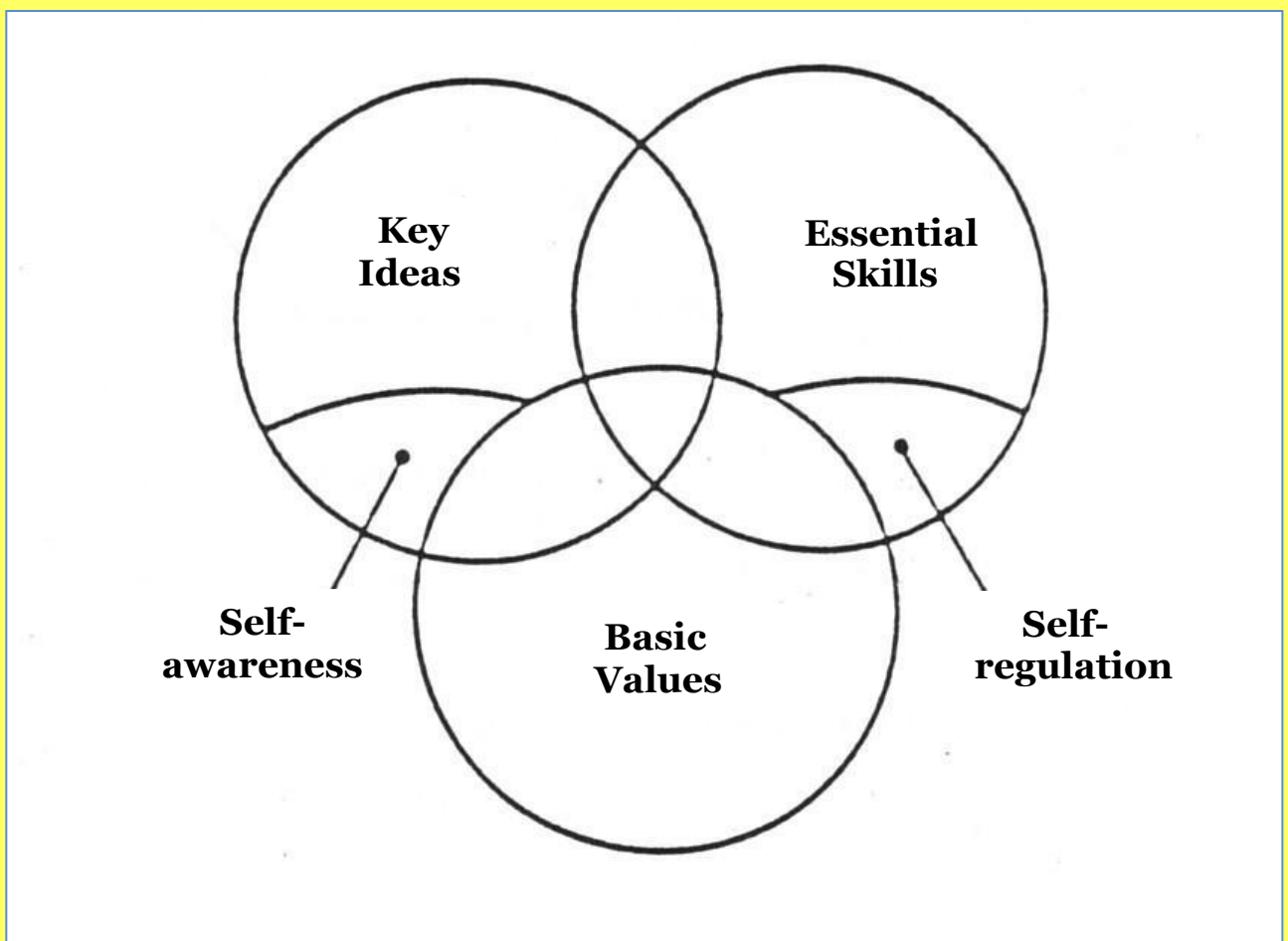


## **A Knowledge-based Model of Leadership Expertise**

Over the past 20 years, I have used the following framework to encourage people to consider what effective leaders know and do. The framework stems from my work in the area of sport expertise and actually originated from an interview with Wayne Gretzky about his hockey expertise in the early 1980s in Edmonton, Alberta. Since that time, I have also applied the model to the development of leadership expertise. Figure 1 presents the model and the five key components are briefly described below it:



**Figure 1. A Knowledge-based Model of Leadership Expertise**

# A Knowledge-based Model of Leadership Expertise

**Basic Values** refer to the attitudes, deep beliefs, and feelings that leaders have related to the way they lead.

**Key Ideas** refer to the major ideas and constructs related to key factors that influence how leaders lead.

**Essential Skills** refer to the set of skills that leaders develop, use, and refine.

**Self-Awareness** refers to a personal appreciation and understanding of the ideas, skills and values that leaders use.

**Self-Regulation** refers to the way leaders control and develop their values, knowledge and leadership skills.

Let us consider some examples of how I have applied the framework in my own practice as a leader.

