



Ivey
Business School

Ian O. Ichnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

WESTERN UNIVERSITY • CANADA

CHARACTER MATTERS:

What is Leader Character and
How Does It Influence How We Lead?

**Executive Fire Officer and Leadership Symposium
National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, Maryland**



About Us



[Kimberley Milani](#)

Director

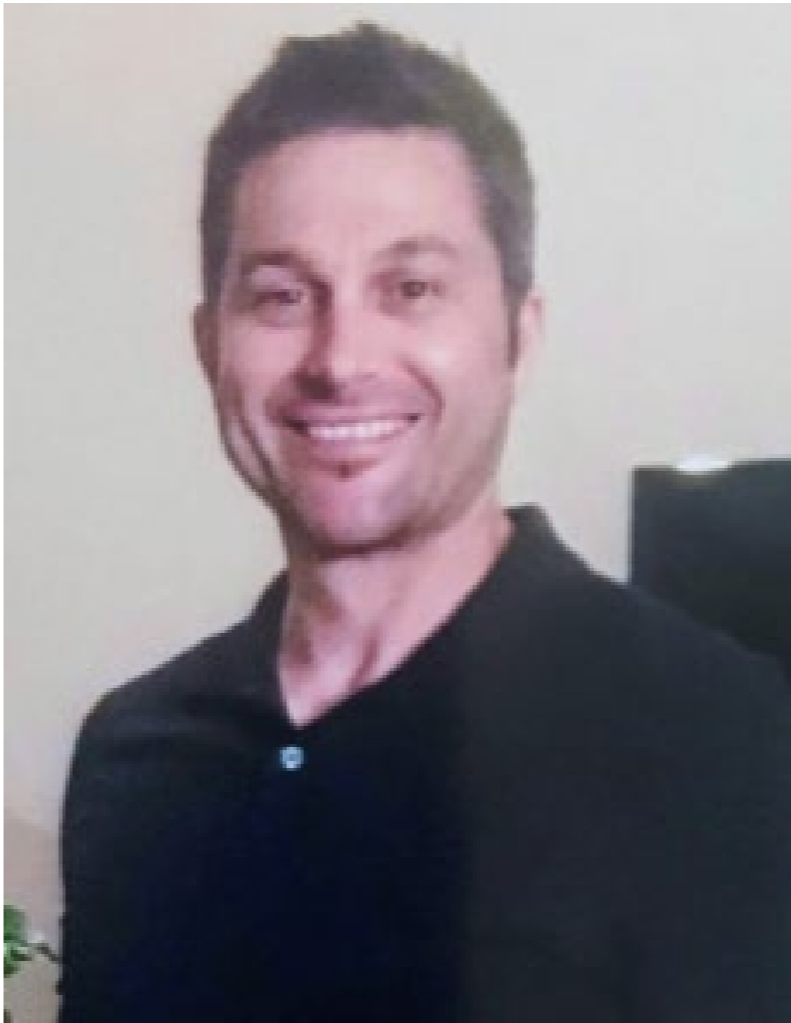
[Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership](#)

Ivey Business School, Western University

London Canada

kymilani@ivey.ca

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani/>



James R. Rychard

Firefighter

Burlington, Canada

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-r-rychard-fsemc-a310a684/>



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://www.instagram.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://www.instagram.com/kymilani)

Today's agenda - three core messages

Character is critical for good and effective judgment, for sustained excellence and wellbeing, and it creates competitive advantage.

There is an objective language with which to address character in people and organizations.
Character is observable and measurable

How can we develop and apply leader character in both our personal and professional lives?
How do we become a character-infused leader?

Who we are



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

Vision

We aspire to have a deep impact on individuals, organizations and societies through the creation and application of new knowledge on leader character.

We aim to:

- Be recognized by researchers and practitioners as a globally leading Institute for research, teaching and outreach regarding the awareness, assessment and development of leader character.
- Elevate the importance of character alongside competence in the practice of leadership.
- **Develop global citizens who have strength of character, strive to make a difference, and contribute to the flourishing of teams, organizations, communities, and societies.**

2008-2009 Financial Crisis



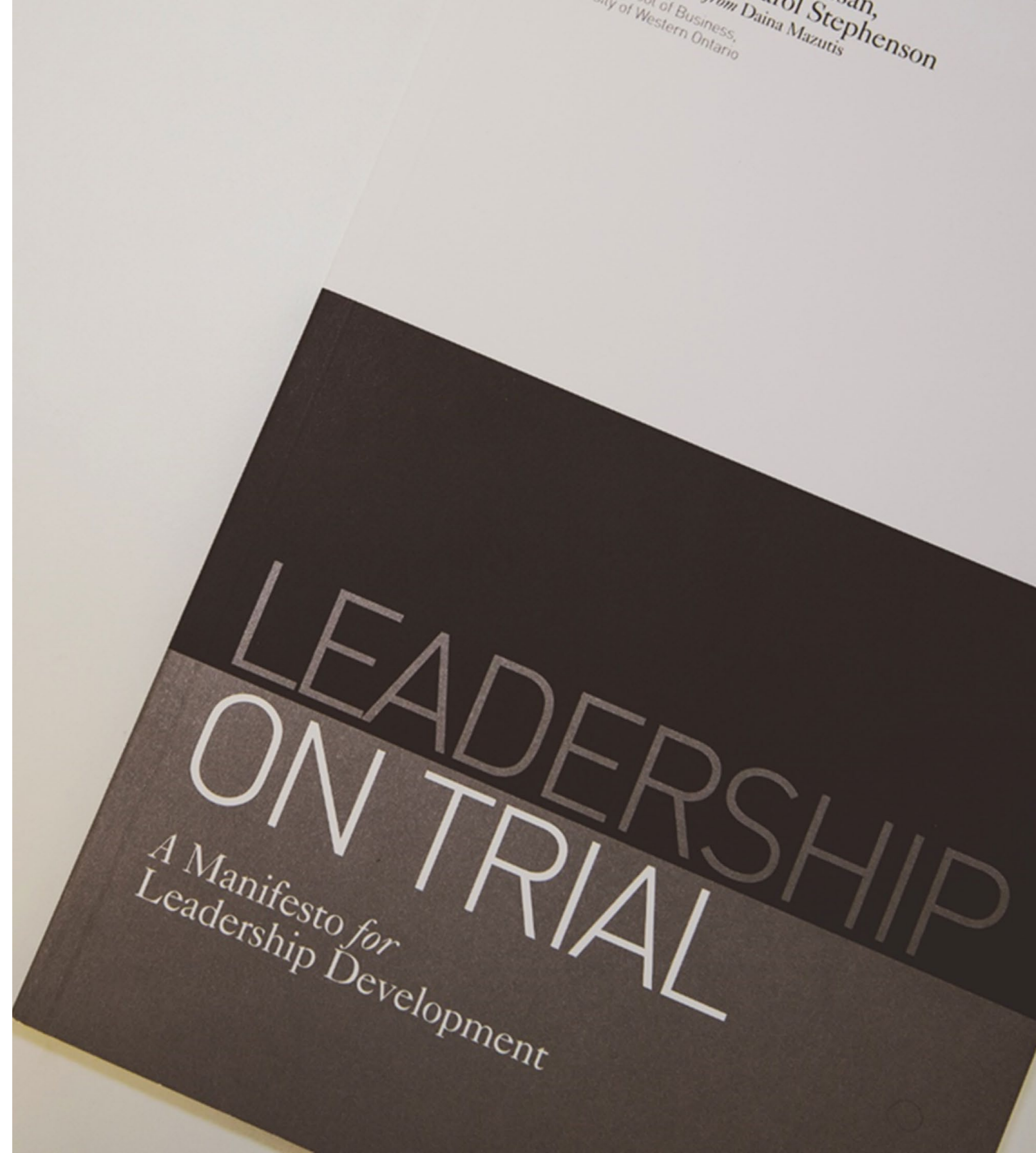
- **What went wrong with leadership** that contributed to the 2008 – 2009 financial crisis?
- Could good leadership have made a difference?
- What do we know about good leadership? What did we – scholars, educators, leaders – miss about the formulation of good leadership?
- What do organizations need to do differently to reduce the likelihood of these kinds of events from happening again?



