LEADING BY DOING

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As organizations increase their use of teamwork, empowerment, and flat structures, it becomes more and more important to decrease psychological distance between leaders and their employees.[1] The closer employees feel to their leaders, the more involved, committed, and loyal they will feel. In contrast, the greater the distance, the greater the potential for employee alienation, distortions in communication, and selective filtering of information up the organizational hierarchy.[2] Unfortunately, studies about the relationship between leadership and interpersonal connections with employees indicate a troubling picture. For example, M. W. McCall and colleagues found that, as rank increased,

- Less time was spent on the shop floor.
- More time was spent outside the manager's department.
- More time was spent in the manager's own office.
- More time was spent outside the organization.[3]

As responsibilities increase, this seems to lead inevitably to bigger leader-employee distance—unless direct action is taken to stop this natural process. The direct action we propose is the process of "leading by doing." This consists of a leader's taking 5 to 10 percent of his or her regular work time to do the actual work of organizational employees. Leading by doing involves taking part

in the technical and affective aspects of working with employees. This is accomplished through doing "real work," participating in employee projects and routines, being willing to share one's own thoughts and emotions, and shifting from the position of leader to that of a genuine co-worker for the given period. Doing so will help managers to gain business knowledge, more accurate access to internal communication, and a genuine connection with employees. In this chapter, we build a case to show that the practice of leading by doing yields the following outcomes: (1) it reduces the psychological distance between management and employees; (2) it increases leaders' learning about the organization; (3) it builds trust between leaders and their employees; and (4) it heightens organizational commitment on the part of employees and leaders.

When leaders implement leading by doing, the work they do needs to be (1) real, (2) taken seriously, and (3) done consistently. The amount of time leaders take to do this should be up to 10 percent of their working week, but the actual amount of time is less important than meeting these three criteria, of real work being taken seriously and done on a regular basis. In this chapter, we discuss why leading by doing is an effective leader strategy.

Leading by Even More Than Wandering Around

The leading-by-doing approach builds on some of the principles of the management-by-wandering-around (MBWA) technique,[4] but it has some significant differences. In the MBWA method, leaders are encouraged to spend time walking around in the organization, visiting departments and cubicles, socializing with their employees, and engaging in small talk. This is done to build a sense of community, to help the leaders be better informed about employees' needs and concerns, and of course, also to demonstrate to employees that leaders are approachable. Although MBWA can certainly be helpful in building links with employees, it does not guarantee the kind of real connection that shared work can. This can be seen through the following example:

> The chief executive officer of a major financial services business told me, with some air of resigned bewilderment, how he had learned from a recent employee attitude survey that he was perceived as being too remote and should spend more time in the branches talking to staff. Sound advice, but what happened was that whenever he dropped into a branch an air of panic ensued. On his unexpected calls, instead of warm and friendly exchanges there was stilted formality. His arrival created a great flurry as an office space was cleared for him. When he would sit with a local staff member in her office and ask how things were going, instead of frank insights he would

get a lot of agitated reassurances mixed with polite small talk. The branch managers evidently dreaded his visits. Some staff were more appreciative of the fact that he cared enough to come by, but they saw his tours as basically a cosmetic exercise. "I felt like I was conducting royal visits," he said miserably. Shortly afterward, he gave the visits up.[5]

A leader of an organization cannot simply enter an office and expect everybody to be open with him or her. Social relationships do not work this way. They need time and cultivation. Even if an organization puts much energy and capital into formal communication channels, such as grievance mechanisms, or into informal activities like the Friday beer blast, there is still a good chance that leaders will not be able to establish fruitful social relations and receive the information they need. To lead by doing, managers take a different approach to getting close to employees and understanding the work—by involving themselves in actually doing the work.

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Leading by Doing: Better Communication across Hierarchies

Information is often referred to as the most important resource a manager has.[6] Obtaining direct, unfiltered information is essential in order to gain a clear picture of the organization and make accurate decisions. In discussing his very hands-on leadership style, John deButts, former chairman of AT&T, talked about the need to "have a good day-to-day feel for the way the business is going. The quality of your decisions depends on the quality of your input, on how unvarnished your information is after it has passed up the chain of command."[7] However, structural factors can often distort communication and the flow of information. Through leading by doing, a manager may get access to one of the most valuable sources of information in an organization: small talk. Through small talk, employees and leaders express up-to-date thoughts, ideas, and concerns.[8] Being part of daily small talk helps employees, as well as leaders, to be informed. It can alert and warn the leader, particularly if what he or she is hearing differs from what the official corporate reports say.

