

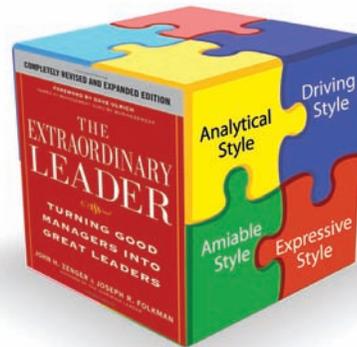


TRACOM GROUP

THE CREATOR OF **SOCIAL STYLE**[®]

A T R A C O M G R O U P W H I T E P A P E R

SOCIAL STYLESM and the Extraordinary Leader



Are great leaders born or are they made? In their book *The Extraordinary Leader*¹, Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman look at research on leadership and show not only that leadership can be developed, but that essential leadership skills are relatively few in number. Further, virtually no leaders possess all of these skills, nor do they have the same patterns of skills. The researchers found that there are different styles of leadership, but they can all be great. The *Extraordinary Leader* and SOCIAL STYLE Models are complementary and can be used in conjunction to help leaders succeed. This whitepaper looks at the connection between these two compelling models of performance.

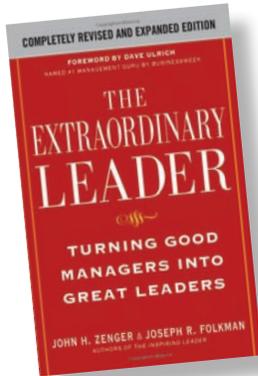
OVERVIEW

SOCIAL STYLE Connections

SOCIAL STYLE is the world's most effective interpersonal skills model. The *Connections* Whitepaper Series looks at how SOCIAL STYLE complements and supports other popular workplace programs including Situational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Crucial Conversations, SPIN Selling, and The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

The MYTH of the Born Leader

SOCIAL STYLE and the Extraordinary Leader



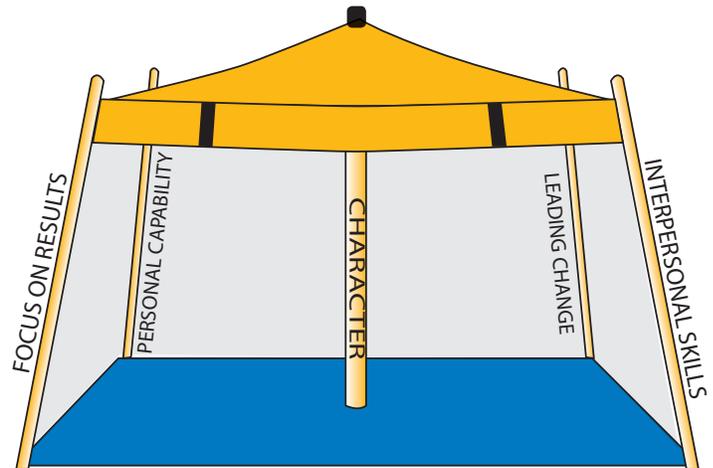
Over the years there has been a persistent belief that exceptional leaders are naturally gifted, and that they possess myriad abilities beyond the grasp of the rest of us. This has been referred to as the “Great Man” theory of leadership, and it is a myth. In their book *The Extraordinary Leader*¹, Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman drive a convincing nail into the coffin of this outdated theory. With thorough research at their disposal, they show not only that leadership can be developed, but that essential leadership skills are relatively few in number. Further, virtually no leaders possess all of these skills, nor do they have the same patterns of skills: “Rather than identifying a consistent profile or style that always worked for every person, what we found was a tremendous variety in the style, approach, and makeup of extraordinary leaders” (p. 110). The researchers found that there are different styles of leadership, but they can all be great.

The Extraordinary Leader and SOCIAL STYLE Models are complementary and can be used in conjunction to help leaders succeed. The Extraordinary Leader Model is a straightforward, research-based look at the most important “building blocks” of effective leadership. Likewise, just as Zenger and Folkman have helped decipher the essence of great leadership, SOCIAL STYLE presents a clear and effective method for understanding behavioral style. Leaders who practice the SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility method can enhance their abilities within the leadership competencies outlined by the Extraordinary Leader Model. This paper discusses the compatibility of the two Models, and shows how SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility serve as a foundational element to help propel leaders toward becoming extraordinary leaders.



