

## INVICTUS: INTRODUCING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES, CHARACTER AND COMMITMENT<sup>1</sup>

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*Gerard Seijts, Jeffrey Gandz and Mary Crossan wrote this case solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.*

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### INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

Recent books and articles have offered analyses of the causes of the global financial and economic crisis of 2007 to 2009. Yet little attention has been paid to the quality of leadership in organizations that were at the epicentre of the storm, were victims of it or avoided it.

A multidisciplinary group of faculty from the Ivey Business School decided to bridge this gap and began a close examination of leadership failures and successes relating to the crisis. They engaged more than 300 senior business, public sector and not-for-profit leaders from across Canada, as well as in New York, London and Hong Kong, in open discussion on the role that organizational leadership played before, during and after the crisis. Using the Chatham House Rules to preserve confidentiality and encourage candour, they dove beneath the surface to discover the true state of business leadership in the twenty-first century.

In a sense, they put leadership itself on trial. They posed one major question: Would better leadership have made a difference? The answer they received was unequivocal: Yes! History, they asserted, need not repeat itself. But it will unless concerted action is taken to learn and apply the lessons from the crisis.

The results of the 18-month investigation were captured in the book *Leadership on Trial: A Manifesto for Leadership Development*.<sup>3</sup> The book contains a statement of principles — a manifesto that addresses what good leaders do, who they are and how they can be developed in organizations. A key conclusion from the research is that when it comes to leadership, competencies count, character matters and commitment to the role of leadership is critical to individual and organizational success<sup>4</sup> (see Exhibit 1).

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<sup>1</sup> This case has been written on the basis of published sources only. Consequently, the interpretation and perspectives presented in this case are not necessarily those of Nelson Mandela.

<sup>2</sup> This case is based on several of our articles that we cite throughout the case. We also would like to thank Daina Mazutis, Carol Stephenson and Mark Reno for their extensive contributions to our work on leader character.

<sup>3</sup> J. Gandz, M. Crossan, G. Seijts and C. Stephenson, *Leadership on Trial: A Manifesto for Leadership Development*, 2010, [www.ivey.uwo.ca/research/leadership/research/books-and-reports.htm](http://www.ivey.uwo.ca/research/leadership/research/books-and-reports.htm), accessed March 17, 2014

<sup>4</sup> M. Crossan, J. Gandz and G. Seijts, "Developing Leadership Character," *Ivey Business Journal*, January–February 2012; <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/leadership/developing-leadership-character>, accessed March 17, 2014; G. Seijts, J.

### **Competencies Count**

Leaders must have intelligence or intellect as well as people, organizational, business and strategic competencies. Such competencies are amalgams of knowledge, understanding, skills and judgment.

### **Character Matters**

Competencies determine what leaders can do. Leadership character determines what they will do in different situations. Character can be expressed as a set of virtues, values and traits.

### **Commitment is Critical**

Alongside competencies and character is the commitment to do the hard work of leadership and to continue to develop as a leader. Such commitment is forged from individual aspirations and the preparedness to be fully engaged and make personal sacrifices in return for opportunities and rewards. Good leaders will be committed to the good of the organization they serve and the people who follow them rather than solely to their own self-benefit.

### **A VOID IN BUSINESS EDUCATION**

Business schools have done an admirable job of teaching and researching competencies. Most business organizations have defined the framework of competencies that are required to be successful in the institution. However, much less attention has been spent on leadership character and the importance of commitment to the leadership role.

Leadership character was raised frequently in our discussions during the “Leadership on Trial: A Manifesto of Leadership Development” project. But there was no consistent understanding among executives about what character meant, despite a concurrence that it was important. What does leadership character mean in a business context? How would one explain or illustrate leadership virtues? How would one teach leadership character? Character is difficult to define, assess, measure and develop. Hence, the need to bring clarity to the construct.

We define leadership character as an amalgam of traits, values and virtues. Traits, such as open-mindedness or extroversion, may be either inherited or acquired; they predispose people to behave in certain ways, if not overridden by other forces such as values or situational variables such as organizational culture and rewards. Values, such as loyalty and honesty, are deep-seated beliefs that people hold about what is morally right or wrong or, alternatively, what makes the most sense to do, or not do, in running a business. Virtues, such as courage or accountability, refer to patterns of situationally appropriate behaviours that are generally considered to be emblematic of good leadership.

In Exhibit 2, we posit character as consisting of 11 dimensions: integrity, humility, courage, humanity, drive, accountability, temperance, justice, collaboration, transcendence and judgment. Each of these dimensions has a similar underlying structure of traits–values–virtues, and each could be extensively deconstructed and discussed in greater depth. The set of dimensions, together with an illustrative set of

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Gandz, M. Crossan and M. Reno, “Character: The Essence of Leadership,” *Developing Leaders* 10, 2013, pp. 11–20, accessed March 17, 2014.

elements that describe each dimension, is unique in that it attempts to integrate age-old concepts from philosophy with more contemporary thinking from the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, evolutionary biology, management and leadership. The wording of these dimensions is heavily influenced by the language used by the executive- and board-level participants in our project; subsequent qualitative and quantitative work with leaders, managers and students to ensure that we had identified relevant dimensions; and endless debate within our own research group. Our analysis differs from many other discussions of character in that it extends the definition of character to embrace other aspects of personality traits, values and virtues, rather than focusing exclusively or primarily on its moral dimensions.

