



i2i coaching
Leadership Development

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DON'T CONFUSE THE MAP FOR TERRITORY

We have so many articles, white papers and books about leadership. At the last count,

Amazon had almost a quarter of a million books on the topic. These are what we call the “maps”, and not to be confused with the “territory”. When it comes to leadership development, we spend a lot of time with the maps, and sadly not enough time in the territory.



New territory for me right now is learning to sing. At the beginning, I was completely terrified and full of self doubt. Yet I persisted because I had set my destination and it was really important to me. I was discarding an old version of me who believed he would never sing. Then one day, almost a year after my first lesson, my teacher mentioned that I was “in the territory” and that this was a breakthrough. What did she mean? She saw someone who was not singing from the sheet music or trying to get the notes right. She saw someone who was “in” the land of the main character, “being” that person, feeling their emotions and singing their song. I had, in fact, put down my map after months of practice and bad singing.

My bad singing was due to the fact that my left brain and right brain could not communicate fast enough with each other. It was not possible for me to *sing* and *feel* at the same time. That was my limitation - it was just the way I was wired. It's the same with leadership. We all have different limitations and are wired to “lead” in a certain way. Your wirings are unique to you. They represent your current stage of development. Getting to know your default tendencies (your

wirings) and working to change them will propel you to the next stage of development.

Getting to the next stage of your development is crucial in order to meet the challenges of an ever changing and complex world. If your stage of leadership development does not match the complexity of your environment, you will fail or stagnate. For most of us, our environment is changing at a rapid pace. No maps, techniques, processes or even leadership skill building will help solve your problems if your leadership development does not keep up with the complexity of your environment. In fact, the complexity of your environment and your leadership development are the same territory.

You have only one territory - the one you are in. Here are a few survival tips to get to the next one:

- Set the right destination. If you are heading only towards “profitability or “shareholder value” - throw out your map. Have the courage to lead your people to a destination worth leading them to. Get dirty figuring this out.
- Ask, “what risks am I willing to take?”. The right risks will lead to greatness. Know that there is no safe way to be great and no great way to be safe.
- Work diligently at becoming the type of leader you want to become. Get feedback on “who” you are being as a leader. It is far more powerful than getting feedback on your leadership “skills”. Your leadership skills are great, but these are technical details.
- Do something new for the first time in your leadership role. If you have not done this, it is a sure sign that your environment is outpacing your capability.
- Notice how you “react” in your leadership role. Reactive tendencies are our default tendencies that are usually fear based and they appear when we feel insecure. The three broad categories are: 1) overly nice or compliant; 2), overly critical or

distant; and 3) overly controlling or perfectionistic. They will give us a clue to the “wiring” we might need to change.

- Get help developing yourself. It’s a competitive advantage. If you feel that you don't need help, you might be coasting. This will catch up with you when it might be too late. A six month coast is perfectly fine. Anything beyond a year is dangerous.
- Have those crucial and uncomfortable conversations with your team about what is really going on that nobody talks about “in the room”. The quickest development route is through relationship.
- This one is scary - tell people what your growth goals are so that you can receive their support.
- Make mistakes, learn from them, make changes and be persistent.

When you have spent enough time in this territory, you will have breakthrough moments. You will develop a new structure of mind and the old wiring will be gone. With this new structure, you can easily find your way around without a map. Then you will know it’s time to find a new land to explore. By then, you will need a *new* map. And remember, it’s just a map!

My breakthrough song is “Iris” by the Goo Goo Dolls. The main character gives up eternity and falls to earth to be human and experience love. What bigger risk can you think of? What greater purpose can there be?

If you need help with wiring, maps or territories, please reach out to me. Set your destination and let’s go.

For aspiring singers, I would highly recommend [Barbara Simon](#).