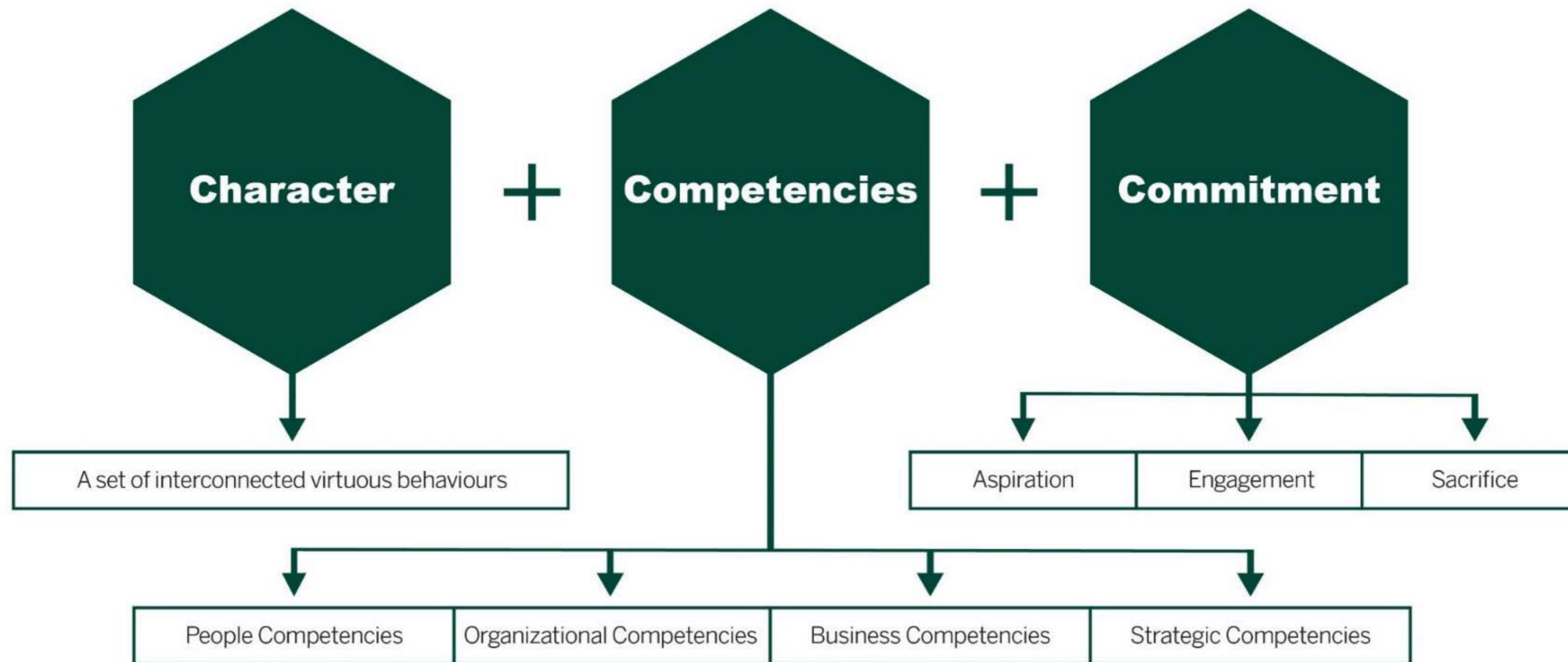
Lessons we learned

- 1.Character heavily implicated
- 2.Need to objectively define, assess and develop character in leaders and organizations.
- 3.Elevate character alongside competence

Leadership on Trial is an open access resource. Read or download a free copy [HERE](#).



The Effective Leader (the 3 Cs)



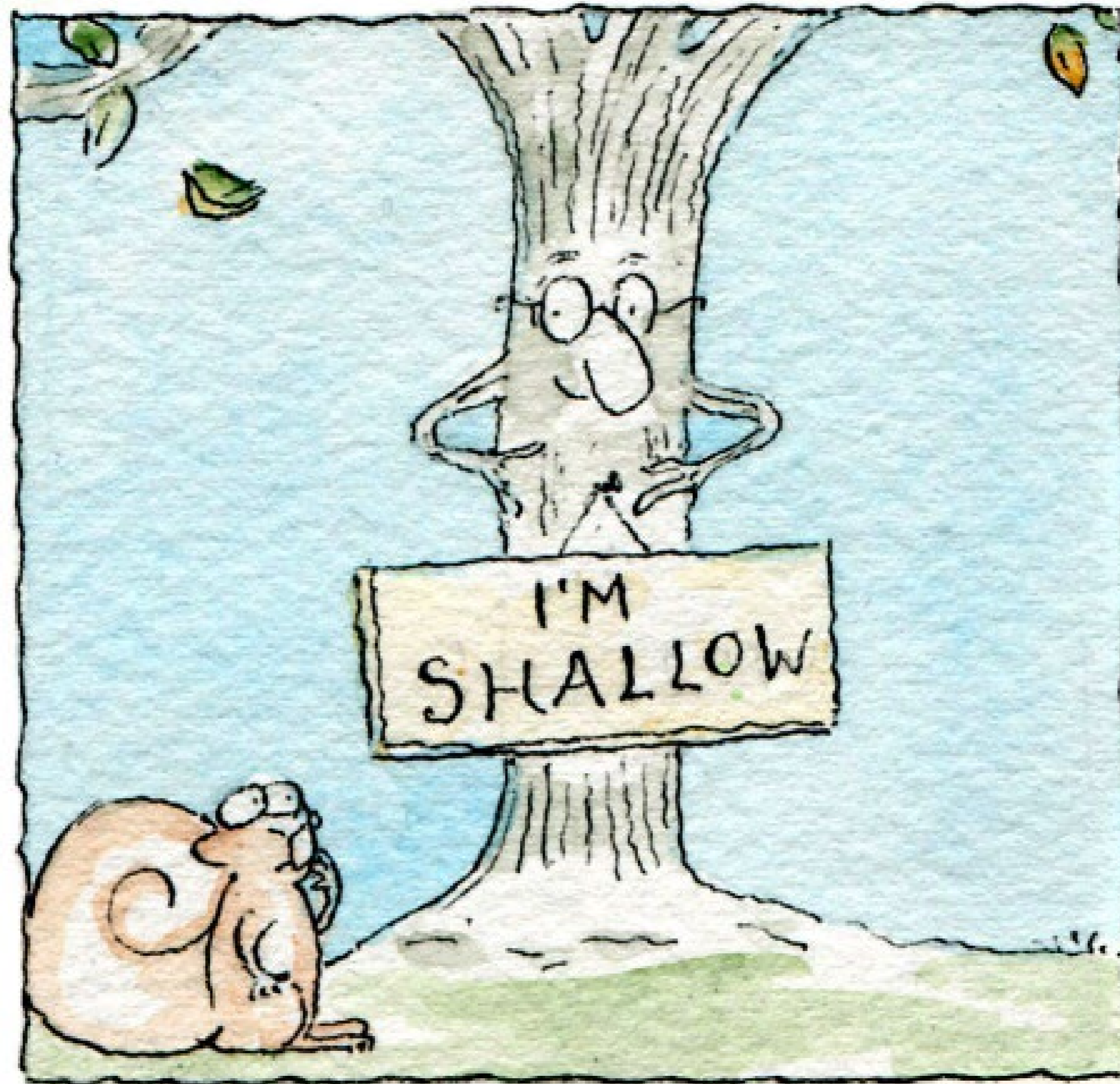
Gandz, J., Crossan, M. M., Seijts, G. H. & Stephenson, C.(2010). *Leadership on trial : a manifesto for leadership development*. Ivey Business School.

If any of these three pillars are deficient, the shortfall will undermine the other pillars and, ultimately, lead to performance problems for leaders, organizations and related stakeholders.

Another way to look at it....







WHEN IT COMES TO LEADERSHIP WHO YOU ARE MATTERS



The Dark Triad – Social Intelligence

1. Narcissism
2. Machiavellianism
3. Psychopathy

Article: [Fixing a toxic work culture: Guarding against the 'dark triad'](#)
by Tom Relihan, MIT Sloan Management Review



Wolf in Sheep's Clothing



Used with permission. Artist: Paul Combs.
[Drawn by Fire Blog, Paul Combs Illustration and Cartoons](#)

If it matters so much...

the challenge with leader character

Why haven't we emphasized leader character in organizations to the same extent as competencies?

1. There is a great deal of ambiguity about what is meant by the word character
2. Leaders need a contemporary, practice-focused vocabulary with which to address character in the workplace
3. Few reliable and valid instruments are available for the systematic assessment of character

The leader's role in character development

- Competencies alone are insufficient
- Character-based leadership development is relevant at all levels and ranks
- Culture is set from the top
- Hire and promote for character



Research to practice

Developing Leadership Character in Business Programs

MARY CROSSAN

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada

HUMAN CAPITAL | FOCUS ON CHARACTER

Leadership Character and Corporate Governance

By paying more attention to what defines "character," directors can improve the quality of leadership in their organizations



Character matters: Character dimensions' impact on leader performance and outcomes



Gerard Seijts*, Jeffrey Gandz, Mary Crossan, Mark Reno

Ivey Business School, Western University, 1255 Western Road London, Ontario, Canada, N6G 0N1

INTRODUCTION

In a recent commencement address at the Ivey Business School, Domenic Barton, the head of McKinsey & Co.'s global consulting practice, said: "When we think about leadership we focus too much on what leaders do... and we don't spend enough time on who leaders are—the character of leaders." Similarly, in a speech to Ivey students, Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, said that "...to restore trust in banks and in the broader financial system, global financial institutions need to rediscover their values... Employees need a sense of broader purpose, grounded in strong connections to their clients and their communities." Few among the hundreds of C-suite leaders and board directors with whom we have discussed this topic in focus groups sessions, conferences, and executive development programs over the last five years, would disagree with them.

