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Craig L. Pearce

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, cpearce2@unl.edu

Charles C. Manz

University of Massachusetts - Amherst, cmanz@isenberg.umass.edu

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The New Silver Bullets of Leadership: The Importance of Self- and Shared Leadership in Knowledge Work

Craig L. Pearce and Charles C. Manz

There is a need to develop thoughtful leaders at all levels of today's organizations, particularly when it comes to knowledge work. Traditionally, however, most leadership development efforts have been narrowly focused on individuals who occupy formal leadership positions, or are being groomed to eminently occupy such positions. In contrast to the traditional approach to leadership development, we argue that followers should also be included in leadership development efforts in order to prepare them to exercise responsible *self-leadership* and to effectively utilize *shared leadership*. This need is especially important in the case of team-based knowledge work.

To fully prepare organizations for the leadership challenges of tomorrow, we need to abandon some popular mythology regarding the very meaning of leadership. The leadership mythology to which we refer is the preoccupation with a top-heavy model—the glorified chief executive officer, or CEO—of leadership. This mythology is coupled with romantic conceptions of leaders as heroic figures who single-handedly save followers—who are largely viewed as interchangeable drones—from their own incompetence. Accordingly, we describe how self- and shared leadership might be lev-

eraged for greater effectiveness, particularly in team-based knowledge work. Before we begin, however, we briefly review the top-heavy and heroic leadership myths.

The Top-Heavy and Heroic Leadership Myths: Historical Foundations

The top-heavy leadership myth has deep historical roots, but from a scientific point of view, it was during the Industrial Revolution that the task of organizational leadership began to be formally studied and documented. During the early 1800s, organizational leadership was formally recognized as an important component of economic activity when Jean Baptiste Say, a French economist, proclaimed that entrepreneurs must be capable of supervision and administration. Prior to this time, economists were primarily concerned with two factors of production—land and labor—and, to a lesser extent, capital. Accordingly, it was during the Industrial Revolution that the concept of leadership was recognized as an important ingredient of economic endeavors, and the predominant form of leadership was top-down command and control.

Throughout the 1800s, literature on management and leadership was primarily shaped by the needs of the emerging railroad industry. The development of the railroads, the first large-scale American enterprise, necessitated the creation of systematic approaches to coordinate and control organizations that employed large numbers of people, were geographically dispersed, and required sizable capital investments. A pioneering thinker at the time was Daniel C. McCallum. He developed six principles of management, which could be considered the first management principles that could be applied across industrial lines. One of McCallum's principles dealt with the concept of leadership—specifically that leadership was to flow from the top to the bottom, and that unity of command was paramount. Thus, during the mid-1800s, we observe the development of prescriptions for organizational leadership. With the emphasis on managerial control and oversight, we began to witness the formation of the top-heavy model of leadership that is still glorified in today's modern industrial organizations.

By the dawn of the 20th century, the ken of management and leadership had crystallized into what was ultimately termed “scientific management.” The fundamental principle of scientific management was that all work could be scientifically studied, and that optimal routines and regulations could be developed to ensure maximum productivity. One important component of scientific management was the separation of managerial and worker responsibilities, with managers having responsibility for identifying precise work protocols and workers following the dictates of management. As such, scientific management perhaps went the farthest in specifying a command and control perspective for the role of leaders in organizational life. The formally designated leader was to oversee and direct those below. Subordinates were to follow dictums to the letter. The thought that subordinates had any role in the leadership process was largely unthinkable at the time.

The European Perspective

While scientific management was being developed in the United States, two Europeans also made especially noteworthy thought-provoking contributions to the formal study of leadership. First, Henri Fayol, from France, developed 14 flexible principles of management. Second, Max Weber, from Germany, derived both a theory of organizational structure—bureaucracy—and a theory of authority or leadership, based on charisma. Both individuals clearly described influence or leadership processes that were top-down, command and control.

By the end of the Industrial Revolution, prescriptions for what constituted effective management and leadership had begun to be specified. The consensus was on an approach that emphasized a clear distinction between leaders and followers and was deeply rooted in the principle of the unity of command: Orders should come from above and be followed by those below. Furthermore, these early thinkers on leadership also spent considerable time trying to figure out ways to prevent shirking of responsibilities by followers, and thus designed more and more elaborate methods of controlling the behavior of followers. Ultimately, by the conclusion of the scientific management era, state-of-the-art thinking on the management of organizations was founded on an unshakable belief in the command and control approach to leadership. That is, the absolute control of worker behavior—down to the finest detail—was defined as the purview, nay the duty, of management.

