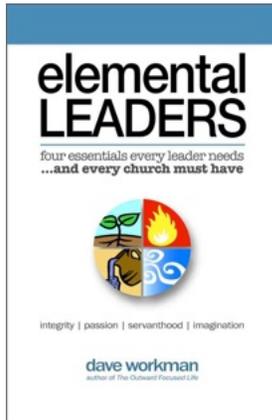


ELEMENTAL LEADERS: FOUR ESSENTIALS EVERY LEADER NEEDS... AND EVERY CHURCH MUST HAVE [The Elemental Group Resources]

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Chapter 1: The Four Elements Overview

After decades of leading in various capacities and observing leaders as a follower, I've come to believe that effective leadership could be boiled down to four basic factors, what I call elemental leadership. For the sake of simplicity and retention, I use the four foundational elements that the Ancient Greeks reduced the world to: Earth, Fire, Water, and Air.

Earth/Integrity. There's something solid, rooted, and grounded in the elemental leader's character. What's more, they build a similar integrity in the organizations they lead. They are driven by principles and values and a deep desire for praxis in their personal lives, their teams, their organizations and their practices.

Fire/Passion. This catalytic element fuels inspiration and energy; elemental leaders bring heat to others and to situations in order to enable things to combust. Things happen. Every successful leader I've known had a fire in their belly for a mission that ignited in others a sense of empowerment and a longing for accomplishment. That doesn't mean they have a salesperson-type personality or are extreme extroverts. It does mean they have to be able to express that inner-passion for a particular purpose in some contagious way.

Water/Servanthood. Elemental leaders deeply understand that the organization (or family or team) is not about them—as a matter of fact, it's more important than oneself. Elemental leaders innately grasp they're part of something bigger than themselves. They regularly fight with and shake off any sense of entitlement, giving life rather than expecting it. They are outwardly focused and feel as though they are being poured out. Many leaders with a Water/Servanthood orientation have grown up in the organization.

Air/Imagination. There's a certain amount of blue sky-ing elemental leaders enjoy with their teams and leaders. They have no problem grilling up sacred cows or questioning organizational methodologies. There's a "what-if" factor that fires their neurons regularly and a certain amount of calculated risk that cultivates organizational "room-to-breathe." Healthy organizations can be characterized by these same four key traits: Integrity, Passion, Servanthood, and Imagination. While each of these is significant in its own right, and while different organizations may naturally excel at some more than others, all must be present and effectively balanced.

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Chapter 2: Earth/Integrity

Over the years I've admired those leaders who seemed rooted and grounded in who they were. To put it simply, it was as if their walk and their talk were fully synchronized. They were solid and trustworthy and their emotional intelligence and self-awareness were integrated with their competencies and character. The simplest word for this kind of wholeness is integrity. Elemental leaders understand the power of integrity within the organizations and teams that they lead. They recognize the critical nature of "organizational oneness."

Typically, when we talk about integrity we default to only thinking about it at an individual level. But organizations must be built with integrity as well. In architecture, the triangle is understood to be the strongest structural shape; likewise, with what I call the *Organization Integrity Triangle*. The health and effectiveness of any organization depends on the strength of each of the points of the triangle.

In the Organizational Integrity Triangle model, we find three simple, critical structural components: Personal, Missional and Systemic Integrity. If any one of those breaks down, the church, or any organization, will collapse. An effective leader will be paying attention to these three components on a regular basis.



The health and effectiveness of any church and its mission is dependent on the spiritual integrity, vitality, and vision of the leaders. Leaders must be healthy, focused, and empowered by the Spirit. Healthy, focused churches require healthy, focused leaders because the soul of a local church is bound up in the heart of its leader or leaders. Whether you're leading a church, organization or ministry, it will invariably look like you.