While leaders readily agree that "character matters," they also report that they seldom refer to it, talk about it, or use it in recruiting, selecting, promoting or developing leaders... although it does surface more often when it comes to firing them! Based on our research, we attribute the gap between the perceived importance and the actual use of character to three things. First, there is a great deal of ambiguity about what is meant by the word character, which of its dimensions are most important in organizational leadership, how character can be assessed, and what can be done to develop character in today's and tomorrow's leaders. Second, leaders tell us that what they need is a

contemporary, practice-focused vocabulary with which to address character. This vocabulary must be expressed in the language used today in their organizations. Third, there are few reliable and valid tools available for the systematic assessment of character. Practitioners tell us they need these tools if they are to move from thinking and talking about character development to actually doing something about it. In this article, we propose an operational definition of character, outline a set of plain-language dimensions of character that we believe to be relevant to organizational leadership, present results from a survey relating these dimensions to leader performance and outcomes, and describe the practical implications for leader character development in organizations.

LEADERSHIP AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Following the 2008–2009 financial crisis and the subsequent economic recession, we engaged more than 300 senior business, public sector and not-for-profit leaders from Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Hong Kong in structured discussions on the role that organizational leadership played before, during and after the crisis. We posed a straightforward question: Would better leadership have made a difference? The answer we received was a resounding "Yes."

We learned that three dimensions of leadership distinguished those companies that failed or were severely damaged by the crisis from those that survived and prospered.



Embedding leader character into HR practices to achieve sustained excellence

Gerard Seijts, Mary Crossan, Erica Carleton

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Journal of Management Studies ••••• 2017
doi: 10.1111/joms.12254

Toward a Framework of Leader Character in Organizations

Mary M. Crossan, Alyson Byrne, Gerard H. Seijts, Mark Reno, Lucas Monzani and Jeffrey Gandz
Western University; Memorial University of Newfoundland; Western University; Western University; Western University; Western University



Business
Law
International

Vol 18 No 3 pp 197–272 ISSN 1467 632X September 2017

Character's Essential Role in Addressing Misconduct in Financial Institutions
William Furlong, Professor Mary Crossan, Professor Jeffrey Gandz and Larry Crossan

The General Data Protection Regulation: Achieving Compliance for EU and non-EU Companies
Ozan Karaduman

The Rise of the Sustainability Reporting Megatrend: A Corporate Governance Perspective
Jerry K C Koh and Victoria Leong

In Pari Delicto and Ex Turpi Causa: The Defence of Illegality – Approaches Taken in England and Wales, Canada and the US
Lincoln Taylor and Martin S Kenney



The myriad ways in which COVID-19 revealed character

Gerard Seijts*, Kimberley Young Milani

Ivey Business School, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada



The application of leader character to building cultures of equity, diversity, and inclusion

Gerard H. Seijts*, Kimberley Young Milani

Ivey Business School, Western University, 1255 Western Road, London, ON N6G 0N1, Canada

KEYWORDS
Leader character;
Organizational culture;
Equity;
Diversity;
Virtue ethics

Abstract Many organizations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors have begun to take action to address the systemic racism entrenched in their processes, systems, and structures. This has included commitments to elevate initiatives for equity, diversity, and inclusion. Data indicate that such good-faith efforts are often not as successful as leaders and organizations had envisioned. Our assertion is that if we really want to address systemic racism in organizations, we must first attend to the people who work there. This is because their individual and collective character, revealed through behavior, drives and determines organizational processes, systems, structures, and culture. The purpose of this article is to connect character to the creation and sustainment of organizational cultures of equity, diversity, and inclusion with a specific focus on anti-Black racism. Character is not a subjective, amorphous entity but manifests as a set of observable behaviors. We explain that character equips people with consciousness and the conduct to embrace and cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion in their organizations and in their lives. We provide concrete examples of the dimensions of character in action using brief illustrations.
© 2021 Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The middle months of 2020 showed us remarkable images from around the world. In the United

States, people from all walks of life—every age, color, orientation, gender, socioeconomic status, and ability—filled the streets on a scale not seen since the 1960s to protest racial injustice and to demand change after the murder of George Floyd. Likewise, diverse groups of people took to the streets in many cities across the globe to highlight

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: gseijts@ivey.ca (G.H. Seijts), kymilani@ivey.ca (K.Y. Milani)

MIT Sloan
Management Review

Make Leader Character Your Competitive Edge

Character is about a lot more than ethics — and fostering a culture where it is valued equally alongside competence can result in better decisions and better outcomes.

Mary Crossan
William Bill Furlong
Robert D. Austin

Article: [Make Leader Character Your Competitive Edge](#) by Mary Crossan, Bill Furlong and Rob Austin. MIT Sloan Management Review



Ian O. Ichnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
linkedin.com/in/kymilani

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

@iveyleadership
@kymilani

BUT WHAT *IS* CHARACTER?





CHARACTER

"You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

ModernServantLeader.com



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

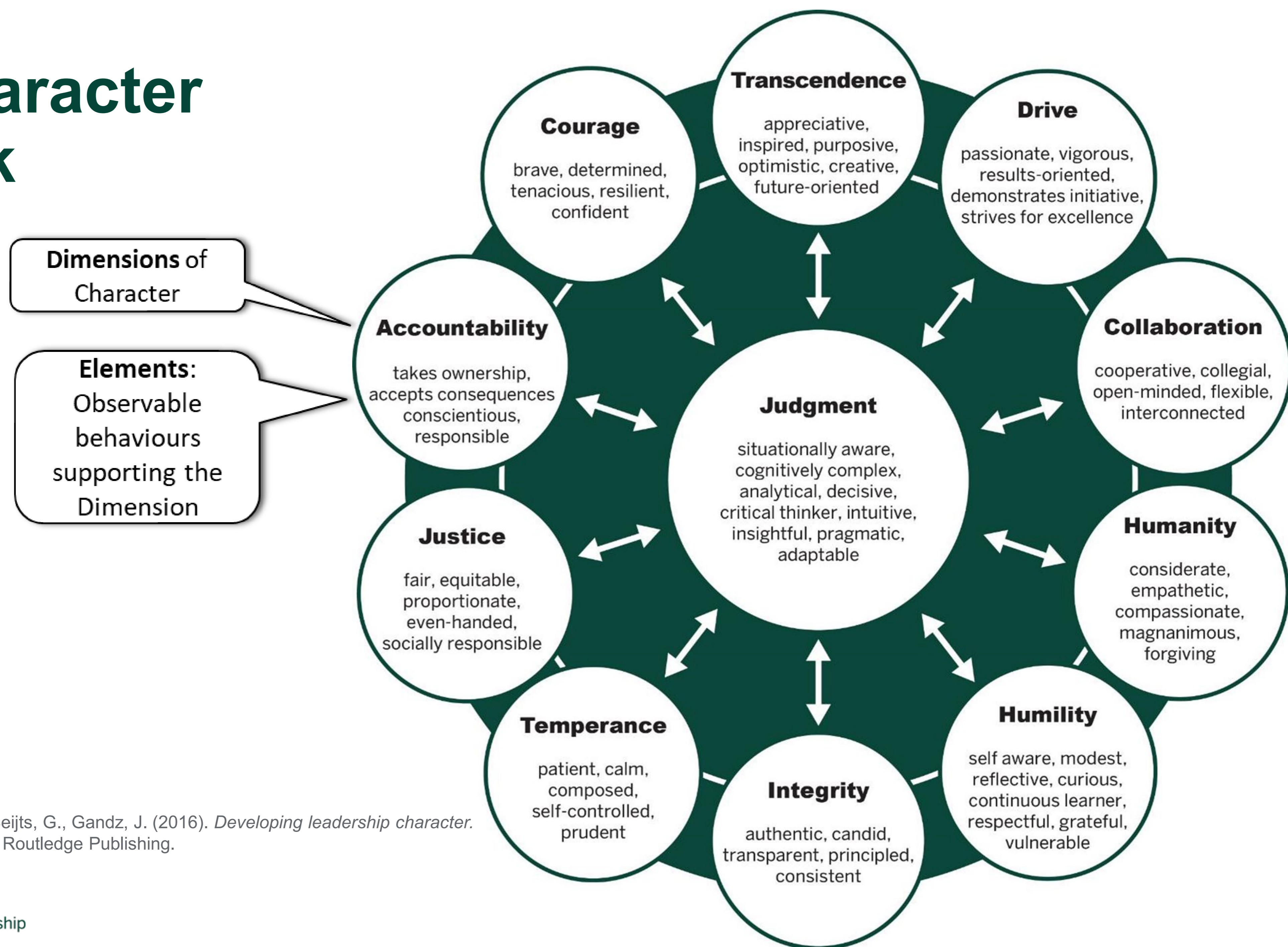
How do *you* define character?



Defining leader character

- Being a **leader** is less about the position and more about the **disposition to lead**.
 - Having the disposition to lead is what allows professionals to rise above the fray and **bring the best of themselves to their daily activities**.
- **Character is a “habit of being”**. Excellence of character is captured by a set of behaviors all of which are virtuous and some of which are traits or values.

