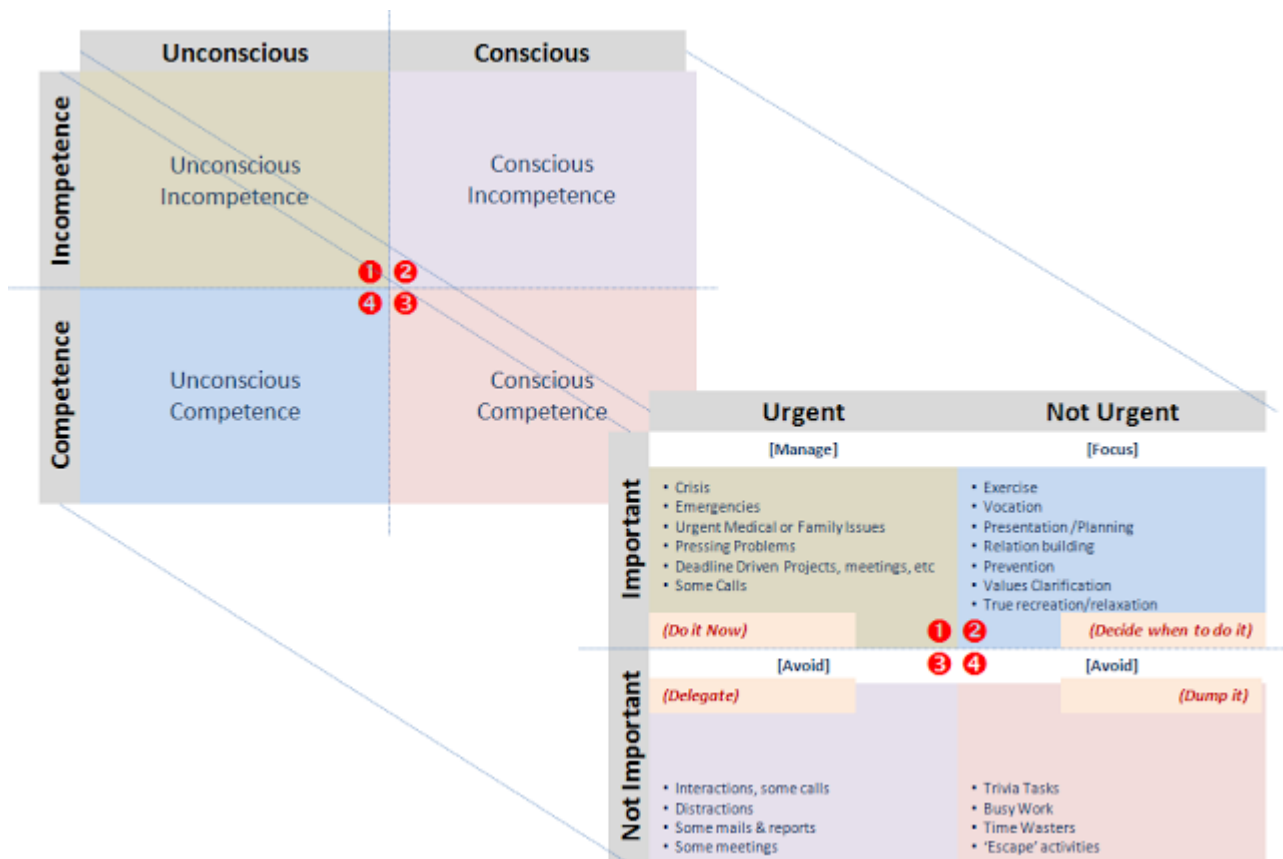
In the book, Covey describes a framework for prioritizing work that is aimed at long-term goals, at the expense of tasks that appear to be urgent, but are in fact less important. This is his 2x2 matrix: classifying tasks as urgent and non-urgent on one axis, and important or non-important on the other axis. His quadrant 2 has the items that are non-urgent but important. These are the ones he believes we are likely to neglect; but, should focus on to achieve effectiveness.

Important items are identified by focusing on a few key priorities and roles which will vary from person to person, then identifying small goals for each role each week, in order to maintain a holistic life balance. One tool for this is a worksheet that lists up to seven key roles, with three weekly goals per role, to be evaluated and scheduled into each week before other appointments occupy all available time with things that seem urgent but are not important. This concept is illustrated with a story that encourages people to "place the big rocks first." (from Wikipedia, verbatim)

The most of times we employ **"rules of the thump"** or **"mechanical"** (filtered by habits and adopted attitudes) practices, that not often furnished the intended results. This quadrant, though, not only attempts to provide a viable solution in this problem, but provides a valuable tool, and a practical approach, that can be easily followed, practiced and incorporated in your everyday activities, providing content as well and context, on the how we aim at achieving our goals and what matters most, for us.

