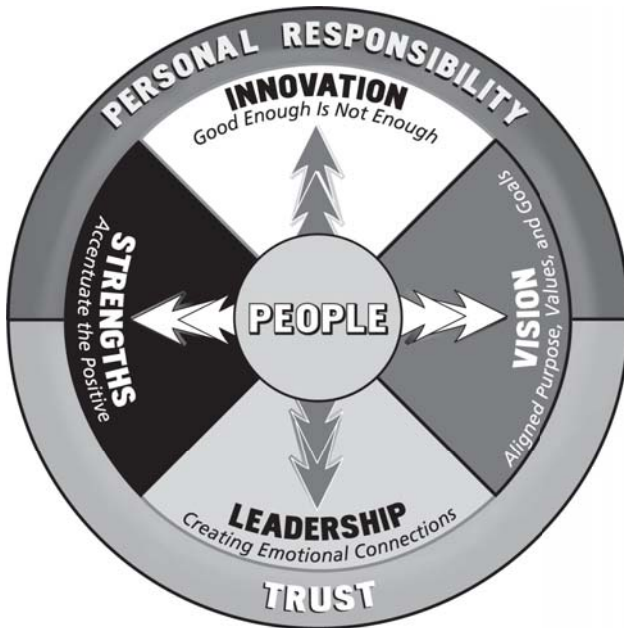


LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE Medicine Wheel



LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE
Medicine Wheel

The Seven Elements of
High Performance

Gary Lear

Advantage®

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Dedication

For my family and friends.

Special thanks to my best friends, John Bentley and Mike Boozer, for allowing me to bounce ideas around with them and for the many great discussions that we have had throughout the years.

I would like to thank my early mentors for helping me on the two life paths that converged:

Rick Knight

Keith Ayers

Rob Lebow

Randy Spitzer

For my wife Ann.

She put up with years of listening to me talk about research and my ideas that came from that research. She provided invaluable feedback and support. I couldn't have done it without her.

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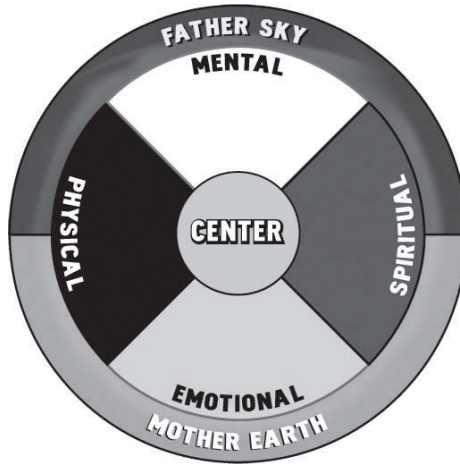
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Introduction



The Seven Elements of High Performance model is not something that I created, but rather something that I have discovered. It is the result of the convergence of two separate journeys that I began many years ago.

One journey began at the end of 2001. I had just completed a one-year project at Educational Testing Service where I had been engaged to create a new division. As a result, I had spent a considerable amount of time working away from my home and family. Now that the project was over I was again marketing my training and consulting services to a variety of potential clients. Yet, I found myself rather unmotivated to go back to doing one-day and two-day training programs that, in the end, had little or no real impact on the operations of my clients' organizations. I was chomping at the bit to apply some of my education and experience to make a real long-term difference for my clients' and their organizations.

But what actually did make a real difference? That was a huge question, as there were literally hundreds of theories and approaches out there in research articles and in management books. The last thing I wanted to do was to be told that I was bringing yet another “fad” to a client. There must be a handful of simple things that any organization could do that would have a real and lasting impact on performance. All I needed to do was find them.

I began reading all manner of research studies, articles, and books about research, focusing specifically on high-performance organizations and larger scale, long-term research. It was all too easy to point out how they all differed. In fact, I had come across several articles that had done just that, stating that obviously if none could agree then there was no value to any of them. Yet, I believed that there was value, and I was finding areas where there was agreement. I began to focus my efforts on finding not what they were saying that was different, but rather on finding what they were all saying that was the same.

I began to see patterns develop, and several themes began to emerge. First it was just a few, and then I began to see more, some of these coalescing into a single, more robust theme. Finally, there were seven very robust themes, or elements of high performance, that had emerged from the hundreds of research articles and almost three years of study.

As these seven elements emerged, I not only noticed an interrelationship between each element and the other elements, I also noticed that there was a very strong relationship of these seven elements to something else entirely, leading to what I had thought was a totally unrelated previous and personal journey.

In 1991 I had made a decision to learn more about my American Indian heritage; a heritage that my family had spent generations hiding.

After all, it wasn't desirable to be Cherokee in the mid-1800s to mid-1900s. But some personal things had happened in my life that led to a desire to learn more about the history, culture and beliefs of Cherokees, my matrilineal heritage, as well as other native peoples in North and South America.

I devoured a variety of books about my heritage, and attended a great number of powwows and other cultural events where I met a variety of people. There was the Apache elder who taught me about hair and its connection to spirituality; the Pueblo teacher who taught me about justice; and many others, each with their own special lesson. One of the events that had the most impact was when I stopped at a little store in North Florida where I met a Miccosukee elder who taught classes on the Medicine Wheel each week, which I soon began attending. Slowly but steadily my journey of learning continued, and it still continues today, as I am always trying to learn more about my heritage and how I can apply that learning to my life.

The Medicine Wheel became a simple yet very complex and powerful structure for relating a lot of other concepts that I was dealing with, both personally and professionally. I had already begun to see some connections with some American Indian philosophies to best business practices. And then, as the themes began to emerge in my research I saw the connection between the Medicine Wheel and these themes.

The two journeys had converged.

What I am about to share with you is the story of this convergence and my discovery. Yes, the Seven Elements of High Performance™ is exactly that: a discovery. It is not something that I have crafted to “fit” a preconceived model that I set out to develop, but rather, it is a naturally occurring model that works precisely because it was discovered and not

contrived. The research says that these seven things work together to bring about high performance; the Medicine Wheel tells us why these seven things work.

And with that, let's begin at the beginning...

The Medicine Wheel

For all the people of the earth, the Creator has planted a Sacred Tree under which we may gather, and there will find healing, power, wisdom, and security.

The roots of this tree spread deep into body of our Mother Earth. Its branches reach upwards like hands praying to Father Sky.

The fruits of this tree are the good things Creator has given to his people: Teachings that show the path to Love, Wisdom, Justice, Patience, Compassion, Generosity, Courage, and those which bring balance into our lives: Honor, Dignity, and Respect.

THE SACRED TREE

These are the beginning words of the workbook, *The Sacred Tree*, which was given to me when I first began to learn about the Medicine Wheel. It was the result of a group of elders from a great many American Indian Nations coming together at a conference to share about the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. As with many people who had not grown up learning about the Medicine Wheel, I had an idea of what it was, but did not fully appreciate the depth and richness that was waiting there for me to discover.

Many think that the Medicine Wheel is a physical thing that has special power. They may point to a set of rocks that have been put in a ritualistic pattern, or perhaps a smaller item that is in the form of a circle with certain colors. While these things might be called Medicine