By personal integrity, I mean the leader's personal wholeness. I can't stress how important this is, even in connection with all the personal requirements of leadership. I have seen too many leaders with strong leadership gifts fall apart because of character issues or lack of self-awareness. Some were spiritually mature, but emotionally under-developed; others were emotionally mature and spiritually under-developed. How many leaders were in the news over the last few years because of character failure? Every leader has to be diligent at this. It breaks my heart to hear of a church leader with so much potential, do something that shatters his or her integrity, and thus affect the bigger picture. We have to cultivate a healthy measure of self-awareness, which means we have to have some permission-giving systems built into our lives.

Do we have people in our lives that we give permission to speak truth to us which includes rebuking, correcting, and probing without fear of retribution? Do we ask them periodically: what do you see in me that frustrates you? How am I doing as a leader...as a friend? Then do I do that at a divine level as well? Have I given Jesus permission to reveal areas of my life where integrity is questioned? Do I schedule "searchlight" times with Jesus?

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Self-leadership means that we notch up our level of self-awareness, and that usually means finding places where we are willing to take the risk of being vulnerable. That's because a blind spot is just that: a blind spot. If we really want to help others grow as whole people, then we need to discover our own stuff.

The second component on the Organizational Integrity Triangle is Missional Integrity. There is a plethora of books about mission and vision, so I'll not flog a dead horse here. Sometimes those words are used interchangeably, but for simplicity's sake, I define vision as "what you want your organization to be when it grows up." Mission is what you want your organization to do. In the Kingdom of God, it's what you believe the Holy Spirit has called you to be...and what you are called to do.

Let's personalize this. One thing that identifies people who are healthy and productive spiritually and emotionally is their measure of self-awareness. Self-awareness is seeing yourself as you really are in order that God can work into you what he sees as your potential. What we keep or hide from God is what hinders our spiritual and emotional growth. Self-awareness is ultimately about searching and finding the answer to two big philosophical questions in life: who am I and why am I here?

But just like people, organizations as diverse from corporations to churches often have little self-awareness. Why does the organization exist? Strategic church leaders must come to a place where they wrestle with those same questions for their church. They take their people through difficult times and changes to fulfill their purpose as an organization. Wrestling with those questions will lead you to discover what your mission is. We do out of who we are.

I'm not trying to suggest what your mission should be and I'm not talking about the size of our churches, but I am saying we must be honest as it relates to what we say our mission is. Your mission and vision is what will keep your heart pumping as a leader and will be the primary catalyst for how people will respond to you. People respond to vision far more than to needs.

That brings us to the last point on the Organizational Integrity Triangle: Systemic integrity. Do you have the systems and processes in place to support your mission? Are resources being put toward the things that drive the mission? Is the organization built to support the mission? Are the right people in the right seats? Do you have the right volunteer leaders in every area? Are you providing enough structure for them so the mission can be accomplished? Are you resourcing them, for what they need to accomplish the mission? Do they know if they are achieving success? Do they have clear goals? Do they feel supported?

Leaders have to pay close attention to organizational systems, no matter how unsexy the work may seem. What is your system for accomplishing your mission? Do you have a system by which your personal integrity is nurtured and held accountable? All three points on the Organizational Integrity Triangle are interrelated and interdependent.

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Elemental Leaders Chapter 3: Fire/Passion

There is no leadership without fire, without a passion that will drive even the reluctant leader to step forward to do the right thing. Passion is marked by a willingness to do anything, or as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux expressed, “The true measure of loving God is to love him without measure.” God has called us to love him with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. But he doesn’t stop there: we’re called to do likewise with our neighbor, the people around us. He demands an internal drive that compels us to think missionally.

Instead, in our churches we often hear more about self-control and what we’re not supposed to do instead of a passionate craving, a hunger, for God and the people he loves.

