

Leading in the Matrix of Today Integrating Body/Mind/Spirit*

By Ginny Whitelaw, Ph.D.

Summary: The connections between body, mind, spirit and the everyday actions of leaders can be understood in terms of 4 simple yet profound patterns running through all of these levels. This paper explores how these patterns foster the whole and balanced leadership so necessary in today's matrix organizations, and the cutting edge implications for leadership development.

The challenges of leading in today's matrix are greater than ever before: leaders are being asked to accomplish more with less authority, balance competing perspectives, involve more people in every project or decision, do more with fewer resources, juggle more demands faster, balance driving their own agenda with supporting others, and do all of this while handling a daily drubbing of dozens, if not hundreds of emails, instant messages, calls and other assorted interrupts.

One doesn't perform well, much less thrive, in this accelerated environment by simply speeding up. Rather it calls a dynamic, versatile quality – where we're firing on all cylinders: using all four energies of whole and balanced leaders. What are these energy patterns? And why are they so essential to effective leadership, sustainable performance and our own sense of being "whole" in body, mind and spirit? I can do more than tell you about them; you have the patterns in you right now. Let me take you on a quick tour.

• **The Driver:** Stab the air with your index finger, over and over, like a politician making a

point – or an angry coach challenging an umpire's decision. These sharp, thrusting movements bring out the Driver. Direct and aggressive, this is the pathway of people who love to win. Picture Donald Trump as he says, "You're fired!"

• **The Organizer:** Sit up straight and fold your hands neatly in your lap. Like Queen Elizabeth II, the Organizer holds perfect form, with "a place for everything, and everything in its place." Moving step by step, the Organizer ticks through a project list, doing the right thing and doing things right.

• **The Collaborator:** Move your head or your hips from side to side, and let your whole body follow. You're getting into the swing of the Collaborator who knows how to have fun and engage people. When Oprah tilts her head, smiles, and draws people into the discussion, she's engaging the pattern of the Collaborator.

• **The Visionary:** Let your arm rise effortlessly, as though it's buoyed by air, and your hand move randomly through space. These hanging, drifting motions bring out the Visionary - like a Tai Chi master – open to anything and sensing the flow. The Visionary is the pattern of possibilities, chaos, imagination and breakthrough.

These fundamental energies have been recognized since the 1930's as patterns in the nervous system¹. They show up as four distinct ways in which nerves trigger the opposing muscle groups that make our every movement possible. But more recent work, particularly by Elizabeth Wetzig (who termed them Coordination Patterns^{TM 2}), has shown that they're not

Nothing happens until something moves.

-Albert Einstein

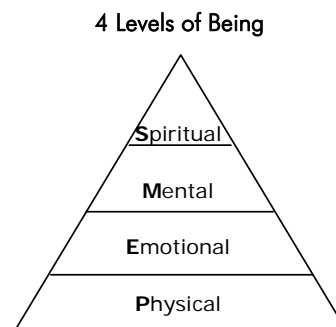
* originally appeared in the 2008 Pfeiffer Annual Leadership Development, D. Dotlich and J. Noel, eds. (John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, 2008). Used with permission.

only physical patterns, but they run through every aspect of our being, as well as in how we do things. Activate the movement of a particular pattern, and you access the feelings, thoughts and behaviors that go with it. For example, if you jab a finger at someone to make your point, you enter the pushiness of the Driver. You'll likely feel an increased sense of urgency and your thoughts will be sharply focused. By contrast, if you lean back in your chair and gaze out the window, you'll enter the drifting, expansiveness of the Visionary. Here you'll likely see a bigger picture and ideas may pop in from left field.

Maybe you've never thought much about how movement and mindset are related; at first this simple idea can be hard to grasp. I've come to think of these patterns as energy that manifests in different, but related ways at every level within us and through our actions. As an analogy, my family has a cabin on the shores of Lake Superior, and I've spent a good deal of time in that magnificent Lake. The energy of the Lake shows up in the water as waves and in the sand on the bottom as ripples. The ripples and waves aren't identical because they're different media, but they are interlinked by common energy.

Similarly, the four essential patterns in us show up in the various media or dimensions comprising us. Borrowing a model from Loehr and Schwartz³, we can call these dimensions physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. "Physical" refers our body. "Emotional" and "mental" refer to the feeling and thinking aspects of mind, respectively. And "spiritual" refers to our transformative capacity or connectedness beyond our ego. As Loehr and Schwartz observe, our best sustained performance "requires strength, endurance, flexibility and resilience in all dimensions." These qualities exactly represent the four patterns running through all these levels: Driver (strength), Organizer (endurance), Visionary (flexibility) and Collaborator (resilience). Out of this mountain of being comes our doing – our behaviors in the world.