For example, small talk foresaw the costly delay of a product in development at Nokia well before management knew what was going on. As reported in the *Financial Times,* "When Nokia announced in late July that its next

generation of mobile phones was three months behind schedule, it lost more than $50bn of its market value in a matter of hours. The delay caught the top managers as badly off guard as it did investors. Yet somewhere inside the Finnish mobile phone company were undoubtedly project planners, designers and purchasing executives who knew full well that the scheduled release date was unrealistic. Perhaps they were even laying bets as to when their elders and betters would wise up."[9] Companies' small talk can be a vital source of information. Much of small talk is about private, non-work-related matters. However, "That's not to say that corporate vision, values and objectives don't have a place in regular conversations." Don Zieman, a purchasing executive for Magna International, an automotive-parts company, observes, "Informal discussion allows me to test my assumptions about how the company is actually going to achieve its corporate objectives. Conversation that builds, that bounces back and forth, is tremendous help in showing me how I fit into the bigger picture."[10] Having senior leadership available to take part in that small talk is a prime way of facilitating more accurate communication up and down the corporate hierarchy.

Small talk is also important because it is in this mundane way that organizational rules are interpreted, information is exchanged, and a common stance toward organizational events is formed.[11] For example, a study of police officers showed that they use coffee breaks and other "dead time" to talk with one another about their handling of emergency calls. Official department texts that guide police officer behavior in such situations are interpreted based on the social sharing of actual events and actions. This creates among the officers a type of organizational knowledge about how to handle cases in their specific area, whereas the texts were all written for general incidents. Thus, the small talk decreases the officers' uncertainty about how to act and guarantees the development of a common stance. For superiors, not knowing these group standards can be a disadvantage when they try to change work routines and texts.[12]

Last, small talk is powerful because it communicates not only information but also the feelings employees have toward organizational events and work processes. Events about which people have feelings are regularly shared with others, including—and when relevant to work, especially—with work colleagues. Rimé and colleagues found that social sharing of emotion is an everyday reality.[13] Up to 90 percent of all affective events are shared with others, with no significant sex, age, or cultural differences. Embedded in these affective accounts lay information that the manager needs to have—information that reflects the hearts and guts of his or her employees.

To hear things by "the grapevine" at all, it is critical to have real ties to employees—ties that can be established by working genuinely together on the same task. People tend to open up slowly, but they are more prone to open up to people they perceive as having something in common with themselves.[14] The distance between leaders and employees is not conducive to this atmosphere of trust and comfort.[15] Working together can lead to mutual experiences, leading to more comfortable access to small talk, leading to a real exchange of ideas about the workplace.

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Leading by Doing: Managerial Learning about the Organization

In a large bakery in Vienna, Austria, with 250 employees and 24 branches throughout the country, the two founding brothers, Robert and Gerhard Ströck, still work two shifts a day making bread and other pastries. "Because we are always sitting right in the middle . . . we are not only 'bosses' who simply sit here talking nonsense, if one can say so. We simply are involved in cleaning up, we are involved in production, we are involved in pumping up tires, we are involved in repairing machines, we are involved in repairing the gate. Simply said, if something goes wrong, we are immediately within reach. . . . and as a consequence it simply works."[16]

The case of the Vienna bakery demonstrates the quality of entrepreneurial-style leadership and illustrates leading by doing. In companies in which employees work their way up through the ranks, leading by doing is a continuous process. For example, Lee Iacocca worked his way up from sales clerk to the CEO of Ford and Chrysler.[17] Akio Morita started at Sony as an engineer and stayed in touch with the technical work throughout his career there.[18] Ingvar Kamprad began selling mail-order ballpoint pens and subsequently built up the IKEA furniture empire.[19] The American general George S. Patton Jr. realized the importance of having leaders see for themselves what was going on among their troops and during World War II ordered all of his senior commanders to spend part of every day away from their desks and in the field.[20]

What we see from these examples, large and small, is that actively working with employees gives leaders insight, knowledge, and opportunities to learn about their companies. It involves what Hamel, in more dramatic language, describes as being new revolutionary leaders.[21] Why is this the case? Much of it has to do with learning on the part of the leader and the resulting organizational learning. In the growing literature on organizational learning and knowledge management,[22] there is an awareness of how leaders learn in organizations. In an illustrative simplification, Antonacopoulou describes two types of leaders, one at each end of the learning continuum: mathophobic (learning averse) and philomathic (learning loving):[23]

