Don't Fence Me In!

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Leaders

The following outline summarizes five styles of power/social influence that can either work at odds with each other, or enhance the wellbeing of the entire community. Most people prefer to use one or two roles, and ignore or even abdicate the others. The tendency to overspecialize, however, creates dysfunction at work as well as at home. But as author Linda Kohanov discovered in her studies of leadership throughout history and across multiple cultures, there is another way.

"Over thousands of years, nomadic pastoralists — tribes that move with large, unrestrained animals — developed a multi-faceted, socially intelligent form of leadership combining all five roles," she explains. "In learning to use these roles interchangeably, rather than specializing in one or two, herding cultures became fluent in when and how to use each of them to greatest effect. In understanding the differences between the Dominant, Leader, Nurturer/Companion, Sentinel, and Predator roles, 'master herders' were able to capture the unique power of each. In the process, they created a fluid vocabulary of interventions that allowed interspecies communities to move across vast landscapes. These people had to deal with predators and changing climates, protecting and nurturing the herd while keeping these massive, gregarious, sometimes aggressive animals together — *without the benefit of fences and with very little reliance on restraints.*"

In doing extensive research on this topic for her 2013 book *The Power of the Herd: A Nonpredatory Approach to Social Intelligence, Leadership and Innovation*, it became clear that the interspecies socialization and leadership skills used by "master herders" in nomadic pastoral cultures *uplift* the intelligence of the entire community, resulting in behavior so coordinated, so sophisticated, it baffles the 21st century mind. These richly nuanced leadership skills were lost when humanity moved toward a sedentary, city-based lifestyle. Even so, when applied to modern situations, these ancient principles can help us harness the talents and creativity of the entire community.

The Five Roles of a Master Herder model grew out of that research, necessitating the writing of a book specifically on how to adapt this ancient wisdom to the modern human world. Over the last four years, Linda and her colleagues have perfected the model, bringing it to corporations, entrepreneurs, executive MBA programs, public schools, banks, social service agencies and other organizations on six continents.

This nature-based view of socially-intelligent leadership offers a powerful yet relatively simple template for helping people understand instinctual behaviors that surface in groups of social animals, including humans. More importantly, it offers solutions for helping teams, families, corporate cultures, social service agencies, educational organizations, and communities adapt to rapid change, allowing groups of people to face unexpected challenges together---and capitalize on unexpected opportunities.

The Five Roles of a Master Herder book includes a Professional Assessment Tool Linda developed with Juli Lynch, PhD. For people taking the assessment online, the following

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

summary offers a quick look at the various roles. For more information on the rich history behind this model, as well as how to develop and balance each of the roles, *The Five Roles of a Master Herder* book and related workshops offer tools that you can immediately put to work in professional and personal settings.

The five roles that a master herder employs, fluidly, as needed, include:

1. **Dominant**
2. **Leader**
3. **Nurturer/Companion**
4. **Sentinel**
5. **Predator**

The outline below covers the characteristics and benefits of each role. It also shows how these roles become dysfunctional when one or two roles are overemphasized in certain individuals---a common occurrence, and source of much pain and misunderstanding. Helping business leaders, team-members, teachers, parents, and political, religious or social activists develop all five skills in balance instantly uplifts the effectiveness of any group.

Dominant

Pastoral cultures have developed a richly nuanced, unusually sophisticated view of leadership because of their awareness of one simple fact: In herds of large, powerful animals that are allowed to move freely and maintain some semblance of a natural social system, the Dominant and the Leader are often two different individuals. As a result, these cultures understand the difference between these two concepts, which are often blurred in sedentary, dominance-submission oriented social systems, such as our own.

In developing 21st century leadership models, it is essential to distinguish between dominance and leadership, and learn how to use both effectively.

The characteristics, benefits and challenges of dominant individuals are similar in humans and horses/other large herbivores. In their adolescent, unconscious forms, the instinctual impulses of naturally dominant individuals can be harsh and destructive.

When used consciously, dominance becomes a constructive element of a mature, well-balanced leadership style. Master Herders in pastoral cultures learn to use dominance thoughtfully and sparingly for specific purposes that enhance the well being of the entire community.

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Instinctual Characteristics of an Immature Dominant

Keeps others away from something valuable
Uses intimidation as a management tool
Sometimes attacks others for no reason
(to keep everyone a bit on edge)
Intends to make others look away or move away
Refuses to move when others ask
Herds others by driving from behind

Benefits of A Mature Dominant (especially when balanced with other roles)

"Direct and Protect" Orientation
Naturally excels at setting boundaries with aggressors
Breaks up fights between herd members
Keeps other herd members out of trouble
Moves stubborn or lazy herd members
Most likely to challenge predators

Challenges of an Immature Dominant

- The main dysfunctions of the dominant stem from the orientation to intimidate and push other herd members away from food, water, valued herd members, etc.
- Because immature dominant individuals occasionally launch undeserved attacks, they are the most feared, least trusted herd members.
- It's difficult for them to lead anyone anywhere in a crisis. Immature dominants increase panic and decrease problem-solving abilities in others.