The Extraordinary Leader: An Overview

When Zenger and Folkman set out to write their book on exceptional leadership, they wanted to separate themselves from the crowded field of leadership books by basing their teachings on empirical research. Unlike many other leadership *theories*, they presented a *model* that is based on verifiable research results. What their research showed is that extraordinary leaders do not possess a complex set of competencies. Instead, the most important aspects of leadership can be categorized into five clusters, which are diagrammed as five poles to a leadership tent.



They found that the five most important elements for leaders are Character, Personal Capability, Focus on Results, Interpersonal Skills, and Leading Organizational Change. Each of these building blocks is made up of specific competencies, and there are a total of sixteen competencies in the Model.

Character: Character is the center pole of the tent, and all other abilities radiate from it. Without high character, a leader is almost certain to fail. However, character is necessary, but not sufficient, for great leadership. Other abilities are also required. Some of the ways in which Character is displayed include: making decisions with the organization in mind, keeping commitments, walking the talk, and being a role model.

Personal Capability: This cluster of abilities does not contain skills that most people would describe as leadership skills, but the research showed they must be in place for leaders to be seen as exceptional. These capabilities include: technical and professional knowledge, analysis and problem-solving, innovation, initiative, and effective use of information technology.

Focus on Results: Effective leaders have to focus on results, and some of the ways they do this include: establishing stretch goals, taking responsibility for outcomes, setting challenging targets, and initiating new projects.

Interpersonal Skills: Along with Character, this pole supports the most canvas on the leadership tent. The authors' research shows that Interpersonal Skills includes more differentiating competencies than any other cluster, and includes skills such as: communicating powerfully and prolifically, inspiring others, building positive relationships, developing others, and being open to new ideas.

Leading Organizational Change: Change is a fact of life in modern organizations, and leaders who are effective change agents have the ability to: be change champions, lead projects, market their efforts, and take a strategic perspective.

Through their research, one of the key insights the authors discovered is that leaders are made, not born. People can learn and improve their leadership effectiveness through self-development.

How SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility Contribute to Extraordinary Leadership

Many of the key findings from the Zenger and Folkman research are similar to TRACOM's research and insights. We know that people of any SOCIAL STYLE can be great leaders; there is no single best SOCIAL STYLE of leadership. Not only can leadership be developed, but the best way to develop is to focus on strengths, and balance these strengths with other abilities. The authors discuss the importance of remedying "fatal flaws," and note that these debilitating shortcomings are distinct from the more typical weaknesses that leaders possess, which are not necessarily hindrances to success. They state that these fatal flaws "are not intellectual deficiencies, but much more on the 'emotional intelligence' or interpersonal side of the equation. These flaws arise from emotional and behavioral dimensions and seldom from a dearth of knowledge or technical incompetence." (p. 160). Finally, a key aspect that both Models share in common is the understanding that changing behaviors is the best strategy for changing leadership effectiveness. By participating in interpersonal skill-building programs, leaders can learn and practice new behaviors, and this results in a transformation of their attitudes and effectiveness.

While there are many ways that the Models are complementary, let's examine how SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility contributes to the Extraordinary Leader Model through some examples. As you'll see, Style and Versatility add value by helping leaders understand and manage themselves, and also provides insight into understanding and capitalizing on the natural strengths of their followers.



The Leader's Style

Having strength in any single building block is not enough to make a person stand out as an extraordinary leader. A leader with great Personal Capability, but average abilities in the other areas, will likely not be perceived as an extraordinary leader. The more strengths the better, and one of the ways for leaders to extend their effectiveness is to balance existing strengths by developing other skills. Zenger and Folkman refer to the development of multiple abilities as “powerful combinations” because it helps propel leaders to the top echelons of leadership effectiveness.