**Basic Values:** Effective leaders adhere to an appropriate set of values; for example, honesty, integrity, openness and a respect for others, which generate feelings of trust among colleagues and other stakeholders. The basic values component is the most important aspect in the model as it influences all of the other aspects.

Each leader will develop a unique set of personal values that will determine to a large extent the type of leadership that he or she will provide. For example, my own style of leadership is greatly influenced by the following basic values:

- ✓ Everyone wants to make a contribution, especially if they can make it in their own way.
- ✓ Two people working together can do the work of three people working alone.
- ✓ You can do anything, if you don't want the credit for it.

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Adhering to the above personal values has greatly influenced the key ideas that have determined to a large extent my own leadership style. Let us consider some of those key concepts.

**Key Ideas:** Effective leaders develop an understanding of the leadership and management tasks that must be performed on a daily basis, as well as, an appreciation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of their fellow workers. They also understand the nature of the social and physical environment in which they are working and realize that it can change dramatically within a short time. In other words, there is a great deal of knowledge that a leader needs to acquire regarding the basic administrative and management duties, the people within and outside their organization, and the influences that impinge on their leadership. Most importantly, they need to understand the major leadership ideas that will influence the way they lead and the type of organization that they wish to develop.

As noted above, my own personal values have influenced to a large extent the following key leadership ideas that I believe are very important:

- ✓ Developing the leadership capacity of other people so that a distributed leadership system actually works.
- ✓ Building a shared vision that fosters a positive and productive organizational culture.
- ✓ Empowering others to contribute effectively is the essence of leadership.

In turn, the above ideas have determined the leadership skills that I believe effective leaders need to develop.

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**Essential Skills:** Effective leaders need to develop a set of personal, interpersonal, and group process skills, as well as, a set of planning, management and monitoring skills, if they are to handle their leadership responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. Moreover, effective leaders learn to use these skills well enough so they can perform them relatively automatically, that is, they have mastered them sufficiently well so that they do not have to think too much about why or when they are using them. The exact nature of these skills will vary with the organizational structure and culture in which they are working. Different situations will require unique sets of leadership skills.

Again, based on my personal values and key leadership ideas, some of the essential skills that I consider to be important are:

- ✓ Listening, listening, and listening some more.
- ✓ Planning and chairing positive and productive meetings.
- ✓ Building effective groups and teams.
- ✓ Using appropriate decision-making methods.
- ✓ Sensible personal and professional time management.

**Self-Awareness:** Over time, effective leaders develop self-awareness about their leadership expertise. They use this knowledge to match their leadership expertise to situational demands, and strategically assess how they are doing as leaders. Considerations related to self-awareness that I consider important are:

- ✓ Taking time to reflect on one's strengths and areas for improvement.
- ✓ Reflecting on leadership situations and identifying the "lessons learned" from them.

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- ✓ Monitoring how one is doing to ensure a balanced, healthy, lifestyle.

**Self-Regulation:** Effective leaders plan, monitor and improve their performance by personally reflecting on the leadership they are providing and considering how they might have handled particular situations in a more effective or efficient manner. In this process, discussing situations or specific leadership challenges with a trusted mentor can be very beneficial. Considerations related to self-regulation that I consider important are:

- ✓ Identifying areas for improvement and new skills that should be learned.
- ✓ Using time management skills to ensure a balanced lifestyle.
- ✓ Applying the principles of lifelong learning by reading, learning and sharing, especially with colleagues.

### **Comments on the Framework**

The concepts, skills and values leaders select will vary depending on the situations in which they are leading. The framework highlights how the personal values and vision of leaders and the shared vision that they develop will determine the ideas, skills and values that will be important in a given organizational culture. The framework also underscores the importance of deliberate practice and the time and effort it takes to enhance leadership expertise.

My reasons for sharing the framework are to:

- ✓ provide a structure on which to base the discussion of the development of leadership expertise presented in this blog, [theleadershipwall.com](http://theleadershipwall.com)

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- ✓ highlight the amount of expertise that leaders need to acquire, whether or not they are formally appointed or informal leaders, and
- ✓ emphasize the important role that collegial conversations, mentoring and ongoing learning play in leadership development.

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