



October 2008

# MasterfulMentoring

## ▼ TIP

### Tip of the Month

Give yourself permission to pause a few times a day to take an inventory of your thoughts and emotions.

## ▼ AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTE

By Randy Emelo

In today's turbulent world, leaders are tasked with managing increasing complexity. Through the vigilant practice of awareness, leaders can make the most of emerging possibilities. To do so, they must be open to challenges on their preconceived notions and long held understandings. Those who accomplish this and are able to master awareness will be able to make the most of rapidly changing circumstances.

### Aware Leadership Defined

Aware leaders are those who are tuned into themselves and their environment. Their internal awareness allows them to understand their own emotional state, personal preferences, competencies, and limitations—they know who they are and what motivates them to do the things they do. Their external awareness allows them to understand the context that surrounds them and the impact of their decisions on others.

Aware leaders "walk in the ready" and are able to anticipate the seemingly unexpected. Because of this, they are typically prepared and able to handle rapidly changing and demanding situations. They are watchful for those things that conflict and disrupt, understanding that new insight, innovation and learning is often found in that which disturbs us.

Aware leaders consciously confront injustices and the status quo, possessing a high sense of purpose and drive to serve others. They do not wait for someone else to acknowledge the right thing to do; they simply do it without expecting applause or accolade.

Awareness directly impacts several leadership domains. The chart on the next page provides further details.



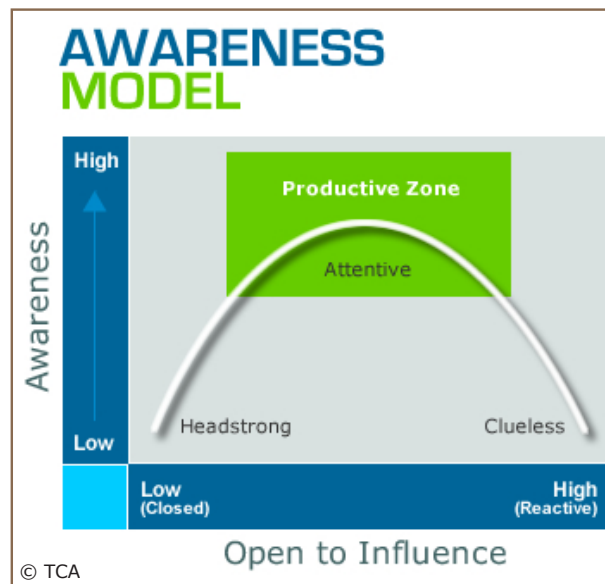
## ➤ AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTE (cont.)

### Leadership Domains and Awareness

	With Awareness	Without Awareness
<b>Agility</b>	You are able to respond to changing situations with the proper sense of urgency.	You run the risk of over- or underreacting to changing situations.
<b>Initiating Change</b>	You are able to leverage emerging potential into lasting results.	You will find it hard to distinguish emerging potential until it has passed you by.
<b>Innovation</b>	You see unique possibilities as they develop.	You are not open to possibilities unless they fit well-known paradigms.
<b>Self-Development</b>	You openly question your thought processes and perceptions.	You miss many opportunities to challenge your views and beliefs.
<b>Collaboration</b>	You are present and able to work with others to make sense of current reality.	You tend to deny uncomfortable realities when working with others.

### Awareness Model

The Awareness Model (shown below) illustrates how two things—your internal and external awareness and your openness to being influenced—affect your ability to be productive in your awareness.



- Your internal and external awareness can fluctuate between low and high. It is low when you are complacent, distracted, confused, or overwhelmed. High levels of awareness (i.e., productive awareness) occur when you are consciously attuned to yourself, others, and the present circumstances.
- The degree to which you are open to being influenced by others or your circumstances also affects your ability to be productively aware. A modest amount of openness to influence is

most effective. Extreme variances tend to elicit behavior that is seen as either headstrong or clueless.

Each of the three regions displayed in the model has distinct attributes that affect how productive your awareness is in relation to your ability to lead others.

### ➤ AUTHOR INFO

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## QUOTE

What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself.

- Abraham Maslow

## AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTE (cont.)

### **Headstrong**

Leaders who appear headstrong tend to have low internal and external awareness and a low degree of openness toward being influenced by others or circumstances. Their past is usually made up of sporadic large wins (when they got it right) and startling failures (when they missed it). These leaders tend to rely on their own limited understandings when making critical decisions and establishing plans. They are often very self-confident and reluctant to solicit input from others; they do a lot of telling and very little asking. Because of their tendencies, they often miss opportunities to make the most of changing circumstances. In the wake of failure, they often dismiss the results and ignore the learning opportunity. These leaders are often seen as obstinate, unapproachable, distant, and unconcerned.

### **Clueless**

Leaders who appear clueless tend to have low internal and external awareness and a high degree of openness toward being influenced by others or circumstances. Their past is usually made up of mediocre results due to their inability to stay committed to a single course. These leaders lack the ability to filter out the opinions of everyone around them, causing them to change their mind and goals based on these opinions. Because of this, they have a hard time following through and staying focused on accomplishing initial objectives, which makes them appear ungrounded for refusing to ascribe to a definitive ideal or course of action. They are often self-deprecating and doubt their own ability to make the right decisions; they ask a lot and tell very little. Because of their indecisive tendencies, they often overreact to changing circumstances. In the wake of failure, they are apt to lay blame on someone or something outside of their control and miss the opportunity to learn from it. These leaders are often seen as flighty, uncommitted, self-serving, and unreliable.

