When upwardly mobile persons are promoted from lower, individual contributor roles to higher, managerial roles, they are confronted by the challenge of negotiating a series of 135-degree "crossroads" or shifts in their careers. Those who make the complete journey must traverse five pathways and four crossroads. These critical career crossroads consist of discontinuous and unprecedented changes in the role responsibilities and accountabilities to which managers in transition must respond. At each crossroads, people are confronted by a triple challenge: letting go of anachronistic responsibilities and competencies, preserving those that continue to be useful, and adding new, discontinuous responsibilities and consequences. Managers in transition can cope with these demands by making adaptive changes in their preferred activities, behavior patterns, and style. A detailed examination of the unprecedented discontinuities that ambitious, upwardly mobile managers must bridge is presented. The adaptation process that is required at each career crossroads is described, followed by a detailed set of recommended shifts in behavior patterns for the future executive at each crossroads.

In 1980, Levinson identified 20 distinctive, normative criteria to describe characteristics of effective institutional leaders. He thought these would predict whether candidates would perform effectively and derive gratification from the role of CEO. To me, these criteria still have considerable face validity and seem relevant 18 years later.

A critical first question is this: How do ambitious, upwardly mobile managers acquire, assimilate, and develop proficiency in applying such competencies, traits, and qualities to perform their responsibilities? They must have acquired some competencies and so forth before and others subsequent to joining their current organizations.

This article is based on an invited presentation to honor Harry Levinson on the occasion of his 75th birthday at the 1997 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (Division of Consulting Psychology), cosponsored by the International Society of the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations.

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Where and how did they develop these competencies, traits, and qualities? Arguably, their early socialization was a dominant influence.

As we all know, leadership competencies, traits, and qualities are not elements of the core curricula of most business schools or technical specialty educational programs. Such institutions tend to focus on the delivery of technical specialty services, not the leadership or management of the organizational system through which services are delivered. From my perspective, the closest that most educational institutions have come is the recent introduction of gratuitous courses in organizational behavior or professional ethics.

If we are to believe the media, with very few exceptions private, nonprofit, and public sector organizations typically ignore the evident demands for preparing upwardly mobile persons to assume roles as leaders and managers within their enterprises. They substitute such short-sighted, single-dimension mechanisms as vision, mission, or value statements that invite employees to believe that they should do whatever they can do to “enhance the value of stockholders’ investments”—and, thereby, their own value to their organization.

One consequence of this expedient strategy is the widespread belief in the notion that it is necessary and sufficient to let newly promoted persons either “sink or swim” in their new roles. Another consequence is the emergence of casino ethics—that is, win as much as you can, using any means necessary.

This seems to paint a rather bleak picture. Yet, there are some dramatic exceptions. Most recently, people like George Soros (billionaire philanthropist and provocative investor in WMX, among many other companies) and Aaron M. Feuerstein (the “savior” of Maiden Mills) have received considerable media exposure as exemplars of some of the positive and ethical leadership traits and qualities. Their experiences suggest that people do not have to choose between ethics and expediency or between competence and politics. Rather, they demonstrate that apparent dilemmas such as these are not, by definition, mutually exclusive. These people have demonstrated that such polarities can be integrated; they are not necessarily either-or choices. Perhaps an additional trait of effective CEOs could be the conceptual and behavioral skills and the inclination to convert mutually exclusive choice points into balancing ethics with expediency and competence with politics as essential management qualities (Johnson, 1992).

A second question is this: What conditions must organizations create to enable people to traverse the five pathways and four crossroads leading from individual contributor to institutional leader roles?

My intention is to present a model that enables consulting psychologists, leaders, and upwardly mobile individuals to (a) diagnose or assess the sociotechnical elements of their organizations to determine what might be modified to minimize potential obstacles so high-potential individuals can know how to adequately prepare to assume increasingly responsible leadership roles, (b) educate and prepare candidates for higher level organizational roles and positions, (c) develop realistic career goals and plans for ambitious, upwardly mobile individuals, (d) enhance their organizations’ corporate continuity—evolution and leadership succession plans, (e) develop effective systems for training and developing leadership candidates, and (f) provide necessary and sufficient support (e.g., coaching and mentoring).

The Manager in Transition

Ambitious, upwardly mobile persons who aspire to higher managerial positions are likely to choose a career plan leading to senior management, if offered, if their organizations’ recognition and rewards systems provide an adequate inducement to shift from lower level into higher level organizational roles (and do not equally reward senior ex-
pert individual contributors). However, unless their organizations educate and prepare them, managers in transition may assume that traversing a promotional crossroads will be an easy transition rather than a dramatic, challenging transformation.

