



Mary H. Osborne, Resources

## PRACTICE RENEWAL

A Leadership Guide for Dentists

### Earning the Right To Influence

Dr. Bob Barkley once said that a dentist must earn the right to influence his or her patients. It occurs to me that by the nature of our training or position, we may have the *ability* to do any number of things — diagnose, teach, make recommendations or decisions — but we have to *earn* the right to influence other people. Influencing others is a leadership role. Whether we are influencing patients, team members, or others in the community, we can only lead with the permission of the follower, and we must earn that permission.

Dentistry today needs leaders. Society today needs leaders. *We need leaders with integrity and vision who will help us go where we would not go by ourselves. We need leaders who have the courage to help others make difficult choices, and leaders who can let go of their own egos and desires for personal gain for the benefit of others. Your patients deserve that, your practice deserves that, our profession and our world deserve that.*

Leadership in a dental office does not require a dental degree. Whether you are a dentist or another member of a dental team, you have the potential for leadership. Leadership in a dental practice cannot be delegated, but it can be shared. Whether you think you are a strong or a

weak leader, whether leadership comes naturally to you or takes great effort, you can participate in shared leadership. By virtue of your profession, your knowledge, and your life choices, you have opportunities to influence others. Let's explore the nature of power and influence, the opportunities and requirements of leadership, and finally, the process by which you can earn the right to influence others.

### Power vs. Authority

Often we confuse authority and power. We think we can confer power with a job title or position. I often hear team members talk about whether or not they have the authority to raise certain issues. The truth is that they may not have the authority, but they often have significant power in that others pay attention to their voices. Many of us have worked in an office in which there is an office manager who has authority, but the real power in the practice resides with someone else.

Power can be a positive or a negative force in the practice. If it moves the team in a direction consistent with the values of the practice, I would call it positive. If it subverts the agreed upon values and mission, I would call it negative.

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## The Four Stages of Power

In Lee and Norma Barr's outstanding book titled *Leadership Development*, they refer to David McClelland's work on the power motive. McClelland identified four developmental stages of power, and Barr and Barr described them as follows:

### 1. DEPENDENT

The first power stage is Dependency, and its purpose is to make others responsible. Stage I power users manipulate either through guilt, helplessness and passive aggression, or through temper tantrums, threats, and insults. It is a very immature use of power.

### 2. AUTONOMOUS

The second stage is Autonomous. Stage II power users are driven by a desire to control. They manipulate either as benevolent dictators, doling out favors like generous parents, or as abusive parents venting their wrath.

### 3. COMPETITIVE

The third power stage is Competitive. Stage III power users are driven by a need to make themselves look good at the expense of others. They may openly humiliate others or appear to be magnanimous, but the motive is

the same.

### 4. LEADER

The fourth power stage is Leader. Stage IV power users may play the role of Inspirational Leader or Fearsome Leader, but in either case, mature use of power is the result of tremendous testing and self-discovery. It is characterized by continual brutal self-examination.

The Stage IV leader represents a mature use of power. It is distinguished from the other three stages by its motivation. Here are some of the ways Barr and Barr describe the Stage IV Leader:

Stage Four leaders are motivated by helping others develop focus and energy to achieve organizational goals. They drive for goals that supersede personal interests.

They go on to say, "Stage Fours truly understand synergy. They know that sharing power increases the potential to achieve more." And perhaps most important, they say, "Followers of Stage Four leaders grow and move toward Stage IV development."

## Know Yourself

Dr. L.D. Pankey said that in order to achieve

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Mary H. Osborne, *Resources*.

Phone: (206) 937-5851

E-mail: [mary@maryosborne.com](mailto:mary@maryosborne.com)

Website: [www.maryosborne.com](http://www.maryosborne.com)

Address: 1564 Alki Avenue SW, Suite 303 • Seattle, WA 98116

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happiness and success in dentistry, you must “know yourself.” Knowing yourself seems to be the area of learning that frequently gets the least attention, although it has tremendous potential for helping you become more effective as a leader.