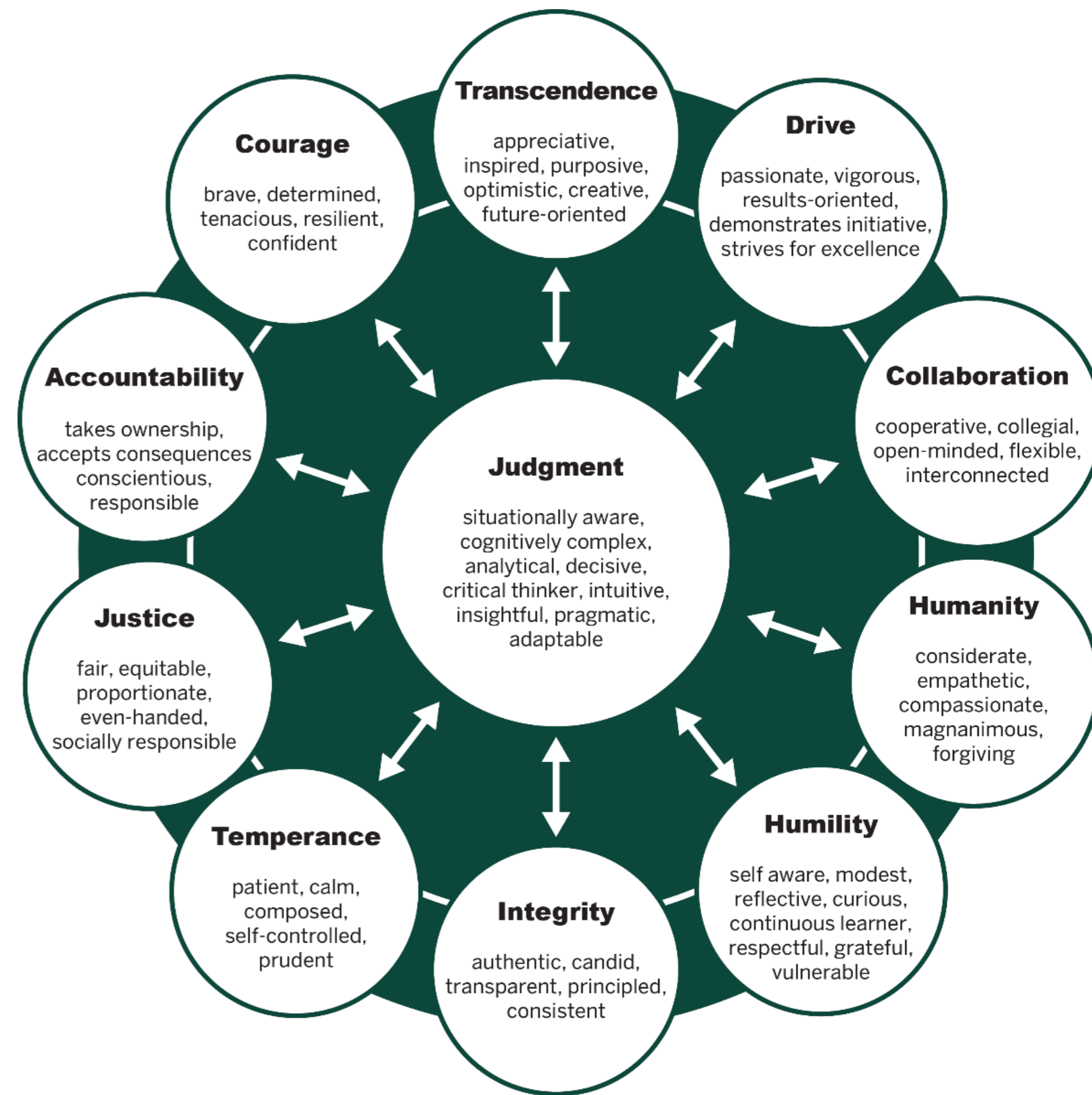
Leader Character Framework



Crossan, M., Seijts, G., Gandz, J. (2016). *Developing leadership character*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing.

Keep in mind...

- Character is **a habit of being** – the behaviours that reveal who you are day in and day out.
- Each character dimension is composed of several **elements or observable behaviours** that affect the strength of the particular dimension.
- The character dimensions are networked or interconnected – they work together ... otherwise **virtues may become vices**.
- Character is **exercised through judgment** - the quality of judgment impacts individual and organizational performance.
- **Our challenge** is to master the elements, dimensions to achieve personal effectiveness.



CHARACTER IN ACTION



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

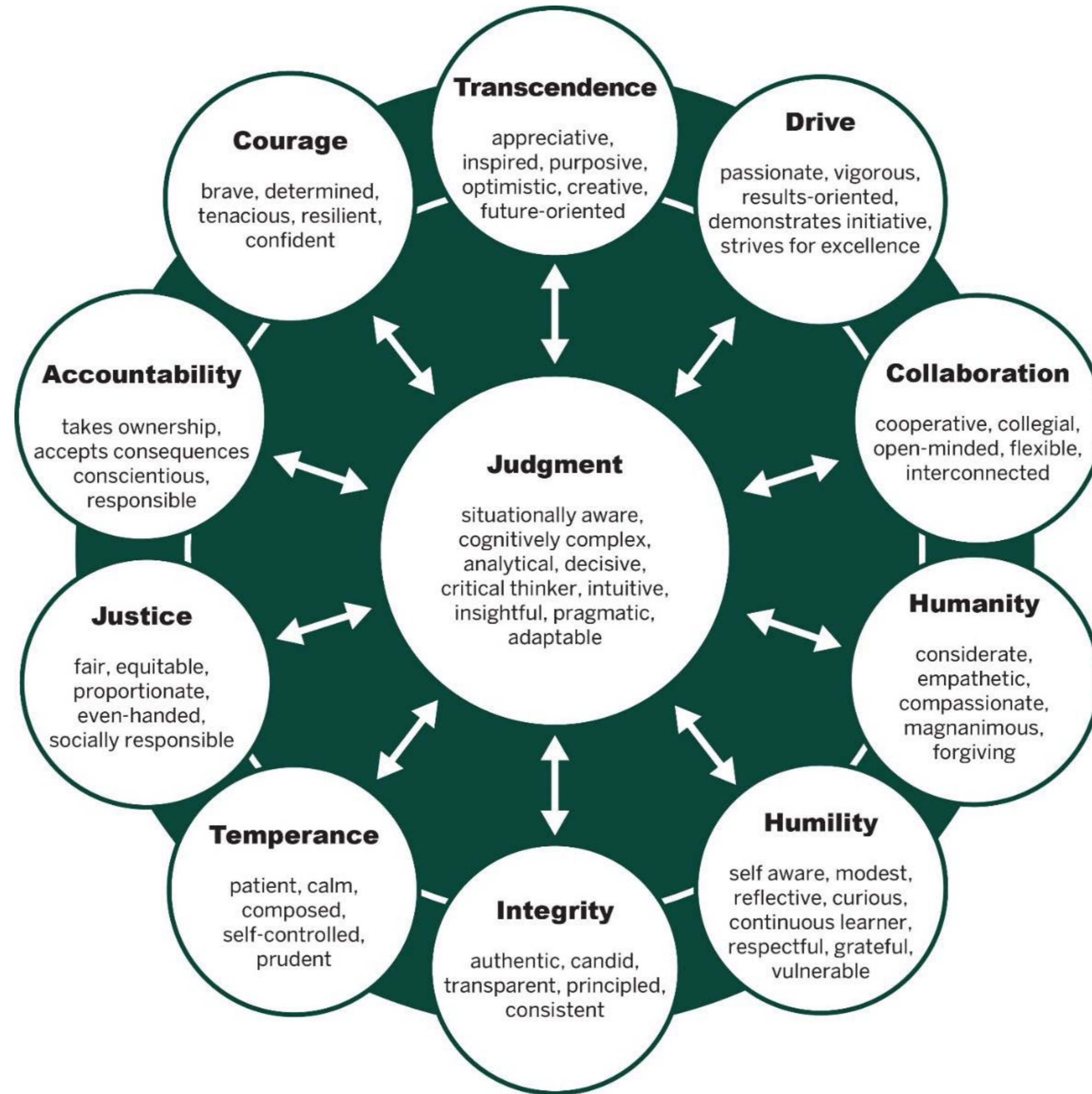
[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