As an example, the Driver pattern shows up physically as pushing or thrusting. Emotionally it emerges as a sense of urgency and intensity. Mentally it manifests as sharply focused, challenging thoughts, and its spiritual dimension is around accomplishing a mission. Driver behaviors, as a result, are pushy, fast, and direct. Since our actions – and everyone else's – emerge in these patterns, the world around us similarly reflects these same four energies. Driver art, to continue the example is bold and edgy (think Picasso). Driver companies are fast and measure everything (think Dell). Likewise all of the energy patterns have a signature at every level, as shown in Table 1. Understanding these linkages is a gateway to deeper self knowledge, as well as deeper understanding of the world around us, and every leadership situation we face. In our own research, we have further established how these patterns link to leadership, and ways of measuring one's preferences for them in an instrument we call the Focus Energy Balance Indicator™ (FEBI™). You may already have some sense of your favorite pattern; the mini-FEBI



4 Energies Manifest at Each Level

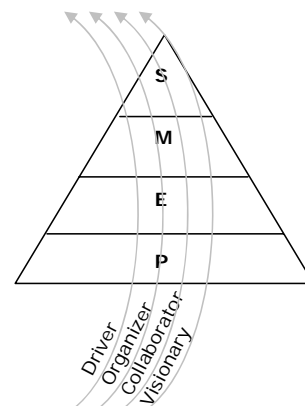


Table 1. Examples of the Energy Patterns at Every Level

	Driver	Organizer	Collaborator	Visionary
<i>Physical</i>	Pushing, Thrusting	Holding form, posture perfect	Swinging, rocking	Hanging, drifting, extending
<i>Emotional</i>	Urgent, abrupt, quick to anger	Composed, calm, tendency to worry	Optimistic, resilient, warm	Open, detached, spontaneous
<i>Mental</i>	Sharply focused, calculating, competitive	Linear, logical, step-by-step, do the right thing	One thing leads to another, stories, humor, sees both sides	Leaps to new insight, gets to essence
<i>Spiritual</i>	Accomplish the mission	Serve a greater good beyond oneself	Spread Happiness to Others	Manifest essence and purpose in the world
<i>Leadership behaviors</i>	Focus on priorities, action, outcomes, bottom line	Establish orderly processes, clear roles, responsibility	Oriented to customers, employees, loyalty, fun	Create the future, think outside the box
<i>Workplace</i>	Bold, no-frills architecture, cubicles	Orderly; quiet spaces to think. A place for everything	Colorful, common places to gather, exchange ideas	Places to network, be alone, or be with nature
<i>Work Processes</i>	Minimal, focused on outcomes	Step-by-Step, and unambiguous	Practical, oriented toward how people really work	Loose, adjustable to circumstances
<i>Corporate Culture</i>	Winning, competitive, fast, no-nonsense; e.g., "Just Do It"	Stable, dependable, ethical, e.g., "Solid as a Rock"	Fun, zany, family oriented; e.g., the LUV Airline"	Creative, paradigm breaking; e.g., "Invent..."

assessment (see box) can give you a better idea, and you're welcome to take the full instrument on our website⁴. The FEBI gives insight into your pattern order, which you can think of as a staircase of four steps. The lowest step represents your favorite, "Home" pattern – the one that's easiest for you to access. At progressively higher energy levels, you access each of the other patterns. But if the steps are steep, you may not use those patterns when they're called for. And that's when trouble arises.

"Great with the details, *but* not strategic enough."

"Makes war on the numbers, *but* is hard on relationships."

"Great with people, *but* overcommits and under-delivers."

I read comments like these by the hundreds in the programs I teach where leaders receive 360° feedback. Here they face the "*buts*" that have trailed them through their careers, often limiting their satisfaction, effectiveness and advancement. While we are wise to leverage our natural preferences in the way we lead, the absence or repeated misuse of any of these four essential energies creates gaps in our leadership. These gaps are quickly exposed under the pressures of leading in today's matrix. Here's what they look like:

Not Enough Driver – Inability to focus on top priorities, maintain a sense of urgency, hit targets, cut to the point, or tell it like it is; often perceived as lacking clear direction, ambition or edge.

Which Patterns Do You Favor?

Though not as reliable or detailed as the full FEBI, this mini-assessment will give you some idea of how the patterns show up in you. It's best to answer the questions first – top of mind – before looking at the scoring. On a scale of 1 (never) to 10 (always), indicate how true the following statements are for you. A "5" means average; i.e. this statement is about as true for you as it is for people in general.

I'm conscientious about commitments.	1.
I am direct and to the point.	2.
My moods go up and down.	3.
I love to win.	4.
I think life is flux, nothing is fixed.	5.
When people are upset, I remain calm and rational.	6.
I have many stacks of papers, articles, etc around my office and home.	7.
When faced with obstacles, I push harder.	8.
I have a hard time attending to details.	9.
When facing a big task, I break it down, and take it one step at a time.	10.
I often go back and forth on decisions.	11.
I enjoy the energy of networking.	12.