Mathophobic managers are those who are aware of the need to learn, yet they are reluctant to learn (i.e., they deny the responsibility). Mathophobic managers tend to be risk averse in their learning approach. They tend to go by the book, to wait passively for the organization to provide them with the necessary resources to learn and on the whole lack personal initiative and are apathetic about their self-improvement. On this basis, an individual would be described as being mathophobic if they lack confidence in their ability to learn, if they lack ambition to progress, if they refuse to take personal responsibility in developing themselves or have no determination or clear sense of direction and are unwilling to explore different learning avenues

On the other hand, philomathic managers are the individuals who are appreciative of the need to learn and engage in a conscious and active learning process to improve themselves, beyond the boundaries of the context in which they operate. They demonstrate this attitude by seeking exposure within their job, aiming to make the most out of their learning resources and opportunities they have available and taking personal initiative. . . . Philomathia is the passion for self-development.[24]

Leading by doing is a structured way for leaders to explore their own abilities to be philomathic leaders. Companies spend large sums of money sending their leaders to management courses to learn how to manage a company successfully. Certainly, these courses help leaders develop knowledge about how to organize work processes. However, a complement to this learning is on-site learning—with in-house work and roles that allow managers to develop ideas and try solutions.

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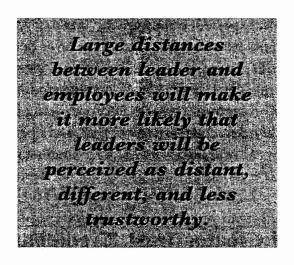
The rationale for leading by doing is also supported by learning theory. Much of the organizational-learning literature focuses on the organization, its structures and institutional forms that help or inhibit learning.[25] In leading by doing, we integrate the leader as a focal point in this process. In basic learning theory, learning is considered a structured, linear process logically ending in behavioral change—change stemming from the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.[26] This clean, tidy, linear process does not always occur in the organizational realm. Learning, rather, can also present itself more nonlinearly, in unstructured situations, in which the leader gains a broader understanding of the personal meaning of his or her experiences. From this vantage point, organizational structure, hierarchy, and lack of communication have been found to have major significance in the learning process and often act as organizational barriers to managers' learning.[27] Leading by doing can help leaders break through deep-rooted organizational structure, culture, and communication difficulties, by having leaders place themselves in situations that are ripe for continuous and nonstructured learning, thus leading to broader understanding of the business organizations they run.

Leading by Doing: Feelings of Greater Trust, Credibility, and Positive Affect between Leadership and Employees

A precondition for successful leading by doing is that the leader not be doing employees' work from his or her own office (for example, trying out the new company order system from her office computer) but rather physically working with the organization's employees, which involves authentic communication about the work and not just polite pleasantries or reassuring schmoozing. The sharing of common experiences and identifying with one another's activities that comes from leading by doing can lead to a genuine trust and rapport with employees—creating community. This creation of community and interpersonal connections can happen naturally through these processes, and it is much less likely to give the impression of a management exercise.[28]

Leading by doing involves working actively with employees and creating genuine ties. The mechanism for these ties occurs through the microprocesses of shared emotions, establishment of trust, and organizational commitment. In general, trust can be defined as one's willingness to rely on another's actions in a situation involving the risk of opportunism.[29] Trust has been found to be an essential part of an effective and functioning organization.[30] Trust develops as an employee learns about the trustworthiness of others by interacting with them

over time.[31] This also holds true for employees' relationships to leaders. Factors that have been shown to influence perceptions of trust in a leader include the leader's behaving benevolently,[32] group membership, interactions, and affect.[33] The last point is especially important here. The affective climate of the group in which the leader works will predict the amount of trust. If people are working within a climate with positive affect, then the sense of being part of a group increases.[34] The leader can help this feeling of belonging by injecting positivity into the environment.

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Also, large distances between leader and employees will make it more likely that leaders will be perceived as distant, different, and less trustworthy. Leading by doing allows the leader to become part of a new category in addition to leader—that of leader/co-worker.

The notion that leading by doing brings greater trust is also supported in another very interesting branch of academic research, one that looks at trustworthy managerial behavior and the challenge of initiating trust among employees.[35] This work is based on the idea that managers and employees are in a social-exchange relationship,[36] in which trustworthy behavior consists of five categories.[37] These categories are listed below, with ideas on how leading by doing meets the needs of each category.