Spiritual leaders must foster genuine passion if they want passionate organizations. It starts with you: what stokes excitement and dedication in you for God and his mission? Nurturing and developing passion at a personal level is another book altogether, but you probably intuitively know what your spiritual pathways are. I would certainly recommend the writings of Dallas Willard or Gary Thomas. For me taking the time to worship God via music, reading apologetics that challenge me intellectually, or simply asking trusted, passionate people to lay hands on me and pray, can each increase my awe of God.

Yet it’s one thing to be passionate about God and his mission and another to be able to infect others with a corporate expression of it and to create what Ken Blanchard famously called “raving fans.” So, the obvious question is: what stirs passion in others and focuses them toward a common vision? If elemental leaders provide catalytic heat to situations, what fuels organizational passion best? I’ve observed six primary fire-starters for any organization. The first three are linear in progression; the last three each stand alone as potentially creating corporate cohesive movement and effectiveness.

Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo. First, a leader has to deeply feel, communicate and rally dissatisfaction with the status quo by explaining why the current situation is unsustainable or even unconscionable. If a definition of leadership is basically moving a group of people from one place to another, then the first part of our job as catalytic leaders is to define reality; it’s a vital part of what we do. It’s what Jesus did over and over for his disciples. Catalytic leaders have to turn the heat up and help ‘people understand why maintaining the present status quo isn’t right or healthy and why inaction is not an option. The proverbial frog in the kettle on the stove doesn’t realize how hot the water is becoming until it’s too late and he’s cooked because he didn’t sense the danger of the current routine.

At some point, leaders sense that they can’t stomach where they are anymore, or their organization’s apathy. We begin to rumble with what pastor and author Bill Hybels refers to as “holy discontent” which is a growing discomfort with ourselves or what we see around us. Unfortunately, I’ve observed that many organizations rarely create space for mavericks in their ranks. It’s understandable: leaders may have gotten burned by pseudo-mavericks who are complainers and contrarians because of an agenda driven by a negative-oriented personality or

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a narcissistic need for recognition. But “loyal mavericks” are invaluable: they are devoted to the mission and vision of the organization and will raise a red flag when they sense there is a subtle drifting from the core values. Their dissension with conformity, which may have surreptitiously crept into the team, is guided by a commitment to the organization’s health and mission. In a healthy team, loyal mavericks feel safe in a truth-friendly environment that values risk-taking.

Paint a Compelling Picture of the Future. The follow-up point is to create a compelling picture of the future, of what could be. For those of us in spiritual leadership, this has to ultimately come from God. But be sensitive to not paralyze the process by hyper-spiritualizing this: God may use your imagination or even a recognized “felt need.” The process of discovering a corporate vision may come as well from the imaginative, prophetic voice of your leadership team. Leaders have to drive the process and discovery.

Communicate the Vision Clearly and Over and Over. This brings us to the next organizational passion fire-starter: communicate the vision clearly and repeatedly. Way more than you think. Key memory-sticking phrases are critical; they don’t have to necessarily be clever or even original, but they have to be memorable. Without a clear vision, your people have nothing to move toward and nowhere to go. What you’re really driving is the non-manipulative process of corporate vision ownership. Nothing should thrill a leader more than overhearing a “private” in the organization describing the mission in a way that sounds as if they personally dreamed it up. That should never, ever threaten a leader. Actually, it’s what you long for.

Pay Attention to Promptings. Sometimes we simply need to be aware of promptings from the Holy Spirit. This is an “internal nudge,” the inner whisper of the Spirit of God. It can come with a seemingly out-of-the-blue intuitive thought or impression, or a sudden imaginative picture.

Do Something. “It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things.” Oft attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, this quote exemplifies the activist nature of passionate leaders. Sometimes you just need to do something. Anything. It’s hard to steer a car when it’s not moving. This doesn’t sound very spiritual, but often people just want to see their church doing something meaningful.

Incidentally, it’s really difficult to make a wrong or even stupid decision in the Kingdom of God if your heart is aimed at heaven with a desire to please God. He has the ability to redeem every decision; it’s much less about geography than “heart ownership.”

