

# The 4E Leadership

## Leadership as Conversation

By Aldo Civico

We live in a high-speed, complex and paradoxical world. High performance leadership requires an approach that meets today's global challenges.

Today its less about finding solutions and more about creating new patters. It's less about redistribution of skills and more about fostering creative processes. It's less about competition and more about collaboration. Our present demands a new kind of leadership.

The definition of leadership as the capacity to influence is still a valid definition, but it's a limiting one. But the "how" of leadership needs to be reengineered. The Harvard Review of Business recently has suggested that effective leadership requires the characteristics of a conversation.

*"There is no authentic encounter until you are looking down to the other."*

The combination of leadership with conversation can at first seem counterintuitive. In fact, leadership has been often interpreted with the charismatic capacity to utter commands that are implemented by followers. The notion of conversation suggests a different attitude.

In fact, conversation presupposes an informal quality. It refers to an exchange of ideas, it suggests a permanent feedback, and points to a system of reciprocity. Referring to this qualities, in seminars and trainings I present the **"4E Leadership™."**

The first "E" stays for **Encounter**. There is no conversation without a previous encounter. An encounter requires the capacity to leave one's own comfort zone and to be moved by

curiosity. It demands to level yourself with the other. There is no authentic encounter until you are looking down to the other.

“Empathy is necessary for a flexible and creative leadership”

The second “E” stays for **Empathize**. To empathize is a fundamental emotional intelligence skill. There is no understanding and comprehension without empathy. It is the capacity to see and to understand the experience, the ideas and the values of the other, almost to the point of identification. It recognizes the other’s existence and legitimizes the other’s ideas. The acquisition of this skill is necessary for a flexible and creative leadership.

The third “E” stays for **Engage**. Once a leader has empathized with the other, the leader can engage the other by soliciting ideas, contributions and commitments. By engaging the other a leader can foster in his own organization the capacity for imagination and creativity which can result in innovative solutions. By engaging the other, rather than selecting solutions, a leader is able to generate a menu of options that adds solutions.

The fourth “E” stays for **Empower**. Leadership does not rest anymore on the performance of a soloist. It is no more characterized by a passive following. Rather, it is about shared leadership, which means, the capacity to awaken the capacity for leadership in each member of an organization. Leadership today is the capacity to elicit co-responsibility from the CEO of a company to its customers.

Executives today consider the skills of building and mending relations as a fundamental skill for high performance leadership. Developing skills according to the “4E Leadership™” executives will be able to navigate successfully and with confidence our high-speed, complex and paradoxical world.