DRIVEN BY TIME: Time Orientation and Leadership

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Driven by Time
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Time Orientation and Leadership

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Leaders are different in many ways. One example is how they perceive the past, present, and future. Some of us think about the future most of the time, some about the past, and some about the present. This bias for one space in time over another is associated with strengths that we can use effectively and weaknesses that can hinder us if we do not understand them. If we are aware of our time orientation or Temporal Alignment, we can begin to “mind” our time and become attuned to the appropriate orientation for each situation. By minding our time, I mean that we can have control over our behavior as it relates to the past, present, and future. We can find ways to maximize the strengths of our time orientation and find ways around the weaknesses. Different situations require different time orientations. When we develop an understanding of Temporal Alignment, we can accurately anticipate the Alignment required by each circumstance and find ways to behave appropriately even when our personality does not fit the situation.

Time matters to leaders. They worry about the past, the present, and the future. The future both motivates and frustrates them. Their concerns include the following:

“What will happen next year? What will happen in ten years?”

“Will we be able to compete in the future?”

“Everyone says that I need a vision for my organization, but what is a vision?”
“Can I shape the future? How?”
“How can I get followers to think about the future?”
“How can this company be more successful in the future?”
“I’m motivated by the future, but my followers are not. What can I do?”

Leaders also worry about the past. They think about how the past affects their current situation and will affect the future. Their concerns cover issues like these:

“How did that mistake occur, and how can I prevent it in the future?”
“Why do I remember the situation one way and others remember it another way?”
“What really happened last year?”
“Why don’t more people care about what I did for them last year?”
“Why do my followers only remember the bad things that happened in the past instead of focusing on what I have done recently?”
“How have things changed for the better over the past 10 years?”
“How have things changed for the worse over the past 10 years?”
“Why should I be concerned about the past?”

Leaders also worry about the present. They ask the following:

“How will my current actions affect us in the future?”
“How will history treat my current behavior?”
“What do I need to know about the past and the future to make good decisions today?”
“How should I be spending my time today, this week, or this year?”
“What is the best use of my time today?”

The purpose of this book is twofold. First, I want to introduce and explain the concept of Temporal Alignment. Comprising several personality variables, our Temporal Alignment, or time orientation, determines whether the past, the present, or the future is most prevalent in our day-to-day thinking. For example, if a person has a preference for the past, he will tend to have a better memory of things that happened than people with a preference for the future. This helps him solve problems. If another person has a preference for the future, she will be better at creating an organizational vision than will people with a preference for the past. This helps her make organizational changes. Each type has its strengths, and each has its weaknesses. Although there is currently a clear bias in
Leadership and Time Orientation

U.S. organizations for future-oriented leaders, past- and present-oriented leaders have their place, as well, and make valuable contributions to their firms. If we surround ourselves only with future-oriented people, we will miss the important perspectives that other types of leaders bring. There are successful leaders from all three Temporal Alignments.

The second purpose of the book is to help leaders interpret different situations and understand the time orientations required by each. If we understand our Temporal Alignment and which Alignment is most appropriate in a specific circumstance, we can respond more effectively. This allows us to adjust our “natural” approach to situations or to construct a social network within our organizations that will help our team deal with varying situations as they arise.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the major theme of the book—the fit or attunement of Temporal Alignment and different situations. I summarize the basic model of time orientation and leadership and talk generally about the differences between past-, present-, and future-oriented people.

Chapter 3 presents a complete and detailed explanation of Temporal Alignment. It includes a variety of simple tests that the reader can use to determine his or her Temporal Alignment, as well as some indicators that can be used to assess colleagues. This chapter also addresses the origins of Temporal Alignment.

Chapter 4 explains the complete model showing the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for different leaders based on their Temporal Alignment. The chapter expands on the basic introduction given in Chapter 3 and provides a number of specific examples.

Chapter 5 explains how leaders can develop more of a focus on the future, when the situation requires it.

I further explore Temporal Alignment and the importance of time orientation for leaders in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, in which I introduce leaders who have accomplished great things. The leaders featured in this book are not CEOs of Fortune 100 companies, but people who grew up in lower- or middle-class socioeconomic environments and whom you might meet in your daily lives. The leaders featured in the book are not all future oriented, but they were driven to lead successful organizations, improve themselves, and help others along the way. Here is a brief preview of some of these leaders.

Walter was raised in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in New York City and went on to earn a degree in engineering and an MBA at Harvard. After leaving a high-level job with a large company, he founded his own high-tech firm. Thirteen years later, he sold his company to a
Driven by Time

Fortune 500 company. He continues to serve the future as an angel capitalist for startup high-tech companies. Walter and some of the other leaders requested that I respect their privacy. To honor their request, I have not used their last names in this book.

Following a divorce in middle age, Anne Castle left a successful consulting business to visit bed-and-breakfasts across the country for a year. Upon her return, she bought a small log cabin in the Hocking Hills of southern Ohio. This cabin evolved into a beautiful and unique bed and breakfast specializing in organizational retreats, serving gourmet meals, and providing an escape from the hectic pace of life. During the process, she transformed herself and let the future pull her forward.

Pepper Bates began her career as a teacher but found that the future drove her to become a school administrator. She has been instrumental in implementing change in her school district and recently undertook the renovation of an old building. In the process, she needed to meet the needs of both a local historical association that wanted to preserve the building and the children who would attend the school. In a large organization, she has found ways to lead others into the future.

The morning after Jerry Converse returned from the army, his father woke him at 5:15 and told him it was time to go to work. Jerry did just that—and never looked back again. He went on to turn a four-person electrical contracting business into a multimillion-dollar commercial operation with more than 100 employees. Without a college degree, Jerry found and took advantage of educational opportunities that would allow him to move aggressively into the future, transforming himself and his organization.

When Mike, the youngest of five sons, was a boy, his father died. His mother raised the family, and it is to her that he attributes the values he still holds dear today. Mike had both academic and athletic ability, as well as the motivation necessary to earn a college scholarship, play professional basketball, and take over the leadership of a small but highly profitable company in Erie, Pennsylvania. He is still managing that company 40 years later, following the same principles established by the company founders.

Following World War II, where he served as a fighter pilot in the Pacific, John returned to his North Carolina hometown to take over the family business. That business soon evolved into a variety of different businesses, including a radio station, a hair salon, and an airport. Eventually, he was offered the job of president of the insurance company for which he had been a broker. His greatest strength has always been the
ability to understand people and what motivates them at a given moment and to sell them his products and ideas.

Chapter 9 further explains the concept of leader vision. I offer a step-by-step method for developing an organizational vision and explain implementation steps.

Chapter 10 presents an overview of the concept of Temporal Attunement. The readers will be given a series of situations with explanations of how to use leaders’ and their followers’ Temporal Alignment to the best advantage.

Finally, the book concludes in Chapter 11 with final words of advice for leaders regarding Temporal Alignment. In addition, leaders will be given guidance on how to continue to improve their leadership skills.

Many books are written as if they are the final word on leadership. This book is not. It is written to help leaders understand one piece of the complicated makeup of effective leadership. Driven by Time presents a theory and examples of leadership that are both situational and dispositional. There is much more to learn about what makes some leaders more productive than others. I hope that this is just the first of many books to examine the various specific aspects of leadership that will help us understand more fully how we can develop into successful and effective leaders.

NOTES


Chapter 2

DRIVEN BY TIME

We must desire, we must want, we must stretch out our hands and walk to create the future. The future is not what is coming to us but what we are going to.

—J. M. Guyau, *La genese de l’idee de temps*

The future is the motivational space of transformational leaders. They are driven by the future. Transformational leaders change their organizations and change the world. They create visions of the future and invite the rest of us to join them in their efforts to achieve the dream. They are continuously challenging the ways that things have always been done, trying new approaches, taking risks, and inspiring followers to achieve the vision. They have a unique relationship with the future. It drives them in ways that it does not drive other people. Many books have been written on transformational leadership. Despite knowing what they do and how they behave, few people can become transformational leaders because they do not have the same orientation toward the future. Our time orientation is part of our personality. By the time we are adults, we each have our own distinctive Temporal Alignment.

A question that has occurred to experts who study time orientation is how can people who lack an orientation toward the future successfully lead organizations in which a visionary leader is needed. That question is addressed in this book by introducing a concept called Temporal Alignment and explaining how it relates to effective leadership. What visionary
leaders bring to the table in terms of their future orientation, they lack in terms of the present and the past. How to utilize one’s time orientation effectively is the key to effective leadership.

In 1995, David Greenberger and I introduced the concept of Temporal Alignment.¹ What we suggested was that each person has a specific alignment or orientation toward the past, the present, and the future. This alignment is made up of various personality traits, all different yet all related to our time orientation. Temporal Alignment includes our timeline orientation, future time perspective, time span, and time conception. I limit my explanation of Temporal Alignment to these four variables, but it is possible that other traits also affect our time orientation. Each of these traits varies among persons. What results from the infinite number of possible combinations is a Temporal Alignment unique to each individual. Our Temporal Alignment can be considered our temporal fingerprint. In the next chapter, I explain each aspect, allowing readers to assess their own Temporal Alignment.

Although organizational leaders have long understood that followers have different personalities, most of them assume that everyone else thinks about time the same way they do. This is because few leaders have been introduced to the concept of individual Temporal Alignments. With a better understanding of time orientation and how it varies between people, successful leaders can anticipate and prevent problems that occur as a result of the varying ways that they and other people think about and deal with time. Just as they find followers who complement their skills, abilities, and other personality traits, they must complement their own Temporal Alignment by careful recruiting.

In McCullough’s book on John Adams, he provides a good example of the different Temporal Alignments of two of America’s most important historical figures. Adams believed that each new generation must learn from the experiences of the past. This attitude affected his decisions and political behavior. For many years after he left the presidency, and anyone else cared, Adams tried to correct others’ 20- to 30-year-old misconceptions about his attitudes toward European monarchies and about his administrative policies with carefully written articles in the political newspapers. Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, believed that the “paper transactions” (laws, in particular) of one generation should “scarcely be considered by succeeding generations.”² McCullough describes Jefferson as having his eye on the future and an air of youth at 57, when he assumed the presidency. According to McCullough, the two retired presidents exchanged letters in which their biases about the past and the future were argued. Although they recognized the differences, they did
not fully understand how Temporal Alignment affected them and their behavior as presidents.

This book explains how different people think about time and, more specifically, the future. It introduces readers to a model that will help them to understand how they can better deal with the future and the varying concepts of time among the people who make up their organization. It introduces leaders who were driven by the future to create innovative companies and to improve and transform organizations. Finally, readers will have the opportunity to assess their own orientation toward time, to learn how to become more future-oriented, and to learn to use others’ time perspectives to maximize organizational performance. I hope that readers will utter an “aha!” throughout the course of this book, recognizing people, situations, problems they have faced, and their own behavior. We know that others think differently than we do about time, but it is unlikely that we have ever had a good explanation of how these differences affect our behavior. By understanding our own Temporal Alignment, we can become more effective leaders in our organizations in the various situations we face.

Here is a simple test to assist readers in determining whether they are past, present, or future oriented.

**EXERCISE 2.A**

Get a 60-minute timer. Identify a “normal” workday to run the test. In other words, don’t do the test on a day when there is a strategic planning meeting, when dealing with a two-year-old problem, or while writing a history of the world. On the day selected for the test, set the timer for 60 minutes when arriving at work in the morning. On a sheet of blank paper, set up two columns labeled “Things I Did” and “Things I Thought About.” When the timer rings, write down what has been done and what has been thought about for the past hour. Reset the timer for 60 minutes and repeat this exercise for one workday. Do it again on a day away from work, from the time of getting up until going to bed. At the end of the two days, review the record you have kept. Label each activity and each thing thought about as primarily past, present, or future oriented. For example, reviewing last year’s annual report, thinking about the project finished a few months ago, and examining the pictures from a parents’ 50th-anniversary party held two years ago are past-oriented activities. Developing the work schedule for this week, thinking about the best staff member to replace the quality team member who is leaving, and raking leaves are present-oriented activities. Contacting customers
to ask their opinions regarding a new service being designed, thinking about the facility that must be built next year, and planning a dream vacation are future-oriented activities. Review the things done or thought about and the percentage of time spent on each. Was most of the time spent doing things that are past, present, or future oriented? Was most of the time spent thinking about things that are past, present, or future oriented?

If you have taken this test before reading further, you may have found that you were doing tasks inconsistent with what you were thinking about. For example, you may have been raking leaves but thinking about the addition to be built onto your home next year if you are future oriented. Or, if you are past oriented, you may have been thinking about how you used to rake leaves for your grandmother when you were a kid. Or you may have been thinking about whether to mulch the leaves or burn them if you are present oriented.

Many of us find ourselves in jobs or performing tasks that require us to work outside the time orientation that matches our personality at least part of the time. If a person is future-oriented and has a job that requires continuous solving of day-to-day problems, she may not feel comfortable in her job and may not do it as well as someone who is present oriented. Even in cases where our job and our Temporal Alignment match, emergency situations make us act outside of our normal time orientation. For example, if a serious accident occurs in a large manufacturing facility, a highly future-oriented CEO may have to notify family members of injured workers, schedule production changes, and inform the media. In these unusual situations, we can do many things that are not consistent with our normal behavior and personality tendencies. Over the long run, however, most of us are drawn to jobs and organizations that allow us to exercise our personal time orientation. In other words, future-oriented people frequently find themselves initiating and leading organizational changes, whether the organizations are a local landscaping business, a multinational manufacturing company, or a community service group. We are drawn by our Temporal Alignment into situations in the same way that our skills and interests draw us to certain jobs and life situations.

Based on their Temporal Alignment, individuals can be categorized as past-oriented, present-oriented, or future-oriented people. Each type of Temporal Alignment has its own strengths and weaknesses. In addition, there are specific skills associated with each type. Depending on the situation, one type of Temporal Alignment might be more effective than another. Let me explain the typical past-oriented, present-oriented, or
future-oriented people to you and tell readers a little more about the strengths and weakness of each.

Future-oriented people are highly oriented toward the future. They think about the future most of the time. They imagine themselves, their friends, and their communities in the future. They believe that the future is more important than the present or the past. Almost everything they do is something that they believe will make them more successful in the future. The future is their motivational space. These are the types of people who have complex positive images of the future in their minds. Those images drive their day-to-day behavior. Future-oriented people talk about the future frequently and don’t particularly like talking about the past or present.

Future-oriented people tend to be good at creating a vision. They usually have detailed cognitive images of what the future can be. This vision drives their daily behavior and the behavior of the people they influence. They tend to pay attention to what is going on in the external environment and constantly assess their own position in contrast to that of others. Future-oriented people are skilled at bringing others into the future with them. Although it would be difficult to say definitively, my research suggests that most people are not future-oriented. Future-oriented people can plan well as long as the focus of the planning is on the future. To future-oriented people, problems are low hurdles to clear rather than important barriers that must be considered. Future-oriented people create the future rather than working with what is going to happen if no one takes action. This is analogous to watching a train headed your way. Future-oriented people are planning how to switch to a new track instead of limiting themselves to the track that is in use and appears to be the only way ahead.

The strengths of future-oriented people are also associated with a number of problems that affect followers and entire organizations. For example, current skill levels would never stop a future-oriented person from making a change. Future-oriented people may not acknowledge the past accomplishments of their friends and family members. This can create a great deal of tension among people with different Temporal Alignments. Another problem is that future-oriented people frequently get ahead of other people. When a leader does this, it makes followers feel lost. Although future-oriented people deal well with ambiguity, most people do not. Getting too far ahead of followers can also lead to horrible errors. For example, appearing on Today (April 26, 2001), Commander Scott Waddle, captain of the submarine that crashed into the Japanese fishing
vessel killing a number of Japanese students, explained, “I got ahead of my crew and didn’t give them time to catch up.” Ironically, future-oriented people are not good at predicting the future. Creating the future and predicting the future are different skills requiring different Temporal Alignments. Another common problem with future-oriented people is not finishing what they start. They may create a vision of something new, but then take off on the next idea before the last one is fully implemented. The people who buy into the idea will become disappointed when they don’t receive recognition for their efforts. The future-oriented person is excited about something new by the time the last project is implemented. Future-oriented people are often surprised to discover too late that one of their projects is in trouble because they were not paying attention to the day-to-day activities.

As the name implies, present-oriented people live for the moment. Everything they do is related to the present. Depending on their individual Temporal Alignment, the “present” may range from the past few days or weeks to the next few days or weeks or it could, literally, be today. They pay close attention to day-to-day activities. They know exactly what is going on in each aspect of their lives and they check regularly to maintain that information. They are interested in daily status reports and what each friend and relative is doing today. They care about what happens this week more than what happened last month or what might happen next year. They have little interest in rehashing old problems. They have little interest in trying to create the future. To present-oriented people, the present is what matters and you may hear them use clichés like, “Why cry over spilt milk?” or “Why worry about the future? It is out of my control.” One day at a time isn’t a self-help strategy for present-oriented people. It is their way of living.

Present-oriented people tend to be skillful at tracking progress, never forgetting to call a child’s teacher, for example. Present-oriented people tend to do well at scheduling events. They know where everyone is and should be on a daily basis. Present-oriented people tend to be good at understanding and gauging the reactions of associates because of their frequent interaction with them. This interaction may not be personal, but present-oriented people will be monitoring information that will tell them what others are doing. They will be highly cognizant of current strengths and weaknesses in each aspect of their lives and able to make accurate recommendations regarding immediate changes that need to be made to improve operations. As managers, they often ensure that things are being done the right way. Present-oriented people tend to be effective at the implementation of plans because of their scheduling skills. Part of the
reason that present-oriented people can spend so much of their time on present-oriented activities is because they are spending little time thinking about events that occurred in the past or planning for the future.

On the negative side, present-oriented people are sometimes guilty of micromanaging. Because their interest runs to the present, they tend to oversee every aspect of current activities in detail. They often look over the shoulders of their friends and family members. This behavior is most frequently perceived as “checking up” on people. It is not uncommon for others to wonder if present-oriented people don’t have anything better to do than monitor them. Present-oriented people spend little time thinking about the future. Improvements that they make have short-term rather than long-term implications. For example, they may fix a broken lawn mower quickly to keep the grass mowed, but fail to invest in new equipment that would have a long-term positive impact.

Past-oriented people think about the past. In their minds, they relive events that happened last year, five years ago, and even ten years ago. They often have positive associations with past events and are likely to talk about the good times in the past. Bad experiences, on the other hand, will continue to bother them for years. Past-oriented people value the history of the organizations to which they belong. They may recall and think about everyone who has interacted with them and they keep in touch with friends who moved away on a regular basis. When facing a problem, Past-oriented people think about things that happened in the past and use those memories to help them address current situations. Past-oriented people believe that there is “nothing new under the sun” and that “people who don’t remember the past, are sure to repeat it.” In fact, they will frequently use those clichés. They often talk about the past and avoid discussions focusing on the future. It is difficult for them to think about the future.

Past-oriented people are typically good about rewarding past behavior. They make it a point to recognize individuals who made major contributions in the past. Unlike future-oriented people, they won’t forget that a friend did them a favor nine months ago. At the annual neighborhood picnic, they will thank their best neighbors and tell wonderful stories about the things that happened over the years. In fact, they will invite former neighbors to the picnic. Past-oriented people know which employees worked double shifts during the bake sale or golf outing three years ago and adjust current work schedules and rewards accordingly. When interacting with other members, they will share and build a strong sense of loyalty and pride in their clubs’ history, mission, and accomplishments. Past-oriented people are good at things that represent the
past, such as preserving older buildings in the community that have architectural value. Interestingly, past-oriented people are skilled at predicting the future. This may sound strange, but accurate predictions of the future require trend tracking, a form of careful monitoring of the past. When we want to know what the future will bring, past-oriented people are going to provide valuable insights based on what has happened over the past 10 years. Again, keep in mind that this is different from creating the future.

With the strengths that past-oriented people bring, there are inherent problems. Avoidance of the future may go so far as past-oriented people skipping planning meetings, usually using the excuse that they do not have time. It is fairly easy for past-oriented people, who find themselves in leadership positions to shoot down the best strategic plans; in fact, this happens all the time. This may explain, in part, why most strategic plans fail. It is not uncommon for past-oriented people to fail to see changes in friends and family because of a focus on past accomplishments. Past-oriented people hate to lose part of their history; friends moving and children leaving home are particularly difficult times. They, and others, may call this loyalty and in some respects it is. It is also related to their strong attachment to the past. Often, when past-oriented people picture their communities in their minds, they imagine the “good old days” rather than how things really are. They rarely, if ever, imagine a desirable future.

It is important to note that few people fit cleanly into one distinct type of Temporal Alignment. We vary on each of the personality traits that makes up our alignment. (I explain in more detail in the next chapter.) In addition, most of us cannot avoid operating outside of the temporal orientation that comes naturally to us. We are all forced to think about things that happened in the past, to deal with present tasks, and to engage in speculation about the future on a regular basis. For short periods of time, we are capable of operating in any time orientation, but our comfort level will vary, and we will tend to go back to the orientation that is easiest for us. This is similar to be right-handed or left-handed. If forced, most of us can write with the opposite hand, but we will probably never feel comfortable doing so. An example related to personality would be introversion and extroversion. If we are introverted, we can participate in large group meetings, but we will need a few minutes by ourselves after the meetings. Extroverts can work alone on special projects, but they will quickly seek the company of others as soon as their work is done. By the same token, if we are present oriented, we may be forced to sit through strategic planning meetings, but we will escape back to
our present-oriented activities as quickly as we can and feel quite relieved when we do. Generally speaking, we will continue to be more oriented toward the past, the present, or the future despite efforts to change.

The question that many readers ask is whether it is better to be past, present, or future oriented. The answer to that question depends on the situation and your understanding of Temporal Alignment. It would be safe to say that most modern organizations need someone who is future oriented, who has a clear vision and drive toward the future. If you are a present-oriented or a past-oriented person, you can still successfully lead your organization if you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your type. Past-oriented people who are CEOs must recruit people who complement them, and they must occasionally operate outside of their comfort zone. Knowing why they feel uncomfortable will help them become more future-oriented when necessary in order to lead their organizations effectively. By the same token, future-oriented leaders must learn when they must reflect on the present or the past.

NOTES

Elliot Jaques, in his groundbreaking book *The Form of Time*, suggested that the past, present, and future are the conscious concepts we develop to express our sense of our experience of oscillation between a focus on our future intentions (the future), on current memories of the past, and on present wishes or desires. He went on to tell us that these three regions can never be in focus simultaneously. Essentially, he views the past, present, and future as fields, or subregions, that exist in both our consciousness and unconsciousness. When one of these subregions is in focus, or in figure, the others are part of the preconscious ground. He is not talking about the kind of time that we measure and track with clocks, but rather our thoughts and beliefs about time. In addition, Jaques proposes that there are no fixed memories of the past, perceptions of the future, or goals for the future. These fields are psychological processes that change and reorganize constantly. The past, which may appear to be firm and factual, is really just our memories of events and can change as we develop and gather more information. Goals often drive our behavior, but they continuously change as we work on them and become better defined over time.

Temporal Alignment refers to an individual’s basic orientation toward the past, present, and future. By basic orientation, I am referring to the temporal space, or subregion to use Jaques’s term, on which people focus most of their attention. Our Temporal Alignment is made up of various personality traits or characteristics that relate to time. Because
each of these traits is different, we all have a multidimensional Temporal Alignment. My research suggests that at least four personality traits or characteristics make up Temporal Alignment. These include Timeline Orientation, Future Time Perspective, Time Span, and Time Conception. I believe that there are other traits that may impact Temporal Alignment as well. This is a complex concept. Although, in this book I generally talk about leaders being past, present, or future oriented, it is not quite that simple. I begin by explaining each of the personality variables that make up Temporal Alignment.

**TIMELINE ORIENTATION**

Think of the past, the present, and the future as three distinct spaces in time. People’s Timeline Orientation is the space that is most important to them. It is the space where they are most likely to see and think of themselves. This would be the space that has the most meaning for the individual. When in that space, he or she feels comfortable. Those with a present Timeline Orientation may feel uncomfortable when forced to think about the past or future. They will probably try to change the subject and may even become out of sorts and insist that people around them deal only with the present. We often hear clichés such as, “Let’s get back to reality and stop worrying about things we can’t change or control” from people who are present oriented. This is their way of getting back into the time space that feels comfortable for them. The same discomfort can occur if a person is past or future oriented and is forced into another space.

Following is an exercise to help readers determine which Timeline Orientation is theirs.

**Exercise 3.A**

The circle test was developed by Cottle to determine time orientation or what I call Timeline Orientation. As one would probably suspect, the test involves drawing three circles. Using a blank sheet of paper, draw three circles representing the past, the present, and the future. The circles may be of any size. They can touch or overlap if that seems appropriate. Place the circles anywhere on the paper. Use this drawing to represent how you feel about the past, the present, and the future and their relationship to each other. Label each circle either as Past, Present, or Future. Complete the exercise before reading further.

To interpret the drawing, look at the size of the circles first. The circle
Figure 3.1
The present is most important and has little to do with the past of the future.

Figure 3.2
The past, present, and future are equally important, and one leads to the next.

Figure 3.3
The present is most important. It is influenced by the past and leads to the future.

that is largest probably represents the time space that one considers to be most important or most relevant to his or her life. The second largest signifies the second level of importance. The smallest is the least important. Next look at the overlap between the three circles. If you drew all three the same size and jointly intersected, you may think that the
Figure 3.4
The future is most important. The past and present do not affect the future.

![Diagram: Past, Present, Future]

Figure 3.5
The past is most important and has little to do with the present and future. The future looks like a distant planet.

![Diagram: Past, Present, Future]

Figure 3.6
The past is most important and has a slight influence on the present and the future.

![Diagram: Past, Present, Future]

past, present, and future are equally important and so intertwined that they cannot be separated. If you drew them distinct from one another, you likely believe that each stands alone and has no impact on the others. Figures 3.1 through 3.8 are sample drawings with their interpretations. Here is another test to identify Timeline Orientation.
Exercise 3.B

Answer the following questions:

1. We all think about ourselves on occasion. When you think about yourself, do you see yourself doing something in the past, the present, or the future?

2. When you think about other people you know, do you see them doing something in the past, the present, or the future? In other words, when you think about your mother, does she look like she did when you were a child? Or do you see her as she is now? Or do you imagine her in the future?

3. When you think about an organization of which you are a part, do you see it in the past (the way it is used to be), the present (the way it is now), or the future (the way you wish it was)?

What do the answers to these questions tell you about yourself? If you find that you think about the past more than the present and the future,
you may have a past Timeline Orientation. If you think more about the present than the past or the future, you may have a Timeline Orientation toward the present. If you think more about the future than the past and the present, you may have a future Timeline Orientation.

**Exercise 3.C**

1. For five minutes, force yourself to think about something bad that happened last year. For an additional five minutes, force yourself to think about something good that happened last year.

2. For five minutes, force yourself to think about something bad that happened this week. For an additional five minutes, force yourself to think about something good that happened this week.

3. For five minutes, force yourself to think about something bad that could happen next year. For an additional five minutes, force yourself to think about something good that could happen next year.

Which of those three steps made you feel most comfortable? If you feel best when thinking about one over the others, this may suggest your Timeline Orientation.

You can put together what you have learned about yourself from the three exercises. This should provide a good sense of your overall Timeline Orientation. Most of us, however, fall somewhere along a spectrum for each space in time. For example, few of us are totally oriented toward the past. In other words, we might have a strong orientation toward the past, but a moderate or weak orientation toward the present or future. This is true for each Timeline Orientation. On the three lines in Figure 3.9, place an X to mark where you think you fall on each.