These ideas of strong top-down control continued throughout the 20th century and largely remain to this day. Elsewhere we have described the most obvious type of leader fitting this description as the “Strong Man” leader or the “Directive” leader. Direction, command and control are used to obtain compliance, often based on fear and intimidation, from followers. In addition, most other forms of leadership, such as transactional leader-

ship—founded on the leader offering rewards and incentives in exchange for follower compliance—emphasize a one-way influence process of leaders over followers.

Even in the case of the generally more attractive visionary, charismatic and transformational type of leadership—which relies on influence factors such as unifying vision and inspiration—the primary focus, and source of thinking, ideas and decision making is designated as the role of the *leader*. This is the basis for what we call the myth of heroic leadership—that the source of all wisdom is the designated leader. We believe this myth flies in the face of the needs of many modern organizations. In contemporary knowledge-based, dynamic and complex team environments, both the cognitive and the behavioral capabilities of the wider workforce are needed to achieve optimal effectiveness and competitiveness. While some may be drawn to the idea of a larger-than-life, charismatic, all-knowing leader who can inspire and single-handedly positively transform work systems and the employees who work in them, the realities and challenges of contemporary organizational life require an alternative view of leadership. Accordingly, we believe that self-leadership and shared leadership are at the heart of the new leadership forms needed to meet the organizational challenges of the 21st century.

Leadership Challenges of the 21st Century

Knowledge work—work that requires the intellectual capital of skilled professionals—is increasingly becoming dependent on both individual contributors, who may possess considerable knowledge yet prefer to work independently, and teams, where the knowledge of several individuals is integrated. The reasons for this are clear. It is ever more difficult for any leader from above to have all of the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to lead all aspects of knowledge work, and this is

true in a wide variety of contexts ranging from cross-functional task forces, to R&D labs, and to even the executive suite.

Top-Down Pressures

The need to shift away from the top-heavy heroic model of leadership is necessitated by both top-down and bottom-up pressures. The top-down pressures result from a less restricted and thus more competitive and global environment, causing firms to seek better ways to compete. This has translated into a focus on reducing costs and improving efficiency in order to remain competitive. These steps, in turn, have led to an increased need for a more dynamic, flexible workforce, a reduction in organizational response time, and full employment of organizational knowledge. This can, in part, be achieved by liberating all organizational members with key knowledge to contribute via the potential of both self- and shared leadership.

Bottom-Up Pressures

The bottom-up pressures faced by firms are a result of the changing composition of the workforce and the concomitant changing desires of employees. For instance, a more highly educated workforce has greater depth and breadth of knowledge to offer organizations. Also, today's employees desire more from work than just a paycheck. They increasingly want to make a meaningful contribution, which can, in part, be achieved through empowered self leadership and team-based shared leadership.

Time for Change?

The shift toward a more empowered workforce creates the need to question whether our conventional models and approaches to leadership are still appropriate—or, whether they require redevelopment and reconstitution. Recent research evidence suggests that it is time for a leadership model overhaul—across a wide array of organizational contexts ranging from the

military, to the management of change, to virtual teams, to R&D labs and even to top management teams. Accordingly, in the next section we describe what we see as the new *silver bullets* for the dawn of a new era of leadership – self-leadership and shared leadership.

The Silver Bullets for a New Era of Leadership: Self- and Shared Leadership

Self Leadership

Usually leadership is viewed as an outward process involving the influence of formally designated leaders on followers. However, a relatively new view of leadership posits that all organizational members are capable of leading themselves to some degree. This self-influence based view is an important, yet often overlooked aspect of influence, even in knowledge-based organizational environments that involve employee empowerment and self-managing work teams, and it is fundamental to the distribution and sharing of leadership throughout a work system.

Elsewhere, contemporary treatments of the individual self-influence process have been addressed under the label “self-leadership,” which is conceptualized as an expanded view of self-influence relative to many more commonly recognized participative and empowerment-based views in the literature. Self-leadership encompasses and goes beyond the earlier and more familiar concept of self-management, i.e., managing oneself via a set of behaviorally focused self-discipline oriented strategies to meet existing standards and objectives typically set by someone else, most notably a leader from above. While self-leadership involves managing one’s behavior to meet existing standards and objectives, it also includes evaluating the standards, and setting or modifying them. It addresses what should be done, and why it should be done, in addition to how to do it.