1. *Behavioral consistency:* Through leading by doing, the leader engages in the work tasks regularly, not only on a sporadic, photo op basis.
2. *Behavioral integrity:* Leading by doing creates an increased opportunity to demonstrate a link between words (such as "We are all a team") and deeds (taking part in the team activity).
3. *Sharing and delegation of control:* Sharing and delegation of control can actually occur as part of a genuine co-worker role during the process of leading by doing.
4. *Communication:* Leading by doing offers frequent opportunities for communication when the manager is working alongside employees and participating in work and small talk.
5. *Demonstration of concern:* Actually engaging in the same work with employees through leading by doing shows them that their work is important to the organization and gives the leader an opportunity to show that he or she cares enough about employees to really understand their work.

Greater Commitment from Employees and Leaders

Interpersonal trust is a strong correlate of affective commitment to the organization.[38] Affective commitment refers to the employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement with the organization[39] and, by proxy, the leader. Leaders are particularly crucial in building this organizational commitment, as they represent the official face of the organization. Their behavior—for instance, in distributing rewards and punishment and in motivating and giving vision—helps lay the foundation on which affective commitment can develop.[40] One study of a public organization "suggested that the relationship with the supervisor was the key to understanding the employees' connection to the organization's goals and their willingness to exert their best efforts and to remain within the agency."[41]

Even as far back as the 1500s, as Axelrod describes, Queen Elizabeth I understood this concept, showing great commitment to go out among her constituency through her "progresses."[42] These progresses were elaborate, extremely expensive, tiring expeditions in which she and her court traveled (with 400 wagons and 2400 packhorses) to visit her subjects throughout England. As Queen Elizabeth understood, having contact with her was critical to secure her subjects' commitment: "We come," she explained to the people of one town she visited, "for the hearts and allegiance of our subjects."

Leading by doing increases commitment in both the employees and the leader via improved and more trusting feelings each have toward the other(s). In modern times, there is now empirical evidence for the validity of Queen Elizabeth's hands-on approach. Higher levels of affective commitment have been linked to higher levels of job performance, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, higher job satisfaction, and greater job involvement.[43] Thus, leading by doing can be seen as a bottom-up trust-building strategy that might be particularly effective for increasing affective organizational commitment. Although the leader may not be able to build up a personal relationship with each employee, especially if the organization is quite large, the outcomes of leading by doing can ripple throughout the organization, through the very small talk and connections among employees discussed earlier.

Higher levels of affective commitment have been linked to higher levels of job performance, lower absenteeism, lower turnover, higher job satisfaction, and greater job involvement.

Creating Positive Emotional Contagion in the Group

In addition to the more-conscious processes of trust and commitment, there are less-conscious processes, which are equally powerful in creating good employee-leader relations, greater commitment, and improved task performance. These are the processes of emotional contagion.[44] One function of motivating and inspiring employees is the leader's ability to "infect" them with the right emotion or spirit.[45] Emotional contagion refers to the transmission of an emotion from one person to another, that is, a tendency to feel and express the observed person's emotions. It is possible to "catch" others' emotions. Emotional contagion can be a subconscious process—automatic, unintentional, and uncontrollable.[46] It involves an automatic tendency to mimic another person's emotional behavior, which ultimately leads to compatible emotions in the observer.[47] Through this process, emotional contagion among group members helps to determine and build the group's emotions.[48] This can also lead to positive effects on the part of the leader, as he or she first infects other group members with positive emotions, which then ripple out and return to the leader, reinforcing his or her positive emotions.

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Leading by Doing: Why It Can Be Difficult

Although leading by doing has many advantages, there can be difficulties in implementing this practice. The five major difficulties we discuss are: where to lead by doing, making time for it, concerns about loss of power, knowing how to do the work, and being viewed as an intruder.

Deciding Where to Lead by Doing

How can leaders decide where in the organization to engage in leading by doing? It is a matter of personal taste, organizational necessity, and politics. With regard to personal taste, leaders can start this process in a place in the organization for which they have a strong affinity, joy, or curiosity. This will

increase the probability of their consistently performing regular, genuine work, in which they can forge positive social relations. Second, leaders can go to where they are most needed—from either a business process perspective or a moral perspective. Or they can go to where they think it is most necessary to gain important organizational knowledge, to learn something they can use. Sometimes, this decision may be based on the leaders' need to stay in contact with customers/constituencies—as well as with employees. Third, leaders should consider the politics of their organization. If a particular area is regarded as "favored," leaders will only exacerbate this perception by beginning the leading-by-doing process there. They should choose a place in which they understand the employees less—or vice versa.