The complicated nature of Timeline Orientation should give an idea as
to how complex Temporal Alignment can be. To explain this further, let me introduce readers to the next personality trait, Future Time Perspective.

**FUTURE TIME PERSPECTIVE**

Nuttin referred to the future as our primary motivational space. Future Time Perspective refers to the extent that the future drives or motivates your current behavior. In other words, how much time, thought, and energy on a daily basis go into planning and activities that will have a future payoff? It will surprise some readers to learn that many people never do anything that will affect or contribute to their futures. Life is lived day to day with little thought about the future. Others spend a great deal of time preparing for the future. The extent to which we engage in goal setting and behavior geared toward future outcomes indicates our Future Time Perspective. I think of Future Time Perspective as a cognitive or mental anchor that influences our planning horizon.

There are many instruments that have been developed to measure Future Time Perspective. Most researchers believe it has several dimensions. By dimensions, researchers are referring to different aspects of Future Time Perspective that make up the overall trait. There are many similarities between these dimensions and the way they are measured. Hoornaert speculated that Future Time Perspective was made up of five dimensions including the following:

1. Extension: how far ahead a person projects one’s thoughts
2. Coherence: how well organized is one’s future outlook
3. Directionality: how fast one sees oneself moving through time
4. Density: how heavily populated with events the future appears to be
5. Attitude and Affectivity: one’s feeling about the future

Daltrey, however, developed a comprehensive 80-item test and found that Future Time Perspective was a one-dimensional personality trait. Bird and Jordan developed a 30-item scale specifically tailored to use in organizational research. I have used their instrument in some of my own research. Their measure of Future Time Perspective comprises five dimensions:

1. Pessimism: the degree of anxiety and negative affect regarding the future
2. Intention: the extent of conscious projection of action and events into the future
3. Pace: the degree of anxiety and negative affect regarding the future
4. Optimism: the degree of hopefulness and positive affect regarding the future
5. Density: the amount of activity one anticipates in the future

In my research using their scale, I have consistently found that Future Time Perspective was only one dimension. I have tested the scale several times using factor analyses.

Recently, Zimbardo and Boyd\(^8\) developed and tested a measure of Time Perspective. They defined Time Perspective as a fundamental dimension in the construction of psychological time and suggest that humans, as part of a cognitive process, partition human experience into past, present, and future temporal frames. They see Time Perspective as a broad concept and do not separate out Future Time Perspective. Their research found a five-dimensional measure of Time Perspective. The five factors that they identified are the following:

1. Past-Negative: A generally negative view of the past, that is, that thinking about the past brings back bad memories
2. Present-Hedonistic: A hedonistic, risk-taking attitude toward life
3. Future: a general future orientation
4. Past-Positive: an attitude toward the past that is positive, that is, that thinking about the past brings back good memories
5. Present-Fatalistic: a hopeless attitude toward the future and life in general

I have listed the factors associated with the scales developed by various researchers because it is important to understand how intertwined our conceptions of time are with our attitudes toward life. I have gathered extensive data suggesting that Future Time Perspective is significantly correlated with both a positive outlook on life and optimism. I discuss this in a later section of the chapter that deals with the origins of Temporal Alignment.

Based on the work of others and my own research, I have developed a short test of Future Time Perspective that I have used in some of my research. Readers can complete this scale (Table 3.1) to get a quick measure of their Future Time Perspective.

**Exercise 3.D**

Add the scores for each item in Table 3.1 and divide by 10. This will provide one measure of Future Time Perspective. After taking the test, put an X on the scale in Figure 3.10 to indicate the level of Future Time Perspective.
### Table 3.1
**Future Time Perspective Scale**

Read each statement and decide the degree to which it is true for you. For each statement, circle the number that best matches your feelings using the scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree (SD)</td>
<td>Disagree (D)</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree (N)</td>
<td>Agree (A)</td>
<td>Strongly Agree (SA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I never feel as if time is standing still.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Living for the future is important in my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I always plan things ahead.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>When I try to think of events that may happen in the future, I see a clear picture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When I think of my future, a sense of peace and tranquility comes over me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Time is moving quickly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>There aren't enough minutes in a day to list all that I hope to do in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The pace of my life is fast.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I see the future as being full of countless possibilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I feel that I am facing my future with confidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3.10
**Future Time Perspective**

![Scale Diagram](image)
Exercise 3.E

Following are examples of typical behavior of people with low, moderate, and high Future Time Perspective. Readers can identify which of these lists of behaviors is most consistent with their behavior.

**Examples of Behavior Consistent with Low Future Time Perspective**

1. Reactive management—addressing day-to-day responsibilities and concerns with no assessment of future direction or potential problems
2. Ignoring strategic plans
3. No retirement planning or investing
4. Unwilling to invest in new business ventures with future payoffs
5. Seeking a job immediately after high school instead of going on for more education
6. Risky behavior such as excessive drinking, speeding, substance abuse, and dangerous hobbies and vocations
7. Buying the car and home you want now rather than waiting until financially stable
8. Having no future goals

**Examples of Behavior Consistent with Moderate Future Time Perspective**

1. Generally reactive management with some consideration given to corporate goals when decisions are made
2. Following a strategic plan without involvement in its development.
3. Investing in a 401K and retirement program at the minimal level
4. Little interest in new business investments
5. Earning a two- or four-year degree but seeking no further education.
6. No-risk lifestyle outside of some occasional and moderate drinking, smoking, and overeating
7. Waiting to buy a home or a car after carefully saving for down payments with limits on the level of debt created
8. May have a few short-term goals

**Examples of Behavior Consistent with High Future Time Perspective**

1. Proactive management geared strictly toward one’s vision of the future of the organization
2. Actively involved in the development of the strategic plan and its implementation
3. Investing in a 401K and retirement program at the highest level, along with additional personal investing
4. Creating extensive debt as an investment into education or promising new business ventures with payoffs in the future
5. Continuous education in some form
6. Proactive healthy lifestyle with ongoing adjustments made to diet and exercise; following fitness trends
7. Waiting to buy a home or a car until after saving a down payment with limits on the level of personal debt created
8. Having numerous long-term goals that are frequently reviewed, revised, and added to

If you found yourself consistently fitting into one of the levels of Future Time Perspective, you may have a pretty good idea where you rate on this personality trait. This trait, however, is not limited to three levels. It is best thought of a spectrum from low to high.

A number of scientists over the past 70 years have studied Future Time Perspective, and there has been some disagreement as to how to define it. Psychologists have found, however, that Future Time Perspective is a good predictor of the behaviors listed in Exercise 3.E. People who do not consider the future in their day-to-day behavior may briefly worry about the consequences of their current behavior, but not enough to change. People with high Future Time Perspective set goals for the future and continuously consider the impact of their behavior on those goals. They may take risks, but the risks are calculated to achieve a future goal. In addition, it is important to note that Future Time Perspective tends to be consistent between our personal and professional lives, but occasionally we may behave in inconsistent ways. We may make careful investment decisions as business professionals, for example, but still provide funds for a relative’s risky business proposition.

We are told all the time that we should have goals and that we should work toward the future. So why don’t most people heed this advice? Because it isn’t in their basic makeup. I believe that most people know that their day-to-day behavior should be consistent with their goals, but because of their orientation toward time, they have difficulty focusing on the future. Franklin Swift, a fictional character in a recent bestseller, Disappearing Acts, is a good example. He has goals but current problems and basic drives continue to sabotage his efforts to get ahead. His lament,
“Why is it that the shit that can change your whole life is always somewhere in the damn future?” is typical.\(^9\) Many parents feel the same level of frustration when trying to teach their children to behave in ways that will ensure their future. Lewin suggested that Future Time Perspective develops over time as we mature.\(^10\) Based on the research, I believe that Future Time Perspective is a personality trait that develops early in life and is, in part, genetic. Anecdotally, we have all seen future-oriented behavior in some children at very early ages, and yet we all know adults who don’t exhibit this type of behavior. (At the end of this chapter, I explain the origins of Temporal Alignment.) This takes us to the next personality trait or characteristic that makes up Temporal Alignment: Time Span.

**TIME SPAN**

Time Span is the amount or block of time that each of us is capable of holding in our mind. It literally refers to the number of weeks, months, and years that we can imagine and work with in our heads. Jaques\(^11\) introduced the concept, calling it time span of discretion, and suggested that the amount of time that we are capable of handling is related to our cognitive capacity, which he distinguishes from intelligence. Another way of understanding this is to imagine your brain as a container. Some of us can hold a few weeks and some of us can hold 20 years. That isn’t literally the way the mind works, but the analogy provides the general idea. Again, the number of years that one can deal with is not an indication of how smart that person is, but rather what his or her mind can hold. A long Time Span is rare, by the way.

Jaques’s time span of discretion referred specifically to future time. He found that the higher one’s level of management in an organization, the broader the time span of discretion. In other words, production workers don’t need to think about any more than the current workday and the tasks they must complete in eight hours. The first line supervisor, however, should be thinking about a week or two ahead to prepare work schedules. The director of manufacturing needs to think about the production line changes that will be made next year and develop the plans for their implementation. The CEO must be considering the direction of the organization during the next 10 to 20 years. If the reader is wondering whether time span of discretion or management level comes first; it has been suggested that it is the former. If correct, our Time Span helps us move up the ladder. Someone with a short Time Span, will never get to higher levels in most organizations. This can be confusing, however. It
suggests that our specific job indicates our personal Time Span. I disagree. Our job is just one indicator of our preferred Time Span. We can get stuck in jobs that do not give us much time span of discretion, whereas in our personal lives, we may be constantly considering and planning for the next 20 years.

Ringle and Savickas\textsuperscript{12} suggested that Time Span includes both retrospective (how far back into the history of the institution leaders remember) and prospective (how far into the future leaders project the institution) extension. In other words, a manager may be very good at remembering a subordinate’s performance over the past year because she is able to recapture the past year easily as a block of time. Another manager may not be able to recapture any of the past but may project a year into the future. The amount of time that can be considered and whether that block of time falls into the past, the future, or both will vary from person to person. There are CEOs who think about the past 10 years and the next 10 years. There are others who think only about the next 20 years. Both have 20-year Time Spans.

Following are three exercises to help the reader determine his or her Time Span.

**Exercise 3.F**

First, make a list of the three to five most significant work projects or assignments that you have been involved in over the past year. Next to each item, note the longest period of time you were fully responsible for the project or some part of it. If you find that the longest amount of time that you were fully responsible was a few weeks, then your work has a short time span of discretion. If you were responsible and expect to continue to be responsible for one to five years, your work has a moderate time span of discretion. If you were responsible and expect to continue to be for over five years, you have a long time span of discretion. This reflects the Time Span of your duties. Some experts would say that this reflects your personal Time Span. I do not, but it is probably a good indicator of the Time Span that you are capable of handling. We tend to rise to the level we can handle.

**Exercise 3.G**

1. Think about yourself next month. How easily can you imagine yourself, what will happen, and what you will be doing during the month? If you found that impossible, you may stop here. If you thought to your-
self, “This is stupid and I’m not doing it,” consider that a sign that your Time Span is short. If you found it easy, go to the next item.

2. Imagine yourself a year from now. Picture yourself and what you will be doing. Spend about five minutes thinking about this and what will happen during the year. If you found that impossible, you may stop here. Don’t force yourself if you can do it but feel very uncomfortable. If you found that easy, go on to the next item.

3. Continue the process moving up to five years from now, ten years from now, and ending with 20 years from now. Stop when it becomes too difficult, annoying, or impossible for you to imagine that amount of time in the future.

**Exercise 3.H**

Ask several people personally close to you this question: “Please try to recall a conversation with me when I talked about the future. What did I talk about?” Make a list of what each person tells you. Did you talk about events that would happen in a few months, like a vacation, or were they things that would happen in ten years?

These exercises should give you a general idea about the length of your Time Span. The reader can place an X on the line in Figure 3.11 to indicate your probable Time Span.

A short Time Span would be a few days to a few months into the future. A medium Time Span would be a year to 5 years into the future. A long Time Span would be 5 to 20 years into the future. As with the other personality traits that we have discussed, one should think of this as a continuum ranging from tomorrow to 20 years from now. Everyone varies in terms of how much of that 20 years can be cognitively captured.

**TIME CONCEPTION**

The last variable that makes up Temporal Alignment is Time Conception, which refers to whether one views time as cyclical or linear. Time Conception is different from the other variables for a couple of reasons.
First, it is a way of thinking about the past, the present, and the future that is primarily culturally based. I believe that it becomes part of our personality due to our socialization, but that could be argued about any personality trait. I refer to Time Conception as a personality trait for purposes of this explanation. Time Conception is also different because it does not fall along a continuum. It is a dichotomous variable.

Graham distinguished between cyclical and linear patterns of time. A cyclical conception of time is a belief that life is a cycle; life events repeat themselves, season-to-season, year-to-year and generation-to-generation. Time is not viewed as something being lost. Time is holistically viewed, inferring that we can do many things during the same time. Picture a spiral that is expanding as time passes. Each life event is part of a pattern that repeats itself over time. The content and texture of the event are growing each time it is repeated. The idea that the past, present, and future are occurring simultaneously in a cyclical pattern is consistent with many Eastern philosophies and the belief systems of many indigenous people around the world. It also relates to discoveries of some modern physicists and leadership experts.

The cyclical conception of time infers that we learn and grow over time because we get the chance to do things over, learning from our mistakes and the mistakes of others. This belief does not literally suggest that identical events recur (although even that could be argued), but that similar events with common patterns occur over and over. From this point of view, the past, present, and future are interwoven and inseparable. By the way, in this context, I am not referring just to you and me when I say “we,” but rather all of us. We typically find a cyclical Time Conception in people from non-European cultures that are more likely to be collectivist in nature. Collectivist societies are oriented more toward the group than the individual.

By and large, industrialized cultures view time as linear with a clear and unrepeatable past, a transient present, and a future that extends infinitely. A linear conception of time is a belief that life is one continuous line with the future ahead and the past gone forever. If we draw time, as we frequently do on timelines, we draw a straight line. Time is viewed as scarce and valuable and, like money, something that must be guarded and managed. This is a prevalent belief in U.S. businesses. Although we might argue that competition, or capitalism, demands a linear conception of time, in reality this is a strong cultural bias. Nonetheless, most American organizations, from multinationals to family farms, rely heavily on cyclical patterns and trends over time, yet we tend to persist in viewing time as linear.
Although we usually think of our society as being more future-oriented than those that have a cyclical conception of time, there is little anecdotal or empirical evidence to prove this is the case. Many great societies throughout the world have held a cyclical conception of time. In addition, research on people who come from cultures in which a cyclical conception of time is prevalent have been measured as having Future Time Perspective as high as people from cultures with a linear conception of time. This points out another way that Time Conception is different from the other personality traits that we have discussed. One type of Time Conception cannot be labeled more future oriented than another. You will find future oriented people from both types of Time Conception.

Time Conception affects Temporal Alignment in several ways. Our view of time as cyclical or linear influences whether we value the past and the future and how we plan for the future. Future-oriented people with a cyclical conception are more likely to think about the past when planning activities that will impact their future. For example, when planning for company expansion over the next 10 years, the future-oriented manager with a cyclical conception will be more likely to ask for information about previous building endeavors to see what can be learned. This individual may not gather the information himself but will place more value on its importance in decisions made in the future. The future-oriented manager with a linear conception of time will not give any consideration to past projects. He will proceed as if the past is over and requires no further consideration. The future is viewed as a clean slate. The present-oriented manager with a cyclical conception of time will continue to pay attention to day-to-day responsibilities but will value the past and the future and may obtain information about past events or future plans that may impact current activities. She may not change her behavior but will be respectful of the past and the future in the way that she manages. The present-oriented manager with a linear conception of time will rarely consider past events or future plans in any activity, will see no value in doing so, and may even consider it a waste of time.

Readers can identify their Time Conception by identifying their cultural background. Those of us born and raised in the United States to families of Western European descent probably have a linear conception of time. Those of us born and raised in an Asian, African, or South American culture probably have a cyclical conception of time. Having said that, it is rarely that simple. Most Americans have a number of cultural influences in our lives. Readers should also ask themselves to picture the concept of “future.” If they see a straight line, their Time Conception is linear. If they see a spiral, their Time Conception is cy-
clical. Readers can also revisit the drawing they made in Exercise 3.A. A drawing like that shown in Figure 3.12 would indicate a linear conception of time. A drawing like that in Figure 3.13 would suggest a cyclical conception of time.

**ORIGINS OF TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT**

Most early research on time orientation speculated that our time orientation develops over time through developmental means. As children, we are totally absorbed in self and immediate needs. As we grow and develop, our ability to delay our gratification grows. It has been suggested that the concept of time with consistent usage of time orientation is not completely developed until the adolescent ages.\(^\text{19}\) In data gathered from children ranging in age from 12 to 18, young adults averaging age 20,\(^\text{20}\) and adults (in groups including senior citizens),\(^\text{21}\) I found no correlation between age and Future Time Perspective. When I studied business leaders ranging in age from managers in their 20s to CEOs who were in their 60s, I found no relationship between age and Future Time Perspective.\(^\text{22}\)

Although Time Conception is clearly culturally based, the origins of each person’s Timeline Orientation, Future Time Perspective, and Time
Span are not so easily linked to culture. Culture probably has some impact on all aspects of Temporal Alignment. By culture, I mean national, ethnic, racial, and family cultures. It is likely that socialization by our families affects our Temporal Alignment in much the same way that it affects other aspects of our personality. Jones suggested that North American and Western European culture view high Future Time Perspective as positive and it is highly correlated with need for achievement. As he pointed out, in Trinidad and Micronesia, the behavior consistent with a person with high Future Time Perspective is regarded as uptight and misplaced. In those cultures, a future orientation might have to manifest itself in other ways or be hidden. Societal pressures influence spoken attitudes and overt behavior. For example, a future-oriented person with ideas for future business ventures may be pressured to put them aside and stay in the family business in a culture where high Future Time Perspective is not valued or is viewed negatively. The person with the ideas about the future still has them, however. We may never see an outcome from the ideas because of the restrictions of culture.

Despite the potential impact of culture on time orientation, Schiller found that Native American men, hypothesized to be more oriented toward the past, were just as likely to have high Future Time Perspective as her other subjects and Migliore found that Sicilian-Canadians, predicted to have low future orientation, were no different from Canadians of other ethnic backgrounds. The problem is that perceptions of the time orientation of others are based on cultural stereotypes and other cultural characteristics rather than reality. For example, cultures such as Native American ones that honor their ancestors or have a cyclical conception of time may infer to outsiders that the culture is past oriented. What this suggests to me is that Future Time Perspective, like many personality traits, is more basic to humans and less affected by culture than we previously thought.

Some early research on time perspective found that men were more future-oriented than women. Most likely, these findings reflect the demographic characteristics of the researchers and the research subjects than reality. I was unable to find any current research that suggests that women differ significantly from men on Future Time Perspective. In addition, I have examined that variable with more than a thousand subjects ranging from preteens to senior citizens and found no relationship. Usually people assume, based on the developmental literature, that young people are not future oriented. Others may find it impossible to believe that some senior citizens could have high Future Time Perspective or would have a long Time Span. Those readers would be wrong. Although the situa-
tions in which we find ourselves (which for older adults may include poor health or limited resources and mobility) do influence our Temporal Alignment to a certain extent, healthy older future-oriented people often picture themselves in the distant future and spend much of their energy on activities that will make a contribution in the future. We all know many elderly people who participate in civic activities that will improve their communities in the future. I know very old professors who still write books. Senior citizens who are not future oriented probably weren’t when they were young either.

As mentioned earlier, situational variables can also affect our Temporal Alignment. For example, a life of poverty without opportunities for an education and good jobs would limit the time one spends thinking about the future—or the past for that matter. LeShan argued that lower social classes are present oriented and that this is a personality characteristic of the poor who have a delayed gratification pattern. Gonzales and Zimbardo found that future orientation increases as income goes up. An abusive family, a serious disability, or loss of a loved one could make it less likely that one would be future oriented for a very simple reason: It is easier not to have to imagine the future and the hardships that will be faced. Having said that, keep in mind that many people who live in difficult situations are future oriented. For example, Schiller’s research, cited earlier, with Native American men, was done with men living in homeless shelters. Their homeless situation did not seem to make them less future oriented than the general population. The leaders featured in later chapters will further illustrate this point.

It is safe to assume that our Temporal Alignment develops early in life and in the same way that other aspects of our personality do. It evolves from our genetic makeup, our early life experiences, the culture in which we grow up, and social and situational factors to which we are exposed. Each of us has a unique Temporal Alignment that is our signature. Although I will talk about Temporal Alignment in general terms of past, present, or future oriented, the concept is much more complex than that.

After years of personality research, we have learned that some personality traits appear to be related to others. In the same vein, I have found that Future Time Perspective is significantly correlated or related to a number of other personality variables. What this means is that when Future Time Perspective is high, so are the other variables. When Future Time Perspective is low, so are the correlated variables.

1. The strongest relationship that I have found between Future Time Perspective and other personality variables that I have tested is its corre-
lation with extroversion, one of the Big Five personality dimensions. Extroversion would describe people who are sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, energetic, and active.

2. Future Time Perspective is also correlated with a need for achievement. Need for achievement is characteristic of people who set goals and keep track of their progress toward their goals. They are driven to achieve success.

3. Future Time Perspective is also significantly related to self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to how favorably people view themselves. The more favorably they think of themselves, the higher their Future Time Perspective.

4. In a related vein, Future Time Perspective is also correlated with both a positive outlook on life and optimism. Positive people have high Future Time Perspective and people who are negative about life will consistently have low Future Time Perspective.

5. Future Time Perspective is also related to agreeableness. Agreeable people are considered courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, softhearted, and tolerant.

6. Future Time Perspective is correlated to conscientiousness. A conscientious person is likely to be dependable, careful, responsible, organized, hardworking, persistent, and achievement oriented.

7. Future Time Perspective is related to openness to experience. Those who are open to experience would be intelligent, imaginative, curious, original, open-minded, and artistic.

To a lesser extent, Future Time Perspective is also correlated to a feeling of control over life situations (called locus of control), and persistence toward goals. It is also important to note that Future Time Perspective is inversely related to neuroticism. Neurotic people would be characterized as emotionally unstable, unable to adjust, pessimistic, self-conscious, anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, and insecure. In this case, the more neurotic the people I surveyed, the lower their Future Time Perspective.

So which comes first, Future Time Perspective or the related personality traits? There is no clear answer to that question at this time and because of the complicated nature of personality, it is unlikely there will ever be one. We might expect, however, that the same conditions that lead people to have high Future Time Perspective also play a role in developing the correlated traits. What we do know is that they tend to appear together. You may have noticed common threads running between these variables: feelings of control and a positive outlook about oneself and life.
Table 3.2
Temporal Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Alignment</th>
<th>Timeline Orientation</th>
<th>Future Time Perspective</th>
<th>Time Span</th>
<th>Time Conception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Oriented</td>
<td>Past is strongest</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5 - 10 years in the past to the present</td>
<td>Cyclical or Linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Oriented</td>
<td>Present is strongest</td>
<td>Low to Moderate</td>
<td>1 year in the past to 1 year in the future</td>
<td>Cyclical or Linear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Future Oriented    | Future is strongest   | Moderate to High         | 1. Short future time span: A few days to 1 year  
2. Medium future time span: 1 to 5 years  
3. Long future time span: 5 to 20 years | Cyclical or Linear |

MODEL OF TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT

Given the variables that seem to make up one’s Temporal Alignment and what readers have learned about themselves, Table 3.2 provides a model to help readers determine whether they are past, present, or future oriented.

In the next chapter, I explain how Temporal Alignment affects our behavior in organizations. If a leader and followers have consistent Temporal Alignments, some important tasks will be left undone. Some issues will never be addressed. If a leader and followers have inconsistent Temporal Alignments, there can be conflict. If leaders understand how Temporal Alignment affects their behavior and the behavior of followers, they can use it to become more effective in their positions.

NOTES

Driven by Time


18. McGrath and Rotchford, “Time and Behavior in Organizations.”


22. Ibid.


24. P. A. Schiller, “An Examination of Native Americans’ and Euro-Americans’


Chapter 4

TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT OF LEADERS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Different organizations and departments within organizations have varying temporal needs at different points in time. What this means is that different managers need different Temporal Alignments depending on each situation. In essence, sometimes, it is better to be past oriented than future oriented. Other times it is better to be present oriented than future oriented. It depends on the situation. When the leader has the Temporal Alignment that the situation demands, we call it Attunement (explained in a later chapter). Effective leaders must occasionally behave in ways that fall outside of their temporal comfort zone in order to achieve goals. Most people understand that sometimes even shy people must act outgoing and friendly and that extroverted people must sometimes work alone. Because the concept of Temporal Alignment is relatively unknown, few people understand that sometimes we must be present oriented when we would rather be working on an innovative project that won’t be completed for 10 years. Understanding Temporal Alignment and adapting to various situations can make leaders more effective.

Years ago, I worked for a CEO who was highly future oriented. As part of his future orientation, he paid attention to the external environment by reading and talking with other CEOs and business professionals who were on the leading edge. He was always trying to find ways to do things better, to fix things even if they weren’t broken. His eye was always 5 to 10 years ahead of the rest of his management team. At that time, the life insurance industry was rapidly changing. In addition to
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global competition, the way policies were structured and the brokerage systems were changing. This company needed a leader with a future orientation. The CEO would tell his vice presidents which changes he wanted them to make and why. Like most future-oriented managers, he didn’t tell them how to do it because having to deal with day-to-day issues would have taken him out of his temporal comfort zone.

In conducting management training, it became clear to me that the midlevel managers did not understand the direction that was being set by the CEO. I invited the CEO to visit the seminar and share his vision. He was amazed and disappointed at their reaction. They didn’t have any idea that he was trying to make changes. The vice presidents had never communicated the vision down the corporate ladder. This company had several vice presidents with a great deal of tenure. The company was old and profitable. The vice presidents had successfully built a stable company, one of the key strengths of the organization. They did it because the situation during the previous 20 years demanded it. They had the skills and the Temporal Alignment needed in the past. At a time when the company had to change to survive in the future, however, they did not have the right stuff. The CEO came to regard them as a “layer of lead” between him and the people who would have to implement the changes.

In this situation, the CEO could have done two things. He could have worked outside of his own Temporal Alignment, making the changes himself, which would have been nearly impossible given the scope of the organization. Or he could have hired someone who could bring about the operational changes that the company required. He chose the latter. During a two-year time period, every senior-level vice president turned over. An executive vice president was hired who did not fit the company’s typical executive personality profile. Over time, companies tend to hire people who look and act like others in the organization. This leads to a consistent personality among executives that is comfortable and makes communication easy. The new vice president was unlike anyone who had worked in the organization before. He was future oriented, thrived on change, and had a contingent of managers who moved from company to company with him. They were experts at the implementation of operational changes. He focused on making sure that the CEO’s proposed changes were addressed, along with a few of his own. Within a few years, the company had made a radical transition, including the implementation of self-managed cross-functional teams. After a failed attempt to take over the company, he and his crew moved on to a new organization. He took a few midlevel managers, who were future oriented, with him.
In that situation, a future orientation was required. The former vice presidents were bright people who could have operated outside of their Temporal Alignments. But they didn’t. They viewed the CEO as flighty, as someone always daydreaming about the future. In the past, his ideas about future projects had been simpler or had disappeared when the vice presidents ignored them. It didn’t work this time. Could the CEO have operated outside of his Temporal Alignment and managed each of the executives in such a way that the changes would have been implemented? Maybe, but he didn’t. He was confused about their lack of attention to the future. In the end, everyone left angry.