If we are honest, we can all recognize parts of ourselves in Stages I through III. If you went through them and excluded yourself from anything but mature power, I suggest you go through them again. Ask yourself about how they apply to you on your best day and on your worst day. If we are not able to look at ourselves through that less-than-flattering lens, we will not ever demonstrate Stage IV power.

I’d like to suggest three areas of exploration that will help you better understand yourself and grow as a leader: Power, Personality, and Passion. Looking at yourself through each of those lenses will help you know yourself.

## 1. Power

We have identified the power orientation that Barr and Barr’s research on leadership was demonstrated by the most effective leaders. They also state that only those who have “walked the difficult pathway of self-knowledge and risk-taking can understand how to bring others through it.” The power model is developmental because all leaders experience other power orientations on their way to mature power.

### Leadership Indicators

One of the most challenging and most important aspects of leadership is facing that “brutal self-examination” I referred to earlier. Leadership is not for the faint of heart. Examine your own leadership from a place of acceptance and self-compassion as well as brutal honesty. Barr and Barr list four indicators you can explore: Intention, Influence Methods, Ethics, and Effect on Others.

#### 1. INTENTION

Examine your intentions. Are you motivated

primarily to get something for yourself? Do you promote yourself at the expense of others? Or are you able to discipline your own ego to act in the best interests of people, the mission, the organization?

#### 2. INFLUENCE METHODS

How do you influence? Do you use intimidation, flattery, force, or ridicule to manipulate outcomes? Or do you have the courage to be direct, challenging, and honest with people? Stage IV leaders bring out the best in those they lead, recognizing differences in style and motivation.

#### 3. ETHICS

What are the ethical standards under which you operate? Are they professional and consistent? Or are they situational and easily changed when they are challenged in some way? Rationalization can be tempting to a leader, but ultimately, it erodes the integrity of an organization.

#### 4. EFFECT ON OTHERS

What do you observe about the people you attempt to influence? Have you surrounded yourself with people who are dependent on you for decisions? Or do you help them grow and thrive, become more independent, and take risks to try new things? Do you help them learn from their mistakes? The best way to determine the success of any leader is to look at the followers.

### Fear and Courage

In any discussion of power, we have to look at fear and courage. Historically, leaders have often been defined by their bravado. They have been seen as fearless and brave.

I’m concerned about any concept of leadership that does not allow fear. Fear is a natural, raw emotion. *Mature leaders learn to face fear and accept it as part of who they are and who they are becoming. They don’t have to deny it, intellectualize it, or excuse it.* They don’t have to call it by another name, such as anger, frustration,

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sadness, or stress.

Stage IV leaders face fear of failure, fear of conflict, fear of powerlessness, and fear of rejection. They learn to accept their fear as a legitimate part of who they are. Fear is not good or bad, it just is. The famous philosopher, Billy Joel, has said, “Your mistakes are the only things you can truly call your own,” but I’d like to suggest that your fears are another thing you can truly call your own. No one can take your fears away. Others can reassure us, stand by us, and support us in our fear, but our fear resides deep within us. And when we face it, we face it alone.

Courage is not the absence of fear, and it doesn’t necessarily involve overcoming fear. When you listen to true heroes discuss their deeds, they usually don’t see themselves or their acts as courageous. One of the most common responses you hear when you ask about courage is, “I just did what I had to do.” Courage, then, might be defined as the ability to “do what you have to do.”

To be a true leader, you must face your fears and continue to face them. You probably won’t ever like it, or enjoy it, but you can *own* it as a legitimate part of who you are. If you accept your fear, you can learn from it. You can *go into it* without judgment about yourself and know yourself better as a result.

## Powerlessness

**M**ature power includes fear. In order to experience mature power, you must experience powerlessness. Everything else is an illusion. Stage IV leaders lead out of their recognition of powerlessness. Their vulnerability is as powerful as their courage. We have certainly seen that demonstrated on the part of our national leaders in times when their leadership was needed most. Honest emotion is far more powerful than false bravado.