Coupling the Quadrants

Both quadrants can be essential tools and aids in a decision process, and can provide a base of reference not only for the decision process itself, but as well for the foundations of the decisions. If they can coupled together in the framework of an everyday practice can provide you a base for an essential upgrading decision making process that would benefit, in more than one ways, your life.



What do you think? These quadrants can be incorporated in your everyday life and provide more required results, or not?

7 Laws for leadership development

Kurt Hahn - The seven laws of Salem



1. Give the children opportunities for self-discovery.
2. Make the children meet with triumph and defeat.
3. Give the children the opportunity of self-effacement in the common cause.
4. Provide periods of silence
5. Train the imagination.
6. Make games important but not predominant.
7. Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege.

In my line of work, I found myself, often, to search within various subjects and areas, in order to comprehend some pieces of information, required for certain tasks.

Training, [pedagogy](#) and education are some of those areas. Searching about certain principles, the other day, I came across to the site of one of the best schools of Athens (Greece), the [Anavryta](#) ([Anavryta Experimental Lyceum](#)), reading about the "[Seven Laws of Salem](#)" and their contribution to the development of the children. Reading these principles, I could not stop wondering, how much similarity they have with analogous principles, required for the development of leadership skills.

Most people, when they look up or see the word **Salem**, think about Salem, Massachusetts in USA and its history. But this is not the case. The "[Seven Laws of Salem](#)" mentioned here, related to the city of Salem in Germany and to the [Schule Schloss Salem](#) (*School of Salem Castle, Salem Castle School*) in which [Kurt Hahn](#), around 1930, developed 7 basic principles for character development in children. Character, though, is a basic ingredient to the discipline of leadership, and, by analogy, these principles can contribute to a great degree in the leadership development.

These principles, mainly focused in the development of character of children, as a solid base for the development of values, something that has direct impact on the leadership development (this connection can also be found in the book "[Leadership The Outward Bound Way: Becoming a Better Leader in the Workplace, in the Wilderness, and in Your Community](#)", by John Raynolds, Rob Chatfield, Jimmy Carter (Foreword), [Outward Bound USA](#) (Corporate Author) and others, in which they are referred as Seven Principles in Character Development and the authors explain their effect on Leadership). The **7 laws of Salem** can, today, formulate a raw model and basic guiding principles for current leaders.

A leader, a mentor, an organization, a company, a society, in order to cultivate a culture of leadership and excellence, should:

1. **Give the leaders opportunities for self-discovery.** The first mandate in [Delphic maxims](#) and basic ingredient in the Greek Philosophy is to “[Know thyself](#)”. A leader should be given the opportunity to know him/herself, to acknowledge its strengths and weakness, to clarify, his/hers goals and values, to know who he/she is, and where he/she going to go.
2. **Make the leaders meet with triumph and defeat.** A leader should [encompass](#) both in his/hers actions, his/hers victories as building blocks for the continuation of his/her path and his/hers failures as valuable experience and learning challenges on what is not working.
3. **Give the leaders the opportunity of self-effacement in the common cause.** Someone who is expecting to lead, should he or she be prepared to follow and serve others, as well. More so, when he or she is devote him/herself to a greater common good, according to his/hers conception. Valuable lessons in this area, can be drawn be the basic philosophy and principles of [Servant leadership](#).
4. **Provide periods of silence.** A leader should be able to [free space for his/hers thought](#), to have time for self-discovery and reflection, to evaluate his/hers goals, path, means, values, to re-evaluate and continue, adjust or amend, his/hers course of action.
5. **Train the imagination.** Imagination and visioning are the two of the most basic resources for every leader. It is important for everyone, and especially for would be or aspiring leaders, to exercise their imagination in every direction, brainstorming various ideas and approaches, visioning different alternative paths towards a goal, and selecting the best ones, not only for themselves, but for others, as well. It is important for a leader to [think big](#), to form solid social connections, to employ win-win situations and to visualize the required results in order to find the best ways in achieve them.
6. **Make games important but not predominant.** It is important for a leader to allocate time for distraction, for non compulsory or obliged activities, for “games” that distract his/hers attention from the [now and urgent](#) and provide room for new insights, ideas, directions, otherwise could not be reached. Games (and there are many “[Finite and Infinite Games](#)“, a very important [distinction](#) for leadership), providing an excellent base for the easy and effortless cultivation of various social skills in a simulated environment (such as co-operation, conflict, win, loose, team work, etc) while some other game provide an excellent opportunity for the development of strategic thinking (such is Chess, [Go](#), etc.). The key ingredient, here, though, is the controlled allocation of time, for such activities, in order not to became dominant factors in someone's life.
7. **Free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege.** A culture, an organization, a company, a leader, should provide equal opportunities, options and chances to everyone to gain or benefited by the knowledge, skills, resources provided, in a certain environment. No one should be treated differently, because of decent, status, authority, race, or any other discriminating factor. A culture, a network or an environment of cultivation of leadership skills, aspiring for the grooming of a new generation of able, competent and value-based leaders, should provide equal opportunities to everyone for proving his or hers capabilities.