This is a classic example of a situation in which the Temporal Alignment of a group of executives was appropriate for a specific period of time, but the management team couldn’t respond to the demands of the CEO and the realities of a changing business environment. It bears noting that when we began the implementation of the self-managed teams, we decided to have one of the executives give a motivational speech about the quality of the workforce and past organizational accomplishments. The CEO refused to give the speech. He did not feel confident about the ability of the staff to respond to the future needs of the organization. Instead, the president of the company made an outstanding presentation about the quality of the employees and his confidence in their ability to work on the teams. More than likely, each reader could tell a story about a similar situation in which there was a gap between the Temporal Alignment of a leader and the needs of a specific situation or organization. The endings of those stories probably range from limited success to total disaster. In the model that follows, I try to explain how organizational leaders can anticipate and respond to different types of situations.

**MODEL OF TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

The difference between a highly future-oriented leader and a highly past-oriented leader is best explained with two examples. First, the reader should picture a leader who is continuously changing everything. Before one change is implemented, the next one begins, the third one is in the planning stages, and the leader has just imagined the fourth. The first change would be forgotten and hold little value—except to the workers who did the work. To help you understand, imagine a great chef who is future oriented. As he prepares each entree, he is thinking about new ways of preparing it the next time. The dish prepared tonight would hold
little importance to him, even if it is excellent. His emphasis is always on the future.

The second type of leader is the one who reviews every detail from the past before making a decision. He carefully analyzes mistakes and accomplishments looking for clues to help him make the best choices. David Greenberger and I used the analogy of a chess master.1 This leader considers every decision he and his competitors have made in the past. Strategy is based more on preserving past successes and the current position than on making a radical change in the game. Opportunistic plays would be rare. This leader bets that the opponent did not learn as much from past moves and experiences. It works in chess. Sometimes, depending on the situation, it works in business.

Those examples, however, do not take into account the fact that organizations are made up of people with varying Temporal Alignments. This is more likely to be an issue at lower levels of the hierarchy because many, if not most, organizations tend to hire managers with similar personalities. Although few leaders or human resources professionals have an understanding of Temporal Alignment, they often hire people with similar orientations toward time. This happens because many organizations use personality as a screening tool. Even if they do not use personality testing, most employers subscribe to the concept of person-organization fit to hire people who will adapt well in the organizational culture.2 To my knowledge, no organizations are currently testing for Temporal Alignment. Other specific personality traits, however, discussed in the previous chapter, are related to time orientation. If an organization used selection measures to screen for a positive outlook toward life, for example, it would tend to hire more future-oriented people.

Few companies, however, use formal personality assessment to hire below the management level. Fewer still retest managers when organizational priorities change and different types of people are needed to respond to the new order. What results is a workforce with varying Temporal Alignments and managers with similar Temporal Alignments that may or may not be planned or appropriate for the situations that they and their organizations are facing today.

Given the accidental nature of the occurrence of Temporal Alignment, it is no wonder that when organizations need a future-oriented leader, they may find themselves without one. When an organization has to focus on making its operations run smoothly and needs a present-oriented leader, it may not have one. When an organization needs to strengthen its culture by acknowledging past performance and needs a past-oriented leader, it may not have one. Each type has strengths and weaknesses,
and each type fits different situations better than others. In the model shown in Table 4.1, I have outlined the three major types of leaders as they relate to Temporal Alignment.

As you view the model, keep in mind that there are at least four variables that make up Temporal Alignment, and every person varies on each. Essentially, what this means is that most future-oriented leaders will have a future Timeline Orientation and high Future Time Perspective, but they will vary on the length of their Time Span and Time Conception. By the same token, present- and past-oriented leaders will also vary on Time Span and Time Conception. Because of this variance, the model should be adjusted if it is used to assess one’s fit.

In terms of Time Span, a past-oriented leader would be unlikely to have a long Time Span. In all probability, it would be short. In a stable environment, this would be acceptable. In a dynamic environment, this would be disastrous because the leader would have difficulty thinking beyond the next week or two. The present-oriented leader would most likely be able to think about the next one to five years, and this might work in a small company or department that has to respond to a change in the market but that will stabilize quickly. If, for example, a large retail chain builds in a small city, creating competition for a family-owned hardware store, the present-oriented leader of the family owned store must respond to the competition during the first few years when the impact will be greatest. This might include development of a new advertising strategy emphasizing personal service. It might mean comprehensive training for all employees. It may mean setting up a schedule to visit local businesses to keep up current orders. If the business survives, it may be able to rely on the competencies that allowed it to win against the competition and simply build on its strengths once the crisis passes. A longer Time Span may not be necessary.

Time Conception is different and will affect leaders in this way: Leaders with a cyclical Time Conception will be more apt to consider natural cycles (related to business, weather, population, enrollment, etc.) in decision making, and leaders with a linear Time Conception will be more apt to ignore business cycles when making decisions. One example of this is found in agriculture; most of us would agree that natural weather and economic cycles drive performance in agribusiness. If a future-oriented farmer is planning to purchase additional land and add a new crop, the one with a cyclical Time Conception will be more likely to take seasonal patterns and weather cycles into account as she plans the timing of the acquisitions, the purchase of seed and fertilizer, financing of the project, and the length of time it will take to make the transition. In this situation,
### Table 4.1
Model of Temporal Alignment and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Alignment</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Good Fit - Situations -</th>
<th>Bad Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future Oriented Leader</strong></td>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>Fails to recognize past accomplishments</td>
<td>Rapidly changing environment</td>
<td>Stable environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most apt to transform</td>
<td>May miss operational problems</td>
<td>Dynamic industry</td>
<td>Stable industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looks for opportunities</td>
<td>Does not value history of organization</td>
<td>Flexible company/department</td>
<td>Rigid culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socks information about trends</td>
<td>May not wait for others to catch up</td>
<td>Open management style</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draws others into future</td>
<td>Impatient with timing of changes</td>
<td>Creative endeavors</td>
<td>A job solving daily issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivated and motivational</td>
<td>Vision will not appeal to all</td>
<td>Intuitive leadership</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty dealing with the past</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trouble with performance evaluations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Oriented Leader</strong></td>
<td>Handles day-to-day operations</td>
<td>Distracted from planning by daily tasks</td>
<td>Stable company and industry</td>
<td>Rapid change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solves current problems</td>
<td>May not see possibilities in future</td>
<td>Concrete job tasks</td>
<td>Shifting priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitively available daily</td>
<td>Can have problems with change</td>
<td>Production environment</td>
<td>Visionary manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes on issues one day at a time</td>
<td>Unlikely to recognize past accomplishments</td>
<td>Department with problem workers</td>
<td>CEO values the past or future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can more easily adapt to past and future oriented tasks</td>
<td>Big Picture may not be acknowledged</td>
<td>and customers</td>
<td>values seniority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vision will seem vague</td>
<td>Department does firefighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past Oriented Leader</strong></td>
<td>Values past accomplishments</td>
<td>Not visionary</td>
<td>Organization/department with</td>
<td>Future oriented culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learns from history</td>
<td>Does not like strategic planning</td>
<td>long history</td>
<td>Emphasis on rapid change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can predict future trends based on past experiences</td>
<td>May sabotage strategic plans</td>
<td>Stable industry</td>
<td>Dynamic industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remembers what happened before</td>
<td>Doesn’t listen to ideas about future</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>High turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good at assessing strengths and weaknesses of workers</td>
<td>May not handle day-to-day tasks</td>
<td>Loyal employees</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>based on past experiences</td>
<td>Will not implement changes if payoff seems distant</td>
<td>“If it isn’t broke, don’t fix it” culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uncomfortable talking about future</td>
<td>Archival type work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a cyclical Time Conception is critical. On the other hand, a linear Time Conception might be better for a manager charged with the technical development of a completely new product after the marketing research has been completed. She could focus entirely on the engineering aspects of the product and how it will look in the future. The marketing and sales department managers would have to consider seasonal patterns of buying when the product was ready to sell, of course. The production managers would have to examine patterns in the availability of resources used in manufacturing of the product. For these reasons, we must incorporate what we know about Time Span and Time Conception into the model of Temporal Alignment and Leadership.

Understanding and accommodating one’s Temporal Alignment is not difficult to do. In this section, I have summarized some common scenarios in which leaders may find themselves. Next, the potential problems and solutions to those problems are described.

THE FUTURE-ORIENTED LEADER

There is good news and bad news. Highly future-oriented leaders are more likely to transform organizations and more likely to alienate followers than past-and present-oriented leaders. Future-oriented leaders drive other people crazy because most of us are not future oriented. Future-oriented leaders are continuously picturing their version of the future in their minds. They expect us to help them make this vision real, but unless they show it to us, we cannot. Sometimes they are impatient because they do not understand why we cannot see what they see.

Future-oriented leaders are particularly effective when an environment is dynamic and changing. They are the most likely of the three types of leaders to imagine a positive vision of the future. Visioning the future is probably automatic behavior for future-oriented leaders. Visioning is a form of imaging or picturing something in one’s mind. Most of us use our imaginations to picture events that we desire or fear, but not all of us picture the future of the organizations in our minds. Future-oriented leaders of organizations often do. My research suggests that the higher one’s Future Time Perspective, the higher one’s visioning ability. We could also expect that Time Span would predict the amount of time that would be included in the future vision. Leaders with a long Time Span might have an organizational vision that encompasses the next 10 to 20 years.

Because most people are not future oriented, visionary leaders must use their visions to motivate followers—to pull them into the future with
them. Having a vision of the future and being able to effectively communicate that vision are different abilities. The most effective future-oriented leaders learn to talk about their visions to followers to provide direction for their work and behavior. The entire vision does not have to be communicated to everyone, but appropriate pieces should be shared with targeted groups or departments to provide specific goals that must be accomplished in order to achieve the vision. Future-oriented leaders who cannot or choose not to communicate their visions will not achieve them unless they are capable of doing all of the work themselves. This is unlikely, because they generally don’t like dealing with day-to-day tasks. It is also unlikely because followers who are not future oriented and don’t like change may sabotage their work.

Future-oriented leaders tend to be skilled at gathering information about trends and what other organizations are doing to improve their effectiveness. This information gathering is done with the future in mind. As they read an article about another company trying something new, future-oriented leaders are considering how the approach might work in their organization. Most likely, they are imagining how their own organization would look and perform in the same situation. Future-oriented leaders are constantly looking for opportunities. They also are apt to challenge current systems seeking ways to improve. This creates tremendous frustration for followers who have done the work to make things work smoothly and do not think about the future. Real problems can occur when future-oriented leaders make changes without waiting for followers to catch up. One example of this would be a future-oriented vice president of sales who begins to market a product the company is adding to its line before the engineers finish the design and production begins. If the product cannot be delivered, there may be negative consequences. Many of us have dealt with CEOs who are angry about product development taking longer than expected. Keep in mind that they expected it when they imagined it. Future-oriented leaders must force themselves to slow down to accommodate the operational stages of change. This is difficult and will require effort depending on the level of their future orientation. When a future orientation occurs in a leader at the highest levels of organizations, a few leaders may feel that everyone else must catch up with them or lose their jobs. In theory, this may be true, but few organizations can afford the high level of voluntary and involuntary turnover that results from that type of arrogance. Although I have not gathered empirical evidence, anecdotal experience suggests that there tends to be higher turnover in organizations with highly future-oriented leaders unless their hiring process is taking personality into account.
The biggest problem that we see with future-oriented leaders is their failure to recognize past accomplishments. This isn’t just true for followers, but also for the leaders, themselves. The past simply does not matter to them. For the most part, the rest of us expect to be recognized for our performance. Some future-oriented leaders do not do performance appraisals. They cannot focus on the past year, cannot (or do not want to) remember what each individual reporting to them did or did not do, and do not value past performance. At best, feedback is usually delivered when the performance takes place. Future-oriented leaders must use specific methods for performance appraisals well. One example would be making notes when a follower does something out of the ordinary and throwing the note in a file. Leaders who have administrative staff may ask them to keep track of specific information that can be easily accessed for an appraisal. At the end of the evaluation period, the notes can be organized and used to develop feedback on performance. Again, this may seem boring and useless to the highly future-oriented person, but it is important to the average worker.

Along the same lines as performance appraisal, future-oriented leaders often ignore the history of the organization. Building a strong culture requires paying attention to the past. Most followers need to hear how the company was started, who the founders were, what they were like, and what was good about the organization. Not only is this difficult for future-oriented leaders, but if they assumed their leadership role recently, they may not know anything about the history of the company. The problem is that everyone else does. By everyone, I mean followers, customers, and members of the community.

It is not uncommon for employees to remember events that occurred years before and talk about them like they were yesterday. A few years ago, I was conducting a training program at a hospital on how to deal with problem employees. A group of managers told me a story about an employee who had a physical fight with another employee and pulled out handfuls of the other person’s hair. The managers indicated that when this incident was reported to the executive team, nothing was done. I promised to investigate and get back to them. What I learned shocked me and infuriated the very future-oriented vice president of human resources. The incident had in fact occurred—10 years earlier. He wasn’t working there when it happened. Yet the managers told the story as if it had happened yesterday. The most important part of this story is that the managers were dealing with problem employees as if their attempts to discipline inappropriate behavior were a waste of time. Managers stuck in the past were thwarting the future-oriented leader, who was trying to
build a better working environment for the future. The solution to this problem would be to air this and other well-known “legends” of the hospital and talk about how things have changed, and then to do this repeatedly until the history is put in its proper perspective. Past-oriented people tend to view the past as the “truth” and use it to guide their decisions. The remembered past is not always true and rarely can it be used to generalize about all behavior in an organization. Revised information must literally be used to change the past which exists only in our memory.

Sometimes, future-oriented leaders are viewed as “off in the clouds,” “daydreaming,” “out there,” or “in their own world.” I refer to this as cognitive unavailability. Most people are present oriented and deal with life one day at a time. Much of the time, people who spend a great deal of time imagining the future are not mentally in the present and may be seen as strange, depending on how well they can hide it. In meetings, future-oriented leaders may not hear everything that is said or focus on the subject of the meeting. In their minds, they are off in the future and are not available cognitively. This creates anxiety for followers who must get tasks done and need guidance or permission from leaders. Not hearing information provided in meetings can create critical problems, especially given that future-oriented people rarely read minutes of meetings.

Future-oriented leaders are especially comfortable and effective in dynamic organizations in dynamic industries or services. Because their orientation lends itself to taking advantage of opportunities and trying to make the future better, they work best in flexible organizations with open management styles. They thrive in organizations where creativity is rewarded, where they have access to decision makers, where leaders empower followers to make decisions, and where intuition or hunches are encouraged. Future-oriented leaders will not be as comfortable in stable organizations in stable industries. They do not like rigid cultures, especially those firmly rooted in the histories of the organizations. When future-oriented leaders work in bureaucracies, they tend to not follow the rules or the chain of command. Sometimes they can get away with this, but most often they leave.

THE PRESENT-ORIENTED LEADER

Leaders who live for the present and focus their attention on what is happening today are probably the most common of the three types. In a leadership role, present-oriented leaders are very effective at dealing with day-to-day issues. This is true for several reasons. First, they care about
the present. Problems are addressed one day at a time instead of speculating on how each aspect of the business may someday cause a problem. Present-oriented leaders make great managers in production, counseling, and construction organizations where they are responsible for concrete tasks. Because they focus on the present, their departments or organizations tend to produce high-quality work when they communicate well, make themselves accessible to their constituents, and provide worthwhile feedback to followers.

Second, these leaders are cognitively available on a daily basis. By cognitively available, I mean that they are the most likely of the three types to be focusing on current issues in an organization and will be able to help followers address concerns and develop methods to accomplish specific tasks. One would be unlikely to find this leader not paying attention or staring off into space when help is needed. The present-oriented leader is likely to be circulating around the work floor talking, observing, anticipating concerns, and answering questions. It is difficult to overstate the importance of leaders who are cognitively available to followers. Again, I am not talking about physical presence, but rather being able to focus on the work that needs to be done today. Some future-oriented leaders are frequently not interested in dealing with daily concerns and questions and that disinterest is communicated through bored yawns, failure to meet with followers on these issues, or lack of opinions when help is requested.

Sometimes present-oriented leaders are thought of as micromanagers. This can be a particular problem when the leader is a CEO. In most organizations, CEOs need to be strategic thinkers. When they spend most of their time on daily operations, it may be perceived as “checking up” on followers, and this is often a waste of time because lower-level managers or self-managed teams have responsibility for day-to-day management. We most often find present-oriented CEOs in small to medium-sized companies where they were employed when the company started business. In the early stages of the organization, the leader may have been one of a handful of employees and was responsible for day-to-day tasks. While the organization grows, this role frequently changes as competitive and regulatory environments change. The present-oriented CEO continues to do inspections, talks to workers on the shop floor every day, and still negotiates with suppliers. Unable to shift to a future orientation, the company may not get what it needs in terms of strategic direction.

Although I have been referring to for-profit businesses in this section, the points I have made are true for social service agencies as well. I have worked with excellent counselors who founded social service agen-
cies and find it impossible to give up the day-to-day counseling to focus on long-term funding issues. Part of this may derive from a feeling of obligation to clients, but it also has to do with Temporal Alignment. The paradox is that organizational founders who do not pay attention to daily operations in the early stages may not have an organization five years later. As companies survive and grow, their temporal needs change. Some founders recognize that they do not have the business expertise to grow and manage large corporations and they hire professional business managers. Few, however, take Temporal Alignment into consideration.

Present-oriented leaders fit well in stable industries and organizations. When they find themselves in dynamic organizations, they will manage the production areas well, providing a critical anchor for those who are not future oriented. Present-oriented leaders are skilled at solving problems. Because they are not as reluctant to talk about the past as future-oriented leaders nor as reluctant to talk about the future as past-oriented leaders, they are willing to research the cause of the problems and help develop solutions for the future. When they have good communication skills, they are effective at providing up-to-date information to followers and can be charged with this responsibility. They will deal better than other types of leaders with problem employees. They will be more apt to go through the procedures in place, follow disciplinary guidelines, forget about problems that occurred five years ago that are not relevant to the current situation, and focus on solving the problem one day at a time. In departments that fight fires, figuratively or literally, present-oriented people are generally good to have around. They work best with bosses who recognize and reward their contributions on a regular basis and acknowledge the importance of a smooth operation.

On the other hand, visionary leaders who shift priorities, change their minds frequently, and expect continuous improvement can easily frustrate present-oriented people. CEOs who value the past or the future more than the present will annoy present-oriented people. Present-oriented leaders will not make major contributions to the planning process. They will be too busy and may even sabotage the process if it will disrupt their operations. When they sabotage planning, they often kill it.

THE PAST-ORIENTED LEADER

Past-oriented leaders are very good at remembering and using the history of their department and organization. There are a number of occasions when this is necessary. One example is when a problem occurs and it is necessary to trace past meetings, decisions, and behavior. In this
case, it is critical that information is preserved and that an oral history of the events leading to the problem can be recreated. Another example is when an organization has achieved a milestone and a celebration is planned. A review of past accomplishments, tying them to the most recent goal, is a good way to strengthen the culture of the organization. Another contribution of past-oriented leaders is their ability to trace patterns in their industry and to identify trends that may recur. These trends and patterns are useful in predicting what may happen in a particular product market or industry. Past-oriented leaders with extensive experience will also remember the past behavior of specific leaders in competitive organizations. The best way to predict future behavior is through past behavior.

Past-oriented leaders remember and value the contributions followers have made in the past. Future- and present-oriented leaders tend to focus on “What have you done for me lately?” Past-oriented leaders are more likely to forgive recent performance gaps if they know one is capable of good work based on past behavior. Many of us like people who remember the good things we have done and fear leaders who always expect more or view our work with a clean slate each day. Jack Welch is known for saying that on payday, his company and the employees were even. The not-so-subtle inference is that employees must prove themselves over again every week. Despite wide acclaim for the returns on General Electric stock during Welch’s tenure, many of us do not want to work in that kind of environment. The past-oriented leader believes that what followers did in the past matters. And, of course, it does. Organizations with high turnover pay a price in terms of flexibility (bringing in new employees actually slows down processes and the ability to make changes), loyalty (employees without job security are planning their next career move), and continuity of service to customers.

The downside to this orientation toward the past is that sometimes past-oriented leaders overlook current performance problems. Previous performance can become a halo over the follower. The leader simply thinks of the follower as a good employee without noting more recent problems or an inability to respond to current performance demands. I have been asked to help a number of organizations solve problems with long-term employees who have performance problems. Every time this has happened, I was told that these employees have not done their jobs adequately for years. I always ask to see performance appraisals for the previous five years. In every instance, the appraisals are above average. In most instances, the evaluations are excellent. The halo of outstanding performance in the past has protected poor performers and by the time
someone wants to take action, the employee is over 40 years old. This is a common problem, and one that would be more likely to occur with past-oriented leaders than with present- and future-oriented leaders.

The biggest problem with past-oriented leadership is that the future is viewed as something that is coming at the organization rather than something the organization will create. With their ability to track patterns and trends, it is easy for past-oriented leaders to predict what will happen in the industry. Transformational leaders, however, need to create the future. Leaders must deal with trends when they create barriers, but they do not let predictions dictate the future of the organization. As an example, think of a business leader in the life insurance industry. If it appears that the prices on term life insurance are going down over the next few years, the past-oriented leader will encourage followers to find ways to cut costs so that her company can stay competitive. A transformational leader would recognize the trend, but then develop a more expensive term product that changes the way policies are designed and marketed. Either approach may lead to higher profits and either approach may fail depending on the execution of the plans. The difference is one of following the train down the track or building a new track and taking a new route. Past-oriented leaders tend to respond well to trends, but are less likely to set new ones. Maintaining the status quo is the result. Sometimes this works, and sometimes it does not.

Past-oriented leaders are uncomfortable when talking about the future. They often view it as out of their control, so to them the discussion is pointless. These leaders are difficult to engage in strategic planning. They are often too busy, distract others involved in planning meetings, and fail to provide critical information. Once the strategic plan is complete, it is common for past-oriented leaders to ignore the plan, which is particularly interesting when the past-oriented leader is not the CEO, sabotage efforts to implement the plan, discredit the plan and the planners, and simply wait for the plan to go away. And usually it does. According to Mintzberg, 90 percent of strategic plans fail because of a lack of strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is future oriented and many past- and present-oriented leaders are not. In my opinion, the lack of a future orientation is the primary reason that most strategic plans fail. In addition to a general future Temporal Alignment, a long Time Span is very important to long-range strategic planning.

An additional problem with past-oriented leaders is a lack of attention to day-to-day operations. The focus on the past may lead to assumptions that everything is fine—because it always has been. Unless there is an emergency, things must be all right.
Readers might be wondering what past-oriented leaders do all day if they don’t think about the future and don’t deal with the present. They actually have lots to do. They review reports of sales, complaints, grievances, costs, and production for the previous year. They compare the reports from last year with reports from previous years. They think about how specific trends in the industry affect the organization’s data. They think about programs that were implemented and how those programs affected the data. They try to find explanations for shifts in the data by going over minutes of past meetings. They meet with employees and discuss the data. In addition to their exhaustive analysis of the data, they review past performance information when considering who to promote to open management positions. It is unlikely that they take Temporal Alignment into account. In addition, they meet with counterparts in the community, people they have known for years, and discuss the local United Way campaign. They discuss who was on the committees last year, who gave how much, and who hasn’t been tapped to lead the campaign for a long time. They may recruit CEOs to community causes when the organizations they lead have been participants in efforts in the past. In other words, like all other leaders they must make decisions that affect the present and the future, but their decisions, and their trust, are based on what has happened in the past.

Past-oriented leaders fit well in very stable organizations and industries. They tend to work better in bureaucracies than future-oriented leaders do. Past-oriented leaders fit into organizations with a long history and many employees who have high seniority. Organizations that use seniority pay are especially attractive to past-oriented leaders. They are particularly uncomfortable in very dynamic industries. Organizations with continuous rapid change are not good fits. Past-oriented leaders will typically avoid organizations with high turnover, at least in their own departments. For example, despite the high turnover in the fast-food industry, past-oriented leaders may be a good fit in the corporate office. Research and development departments are typically not a good fit unless their assignment is the ongoing testing of a particular product or process over time.

WHEN THE TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT DOES NOT FIT

Most readers have probably begun to identify themselves as future, present, or past oriented and to think about situations in which their Temporal Alignment either fit or did not fit the situation. I recommend
that readers avoid the temptation to pretend that they are future oriented if they are not. Based on the popular business literature, it would be correct to assume that it is trendy to be future oriented. If the readers buy the arguments in this book, they understand that our Temporal Alignment is not a choice; operating outside of our temporal comfort zone on occasion is. In the end, this is what matters because each Temporal Alignment offers advantages and disadvantages. We have to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in our personalities and then utilize the strengths and find ways to compensate for the weaknesses.

Here are some general tips when you realize that your Temporal Alignment does not fit the situation, organization, or industry in which you find yourself:

1. When the fit is bad, people should leave and find jobs with a better fit. Seriously. In this situation, individual and organizational performance will suffer and one may have to leave involuntarily anyway. I am an advocate of people finding the places to work that best fit their personality, work habits, and temperament. In a global economy, there are many organizations in which one can work. If more of us made better choices based on our match with the department and the organization before taking jobs, we would all be better off. Because organizations change frequently, it may be unavoidable that the fit will also change over time, and it is difficult to change jobs frequently.

2. Organizational leaders should choose people to report to them who have a Temporal Alignment that complements theirs. Considering the strengths of each type, it would be wise to surround yourself with people who are comfortable doing the temporal tasks that you do not do well. For example, a past-oriented leader needs a future-oriented person working with him to create an organizational vision and to drive strategic planning. A future-oriented leader needs a past-oriented person working with her to review past performance data and analyze trends in data to be used in future planning.

   It is OK to tell a follower, “I would like to have you monitor day-to-day operations and report to me only when there is a problem.” When meeting with followers to inform them on the progress of the integrated software project, a future-oriented CEO could have one of the past-oriented people in the organization provide a history of the company’s information systems and explain how the new software was chosen. The future-oriented leader can simply say, “I have asked Jim to explain the evolution of our information systems because he can do that better than I could.” Following that presentation, the CEO can introduce the present-oriented person who will be installing the soft-
It will not matter that the CEO doesn’t follow every word and is imagining the next project while they talk.

3. Leaders must force themselves to operate outside their Temporal Alignment when the situation demands it. Given the limitations of each type, leaders should understand how their Temporal Alignment affects their behavior and then do necessary tasks even when the tasks make them feel uncomfortable. Effective leaders do many things that they do not enjoy. For example, I know a CEO of an innovative company who is introverted and hates public speaking. Yet I have seen him make many speeches in his community. Yes, his face is red and he sometimes struggles for words, but he meets that responsibility. By the same token, I have worked with business leaders who are past- and present-oriented and helped them develop organizational visions. They didn’t necessarily have fun in the process, but the visions and introductory plans were completed. Part of their plans must include decisions as to which followers should communicate and execute each aspect. For short periods, we are capable of working outside of our Temporal Alignment, and with guidance we can do it effectively.

4. People have to develop specific methods for dealing with situations that can occur when they get caught in the wrong time zone. For example, future-oriented leaders have many strategies they use on those occasions when they get caught daydreaming. They may say, “I am sorry, I didn’t hear the question,” or they can make a joke that fits many situations and say, “Seriously, what is your question again?” When present-oriented leaders are dealing with strategic planners, they can ask for specific areas of the plan for which they will have responsibility. This will save them from having to read the entire document. Learning to look interested when one isn’t is another method that leaders may find helpful. We sometimes forget how to do that as we move up the corporate ladder.