## Performing

**P**erforming gets in the way of true leadership. Trying to pretend you believe something you

do not, or trying to pretend you have no fear when you do, impedes your ability to lead. When you are performing, the success of the process is more focused on your performance than on the needs of those you lead.

When you are meeting a new patient for the first time, presenting treatment, or talking with an existing patient, ask yourself where your attention is. Is it on the patient or on yourself? When you are leading a team meeting, is your attention so focused on your ability to convince the team of your ideas that you are unable to really hear their thoughts or feelings? When you perform, your attention is on yourself, rather than on the person you are leading.

## Allowing Yourself To Be Influenced

**O**ne of the most important elements in earning the right to influence is that you *allow yourself to be influenced*. It is a paradox; it may appear contradictory, but **in order to influence others, you must allow yourself to be influenced by them**. You don’t have to allow yourself to be persuaded or controlled. You may not like what you hear. You may not agree with what you hear. **But if you don’t allow it to affect your thoughts and feelings, you are not likely to be successful in influencing others.**

Think of a time when you have been in a conversation and sensed that the other person was so entrenched in her perspective that nothing you say will get through to her. The interaction doesn’t have to be confrontational, just not open. “Yes, but ...” is the operative phrase. Now think of an interaction in which you felt truly understood: a conversation in which your perspective was included and given weight. You are far more likely to be influenced by the latter.

It’s interesting that *when we are most clear about our position, we are least likely to be closed in our conversation*. When we are unsure of ourselves, we are more likely to feel the need to

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defend our position, more likely to feel threatened by anything contrary to our perspective.

## Expansive Thinking

Cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien has said that the opposite of trust is not distrust, and it is not fear: it is control. The more we trust the process and trust ourselves in the process, the less we feel the need to control. The less we feel the need to control, the greater is our ability to influence other people. “Yes, but ...” thinking gets in the way of our ability to influence. It gets in the way of our ability to lead.

Mature power allows for “both... and...” thinking, instead of “yes, but ...” thinking. Mature power accepts the fact that there is more than one right answer. It is inclusive. In attempting to influence your patients toward better dental health, how willing are you to allow yourself to be influenced by them? Their fears, concerns, money issues, and trust issues are all important to them. Responding with “yes, but ...” may overcome their objections, but does it really influence them in positive ways?

I’m not suggesting you should fall victim to your patients’ concerns or that you should allow those concerns to change your recommendations. However, if you ignore them or trivialize them, you miss an opportunity to earn the right to influence. Including a patient’s concern in a discussion, legitimizing it, and having confidence in her ability to work through it contributes to mutual trust and understanding.

I remember a patient I saw who had extensive decay. She said she was recovering from cancer, chemotherapy, and radiation. One of the effects of her treatment was dry mouth, and she drank Coca Cola® all day to counter that. We talked with her about the effect that was having on her teeth. She told us that drinking Coke was the only thing she enjoyed in her life at that time. Our role at that point was not to lecture or forgive but to allow the reality of her situation into our thinking. “Yes, but ...” thinking and language would have

severely limited our ability to influence her at that time.

Instead, we encouraged her to talk about what she *was* willing to do to control her dental decay. She chose not to drink diet sodas but thought she could cut back on the cola. We also talked about alternative drinks, diluting them with water, and the use of fluorides. Once she felt we understood her situation, she was much more open to our suggestions.

“Both ... and ...” and “Yes, but ...” refer to a way of thinking as much as to the language you use. It requires that you genuinely open yourself to the unexpected, the element of surprise. You won’t always be surprised, but it will happen more than you think. ***When you are openminded, you may hear nuances you might have missed that make a world of difference.***

In leading your team, you may pick up on what seems like an insignificant concern, but one that is a major barrier to growth and change. If you fail to address that one concern, you may invest huge amounts of energy fighting obstacles that could have been easily overcome. People who feel empowered are less resistant to change. Leading a team requires genuine commitment to their growth, not control.