Seinfeld – Kramer’s incident with Barry



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-A9U_Y3L7XU

From the NBC sitcom *Seinfeld's* "The Face Painter," S6. E22.; aired 11 May 1995

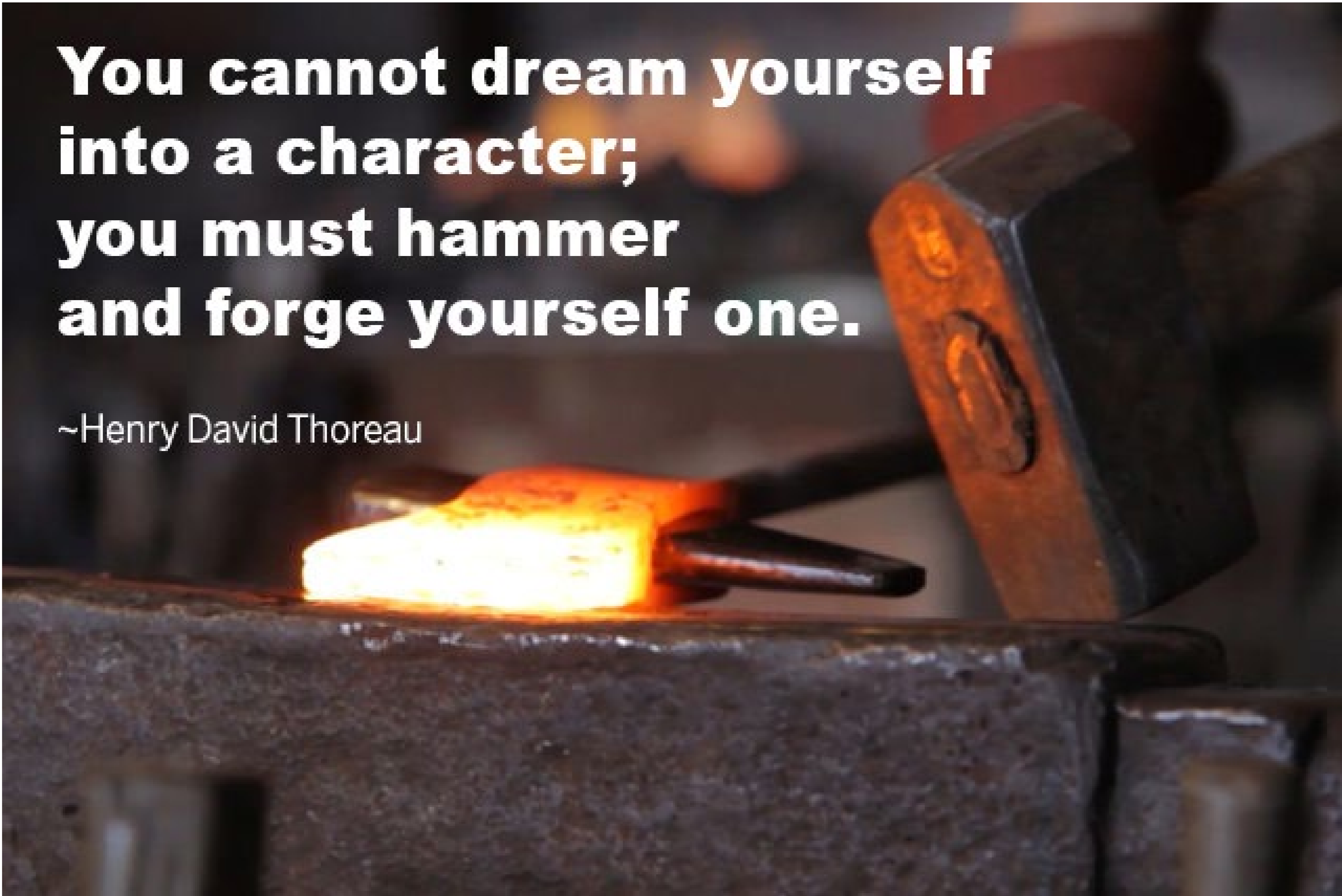


Can character be developed?



**You cannot dream yourself
into a character;
you must hammer
and forge yourself one.**

~Henry David Thoreau



Can character be developed?



- Character can change for the better or worse
- Character is developed incrementally
- Range of different approaches - e.g., education; reading; workshops; simulations including role plays; experiences; music

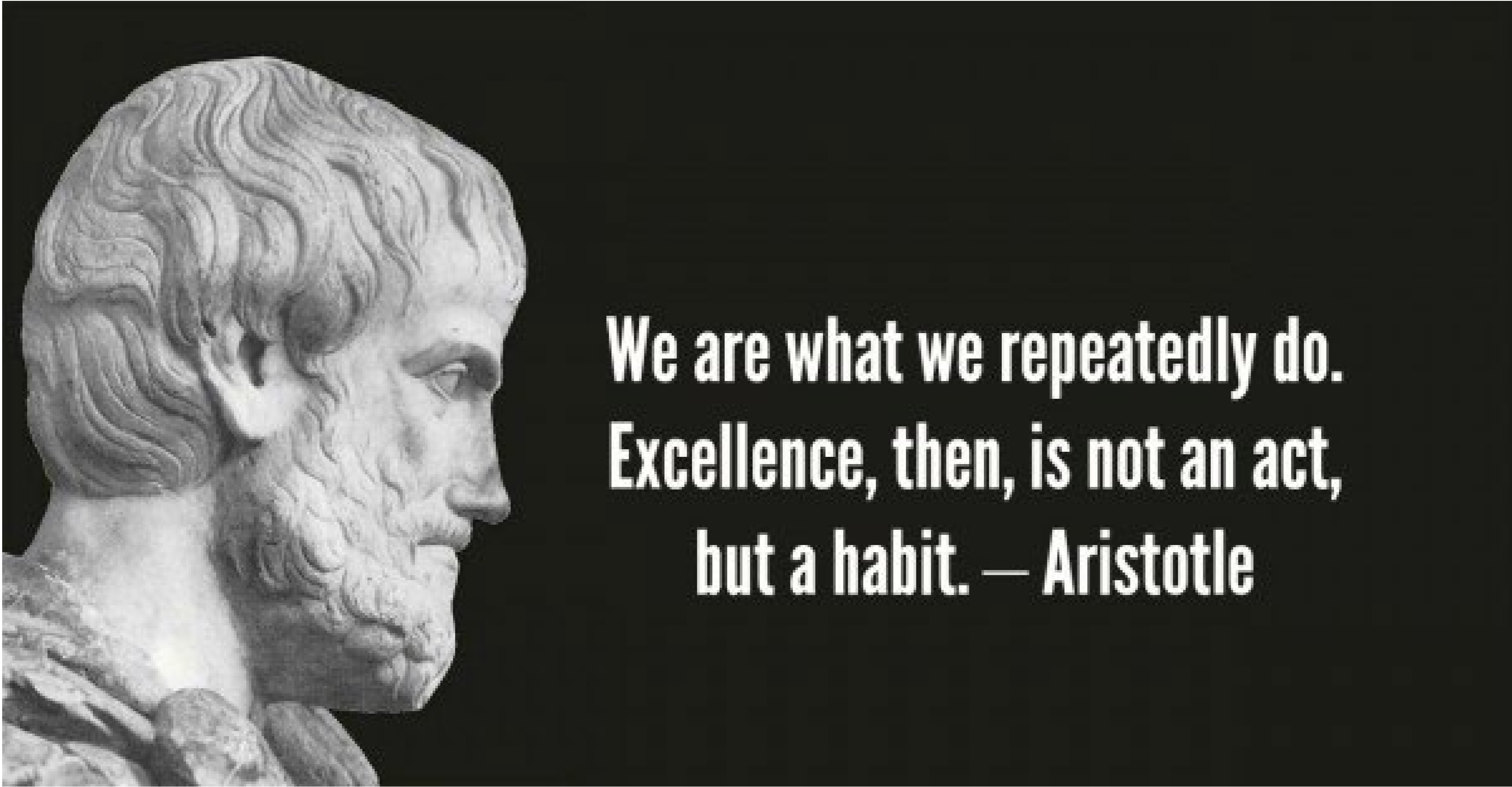
The Individual's role in character development

- People have the potential to constantly learn, modify, adapt and experiment as they make their way in life
- Reflect
 - Who am I?
 - What do I want to be?
 - What am I going to do to become what I want to be?
- Stretch, goal-setting
- Get data to course-correct, feedback especially on those experiences that really test character