Self-leadership also incorporates intrinsic motivation, self-influence skill development,

and strategic oriented cognitions. Self-leadership represents an alternative to more traditional leadership and organizational perspectives that focus on the influence and control of designated leaders with formal hierarchical authority. Such an alternative view fits well with the concept of empowering employees through teams, which creates a condition of less dependence on traditional leader authority figures.

For example, the highly successful W. L. Gore and Associates has provided its employees with dramatic levels of freedom for self-leadership. This innovative maker of diverse products in categories including electronic wire and cable, and fabrics for outdoor sporting activities, industrial, and medical uses, relies heavily on the initiative of their “associates” (the term they use to describe employees). Described as a company that relies on “unmanagement,” W.L. Gore encourages members throughout the organization to experiment with Gore-Tex (the primary material for its products) to create new products. Essentially, every employee is viewed as a knowledge worker who has the capacity for identifying successful new products that can carry the company into a profitable future. Historically, W.L. Gore may be the flattest company of its size in the world. And at the heart of Gore’s culture is an advanced spirit of self-leadership that reflects a proven emphasis on this new silver bullet of leadership.

Some specific self-leadership skill areas and practical strategies include self-observation, self-goal-setting, self-reward, rehearsal, self-job redesign, and self-management of internal dialogues and mental imagery. These kinds of self-leadership strategies hold promise for meeting the important empowerment challenges posed for members in the complex, highly dynamic, less hierarchical and team-based knowledge work systems of today’s organizations.

Shared Leadership

Shared leadership occurs when all members of a team are fully engaged in the leadership

of the team: Shared leadership entails a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team, that involves the serial emergence of official as well as unofficial leaders. In other words, shared leadership could be considered a case of fully developed empowerment in teams.

Several studies have documented the importance of shared leadership across a wide variety of contexts—including top management teams, change management teams, teams of volunteers, research and development teams, virtual teams, and even military squads. In fact, several studies indicate that shared leadership is an even better predictor of team success than just leadership from above. Thus, the initial evidence points to an increasingly important role for shared leadership, particularly in the knowledge-worker context. As one striking example, consider the case of the Braille Institute of America.

The End of Leadership as We Know It?

There has been a substantial increase in the utilization of empowerment to leverage the capabilities of knowledge workers in organizations. With the increased empowerment of knowledge workers, it is important that we question our traditional models of leadership. Here we have attempted to clarify two alternative sources of leadership—self-leadership and shared leadership—that may provide insight into the leadership of knowledge workers.

It is important to note that self- and shared leadership are not panaceas for knowledge work. For example, if knowledge workers, particularly those in formal leadership roles, resist the notions of self- and shared leadership, their potential may simply remain that—potential. This raises an important question. What should organizational leaders do with a technically sound, and otherwise success-

Self- and Shared Leadership at the Braille Institute of America

Self- and shared leadership are particularly important in the nonprofit context—especially when volunteers comprise a sizable component of the workforce. According to Leslie Stocker, President of the Braille Institute of America, “All of our workforce—but especially our volunteers—want to have a voice in determining how they can best contribute to our mission, serving the visually impaired.” Unlike in the for-profit sector, where the workforce is at least somewhat dependent on the organization for compensation, if a nonprofit volunteer feels overly controlled by a domineering manager, he or she can simply walk away. Thus, managers in the nonprofit sector need to be acutely sensitive to the desires of the workforce to have a voice in the leadership of the organization.

However, if self- and shared leadership are to be successful in this context, one must be quite vigilant about the integrity of the super-ordinate goals of the organization: One risk of encouraging self- and shared leadership is the potential for people to lead the organization into inappropriate directions. As Stocker indicated, “Encouraging leadership from below does have some risk. For example, I recall a situation where some volunteers wanted us to become involved in a new initiative, and they secured the external funding to make it happen. However, to me the initiative represented ‘mission drift’ and I had to try to refocus our volunteers on our mission ... we lost at least one volunteer over that issue.”

Encouraging self- and shared leadership does not mean encouraging organizational anarchy. On the contrary, the integrity of the mission must remain clear, and people need to be educated on how they can best contribute to the leadership of the organization. According to Stocker, “Education is the key. You’ve got to educate people that it’s not just business as usual. It takes a lot of development. [In the end], we all have a voice in creating our common mission ... the key is to help others lead you, when they have the relevant knowledge.”

ful, leader who refuses to encourage self- and shared leadership in favor of his or her tried and true authoritarian rule? This is a difficult question to answer. In the short-run it is most likely beneficial to keep the leader in place. Nonetheless, authoritarian control of knowledge workers may ultimately impede the very innovation and creativity one desires from them. Furthermore, over-reliance on any one individual in the knowledge creation process can engender an unhealthy dependency. What would happen, for example, if that person left the organization? In the long run, over-reliance on a top-down heroic leadership model in the knowledge-worker context can undermine the robustness of the knowledge-creation process.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some knowledge workers might successfully adopt self and/or shared leadership, but actually work at odds with overarching organizational objectives. Similarly, self- and shared leadership seem unlikely to prove effective if knowledge workers lack the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities for their tasks. These are but a few of the potential caveats about self- and shared leadership: The enactment of leadership is as much an art as it is a science.