## 2. Personality

The more you know and accept what comes naturally to you, the more you can develop the less preferred sides of your personality. Like power orientation, personality is also a developmental process. The task of the early years of life is to develop our preferred functions. The task of the latter part of life is to develop our less preferred functions.

Myers and Briggs identified four pairs of preferences, which combine to form personality. Their research indicated that we all have both of each pair but have a preference for one or the other: either Extroversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging



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or Perceiving.

## ◆ EXTRAVERSION/INTROVERSION

Some people are energized by the outer world of people, places, and things, and others prefer to go inside themselves to restore their energy. One type prefers to process verbally or “think out loud,” while the other prefers to take time to think before speaking. Extroverts tend to want to “try it,” and introverts want to understand it. Both ways of relating to the world have value.

## ◆ SENSING/INTUITION

Some people prefer to take in information through their five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, while others depend more on their sixth sense of intuition. One group feels grounded in “what is,” while the other is more attracted to “what can be.” Sensors prefer a step-by-step, linear process. Intuitives enjoy focusing on patterns and outcomes, sometimes employing leaps of logic. Both have value.

## ◆ THINKING/FEELING

Some people prefer to come to a conclusion based primarily on logic and reason, while others place more weight on feeling values (e.g. the impact of decisions on people). Thinking types and Feeling types both use logical analysis but disagree on what constitutes evidence. Both have value.

## ◆ JUDGING/PERCEIVING

Some people prefer to orient their lives toward closure, while others prefer to keep their options open. Judging types use order and structure to control their environment, while Perceiving types prefer to be adaptable to their environment. Both have value.

Myers and Briggs believed that if we understood which of each pair came most naturally to us, we could develop that preference to its full potential. Only when we are clear about our preferences, can we begin to develop the less preferred parts of our personality.

It is important to remember that having a preference is not limiting, it is empowering. It

allows you to practice what comes most naturally to you and to understand the challenges of acting outside of your preferences. Understanding psychological type helps you to know yourself better.

The other side of understanding psychological type is recognizing that everyone does not see the world as you do. *When you fully embrace the concept that there is more than one way of looking at the world, you will come to see differences in perspective as legitimate, even valuable.* You are more likely to allow yourself to be influenced by another person.

## Strength-Building

In understanding personality types, there are comparisons to what Daniel Goleman refers to as “emotional intelligence” and “emotional competencies”; one refers to natural gifts and talents and the other to skill-building. The better you know yourself in terms of what comes naturally to you, the better able you are to grow in other areas. That seems obvious, but I think it sometimes gets lost in references to strengths and weaknesses.

My experience is that individuals tend to minimize things that come easily to them. They don’t see them as strengths. They might write them off as “common sense.” It seems easier to recognize strengths in others, particularly if their strengths are not your own.

In Donald Clifton’s work on strength identification, he defines a strength as:

A pattern of behavior, thoughts, and feelings that produces a high degree of satisfaction and pride, generates both psychic and/or financial reward, and presents measurable progress toward excellence.

A talent is defined as “any recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.” By those definitions even an apparent “weakness” could be considered a strength if it is applied productively. Dr. Pankey

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used to say that he had a “gift” of being hard of hearing because it caused him to be a very careful listener. I would call that a talent.

Knowing your personality includes knowing your preferences, strengths, talents, and skills. It includes understanding your emotional and relational competencies, as well as your technical and intellectual competencies.

## 3. Passion

The third area in which it is important to “know yourself” has to do with your passion. What is it that drives you, motivates you, excites you? What moves you? There are few qualities more powerful in a leader than passion. I read that the magazine, *Fast Company*, has as a motto, “Work is personal.” A simple statement but true. In David Whyte’s remarkable book, *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, he writes,

. . . to set out boldly in our work is to make a pilgrimage of our labors, to understand that the consummation of work lies not only in what we have done, but in who we have become while accomplishing the task.