To calculate your totals, add # 2, 4 and 8 for **Driver**: _____

add #1, 6 and 10 for **Organizer**: _____

add #3, 11 and 12 for **Collaborator**: _____

add #5, 7 and 9 for **Visionary**: _____

Not Enough Organizer – inability to get things done, break large jobs into executable tasks, deliver on time, do things right, and do the right (e.g., ethical) things; often perceived as sloppy and undependable.

Not Enough Collaborator – inability to engage with people, care about and influence them, see both sides of an issue, lighten up and make work fun; often perceived as rigid, insular and non-team players.

Not Enough Visionary – inability to think outside the box, leap to novel insights, scan the horizon for what to pay attention to, let go and sense the flow; often perceived as lacking in imagination or not being strategic enough.

Conversely, every pattern is essential for leading in today's matrix (see box on next page). Taken together and used appropriately, these four

energies balance one another and generate the behavioral breadth needed for whole, effective leadership. They're also essential to performing at our best for the long run. We know from research around peak performance that it comes through alternating drive and recovery⁵, pushing to our limits and then renewing. In pattern terms, this pulse could be skillful use of the Driver pattern, and then letting go with the Visionary. Or it could be stretching ourselves into our weakest pattern, and then returning to our more comfortable Home pattern.

That's not to say we have to use each pattern equally; we still do well to play to our strengths, using our preferred patterns most of the time. But if we have – or develop – easy enough access to the other patterns, we'll start to notice when we need them and be able to go there.

Akin to the adage, “If your only tool is a hammer, everything looks like a nail,” if you’re only comfortable in the Driver pattern, everything looks like it needs to be hammered. That’s when you start hearing things like “Makes war on the numbers, *but* is hard on relationships.” With greater pattern versatility, you gain greater flexibility in action and avoid the tyranny of the “buts.”

If we try to change only in our superficial behaviors – not integrated in body, mind or spirit – we won’t be very effective. I was working once with an Organized Driver, John, who wanted to be more influential with his colleagues. At first John set up a series of perfunctory, 3-point agenda-driven meetings with several colleagues, but had no real sense of engaging them. The meetings didn’t go well, and he grew discouraged. I was trying to help John find the Collaborator pattern in himself (deeply buried, as you might guess). If he could get into the Collaborator frame of body and mind, truly engage the other person, play in the give and take of the exchange, emotionally connect with the other’s feelings, listen and build on the other’s ideas, then he’d have a real conversation and a good chance to influence. We weren’t trying to make Collaborator his favorite pattern ⁶, but just give him enough access to it that he could use it when necessary. A colleague of mine likens this process to learning a foreign language. “I’ll never be mistaken for a native, but at least I can order food in a restaurant and get by.”

Now here is the revolutionary possibility of these patterns for leadership development: since every level is linked by common energies, you can use movement to change mindset, to literally move your leadership to a new level of

Every pattern has an essential role in today’s matrix:

- **Driver:** Focusing attention, hitting targets, breaking down barriers
- **Organizer:** managing disciplined execution, doing the right thing
- **Collaborator:** enlisting support, reconciling competing perspectives, developing people
- **Visionary:** Thinking outside the box, being agile and open

wholeness and balance. In John’s case of wanting easier access to the Collaborator, for example, swinging movements help – as in swinging a golf club, swing dancing, slow-and-easy bicycling, or even just rocking back and forth (as you did in touring the Collaborator pattern earlier). John couldn’t get his head around taking swing dancing lessons with his wife, but he was quick to pick up on a new reason to play more golf. Ways of stimulating the senses with the right pattern also help, such as music, art, or other elements in the work environment.

John put a couple of rocking chairs in his office - more as a reminder at first. “But it’s very relaxing,” he noticed, “And gives me more patience when people come into my office.” He’s hardly a native, but John is easing into the Collaborator enough to get by!

Table 2 gives some suggestions for developing easier access to any of the patterns. If you aren’t sure which pattern could help you most, consider the pattern that scored lowest for you in the mini-assessment, or think of the most troubling or recurring “but” you’ve heard about in your own leadership, and start with the pattern that would erase it.

So how do these patterns help leaders handle the complex demands of today’s matrix? The Driver’s determination and the Organizer’s ability to get things done have long been valued in organizations, and continue to be indispensable in a matrix. For example, the Driver’s energy focuses attention on critical issues and sets clear direction. The Organizer’s strengths are called upon to break large tasks down into steps that can be executed throughout the matrix, and manage the interdependent project plans that link work together.