Use Dominance Thoughtfully to:

Stop unproductive behavior in groups
Manage disagreements between team members
Handle aggressive or passive aggressive power plays
Motivate "lazy" or resistant individuals to take action
Protect valuable resources from those who would take advantage

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Leader

In horses and other large herbivores, certain characteristics are common among individuals who other herd members ***choose to follow:***

Young Leader

Is attracted to novel situations
Assesses the possible benefits
Exhibits curiosity and confidence that other find contagious

Mature Leader

Exhibits heightened knowledge of terrain, food and water sources, and predators
Calms and focuses others in a crisis
Does not get involved in petty herd dramas
Sets effective boundaries with aggressors and dominants and then goes "back to grazing"

Human leaders add creativity to the mix, adding the following benefits and challenges:

Benefits of a Leader

Exhibits exceptional visionary qualities
Calms and focuses others during tense or novel situations
Motivates through inspiration

Challenges of a Leader

- Can lose touch with other herd members, appearing aloof or self-absorbed
- Sometimes gets so far out in front of the herd that others can't follow
- Seems unsympathetic or easily frustrated by interpersonal dramas
- Can take on too much responsibility due to difficulty delegating tasks, especially when the vision is first forming (procedures, policies and job descriptions are not clear in early stages of innovation, and must be tested and modified over time; this stage feels like you are "building a plane while flying it")

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Nurturer/Companion

Characteristics

Monitors the well being of others
Wants to make all members feel comfortable
More extroverted Nurturer/Companions can socialize with any member of the herd
More introverted Nurturer/Companions are an invaluable source of loyalty and support to family members and team members

Benefits

Holds the herd together
Increases socialization through affection and connection
Is most likely to appreciate diversity

In well-socialized herbivores, most herd members show solid nurturing and companionship skills, even those who are herd dominants or leaders. In humans, however, some people over-emphasize nurturing and companionship skills (often by having this role forced upon them through rigid sexual stereotypes). This can become toxic to the group. The following challenges of this role are usually unintentional, a result of the unconscious power plays nurturers engage in when they haven't developed other forms of power.

Challenges of the Human Nurturer/Companion

- Is less likely to lead because of interest in keeping everyone comfortable and together
- Has trouble differentiating between assertiveness and aggression
- Sees dominant as abusive, while also trying to get close to him or her, inspiring "two-faced" behavior
- Power tends to "go underground" through passive aggressive moves and grudge holding
- On a power scale of 1 to 10, someone who overemphasizes this role cannot "dial up" power over a "5" without adding frustration or rage. This person then feels embarrassed about the explosion afterward and will sometimes retreat into shame, or shame others in response
- Has a tendency to use gossip as a bonding tool

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Sentinel

Characteristics

- Steps away from the herd to witness dynamics, threats, and opportunities from a wider perspective
- Scans environment so that others can securely interact, rest or do their job
- Engages a relaxed yet heightened awareness of the big picture in the present (as opposed to the leader's focus on the big picture in the future)

Benefits

- Acts as a witness who simultaneously observes "herd dynamics" as well as how the organization, family or company interacts with the environment, culture, or larger economic/political/social system
- Alerts leaders when it the organization is in danger of losing track of its purpose or in need of support and protection
- Serves as a Holder of Group Consciousness who stays on the edges but remains tuned into the group's life and work, ideally keeping its welfare in mind and heart
- "Smells smoke before others see the fire." Acts as a "whistleblower" when necessary.
- Fosters calmness and trust in others so they can rest, play, interact, or do their work without vigilance, knowing that they will receive information on changes in the environment, culture or market with time to adjust

Challenges of a Sentinel

- Can be seen as overly logical, aloof and detached
- Tends to emphasize group needs at the expense of individual needs and desires
- Sometimes suffers from the "shoot the messenger" phenomenon
- May withhold crucial information or fail to warn of impending disaster (as an act of revenge for being devalued or as a power play to undermine designated leadership)
- When lacking in social intelligence, the Sentinel tends to focus on spreadsheets, budgets, data, and procedures, becoming oblivious to the emotional needs, interpersonal dilemmas and creative ideas of co-workers and family members
- Can become hyper-vigilant and problem-focused without offering solutions, relying on others to intervene in conflict, create new policies, and invent new products or business models