**LEARNING TO BE FUTURE ORIENTED**

No Temporal Alignment is better than another; however, most organizations need to prepare for the future. Leaders must find ways to create future visions, convince followers and other constituents to invest their energy and time in the future, and implement strategic plans. So what’s a past- or present-oriented leader to do? Over the long run, people cannot transform themselves into a future-oriented leaders because Temporal Alignment is complex and tied to other personality traits. There are, however, ways to help spend more time thinking about the future and imagining the future as a positive place to be. In my research, I have been able to increase visioning ability and that is correlated to Future
Time Perspective. I have also studied other leadership development programs that increased Future Time Perspective. Later in the book, I provide exercises to help readers to increase their future orientation, at least for the short run, and to create a future vision for their organizations. I also explain techniques for increasing one’s optimism that will assist past- and present-oriented people who are pessimistic to think more optimistically about the future.

In later chapters, I introduce readers to leaders who have successfully used their Temporal Alignments to build and improve their organizations. In particular, I focus on how they brought followers into the future with them.

NOTES

Any review of the leadership literature suggests that today’s leaders must have an outlook toward the future. In their 1985 book on leadership, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus asserted that leaders invent, design, and shape the future. According to these experts, the real art of leadership lies in the interpretation of the information that leaders gather about the future. In other words, the most effective leaders make the most effective decisions based on what they know about the future and what they envision for their organizations. In a later book, Bennis identified short-term perspective, common among managers in the United States, as one of the biggest problems with American business and political leaders.

In every major study of transformational leadership, a vision of the future is identified as critical to successful leadership. Since Burns’s early work on transformational leadership and Bass’s testing of Burns’s model, a number of researchers have identified vision as a major component of leadership. Tichy and Devanna suggested that the vision should be the ideal to strive for. In one of the most widely read books on leadership of recent years, Kouzes and Posner indicate that little can happen without vision. Nanus provides a step-by-step approach to developing an organizational vision. His method is similar to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Trends) analysis, and he advocates a vision based on realities of the situation. Yukl, in his comprehensive summary of all of the leadership research, suggests that vision is useful to guide change in an organization. Wheatley goes so far as to suggest that an
organizational vision is a force field, analogous to gravity. Given the number of self-help books for leaders on the market and most leadership experts suggesting that the best leaders have visions of the future, why doesn’t every leader get a vision? My research suggests that few leaders create a vision of the future of their organizations because they cannot. They cannot do this because of their Temporal Alignment, and this also explains why Bennis has found that most U.S. business leaders have short-term perspectives.

Part of my difference of opinion regarding what a vision is has to do with semantics. Vision is always operationalized in organizations as a written statement or a short set of statements. Most often, this vision statement is developed by a group of executives or other constituents, often at a retreat (sometimes called a Vision Quest after a Native American practice) at some lovely resort. It is articulated after lengthy discussions driven by the CEO’s Temporal Alignment and then everyone gets to play golf and party (for this reason, visions are often developed quickly). Despite this, board members and executives take the creation of a vision very seriously. A few weeks later, the statement or set of statements, is carved on a plaque that is hung on a wall, strategically placed on the annual statement, and used on marketing materials. The written statement becomes “the vision.” Invariably, the plaque is never read again after being proofread to make sure there are no mistakes, which wouldn’t matter anyway because no one ever reads it. If this is how one defines vision, then, yes, everyone can create one. This type of vision is the comic fodder for the Dilberts of the world. Scott Adams, the creator of the popular Dilbert comic strip suggests that organizational visions provide excuses for long lunches and golf games, produce nothing tangible, and are an attempt to convince followers that the leader has a handle on the future.

Although Adams is trying to get a laugh when he talks about leaders and vision, it would be fair to say that the vision statements posted on the walls of so many organizations have no meaning to anyone. An exercise at a recent seminar at a large university was used to illustrate this point. Each participant was asked to bring a copy of his company’s vision. These visions were placed in a hat, pulled out, and read one at a time. Participants were asked to raise their hands when they heard their company’s vision being read. When the first was read, 16 people, all from different organizations, raised their hands. As other visions were read, there was mass confusion. They were alike and most even used similar terminology and phrasing about satisfied customers, happy employees, and being leaders in their fields.
My definition of vision is very different from the statements hanging on most walls. A vision is a positive and complex cognitive image of the future that provides direction for future planning and goal setting. As Bennis and Nanus described it, a vision is a view of an attractive future state. Because an organizational vision is a cognitive image, it exists in the leader’s mind. A written statement, a business plan, or a speech to followers is a manifestation of the vision, not the vision itself. A visionary leader hires, talks, makes decisions, plans, and leads according to his vision. His vision sits atop his hierarchy of organizational goals serving as a guide for behavior. At this level, a vision is a mental image of what an organization can become and it reflects the leader’s values. Depending on the size and the type of organization, the external environment, the kind of followers, and other variables, the leader must decide how much of the vision should be communicated to followers and other constituents as a means to achieve it. Unlike the vision statement, the vision does not exist in a tangible form. A cognitive image of the future grows and changes over time. The statements on the wall do not. They are stagnant and irrelevant.

Everyone can create a vision statement, but few people actually have a vision of the future. Leaders with future-oriented Temporal Alignments do not have to be told or shown how to create a vision. They do it automatically because it is how they think. In several studies that I have conducted, I have found a significant relationship between visioning ability and Future Time Perspective. My research suggests that the higher one’s Future Time Perspective, the higher her visioning ability will be. Many people are capable of creating images in their minds to greater or lesser extents, but not of imagining the future. That would be dependent on a future-oriented Temporal Alignment.

In addition, I have found that a positive outlook on life and an optimistic attitude are related to visioning ability, perhaps through their relationship with Future Time Perspective. Although researchers have yet to explore the direction or causation of these relationships, I believe that a positive outlook and optimism precede Future Time Perspective. This proposition is based on logic. If one feels positive about life, she is more likely to think about the future. If one feels pessimistic about life, the future would not be an inviting place to visit in one’s mind.

All leaders can create future-oriented organizations by the choices they make regardless of their Temporal Alignments. The point of this book is that we must understand our Temporal Alignments to use them effectively and to compensate for the weaknesses inherent in each. It is possible to increase one’s outlook toward the future and to create an image
of the future that can be committed to paper and used to guide organizational behavior. I have found that leaders can increase their visioning ability and Future Time Perspective through exercises that force them to think about the future. It is unlikely that one’s Temporal Alignment can be permanently changed, but past- and present-oriented leaders can learn to “visit” the future when the situation requires them to do so.

In addition, leaders are in a position to hire people who complement their Temporal Alignments. A leader who recognizes that he is past- or present-oriented can hire future-oriented people to work with him. The problem, of course, is finding the future-oriented people to hire. There are ways to measure future orientation and to detect it from verbal cues in interviews.

WAYS TO INCREASE FUTURE OUTLOOK

Forcing Oneself

The best way to increase one’s future outlook is to think about the future. Depending on the type and strength of a person’s Temporal Alignment, this may be difficult for many people. One of the biggest reasons is that thinking about the future is a form of daydreaming perceived as negative in American businesses. Many years ago, I suggested to a CEO that his organization would be better served if his managers spent 30 minutes per day thinking instead of constantly doing something. He agreed, but when this idea was presented to the managers, they expressed the common fear, “But what if someone walks by and catches us not doing anything?” Part of that fear is related to the way many companies are run and part of that was fear that they wouldn’t have anything to think about. In reality, 30 minutes is a long time for a past-oriented person to think about the future. One might want to start with five to ten minutes at a time. Using some questions as future thinking starters can also be helpful.

Here are a series of questions that people may use to focus their attention and “thinking time” on the future:

1. In what direction is the organization moving?
2. What is my boss’s biggest goal for the next year?
3. What is my boss’s biggest goal for the next five years? This question should lead to some discussions with the boss.
4. What role should or could I play in achieving those goals?
5. What problems are we facing now that will have to be addressed in the future?
6. What changes would I like to see happening in the organization?
7. Where do I see myself in the organization in a year?
8. Where do I see myself in the organization in five years?
9. Where will I be in five years if I am not here?
10. If anything were possible, what would happen to me in five years?

As a person answers each question, it is critical that some visualization occurs. The individual should imagine herself working on a goal, solving a problem, or in a different role in the organization.

**Goal Setting**

A second strategy to increase one’s future outlook is goal setting. Most future-oriented people do this automatically. They are constantly striving to reach the next goal. Goal setting is a primary focus of most time management strategies and a critical component of successful management. I recommend setting goals for each of the various aspects of one’s life to coordinate one’s efforts in the future. Successful people who want to retire early make different career decisions than those who want to work into their 70s and move as high as possible up the organizational ladder. Specific goal setting is not the same as having vague ideas about what we want from life. When we set goals, we need to think about how we will measure our attainment of the goals. Most important, we need to develop a strategy to keep the goals in our minds. I have taught goal setting to hundreds of people over the years. I knew when I did it that most of them would walk away and never think about or read those goals again. Life is just something that happens to many of us. To those who are future oriented, life is what they make it. Goal setting and monitoring of those goals is a critical component of that.

To begin, people can start by setting short-term goals. What would the individual like to accomplish in the next year? Then, after the short-term goals are set, they work on longer-term goals focusing on five years from now and eventually ten years from now. A person’s Time Span may limit how far into the future he or she can realistically set goals, but stretching beyond the limitation is a good idea whenever possible.

The second step is to write the goals. Write down various categories or types of goals such as “Job,” “Career,” “Family,” “Hobbies,” “Finances,” “Spiritual Life,” and “Home.” Under each category, the person
should write two important things that he or she would like to accomplish during the time period. Contained in that goal should be some indication of how one will know if the goal has been achieved. For example, one goal might be to save money for a down payment on a house. The short-term goals might read, “I will save $1,500 by December of this year for a down payment on a house,” and “I will ensure that all of my credit cards are paid off by the end of December of next year.” The long-term or five-year goal might read, “I will save $8,000 for a down payment on a house by the end of five years.”

The third and most important step in goal setting is to develop a strategy to keep the goals in mind and as part of the daily agenda. Individuals must decide what will work best for them. One person may like to keep a list of her goals taped to her desk. Another person may tack them to a bulletin board or on the refrigerator. Still another may discuss his goals with a significant other and meet on a regular basis to discuss how each is doing. I know one group of women who met every other month at one member’s home to discuss their goals and their strategies to achieve them. Whenever one member of the group ran into a roadblock, they would discuss it as a group and help the person find an answer or revise the goal. For others, this somewhat public approach to monitoring and achieving goals wouldn’t work. Nonetheless, I strongly recommend leaders and followers sharing work related goals and discussing them on a regular basis.

When followers understand the vision of an organization, or at least the parts that affect them, they can develop goals that are consistent with the vision. Goals set at each level of an organization answer the question, “How will the vision be achieved?” By outlining a vision, clearly communicating it, and asking followers to set goals to help achieve the vision, leaders bring followers into the future with them. For a past- or present-oriented leader, creating the vision and goal setting with followers can help him maintain the future outlook over the long run.

**Learn to Be Optimistic**

Martin Seligman has spent much of his professional life studying pessimists and optimists. He has concluded that both are necessary components of strong organizations. He describes organizational optimists as the researchers, developers, planners, and marketers, all of whom need to be visionaries. He suggests that these people dream things that don’t yet exist. This is consistent with my own research suggesting that the more optimistic one is, the higher the visioning ability. Seligman, how-
ever, warns that companies also need pessimists. Pessimists are best as financial officers, certified public accountants, business administrators, and safety engineers. The role of the pessimist is to be aware of the worst things that can happen and warn others of danger or, as he puts it, to wave the yellow flag. Seligman is also careful to note that these should be “mild pessimists”\textsuperscript{19} so that they are not high-level depressives (p. 112).

Optimism is measured by how we view bad situations in our lives and to what we attribute the “blame” for them. According to Seligman, optimism is made up of three factors: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization.\textsuperscript{20} Permanence refers to a belief that the cause of a bad situation is either permanent or temporary. Optimistic people think that the cause is temporary and will not cause other problems in the future; pessimistic people believe that the cause is permanent and will cause other problems in the future. Pervasiveness refers to how widespread, meaning is it specific or universal, one believes a bad incident to be. As an example, assume that something bad happens to a person while writing a report at work. An optimistic person will think that the event is specific and will not happen with other reports or other types of work. A pessimistic person will believe that this bad event is universal and will happen with all reports and other aspects of work as well. Highly pessimistic people may believe that doing a poor report is reflective of everything they do in life. Personalization refers to whether bad situations are attributed to external or internal causes. For example, an optimistic person would be likely to find other sources for failure external to herself. She might say, “The report was poorly done because Joe was sick all week and I couldn’t get the information from the accounting department.” The pessimistic person will tend to internalize each bad situation and might say, “I did a lousy job on the report because I just can’t do them very well.”

Obviously, severely pessimistic people should seek counseling, but others who are mildly pessimistic serve a purpose in organizations. When there is a need in the organization for a future outlook, trying to think more optimistically will help. To become more optimistic, Seligman suggests that there are two ways to deal with pessimistic beliefs: distraction and disputation.\textsuperscript{21} By distraction, he means stopping yourself from thinking about the negative event. This can be done by forcefully telling yourself to stop, using tools like a rubber band around your wrist to remind you, directing your attention to other things, and writing down troublesome thoughts when they occur and “scheduling” a time to review them later. The second approach, disputation, means arguing against the
pessimistic thoughts. If a person did a poor report, he could argue with himself that this was a one-time occurrence and identify problems out of his control that occurred while he was writing the report. He could find evidence showing that other reports and work he completed were well done. To become more optimistic, we need to find ways to stop negative thinking and find alternative explanations for poor performance.

Quincy Jones, a visionary producer, conductor, and musician, said in his recent autobiography that a spirit of adventure and a "criminal level of optimism" have driven him all of his life.\(^\text{22}\) The idea that optimism can be criminal may seem odd, but he is referring to the willingness to take chances that can lead to both success and failure. Failure goes hand in hand with success. Great artists, as well as visionary leaders, experiment and are willing to try new ideas. Precisely because they approach each new venture as if things will turn out well, they are more likely to take the kinds of chances that transform their work, their organizations, and their industries.

**Spending Time with Future-Oriented People**

We tend to make friends and hire people who are similar to us in personality. For that reason, past- and present-oriented leaders often find themselves surrounded by past- and present-oriented people. Remember also that we tend to gravitate toward organizations in which the culture matches our personalities. The point is that it might be hard to find future-oriented people in many organizations. If you find a shortage of future-oriented people in your organization, you will have to go outside. Once you find or hire them, spend as much time as you can with them. Talk about business, life, change, ideas, and the future. Future-oriented people throw out ideas that may or may not be operational. Try to avoid thinking about every idea that emerges and how it could be executed. We need to think about the future, and this is why we spend time with future-oriented people. We must force ourselves to imagine the future without setting limits.

To spend time with them, we have to find future-oriented people. Following are some tips on how to spot them.

1. Future-oriented people tend to move up quickly in organizations—both because they want to (future-oriented people may plan their next couple of promotions years ahead of time) and because they get noticed because they have lots of ideas for positive changes.
2. Future-oriented people tend to talk about ideas more often than current operations.

3. Future-oriented people talk about the future— their own and the organization's.

4. Future-oriented people will ask you about your future—they want to know what you are thinking about and planning.

5. Future-oriented people do a lot of what might look like daydreaming. This doesn’t mean that they don’t get their work done, just that they think and imagine the future a lot. Don’t confuse them with people who sleep during work.

One would be apt to hear future-oriented people saying things such as the following:

“So what are your plans for next year?”
“What product will perform best five years from now?”
“How do you picture your department in the future?”
“What role do you see me playing in the long run?”
“Where do you see yourself in the long run?”
“Let’s focus on the big picture.”
“I see the future differently.”
“My vision includes a long and healthy life.”
“I feel good about the future.”

If a leader is trying to hire a future-oriented manager, there are a number of situational and behavioral questions that she can ask. Following are some structured interview questions, with the sorts of answers that you would be seeking in italics.

**Behavioral interview questions**

1. “Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. How did you handle it?”

   Right answer: *The mistake was when I missed some information that should have been considered before a recommendation was made. I examined all of the possible reasons that the information was overlooked and addressed each one to make sure it wouldn’t happen in the future.*

   Debriefing: Notice that the right answer infers that there are alternative explanations to the mistake, and the person is not internalizing it nor assuming that it will happen again. Note also that the answer mentions the future.
2. “Describe a situation in which you had to start something new from scratch. How did you begin?”

Right answer: *I had to develop a new customer service department. To start, I pictured the ideal service representatives and how I would like to be treated as a customer. I let that image drive our changes.*

Debriefing: Notice that a vision was used to design the ideal department.

3. “In your previous job, think of a time when you had to do something that would affect the future of the organization. What did you do?”

Right answer: *I think about the future a lot. I always consider the impact of everything I do on the future. In one situation, I had to plan a move to a new facility. I tried to anticipate everything that would happen the following year when the move actually took place. I worked with others to plan every step.*

Debriefing: Notice that the interviewee mentions the future more than once and talks about using predictions of what will happen in the future.

**Situational interview questions**

4. “If you were assigned to develop a vision for your department, what would you do?”

Right answer: *I would consider each function, our customers, our products, and all of our constituents. I would talk to others in the department. I would picture the ideal department in my mind. Finally, I would plan how to communicate my vision to others.*

Debriefing: Notice that the interviewee creates an inclusive and comprehensive vision, pictures the vision in her mind, and considers communicating the vision.

5. “Pretend that you have been asked to work on a product that will not be introduced for five years. How will you approach that assignment?”

Right answer: *I would love that. I like to work on things for the future. I would talk to as many people as I could about the future direction of the company. I would look over some trend analyses and talk to experts about how the market is changing. I would consider ways to make the market respond to our product instead of vice versa.*

Debriefing: Notice the enthusiasm, an interest in the corporate strategy, and discussions with experts on predicting the future of the market. In addition, this interviewee talks about creating the future—making the market respond to the organization rather than the other way around.

6. “Imagine that you had to develop some new software for the company. What would your top priority be?”

Right answer: *I would want to make sure that the software served the
company’s future needs. I would hate to develop something that was outdated within a year.

Debriefing: Notice that the top priority is the future.

Develop an Organizational Vision

For millennia, people have seen the value in having a vision, and many approaches have been used to get one.²³ Most readers have heard about Native American Vision Quests that involved leaving one’s community for long periods of time and living alone, often enduring harsh conditions. In many cultures, this was an initiation to manhood. In other cultures, drugs, torture, and forms of isolation have been used as well. These methods have no proven empirical record and, you will be glad to hear, I cannot recommend them to readers. The approach used in some of the leadership literature is an exercise similar to the traditional SWOT analysis.²⁴ Leaders who use this approach consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization and then develop a realistic vision. A realistic vision flies in the face of the benefits that we attribute to organizational visions.²⁵ Different experts have different opinions on this, but I believe that a vision should be idealistic.

The research on goal setting suggests that challenging goals produce the best results in the long run.²⁶ As leaders, we try to be careful to not set goals so high that they are unachievable. My experience suggests that managers spend too much time making goals easy and not enough time making them challenging. This is true for a few reasons. First, in most objectives-based performance appraisal systems, the employees only get rewarded if they fully achieve all of their objectives. This encourages rational employees to negotiate easy objectives. When systems reward level of achievement of difficult objectives instead of full achievement of easy ones, objectives are set higher. Second, managers are usually evaluated on whether subordinates make their objectives. Rational managers don’t want to hurt their own chances for raises with challenging goals. Third, challenging goals are threatening. I believe that visions work the same way. The “realistic” vision statements hanging on walls in most corporations do not threaten or challenge anyone.

While writing this section, I tried to think of a ridiculous notion to include as an example, something like humans flying or three-dimensional images that look real, but with each example, I realized that a visionary leader has already achieved that image. If one considers a vision to be a literal interpretation of what must happen, he will be stymied. If one considers a vision to be an ideal image of the future, he will achieve
more than he would with a realistic vision. One example of this concept that I use in my teaching is an amusement park that has real cartoon characters working in it. Sounds impossible, doesn’t it? A much more realistic image would be of people dressed up in cartoon character costumes. Those readers who have visited Disney World or Disney Land know that the cartoon characters wandering the parks are much more than people in costumes. The characters have the mannerisms, the costumes have the details, and the parks are designed with secret passages and policies for employees that make many visitors feel that Mickey is really with them. The difference between a realistic vision and an idealistic vision is the difference between employees in costumes and cartoon characters interacting with us. The ideal image takes us to a higher level.

In a seminar exercise, I had a participant who imagined that he only had to play the holes he liked at his country club. It took ten minutes, but the other participants in the seminar finally convinced him that his was not a crazy idea. It was much easier than most of the others. He simply had never thought about breaking traditional rules to enhance his enjoyment of his hobby. We reminded him that he paid to play. By the end of the seminar, he had developed a strategy that included a new scoring format and clubhouse rules. He was convinced that most of the other members would like it. I have always wondered whether he got up the nerve to introduce his vision.

One of the most idealistic visions developed in a seminar was one for a youth soccer league that included the ideal that all of the children would have fun. After much harassment by the other participants over how ridiculous this was, the group developed a specific strategy to achieve it. Suggestions ranged from eliminating parents from watching games to having alternative activities for kids who didn’t like soccer. The strategies were fairly simple and inexpensive to implement. When we finished, the vision of lots of kids having fun every time they “played soccer” was within reach. If that participant followed through on the steps we suggested, did every single child have fun every time? Probably not; however, the youth soccer league came much closer to that challenging goal than it did before the effort was made.

In my research, I have developed a method of developing an organizational vision. My method uses creative approaches to develop a complex image that provides enough direction that it can be used to develop a strategy. This approach fulfills the purpose of the strategic thinking that Mintzberg says must precede strategic planning. I explain this approach later in the book, and readers will have the opportunity to develop a
vision. In addition, I detail the strategies that will help leaders, even those who are not future oriented by personality, achieve their organizational visions.

**Acting**

Strange as this may sound, sometimes leaders have to pretend to be future oriented. On occasion, the past-oriented leader who normally talks well about the past has to talk about the future and pretend to care. Like the CEO mentioned earlier who couldn’t talk about his employees with confidence, some leaders may find this idea offensive. Sometimes, however, we must use our acting skills if we are to be successful leaders of our organizations. This includes sitting through strategic planning meetings and staying awake using whatever means are necessary, meeting with managers about the future of each department in the organization, and making speeches about the future to followers even if someone else has to write it. Acting can force us out of our comfort zone and into a new one. Many readers have probably heard the advice that we should smile before we answer the phone and how that will actually make us feel and interact more positively. Acting as if the future interests us may make us more future oriented over time.

**Keeping the Future in Focus**

As I have said earlier, future-oriented people usually think about the future. The rest of the population must force this focus through the use of specific tools such as goals setting. This is difficult to do even when one has the best of intentions. For example, take the very popular time management systems. For the past 20 years, managers all over the country have attended time management seminars that detail how best to utilize planning books. The most important part of the seminars and the books is the goal-setting section. Invariably, when I ask the folks who carry the thick planning books, they admit that they never use the goal-setting sections of the books. The books are used strictly to remember what they have to do each day. This is probably true of the handheld electronic planners as well. There is nothing wrong with disorganized people having these tools to make sure they get to their meetings on time, but to gear our activities toward the future, we have to think about future goals. The future field, or subregion, discussed in Chapter 2, should be the primary focus. There are several approaches that can be used to bring that field to the surface more often.
One method is a regularly scheduled meeting with followers to discuss their progress toward the goals and the vision. The meeting should be at a consistent time and place. For past- and present-oriented leaders, this meeting forces them to focus on the future. It should include a review and reassessment of the goals that have been set. The goals should be compared with the vision. Do the goals answer the question regarding how the vision will be met? Even future-oriented leaders benefit from these meetings because it forces them to look at how their vision is being operationalized.

A second approach is to commit publicly to the goals and the vision. This is a bit trickier, but it works much the same as a wedding, in which we commit to a partner in front of our family and friends. The point of having public weddings is that the ceremony builds feelings of obligation when problems occur along the way. This is what Bennis means by vision serving as a contract between leaders, followers, and constituents. If leaders commit to their organizational visions in public, this serves to maintain the feeling of a contractual obligation to followers. This is where we run into problems, however, because a complex cognitive image is difficult to put on a plaque on the wall—and in reality, it should be public.

The ways that leaders communicate and commit to their visions and the goals that make them happen is by talking about them frequently. A summary of the vision should be restated every day, in every meeting. How much of the vision and to what groups should it be communicated? That depends on what is at stake with each group. I worked with a CEO who envisioned a shift to self-managed cross-functional product teams, a change from expensive mainframe leases to networked PCs, a transformation from a mutual to a stock insurance company, and product innovation. His vision had tremendous depth and had evolved over years of experience and research. Despite talking about these ideas to his executives, he had not gone directly to the professionals who could make the changes happen. Did he need to talk to the information systems department about the transformation from a mutual to a stock company? No. Did he need to talk to the investments department about it? Yes. Unfortunately, he didn’t talk to anyone but the executive team that was resistant to changes of any type. He relied on a traditional chain-of-command type of communication, and that wasn’t sufficient to get things done. Transformational leaders take the vision to everyone who needs to understand, but they do it judiciously.

Once the appropriate parts of the vision have been shared with the right groups, those teams have to develop a strategic plan that will achieve their
portion of the vision. Leaders have to verify that the plans are being developed and, eventually, implemented. The planning and follow-up are important ways to keep the future on the surface. Too often, however, strategic plans go the way of vision statements posted on the wall. Remember, this is because most of us are not future oriented. The focus is lost. We have to work to maintain it.

In the next four chapters, I introduce readers to future-oriented leaders. We explore their backgrounds, how their early experiences shaped them, how the future influences and shapes their behavior, and how they bring others into the future with them. I hope that the vicarious experience of seeing how future-oriented people live and manage will provide additional guidance.

NOTES

15. A. Lakein, How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life (New York: Signet, 1974).


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.


28. Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*.

In this and the next chapter, I share the stories of some of the future-oriented leaders whom I have known professionally. These are not the famous Fortune 100 CEOs typically featured in leadership books. Instead, I chose the type of people whom we all have met during our lives as friends, work colleagues, and bosses. I will tell you why I believe that the future drives them. We don’t have to be born into the right (translate that to rich) family or get lucky breaks to create innovative organizations. The leaders featured in this book are “regular” people who through hard work, overcoming difficult situations, continuous learning, and a future-oriented personality achieved great things.

In this chapter, I introduce you to Walter and to Anne Castle who came from difficult but different backgrounds. Their early life experiences and their future orientations helped them envision better futures for themselves and for others. I tell each of their stories and follow each with a brief analysis explaining how their Temporal Alignments played into the achievement of their visions.

**WALTER**

**Background**

Walter grew up in an ethnic neighborhood in Queens, New York City. Although his father was an engineer, Walter never knew his alcoholic
dad. Walter was the “man” of the family. His mother, who had difficulty putting food on the table when her children were very young, raised him and his younger sister. His mother had grown up as the youngest of 11 children and was taken care of by her older siblings. This led to her being relatively helpless in terms of being able to make a living. Nonetheless, she worked to feed Walter and his sister and eventually got a job as a telephone operator, which paid well enough to make their lives easier.

Walter worked from the age of nine. He frequently used his street smarts to appear older to get better jobs. While still very young, he also served a stint as an altar boy and sometimes, serving at weddings, he would receive tips that he used to buy food for the family. Working kept him from playing many sports as a kid, but he did join the radio club in high school and developed an interest in electronics and communications technology.