Work *is* personal. We are identified by our work. We express ourselves through our work. Work has aspects which inspire us and aspects which bore us. That is the nature of work. I don’t think it is reasonable to expect to be passionate about every aspect of work. But getting in touch with your passion allows you to make choices about how you spend your time. It allows you to be energized by what you love and to see how the less inspiring aspects of your work are a part of a bigger picture.

Leadership requires that we go beyond competence: competence alone does not inspire other people. What lies behind the competence may be inspirational. What drives your competence? To quote David Whyte again, he writes,

Our competence may be at stake in ordinary, unthinking work, but in good work that is a heartfelt expression of our-

selves, we necessarily put our very identities to hazard.

Ask yourself what there is *about* your work that you would find a way to do, even if you were not doing what you are now doing. Is it creativity? Caring? A drive for excellence? Beauty? I remember a dentist I worked with many years ago who was thinking of leaving dentistry. He was not very happy in dentistry, but he realized he would miss it for the opportunity it gave him to contribute to the growth of people on his team. That was a significant part of his mission in life, and it was where his true passion lay.

## Shared Leadership

One of the distinctions of Stage IV leadership is that it encourages Stage IV behavior on the part of followers. It empowers and encourages others to share in leadership. Shared leadership is not an organizational model or a system for making decisions. It is a way of coming to your work, a belief system that looks for and encourages leadership qualities in others. It is a developmental process.

Leadership cannot be conferred: it emerges. Individuals step into leadership. ***Mature power comes from within — it is a reflection of personal power, not power over others. It requires the willingness to do the work of getting to know yourself, confronting your fears, and acting on your beliefs.***

I remember a dental practice I worked in one day a week when my children were young. Although I was a part-time employee, I now see that experience as the time when I began to step into leadership. I was committed to excellent patient care; I asked questions easily; and I listened carefully.

Eventually, the dentist for whom I worked began to talk with me about concerns he had about the practice. The dental assistant I worked with would also talk with me at lunch about her concerns. I did not engage in gossip but stayed focused on improving the practice. Gradually, I found myself bringing the two of them together to

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get important practice issues on the table and resolved. I had *earned the right to influence*.

My emerging leadership came as a result of the combination of my willingness to step out of the role of a part-time hygienist, the dentist's willingness to see me as more than just a pair of hands, and the assistant's confidence that I could help. All were integral parts of the process. Whatever role you have in the practice, you can participate in leadership, and you can encourage others to step into leadership as well. You can earn the right to influence.

## Risk

Leadership always involves risk. Stepping out to the front is more challenging than staying behind. David Whyte talks about the "captain" we so desperately need in our lives and in our work. We operate out of a model that says "either I am the captain, or someone else is." He tells the story of nurses who know the dosage a doctor has prescribed is too high but administer it anyway when another doctor concurs with the first doctor's recommendation. A child dies as a result. In speaking of those nurses, David Whyte says, "They had the captaincy, but not the courage of a captain's convictions."

Similarly, I have had more than one dental assistant tell me that they assisted in extracting the wrong tooth because they did not think they should challenge the doctor. They had to believe that the dentist put his or her ego above the needs of the patient, and they were unwilling to risk their jobs in the patient's best interest. I once worked for a dentist who told me I could ask any question but never in front of a patient. I remember what it was like to fear for my job, but ultimately, both leaders and followers must share responsibility for the well-being of the patient. David Whyte quotes a retired Navy admiral who told him, "A good crew doesn't let its captain fail."

A mature leader encourages risk, and celebrates when it spreads among the team. I can't talk about leadership without a reference to our Seattle Mariners baseball team and their former

manager, Lou Pinella. Although Lou could not be described as the most articulate leader, he led the 2001 Mariners to a record-breaking 116 win season.

One of the many reasons for their success had been their willingness to take chances. Early in the season Lou encouraged the team to steal bases. His rookie player, Ichiro, had great speed and had twenty-four steals the prior year in Japan. In 2001 he led the American League with fifty-six stolen bases. He may also have been tagged out more than he had in the past, but he was encouraged to take that risk.