Is the age of hierarchical leadership past its expiration date? No. The issue is not whether or not there should be leadership from above – clearly there should be. Rather, the issues are: (1) when should self- and shared leadership be encouraged? and (2) how can self- and shared leadership be effectively developed? These important issues are at the heart of moving toward a more appropriate model of leadership for today, tomorrow and beyond, and are addressed in the following discussion.

When Should Self- and Shared Leadership Be Encouraged?

Clearly self- and shared leadership offer a number of advantages, especially in work settings staffed by knowledge workers. Neverthe-

less, not every situation is appropriate for these empowering leadership approaches. So when should they be encouraged? At least five factors influence the appropriateness of self- and shared leadership: The level of urgency, the importance of employee commitment, the need for creativity and innovation, the level of interdependence, and the degree of complexity.

Urgency

If a situation is highly urgent – the building is on fire and we need to get out now – more traditional forms of leadership may be needed. Developing employees' capacity for self- and shared leadership can take more time than is available. This is especially true in cultures that have relied on more leader-centered approaches in the past. If the company is on the verge of bankruptcy, for instance, undergoing a major shift toward bringing out the inner leadership of others and having them significantly share in the influence process may not be feasible. On the other hand, self- and shared leadership represent major investments in the future effectiveness of the organization. When time allows for the transition to these empowering forms of leadership, more capable employees who are able to significantly contribute to the knowledge that can lead the firm into the future are among the valuable outcomes that can result.

The reality is that there are few truly urgent situations in most organizations, with the notable exception of start-up, entrepreneurial firms: Most start-up firms face highly urgent decision-making contexts where simply meeting payroll on a week-to-week basis is never quite assured. Many entrepreneurial firms "bootstrap" finance their operations through personal savings, credit card debt and loans from family and friends, rendering nearly all financial decision-making into the realm of urgent. For example, according to *Inc.* magazine more than a third of the *Inc. 500* – the fastest growing entrepreneurial firms in America – began operations with less than \$10,000. In these urgent types of

situations it seems prudent to centralize leadership and decision-making.

Nonetheless, even for these high growth firms, we advocate moving toward the use of self- and shared leadership as the firm continues to expand and grow, in an effort to develop a more robust leadership process. And this is precisely the path of one of the more notable members of the *Inc. 500* club—Dell Computer Corp. Early on, the leadership of the firm was clearly centered on the role of the founder, Michael Dell. However, as Dell continued to develop into the current-day powerhouse of the computing industry, so too did the company's leadership model evolve. For example, Dell is now run by the leadership team of Michael Dell and Kevin Rollins, to which they refer as their "two-in-a-box" philosophy. According to Michael Dell, the company is much stronger with the team of two at the helm.

Employee Commitment

Employee commitment is also an important consideration. If compliance (doing the minimum of what is asked and little more) is all that is needed from employees, self- and shared leadership are less important. On the other hand, if commitment (a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty) is needed and desired, self- and shared leadership can be very important. Sometimes for more routine work processes that simply require consistent performance, traditional forms of leadership can be adequate. However, more and more, in the highly dynamic and competitive environments that most organizations face today, the commitment enabled by self- and shared leadership can be crucial for long-term success.

Take the case of the Lake Superior Paper Company. In the 1990s, they began encouraging self- and shared leadership in an effort to boost quality and productivity, but quickly found very positive benefits in the form of reduced turnover. One employee claimed, "Here we have the power to do something about it," while another stated, "I wouldn't want to

work anywhere else." Clearly, the practice of self- and shared leadership has the ability to strengthen employees' sense of ownership of, pride in, and commitment to their work.