Do you think you can benefited by these principles? Do you think you can use it, in order to educate and training your children, you co-workers, your

friends, your associates in a new culture of leadership? Can you benefited by incorporate them in your life?

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Articles & Blog Posts

- [Concepts of Leadership](#), by [Donald Clark](#)
- [Leadership Is a Conversation](#), by Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind
- [Leadership](#) (from Wikipedia)
- [12 Ways to Know If You Are a Leader](#), by [Michael Hyatt](#)
- [8 Leadership Lessons from a Symphony Conductor](#), by [Michael Hyatt](#)
- [How To Reboot Your Life And Get Rid Of Anxiety and Depression Kind Of](#), by Chris Lavergne
- [Seven Lessons to Reboot Your Life](#), by [Maria Ross](#)
- [Tips for Starting Over and Rebooting Your Life](#), by Kimberly Key, M.A.
- [Today is the First Day of the Rest of Your Life](#), by [Patrick Hruby](#)
- [What Is Between Stimulus And Response?](#), by [Voranc Kutnik](#)
- [The Space Between Stimulus and Response](#), by [Dr. Ben Kim](#)
- [One Key to Change: The Space Between Stimulus and Response](#), by [Susan DeGenring](#)
- [The space between stimulus and response](#), by [Neil Denny](#)
- [50 Tricks to Get Things Done Faster, Better, and More Easily](#), by [DUSTIN WAX](#)
- [Purpose Your Day: Most Important Task \(MIT\)](#), by [Leo Babauta](#)
- [To get started, all you need is to take the first step](#), by [Jason Womack](#)
- [Are you making the most of your resources?](#), by [Jason Womack](#)
- [How to Use Batching to Become More Productive](#), by [Michael Hyatt](#)
- [Just Do It Now](#), by [Craig Jarrow](#)
- [Why You Need A Place For Your Stuff](#), by [Craig Jarrow](#)

Books

- [The Art of War](#), by Sun Tzu
- [A Book Of Five Rings](#), by Miyamoto Musashi
- [The Prince](#), by Niccolò Machiavelli
- [On War](#), by Carl von Clausewitz
- [I Have a Strategy \(No You Don't\): The Illustrated Guide to Strategy](#) by Howell J. Malham Jr
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- [The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness](#), by [Stephen R. Covey](#)
- [Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity](#), by David Allen
- [Ready for Anything: 52 Productivity Principles for Getting Things Done](#), by David Allen
- [Your Best Just Got Better: Work Smarter, Think Bigger, Make More](#), by Jason W. Womack
- [Take Back Your Life!: Using Microsoft® Outlook® to Get Organized and Stay Organized](#), by Sally McGhee
- [Total Workday Control Using Microsoft Outlook](#), by Michael Linenberger
- [Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done](#), by Larry Bossidy
- [Time Management from the Inside Out, Second Edition: The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule — and Your Life](#), by Julie Morgenstern
- [Time Management In an Instant: 60 Ways to Make the Most of Your Day](#), by Karen Leland
- [Executive Stamina: How to Optimize Time, Energy, and Productivity to Achieve Peak Performance](#), by Marty Seldman
- [Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience](#), by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
- [Do It Tomorrow and Other Secrets of Time Management](#), by Mark Forster

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- [“If” by Rudyard Kipling \(poetry reading\)](#)
- [Ithaca by C.P.Cavafy \(with Sean Connery & Vangelis\)](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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