Because of her own limited ability to earn a good living, his mother drummed into Walter the value of education. She was a tough disciplinarian who enforced traditional values. Walter’s primary education was in a parochial grade school in New York City. At the time, these schools were free to members of the parishes. He was admitted to Bishop Loughlin High School where he encountered the very strict Christian Brothers, the order of lay brothers who ran and taught at the school. Walter discovered that math and science came easily to him. Other subjects, like languages, did not. Using some of the money he earned working evenings and school holidays in a local drug store while in high school, he hired a French “war husband” to tutor him in order to pass the French test and graduate from high school.

From an early age, Walter was driven to escape poverty. He saw education as the way to achieve wealth in the future. Because he had to work to support himself and tuition was free, he went to the City College of New York (CCNY). He knew that he could have done the work at more prestigious colleges, but because of their tuition, he could not afford them. CCNY was his ticket to higher education. CCNY was ethnically, racially and religiously mixed, and Walter found the new diversification exhilarating—he thrived on it. So despite the concern the Christian Brothers expressed to him about Walter’s mixing with Jews, atheists, and Protestants, as well as the 90 percent dropout rate in CCNY’s five-year engineering program, he managed to survive. He, like many of his fraternity brothers, which included Colin Powell, discovered ROTC (the Reserve Officers Training Corps), which helped his grade point average and kept him in school. Walter had other goals too, planning to get an
MBA even before he entered his undergraduate program. He didn’t know how he knew, but it was clear to him that an MBA was necessary to achieve his goal of wealth.

Walter earned his electrical engineering degree in 1958, but his MBA education was delayed. He had always worked while he attended college, so he decided to also delay his army commission and work a year before entering the service. He wanted to have some money for the first time in his life. He worked for a contract engineering firm doing work for temporarily overloaded engineering departments. Such work had low job security, but it paid well. He was a good engineer and started at $3 an hour. After only a few months, he got another job, for which he negotiated $6.25 an hour—more than doubling his salary and making a lot of money for a young man from a poor family in those days.

In 1959, Walter was commissioned in the army and assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. At that time, this division was the nation’s first line of defense in case of hostilities. He was a signal officer in an infantry battle group stationed at Fort Campbell in Kentucky. The level of responsibility was high for lieutenants, and he loved it. It was before direct U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and many servicemen were being assigned to combat advisor roles for our South Vietnamese allies. A good number of his “noncoms” went to Southeast Asia in communications jobs. Walter worked with what he believed to be the cream of the crop of U.S. troops, people who considered themselves truly professional and the best infantry soldiers in the world. Despite disliking many aspects of the military, such as waiting in lines, politics, and the bureaucracy, Walter understood and appreciated how things worked. He learned that promotions were something that one had to wait for. He also learned that innovative approaches were not the prerogative of junior officers. Most important, he learned how brotherhood develops when groups of people must rely on each other and work together closely. This was a concept that he would carry into his business career years later.

For officers, jump school was difficult. He was the only officer to make it through his program. After the graduation ceremony, the few hundred men who completed training together with him ran over to surround and congratulate him. He was truly surprised and touched and remembers this as a very emotional moment in his life. Graduation was also important because he then earned “jump pay,” an extra $110 per month. Although Walter liked the army and knew he could do well, he also knew he could not get rich there. So after three years he applied to Harvard Business School. Walter was admitted but Harvard’s start date overlapped his last two weeks in the army. He managed to get a two-
week furlough and was mustered out of the army in Boston by an MIT University ROTC officer afterward so that he could begin his MBA program on time. He found the program to be tough and challenging.

He graduated in the standard two years and accepted a job with a Midwestern industrial company as their New York City sales engineer. He worked in the job for three years before being promoted to regional sales manager for the East Coast. He had six bright, multidegreeed, highly qualified sales engineers working for him. Walter remembers this as one of his best jobs because he and his staff could focus all of their time on sales, while administration was handled at company headquarters. It was during this first business management job that he learned the importance of hiring and surrounding himself with good people, people who were smarter than he was. He realized this made him look good. He continued to follow that principle and taught it to all of his people and other business associates.

Three years later, Walter was promoted to vice president and general manager of the company’s industrial systems division and moved with his family to Columbus, Ohio. In three years, his division became the most profitable in the company, despite being half the size of the largest division. He used several innovative techniques when he assigned sales quotas. For example, he told his sales people how much they had to sell to make more money than the president of the company. He used it as a motivating goal. Walter had done it once and some of his people actually got close to achieving this goal. The president of the company was an impressive ex-marine who had a tremendous influence on Walter. The man was only a few years older than Walter, however, and wasn’t planning to leave the company. Walter began to think about going to another organization to move up.

An acquisition by his company brought Walter in touch with a venture capitalist who would change his life. Walter’s company purchased a $2 million dollar industrial company after its founder was killed in a plane crash. The lead, local venture capitalist investor in the company was temporarily and reluctantly running it when it was sold to Walter’s company and attached to his division. One day, the venture capitalist mentioned a product in which he had a small investment. That product had been invented but not developed so all the notes and records were stored in a cardboard box. The venture capitalist asked Walter to evaluate it. Walter liked the product and believed it could be successful if it was developed properly. The venture capitalist suggested that Walter was the one to do it and offered him the opportunity; Walter accepted. He believes that there are lots of great ideas but few people who can put them
together to make a successful company. He remembers an extensive display of mousetraps at the Harvard Business School that was put together to disprove the old saying “Build a better mouse trap and the world will build a path to your door.” The lesson it taught was that to be successful one must always have and execute a good business plan.

Walter began his new company on a shoestring. He got a few local venture capitalists to put up some seed money and used business loans that required pledging his house and everything else he owned to start the company. Twice, a second mortgage was required to keep the company going. (This did not make his wife very happy.) The company designed, manufactured, and marketed high-tech industrial automation equipment that was rugged enough to survive the heat, vibration, rough handling, and other hostile conditions in factory environments. The company grew over time into a very successful business. Thirteen years later, it was sold to a multibillion-dollar Midwestern industrial company, and Walter continued to run it for another eight years until his “retirement” in 1997.

When he hired people to work for him, Walter assumed that they were future oriented. He didn’t think specifically about that trait, but he was interested in people who were like him. He sought smart, energetic, and inquisitive associates who got “into it” and “bit life right in the ass.” He believed that his job was to fire up their imaginations. He did that by sharing his vision and showing them how it related to their goals. He described this both as “painting a picture” and as “weaving the thread of a common goal tied to everyone’s personal goals.” He did not leave this to chance, constantly talking about how their success was linked to the company’s profitability, developing and distributing charts to indicate the projected growth and earnings of the company, and telling them how that related to their own personal future wealth.

He also used compensation strategies designed to build buy-in and ownership. Every employee benefited from profit sharing, and most had stock options. He believed that no one accumulates real wealth by working for wages, no matter how high. In his view, nest eggs build wealth, and he strongly promoted the long-term tax-free compounding of options and stock ownership. He convinced his people so well that many second-mortgaged their homes to buy more stock in the company. Many employees are wealthy today because of their investment. Part of Walter’s vision was to make his colleagues and their families rich. He says that he became more paternal over time, although he wasn’t when he was younger.

Walter is in business now as an angel capitalist. While he is “well
off” by his standards, he is not rich enough to invest in the million dollar–plus category of typical venture capitalists. Angel capitalists invest smaller amounts than venture capitalists and work with smaller companies. He invests and helps small companies by providing seed money. He was careful to explain that by “help” he doesn’t infer any emotional attachment. It’s simply what he does to protect his investments. Before investing, he considers the business plans, which are typically poor because many entrepreneurs are inventors with little business background. When making investment decisions, he considers the people even more important than the business plan. He looks for good character and good business sense or the propensity to develop it, honesty, reliability, the ability to keep one’s word, and a good pattern of success. He will not consider “sharpies, cheaters, or druggies.”

Walter has had a number of accomplishments in his life, as well as his share of good fortune—including the success of his three sons, his wonderful and supportive wife, good friends, and being able to live the good life. He has experienced business success and earned degrees at two outstanding universities, CCNY—the “proletariat Harvard”—and the prestigious Harvard Business School.

**Analysis**

When I was discussing his personal history with Walter, he repeatedly said, “I never think about this” or “This is the first time in years that I’ve thought about this.” It is a typical reaction when one talks to a future-oriented leader. Walter is probably at the high end of the scale, but future-oriented people rarely think about the past, even the good parts, let alone talk about it. We can engage them and get them to think back if they have good memories. The issue is their Temporal Alignment.

It is clear that Walter was and still is driven by the future. In my interviews with him, it appeared that he thinks of himself as being driven to be wealthy as a means of escaping the poverty of his youth. Many people grow up in poverty but never achieve what Walter has despite a common desire to be rich someday. It was his ability to envision himself in the future as a successful man that drove him forward. That vision required a future orientation and an optimistic outlook on himself and his life. Walter mentions the discipline that he received from his mother, his teachers, and the military. Strict discipline can have positive and negative effects on children and adults. For it to work, the disciplined person must be able to see a positive outcome from the experience. Past- and present-oriented people would be less likely to see the positive as-
pects and would probably deal less well with tough discipline. Walter commented that many of the boys with whom he grew up got into serious trouble.

One thing that I found particularly interesting when talking to Walter was that he knew he wanted an MBA before he started college. He cannot remember anyone telling him that an MBA would help him be rich and successful. He told me, “I just knew it.” This suggests that the vision of himself in the future was firmly rooted by the time he left high school, and he already had the strategic plan in place. Clearly he ran into some distractions along the way, but he knew exactly where he was going in the long run. By the same token, Walter knew that he wanted to be a manager or leader—he saw that as a ticket to being rich as well. That goal may be a bit easier to understand given that most business and community leaders are highly visible and typically live better than the rest of us.

Another interesting aspect of Walter’s personality is the prevalence of vision in his life. As a child, he envisioned himself as being successful and made a plan to get there. He “painted pictures” for his followers to share his own cognitive image of the future with them. It is clear that he worked hard to make sure that others saw what he saw.

Although Walter is clearly future oriented, he was able to handle the tasks that required a focus on the past and the present. For example, he was detail oriented when working with his operations department and able to recapture the past when involved in forecasting. To be successful, Walter temporally attuned himself to the situations that arose. He also shared with me that he did not like strategic planning because the planning retreats took him away from working with customers, which is what he liked best. He did it because it was necessary. He efficiently minded his time.

Walter continues today to live without any ostentatious display of wealth. He quietly and generously contributes to several philanthropic and charitable organizations, both financially and with his time. A majority of these organizations also look to the future by educating or caring for tomorrow’s leaders.

In Walter, we see one of the most distinguishing characteristics of future-oriented people. It doesn’t matter that he is retired, that he has achieved his vision for his own life, or that he is now a senior citizen. He is still actively engaged in future-oriented activities. He continues to work with entrepreneurs and charitable organizations, investing in good people, and helping to develop good ideas. His favorite word is still,
“Why?” And he is still motivated to help others become successful in the future.

ANNE CASTLE

Background

Between the death of her mother three days after her birth on December 15, 1932, of pneumonia, the quick disappearance of her father shortly after that, and bad burns on her feet from the hospital’s steam-heating system, Anne Castle’s life got off to a rocky beginning. The doctor treating her mother performed illegal surgery on her to prevent further pregnancies and infection set in. The scandal made the situation worse, and Anne was lost in the crisis. Her sister, Patsy, was sent to live with the grandmother, and an aunt and uncle, Laura and Maurice Goldsmith, who had already finished raising their own children, took Anne home.

Laura was much older than her deceased sister, whom she had always treated maternally. She and the rest of the family were devastated by the death of Anne’s mother. Laura had always been a bit different. She went to nursing school to the only place that would admit a German American, Montefiore Hospital in Pittsburgh. She became a nurse and met and married Maurice Goldsmith, a Jewish doctor. After the birth of her children, Laura was a housewife for many years, but later went back to college to study landscape architecture. She eventually took up that profession. Maurice was a physician. Nine months after Anne was born, her father, now employed in Washington, D.C., remarried and reclaimed Patsy, not giving much thought to his infant daughter whom he had not seen since her birth. Within the year, Laura sensed problems, and she and Maurice went to D.C. to investigate how Patsy was being raised. What they found was a three-year-old child alone in an apartment, playing with a headless doll. Laura and Maurice asked to adopt both girls. Bob Castle agreed and didn’t see the girls again for 11 years. Laura and Maurice were wonderful parents to Anne and her sister, and they both had good childhoods.

Anne was an excellent student. She always loved school and earned good grades. In addition, she became a top-notch pianist—good enough, in fact, to become a concert pianist, although she never pursued a musical career. Anne went to the Pennsylvania College for Women on a scholarship after high school. In college, a friend introduced her to Henry, the man she would eventually marry. Henry was from Pittsburgh and had grown up wealthy, the grandson of the president and owner of a large department store in New York City. Despite their money, Henry’s family
was dysfunctional and sad; eventually he would have no contact with them again. Anne didn’t see these traits in Henry, and they married before she finished college. She had made the decision that marriage and children were more important than finishing her education or a musical career.

Anne and Henry moved to Atlanta. Henry was a manufacturer’s representative for women’s clothing. He traveled extensively in this job while Anne made their home. Their first daughter, Ellen, was born in 1956. Soon after Ellen’s birth, they moved to Pittsburgh, where their second daughter, Pat, was born in 1957. A couple of years later, they relocated again, this time to Columbus, Ohio, where their third child, Lisa, was born. That was the last move for the family. During this time, Anne had become a housewife, mother, and community activist. She developed an interest in various civic projects in the city.

By the late 1950s, it had become apparent that Henry had not escaped the problems of his family. He was suffering from an acute addiction to gambling despite holding and performing his job well. Things became so difficult that “collectors” came to their home regularly. Anne had to find ways to live frugally to keep food on their table and clothing on the children. Her daughter remembers dinner being a single can of salmon, a food she can no longer eat. As her husband’s addiction became more and more pervasive, Anne became increasingly unhappy. She stayed in the marriage hopeful that counseling and the family would solve Henry’s problem. It never did. On the surface, they appeared to live an upper-middle-class life, but their home in the well-to-do neighborhood was rented. Anne and her girls wore clothing samples left over from year to year from her husband’s work. No one knew that the first gentile president of the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women was flat broke.

Anne had a strong reputation as a community leader, but what she did was always for other people. As she came to understand the depth of the problem facing her, Anne began working outside of her home. She worked in the Columbus school system and with groups serving retired senior citizens. After her sister Patsy finished a master’s degree, Anne also decided to return to college. She earned her bachelor’s degree in social work from Ohio Dominican College in 1975. She went on and completed a master’s degree in social work at American University. Patsy remembers this as the point when Anne became future oriented. Previously, Anne was just focused on day-to-day survival. From the point at which she “grew into herself,” as Patsy puts it, Anne was a future-oriented person.
During her master’s program, she and three friends, Wanda Hambrick, Nancy Brower, and Gay Hadley, founded Options. Options was a creative and innovative organization in Columbus that offered career-counseling services. The organization was housed in the Columbus Public Library in downtown Columbus. They specialized in career counseling for middle-aged women going through major transitions in their lives. Prior to the 1970s, most middle-class white women stayed home during marriage and “kept house.” When they faced divorce, were widowed, or had financial problems, they had few alternatives when they had to begin working or making a living for a family. Options taught women how to promote themselves using the skills that they had developed while working in their homes and communities. Through her personal experience, Anne saw a way to help women in the future who faced similar problems. Options became the best-known career service in the city and helped hundreds of women, as well as men, for many years. Anne also continued her volunteer work.

As Anne’s career and reputation grew, her family’s financial position also improved. They finally bought their own home, a condominium in Victorian Village, a restored upscale neighborhood in the older section of Columbus. For a time, they lived a lavish lifestyle reminiscent of how Henry had lived as a child. Anne even helped finance the education of her daughters. Anne’s husband was still traveling and gambling. He was not a big influence over his children. Anne, on the other hand, set out to raise independent, strong women who would be able to stand alone if they were thrown a curve in the future. Over time, Anne began to focus on the spiritual side of her life. During this process, she came to believe that if she did not leave Henry, she would die.

In 1983, Anne Castle divorced Henry after almost three decades of marriage. She was the first member of her family to be divorced. Despite this, her aunt and adoptive mother Laura gave her full support. On the other hand, she lost many friends. Leaving her husband was especially threatening to women who lived in similarly unhappy homes but did not have the courage to leave. Anne’s view toward the future, or the rest of her life, did not allow her present situation to continue to determine her life’s agenda. Henry was angry and bitter after the divorce. He quickly became insolvent, made worse by his employer’s decision to terminate all of the manufacturing representatives over age 50. Five years later, Henry died.

At the time of her divorce, Anne had been doing extensive consulting on preretirement planning. She had sold her expertise to numerous local organizations and developed a reputation as the leading authority on the
subject in her area. Most organizations offered a pension plan of some type, but few employees thought about other aspects of retirement or considered whether their retirement plan would provide for their needs later. Essentially, Anne’s focus became helping other people think about the future. While doing this work, a vision slowly evolved and became the example that she used when working with other middle-aged people anticipating their futures. Anne had a dream of opening a country inn that would serve as a retreat for people who needed to sort through problems and nurture relationships.

About one year after her divorce, Anne gave up her lucrative consulting practice to make her vision a reality. Given her lack of experience and training on how to start and run a country inn, she decided that she needed an education. She sold her home, bought a recreational vehicle, and began a seven-month odyssey visiting country inns and bed and breakfasts along the East Coast. When Christmas fell during this road trip, Anne rented space at the local Hyatt to entertain her children.

Anne’s friend, Rosie Joyce, lived in the Hocking Hills about an hour and a half south of Columbus. Anne had used her friend’s home as a retreat during the times when she needed a respite from her problems and relief from the fast pace of her professional life. As she considered locations for the inn, the Hocking Hills emerged as the best choice. The Hocking Hills are located in a depressed area of Ohio in Logan County. Unemployment is high; there are few job opportunities and even less economic development. As is often true in areas like this, the countryside is beautiful. The Hocking Hills are a favorite daytrip for people from Columbus, Cincinnati, and Dayton. The natural caves, forestlands, and waterfalls have led to the creation of several state parks and nature preserves including Old Man’s Cave and Conkle’s Hollow. At the time, there were no other inns in the area.

Finding the right property was the next task. Working with a local contractor, Anne located 100 acres owned by Mary Kalklosch, whose ancestors were the original owners of the property. Mary was old, single, and had no children. She and Anne spent a lot of time together talking about how Anne planned to use the land. Mary wanted to sell the property, but because of the personal meaning that the land had for her, she wanted it to be used in a positive way. She sold the land to Anne.

The next challenge for Anne was finding the money necessary to build the facility. Some of the funding came from family members and friends with whom Anne had shared the vision. They believed in her dream. She also received a Small Business Administration loan and went back to the preretirement planning consulting work to have sufficient funds to
finish the inn. After the first building was completed, a number of other shareholders invested in the project and what Anne was trying to achieve.

Anne’s vision is a good example of how impossible it would be to put a real vision on a plaque. No one but Anne completely understood her entire image of the Inn at Cedar Falls that existed in her head, but the part that everyone did understand was that she wanted to create:

1. A nurturing, healthy environment that would be conducive to couples and friends—a place where people could go to refresh their spirits. She imagined the quiet of the hills and the animals that lived on the property. She even envisioned a large garden that would provide the ingredients for the excellent gourmet meals served at the Inn and give visitors with a need to get their hands dirty, a place to do so. She saw people who couldn’t afford the inn’s prices occasionally working in the garden to earn their keep.

2. A place where visitors could become one with the natural universe—and carry part of that peace with them when they left. She pictured long walks to nearby Conkle’s Hollow, lounging on the porch swings, sitting on the fence rails around the Inn, and watching the humming birds at the various feeders. She provided maps of the best walks and even a dog to accompany visitors who wanted company.

3. Positive memories for people that will make their lives better after they leave. The inn became a place to meet good friends and to develop intimate relationships. Couples were given the amount of privacy or company at the breakfasts and the evening dinners as they desired. Friends and colleagues could use the meeting rooms to facilitate their conversations. On occasion, Anne would join groups that needed outside guidance to explore issues they were addressing.

4. An environment that would cater to both couples and singles. In particular, Anne created holiday dinners that drew single people without close families to the inn to find a community during lonely times of the year. The Thanksgiving dinners were booked months in advance. She also created an atmosphere that heightened opportunities for intimacy between couples.

5. An escape from all of the pressures of daily modern life. None of the rooms in the inn have televisions, radios, or telephones. A staff member handles the phone 24 hours a day to take care of emergency phone calls. People have the option of participating in the breakfasts and dinners, but lunches are on their own. The inn is a quiet place, totally isolated from the outside world.

As the inn developed, the contractor, who is also very future oriented, had an influence on the dream. Anne’s daughter Ellen got involved in
the project. Ellen is present oriented and was able to operationalize the vision by creating and executing the business plan. Ellen eventually married Terry, the contractor. Anne’s other daughters also played roles in running the inn. Lisa, for example, is an outstanding gourmet cook and would leave her law office on Friday afternoons and spend the weekend creating wonderful meals for the guests. The Inn at Cedar Falls became a community of family and friends working together.

Shortly after the inn opened, a couple celebrating their 50th anniversary were given a gift of a weekend at the inn. On the evening of their first day, they came to Anne a bit timidly to say that they were concerned that there was no television, radio, or telephone in their room. It was too late for them to change locations that night, but Anne promised that she would find them a local hotel room and cover the cost the next evening. Given this experience, she had second thoughts about whether her dream was one that others would buy. The next morning, the couple came to her and told her that they had talked more that night than they had in the past 50 years. They stayed and Anne had her first evidence that this was a plan that might work.

Part of Anne’s vision was a transformation of herself. Throughout her life, Anne had presented the image of the perfect woman—smart, a great mother, the good wife, well groomed, well dressed, cool, professional. At heart, however, she needed to have her feet on the ground—literally. As the proprietor of the Inn at Cedar Falls, she wore jeans, gained a few pounds, hiked every day with her dog, and spent time exploring her spirituality and focusing on the things that she valued the most.

The Inn at Cedar Falls evolved from the original log cabin, which now serves as the dining area and administrative center of the inn, to a large facility with guest rooms. There are also cottages for people desiring more privacy. Further expansion is planned for the next few years. The inn has been profitable for many years, although making lots of money was never part of the vision.

In 1989, Anne was diagnosed with mouth cancer. She began to research the disease and different treatment options. She used traditional medicine along with various holistic approaches that she thought would fit her personality and lifestyle. She worked with her physicians to develop a treatment program. Initially, the program worked, but over time, it became clear that she had a terminal case of cancer.

As she had throughout her life, Anne planned for the future, and at this time, it meant planning for her death. She developed a strategy that would allow her to spend time with the most important people who needed her and whom she needed. She created a garden fund so that
people who wanted to make a contribution could donate money or time to further develop the vegetable garden at the inn. She also began a journal about her experience in dying. She wrote this journal with the intention of helping her friends and family members in the future, when they had to deal with death. Recently, one of those friends lost both her son and her husband to disease and found the journal to be very helpful. Anne died in 1991 having fulfilled her dreams.

The journal is revealing in terms of Anne’s Temporal Alignment. It is striking in that she had to rein in her strong future orientation during dying. She admonishes herself on page 1, “Live each day at a time, Do one thing at a time, Slow the pace, Stop driving.” She recognized that her future orientation was out of place at this point, and she reminded herself to focus on the present. She articulates her view that each part of our lives, both the past and the present have equal value and tries to focus on the importance of each as she wraps up her loose ends. She also talks about how her garden symbolizes her sense of time. On page 39, she says, “The garden is a constant miracle to my eyes. For me, it symbolizes the continuity of the Inn—from past beginnings to future organic and environmentally helpful efforts.” Her journal begins and ends with a joke that she envisioned her family and friends telling people when she was gone. On page 61, she says, “I had a huge giggle, picturing people asking: ‘What’s Anne doing now?’” She asked Rosie to say, “Oh, she’s off to a new place, getting a new job!” She imagined that they would look disgusted and say, “Oh, dear, why when everything was finally going so well for her!” Anne continues, “I laughed so hard at the thought, I doubled over! Rosie, some how, some way, you’ve got to put that at the end of all this!” Death was part of a new beginning for her—something in the future.

**Analysis**

As I started to write this book, the editor challenged me on the notion that older people can be future oriented. Intuitively, it doesn’t make sense that someone facing death in the next few years could possibly think about the future. Anne Castle is a classic example of someone who did just that. Anne is also an interesting case of a woman who knew when she had to rein in her future orientation to deal with present realities in her life. She was capable of putting her goals on the “back burner” to meet her obligations.

It is difficult to determine when her future orientation began to drive her behavior given the history we have about Anne. It appears that she
was a high-achieving child raised by high-achieving adults. The birth parents had little influence other than their genes. Her aunt was a woman who raised two generations of children and then went back to school in middle age to become a landscape architect. This is the type of event that shapes the attitudes and values of children helping them understand that we often have to delay personal gratification until the future. For women of Laura and Anne’s generations, in particular, the achievement of personal dreams later in life was rare. This lesson was a gift that Anne received from her aunt and that she passed on to her daughters.

Anne’s decision to drop out of college to marry and have a family was typical of many women her age. While it may be debatable whether child bearing is a future-oriented activity or not, Gonzales and Zimbardo found that women of child-bearing age tended to have lower Future Time Perspective than other people.\(^2\) We do not have other empirical evidence to suggest that Future Time Perspective might vary based on situational variables in the lives of women, but slowing down the rate of change in one’s life to accommodate raising children might be understandable. It appears that Anne Castle delayed her college and career to begin a family.

As the circumstances of her marriage changed, however, she began to contemplate how to provide for the basic needs of her children and to think about the future. She returned to paid work to support her family and volunteer work to connect and contribute to her community. More important to her future, she also completed two college degrees.

One characteristic of Anne’s that we will almost always find in future-oriented people is an optimistic attitude toward life. Given the difficult circumstances that she encountered throughout much of her life, she kept up a positive and optimistic image of herself and her surroundings. To some, her attempt to make things look good on the surface may seem deceptive. It is not faking, however. Instead, her effort to maintain a good lifestyle reflects her feeling positive about her life. The life that she managed to develop for her children and herself was difficult to accomplish, but it was real. Less future-oriented people will sometimes give up and live day-to-day as if life has no possibilities. Anne lived hopefully. Through her work, she challenged others to approach life in the same way.

Evidence of this optimistic attitude is her ability to envision and create organizations that also reflected her values. Along with three like-minded friends, she began Options to assist people with career counseling. Career counseling is a future-oriented activity. Later, she began a consulting service that taught employees of corporate clients how to plan for their retirement, also a future-oriented activity. Finally, she envisioned the Inn
at Cedar Falls and its unique mission. Over the period of a decade, this vision became more complex, and she was able to achieve the vision, at least in part, prior to her early death. In death, she left a better future for her friends, family, and the hundreds of patrons of the inn. In addition, the Hocking Hills and the area around the Inn have developed tremendously since she began her venture there.

NOTES

Chapter 7

FUTURE-ORIENTED LEADERS WHO CHANGED ORGANIZATIONS

PEPPER BATES

Background

As a child, Pepper wanted to “own” a school. Although she has since realized that schools don’t work that way, she owns one in a figurative sense. Pepper is one of several future-oriented leaders who saw something written about my work in a popular business journal and contacted me. When that happens, it allows me to meet other future-oriented people who are looking for people like themselves. After talking over a period of months, I arranged to meet Pepper and see the project she was working on. It became apparent that she would be an excellent example of how effective leaders must adjust their natural Temporal Alignment. In her case, this has meant to slow down when necessary to make sure her vision was achieved.