Creativity

Another issue is the level of creativity that is needed. For organizations that need continuous innovation in order to offer the best products and services to their customers as well as perform in the most up-to-date and effective ways, self- and shared leadership are essential. More traditional forms of leadership, which center on the leader having the power, knowledge and answers to emerging problems, do not encourage optimal creativity and innovation. It is the formally designated leaders who are expected to think, while workers are left to focus on implementing what they are directed to do. When employees are encouraged to lead themselves and share influence with their peers in making decisions, solving problems, and identifying opportunities for the future, wide spread creativity and innovation is encouraged.

As in the culture at W.L. Gore mentioned earlier, creativity can become a shared activity of employees throughout the organization, who are encouraged to extensively participate in the ongoing process of leadership. Moreover, consider the case of organizations undertaking long-term research and development projects. Noted scholar Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and colleague Charles Hooker conducted an in-depth study of R&D labs and concluded that shared leadership, flow, and creativity were inextricably linked. Self- and shared leadership are key levers that can be employed to enhance the creative process in organizations.

Interdependence

The amount of interdependence in the work system will affect the appropriate balance of self- and shared leadership. While self- and shared leadership can work very well together, particularly in empowered team-based

environments, the higher the interdependence involved, the more important shared leadership becomes. Interdependent teams of workers who share the leadership process tend to outperform individual workers when tasks are interconnected and integrated. On the other hand, if the nature of the work being performed is not closely connected, individual self-leaders who primarily lead themselves independently, as opposed to sharing in the overall leadership process, can be effective. For example, successful independent salespeople have long been characterized as self-starters, self-motivators, and self-leaders.

That being said, more and more organizations today face complex work requirements that require combined efforts of multiple employees, making a blend of self- and shared leadership a highly effective alternative. This is even the case in sales, where firms ranging from Procter & Gamble Co. to IBM Corp. are increasingly using sales teams to satisfy customer needs.

Complexity

The more complex the work that is being performed, the less likely it is that any one person can possess all of the expertise that is needed for high performance. In organizations involved with advanced technology, often requiring teams of knowledge workers that integrate their intellectual capital to accomplish the required work, shared leadership can be particularly important. The idea that a single leader can know everything that is necessary to lead all aspects of the work process is unrealistic. Individual employees need to step forward as their expertise and the demands of the work require. At the same time, the willingness and confidence to take on part of the leadership role requires some level of self-leadership from the knowledge workers involved. It is one thing to possess the knowledge and expertise to help guide a particular aspect of the work process, but quite another to have the motivation, initiative and influence skill needed to provide leadership. Thus, the more complex the work

involved, the more likely it is that shared leadership, supported by the self-leadership of the individual knowledge workers, will be needed for optimal performance.

Several enterprising firms, for example, have experimented with "internal decision markets" for making complex decisions. Decision markets are forums where the relevant facts are distributed organization-wide and all employees are involved in the decision, for instance, on which new product to bring to market. As one example, Hewlett-Packard Co. experimented with decision markets to forecast sales in the late 1990s and found the markets to outperform the company 75% of the time. In another experiment, drug maker e.Lilly, a division of Eli Lilly & Co., set up a decision market to examine the viability of six drug candidates for U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval. The results of their experiment showed that the decision market identified which drugs were ultimately approved, and which were rejected. As these examples indicate, for complex decisions organizations would do well to tap the intellectual capital of the larger workforce.

How Can Self- and Shared Leadership Be Effectively Developed?

There are at least two primary sources of self- and shared leadership development. The influence of formally designated leaders is one source, while key aspects of the organization itself is the other.

Formally Designated Leaders

Even in empowered organizations that perform knowledge work (often in teams) there are typically formally designated leadership roles that are recognized as part of the organization structure. Sometimes the individuals in these roles are referred to with titles such as "team leader," "coordinator," "facilitator" or "coach." Regardless of the title used, the special challenge for these designated leaders is to

foster the self-leadership of individual members as well as the sharing of leadership influence throughout the system.

One key way this can be accomplished is by the leaders' own practice of self- and shared leadership. Designated leaders can serve as visible models for others when they demonstrate initiative and self-leadership practice as well as sharing in the leadership process and encouraging others to do the same. Following are excerpts from interviews of successful leaders of research and development teams from one of the co-authors' consulting practice. One team leader claimed, "My most important role is for building the team—getting them to interact without being directed," while another team leader stated, "You have to play cheerleader sometimes [and] you have to be careful not to be a dictator." One team leader, however, summed up his role in creating self- and shared leadership by stating: "I have told them [the team members] their goal is to replace me."