On the contrary, the nature of the demands made on persons subsequent to promotion to radically different higher level roles are, typically, significantly unprecedented and discontinuous relative to the career transitions during their previous pathway experiences. Crossroads transformations contain hidden threats to their sense of coherence and well-being—this will be weakened by any loss of strength or reliability of their attachments to the anchor that is their public role (Freedman, 1995a). As the ancient Chinese warning says, "Be careful what you wish for. You may get it."

Typically, when inexperienced people are hired into their first jobs, they have to climb a learning curve to adapt to the particular demands of their employing organization. They have to learn where, when, and how to apply what they may have learned in a classroom or laboratory to the work they must do on "the shop floor." This process is usually repeated until they have mastered all of the tasks, activities, and functions that constitute their job responsibilities. Then, when they have achieved requisite proficiency, they may be shifted to a new position where they must acquire proficiency in applying whatever additional, related set of skills may be required to perform their expanded portfolio of responsibilities. Or, they may be redeployed into a new context in which they must learn how to apply their existing skill sets to perform different responsibilities. In this process, individual contributors may capitalize on opportunities to enhance their capacity to add value both for their organization and for themselves.

Implicit threats that are triggered by the promotion usually become evident as new supervisors or managers realize that the demands made of them at higher organizational levels differ in type and quality from the demands that were made of them when they had lower level positions. To be considered promotable, individual contributors had to demonstrate outstanding competence in performing their technical specialist responsibilities. Therefore, it is only reasonable for managers in transition to assume that to be successful in the new role they probably should do more of what they used to do. This is often reinforced by a job addiction factor (discussed below). However, such reasonable expectations may not be realistic (Freedman, 1995b).

New supervisors and managers may require at least 6 months posttransition experience to display reasonable proficiency (replicating their developmental experiences as individual contributors). Most organizations do not recognize the significance of this posttransition period, nor do they dedicate appropriate resources to adequately prepare or support managers in transition.

Essentially, in most organizations, managers in transition are on their own. During this posttransition period, they may realize their existing competencies are inadequate in coping with unexpected, unprecedented leadership and managerial responsibilities. They may sense they need assistance to recognize these transitional challenges and to adapt and cope effectively with the legitimate demands of their new roles. However, they are often reluctant to act on that realization—usually because of some fear that to ask for assistance may be construed as an admission of some previously unrecognized weakness (i.e., some personal defect, deficiency, or inadequacy).

New managers gradually discover that access to appropriate opportunities to perform their familiar, reassuring, well-practiced, public, technical specialist roles have been drastically reduced or entirely lost. New managers may feel lost, adrift, alone. The managerial tasks, activities, and functions for which they are now responsible are those with which they are both unfamiliar and un-
skilled. Their dawning awareness of this discontinuity often triggers a sense of intense discomfort and insecurity. People often feel like frauds, as if they have deceived themselves, those who selected them for this position, and those who now depend on their performance. It threatens their critical sense of self-confidence and self-esteem.

To recreate an illusion of strength and to satisfy their addictive cravings, new managers frequently revert to performing those familiar technical specialty responsibilities—those which used to result in recognition, approval, and appreciation. But these are now their subordinates’ responsibilities; to persist in performing such tasks, activities, and functions simply is not responsive to—nor does it satisfy—the legitimate demands of the higher level managerial roles.

Managers in transition must somehow recognize they have arrived at a major career crossroads that requires a 135-degree shift. They must recognize and specify the new, unprecedented, mostly discontinuous but legitimate and demanding requirements of their new career pathway. They must recognize that some of their existing proficiencies will be required on their new pathway after they have traversed their next crossroads, but that the relevance of many other proficiencies will be lost. And they must identify and acquire proficiency in applying many new, vastly different competencies and attributes to perform their new responsibilities and to cope with and satisfy the demanding requirements of their new roles. Thus, they must compare and differentiate between these novel transitional demands with those that belong to their prior experience.

The first 135-degree shift at the individual contributor to first-line supervisor crossroads usually illuminates a number of unexpected, previously ignored or hidden discontinuities. Sudden awareness can be quite confusing and disorienting. Managers in transition must, somehow, learn to recognize and manage these and other apparent paradoxes they will have to manage as long as they continue to follow the pathways and crossroads leading toward institutional leadership. This attribute may be referred to as maze-brightness.

Of course, fewer errors would be made—and there would be fewer unnecessary casualties—if organizations seriously studied the way in which their managers in transition typically respond to their career progression process. Such studies have implied both an organizational diagnosis (Levinson, 1972) and self-assessments by managers in transition (Hollander, 1991; Levinson, 1992) that would enable them to determine what kinds of support their ambitious, upwardly mobile people require before, during, and after each 135-degree career shift.