Interestingly, the Mariners team as a whole led the major league in stolen bases. Ichiro responded to Lou's leadership, and I believe the team responded to both Lou and Ichiro's leadership. A culture of risk-taking developed on that team because their manager supported risk.

## Earning the Right To Influence

In closing, I'd like to review a process by which you can earn the right to influence. Leadership is a reciprocal process. Mature leaders lead and encourage leadership in others, and followers step into leadership. Leaders earn the right to influence based on three key determinants: who you are, what you do, and what you say.

### Who You Are

Who you are includes, among other things, your fears, courage, power orientation, integrity, personality, gifts, talents, preferences, skills, and passion. You will earn the right to lead your patients into healthy choices when you accept who you are, no matter what they choose — when it's all about them, not you. You might be more prosperous, more fulfilled in your work, more comfortable if they choose what you recommend, but, either way, you will be okay.

The same goes for who you are with your team.



You will be an effective team leader when you accept each person on your team for who they are and accept yourself regardless of the direction they choose. Their choices are about them, not you. When you understand that your path is not for everyone, yet you work at creating a community that can learn and grow together, you earn the right to influence.

### *What You Do*

**Y**ou also earn the right to influence by what you do. Your actions communicate the importance of what you believe: how you exercise power, the methods you use to influence others, the people with whom you surround yourself, where you place your attention, your effect on others, and how you act on what you believe.

If you want to influence patients about good dental health, know your work, take the necessary training, explore what does not support health in your own life, and have your own mouth restored. If you want to earn the right to influence others on your team, let your work reflect your passion and your commitment.

### *What You Say*

**W**hat you say also affects your ability to earn the right to influence. How do you communicate that you hear and understand the people you want to influence? How do they know you have been affected by their thoughts, words, and feelings?

**Choose your words carefully.** Choose what you say to yourself as well as what you say to others. Listen carefully to your own voice as well as to what others have to say. In earning the right to influence, you have much to learn about yourself and about those you lead — both your team members and your patients.

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## *Classic & Current Resources*

My work is influenced and informed by the wisdom of past as well as emerging new thinking. The following is a list of some of the sources I referred to while writing this issue of *Practice Renewal*:

### ***“The Second Half of Life”***

Audiotape by Angeles Arrien

### ***Leadership Development, Maturity and Power***

by Lee and Norma Barr

### ***Now, Discover Your Strengths***

by Don Clifton and Marcus Buckingham

### ***Soar with Your Strengths***

by Don Clifton and Paula Nelson

### ***Leader to Leader***

edited by Francis Hesselbein and Paul Cohen

### ***Crossing the Unknown Sea, Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity***

by David Whyte



Mary H. Osborne, Resources

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Meeting Planner

Phone: (206) 937-5851 • Website: [www.maryosborne.com](http://www.maryosborne.com)

### Earning the Right To Influence

1. Review the descriptions of the first three stages of power and think of examples of times when those strategies were used to influence you. Remember how you felt. Think of a time when you used those techniques to influence others. Discuss what you learned about yourself through the process.
2. Review your current leadership style, and ask yourself how often you act as you would like to act in regard to Intention, Influence Methods, Ethics, and Effect on Others. In which area of your leadership do you see the greatest potential for growth?
3. Think of a time when you were fearful but managed to move forward in spite of your fear, when you “did what you had to do.” What resources did you call upon to face your fear and move on?
4. Think of an example of a conversation in which you felt your concerns were not validated, when “Yes, but ...” thinking was the response to your concerns. Talk about how you responded to that and what it would have taken for you to feel heard by the other person. What could he/she have said or done that would have made a difference for you?
5. Think of an example of a recent conversation in which *your* mindset was “Yes, but ...” thinking. How could you have been more inclusive and seen the situation with “Both ... and ...” thinking? In what way could you have allowed yourself to be influenced?
6. What do you know about your personality style? Which of the pairs of preferences do you feel clear enough about to begin to work on the opposite style?