Born in 1956, Pepper lived in a very happy, healthy stable, middle-class family. She, her parents, and three siblings are emotionally close and supportive and choose to live in the same area even today. Her parents were intelligent and high-achieving people.

Pepper’s mother attended medical school but quit when she married. She became a teacher but left that career when her children were born and has never worked outside of the home since. Although Pepper perceives her mother’s choice as leaving her with unfulfilled dreams, her
mother never showed it or complained. Because of her intelligence and personal drive, her mother handled all of the problems that came along with her family. She never relied on the typical line, “Wait until your father comes home!”

Pepper’s father has a high future orientation and a need for achievement that goes back to his own youth. He enlisted in World War II at 18 to become a pilot. He flew fighter planes in the European theater and was shot down in Yugoslavia and rescued by a partisan group. After the war, he married and became a math and science teacher, coach, and principal in Idaho. He began doing consulting with a company working with metals. Eventually, he returned to Ohio where he continued teaching and consulting with local companies on metal finishing. In 1964, he bought his metal finishing company. He went from the vice president to owner. The company founder had taught him the business. Pepper’s father was involved in civic activities ranging from city council to local service clubs. He says that he doesn’t care what others think of him, but Pepper believes that it actually is important to him. He wants to have a good reputation and be respected, and he acts accordingly. When Pepper thinks of her father, she cannot imagine him dying because he always has so much to look forward to. She feels the same way about life.

As a child, Pepper was always a leader. In the neighborhood, she initiated and organized the activities. This is behavior that I have found to be common among leaders. In that era, she was considered to be “bossy” and she began to hear that name. She tried to tone down her “bossiness” to be more popular but was unsuccessful in keeping quiet when a leader was needed. She never thought of herself as a leader, but rather as the negative “bossy” girl, but she was never competitive by nature. Perhaps that was because of the negative stereotypes about aggressive girls. Others encouraged her to continue to take a leadership role. A high school teacher, in particular, pushed her to develop her skills and take on responsibility.

Pepper knew that she would go to college and be able to take care of herself. She knew the expectations her parents had for her future because they told her. She had always pictured herself as educated, a professional, and successful. Her father wanted her to become a physician, but she had other ideas. One of the disadvantages of parents with ambitious visions of their children is that the children may feel that they have disappointed them if they go another route. Pepper feels that she may have let her father down in this respect. Pepper’s image of herself was as the “owner” of a school that would serve disabled
children. This was the beginning of her personal vision to become a special education teacher.

After graduating from high school, Pepper went to the University of Michigan. She found the environment to be detrimentally competitive. The students were all bright and “bossy,” and the atmosphere was one of continuous one-upmanship and having to prove how smart she was. This experience hurt her confidence because she was more interested in collaboration than competition. When her boyfriend left for chiropractic training, she transferred to Ohio State, where she graduated in special education in 1978.

Pepper was married the same year and began teaching in a suburb of Chicago, where her husband was a student. She did well in a great high school despite being only 21 years old, not much older than her students. She immediately began her master’s degree because she knew what she wanted to do—she wanted to “own” a school. Following her husband’s graduation, they moved to Wadsworth, Ohio. She did not finish her master’s for ten years, when she received her degree from Ashland University. Pepper and her husband have established a “your turn, my turn” relationship with each other that mediates their professional and personal lives. One gets more education and the other gets a new job. One starts a new career and the other gets more education. This has worked for them for 15 years. They have also produced two children during the 15 years of full-time employment and continuing education.

Other people have always taken an interest in Pepper and encouraged her. When she found herself at a dead-end with her special education teaching, the superintendent of the system in which she taught discouraged her from pursuing her master’s. She had begun to feel like a “tube of toothpaste, all squeezed out” and wanted to move into administration. By discouraging her, he made Pepper more determined, which he later claimed was his intention all along. He became one of her strongest supporters over the years, and she has maintained a strong mentoring relationship with him.

During this period, Pepper found herself in various life stages that required her to slow down and focus more on the present—something she must consciously focus on to do effectively. It doesn’t come naturally or easily to her. In particular, she had to slow her pace when she had children. She and her husband work hard to make sure that their children have their needs met, even when it means delaying a career goal. In addition, Pepper is always positive and optimistic, and she feels herself becoming more positive over time, even when she has to operate outside of her temporal space.
Her mentor, the superintendent of the Highland School District, quickly used Pepper’s education and talents and promoted her to assistant principal of the middle school. She also earned certification in gifted education. At this point, she was teaching gifted students and working as an administrator. One of her principle responsibilities was the development of a strategic plan for the district. She served as the internal facilitator of the process that required her to bring large numbers of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members together to write a plan that served all of the various constituencies and provided a congruent vision for the future of that district. She kept the administrative job and stopped teaching gifted students. Before she began to implement the plan, however, her mentor had another plan for her.

A fellow superintendent in the Wadsworth district had a problem. They were restructuring their system and adding an intermediate middle school that would include fifth and sixth grades. To do this, they had to gut and remodel an old building. This district needed someone who could execute an educational change, move large groups of teachers and students, and handle the reconstruction of a large building. She and her current boss had many conversations about her ability to take on this overwhelming task. He told her that he didn’t want to lose her, but he knew she “had things to do.” Effective leaders, as he undoubtedly is, recognize the need of followers to have more responsibility. Pepper was hired to handle the transition and set up a new system.

During her interviews with the new district, Pepper was able to share the vision of what a school should be that she had had since she was a young girl. This vision was consistent with the goals of the superintendent. She told me that the hardest part of implementing any change is bringing others along. She has learned over the years that most people are not like her in terms of their view toward the future. Because of this, she has learned techniques to pull others into the future with her. Here are some of the things that she had to do to implement the change:

1. She built strong relationships. She has very good people skills and cares about others. This is apparent in her actions. She does have to force herself to slow down to do this.

2. She tries to be a good listener. She finds that in the end it saves time to be approachable, and she is always looking for new ideas and opportunities.

3. She finds others with vision. She identifies with positive people with goals. She finds them easier to work with, and she can help them
achieve their goals. Surrounding herself with this kind of person helps her be more successful.

4. She scouts around for future-oriented people. She can recognize them by what they are doing. These are the kind of people who are always busy with new ideas and projects. She observes their interactions. For example, she talks to them about their goals for their teaching and observes them when they talk to parents and children. She looks to see who is hopeful and positive when they talk about teaching. She notes who is flexible and has a “don’t give up attitude.”

Because Pepper came into the project at the beginning of the second year of a three-year project, she had to make up for lost time quickly. She used a variety of strategies to make sure that the school would fit the vision that they were trying to create. The most important parts of that strategy included the following steps:

1. She developed a core team that included the teachers who would teach in the school, the superintendent who controlled the resources, the school secretary who would link her to the network of collaborators, and the construction supervisor.

2. She spent a great deal of time gathering information. She spoke to everyone who had a stake in the school. She discovered that a local historical society had a vested interest in the renovations and involved them in the process. This is a step often overlooked by some future-oriented leaders who want to drive their vision without gathering necessary information from others.

3. She forced herself to chip through the day-to-day details.

4. She set and worked toward short-term goals necessary to achieve the vision. Achieving each goal was an important part of the process. Goal setting has always been a key element in her life. It is automatic. She doesn’t remember anyone teaching her to do this, “she just knew.”

In December of 2001, the school was completed, and Pepper moved the children, the desks, the teachers, and the books into a beautifully renovated building with a minimum of disruption. The building is exactly what she imagined it would be, and the teachers and the children look a great deal like the vision she has carried around most of her life. This “movie,” as she describes it, is playing all of the time. Although she does have pride and wants to please others, she is primarily motivated by challenges and the future. Because the school was finished two months before this interview, her picture of herself as principal of this school is becoming “foggy.” In other words, she achieved her vision, and she can’t
imagine herself running it on a daily basis. She is starting to think about other things she would like to accomplish. Her former district is ready to implement the strategic plan that she developed, and she has been asked to return. As the vision in her mind begins to clear, she will decide what direction is right for her. She has other ideas and opportunities and may even decide to really “own” a school before it is over.

Analysis

Earlier in the book, I discussed the sources of temporal alignment. In Pepper’s case, we see the influence of both genetics and environment on her future orientation. She told me, however, that her brother is present oriented and rarely focuses on the future. This suggests that environment and culture can explain only part of our Temporal Alignment.

When talking to Pepper, one of the most striking things about her is the air of leadership that she exudes. You could spot her as a leader from a distance—it shows in the way she carries herself and in everything she says and does. Goal setting and vision are integral parts of how she thinks. The future is clearly her motivational space.

Like other leaders whom I interviewed, there are things that she says she “just knew.” Perhaps it is our personalities that allow us to “know” things we haven’t been taught. Realistically, there are probably societal influences that help us “know,” but those elements of society don’t stick in the cognition of all of us the way that they do with others. Future-oriented people are probably more open to cues about education and goal setting, for example.

It isn’t a coincidence that, as a woman, Pepper has had to focus on the present and slow down on numerous occasions. Raising children, despite having an impact on the future, has to be done one day at a time. We can make changes quickly in our professional lives, but children require a different pace. Future-oriented men with wives who stay at home or are willing to forgo their own career advancement may be able to continue constantly into the future, but few women have that luxury. Pepper made a good choice of a husband, selecting someone who has a similar personality, understands when it is her turn, and knows when they both need to focus on the present to maintain their marriage and family.

JERRY CONVERSE

Background

Unlike his older sister and his twin brother, Jerry wasn’t afraid of his father. His respect for his father and the lessons he learned from him
were the major influences in his life. Jerry was born into a conservative and religious family in 1946. His father was a dominant force in the family: tough, direct, quiet, nice, and well liked by his many friends. He was hardworking, having helped his own mother to raise his siblings by hauling coal when he was a child.

Jerry and his brother and sister attended strict parochial schools run by Franciscan nuns who used harsh discipline. Jerry, however, was “ornery,” as he puts it and did not study or take school seriously. He liked sports and had a wide social circle and activities. He competed with his twin, a practice encouraged by the family. Overall, however, his brother did well in school, and Jerry did well in sports. During one grading period, Jerry set a goal for himself to beat his brother’s grades. He actually studied, tried hard, and did well, beating his brother this one time. The following grading period, he went back to his old habits, having proved himself. Whenever he was afraid of something, he went after it. If he was afraid to try something new, he would force himself to do it until he was successful and no longer afraid. This is a pattern he has followed throughout his life that has led to great personal development during recent years.

Jerry’s father was an electrician who worked for a contractor. From the time he was a young boy, Jerry went to work with his dad on days off from school. He worked alongside him and began to develop electrician skills. On these trips to work with dad, his father used various situations to teach his son values. Jerry shared several of the stories that have had the most impact on him. One of his earliest memories of working with his dad as a child was a time when they were doing a job along a roof in an isolated section of a building. His dad asked him to get a level so that he could check his work. Jerry asked his dad why he was being so careful when no one would ever see it. His father, in typical fashion, responded simply, “I will know.” That simple phrase has guided Jerry’s company and helped him develop an excellent reputation in the construction community. He still uses that phrase with the electricians who work for him. If it takes a little longer or costs a little more but it is the right way to do it, they do.

Another experience that stands out in his mind was one time when he and his father were working on a job where a three-phase motor had to be pulled. His father was busy with something else and told Jerry, who was about nine years old at the time, to pull the motor. He managed to disconnect all of the wires, but he couldn’t pull the motor off the shaft. He tried for a while and finally went to his dad and told him. His father responded, “You give up too easy.” Jerry remembers being angry with his dad, going back to the job, and eventually getting the motor off the
The life lessons were not limited to professional endeavors. Jerry remembers a time when he was talking at the dinner table about how poorly his high school football team had played the night before. Jerry got his father's response was, "At least they are out there trying." Jerry got the message. He went out for the team and lettered the next two years. The team didn't win many games, but he learned that if you try, you may make a difference. He also learned a lot about teamwork from playing sports.

One of the most important things that Jerry learned from his father was to set goals. He challenged Jerry to save in order to buy the things he wanted. Jerry didn't believe in college. He didn't see any need for it. Nonetheless, Jerry attended college part-time while working full-time as an electrician. After a couple of years, he went into the army and was sent to Europe. When he returned home, his father got him up at 5:15 the very next morning. His dad had recently started a new electrical contracting business. Jerry went to work that company, new electrical contracting business. His dad had recently started a new electrical contracting business. After a couple of years, he went into the army and was sent to Europe.

One of his early goals was $250,000 in sales. When the goal was met, Jerry's father quit, they began to expand and had to hire more electricians. Then, when Jerry was 21 years old, he decided to start his own electrical contracting business. The profits went to Florida, where he claims he became a better Catholic because he had to explain his faith to others. Jerry's father did not believe in college, his family was rich until he left home. They only bought what they could afford, and his father always worked very hard. When he was in high school, Jerry began to attend the large public high school, where he claims he became a better Catholic because he had to explain his faith to others. Nonetheless, Jerry attended college.

Jerry ran the business and was paid an hourly wage for 40 hours per week. He was the lowest paid worker in the company, and the profits went to Florida. When he returned home, his father got him up at 5:15 the very next morning. His dad had recently started a new electrical contracting business. After a couple of years, he went into the army and was sent to Europe.
He pointed that out to his father after a couple of years, and his father didn’t believe him. After checking, his father told him, “That was an oversight,” but Jerry never did get a bonus like the other employees did.

A few months later, Jerry bought out his dad. Again, his father made him do it the hard way, never cutting any slack with this boy he had so carefully developed. His father insisted that they both had to use one attorney—his. When he saw the appraised value of the business, his father was furious and forced Jerry into buying him out at a significantly higher price. His father also put into the agreement that if Jerry missed a single payment, the business would revert back to his father. His father’s attorney recommended that Jerry not sign the contract, but Jerry agreed and paid off the debt early. He knows that every barrier that his father threw at him made him stronger and smarter and made him work harder. He appreciates and respects the lessons he learned.

Jerry always thinks about the future. He always has goals. Like his dad, he always took charge of any activity in which he was involved, even when he was a child playing games in the neighborhood. He liked to organize activities. Converse Electric grew rapidly over the next 20 years, eventually employing more than a hundred electricians with sales in the millions. Jerry takes pride in the strong professional relationships he has built over the years he has had the business. His reputation of quality workmanship, honesty, and reliability are extremely important to him.

He is energetic, motivated, positive, and likes to make people laugh. Part of his positive nature includes trust of other people. He has been taken advantage of by a couple of his partners in new ventures over the years. Some were not as honest as he is, and some were not willing to work as hard as is required to run a business. He cuts his losses when this occurs and continues to trust people. It is part of his nature and typical of future-oriented leaders.

Four and a half years ago, he sold the company, which he still manages, to a large national construction company. Although he made a great deal of money on the sale of the company, he considers that a failure. He sold it because his children were not interested in the business and he was starting to think about retirement. He does not like the emphasis on number crunching and the repetitive work in a large company, however. He believes that accountants run large companies, and this concerns him. His favorite aspects of running a business are decision making, sales, and working with other people. He has realized that he was cut out to be an entrepreneur, not a corporate executive.

He has noticed other differences between being an owner and working
for a corporation. Prior to the sale of the business, he used to set aside money to use during slowdowns in construction that occur on a regular basis. He used recessions as a time to do training, maintenance, and to sell work that would begin when the economy improved. Even today as the country emerges from an economic downturn, he has lots of work on the books that is being held until the third quarter. He is negotiating with his new bosses to allow him to get back to what he does best: sales. His current goal is to grow the value of the company’s stock.

Over the past 30 years, Jerry has been involved in many business ventures ranging from construction concerns to a highly profitable cookie shop in a mall. His second biggest success has been in commercial real estate management, and he is still involved in that work. He starts new businesses for a couple of reasons that once again illustrate his time orientation. First, he sees it as insurance in case his primary business has a problem in the future. Second, he anticipated that his children may not like the electrical business and he would have alternatives for them. He finds that people approach him with ideas knowing that he is always interested in talking to entrepreneurs. Jerry has also been active in the local professional association of electrical contractors and was instrumental in implementing a journeyman’s certificate program. He helped develop the curriculum for electricians in training and convinced the association to pay the tuition of people who want to complete the training. This assures the companies of a steady supply of qualified employees. In order to achieve this, he had to convince the other member company owners that this expense would benefit them in the long run. It took a long time, but he has accomplished it. As with everything, if Jerry believes in something, he can sell it.

To Jerry, “the future is in family.” He believes that doing a good job with one’s children builds the base for the future. He considers his children his biggest accomplishment. Although he did not use the same tough parenting approach that his father used with him, he is proud of their successes and that he can “take them anywhere.” His second biggest source of pride is the reputation of his company for quality work. They are considered one of the select contractors in the community. His peers are like him—they set high standards. This opens doors in the future. He no longer has to sell as hard to get new business.

He is also actively involved in the Foundation Board of Mount Carmel Hospital where he has served for several years. He is a frequent speaker at the local vocational school, where he likes to talk to kids about careers in his industry. He is also a leader in the electrical apprenticeship program that recently merged with Columbus State University. He negoti-
ated a program that awards a journeyman’s certificate and college credit for the people who want to earn a college degree. This is a unique approach for this type of training.

**Analysis**

As a corporate manager, Jerry is being asked to do forecasting. He finds this distasteful. As he put it, “I don’t like being asked to read a crystal ball.” He is used to creating the future, not trying to predict it. This is common among future-oriented leaders because good predicting or forecasting requires the analysis of past performance trends.

With Jerry, we have the advantage of seeing how a future orientation has different value in a small privately held company compared with a large corporation. Jerry has operated in a future oriented way his entire professional career. Now, as one of many managers for a larger company, he is being forced out of his comfort zone and into work that he finds tedious and not particularly helpful to the company. He also has to interact with the type of employee most apt to be present or past oriented, the accountants.

Jerry is typical of the other leaders featured in these chapters in that he is always involved in activities that impact the future. In his case, he has been a key player in the electrical training program in his community. He works with entrepreneurs and is interested in discussing ideas. He likes sales. He likes to build new organizations and try new things. If they don’t work, he gets out and starts something else.

He is a classic example of the importance of being positive and optimistic if one is going to be future oriented. I particularly enjoy talking with him about a couple of business failures he has had. In each case, it was because a partner cheated him or didn’t do the work. He tells funny stories on himself about these experiences. Instead of being embarrassed or refusing to work with entrepreneurs in the future, he tries other ventures, perhaps asking a few more questions each next time. He isn’t foolish about his investments and always makes sure he can afford the risk, but he continues to trust people and expect the best. Like other future-oriented leaders, he prefers not to think about the bad experiences in the past. Negative and pessimistic people often dwell on past bad experiences, but most future-oriented people can’t do that for long. Despite his continuing professional interests, Jerry told me that currently his focus for the future tends to be more on his family and less on business. He thinks a great deal about the role that he will play in his family’s life in the future.
Chapter 8

EFFECTIVE LEADERS WHO ARE PAST AND PRESENT ORIENTED

No leader wants to be called past oriented, but leaders are not as offended if they are called present oriented. If they have seen a modern leadership book or read a recent business journal, all leaders know that the future is the trendy temporal space for leaders. Nonetheless, many effective leaders are past or present oriented. They exhibit all of the signs of their Temporal Alignment and use it to run very successful organizations. I introduce several to you in this chapter to explain the advantages that these time orientations can bring to an organization.

MIKE

Background

Mike was the youngest of five children, raised by a widowed mother in Chicago. His father was a tall, strong Polish factory worker who taught the oldest sons how to be men. According to Mike, his mother taught him how to be human. He learned to listen and to communicate effectively from her. His mother worked to support the family after the death of this father.

Because of his unusual height and athletic ability, Mike developed into an excellent basketball player. This talent provided a college scholarship and eventually a brief career with the NBA. In college, Mike majored in economics, which served him well following his sports experience.
Mike worked for several Fortune 100 companies in sales and as a general manager. In 1960, he was hired as a sales manager for a growing company in the northeast. Nine years later, he was named executive vice president and then president in 1970. He is currently the president and chief executive officer. The company that he has managed for more than 30 years is highly profitable and has expanded around the globe. In addition, Mike serves on numerous boards and is a member of several civic organizations.

One of the reasons that Mike was hired and has continued to succeed with this organization is his strong orientation toward the past. He shared the ethical values of the founders who hired him and has worked extremely hard over the years to maintain the character of the organization. These values and his Temporal Alignment are manifested in multiple ways that contribute to the organization’s success. He has developed an approach to management that is unique for someone who comes out of a highly competitive background including professional sports and working with Fortune 100 organizations. His primary goal is to build people in his organization. He feels that this is how to make a company profitable and has been successful using this strategy.

One approach to management that he uses is careful selection of new employees. A personality type has evolved over the years that works well for the organization. New applicants are carefully screened for organizational fit. This is a good example of a past-oriented approach to management. By hiring the same type of person over the years, the company is less likely to have to deal with variance, and change will be slower. Once people are hired, it is difficult to release them. Mike’s attitude is that the people who work in the organization need to be trained, developed, and coached so that they make it over the long run. In addition to making sure that employees make it in the organization, he uses various approaches to keep good employees. For example, he did away with time clocks and offers flexible work schedules to accommodate family needs, there is a profit sharing program, and employees with personal problems are given as much time as they need to recover.

All of these techniques provide stability in the workforce. They also provide history for the organization. Employees stay and remember. They are reminded at company celebrations—and there are many—of the founders and their values, of the accomplishments of the organization, and of how they have survived together through tough economic conditions. Mike is gifted at recounting the past and using it to encourage the workforce.

Some of the driving forces behind Mike’s attitude toward people are
his observations and memories of other companies in the region over the past 40 years. He has known all of the local CEOs and watched them and their organizations. He can recount numerous stories of business failures and personal tragedies related to the fast-paced, profit-above-all philosophies of many other businesspeople. He abhors managers who treat workers as assets through which their companies can make more money. He views that as shortsighted and immoral.

Obviously, a past orientation toward all business decisions cannot work, and Mike adapts well to changing conditions in the business. The company changes when it needs to do so, but only after careful research and consideration. Every business decision is weighed against the cost to the employees. They have passed on profitable opportunities when the deal would have created hardships for the workers. The stockholders are satisfied with their dividends (probably because, like the organization, they are consistent over time) and support Mike’s approach to management. Mike has an image of his organization in the future. He worked many years to build it and now doggedly maintains it. As he puts it, “Numbers are not the vision. Numbers are the result of it.” Mike is not in a hurry to retire. He is more concerned with finding a successor who is ready and able to take over the role of maintaining the character of the company.

**Analysis**

Unlike the leaders discussed in the previous chapters, Mike is clearly past oriented. He was promoted to CEO to maintain the success, traditions, and values of an existing organization. The founders had a clear vision of the type of climate and culture they wanted to create and preserve. They sought, trained, and selected Mike to do that for them. They also needed someone who could address current problems and work toward the future of the organization. Mike was able to do that very successfully.

In Chapter 10, I explain the concept of Temporal Attunement. Basically, it means that the leader can respond to each situation with the appropriate time orientation. When it is required that a leader be future oriented, he can be or can use followers to complement his strengths and overcome his weaknesses. Despite his strong past orientation, Mike is very good at adjusting his Temporal Alignment to the situation. This means that he easily and naturally maintains the traditions of the organization, while still being able to make changes when they are required for the future. Although he may take longer to recognize the need for change or to sign off on proposed changes, he will adapt when it is needed.
One example of this in Mike’s case is a recent shift in suppliers of raw materials. Mike has a strong belief in using U.S. suppliers and had been able to continue to do that despite price differentials in the price of steel from foreign markets. Recently, however, after seeing evidence from his accounting and finance departments, he agreed to begin buying steel from Asia to maintain the competitive pricing of their products. This was not an easy decision for Mike, or an easy sell for his controller. Although it is unlikely that the accounting and purchasing managers discussed Mike’s Temporal Alignment to develop a strategy to change his mind, they probably did understand that they had to make a very good case to do so. They may have chalked it up to his age, his personality, or his adversity to risk, but I believe that his Temporal Alignment was part of it, too.

Mike is a good example of the benefits of a leader with a past orientation. He never forgets good performers, and his loyalty to them is legend in the company. His turnover rate is miniscule. He has stockholders who will cut him and the company slack when there is a downturn in business. He feels obligated to the community and serves on boards, participates in civic organizations, and makes speeches and meets with local students whenever asked. He allows employees to put their personal lives first, and he would be proud to tell you about the health of the families of his employees. He campaigns against abusive work systems in other companies that separate employees from their families and executives from their values.

SUSAN

Background

Susan was born in rural southern Indiana in the early 1940s. She was a middle child in a family of two boys and two girls. Her father was an accountant, and her mother a teacher. Susan grew up in a happy middle-class family. Her parents were intellectual, educated, loving, and endowed with a great deal of common sense. Her life was calm, ordered, and planned, as was the life of the family. Additionally, her parents were progressive in their thinking, which was unique in southern Indiana at that time. For example, Susan remembers her parents’ attitudes toward taxation and women’s rights. Susan grew up knowing that she was allowed to have an opinion and that her opinion mattered. This was a family in which everyone had a voice.

Susan was an excellent student who was active in school activities.
After high school graduation, she attended Indiana State University. She taught for a couple of years in the public schools. She had always been interested in going to graduate school and soon headed to Ohio State, where she earned a Ph.D. in communications. After finishing her degree, she began teaching at a small college. Over the next 20 years, Susan gradually moved into administrative positions, starting with department chair and ending with dean of humanities and social sciences. While dean, Susan introduced two new majors and worked with faculty to improve their programs. She was also a key player in the process that led to full accreditation of the college.

Susan was successful at university management for a number of reasons. She is detail oriented and conscientious. She plans well and follows through when she makes a commitment. She always makes time to talk to colleagues and people in her department. Performance evaluations are thorough, and she takes hours preparing them and meeting with her subordinates. She is never too busy to conduct a lengthy interview and meet with her colleagues to ensure good hiring decisions. Her management philosophy is to select the best faculty she can find and then to work with them and help them solve any performance problems that may occur. The best description of Susan is reliable—100 percent of the time. Everyone who has worked with her would verify this.

In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Susan continued to teach a course each year to maintain contact with students and better understand the work of faculty. She also continues to conduct research and to publish academic articles. Few administrators keep up their scholarly work because of the demands of management. Susan made time to do so to keep her hand in the field.

In addition to her work responsibilities, Susan is a joiner. She is active in civic groups such as the YWCA, where she sits on the board; in political groups, taking part in campaigns for candidates whom she supports; in groups related to her family, such as the Girl Scouts, where she serves as a scout leader; and professional groups, such as the academic communications association, where she frequently presents papers. She is a well-known community leader and has been recognized with numerous awards for her service.

All of this has been done while maintaining a marriage and raising two daughters. Susan is not Martha Stewart. She keeps a clean warm healthy home but does not invest her time in painting old flowerpots or planning clambakes. She sets priorities that matter to herself and her family but does not try to impress others. As one might suspect, the daughters are also active and accomplished.
Susan recently retired, at age 55. There were many reasons she made this decision. Most important, Susan lost her parents at early ages to cancer. She was diagnosed with the beginning signs of cervical cancer 15 years ago, but noninvasive surgery addressed that problem. In addition, she and her husband have always lived frugally and had enough money set aside that both were able to retire early. They wanted to spend their time on activities that they have always wanted to do. Susan is writing a novel and children’s books. There is never a rush to finish anything. She has done her homework on the process and keeps at the writing on a regular basis. As part of this, she has taken courses on writing and publishing novels. She talks with publishers and authors and then rewrites her work. There is no hurry. She enjoys the process. Meanwhile, Susan continues to play an active leadership role in her community where she is still known as the person who can make things happen and on whom others can always rely.