**The Five Pathways and Four Crossroads**

In complex, multitiered organizations, each level is unique. Each can be characterized by the distinctive demands it makes on people who operate at that organizational level. Typically, as they climb their organizational hierarchies, many ambitious, upwardly mobile people discover an unexpected and shocking phenomenon: Behaviors, activities, and styles that were effective, highly valued, and appreciated at lower levels are often inadequate or dysfunctional at the next higher level. The reverse is also true: Valued activities at higher levels may not be recognized, understood, or appreciated by those at lower levels. Unfortunately, many who participate in human resource developmental planning and promotion decisions—executives, managers, supervisors, and human resources management specialists—often fail to recognize and apply this significant distinction.

To place the concept of leadership into a meaningful context for this discussion, we need a functional operational definition. I rather appreciate one developed by Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994, p. 394): “Leadership involves persuading [not dominating]
other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and...willingly adopt, for a period of time, the goals of the group as their own.”

The Significance of the Issue: Flawed, Inept Management

Although there is no conclusive, reliable, comprehensive research to date, Hogan et al. (1994) estimated that between 50% and 75% of all levels and types of North American managers are so incompetent that their managerial careers are in danger of being disrupted by their senior management in response to unacceptable performance by and complaints from disappointed, frustrated, and vindictive subordinates.

Paradoxically, much of the responsibility for placing unprepared and inept people in managerial positions lies with senior management. Those who make such decisions may uncritically accept prevailing cultural assumptions that it is up to the newly promoted supervisor or manager to move “up or out” or “sink or swim.” Such assumptions serve to rationalize senior management’s avoidance of recognizing that each managerial level is distinctive; each has its own unique demands for managers who, to respond effectively to those demands, must be proficient in applying certain relevant and requisite competencies. These rationalizations also enable senior management to trivialize or ignore the use of reliable standardized and validated screening and selection processes—for example, multirater appraisals (360-degree assessments), assessment centers (simulations and role plays), and psychological interviews and tests (cognitive ability and personality)—to determine if promotional candidates have mastered the requisite competencies.

Figure 1 illustrates a hypothetical pathway from individual contributor to institutional leadership through four basic career crossroads or shifts (based on Mahler & Wrightnour, 1973).

To negotiate any of the four role transitions effectively, newly promoted incumbents must make self-conscious decisions to let go of some of their habitual or preferred lower level perspectives and many of their familiar responsibilities and work methods. Letting go of outmoded work habits frees them up so they can recognize the demands of their new responsibilities to which they must adapt. This enables promoted persons to adapt to the unusual demands of their higher level roles. This process is repeated each time a person is confronted by the challenge of negotiating the next higher 135-degree shift they must make at each career crossroads.

Preferably before or at least very soon after each crossroads shift, those who are most successful in negotiating discontinuous career crossroads seem to make themselves aware of and acquire proficiency in the competencies and attributes they need to adapt to the unprecedented demands of their new roles. Upwardly mobile people are on a journey that repeatedly requires them to abandon familiar conditions of work and, courageously, enter new, unfamiliar territory. They must be alert, astute, and careful. To the naive, the new work and its demands may look deceptively familiar, particularly as new managers may feel insecure and understandably motivated to deny any differences. But, perceived or not, the differences and the adaptive challenge exist. Those who are not attentive or who fail to enhance their adaptive capacities are vulnerable.

The general principle (see Figure 2; Freedman, 1992, 1995a; Harrison, 1972) is that at each career crossroads, upwardly mobile managers must

1. Let go: They must stop or do less of their anachronistic but familiar and comfortable tasks, activities, and functions. They must let go of those competencies and attributes that enabled them to effectively perform no-longer-relevant responsibilities. Their existing competencies may have been useful in their previous positions when performing familiar responsibilities. People felt
Figure 1. The five primary pathways and four basic career crossroads. Within each of the five pathways, the vertical risers imply rotation among related positions or progression along any career pathway. Time factor: Upwardly mobile managers in transition should not remain on the same pathway for more than 3 or 4 years. Beyond that, people become too "addicted" to using familiar routines that may have been successful at lower levels as they try to adapt and respond to the new demands presented by crossing their next career crossroads.

2. Preserve: People must continue to perform certain familiar tasks, activities, and functions that have been, still are, and probably will continue to be practical and useful. A major difficulty is that they have to distinguish between those responsibilities they must let go of and those which they must retain and preserve. Few people can make this distinction easily and accurately. Errors in judgment are inevitable.