The movie *Invictus*,<sup>5</sup> based on a biography of Nelson Mandela,<sup>6</sup> provides a truly brilliant illustration of not only the competencies required to lead but also the leadership character and commitment that are needed to lead during trying times.

## PREPARATION

There is no need to view the movie prior to the session; in fact, the session works best if you have not seen the movie. The only preparation is to read *Leadership on Trial: A Manifesto for Leadership Development* or the following articles based on the book:

M. Crossan, J. Gandz and G. Seijts, “Developing Leadership Character,” *Ivey Business Journal*, January–February, 2012. <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/leadership/developing-leadership-character>, accessed March 17, 2014.

J. Gandz, M. Crossan, G. Seijts and M. Reno, “Leadership Character and Corporate Governance,” *Director* 167, May–June 2013, pp. 15–21. Reprinted in *Ivey Business Journal* [online]. <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/leadership/leadership-character-and-corporate-governance>, accessed March 17, 2014.

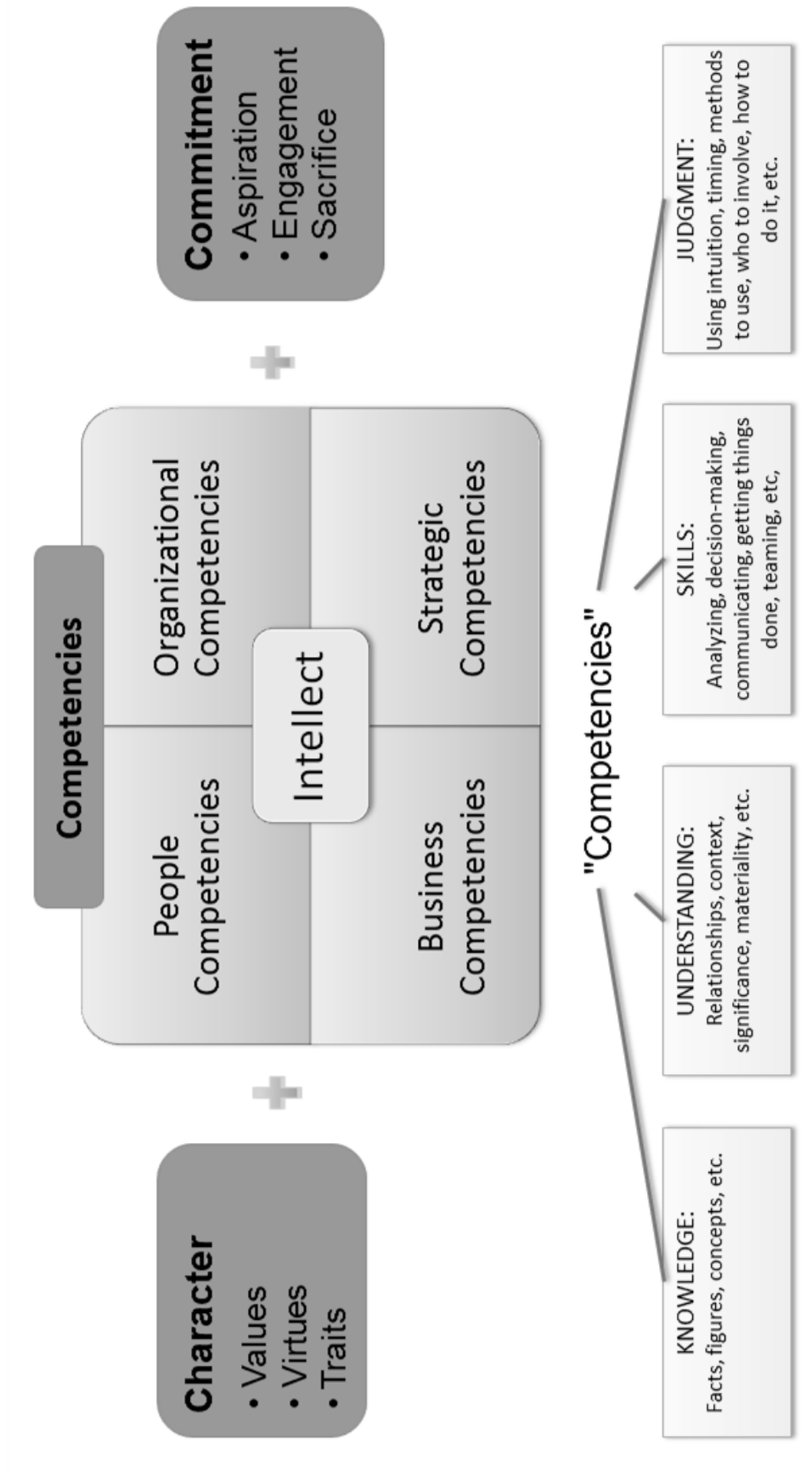
G. Seijts, J. Gandz, M. Crossan and M. Reno, “Character: The Essence of Leadership,” *Developing Leaders* 10, 2013, pp. 11–20.