### **Attentive**

Leaders who appear attentive tend to have high internal and external awareness and are moderately open to the influence of others and circumstance. Their past is usually made up of solid accomplishments due to their steadfast devotion to principled action and a willingness to adjust to changing circumstances. These leaders set their minds on decided courses of action and remain flexible enough to respond to the evolving needs of others and circumstances. They are grounded and can offer reasonable explanations for their points of view, yet they are interested in acquiring and appreciate new perspectives and understandings. They understand their strengths and limitations and are humble before others, quickly acknowledging superior concepts and contributions from others. Because of their astute tendencies, they know when to adapt to change and when to remain steadfast. In the wake of failure, they are able to ruthlessly examine the root causes and learn from it. These leaders are often seen as judicious, balanced, visionary, and inspirational.



## RESOURCES

Triple Creek offers many free resources on our web site, including booklets, research papers, and an archive of past newsletters.

Visit [www.3creek.com](http://www.3creek.com) for access to these additional mentoring resources.

## AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTE (cont.)

### **Developing Productive Awareness**

Awareness is a lifelong process of learning about yourself and life from others and circumstances. Every day we have the opportunity to learn more, but it takes a solid resolve to walk this difficult path. With this in mind, consider the following suggestions.

#### ***Be Mindful***

Awareness relies on you being in the moment. This sounds easy, but in practice it can be difficult. Our minds process information so fast that it is often a struggle to stay present when interacting with others. It is easy to slip into the ineffective practice of projecting from the past or into the future. To counter this, you need to bring your attention back to the present when it starts to drift and halt judgments as they begin to form. As a leader, when you are able to bring your full attention to someone or to a situation, you display a high level of respect for those involved.

#### ***Solicit Feedback***

To be aware you need to understand how others perceive your motivations, contributions, and understandings. Direct and open communication about how you are impacting others is critical for gaining insight into yourself. It is important that you stay open to new understandings and uncover blind spots as you lead others. It is advisable that you make several key inquiries from trusted advisors before you enact major policy or process changes that will affect others. This will help you anticipate how others will respond and give you the chance to modify your plans or the way you communicate your decisions. It is always better to know the type and degree of resistance that you are likely to face in advance of making a major change.

#### ***Question Beliefs***

Our beliefs are strongly held understandings or convictions about how things are or work. Beliefs can save us a great amount of time when making decisions and enable us to act with consistency. Unfortunately, our beliefs can also cause us to not ask critical questions at opportune times. The difficulty lies in knowing when to take the time to question your beliefs and when to hold fast to them. This is more art than science, but a good principle is to pay attention to opposition and that which disquiets or disturbs you. Also be mindful of repeating patterns; if you consistently see the same unanticipated results, it is highly likely that there is a lesson at the root of the issue for you.

#### ***Face Failures***

Failures and setbacks can offer powerful lessons and reveal truths and understanding to us. The more we push into our shortcomings, the more flexible we become in our thought processes. In the wake of a failure or setback, probe into what went wrong. Self-analysis can help you see misunderstandings, as well as emerging and overlooked truths. Be careful not to use these reflections as blame or shame exercises, but rather try to remove personality from the evaluation. Focus instead on the principles, methods, procedures, and preconceived notions that need to be modified in order to get the results you desire.



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## AWARENESS AS A LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTE (cont.)

Cultivating awareness can be challenging. Mentorship is the ideal type of developmental relationship in which to work on your awareness. Your mentoring partner can provide you with honest feedback and support you as you endeavor to increase your awareness. The point may not be to achieve perfection; the point may be to strive for betterment.

### Practice Exercise

The following exercise can help you discuss with your mentoring partner how to become more productive in your awareness.

1. Use the following self-evaluation to assess your ability to be aware.

### Self-Evaluation

Think of the current work-oriented relationships you have. With this in mind, rate how closely you agree with the following statements.

	Low					High				
<b>Headstrong Tendencies</b> (low score is desirable)										
I usually stick to my plan no matter what.	1	2	3	4	5					
I do more telling than asking.	1	2	3	4	5					
I mostly keep my own counsel when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5					
Others see me as overly rigid and set in my ways.	1	2	3	4	5					
<b>Clueless Tendencies</b> (low score is desirable)										
I often change course due to the opinions of others.	1	2	3	4	5					
I do more asking than telling.	1	2	3	4	5					
I seek the approval of others when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5					
Others see me as reactive and indecisive.	1	2	3	4	5					
<b>Attentive Tendencies</b> (high score is desirable)										
I am decisive but remain open to change.	1	2	3	4	5					
I balance my asking and telling.	1	2	3	4	5					
I actively seek input from others before making critical decisions.	1	2	3	4	5					
Others see me as astute and responsive.	1	2	3	4	5					

### Summary Results

Based on the results above and the understanding you have into your own behavior, which leadership tendency do you lean toward? Circle your choice.

Headstrong                      Clueless                      Attentive

Give a brief explanation of your choice:

2. Discuss your self-evaluation results with your mentoring partner and solicit his/her perspective of your results.
3. If you have determined that you need to strengthen your awareness abilities, determine what new actions you are going to take.
4. Set up a time to review your progress with your mentoring partner.