In fact, modeling these leadership behaviors is one of the most important things leaders can do to promote the potent silver bullets of leadership. For this developmental process to be most effective, it is important to model these behaviors in vivid and relevant ways for others. Bruce Barkus is executive vice president of Family Dollar Stores, Inc., the extreme value retailer that was recently recognized as having the best supply chain management system in retail, ahead of Wal-Mart Stores. According to Barkus, stepping forward and providing guidance on a part of the process in which the leader has unique expertise, then turning to other knowledge workers and asking for guidance where they have special skills that match task demands, can be very effective in the development of self- and shared leadership.

At the same time, it is also important to reinforce appropriate self- and shared leadership behavior when it occurs. As knowledge workers learn to initiate and provide appropriate guidance for others, the designated leader can verbally reinforce this behavior. Simple statements such as "Thanks for your initiative and

input ... you are making an important contribution and I appreciate it" can have a powerful effect on the development of self- and shared leadership in others. At the same time, encouraging teamwork is important when interdependence, complexity and creativity are required.

As the designated leader continues to use these kinds of influences, an overall culture of self- and shared leadership will begin to emerge. It will become readily apparent that practicing self- and shared leadership is not only desirable, but also expected. This will establish a stable foundation for individuals to grow in their own self- and shared leadership practice over time.

The Organization

There is no question that the formally designated leader plays a crucial role in developing self- and shared leadership in others. But this source of influence needs to be supported by the wider organization. Two key considerations are organizational rewards and training.

Organizational rewards. Reinforcement from the designated leader is important, but the organizational reward system also needs to support the deployment of self- and shared leadership. Research has long demonstrated that people tend to do what they are rewarded for doing and avoid what is punished. It is foolish to expect knowledge workers to practice self- and shared leadership if conformity and self-serving behavior are the focus of rewards in the organization. The formal reward system needs to provide some emphasis on self-leading initiative and teamwork. That means that individual-based merit pay is not only insufficient, but also may actively discourage the cooperation required in shared leadership. On the other hand, team-based incentives—as well as recognition of individual initiative that contributes to overall team performance—can be very helpful.

Training. In addition, it is unreasonable to expect skilled practice of self- and shared lead-

ership from workers who have not been provided training. Some may have been exposed to controlling bosses or centralized work systems that allowed little opportunity for the development of necessary skills. Others may have simply developed a habitual focus on only the knowledge work they perform and have thought little about the nature of influence in their work system. Workers usually require training in self-leadership strategies that can enable them to exercise more initiative in taking on responsibility. At the same time, training on topics such as conflict management, communication, conducting meetings, and on how to effectively work with others is needed for developing the necessary shared leadership capabilities.

Conclusion

Here we have attempted to articulate why over-reliance on a top-down, heroic model of leadership is, at best, insufficient when it comes to knowledge work. Specifically, we identified two alternative sources of leadership—self- and shared—that can augment leadership from above, particularly when it comes to team-based knowledge work. Clearly, self- and shared leadership deserve more attention when it comes to harnessing the potential of knowledge workers.

Executive Summary

How are the capabilities of knowledge workers best harnessed? Traditionally, organizations have focused on a top-heavy, heroic model of leadership in order to extract work-product from their employees. We believe this model is a myth. It is becoming ever more difficult for any one person to be an expert on all aspects of the work that needs to be done, and this is true in a wide variety of contexts ranging from the research and development (R&D) lab to the executive suite. Recent research indicates that two alternative sources of leadership—self leadership and shared leadership—hold considerable promise for enhancing the performance of knowledge workers. In fact, research indicates that poor performing teams tend to be dominated by the team leader, while high performing teams display more dispersed leadership patterns, i.e., self- and shared leadership. This is not to suggest that leadership from above is unnecessary. On the contrary, the role of the designated leader is critical to the ongoing success of self- and shared leadership in knowledge work. This article examines the mythology of the top-heavy, heroic model of leadership; the key leadership challenges of today and tomorrow; the concepts of self- and shared leadership; the circumstances that call for the encouragement of self- and shared leadership; and how self- and shared leadership can be developed.

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The Authors

Craig L. Pearce, Ph.D. is an associate professor at the Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA 91711, USA. His award winning research on leadership has appeared in numerous scholarly journals and his consulting practice has spanned numerous industries and countries. His recent book, *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, is published by Sage.

Charles C. Manz, Ph.D. is a speaker, consultant, and best-selling author of over 100 articles and 17 books including *Temporary Sanity: Instant Self-Leadership Strategies for Turbulent Times*, *Fit to Lead*, and *The New SuperLeadership*. He is the Nirenberg Chaired Professor of Business Leadership in the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts, USA.