Last, as time passes, it is useful to go to different parts of the organization. Leaders need to stay in one place long enough to have the work be real and meaningful, but there are benefits to exploring and working in different parts of the organization. Sometimes, there may be practical difficulties to doing this. A CEO who takes the time to learn a complicated computer system, or the nursing-home director who takes a one-month course in being a certified nursing assistant to be able to do that job, will be reluctant to move on to another department or function. However, after a certain amount of time, it will be important to do so. One sign of the success of this process may well be the requests for the leader to come work in other departments.

Time Shortage

One of managers' greatest concerns is lack of time,[49] and leading by doing will take a certain amount of time—although we believe it will be time well spent. We acknowledge that leaders cannot easily change their workday at will, as they are certainly not entirely free to plan their time,[50] and their days are fragmented with many external demands.[51] However, even leaders of major corporations can make the time, if they choose to. For example, when John deButts was chairman of AT&T, he had a million people working there, which was more than 1 percent of the entire U.S. labor market at the time. In a description of how he learned to organize his time, deButts made it explicitly clear that making time to have genuine contact with his employees was one of his priorities and that he felt this was a worthwhile use of his leadership resources. For example, he describes an unexpectedly long two-day visit with department heads of South Central Bell: "I hadn't planned that long a visit, but the time and the opportunity were there, so I took them. I spent a lot of time with them, at meal times and in conferences and in small groups, finding out what's bugging them, what they're interested in, and why they need help.

That sort of thing is worth the time to me because it keeps me in touch; it lets me check the formal reports I receive against the realities."[52] As Axelrod states, "There is no substitute for frequent contact with reality in all its complexity and fullness—for seeing and for being seen—even if it takes a good deal of effort to 'get out among them.'"[53] Trueman, in describing how to fight against CEO isolation, cites consultants who say that "it's worth using up as much of that precious time as it takes to break out of isolation. It may seem like an extravagant investment right now, but later on it will seem small compared with the payoff at the other end.[54] "The beauty of it," says Marti Smye, president of People Tech Consulting in Toronto, "is that you free up far more time to spend elsewhere." The first step, she advises, is to go "get up and out of the corner office and get to know your company again from the ground up."[55] Leading by doing will take time—time effective leaders may be unable to afford *not* to spend.

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Concerns about Power Differentials

Leaders may be concerned about lessening the power differential between them and their employees, particularly in cases in which the leader is more junior in some respect (age, experience, tenure with the organization) than the employees with whom he or she will be working. In some ways, a leader's ability to comfortably become a co-worker, from both a knowledge base and a socio-emotional base, is a reflection of his or her ability to connect with the organization. Even in situations in which it may initially be awkward, difficult, or time consuming to learn the process, employees will recognize this, and if the leader's work and intent are genuine and consistent, they are likely to appreciate the effort rather than mock it. Concern about power differentials is certainly a greater risk for a younger or less-experienced leader doing a job for which he or she may not be trained around "old pros" who are. But even an initially awkward situation would, in itself, reveal organizational-distance problems that need to be addressed. Leading by doing is a structured way of tackling such issues.
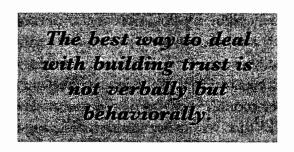
Knowing How to Do the Work

Another question concerns the situation in which the manager cannot do the technical work his or her employees do—due to training needs or governmental

regulations. Managers need to be careful about what piece of the work to attempt—but often what may seem the most insurmountable may still make the most sense organizationally. For example, a CEO of a large chain of nursing homes was thinking of engaging in a leading-by-doing process as part of a major organizational-change effort. When analyzing which job made the most sense for him to do, he determined that this was to be a certified nursing assistant (CNA). This was one of the most common job functions in the organization and the one that had the most direct contact with nursing-home residents. The CNA function was also a big part of the CEO's organizational-change agenda. The problem was that to do "real" CNA work, he would have to take a one-month course to become certified and take a weekly chance with his bad back when moving patients—an integral part of the CNA job. This CEO found that the very act of having to weigh these concerns gave him additional appreciation and respect for the work these employees did—particularly as he might well not have been qualified for it. Thus, before rejecting a leading-by-doing job because it would take too much time to get up to speed, leaders should think about what this fact may reflect about their knowledge of what is happening in the organization. Sometimes, it will simply not be practical: the CEO of an airline may not be able to fly a jumbo jet, or a hospital administrator may not be able to do heart surgery, but without being able to join meaningfully in that work, leaders will need to think of other methods of becoming "one of us."