Table 2. Ways of Gaining Ease in Any Pattern

	Driver	Organizer	Collaborator	Visionary
Work Behaviors	Know your top 3 priorities Measure something you're doing – and cut it in half Get to the point Set stretch goals Reduce distractions Enforce clarity and action	Make a list Organize your day Make sacred time for planning Break big jobs down into steps Always know your next step Under-promise and over-deliver	Put fun into your day, celebrate Build your network Build or bond a team you're working with See both sides Find your way around obstacles; work indirectly Work through people	Add spontaneity to your day Make time for reflection Brainstorm Widen your perspective (e.g., surf the net, solicit many points of view) Create some chaos, stir things up
Background	Office: Stark and sparse furnishings, Music: Rock & Roll, Rap Art: Sharp, high contrast, sports posters, "Winning"	Office: Neat and tidy, a place for everything Music: Classical Art: Still life, perfectly composed, "Quality is..."	Office: fun and colorful, overstuffed furnishings Music: Jazz Art: family photos, comic strip characters, "Hang in there, Baby"	Office: light and airy, harmonious with nature Music: New Age Art: Enigmatic, evocative, outer space posters, "Invent..."
Physical Activities	Movement: thrust, push Running Karate Weightlifting Cardio machine (hard and fast) Kendo, sword work Bicycling (hard and fast) Aggressive sports Skiing (hard and fast) Tennis Racquetball	Movement: shape, hold form Ballet Yoga Meditation Walking Dressage Ceramics Housecleaning Organizing a space Woodworking Needlepoint Anything done step-by-step	Movement: swing, rock Ballroom dance Ice dancing Aikido Golf (the swing) Skating, rollerblading Swimming Bicycling (slow and easy) Skiing (slow and easy) Weaving Bowling (the set up, social aspect)	Movement: hang, drift Tai Chi, Chi Kung Meditation (samadhi) Sailing Hangliding Scuba diving Snorkeling Archery Photography (in the moment) Being out in nature

But it's the other two patterns, the Collaborator and Visionary that become even more necessary in a matrix than in the hierarchical organizations of old. The Collaborator's gift for engaging and influencing colleagues, rather than relying on authority becomes the new currency of power in a matrix. Also, this pattern is a natural at seeing both sides of an issue and being able to bounce back and forth balancing the competing demands of multiple reporting lines. The Visionary comes to the fore its ability to "chill" in the midst of frenetic action, to "hang" with chaos and ambiguity,

rather than try to figure it out or eradicate it. And when it comes to speed, even the Driver's fast action and the Organizer's efficiency are no match for the Visionary's gift for scanning and intuitively leaping to what's most essential.

In total, the patterns are a leader's essential inner team for wholeness, balance, maximum effectiveness and deep personal satisfaction. Vertically they link body, mind and spirit, allowing us to integrate our actions with our heartfelt intent, our walk with our talk. Taken together, they cover the breadth of versatile action needed to lead effectively in today's complex

matrix. And because they link brawn to brain to behavior, they open up new ways of expanding leadership capacity. Integrating our whole self, we are able to lead in whole, new ways. That's how we meet the challenges of today's matrix: not by speeding up, but by opening up to the fullness of who we are.

Ginny Whitelaw, Ph.D. is an executive coach, leadership consultant, and co-founder of Focus Leadership, dedicated to developing the whole and balanced leader. For many years, she has taught and coached with the Mercer Delta Executive Learning Center – a premier leadership development firm – and has served on the adjunct faculty of the Columbia University Senior Executive Program. A biophysicist by training, Dr. Whitelaw worked for 10 years at NASA, becoming the Deputy Manager for integration of the Space Station Program. She has extensive experience in managing large programs, and leading for-profit and non-profit organizations. She also has 30 years of experience in Zen and martial arts, holds a 5th degree black belt in Aikido, and is a teacher of Zen meditation. She is the author of *BodyLearning*, and (in collaboration with Betsy Wetzig) *Move to Greatness: Focusing the 4 Essential Energies of a Whole and Balanced Leader*.

¹ Rathbone, Josephine. *Residual Neuromuscular Hypertension*. NY, Bureau of Publication, Columbia University, 1936.

² In *Discovering the Body's Wisdom*, by Mirka Knaster, NY, Bantam, 1996, p 271.

³ Loehr, Jim and Schwartz, Tony, *The Power of Full Engagement*, NY, Simon & Schuster, 2003.

⁴ You can take the FEBI online at www.focusleadership.com.

⁵ See, for example, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement*, or Herbert Benson's, *The Relaxation Response*, Boston, HBR Press, 1975.

⁶ The research suggests that one's pattern preference order doesn't change from youth. What does change through practice is the ease of access to our less preferred patterns. In the stairstep analogy, practice lowers the height between steps.