**Analysis**

Susan is present oriented. She is a classic example of someone who is always in the moment. Her primary focus is on short-term needs and tasks. She is the type of person who can take a job, dissect it, prioritize the tasks, and move steadily along until it is done. She is not distracted by daydreams about the future or problems that occurred in the past. She is persistent and conscientious.

Susan is skilled at adapting when it is necessary to handle aspects of leadership that require a past or future focus. In her role as dean and as a leader of numerous community groups, she has been involved in many strategic planning projects. When involved in this planning, she can successfully set aside her current tasks and redirect her attention to the future. The groups that she has led have been successful over the years. She has also had to do a significant amount of problem solving, which required her to dig back through past files and interview colleagues about events that occurred in the past. She can adjust her attention when it is necessary, but when she operates out of her comfort zone, she does it reluctantly.

On a personal note, Susan’s personal orientation toward handling money shows her present orientation. She pays cash whenever possible, avoids risky investments, and, over the years, banked a large portion of her earnings. Because of this, she and her husband had adequate money in the bank to retire early. Present-oriented people tend not to borrow as much and design their personal lives as if their jobs could end tomorrow.
They do not take financial risks because they do not spend much time anticipating their earnings or payoffs on investments in the future.

JIM

Background

Jim was raised in an Italian neighborhood, a New Jersey suburb of New York City. His father was a factory laborer. He provided the essentials for the family but never owned a home during his lifetime. Jim’s parents were strict, but the neighborhood was rough. Jim was involved in minor problems with other young teens while growing up. He was bright in school and played sports. He credits his parents and sports with keeping him out of serious trouble.

Jim was an excellent football player and earned a scholarship to play for a Division 1 college program. He planned to play professional sports after college. Shortly after arriving on campus in the fall of his freshman year, he was seriously injured and couldn’t play again. As a result, he decided that college was a waste of his time. He got a job and worked for a couple of years. Eventually, he decided to join the Marines and served in Vietnam. He liked the Marines, which provided him an outlet for the energy and competitiveness that he had liked about sports. After three years in the service, he returned to college on the GI Bill and majored in business operations. After earning his bachelor’s degree, Jim went to law school, but after the first year, he found the classes and the prospect of working as a lawyer boring.

He began to research job opportunities and found an opening as a traffic and shipping analyst. His major had been operations management as an undergraduate. Jim took the job with a large manufacturer in the Southwest. Over time, he moved up in the organization because of his strong work ethic and attention to detail. Within ten years, Jim was the operations manager of a large facility. Five years later, he was promoted to general manager of a plant in California.

As general manager, Jim identified a number of problems in the manufacturing process and the mathematical modeling being used to control materials purchasing and inventory. He worked with his engineers and plant personnel to eliminate these and other problems. The plant efficiency was improved by 50 percent in the first year. The plant has had numerous labor issues arise over the previous 20 years and Jim made the resolution of these issues his top priority. He met with union leaders, establishing a revised communications network for workers and a quality
team made up of the leaders and representatives of each department. In addition, he increased mandatory training for safety, communications, and supervisory skills. He took a proactive approach to contract negotiations, setting meetings with managers a month before negotiations officially began to develop a reasonable and fair company position. He worked with the union to develop an incentive pay program that was successfully implemented. There wasn’t a single work stoppage after Jim took over as general manager.

One of Jim’s important concerns was the relationship of the plant with the community. When Jim arrived, he found a hostile community. In part, this was related to negative labor relations with workers, but the community was antibusiness in general. Politically, it was a liberal area where people had strong environmental concerns. Jim’s approach was to join the local civic groups, including those involved with environmental issues. He found that his presence tempered the discussions as he could provide immediate facts about the facility he managed. He invited concerned people to visit the plant, encouraged evaluation and inspection teams, and aggressively addressed every problem raised. Although the attitude of the community about business never completely changed, his company earned the label, “one of the good ones.”

**Analysis**

Jim loves to solve problems. He looks for them and works to address them. He takes each problem as it arises or as he learns of it and works persistently until it is solved. He is comfortable with researching past events that may have led to the problems. He is always available to discuss production and personnel issues with managers, workers, and people outside the plant. Jim is the kind of person who works long hours because he loses track of time. He wants to get the day’s work done before he leaves each day. Like other present-oriented people, putting off a task for another time in the future doesn’t register. If there is something to be done, he does it in the present rather than putting it off for the future. He can easily adapt when asked to sit in on strategic planning sessions.

Jim is skilled at working with people. The best way to describe his interaction with others is that he is “present” in the moment. In other words, he is able to focus on the person and the situation that faces him currently. Some future- and past-oriented leaders tend to be somewhere else when they talk to followers and others. They may be living in daydreams of the future or memories of the past and are often too busy to
focus on the people and issues that surround them on a day-to-day basis. There are few things as frustrating as trying to talk to someone who is distracted. Jim rarely is unless he is in the middle of solving a current crisis. This makes him popular with followers, colleagues, and community leaders who feel important because they always have his attention.
Organizational vision is one of the widely discussed concepts in leadership. More than a thousand articles and books on the topic have appeared in the academic literature.\textsuperscript{1} Despite the interest in vision, it is widely misunderstood. Leaders are still unclear about how to develop and use organizational vision. Regardless of the fact that the leadership literature indicates that all successful leaders need a vision, we still don’t know why some leaders develop a vision and others do not. I believe that the answer to that question is based on our personality. My research suggests that future-oriented leaders are more apt to develop a vision than other leaders. They are also more likely to transform their organizations because they have a vision.

Vision is not a new concept. It has been discussed in one form or another as long as records of humans exist across many cultures.\textsuperscript{2} Despite its widespread acceptance, people understand it in varying forms. These forms range from the vision statement hanging on the wall in a corporate setting to the fasting and drug-induced hallucinations produced after a month alone in a forest. Vision has reemerged as an important concept during the past 30 years, especially in the leadership literature. There are several reasons. The first of these is that the traditional approaches of research into leadership were not producing replicable results or information that provided guidance to organizational leaders. Second, transformational leadership theories began to emerge and consistently indicated
that effective leaders have vision. Finally, leadership research, although still using traditional methods of measuring transformational leadership, also began to use observations and tracking of the behaviors of effective leaders. Creating and communicating an organizational vision has been found to be common behavior among the best leaders in most of these qualitative studies.

While the debate over whether leaders are born or made continues, most experts believe that both are true. Some people are born with characteristics or circumstances that make them more likely to become effective leaders. In addition, some people have life and educational experiences that develop their ability to lead. From the perspective of my research, related to this is the question of whether any leader can create a vision. My research suggests two answers as well. First, the more future oriented, positive, and optimistic one is, the higher one’s visioning ability. I believe that some of those characteristics are innate. Second, visioning ability can be increased with training, at least for the short term. I believe that this training effect is probably not long lasting. This suggests that basic personality traits will make some people and some leaders more capable of creating an organizational vision and using it to guide behavior than others can. There are no guarantees, however, that the leader trained to develop a vision will continue to develop an organizational vision or to use the vision to guide his behavior.

Visioning is actually imaging, or picturing something in one’s mind. Richardson has written a book on imaging that discusses a number of scales that can be used to measure a person’s imaging ability. Some of us have an easier time imaging than others, which will come as a surprise to no one. Because visioning is another form of imaging, it follows that some of us will do it better than others for any number of reasons. My research suggests that this is true. Visioning, as I define it, however, refers to one’s ability to create an image of an organization in the future. Let me define organizational vision more specifically:

A vision is a cognitive image of the future that is positive enough to followers that it is motivating and elaborate enough that it provides direction for future planning and goal setting.

This definition developed as I conducted a series of studies and vision training courses over the past ten years. A vision is not a prediction of the future, but what a leader wants to create. Vision should be distinguished from other concepts with which it is often confused: mission, mission statement, philosophy, vision statement, and goals. A mission is
the purpose for the organization to exist. A mission statement summarizes that purpose. The philosophy is the values that drive the leader and members of the organization. Most organizations have management philosophies that characterize the approach to management that is sanctioned by the organization. The well-designed vision statement is a brief summary of the direction of the organization. Because a few sentences cannot possibly capture the essence of a leader’s true vision, it is usually pointless and is often confused with mission statements and management philosophies. Another important distinction is between vision and goals. When compared with an organizational vision, a goal is a lower-level objective used to help achieve the vision.

Numerous examples of leaders with vision are well known: Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream,” speech, Bill Gates’s image of a computer in every home, Anita Roddick’s dream to create a profitable socially responsible company, Walt Disney’s park in the Florida swamp, Tecumseh’s attempt to unite Native American tribes, to name just a few. Although we know from history that not all of these visions have been achieved, literally, we need to understand that we have come further than we would have without the vision.

Vision works for a variety of reasons:

1. A vision tends to motivate followers because it makes them think about the future. The future is our motivational space according to Nuttin, but most of us are not future oriented. A leader with a vision pushes us into the future. If a vision is positive, it also serves to make the future appear to be a good place to be enhancing the motivational effect.

2. A vision serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Research suggests that when we have high expectations for the performance of people, they tend to rise to our expectations. A vision is a positive image that infers high expectations.

3. A vision develops commitment. If followers understand where an organization is going, they decide whether they want to go along. Those who don’t like the direction will leave, with any luck. Those who do like the direction will stay because they either want the same things or the vision is consistent with their values, they come to believe in the vision because of the influence of the leader, or they are willing to consider the vision for other reasons that may include needing the job. This results in followers who are more committed to the vision.

4. A vision directs planning and behavior. It becomes the map that people follow when deciding what to do each day. This is one reason that a complex well-communicated vision is critical. We cannot expect followers to work toward a vision if they don’t know what it is.
5. A vision serves as a contract between a leader and the constituents of the organization. Conscientious leaders feel obligated to fulfill the agreement, especially if the vision has been made public.

6. A vision and its creation are a type of strategic thinking that should precede strategic planning. The desired state has to be articulated before any real planning is appropriate.

7. Wheatley believes that a vision works as an energy field that energizes all members of an organization. This “field,” which she explains with the use of relativity theories from physics, connects each individual follower. By unifying everyone, the vision provides a consistent direction, builds commitment and ownership, and develops teamwork.

8. Bird has a somewhat different view of vision. She suggests that the critical relationship is between the leader and her vision. The emotional distance between the current state of an organization and a leader’s vision leads to temporal tension, which becomes a motivating force. The primary purpose served by the vision, then, is to motivate the leader.

9. Michele Govekar and I have explained vision in the context of a control theory model. We believe that the vision sits at the top of a hierarchy of goals, answering the question, “Why?” providing the reason and the standard for all behavior and performance in an organization. A committed leader with a well-defined vision and followers who understand the vision will continuously compare current performance (both individual and organizational) with the vision. If the performance is not taking the organization to the vision, she has to make adjustments in the system. Goals are the steps necessary to achieve the vision. They answer the question, “How?” Communications, planning, hiring, problem solving, goal setting, and decision making are driven by the future vision. Consistent behavior will occur naturally when the vision is strong and is discussed and reinforced regularly. Errors occur when performance is inconsistent with the vision. In these cases, either the vision or the behavior has to be adjusted. The strength of the leader and the vision and the value of achievement of the vision will determine which happens.

Which of these explanations is the right one? Based on my reading and experience, I believe that they are all true. One explanation cannot possibly answer the questions or account for the impact of vision on organizational performance. Vision is related to our ability to imagine and dream, our commitment to our organizations, our values, our followers, our Temporal Alignment, our cognitive capacity, and our creativity. There isn’t one concrete definitive solution to the mystery of vision and how it works, but all of the research suggests that it does.
As mentioned earlier, there are a number of approaches to developing vision that have been used for millennia. These include fasting, drugs, torture, self-mutilation, and isolation from other people. Among industrialized Westerners recently, the trend in vision creation has been a strategic planning approach. Nanus uses a form of SWOT analysis. Many others use a similar approach. The problem with incorporating an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats into the development of a vision means that the strategic planning process begins prematurely. This shortchanges the critical need for an idealistic and positive image of the future because we are inhibited by limitations at the outset of the process. The SWOT analysis should follow the creation of the vision, and the intent of it should be on how to overcome the barriers that exist in the environment. Visionary leaders don’t even have to think about this, however. They do it naturally. Often, they don’t sit in on strategic planning sessions. Strategic planning is an operational stage and is better done by present- and past-oriented people.

Dawn Blasko and I developed a measure of visioning ability that we have tested and validated. This is a 12-item scale designed to measure one’s basic ability to create an organizational vision. The scale is presented in Figure 9.1 so that readers can measure their own visioning ability. Readers may complete and score the scale before proceeding.

To score the scale, add the scores on all 12 items and average them. The rating scale in Figure 9.2 gives readers an idea of how they compare with others who have completed the visioning ability scale.

In one study in which I tried to manipulate visioning ability through a training program, the average score for practicing business leaders was 3.52. After a three-hour visioning training program, the mean rose to 3.94, a statistically significant difference. In another study of 402 college student leaders, the starting mean was 3.69. After a weeklong leadership training program that included visioning training as one component, the mean rose to 4.14, a statistically significant difference. Other tests of the instrument have yielded similar results. Considering that these research participants had either been identified prior to my measurement of their visioning ability as leaders or self-selected into the training programs, I expect that these means are much higher than we would expect to find in the typical person.

I have developed a new approach to vision development for those who don’t do it naturally. My method is based on creative writing techniques that have been used for many years to encourage people to think outside of the box. I have tailored these techniques so that they foster positive thinking. I have tested this approach with corporate executives and found
Figure 9.1
Visioning Ability Scale

In your mind, create an image of your organization in the future. Take a few minutes to think about what you would like to see it become. Read each statement below carefully and decide the degree to which it is true for you. Circle the number that best matches your feelings. Use the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. It is easy to imagine myself and how I will be leading my organization in the future.
2. It is easy to think positively about my leadership skills in the future.
3. It is easy to imagine my organization and what it will be like in the future.
4. It is easy to think positively about this organization in the future.
5. I can clearly imagine how large this organization will be.
6. I can clearly imagine the type of organization it will be.
7. I can clearly imagine the type of people who will be involved in this organization.
8. I can clearly imagine the physical environment of this organization in the future.
9. How this organization will look is clear in my mind.
10. I frequently imagine this organization in the future.
11. I can clearly imagine my role in this organization in the future.
12. It is clear to me whether this organization will be successful in the future.
that visioning ability increased significantly during the training. The approach to vision creation that I have developed and tested involves a three-step process: 14

1. Clustering to create the complexity.
2. Generating a series of “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements to create an ideal.
3. Writing the script for the movie in one's mind to develop the vision.

Following is my approach to developing an organizational vision. This approach can be used by individuals and small groups.

**CREATING AN ORGANIZATIONAL VISION**

**Step 1. Clustering to Create the Complexity**

A vision must include every aspect of the organization. To achieve that, we will place the name or type of organization in the center of a large sheet of paper. For example, assume that it is 50 years ago, and you are Walt Disney. You want to create an amusement park. You don’t want it to be like the typical parks found at Coney Island or Six Flags. You want it to be unique, highly entertaining, profitable, and related to your primary business. Put the words “Amusement Park” in the center of the sheet.

Now, we want to begin to identify each aspect of an amusement park that we can think of and place it on the on the board. Here is an example:

- Employees
- Location
- Amusement Park
- Attractions
- Marketing
As we begin to identify related elements, we will draw lines to show connections. How the various elements are connected is less important than getting them down. We want to make sure that we have everything covered. Each person will make different connections. As you work, the cluster becomes more and more complex. Figure 9.3 is an example of what should happen with the Amusement Park example.

Each connection will lead to more complicated connections. This activity allows one to develop a complex image by including all elements that must be included in a vision. This leads us to the next step. Do not begin thinking about specific strategies for “recruiting” yet. The point of this exercise is to identify all of the elements that should be included in the vision, not to develop a plan. This “cluster” should be as complex as you can make it.

Let’s practice this step again. Think of an organization of which you are a part. Don’t use your work group or organization—we will get to that later. You can use your church, your daughter’s soccer league, your golf club, your civic group, or any organization with which you are involved. Create a cluster for that group on a large sheet of paper. Put the name of it in the middle of a sheet of paper and begin to identify every element that should be included in the cluster. Take your time because this step is critical to the next.

**Step 2. Generating a Series of “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” Statements to Create an Ideal Image**

Once we have created the cluster, the next step is to list as many statements that begin with the words, “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” as we can.

Let’s go back to the amusement park. Here are some examples of “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements:

Wouldn’t it be great if our park would be appealing to people of all ages?
Wouldn’t it be great if the weather were good year-round at our park?
Wouldn’t it be great if real cartoon characters worked at the park?
Wouldn’t it be great if we could charge as much as we wanted and people would pay?
Wouldn’t it be great if people would stand in line to get into the attractions?
Wouldn’t it be great if we had long lists of people who wanted to work for us and were willing to work for minimum wage?
Wouldn’t it be great if people could visit other countries when they visit our park?
As you have undoubtedly ascertained, these statements would appear to be very idealistic, and even silly, if you didn’t already know the Disney World story. Have some fun with this and see how many you can list. Using each of the elements in the cluster we created earlier, list at least one statement for every element on your cluster.

Now let’s go back to your own organization for which you created the cluster. Do the same thing with that organization. List as many “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements as you can. Use each element in your cluster to help you generate a long list.

Years ago, when conducting this exercise, one participant put his child’s soccer league in the center of his paper. When it came time to generate the “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements, he became very idealistic and came up with a list that included the following statements:

Wouldn’t it be great if every child had fun?
Wouldn’t it be great if there were alternatives to playing soccer for children who didn’t want to play?
Wouldn’t it be great if there were no funding problems?
Wouldn’t it be great if every child got to play in every game?
Wouldn’t it be great if there weren’t any parents watching during the games?
Wouldn’t it be great if every child received a trophy?
We will explore one of the items from this list and how it could be used for planning purposes later in the chapter.

**Step 3. Writing the Script for the Mind Movie to Articulate the Vision**

Remember that a vision is nothing more than a cognitive image. You can think of it as a movie that you will play over and over in your mind. There are lots of movies in your mind now. You may use them for escape, for pleasure, to plan future activities, to rehearse your performance, or to review past events. This time, you are creating a movie of your organization in your mind.

If you have been to Disneyland or Disney World, you have that movie in your mind and can play it now. What does it look, sound, smell, and feel like when you are there? Walk through the park. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What is good about it? How do you feel?

Now, go back again to your own organization. Put down your pencil. Close your eyes. Imagine your organization two years from now if all of your “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements had come true. What would it be like? Imagine every detail. Write a script for this movie. Pretend that you are walking into the organization (the church, a club meeting or activity, a game, etc.). Describe what you see and hear as you enter. What is happening? Pretend that you are there and that things are happening around you. Remember, you are creating the ideal situation now. Don’t imagine it like it is, but rather as you wish it would be five to ten years from now. If you would like, you can write the script for this movie that you have created in your mind. If you find these exercises to be difficult, it would be best to write out the vision in detail.

Finally, use the organization that employs you and the department or unit in which you work to develop a vision. Walk through each of the steps to create a vision for that organization.

**VISION AND PLANNING**

Vision should drive the strategic planning process. In most organizations, both those with and without visionary leaders, strategic plans are usually developed outside an organizational vision. Again, they use some form of a SWOT analysis. It usually takes many hours of meetings. Most participants do not understand what is expected of them because they don’t understand the vision, if it even exists. The strategic plans are
written and distributed. They are filed. They are forgotten. According to Mintzberg, fewer than 10% are achieved. He attributes this high failure rate to a lack of strategic thinking. In my view, visioning is a form of strategic thinking. Why don’t visionary leaders force their visions into the planning process? Some do, but most highly future-oriented visionary leaders expect others to execute their visions. They don’t even attend the meetings. Strategic plans should be the blueprint for operationalizing an organizational vision. In other words, how can we make the vision a reality?

The best way to understand the impact of vision on the strategic planning process is to look at examples:

1. Suppose that Walt Disney did the visioning activity suggested in this chapter and asked, “Wouldn’t it be great if cartoon characters worked at the park?” It sounds ridiculous, but the Disney people have come close to making this a reality. At Disney World and Disneyland, the cast members who play the cartoon characters are trained in the mannerisms and behaviors of the characters. The costumes are detailed and always in perfect condition. The park has built-in tunnels and hidden doors so that no cast member is ever out of costume in the public view. All of these things help the park come as close as possible to achieving the idealistic goal of having cartoon characters work at the park. Do real cartoon characters work at Disney World? No. However, the park is far better off by starting with an idealistic goal than it would be if it had simply begun planning by saying, “What kind of costumes should we have?” The difference in the outcomes achieved is substantial.

2. Imagine that the former participant in vision training really decided to improve his child’s soccer league. And suppose that the statement he chose for his focus was, “Wouldn’t it be great if every child had fun at every game?” That is a bit unrealistic, isn’t it? Well suppose that we were going to develop the strategic plan, and we used this idealistic goal to drive our planning. What could we do to make sure that every child had fun at every game? In other words, what is the strategy for achieving the vision? Here are some suggestions from participants in past vision training programs:

   1. Let every child play in every game.
   2. Hire coaches who know the game, who like children, and who aren’t related to the players.
   3. Offer alternative activities to the children. For example, build a playground for use before and after games at the same location. That way, even children who don’t love to play soccer or who have a bad game will have fun.
4. Don’t allow parents to stand near the fields when games are being played.
5. Let the children decide if they aren’t in the mood for soccer on any given day.
6. Offer a variety of sports in each league and help children explore individual talents and skills that they have.
7. Group children by interest and level of skill so that all children are playing other children who are as interested and talented as they are.
8. Not keeping score, especially in soccer, is impossible, so set up the games and plays so that both teams score. Maybe the coaches can coach both teams during a game and rotate players as needed.
9. Turn skill building drills into fun activities instead of tedious exercises.
10. Teach coaches how to make soccer more interesting and fun for children. In most programs, the coaches may not even know soccer, let alone how to make it more fun.

We could go on and on. The recommendations for the strategic plan that would allow every child to have fun are completely different from the recommendations that would be made if all we want to do is make sure the budget is balanced and we have referees for every game. If that is all we want to accomplish, we don’t need a vision. If we want to make a difference, we do. Transformational leaders, whether they are the presidents of their children’s soccer leagues or the CEOs of multinational corporations, use vision to guide their and their followers’ planning and day-to-day behavior.

What we want to do is change the old rules and make new ones that will help us achieve our vision. Breaking out of conventional thinking to make the idealistic become reality is what vision is about. The bottom line is that an idealistic, positive vision takes us farther and to a different place than a realistic plan based on limitations and trends. This is what we know about challenging goals as well. The more challenging the goal, the higher the level of performance will be.

COMMUNICATING AN ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

If a leader’s vision is going to drive behavior in an organization, followers have to understand it. Many visionary future-oriented leaders fail because they cannot communicate their visions to the followers who have
to develop the plan and carry it out. Communicating a vision, as I define it, is difficult. The vision statements hanging on many corporate walls, useless as they are, are easy to disseminate. How does a leader communicate a complex cognitive image? There are a number of ways it is done. Here are some of them:

1. Decide which parts of the vision should be communicated to which people. Not everyone needs to understand the entire vision. Besides, a cognitive image cannot be communicated in its entirety to others. Financial institutions that will loan you the money to finance the vision need a certain type of information. Your advertising agency needs another type of information. Your mother needs a different type. You need a communication strategy for each constituent.

2. Incorporate the important parts of the vision into your daily communications and your presentations regularly. Use the vision as the central theme every time you talk to others. You may talk about your “dream,” your “goal,” what you “see in the future,” or your “vision.” But talk about it!

3. Model behavior that is consistent with your vision. If you want every employee to be customer friendly, others in the organization must see you serving customers, designing customer-friendly systems, and “putting your money where your mouth is” when it comes to customer service decisions.

4. Provide continuous feedback to others regarding their behavior and its consistency with your vision. Tell them if they are doing things that will help the organization achieve the vision. Tell them if they are not. Talk very specifically about the behavior and how it relates to the vision.

5. Use the vision to guide planning and goal setting. Every goal should lead to the vision, or the mega-goal.

6. Tie the vision to the values and goals of others. Show how achievement of the vision will help individuals achieve personal goals.

7. Recruit and select followers or employees whose values and goals are consistent with the vision. Get rid of followers who are not committed to the organizational direction. The higher their level in the organization, the more critical this is.

8. Provide details on your vision when necessary—elaborate. Maybe someone is not performing or planning in a manner consistent with your vision. The problem may be that the leader should provide more elaborate information.

9. Use errors (gaps between the vision and performance) to teach. The more errors are made, the more we learn if we get feedback.
10. Present the vision as a challenge. Effective leaders tell people that they know that they are capable. Say, “I know that you can do it.” By the way, few people will understand that some parts of a vision may be literally impossible, but that effective leaders try to get as close as possible and don’t give up easily.

11. Use the vision to make the future seem closer. Specifically talk about this in communications about the vision.

12. Continuously monitor progress toward the vision. Involve others in the process.

13. When others ask why something is being done, point to the vision. If the vision doesn’t answer the question, the task may be inappropriate.

14. Participate in strategic planning and make sure that the plan answers the question, “How will the vision be achieved?” Any corporate planner who is in charge of developing a strategic plan must understand every aspect of the leader’s vision. Leaders have to make planning a priority, even when they “have better things to do” (code for not wanting to do strategic planning) and participate in the process.

**CAN GROUPS DEVELOP A VISION?**

Groups can develop a vision using the same approach as that suggested for individuals. It is not possible, however, for every member of the group to have the same cognitive image at the end. This needs to be understood and discussed among the group. If a leader wants to use a group to develop a vision, do step 1 together. Then, as individuals, do step 2. Come together and create a laundry list of statements without judging the statements developed by others. This could be done anonymously using a chat feature on organizational computers. Come back together and review the “Wouldn’t it be great if . . .” statements to which the group is willing to commit. Write the script for the movie together.

Several years ago, I was working with a large number of board members at a retreat. They represented three organizations that came under one large umbrella organization headed by one of the most future-oriented leaders I have ever met. One was a hospital, one was a nursing care facility, and one was a medical school. Each separate board broke into smaller groups and went through the first two steps in the vision creation process. Then, the three separate groups came together with the CEO of the larger group, and we began to share the ideas that had been generated. It was important that the leaders’ values and ideals were consistent across groups. We narrowed down the statements into a long list to which most board members could commit. We did not get into any specific planning
to achieve the vision, but I was sure that this group would, and they have over the years. One of the board members, who was clearly not future oriented, asked at the end of the retreat, “Now, this isn’t the final vision is it? We haven’t voted on it yet.” There were a number of visionary leaders in that room, including the CEO. What this one board member did not understand, and I didn’t myself until recently, is that a vision isn’t something that a board “votes” on. A number of visions were taking shape in that room full of administrators and board members. Which ones would emerge and eventually become reality depended on the commitment and skill of the leaders with the visions. If the group had voted down a vision or voted in favor of one, it wouldn’t have mattered. What really matters is whether one person incorporates a vision into his or her thinking and is willing to do what must be done to achieve it.

IS LEADERSHIP STILL IMPORTANT?

Many organizations are using participative styles of management. We tend to use groups to create visions, missions, philosophies, and goals. This approach to management is valuable in many situations. I believe in leadership, however. One person who incorporates a vision into his or her worldview can change an organization, or a community, or the world. A vision does not have to be approved by a committee. It exists independently in the mind of a leader. The leader must breathe life into the vision.