My friend Steven Manuel describes it like this: Suppose I go to my kid’s room at bedtime and am puzzled to find him standing on his head. Suppose I ask him, “What in the world are you doing?” and he responds by declaring he’s doing what he heard me tell him to do: “Go stand on your head.” Steven then smiles and says, “No, I asked you to ‘go to bed’, not ‘stand on your head’, and finds himself secretly thrilled at the idea that his son did what he thought his father said. A heart of obedience is what the Father wants, the simple desire to please him. Obedience trumps clarity every time.

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Celebrate Successes. Leaders who are stoking the fire element and expressing passion for their organizational goals will typically gloss over this one. It may be that at this point their own adrenaline will drive them to take the next hill after a specific goal has been reached. But without some sense of celebration, followers will forget the purpose of a passionate appeal or initiative. Celebrating a success centers everyone on the true point of a particular initiative.

For healthy organizations that accomplish a specific objective, having a value celebrated through a personalized story is crucial. Not only does it remind everyone that a goal was accomplished, but it reinforces the idea that the organization is Elemental Leaders values-driven above all else. This is far more important than communicating a specific financial or numbers achievement. Don't forget to take the time to celebrate success at any level as it can light a fire of passion toward the mission and vision of your organization.

Chapter 4: Water/Servanthood

Water has long been associated with servanthood. In Biblical times, it was the servant who offered water to thirsty guests and who washed their feet. In Isaiah's powerful, prophetic passage on the Suffering Servant who rescues and leads his people to freedom, he uses the metaphorical phrase "...he poured out his life" as someone who is emptied out for the sake of others.

A servant-oriented leader clearly expresses and models the credo that "it's not about me." While they may carry a sense of destiny and calling, they keep that internal and deeply personal. Instead, they authentically communicate that the church, the mission and the mechanism are actually more important than them. They carefully guard their hearts and motivations by avoiding any semblance of entitlement or privilege. They bring energy to others and the vision rather than requiring or demanding it. They cultivate an outward-focus personally and in the organizations they lead. The primary characteristics that highlight the water element of leadership are the lack of a sense of entitlement and the betterment of the followers in the pursuit of a vision.

Author Scott Sinek articulates the danger of "entitlement creep" and how leaders can begin to feel arrogantly bulletproof in their decisions. In describing effective leadership, he writes:

(Leaders) are often willing to sacrifice their own comfort for ours, even when they disagree with us.... Leaders are the ones who are willing to give up something of their own for us such as their time, their energy, their money, maybe even the food off their plate. When it matters, leaders choose to eat last. The leaders of organizations who rise through the ranks not because they want it, but because the tribe keeps offering higher status out of gratitude for their willingness to sacrifice are the true leaders worthy of our trust and loyalty. All leaders, even the good ones, can sometimes lose their way and become selfish and power hungry, however. What makes a good leader is that they

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eschew the spotlight in favor of spending time and energy to do what they need to do to support and protect their people.

A true leader is always a servant. Leadership is never seen as a self-esteem enhancer. A platform for influence is never held on to; it's not a white-knuckle ride. Effective leaders are servants. They don't serve some mythical "out-there" folks—they serve the people they lead. Always.

I've always enjoyed taking prospective hires to a restaurant, primarily to create a more relaxed environment, but also to observe how they treat the servers. Not all servants are good leaders, but all good leaders are servants.

Servant leadership demands that team development is vital. When it comes to achieving a corporate mission true servant-orientated leaders value a team-based approach. The ability to do more and accomplish greater goals is achieved by coalescing the strengths of a team. Elemental leaders live by the classic adage: imagine what can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit. Leaders today must lean more into empowerment rather than delegation, and values and direction over micromanagement.

Servant-leadership is most effective when combined with clear visionary communication and expectations. Don't confuse the servant leader with being mousy or afraid to take charge. While Jesus is often portrayed as a soft-skill leader as he related to his team ("Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends"), he was absolutely resolute in his mission and frequently confronted his team with hard-edged truths about themselves and their focus toward that mission.