Leading by Doing Being Perceived as an Intrusion

There can be a danger that employees will perceive a leader's involvement in their task as distrust or as the leader's being nosy. First, in large organizations, it is important for leaders, particularly new leaders, to be up-front about who they are and what they are doing. This was demonstrated dramatically by George Anderson when he took over Central Guaranty Trust. In a version of managing by wandering around, Anderson could explore his company unrecognized and thus get a sense of what was really happening. However, the learning he gained was vastly outweighed by what he calls in retrospect the "reign of terror" through which he unintentionally put his employees: "If staff members fumbled the ball with me, and then found out who I was, they were devastated," he says. "Now I announce myself every time. I don't want to be threatening."[56]

Also, the greater the hierarchical distance between leader and the employees with whom he or she works, the greater the likelihood of initial suspicions about the leader's intentions—suspicions the leader will have to work to dispel, particularly in the beginning. Vickery Stoughton, president and CEO at Toronto Hospital, made it a regular routine to stroll the corridors of his hospital,

so that employees eventually came to "accept his presence and trust that his probing questions amount to more than just idle curiosity."[57]

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Leading by doing has an inherent advantage over these types of contact because of the genuine work involved, but that does not mean that there will not be initial suspicions. The best way to deal with building trust is not verbally but behaviorally. Leaders should do the work seriously, consistently, and genuinely. When employees see that the leader is doing steady, clear, useful, real work with actual commitment, this fear should wane. As discussed, creating trust and commitment is a long process, and leaders should not be discouraged by early suspicions, as these can certainly be eased through consistently engaging in leading by doing.

Leading by Doing: An Example from the Health Care Industry

A useful example of carrying out the practice of leading by doing, and carefully thinking through how and when she would do this, can be seen in the work of Katrina Clark, executive director of the Fair Haven Community Health Center (FHHC) in New Haven, Connecticut. Every Tuesday night, without fail, starting at 5:00 PM, Clark works at the clinic's front desk, where she does patient intake—as a genuine member of the front-desk staff. When working at the front desk, she is not the "executive director" but rather a fellow worker—giving and taking along with her co-workers.[58] When Clark is asked about why she engages in leading by doing, she states, "I enjoy knowing what the clinic is all about. I would really lose touch of the functioning on a line level if I didn't do this. There used to be less buffering between me and staff and patients. We were a smaller clinic and had more interaction. As the clinic has gotten bigger and my job has pulled me more upward and outward, more externally oriented, I have much less open access to what is going on. I need to get my own information about how the place works."[59]

Clark chose the front desk intentionally, as the best way to stay in touch with what was happening at the clinic. First, dealing directly with patients is one of the greatest joys of her work, a joy from which she was getting increasingly removed as the organization got larger and her administrative load became heavier. She also felt that the patient intake desk was, of necessity, the

pulse of the clinic, where much could be learned about what was actually going on in the clinic. It was also a symbolic gesture. The clinic is open long, non-traditional hours to better serve its clientele, and her willingness to take the "evening shift" showed that she was willing to be part of this process of outreach to the clinic's constituency. Last, from a political perspective, by focusing on line staff and patients, she models a very important part of the culture at FHHC—an egalitarian ethos in which the patient comes first and in which all employees are equally important and equally deserving of her time, attention, and interest. By working on the desk on Tuesday nights, Clark shows that "it doesn't matter what your status is here at the clinic—you do the work that is needed."

A similar rationale was given by Murray Wallace, president of Wellington Insurance Company, about the time he spends taking his shift on his company's switchboard. While it gives him a chance to deal with customers directly, he states that there is an even bigger payoff for this investment of his time. "There's no point talking about democracy or empowerment," says Wallace, "if you don't demonstrate through your own actions that you practice what you preach." The sight of CEO-as-receptionist every month or so is a constant reminder that, in this company, every job is considered important.[60] Unlike Clark, Wallace only does one shift every 40 days, as does everyone else in the unit—but he does meet the other criteria of leading by doing, in that he does real work, seriously, and regularly.

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Conclusion

In this chapter, we have introduced and explored a new leadership concept: leading by doing. Though not necessarily easy to introduce in the workplace, this practice can help with such leadership issues as information distribution, managerial learning, and increased employee commitment and trust. Through improving a leader's ability to deal with these issues, and by increasing the leader's own commitment to and connection with his or her employees, leading by doing can yield considerable rewards for everyone—the leader, the employees, and ultimately, the organization's stakeholders.

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