

# High Quality Leadership Theory

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A New Perspective

The High Quality Leadership (HQL) theory provides a more holistic and inclusive definition of leadership than other models. An actual *refinement*, so to speak, that goes beyond simply “influence” (Northouse, 2010, p. 3), but also includes a leader’s moral qualities to lead, taking stock in leading with selflessness, integrity, and in a spiritually conspicuous way for followers to witness.

High Quality Leadership (HQL) emerged amid evaluations of predominant leadership theories and debate surrounding notable leaders who were able to achieve incredible feats, but whose leadership style and subsequent outcomes were detrimental to others. Leaders who influence relying upon charisma, coercion, rewards, etc. can remain successful, but may fail to meet the criteria of a high-quality leader. According to HQL theory, all leadership falls along a continuum between high quality leadership and low-quality leadership and influence comprises only part of what a high-quality leader must possess.

The ability to influence others remains core to leadership as evidenced by prior theories and empirical support, but it exemplifies more narrow explanations of leadership. HQL theory diverges from most theories because it emphasizes that leadership is comprised of the capacity to be an effective leader coupled with the moral compass to truly be a high-quality leader.

### What It All Means

High Quality Leadership theory advances the understanding of leadership by promoting that leadership contains both leadership capacity and a moral compass and that both aspects are equally important. This new model of leadership bridges the gaps that have existed in other models and presents an assessment tool that is more comprehensive than some of the dominant leadership instruments.

Organizational researchers and practitioners can now move beyond asking if those who lead are good leaders and begin asking if they are high quality leaders. This enhanced leadership perspective can further stimulate a deeper analysis of leadership assessment, which can inform leader and follower performance reviews. This model also informs effective leader development and efforts to improve organizational culture.

### Components of High Quality Leadership

**Capacity** - Capacity is defined as one’s skill to lead and relates to one’s leadership capabilities. Capacity includes four domains, Cognitive Ability, Getting Results, Compensation Attainment, and Span of Control.

**Cognitive Ability.** The degree to which a person is perceived to be a deep thinker, smart, and academically gifted.

**Getting Results.** The degree to which a person is perceived to have a propensity toward action, risk, curiosity, and courage.

**Compensation Attainment.** The degree to which a person perceives that they themselves have achieved successful salary attainment.

**Span of Control.** The degree to which a person is perceived as being skilled, well-organized, and can effectively coordinate and control the activities of those they lead.

**Compass-** Compass is defined as one's moral directive to lead and relates to one's ethical character. Compass is comprised of the four domains of Selflessness, Spiritual Behavior, Accountability, and Integrity.

**Selflessness.** The degree to which one foregoes their own self-interest in the interest of others' wishes, goals, and successes.

**Spiritual Behavior.** The degree to which a person is perceived as having a value system and conscience that derives from a spiritual sense of connection to a higher power.

**Accountability.** The degree to which one takes a personal ownership of choices and outcomes.  
Integrity. The degree to which one is truthful and trustworthy.

## Why It Matters

High Quality Leadership Theory combines technical and moral leadership in a new way and provides a more complete framework than other leadership theories. HQL's two constructs, Capacity (technical "effective influencer" leadership) and Compass (moral leadership) were developed to be more exhaustive than current leadership paradigms. Capacity to lead is identified by assessing a leader's cognitive ability, ability to obtain results, ability to lead a sizeable number of followers and increases in the leader's salary. Compass to lead is identified by assessing the leader's levels of selflessness, accountability, integrity and spiritual behavior. In sum, HQL remedies some of these weaknesses in definitions, explanations, and assessments of leadership.