Leadership requires speaking the truth about the organization's productivity and about people's abilities and capacities, but with genuine love for the leaders and workers you serve with. This isn't a mushy, idealized picture of leadership, but a reflection of the most amazing leader that ever walked the planet. The Water/Servant approach is about learning how to speak the truth with genuine love. As a matter of fact, Paul claims that the universal spiritual organization known as the Church, which has a clearly defined mission, functions best as it interdependently operates by love.

Chapter 5: Air/Imagination

The power of imagination is too often overlooked in management and leadership circles and is typically the least active in churches and teams. At a personal level, there may be a physiological reason why we have trouble with innovation and its catalytic instigators: imagination and creativity. According to some neuropsychologists, part of the way our brain functions in order to not burn out is by creating neural pathways so as not to expend energy on what is routine, thereby allowing us to focus on things that need specific attention. Over time, these can become neural ruts. We all have them, and as you might imagine, the older you get, the harder it is to develop new patterns and climb out of old ruts.

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What artists often do is begin with the creative question, “What could be?” But leaders who are “Air/Imagination challenged” will often respond with, “Yes, but artists start with a blank canvas. I have a complex organization that’s x-amount-of-years-established with org charts and systems and processes and financial responsibilities and yada, yada, yada. I don’t have a blank canvas!”

But what if you did? What if you thought differently about those organizational boundaries? In reality, artists have boundaries as well. To start, the size of the canvas. While their expression of colors seems infinite, they begin with only a few primary ones. They may also have restrictions of time, supplies and their own limited experiences from which their imagination resources. Furthermore, they may be commissioned and must consider the satisfaction of their benefactor.

One way to think about the leadership “blank canvas” is to begin with the two most basic questions: “What’s our business?” and “How are we doing?” Based on that simple “status quo” probe, leaders next have to assess how their current strategy is working and be honest with what’s not. That’s followed by the obvious question: what will we do differently? That’s a huge creative endeavor and the first stab at a corporate blank canvas.

Perhaps the biggest barrier to the Air/Imagination element of leadership is the fear of change. There is a lot beneath the surface in organizational fear of change, and the leader’s personal fear, but every leader must subscribe to a foundational truth: there is no growth without change. The corollary to that is there is no change without letting go of the past.

It’s a simple principle, but we can’t reach for the new without letting go of the old. It’s a bit naive to think it won’t be painful to some degree. Letting go of anything typically entails a measure of grief and most of us will avoid grief as much as conflict. Obviously, the greater the sense of loss, the greater the grief. Nevertheless, if we want to grow our ministries in depth, influence, and reach, we will inevitably have to let go of something.

The element of Air/Imagination is easily choked by the sometimes overwhelming day-to-day routine and thought consumptive operational-side of leadership, but it is this vital element that is missing in so many churches and organizations. It’s the ability to wonder and interact with the question “What if?”

Carving out an allowance of time to wonder through questions is crucial work for every leader. If you lean toward introversion, it’s imperative to regularly schedule alone time to dream about your organization, ministry area, department or family. For instance, I did my best thinking in my car, taking day-long drives by myself, about twice a month, often mulling over a single problem or simply dreaming about what could be. This was not a Moses-complex of “going-up-the-mountain-and-coming-down-with-commandments,” but rather a practice for my own sanity. It was a better way for me to gather my imaginative thoughts since I tended to be a slower, non-verbal processor. As a result, I would take any ideas to our leadership team to process, revamp or question, but the time alone allowed me to mix my imagination with prayer and listening.