NOTES


Chapter 10
TEMPORAL ATTUNEMENT

Attunement occurs when the Temporal Alignment of the leader matches the temporal needs of any given situation. If an organization needs a vision (a well-communicated complex cognitive image, not a vision statement), a future-oriented leader will be attuned to the situation. If an organization is dealing with a long-term difficult problem, a past-oriented leader will be best able to recapture the events leading up to the issue and will be attuned to the situation. Of course, the successful implementation of a strategic plan and a solution to a problem may require a present-oriented leader who will be attuned to current needs. Because one leader is unlikely to be able to handle all aspects of any situation, an effective leader has to carefully analyze each situation and choose the best manager or associate to handle each aspect. At first, this may seem like a lot of work, but it is no different from the sorts of choices made by leaders every day. When deciding whom to send to land the new account, we use information about personality variables along with product knowledge to make the decision. When deciding which employees will talk with the customers visiting the plant, we consider personality along with expertise to make the decision. Temporal Alignment is simply another personality variable to take into consideration when making decisions about the best use of a team.

In this chapter, I explain Attunement and present a series of problem situations that I have observed over the years. Each problem includes a description of how a leader or follower created the necessary Attune-
ment. A series of typical situations is presented with recommendations for necessary action.

Michon explained that humans cope with temporal contingencies of the environment based on partly innate, partly learned Attunements.¹ This tuning does not have to involve any conscious awareness of time. When circumstances exist for which Attunements are not available in the physiological or behavioral repertoire of the human, however, conscious strategies are necessary for handling these circumstances. In these situations, explicit mental representations of time need to be generated. Michon refers to this controlled way of coping with those aspects to which we cannot directly tune ourselves because we are not geared to them by evolution or learning as minding your time.

Jackson also argued that temporal information is not automatically encoded and that it involves cognitive effort.² This is best understood by Langer’s distinction between mindfulness and mindlessness.³ Mindfulness is a state of being that allows a person to adapt to changing circumstances. To merge these concepts within the context of time, it can be inferred that an effective leader will typically respond to situations with the Temporal Alignment that is most comfortable, but when a task or situation demands, the leader must adapt by changing temporal focus.⁴ The idea that Attunement is necessary for leaders is not new. We frequently hear the expressions “in sync” and “good timing.” Both imply a balance between the time orientation needed by the organization at one point in time and the one provided by the leader. How flexible a leader can be will depend on the strength of her Temporal Alignment, her discipline, and her ability to control her cognitions. There are some future-oriented leaders who find it almost impossible to think about the past and may only rarely be mindful of what has happened before. By the same token, some present-oriented leaders are so involved in day-to-day operations that they rarely find the time to look at the long-term picture. In the past, some critics have accused U.S. business leaders of having a short-term perspective to maximize their own rewards. Another explanation is that some leaders find it nearly impossible to focus on the future because of their Temporal Alignment.

Temporal Attunement is not an easy thing to achieve. Few leaders can adjust their Temporal Alignment to fit the situation as well as John. John’s background helps us understand how one learns to attune oneself to different situations. John is currently the CEO of Southeastern Employee Benefit Services, which administers employee benefit plans. John learned to take care of each situation as it occurs from his mother, his early life experiences, and the various businesses he has managed.
He grew up in a small city in North Carolina during the Depression in a family of moderate means. They had enough to eat because both parents and all three children worked. John’s mother, by training a nurse, and, by vocation the owner of an antique business, was a strict disciplinarian. She set goals for each child. When one goal was met, she set the next challenging goal. The dinner table is where progress toward the goals was discussed. If one of the children had failed to complete a task, that child might be sent from the table to finish it.

John entered army flight school when he graduated from high school in 1943. He flew P-51s in the Pacific during World War II. When the war ended, John attended the University of North Carolina for two years. He decided to drop out of college and purchased a tractor trailer. He drove the truck for a year and lost his entire investment. In 1950, he graduated from Guilford College and went into the insurance business. He very quickly earned his Chartered Life Underwriter and joined the Million-Dollar Roundtable.

In those days, the insurance industry was incredibly stable. Everything from rates to dividends stayed the same. A stable industry that experiences little change requires leaders who are present oriented. Because of his strong future orientation, John grew bored with his career. While maintaining his insurance business as his financial base and continuing to lead other producers, he began to seek and find other outlets for his future orientation. Over the past 50 years, John has owned 19 businesses, including furniture stores, real estate companies, a beauty shop (inherited with a building he purchased), and a radio station. The radio business was a high-risk proposition, and many advisors recommended against it. John had sold insurance to the station’s owner, who offered to bring John in as a partner and teach him the business. Despite the warnings, he decided to invest in the station, which eventually developed into one of his most lucrative businesses and an optimal learning experience. On the other hand, despite his knowledge of flying (John is still piloting his own plane), John lost a “ton” of money in the aviation business.

One thing that John had always avoided was corporate settings. Because he was future oriented, he could never picture himself as a “corporate type,” taking orders from other executives or boards. For this reason, when he was offered the presidency of the life insurance company for which he was one of the leading producers in the country, he said no. After further negotiations with the CEO, John agreed to try it. Two of the things that John negotiated before taking the job were that he wouldn’t have to retire at 65 and could deal directly with the CEO instead of having to write memos to communicate, which reflected his
stereotype of how business was done in large companies. During the first few years, John corrected some old problems, developed a new marketing strategy, sold a group business, and hired an actuary to put the company into a new product business.

When John reached 65, the company was going through the transition from a mutual to a stock company along with other structural changes. As a result, he was asked to retire, a painful experience for him given the accompanying pomp and circumstance. Of course, he had no intention of retiring. John has always pictured himself in the future. He currently owns Southeastern Employee Benefits Services, which administers 2,000 benefit plans. He also owns Flex-Pay Business Services, which handles 650 payrolls. At 78, John is not interested in golfing or retirement. He is planning his next business.

Despite his very strong future orientation, John has successfully managed an insurance business for 50 years, taking care of the day-to-day operations. He is particularly interested in working with the accounting and finance aspects of the business, something that is uncommon for most future-oriented leaders who tend to rely on their accountants and analysts. He does not like dealing with the problems of individual employees. This is a present-oriented task that takes a tremendous amount of time and energy. Although he does it, he dislikes this aspect of running a business the most.

When he found that the business he was in did not satisfy his need to drive into the future, John developed other businesses that allowed him to utilize his creative energy. Like Jerry Converse (whose story is told in Chapter 7), John used his stable business as his financial base and used his income from that for the more risky ventures, some of which panned out and others that did not. Before taking a corporate job, he negotiated the terms to better suit his Temporal Alignment and personality. Then, when it was required, he made adjustments to his natural orientation and addressed the issues required of him. At one point, it was suggested to the CEO that he needed to give the workforce a motivational talk to keep their spirits up during a major organizational change. The CEO declined because he did not believe that the workforce was capable of making the change. John volunteered to do the talk. He gave a very motivating presentation highlighting the past accomplishments of the people in the company, pointing out how they have dealt with recent changes in the industry and the products, and he expressed his confidence in their ability to handle future challenges. He bridged every space in time and took them forward in so doing. He has demonstrated repeatedly an ability to adapt his future orientation to changing and new situations.
The following situations come from my organizational experiences over the past 30 years. Names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the organizations and the people. I explain each situation in some detail and provide an accompanying analysis of the leader and the situation. In addition, I provide prescriptions for leaders who find themselves in similar situations.

Nontrad University is a nontraditional school offering business degrees in a large and growing metropolitan area. The president, Ed, was a brilliant scholar who had strong management skills. He was both present oriented and detail oriented. Ed was highly political in all of his behavior. The president had grown up poor in this community and worked his way up the ladder in the college. His mentor considered Ed to be naïve and had spent a great deal of time teaching Ed how to manipulate and control subordinates and board members. Ed was paranoid about maintaining his power. His political sense and his Temporal Alignment made him effective at the control aspects of his job. He put in long hours that included meetings with local leaders about fundraising, reviewing the quality of academic programs, keeping detailed notes on every person who worked at the college, and inspecting the street curbs to make sure they were clean.

Nontrad had been founded to serve the student who was returning to college after many years in the workforce. Classes were scheduled during the day and in the evenings to accommodate working adults. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, other colleges began to recognize the market potential of the nontraditional student and developed comparable programs in the same metropolitan area. Some colleges from other areas even initiated nontraditional programs in the city.

Because of his present orientation and concern about maintaining his power, Ed missed the changing environment. He had surrounded himself with like-minded administrators who continued to operate the same kinds of programs and schedules. When a new administrator wanted to try something new, Ed would approve small incremental changes and then hold that administrator strictly accountable if the change failed. The administrators who failed would be publicly berated and used as the butt of numerous jokes. There was a tremendous fear of making a mistake and, as a result, little innovation occurred.

By the time Ed realized that major changes were necessary, it was too late. An aggressive future-oriented dean went behind Ed’s back to the board. One member of the board contacted Ed and alerted him that there could be a problem. Ed began to make major erratic changes, firing administrators, eliminating programs, cutting departments, adding ma-
jors, and behaving in highly uncharacteristic ways. Shortly after this, he was diagnosed as terminally ill and died of a heart attack within months. The college suffered from declining enrollments, high job dissatisfaction among the faculty and staff, and declining quality. The board hired a future-oriented president to replace Ed. This leader has added an MBA program, established close relationships with the board, and expanded off-campus offerings.

Ed was not Temporally Attuned to the situation. He had been running a stable university, the only one in town geared toward the nontraditional student, for many years. When the competition increased and students had more options, his Temporal Alignment, as well as other personality traits and behaviors, did not allow him to adjust to the changing environment. If Ed had recognized the shortcomings associated with his Temporal Alignment, he could have hired an administrator who would complement him by thinking about the future and developing a strategy to ensure the future of the school.

Serena, the director of public relations for Helping Hand, a large hospital, loves history. She majored in medieval history in college. She began working at the hospital writing press releases. Three years ago, she was promoted to director of external affairs. For the most part, the primary goal of her job is to show the community what a great place the hospital is. This allows Serena to take advantage of her orientation toward the past. She has researched and used every good thing the hospital has done over the past 40 years. Every press release mentions the 40 years of service to the community, and the slogan “40 Years of Healing People” is on every banner.

Because of a highly competent staff, adequate funding, support from the community, and lots of luck, public relations has been an easy job at Helping Hand. Unfortunately, a patient recently died after being given the wrong medications over a two-day period. The cause of the problem was under review for more than a week before it was discovered that the surgeon had made the mistake with the original prescription and that two other physicians and three nurses, all of who should have known better, failed to catch the error. Serena was bombarded with visits and calls from reporters who wanted every detail of the incident. She didn’t know the details and had to be in continuous contact with hospital administrators, the chief of the medical staff, and the head of the nursing association, all of whom were talking to the press independently. As with many people who are strongly oriented toward the past, Serena had to force herself to take care of the many detailed minute-to-minute details that came up. She felt disoriented much of the time and even angry that
this event ruined what it had taken 40 years to build. She was also
disappointed in herself because she knew she wasn’t doing her job well.
To fulfill her responsibilities to the hospital, Serena contacted a public
relations manager at another hospital where a similar event had occurred
recently. She spent a day discussing and formulating a plan for how to
deal with the press and how to release the correct information when the
facts were known.

After the release of the facts in the story, Serena realized that she was
too focused on the past and relied too heavily on the good events of the
past. Now she had to assess the damage that had been done and develop
a strategy to cope with what was bound to be an attitude-altering event. She
worked closely with the strategic planning team to develop a system
for showing the community how the hospital would prevent incorrect
medications from being used in the future, what the hospital was doing
to assist the family of the victim, answering questions and concerns on
an ongoing basis, and reestablishing the hospital’s reputation. She forced
herself to focus on the future.

Doctor Review Systems Company was a midsized and growing com-
pany that administered medical claims for an agency of the federal gov-
ernment. The CEO, George, was a future-oriented leader. He had made
a number of contributions to the company as it developed over the pre-
vious ten years. He was constantly surveying the external environment.
He knew his competition, the government regulations and congressional
trends that might affect the industry, and the future of health care in the
country. He hired several top-notch managers to run the day-to-day opera-
tions of the organization because he had little interest in that aspect of
the business. He initiated structural changes that responded to anticipated
changes, maintained good communications with the agency that admin-
istered their business, and was actively involved in the process of hiring
good employees as the organization expanded.

Although George appeared to deal well with his future orientation and
the shortcomings associated with it, he was thrown a curve. His two top
vice presidents, both of whom were highly competent and the leading
candidates for the CEO position in the succession plan, began to have a
romantic affair. Most employees in the company knew about this, but
George, whose head was always in the future, had not been paying atten-
tion. The affair had affected the organization in many ways that George
had not noticed. Company morale was low for a number of reasons.
These executives were unable to make decisions that affected each other’s
departments. They were often missing in action because of long lunches,
unscheduled breaks, and taking frequent business trips together. The ru-
mors, gossip, and innuendo were distracting to other workers. The affair was public for many months before George knew.

George found out about this when the spouses of the two executives showed up in his office one day and demanded that George do something about the affair. Like many future-oriented leaders, when something like this happens, he felt completely lost. Besides respecting both executives and feeling that this wasn’t his business, he didn’t want to deal with day-to-day personnel issues. He felt that this wasn’t his job. He was angry and resentful that the two people he counted on to handle these types of situations were the causes of the problem. George fired them both. He lost two good executives. This wasn’t the solution that the spouses wanted, and George was tied up for several months handling the jobs of the lost executives and hiring their replacements.

If George had been more present oriented, he would have been able to see the situation developing. He might have been able to talk with the executives, express his attitude and concerns, and help them find a solution to their problem. Like most future-oriented leaders, he wasn’t in touch with an issue that every employee in the company knew about. In this case, George had done the right thing by hiring people who could complement his Temporal Alignment, but the plan fell through. He was not attuned to the situation.

Kapolds, a furniture store that sells high-end furniture in the wealthy suburban neighborhoods surrounding the store, had been in business for 40 years. The company had been profitable enough to support the two owners and their families and provide income for their retirement. Now their sons were working in the business, and between their salaries and the amount required for the retirements of the founders, money was tight. Kapolds had always offered something, however, that most other furniture retailers could not: interior designers. Kapolds had traditionally hired professionally trained designers to work with customers. The designers, who were predominantly female, were paid a minimal hourly wage, plus a commission. In addition, the designers could consult with customers and charge design fees on their own. When many designers only needed or wanted part-time hours and would work without benefits, this arrangement worked well for Kapolds.

As more women began to work full-time, the lack of benefits and the low wages for trained employees became a negative. The store also had increased competition from outlet furniture stores that could obtain name brand furniture at substantial discounts. In addition, new stores had opened that sold the same lines of better furniture. Because furniture is such a large investment, people are willing to travel outside their neighborhoods
to buy it. In addition, Kapolds had rarely advertised over the years. People came to the store to find the brands they wanted and they had a reputation as a fine furniture store. As competitors opened and aggressively advertised, business began to drop.

Marv, one of the founder’s sons who was running the store, noticed the declines. Marv had been raised in the store, working there since he was a child. He hadn’t picked the business; it had picked him. Besides, his father was always there, reminding him of how the company used to be run and expecting Marv to maintain the traditions of the first 40 years. Because his father second-guessed him anyway, Marv had learned that his job was simply to handle daily operations.

One of the designers had worked in the industry before and volunteered to help develop a marketing strategy. On reflection, Marv realized that he did not have the personality (Temporal Alignment) to do that and knew that they needed help anticipating and planning for the future. Much to her surprise, he came up with a unique compensation plan for the designer and asked her to develop a new marketing program and handle some other management duties.

June, the CEO of a large life insurance and annuity company, had worked her way up in the insurance industry during a 20-year career. She had worked in three companies and was hired as CEO of the Insure Company two years before. June is future oriented, and this was the primary reason she was hired. The insurance industry, traditionally very stable and conservative, has undergone immense changes during the past 15 years. Many of the executives working in the industry were attracted to it because of the stability, and many boards are looking for new leadership to create the vision and innovation now required in insurance. June was one of those new leaders.

The Insure Company had been in existence for one hundred years. Although the industry has changed, people still prefer the image of a stable organization when they invest their money. For that reason, June decided to make the hundred-year anniversary a big public relations event for employees, customers, and the community. This created a problem for June, however, because in reality she couldn’t care less about the past of the Insure Company. She knew little more than what she had read in the annual report and other public materials that she had reviewed during the interview process. If the company launched an anniversary celebration, she would need to be front and center, making speeches and “rolling in the history,” as she put it.

June developed a strategy for forcing herself to learn to celebrate the past. She assigned several staffers to do the research and prepare a com-
prehensive report on the company’s evolution. She asked that the report be presented orally in small blocks of time over a month. She gathered photos from archives and began to learn as much as she could about the founders and past CEOs. As she and her staff worked, she used her visioning ability to imagine how past CEOs had worked and planned. She thought about the problems and issues they would have faced given world and local events. She thought about how she might have handled some of the situations they had encountered. By using her ability to imagine, she was able to relive some of the past events and better understand her organization. She also spent time over a series of lunches talking to some older employees and a few retirees. She avoided war stories and gossip and focused on the major changes and innovations that had occurred.

By the time of the anniversary, June had developed a 30-minute speech that she delivered to the employees over a luncheon meeting. She showed photos and talked about how the company had changed and developed over its hundred-year history. She used the company history as a springboard for introducing changes she planned to make and helped the employees understand that change was part of the organizational culture. The history was also summarized into an illustrated brochure that the marketing department developed and sent to all current customers and brokers. The brochure highlighted the stability over time and the openness of the organization to change and innovation to respond to customer needs. In addition, June gave a slightly revised version of the speech to local civic groups. She showed how the company had grown and developed over the years, described the role that the company played in the development of the community, and emphasized the constantly evolving role of business in the city. She talked about the company’s future commitment to the community.

June overcame her reticence to delve into the past by using the cues that interested her the most, change and innovation, linking the past to the future. She focused on the payoff to her and the company in the future of the anniversary celebration. What she found as she attuned herself to the situation was a new appreciation for the importance of the past in shaping the present and the future.

In each of the preceding examples given, the leader did not have the Temporal Alignment called for by the situation. In some, another person was used to supplement or complement the leader’s orientation. In others, the leader forced himself to adapt to the situation. To fail to do so is disastrous. If we think of Temporal Alignment as a basic bias or preference, we can better understand and adjust to various situations. If forced
to do so, right-handed people can use their left hand to write, throw a ball, and pull weeds. If forced to do so, we can use our left foot on the gas pedal of our cars. We may never feel comfortable doing it, even if we have to do it for years. Adapting our Temporal Alignment to new situations is similar. We can do it, preferably for short time periods, but we can adjust if we recognize the need.

At the national level, we often see leaders who are out of sync with the needs of the people they lead. In part, this is because one leader with one Temporal Alignment cannot possibly address the issues that are important to all constituents. Nor can one leader independently respond immediately to every situation that may arise at a national level with the appropriate Temporal Attunement. For example, typically, we expect our presidents to be working toward the future. After September 11, the nation required a leader who could address the current problems. This included fixing the things that were broken, assisting the victims and their families, helping the nation deal with anger and grief, and mobilizing a military response. President Bush effectively filled this role.

A colleague from Africa recently complained to me about the leaders of some African nations. His concern centered on the future orientation of these African heads of state. In his opinion, their future orientation limited their ability to deal with the many serious issues facing Africans on a daily basis. For example, he found the attempts of African leaders to bring modern business to their countries laudable, but couldn’t understand their inability to deal with the starvation and disease that plague their nations. The attitude seems to be that the current problems cannot be fixed today, so it is better to focus exclusively on the future.

Recently, in France, a presidential candidate ran on a pro-Fascism platform. Many people around the world were surprised that citizens of a modern country that suffered tremendously during Hitler’s era could support a candidate with similar views. Nonetheless, the idea that current problems, like high unemployment and a devalued currency, can be blamed on age-old enemies and that a nationalistic approach will cure our ills is not uncommon. Old movements frequently cycle back because many people are past oriented. Even knowing that old attitudes and behaviors did not work is not enough to keep followers focused on the future.

Achieving Temporal Attunement is easier for leaders of countries who understand the concept because they have well-educated people who support and advise them. It is particularly important that they create a balance of different Temporal Alignments among cabinet members and other advisors. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each and knowing
which Temporal Alignment will work best in each situation is critical. In addition, leaders of countries, like leaders of companies and other organizations must recognize their own shortcomings as they relate to time and adjust their natural orientation to fit the issues they face.

**TROUBLE SHOOTING FOR PROBLEMS WITH TEMPORAL ATTUNEMENT**

There are some warning signs that there is a lack of Temporal Attunement. In the following list, I present several common problems, along with a probable diagnosis of the problem.

1. A leader appears to others to be disassociated from the organization. She rarely talks to subordinates and spends most of her time outside the organization. She may come by to briefly explain a new idea, but leaves the idea hanging. This may mean that the leader is future oriented and cannot connect with employees on the day-to-day tasks.

   In this situation, the leader must force herself to become connected by visiting the departments and talking with the workers. She has to follow through on new ideas to make sure that an implementation plan is in place. This may mean that her administrative assistant blocks out time for these meetings and reminds her to keep them. The leader may also have an executive assigned to specific projects who handles the plan for each.

2. A leader makes frequent comments about how poor new workers are. He makes comments about how the organization just cannot hire good people anymore. There may be lots of stories about “the good old days.” This may mean that the leader is past oriented and does not like change. Because turnover of employees is inevitable, this creates negative feelings among new employees who feel as if they can never measure up.

   The leader must make it a point to get to know new employees and observe their work. Again, this means connecting with them in a meaningful way so that old scripts don’t continue to drive his attitude toward workers. He also needs to develop a more optimistic attitude.

3. A leader fails to create strategic plans. This may mean that the leader or the followers are not future oriented. The leader may participate in the process because she knows that she should or the board forces her to do so. The followers may not be future oriented and may resist change.

   The leader must become engaged or turn over authority to create the strategic plan to others who will. If the followers are sabotaging the
plan, the leader must identify the people creating the logjam and get them to comply or leave.

4. A leader skips important steps required to execute orders. When a future-oriented leader gives a command, he may not wait for followers to catch up. In their rush to follow the order they received, followers may skip necessary steps related to safety or other aspects.

   The leader must slow down, follow up on a step-by-step basis for each order, or assign another executive to do the follow up. When an order is given that involves safety, the leader must add extra safeguards.

5. An organization is always behind the competition and takes a long time to implement change. This may indicate that the leader is present oriented and that she does not spend enough time thinking about the future or monitoring the external environment for changes that will affect the organization in the future.

   The leader must force herself to work through visioning exercises and to become more involved in strategic planning. She must leave the organization, attend industry meetings, meet with other executives in other companies, and hire future-oriented executives in her own.

6. Everything is done so quickly that the work environment becomes highly stressful. This stress affects employees and customers. Future-oriented leaders often feel as if the future is rushing toward them, and they must hurry to be ready for it. This creates a negative environment.

   In most cases, it is unnecessary for changes to be made hurriedly.

   The leader needs to slow the pace. This may mean extending the timelines on proposed changes, taking more time for the research phase, or allowing for more careful development.

7. A leader continues to dwell on past failures at either an individual and organizational level for years. She is probably past oriented and cannot change her thinking about people or systems or recognize that both have changed over time. She also feels powerless to make things better because she doesn’t think about the future very often.

   This leader needs to get in touch with the organization, as it exists today. If old problems are still present, she must address those problems or work with the managers who can. She must also work to become more optimistic.

8. Rome is burning and the leader is fiddling. The leader may not realize that the company isn’t paying bills, that morale is low, or that customers are complaining because he is living in his vision of how things should be. In speeches, he talks about the progress that has been made and how positive he feels. Meanwhile the workers are disgusted because the company is about to fold.

   This leader must get in touch with reality. He must check on the status of things in the organization. Again, he may have to force him-
self. Any leader who hasn’t checked the books, talked to employees, or hasn’t read comments from customers in a year, is probably missing something. The excuse that one has surrounded oneself with good people so he doesn’t have to handle the day-to-day tasks just isn’t good enough.

These and other common leadership problems are frequently associated with a leader who is not Temporally Attuned to the situation. Although the problems described here more than likely have numerous causes, failure to adjust to the temporal requirements of any given situation are important and ignored by most leaders. Although most of us on occasion have a sense that the timing is wrong, we may not have any idea about how to fix things.

NOTES


A unique Temporal Alignment drives each leader. This Temporal Alignment comprises variables related to time and personality. Some leaders are past oriented, some are present oriented, and some are future oriented. Each situation requires a specific time orientation. Some situations call for an orientation toward the past, some call for a present orientation, and some call for a future orientation. Temporal Attunement occurs when the leader’s Temporal Alignment matches the time orientation required by the situation.

There is a common perception that all successful leaders are future oriented. It is certainly true that most transformational leaders are highly oriented toward the future. Not all organizations, however, need or would benefit from either future-oriented or transformational leaders. Many leaders are in stable organizations that require only small incremental changes over time. Future-oriented leaders can be counterproductive and disruptive in those organizations. In those cases, present-oriented leaders are optimal; in some situations, past-oriented leaders will be best.

Effective leaders recognize and understand their own Temporal Alignment and find ways to adapt to each situation as it occurs. They may have to force themselves to operate outside of their temporal comfort zone or utilize the Temporal Alignment of other executives or followers. This is the same as assigning followers with the right personalities and skills to deal with various tasks and aspects of specific projects.

I hope that the examples of effective leaders in this book will inspire
others to pay attention to their Temporal Alignment and attempt to adapt to each situation. I have some additional advice related to time orientation for leaders. Following are some final tips.

1. Regardless of their Temporal Alignment, all leaders should develop a vision of the future. The vision should be reviewed on a regular basis. Leaders must monitor their organizations’ progress toward their visions. Temporal Alignment will affect the difficulty of creating and following through on the vision, but it is a critical aspect of modern leadership.

2. Leaders must surround themselves with people who have diverse Temporal Alignments. In a changing business world, a variety of personality traits are necessary in every work environment. Time orientation must be taken into consideration when making hiring decisions, especially at the executive level.

3. Leaders must learn to value the past and the lessons learned from predecessors. This doesn’t mean dwelling on the past, but uncovering the best from what has happened before and building on that knowledge. It also means understanding a problem’s cause and making sure that it is not repeated. Motivating followers requires the ability to link the past accomplishments and experiences to the present and the future. In part, that is how we build self-efficacy or show people that they are capable of performing in the future.

4. Leaders must remember that most people are not future oriented. Future-oriented leaders can continue to bang their heads against brick walls and get angry because followers do not rapidly adjust to change, or they can understand that most people do not. Get over it. Effective leaders develop strategies to drag followers into the future. It isn’t easy, but it is possible; there are specific things that can be done to accomplish it.

5. Leaders must learn to value the strengths of their Temporal Alignments and those of their followers. They must also learn to recognize the weaknesses of each Temporal Alignment and anticipate potential problems related to them.

6. Most leaders need to learn more about personality and other individual differences. Often, leaders move up quickly because they are efficient in their thought processing. This may mean that they overgeneralize or stereotype when dealing with others. Leaders must learn to recognize the many differences among people and adjust their own behavior.

This book is not intended to explain all of the mysteries of leadership. It explains only Temporal Alignment and Temporal Attunement, two small pieces of the puzzle of how effective leaders function. A complete
understanding of leadership requires many years of study and experience. We must examine the various specific aspects of leadership that will help us to understand more fully how we can develop into successful and effective leaders. Leaders do make a difference, and for that reason, understanding the complexity of effective leadership is important.
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