

## SYSTEMS ORIENTED LEADERSHIP™ COMPETENCIES

*Systems Oriented Leadership (SOL) relies strongly on 3 different types of Intelligence. Expression of and access to Relationship Systems Intelligence is the defining characteristic. In both public and private settings in recent years, a team approach to problem solving has become increasingly popular and important.*

Systems oriented Leadership requires a different set of skills from traditional leadership. Systems Oriented Leadership holds leadership as a role that belongs to all team members and is not only a job description for the leader. This poses a huge challenge for top down management since traditional leadership is often hierarchical and assumes control of resources and manpower. Systems Oriented Leadership involves the forging of alliances across organizational or even national boundaries and different cultures where resources must be shared. The Systems Oriented Leader focuses on the whole system not only the individual players. It involves helping to ensure the success of a heterogeneous team in service of a common purpose, through sharing power.

In this increasingly global world the need for Systems Oriented Leadership is increasing. An Ipsos MORI research report published in 2007 found that relationship management and Collaborative Leadership were the top two qualities that Directors involved in large business partnerships would have liked to have had more access to when setting up or running a partnership. Systems Oriented Leadership seeks to evolve not only the theoretical frame of the known Collaborative Leadership approach, but to also create the soft skills and technology for actively practicing it and take it to the next level.

### Competencies required for Systems Oriented Leadership

#### Leveraging Relationship Systems Intelligence

Since Systems Oriented Leadership involves the coordination of many diverse people and viewpoints it requires high Emotional, Social and Relationship Systems Intelligence.

- **EQ**– The capacity to identify, articulate, self manage and skillfully leverage personal emotions.
- **ESI**– Accurate listening and empathetic understanding of another and skillful **communication**.
- **RSI**– Re-interpretation of self through the systemic experience. **Every individual experience is both personal and belongs to the larger whole as an expression of the system.** Systems awareness is the capacity to read emotional fields, understand the decision networks and politics at the organizational level. It is the ability to actively cultivate and maintaining a web of relationships.

The Systems Oriented Leader works to continuously develop all three types of Intelligence through self- reflection, training and feedback from others and through the practice of seeing and experiencing all individual voices as an expression of the system.

## Practice Deep Democracy

- **Listening.** The Systems Oriented Leader actually listens for the voice of the system by allowing all voices to be expressed – even the unpopular ones. From this perspective, it flows naturally that each is holding a critical perspective for the system.
- **Celebrates Diversity.** Getting value from difference is at the heart of the Systems Oriented leader’s task. They share control and trust a partner or team to deliver, even though that partner may operate very differently from them. (*Collaborative Leadership* by Archer and Cameron.) At the heart of this approach is the knowledge that it is through the full range of our differences that increased capacity and range is delivered to the system. Without accessing *that*, the system is indeed less...

## Empowers Others

- **Creating we-centered teams and organizations**
- **Promotes Collective Intelligence.** Systems Oriented leadership recognizes that teams with high collective intelligence are teams with high social awareness skills, hold leadership as a role belonging to all team members and that sharing information and critical conversation creates a knowledge pool that benefits all the participants. The whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts.
- **Develops others leadership skills in service of collective intelligence.** Mentoring and coaching increases individual capacity and the philosophy behind that are not only focused on individual improvement but improving the collective capacity of the system.
- **Is open to influence– shares power.** By definition collaboration requires the ability to set aside personal self interest and position for the sake of a larger shared interest. Information, resources, decision making and credit are shared
- **Practices tools improving and leveraging RSI.** The Systems Oriented Leader has a vested interest in the development and use of collaborative and we-focused tools to ensure that all the people affected by a decision are part of the change process.

## Hold Leadership as a role that belongs to the system

- From the RSI perspective, leadership is, beyond job description, defined as something that belongs to the whole system. At any given point in time, a team member might hold the authority of being able to access the voice of the system or what is trying to happen within the system, and is free to offer that up.
- Powerfully leveraging this, it allows for the entire team or system to become co-responsible, not only for their own role and function, but to clearly understand the interdependent nature of their engagement together. Every member experiences themselves as “co-owners” of the organization and the bottom line.

## Creates Shared Accountability

In a systems oriented leadership approach accountability and co-responsibility is shared as stated above. Partners are co-responsible for each other's success and failure and hold one another accountable. Accountability is the keystone to developing trust and delivering results.

## Commits to Constructive Conflict and lowering of the “toxic load”

- **Avoids toxic communication patterns.** The Systems Oriented leader understands the destructive power of toxic communication patterns and avoids the use of blaming, defensiveness, stonewalling and contempt.
- **Recognizes conflict as midwife to constructive change.** Systems Oriented Leaders recognize that conflict is a signal that something new is trying to happen and embraces conflict as a means for constructive change. It indeed is a signal from the system *through* its conflicted members, that change is needed.
- **Minimize toxic load and develop communication styles of positivity and have valid conflict protocols.** Systems oriented leaders are knowledgeable about and trained in constructive conflict tools. They use conflict protocols and enforce their use.

## Facilitates Change

- A 2008 IBM study stated “Change is the new normal.” Systems Oriented partnerships are developed in part due to the need to address constantly shifting environments. Systems oriented leaders must be competent in change management theory and practical technique within a setting with multi stake holders.
- Values inspirational Leadership. Systems oriented leadership includes the capacity to forge alliances across multiple stakeholders often with flat hierarchies. This requires the capacity to motivate and influence others through inspiration rather than command or control.
- Creates Clarity – Visioning & Mobilizing: Defining shared values and engaging people in positive action. Systems Oriented Leaders create and honor the visioning and dreaming nature of systems through all levels of reality; essence, dreaming and consensus reality.
- Holds passion for the cause and the ability to inspire the dreaming potential of others.
- Demonstrates the capacity to inject energy and drive into their leadership style.
- Shares optimism about the future. Systems oriented leaders have deep awareness of the relationship between positivity and productivity and excel at creating positivity in, through and with teams and organizations.
- Creates positivity and sharing credit generously.

## Social Responsibility

Systems Oriented Leadership by definition moves past narrow self-interest to embrace the needs of multi stakeholders. Systems Oriented leaders have a responsibility to consider the long term impact of their partnerships and to hold the larger welfare of the community.

Given the speed of change in our modern society, the degree of connectivity and the demand for leaders to relate to larger and larger networks, the traditional model of leadership is breaking down as the speed of change overtakes the capacity of any individual to stay current, let alone stay abreast of change. Unless we develop and increase our capacity to work systemically and leverage shared responsibility while attempting to listen to what the larger whole is trying to convey to us, we will not be able to lead change, nor maintain equilibrium. Relationships and how to listen to, co-operate with, and leverage the system created by it, truly is the new frontier!