Different SOCIAL STYLES are naturally suited to specific abilities. For example, Amiable Style leaders are often skilled in their interpersonal effectiveness. They develop and maintain good relationships with their followers, peers, and others. They are often good listeners and are open to the input and ideas of their people. These characteristics help Amiable Style leaders be proficient at Interpersonal Skills, one of the building blocks for extraordinary leadership. After all, their Style Need is Personal Security and therefore they focus on maintaining good relationships.

While these behaviors might be natural strengths, Amiable Style leaders may lack other critical abilities, and this can prevent them from becoming great leaders. For example, it is not uncommon to encounter Amiable Style leaders who are centered on maintaining good relationships, but who lack Focus on Results. They have not developed competency in this area because they are focused on people and relationships, and they simply don't invest time and energy into this skill set. However, instead of toning down their Interpersonal Skills and being more hard-nosed, as some people might recommend, Amiable Style leaders should balance this natural skill set by learning and practicing how to focus on results (as well as other abilities as necessary). By doing this, these leaders will improve their followers' confidence in them by showing that they are highly capable leaders who can make things happen, in addition to being human beings who care about them. These leaders are creating a powerful interaction effect by combining skills in one competency with skills in another competency. In fact, Zenger and Folkman's research shows that of those leaders who were in the top quartile on both Builds Relationships and Drives for Results (two of the sixteen differentiating competencies), 72 percent were at the 90th percentile of overall leadership effectiveness. Of leaders who possessed only one of these abilities, only between 12 and 14 percent were in the 90th percentile of leadership effectiveness.



The Leader's Style

SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility can help Amiable Style leaders, and leaders of all Styles, achieve greatness by showing them straightforward ways of making simple adjustments to their behavior that will help them focus on results. For instance, the Growth Action for Amiable Style people is to “initiate.” These leaders are hesitant to take action or alter the status quo. They are naturally more risk-averse and don't want to upset others by making dramatic changes. However, by taking the very simple step of establishing stretch goals, both for themselves and others, they can enhance their effectiveness. Their followers will feel more confident in them because they will see them as actively promoting projects and pursuing goals. Leaders who focus on results, in addition to people, will enhance their success because people will be more supportive of their goals and therefore more likely to help them meet those goals.

Beyond Style-specific strategies, the Versatility Model consists of emotional intelligence competencies that are fundamental for increasing not only Interpersonal Skills, but for helping manage the fatal flaws that can undermine a leader's effectiveness. By practicing strategies for increasing abilities within the four areas of Image, Presentation, Competence, and Feedback, leaders can help ensure that they do not fall victim to the career de-railers described by Zenger and Folkman. To continue our example, many Amiable Style leaders possess Feedback skills, such as empathy and the ability to build good interpersonal relationships. However, they may lack some of the Competence skills, such as flexibility, perseverance, and innovation. The Versatility Model provides practical strategies for developing these skills.



The Follower's Style

Working on personal abilities is, of course, fundamental for achieving leadership effectiveness. But there is another very important aspect to the leadership equation - followers. SOCIAL STYLE contributes not only to self-awareness and self-management, but to awareness of followers and how to effectively manage those relationships.

SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility shows leaders how they can enhance the effectiveness of their followers. By understanding the Styles of their followers, leaders can help them focus on their areas of strength and can develop well-rounded teams of individuals that complement one another. As Zenger and Folkman write, "For an organization to have exceptional leadership ability, it needs to assemble the right team with ample diversity and talent to maximize the collective influence of the team" (p. 19).

For example, an Analytical Style follower may have natural abilities within the building block of Personal Capability. This person has extensive technical expertise, is adept at analyzing and solving problems, and stays current with her field. These are all related to the Analytical Style need – To Be Right. A leader who is aware of these Style tendencies will be in a good position to highlight the Analytical person's strengths and help her make the most of those. The leader will develop the ability to communicate in ways she prefers, give her the time she needs to complete her projects, and understand how to involve her in discussions and decision-making. Each Style has preferences for these activities, and meeting these preferences brings out the natural strengths of individual team members. By helping individual followers develop their natural strengths, leaders are ensuring that the next generation of leaders will be well prepared. Because this is so important, "developing others" is one of the competencies in the Extraordinary Leadership Model, under the Interpersonal Skills category.