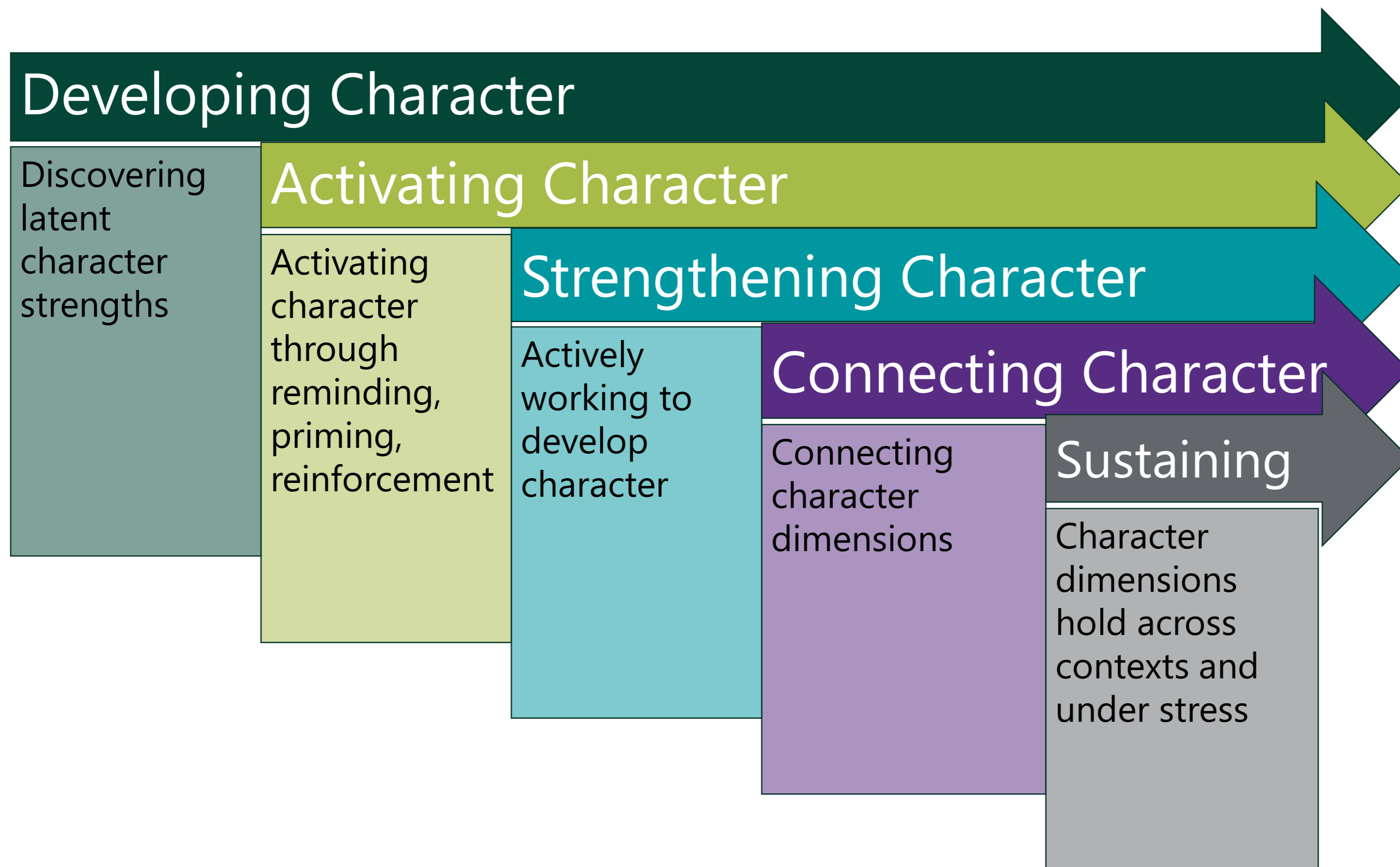


"The root of leadership development is self-awareness."

Michael McCain



**We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is not an act,
but a habit. — Aristotle**



Think about developing character along a continuum

Character is foundational

- **Character of an institution or department's leadership is critical....**
 - Drives behaviour and conduct
 - Collective character defines the culture
- **Embedded Leader Character transforms an organization**
 - Character infuses thoughts, conversations and culture
 - Changes dynamics of every interaction, decision and judgment
 - Creates conditions for sustained excellence

Why does this matter to the Fire Service?



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

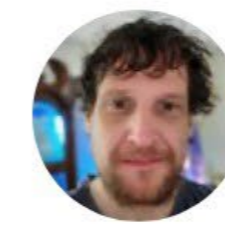
Herb Brooks - Miracle



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YCVtPVP5wI>

From the Walt Disney Pictures film *Miracle* directed by Gavin O'Connor, 2004

Character Matters



Mike Gibbs ✓
@Mikeggibbs



Apparently NASA is hyper obsessed with picking people who like people, who are kind not just calm.

Bc once you're up there you cannot afford to ever lose your cool or get snippy. Someone you can tolerate spending 24 hours a day together in a tin can for weeks.

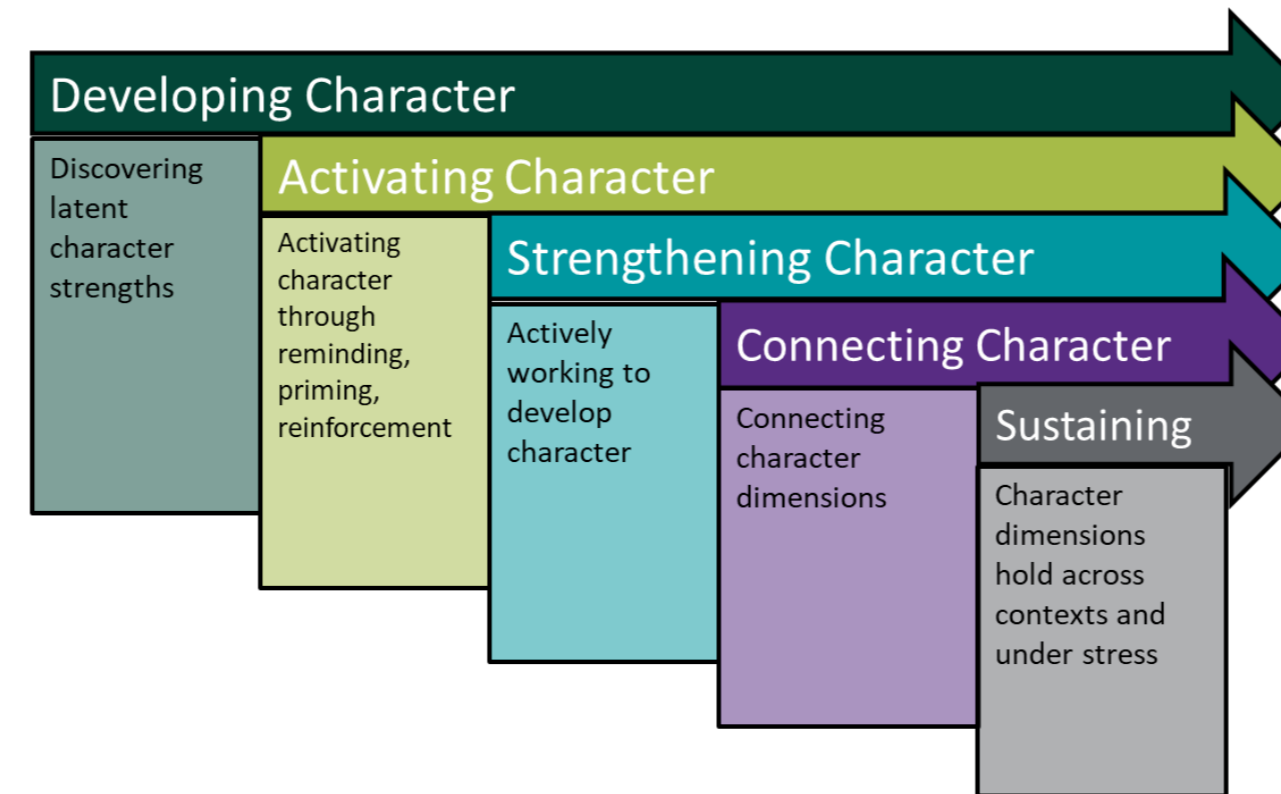
This guy seems to fit the mould perfectly. He seems like a sweetheart. A tremendously decent kind pleasant person. He's impossible not to like.

He's so humble too.



9:42 AM · Apr 4, 2023 · 78.8K Views

Anatomy → Development → Application



Leader Character strategic roadmap

INFUSING CHARACTER THROUGHOUT ORGANIZATIONS



© Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership, Ivey Business School



Ian O. Ihnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

Character Infused Culture

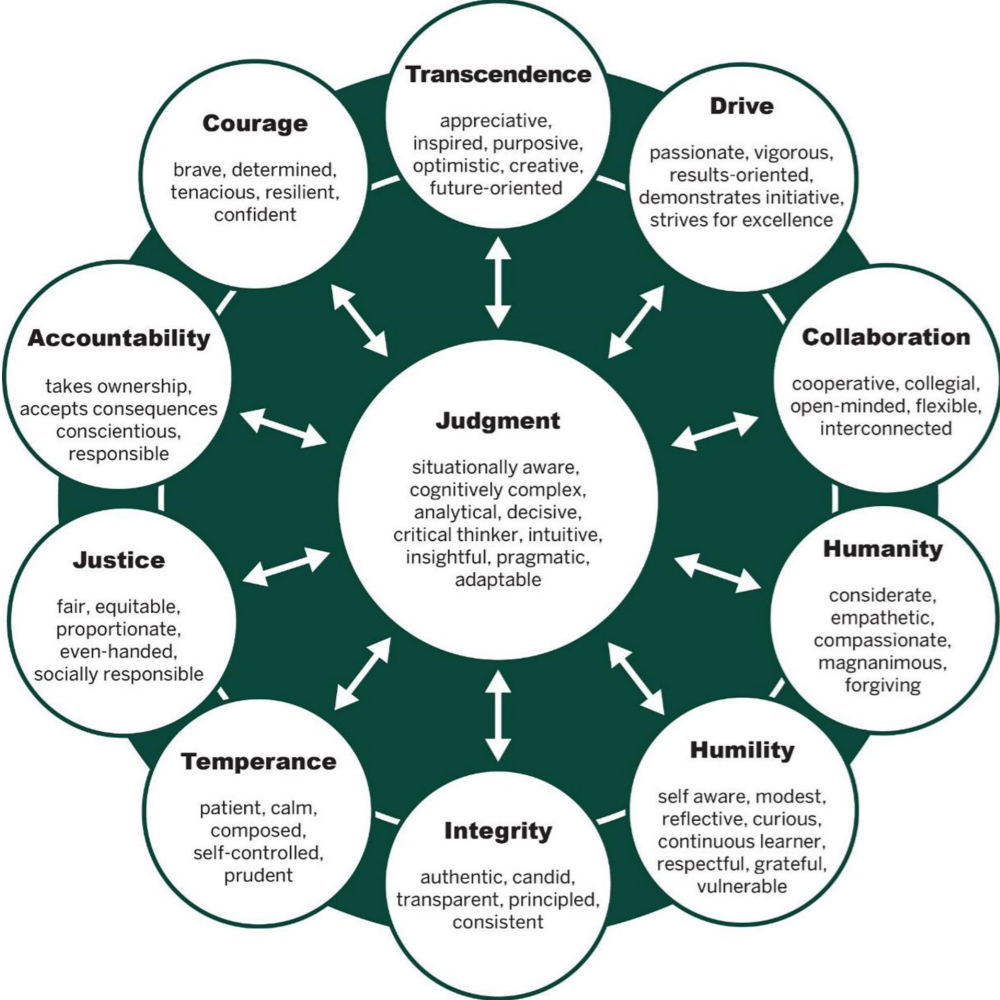
Dimension	If Present	If Absent
Judgment	Recognize key issues; solid decision making	Poor decisions, confusion, & resistance to change
Courage	Decisions are made; opposition to poor decisions; innovation thrives	Agreement of poor decisions; satisficing rather than maximizing is the norm; moral muteness prevails
Drive	Sustained momentum around focused priorities & high productivity	Lethargy & low productivity
Collaboration	Effective teamwork enhancing productivity; diversity in teams	“Every man for himself” mentality; lack of information sharing
Integrity	Trust, transparency & effective communication	People operate from a position of self-interest & mistrust
Temperance	Effective risk management; thoughtful consideration	Short term gains dictate strategy; desire for instant gratification
Accountability	Ownership; commitment to decisions	Failure to deliver results & take responsibility
Justice	Fairness fostering trust; going above & beyond	Inequities exist; favoritism & nepotism
Humility	Willingness to identify & discuss mistakes; support of continuous learning	Arrogance & overconfidence; complacency
Humanity	Deep understanding of what is important to stakeholders	Failure to acknowledge critical social interactions
Transcendence	Commitment to excellence; clarity & focus; inspiration motivates innovation	Narrow goals & objectives; failure to acknowledge, appreciate, & strive for excellence; not inspired

© Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership, Ivey Business School



IN SUMMARY

Anatomy



Ian O. Ichnatowycz
Institute for Leadership

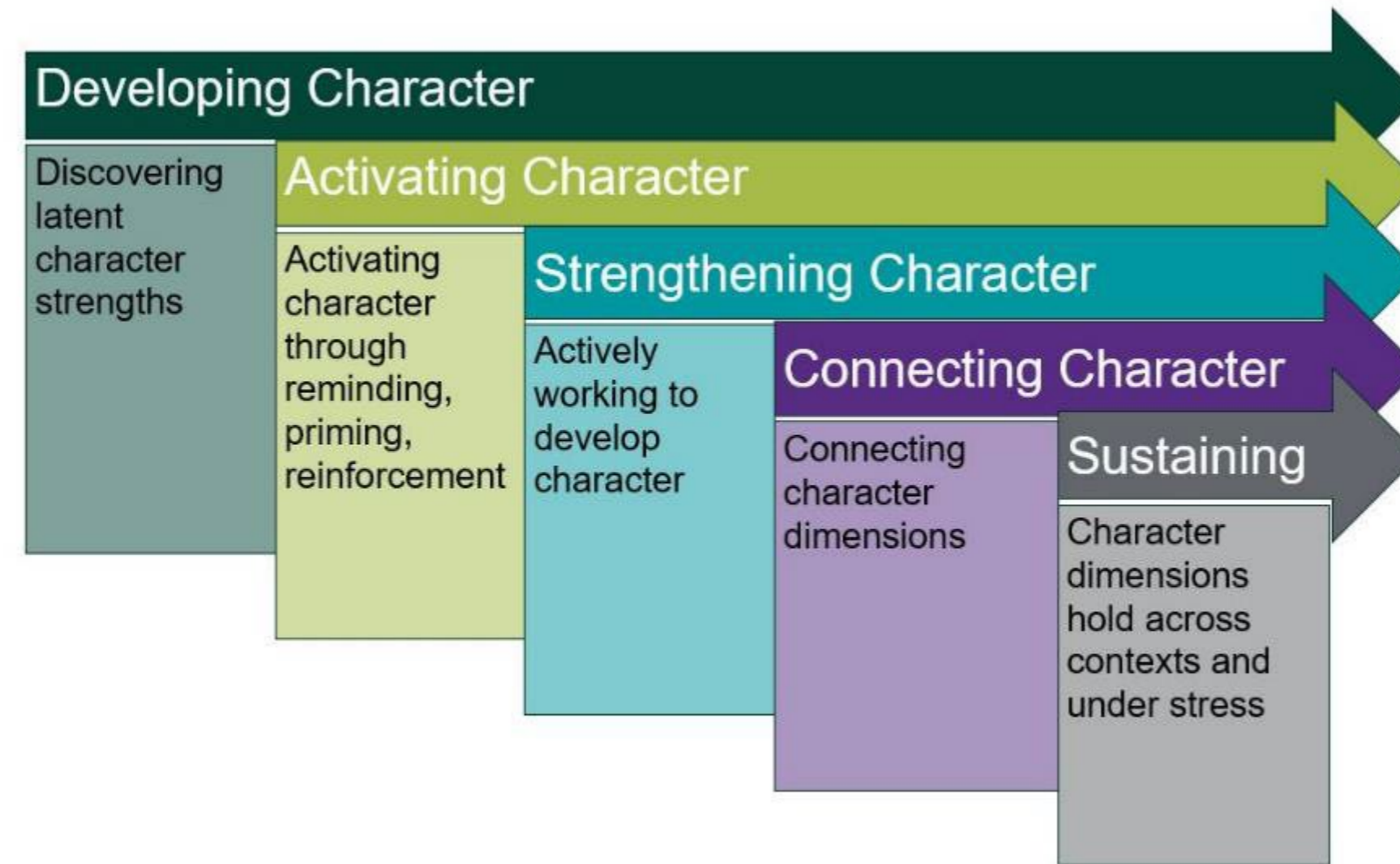
ivey.ca/leadership
[linkedin.com/in/kymilani](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kymilani)

leadership@ivey.ca
kymilani@ivey.ca

[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)
[@kymilani](https://twitter.com/kymilani)