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For those of us perfectionists, the fear of making a mistake can be debilitating for a leader. But if we're not willing to be wrong, chances are terribly high that we'll never come up with anything creative. Creativity demands the process of elimination or, as I like to call it, the process of humiliation. Albert Einstein quipped, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." True innovation absolutely demands failures and false starts because it's simply part of the learning process. Often, it's in the failures that our true direction and purpose is discovered. Entrepreneurs know that the company they founded may look and produce things very differently than what they started; for them, it's the initiating and forward-movement aspects that stimulate them.

Wise spiritual leaders have learned that followership is not given because of how perfectly a leader leads, but rather how quickly they own their mistakes and failures. A leader's credibility with their followers is exponentially devalued when he or she shifts blame to others when they're ultimately at fault.

The Air/Imagination element is often overlooked in leadership development the same way that research-and development is usually the first budget item to get cut during lean times. But don't let that stop you. My personal experience is that creative thinking is often best expressed when resources are thin, forcing more innovative ways to attack problems or promote growth.

Regardless, carve out some time to reflect on how your organization is nurturing its creative juices or, conversely, how subliminal or subconscious forces are hindering any entrepreneurial thinking. Are you overdue for some innovative ways to further your mission and vision or realigning resources to achieve greater impact? When was the last Big Idea that caused your mission to leap forward? Is it time for a new one?

Chapter 6: Discovering Your Element

This chapter consists of a survey that the reader can take to help determine which element they naturally lean into. It cannot be summarized.

Chapter 7: Assessing Your Church

The primary objective for any leader is to discern what the "best course" is for the people they lead. In other words: what needs to be done today in order to complete the mission tomorrow? Elemental leaders are consumed with determining what is needed to keep their church healthy, effective and moving forward. That also implies they have a high degree of organizational "self-awareness."

As a leader, you have the responsibility of assessing which elements in your church need attention, but you cannot do that alone. For one, you more-than-likely lean into one or two of them as your primary mode of operating and that's the paradigm by which you view your organization. In other words, you can't help but have blind spots.

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Earth/Integrity. At its most basic level, the Earth/Integrity element can be assessed by a simple metric: is the mission of the organization being accomplished? Any healthy organization has some way of measuring its success. It may even be by benchmarking and being challenged against itself year over year. Even if accomplishment is measured in a squishier way, say, influence, there is always a way of measuring that. It is absolutely no fun to play a game and have no idea how to win. There must be a reward and outcome for our work both personally and organizationally.

But “mission accomplishment” has to be weighed against other values, such as relational and organizational health, long-term sustainability, individual worker (employee or volunteer) satisfaction, and so on. Regardless of the tool, the only way an assessment has any value is by the degree of self-awareness the one being assessed has. This is where the value of a team comes into play and a broader view of reality can be determined, particularly if they’ve had humility and a lack of defensiveness and protection is modeled for them.

Try starting with the following questions. Are tasks getting done that need to get done, or are you regularly filling in the gaps at the last minute to get things completed? Can you honestly say that your organizational mission is actually what everyone is focused on? Do the various departments or ministry areas feel connected with each other or is there a common theme if feeling siloed? Asking questions regarding the wholeness of yourself and your organization is vital work for the elemental leader. The integration of you as a leader and the mission and processes for getting things done is of ultimate importance.

Fire/Passion. Is your church (or team, department, or ministry area) lagging in passion? Has a dull acceptance of the status quo settled in? Is there a growing sense of “organizational boredom,” a ho-hum approach to the mission? When was the last time your team sensed the need for a big challenge? How long has it been since the people in your organization were challenged with something larger than themselves? When was the last time they sensed a need to sacrifice for the greater good? If people don’t have anything worth dying for (at least in the figurative sense of personal sacrifice), they really don’t have anything worth living for. When was the last time your people sensed that they were involved in something that was changing lives for the better? Elemental leaders know that periodically their people need to be challenged with something that is beyond their abilities at an individual level.

Water/Servanthood. Elemental leaders understand that the accomplishment of the mission is dependent on the people that they lead. They also viscerally know their personal ambition and welfare is secondary to the organization they lead.