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Predatory Power

- Nourishes self at others expense
- Values territory over relationship
- Values goal over process
- Fight to the death impulse is strong
- Conquest/Survival of the Fittest orientation
- "Kill or be killed" mentality
- Culls the weak
- Must hide vulnerability at all cost
- Purposefully escalates fear
- Competition emphasized

Nonpredatory Power

- Supports individual and group needs simultaneously
- Values relationship over territory
- Values process over goal
- Stops fighting when aggressor backs off
- Mutual Aid/Safety in Numbers orientation
- "Live and let live"
- Shields the weak
- Vulnerable individuals can rely on others
- Conserves energy for true emergencies
- Cooperation emphasized

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

Predator

Benefits (when used thoughtfully and sparingly)

Culls what is no longer needed
Sensitive to energy and resource drains
Can make tough decisions during lean times
Keeps life in balance with available resources
Offers additional protection from predators

Challenges (when this role is overemphasized)

- Too quick to cull vulnerable or highly sensitive "herd members," or people who simply need more support and training to excel
- Sometimes "eats its own children," preying on team members, creating rampant mistrust, paranoia, and political games that waste time and money for everyone involved
- Wants to win at all cost, even when it's not in the best interest of the company, social system, or self
- Overemphasizes survival of the fittest, competition for limited resources mentality, transferring competition with other companies to needless competition within the company, again wasting time and money

The Leader, Dominant, Nurturer/Companion and Sentinel Roles are most effective when they are *consciously separated* from predatory impulses.

Among master herders, the roles of Dominant, Leader, Sentinel and Nurturer-Companion are used in their *nonpredatory* forms Predatory power is used sparingly, mostly to keep the herd and tribe in balance with available resources.

In modern sedentary cultures, such as our own, however, predatory power is actively promoted, causing many people in power to employ dominance, leadership, sentinel and even nurturing/companionship roles *with an underlying predatory motivation* that can be extremely destructive to the social system as a whole, not to mention confusing and hurtful to individuals who encounter such leaders.

Pairing Predatory Power with the role of Dominant, for instance, causes those in leadership positions to become wasteful and abusive. Predatory Dominants feel justified in *thriving* at others' expense, hijacking the resources of the

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

company and the community for short-sighted personal gain. (Dictators are predominantly, if not exclusively, Predatory Dominants.)

Pairing Predatory Power with the role of Leader results in charismatic individuals who initially build on an inspirational presence and some good ideas of their own, yet over time feel justified in callously hijacking others' ideas. (Steve Jobs exhibited this tendency, sometimes combining it with intensely dominant behavior.)

Pairing Predatory Power with the role of Sentinel results in the tendency to collect and hoard information on internal dynamics and outside forces that make the organization vulnerable to emerging market trends, and cultural or political shifts, ultimately using these insights against leaders and colleagues at just the right time to gain personal advantage, (Example: facilitating a hostile takeover or sale of a business that will result in layoffs for others and power or profit for the Sentinel.)

Similarly destructive are Nurturer/Companions who develop predatory tendencies, as they can easily gain an individual's trust, learn about this person's vulnerabilities through intimate conversations, and then suddenly, seemingly inexplicably, use those vulnerabilities against him or her for personal gain.

Most of the time, the predatory impulse is paired with only one or two of the other roles. (Sociopaths and psychopaths are predatory individuals with little or no capacity for empathy or conscience. Luckily, most are not skilled at all five roles, and can often be impulsive and disorganized as well.)

True "Evil Geniuses," however, are adept at using all five roles to manipulate people and situations exclusively for their own personal gain. A great example of such a (hopefully rare) individual is the fictional senator in the Netflix series *House of Cards.* It's fascinating to watch the main character, played by Kevin Spacey, employ the Dominant, Leader, Sentinel, and Nurturer/Companionship roles exclusively for predatory purposes--- eventually reaching the presidency through the fluid and nefarious use of all five roles as needed.

A Master Herder, on the other hand, uses predatory power sparingly and with tremendous skill and empathy, for the good of the tribe, the herd and the eco-system. He or she employs nonpredatory forms of the Dominant, Leader, Sentinel, and Nurturer/Companion roles, while using the Predator role for sustainability related issues, keeping life in balance with available resources.

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov

The Ultimate Evolutionary Advantage

Gaining and then maintaining the balance of all five Master Herder roles, using them at the right time and right place, mitigates the challenges and dysfunctions that surface when any single role is overemphasized.

When everyone develops these skills, it is hard for any one individual to manipulate, victimize, or take advantage of others. And the intelligence, creativity, and power of the entire "herd" are elevated!

Copyright 2013 by Linda Kohanov