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<sup>5</sup> *Invictus*, directed by Clint Eastwood, Warner Brothers, 2009.

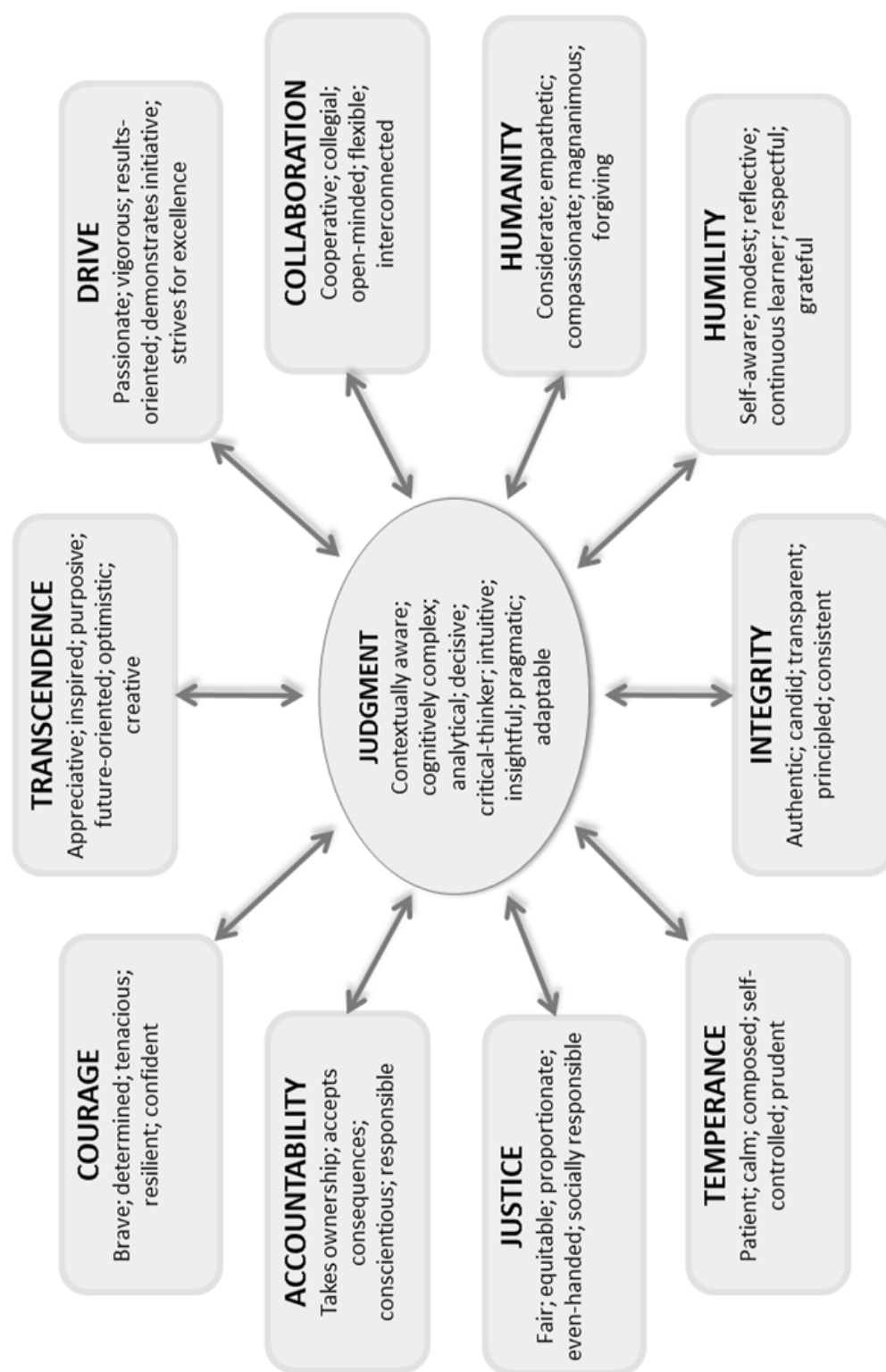
<sup>6</sup> John Carlin, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Changed a Nation*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2008.

## EXHIBIT 1: THE EFFECTIVE LEADER



Source: J. Gandz, M. Crossan, G. Seijts and C. Stephenson, "Leadership on Trial: A manifesto for Leadership Development," 2010, Richard Ivey School of Business, London, Ontario

## EXHIBIT 2: CHARACTER DIMENSIONS AND ELEMENTS



Source: J. Gandz, M. Crossan, G. Seijts and M. Reno, "Leadership Character and Corporate Governance," *Director* 167, May–June 2013, pp. 15–21, reprinted in Ivey Business Journal [online], <http://iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/leadership/leadership-character-and-corporate-governance>, accessed March 17, 2014.