A true servanthood atmosphere has to be modeled, taught and clearly expressed as part of the corporate culture. It will never just happen. We human beings naturally look out for number one; it is part of our fallen nature. The leader must assume responsibility for the culture.

One last thought. Culture is often difficult to assess, simply because it’s the water we swim in. I’m sure no fish gives a second thought to being in water as it’s all it knows. It’s so important to

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get an outsider's view of your world. Don't be afraid of using assessments and bringing in coaches and consultants that you trust.

Air/Imagination. Organizations have a relatively short shelf life without innovation and, oddly enough, few allot time resources to imagination and creativity. As with any organization, this critical element must be nurtured and promoted by the leader. Regardless of whether this is your element or not, the good news is that acquiring these necessary skills can be learned and developed.

Over several years, the authors of *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators* interviewed hundreds of innovators and nearly five-thousand executives to distinguish the disparate ways of thinking that innovative leaders use over the average leader. The simple fact is that innovators think differently and as a result, act differently. Their surveys uncovered five key behavioral patterns.

First was their ability to practice associational thinking. They loved connecting seemingly unrelated ideas and difficulties to create new ways of thinking. Innovators never seemed to shy away from uncovering other organizations and people who had solved similar problems, often simply asking if someone else had already come up with a solution.

Second, they tended to be keen observers. For instance, it has long been known that the cleverest comedians are typically good at observing and interpreting with humor the unique foibles of humans and even their own responses to life's circumstances. Likewise, imaginative leaders seem to have a heightened sense of noticing and then taking the time to interpret their observations.

Third, observation led to the practice of questioning why, as in why we or others do this or that.

Fourth, innovators practice networking with a diversity of people. They see their interaction with people of various backgrounds as a way of garnering new understandings.

Last, imaginative leaders experiment. They typically don't want to wait for data; instead, they want to make data! Experimentation allows for the creation of new data points.

At an organizational level, how are those five practices being developed in your leaders? If there seems to be a dearth of these practices, you have just discovered your primary way of assessing the strength of the Air/Imagination element. Elemental leaders intuitively know that the Air/Imagination element is crucial, but often the busy-ness of management crowd it out. The truth is: no future-oriented organization can afford to overlook it.

Chapter 8: Moving Forward

Most good leaders want to develop themselves as best they can, whether that be attending conferences, seeking mentors, reading books, taking assessments, rubbing shoulders with other leaders, and so on. Like everything else in life, it doesn't mean anything without application. I

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can read and study until I'm blue in the face, but the first step toward effective leadership is simply asking the question: What am I going to do about it?

Jesus demands that his followers become reflective when it comes to personal perception when he says, "Why do you notice the little piece of dust in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the big piece of wood in your own eye? How can you say to your friend, 'Let me take that little piece of dust out of your eye'? Look at yourself! You still have that big piece of wood in your own eye. You hypocrite! First, take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust out of your friend's eye."

This is a leadership issue because he's talking about the need to help others discover the things that cause them pain or limit their ability to see their world effectively or function at the peak of their ability. It first requires a high degree of self-leadership. Then in challenging his followers on the cost of discipleship, Jesus employs a metaphor that implies a principle of organizational self-awareness: "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"

While focusing his followers on personal discipleship, Jesus uses an example of organizational discernment. Our churches, ministries, and organizations must be aware of their own limitations and Achilles' heels as well as their barrier-breaking potential and scope.

The people you lead, and the world your church or ministry has the opportunity to influence and transform, deserve the best. No organization can flourish long-term without the four foundational elements: Integrity, Passion, Servanthood, and Imagination. My deepest hope is that you bring out the best and highest capabilities in the people you are privileged to lead. It's all for the Kingdom.

For more resources, visit www.elementalgroup.org

The Elemental Group 

The logo for The Elemental Group features the text "The Elemental Group" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a circular icon containing a white crosshair design.