As we've seen through these examples, leaders who practice the fundamentals of the SOCIAL STYLE Model can meaningfully increase their effectiveness across the most important building blocks of leadership. There is one particular element of leadership effectiveness that deserves special mention, and we discuss this next.

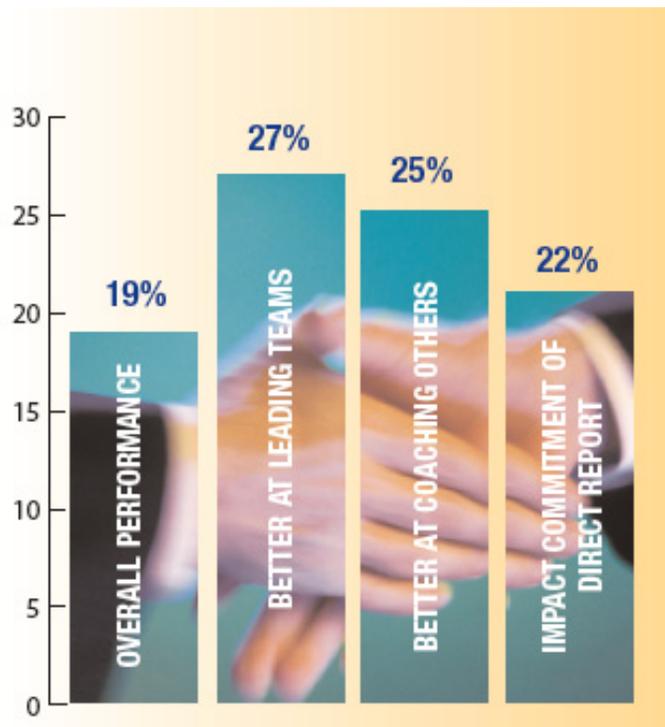


Versatility and Interpersonal Skills

Zenger and Folkman make a special note of the Interpersonal Skills building block, stating that, along with Character, it supports the most canvas on the leadership tent. In fact, of the sixteen competencies that make up the five building blocks, one competency, “inspires and motivates others to high performance,” is the single most powerful competency in predicting overall leadership effectiveness. Leaders with strong Interpersonal Skills inspire others. They also communicate powerfully and prolifically, build positive relationships with others, develop the talents of their followers, are open to new ideas, and are collaborative, among other abilities.

Versatility is a measure of interpersonal effectiveness. TRACOM’s research has found that leaders who excel in

Versatility are seen by their followers as “much more effective” than leaders who score lower in Versatility. The Extraordinary Leadership Model raises the bar for exceptional leadership. The authors believe that most leadership development efforts have been aiming too low; therefore they define strengths on their competencies as being at the 90th percentile. TRACOM also holds this view. The bar for scoring in the upper quadrant of Versatility is very high, requiring an average of over 4.0, on a 5-point scale, across all items that measure Versatility. Highly versatile leaders are exceptional. The good news: Versatility can be learned.



Benefits & Summary:

The Extraordinary Leader Model is a succinct and compelling method for understanding and developing the most critical skills needed for exceptional leadership. Through convincing research, it clarifies the abilities that help and hinder leaders, and shows that great leaders are not perfect, but they are very talented in some areas. Perhaps most important, and most relieving to all of us, is that these skills can be developed.

In a similar way, the SOCIAL STYLE and Versatility Model demystifies behavioral style and preferences. The Model provides practical strategies that leaders can use to develop their own strengths, as well as the strengths of their followers. By utilizing the Model as a foundation for developing the key competencies outlined in the Extraordinary Leader Model, leaders will be well positioned to propel themselves into a higher category of effectiveness.



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1 Zenger, J. H. & Folkman, J. R. (2009). The extraordinary leader: Turning good managers into great leaders. McGraw-Hill.



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