Anatomy

Development, Exercise



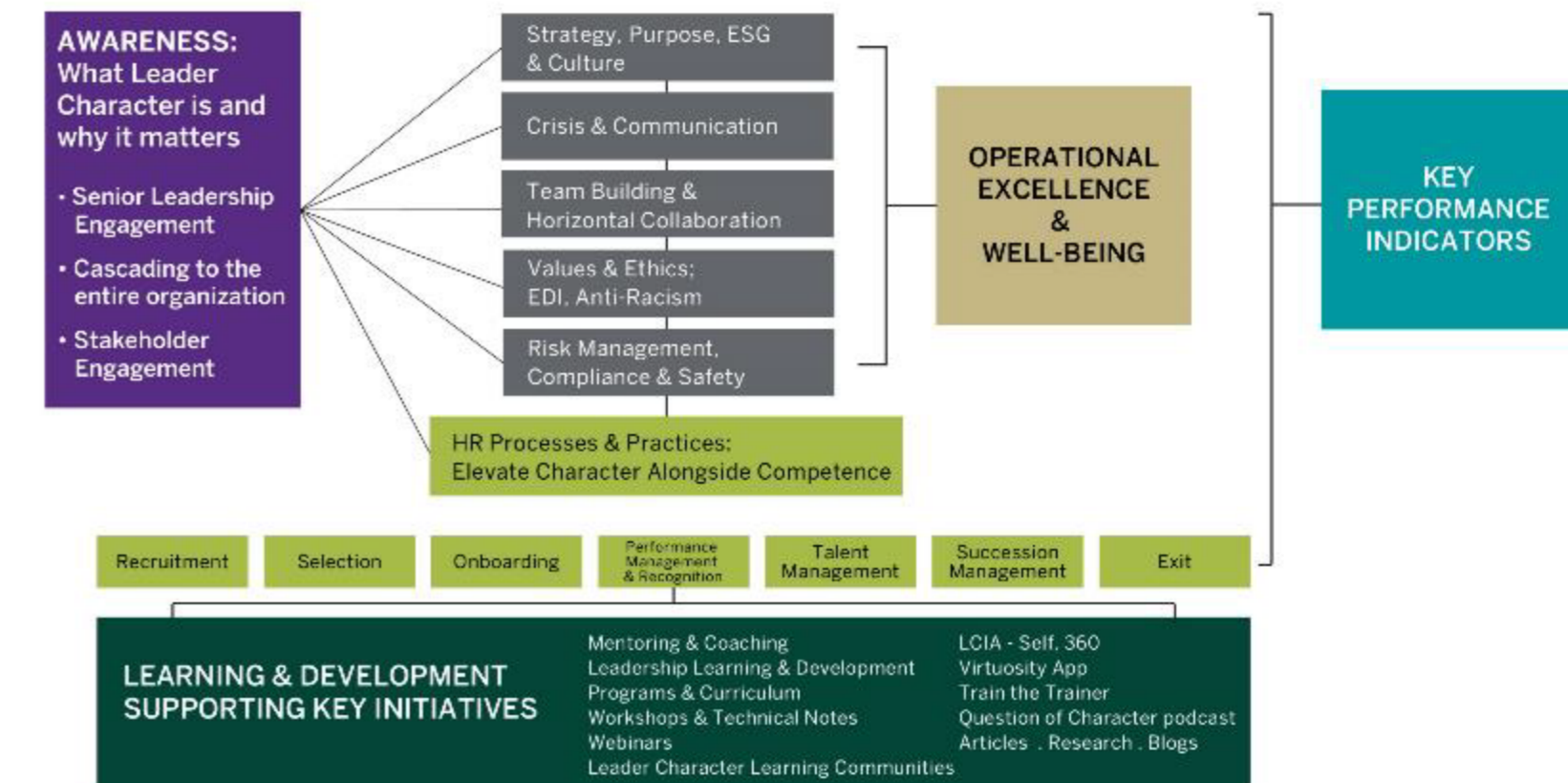
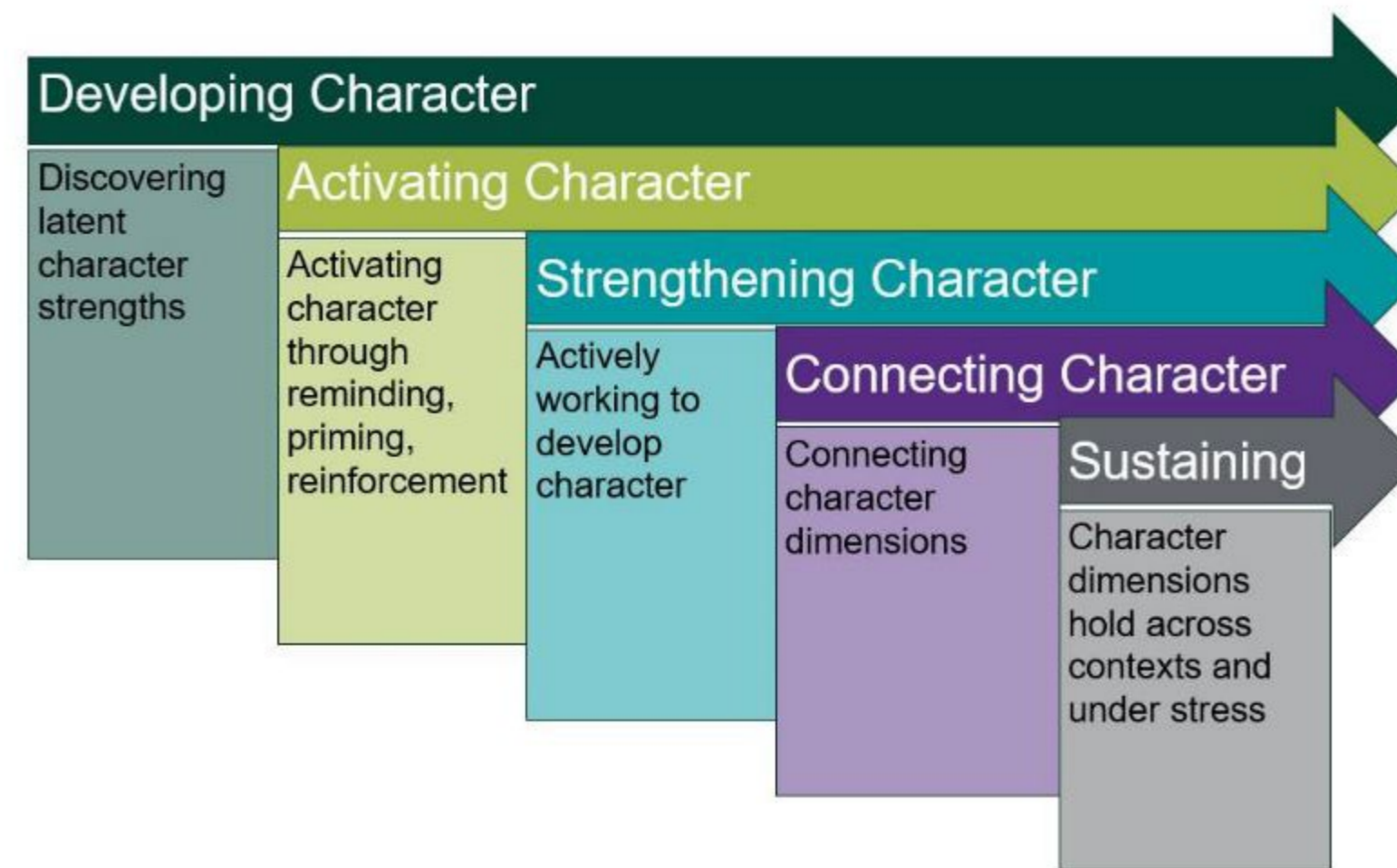
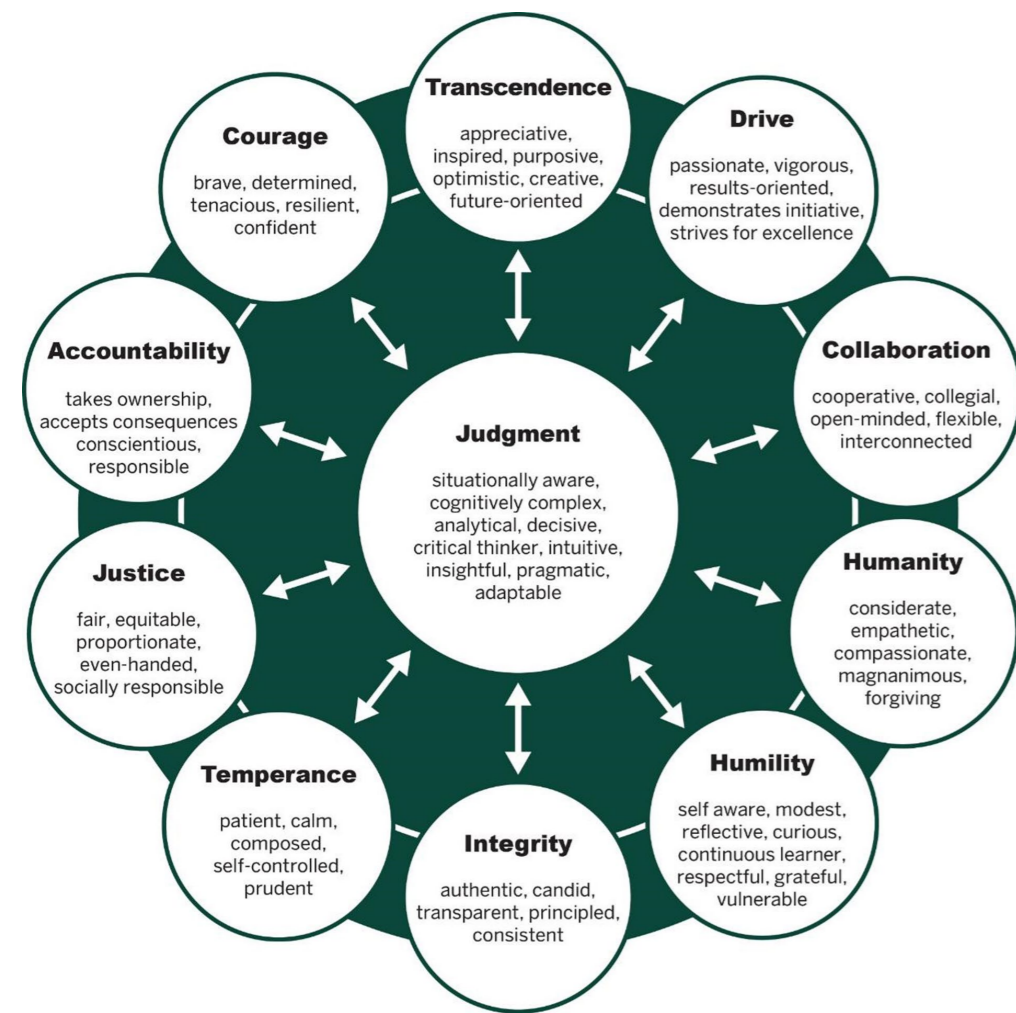
Anatomy



Development, Exercise



Application



Questions to Consider

Does your department attach importance to the character of its employees and leadership teams?

- If not, why not? What gets in the way of enacting character in your department? What can you do – or do better – to make sure that character gains traction in discussions?
- If yes, how does your organization define, assess, and develop character? Have specific initiatives been implemented?

Does your department's culture, code of conduct, mission, vision, values, etc. emphasize the importance of character?

- Is there explicit or implicit overweighting of some dimensions and underweighting of others?

Does your department incorporate character into its decisions related to recruitment, development, compensation, promotion, and termination?



Resources & Contact Information

For articles, blogs, videos, and webinars on character-based leadership visit: www.ivey.ca/leadership

Twitter: [@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)

Join our [LinkedIn group](#)

Email us: leadership@ivey.ca

Connect with [Kimberley on LinkedIn](#)

Email Kimberley: kymilani@ivey.ca

[Subscribe to our mailing list](#)