3. Add on: People must start or do more of new, unprecedented, and discontinuous responsibilities with which they are unfamiliar and not proficient. Managers in transition must adopt the role of learners. This can be quite uncomfortable, unless they have developed the habit of constantly seeking self-enhancing personal and professional development experiences already. Many newly promoted managers find the prospect of acquiring proficiency in the application of new information, concepts, methods, technologies, skills, attitudes, and perspectives to be unreasonable or unnecessary. Often, these expressed rationalizations are a facade intended to contain their anxiety—which is confident in themselves and in their competencies; they felt comfortable when using these reliable competencies in that familiar context. They easily addicted themselves to those familiar responsibilities and their use of their familiar competencies. To let go of these reliable old friends—even when done with respect and appreciation—is easy to prescribe but difficult and threatening to do. As in dealing with drug addiction, people need firm encouragement and support to fully experience (rather than deny) their own withdrawal process and to grieve and mourn the loss of their emotional attachment to these familiar, comforting competencies and responsibilities.
often quite intense. Beneath their brittle bravado, most managers in transition harbor fundamental doubts about their own capacity to learn and to adapt.

As they rise within large, complex organizations (which they thought they thoroughly understood), people inevitably discover, as they traverse each of the four career crossroads, that they are moving into quite different, very unfamiliar worlds—unless they construct a convenient world of fantasy. Like Dorothy, they might well say, “Toto... I don’t think we’re in Kansas any more.”

A Practical Frame of Reference to Career Crossroads Shifts

Managers in transition may be confused if they have not accumulated sufficient experience to know they must acquire essential information from relevant sources and accurately judge which role responsibilities they should preserve (continue) and which they should let go (stop or do less) or add on (start or do more). A practical frame of reference can serve as a set of guiding principles. Four critical career crossroads are described, and the many critical responsibilities and behaviors of which upwardly mobile managers must let go, add on, and preserve to round out their coping skills repertoires are identified. Critical prerequisite competencies and attributes the upwardly mobile manager will need for maneuvering through each career crossroads are also presented.

From Individual Contributor to Functional Manager

Individual contributors. Most organizations recruit their workforce from their local or national community’s labor pool—for example, from public and trade schools, from competitors or local companies whose employees have requisite skills, or from university settings. Many professionals come with one or a mix of technical and business degrees. Their first assignments are generally one or a series of individual contributor roles—for example, salesman, assembly line or warehouse worker, engineer, accountant, salesperson, or emergency room physician. When individuals are thought to be ready and the company needs them, they are promoted into supervisory positions to lead or direct the activities of a small group of workers whose members generally do the same kind of work as the new supervisors had been doing.

The first of the four 135-degree career shifts (see Figure 3) is the most frequent and
the most fundamental. It occurs when individual contributors who are considered to be high performers are promoted into first-line supervisory positions. These persons are often selected in preference over their former peers. That is, "first-line supervisors are often chosen from the workforce on the basis of their technical talent rather than their leadership skills" (Hogan et al., 1994, p. 495; Freedman, 1995b). It does not seem to matter if this event occurs as a result of persons being promoted out of single-discipline groups where each worker has a similar background and training and is responsible for performing some part of a whole piece of work—for example, assembly work—or if persons are promoted out of multidisciplinary teams where workers may have different backgrounds and training but work together cooperatively, integrating their complementary capabilities to perform a whole, complex piece of work—for example, an emergency room operating team.

Such a shift is deceptive. It is not, however, as dramatic as those crossroads that lie ahead of future leaders. The new first-line supervisors are often expected to be working supervisors who are expected to spend 40% and 60% of their available time performing familiar technical specialty work. Many of these first-line supervisors will be transferred and/or progress within their departmental roles until they reach and negotiate their second career crossroads. However, their technical knowledge and skills gradually become obsolete or irrelevant—unless they neglect their managerial responsibilities (in which case, their organization will have overpaid individual contributors who fail to perform the responsibilities of the role into which they were promoted); the supervisors’ sense of identity will shift away from viewing themselves as technical specialists or experts to that of being managers of technical specialists. Subsequent to this metamorphosis, most managers spend less and less time on individual work and correspondingly more time as managers.

Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, like many technical experts-turned-entrepreneurs, may have negotiated this first career shift in starting Apple Corporation. The difficulties leading to their early exits from that company may have been a consequence of their lack of preparation to deal with the complexities of rapid growth from a couple of computer geeks working on a dramatic technological innovation in a garage to the leadership of a large, maturing organization. They may have gotten sufficient relevant leadership development experiences had they stayed with their original companies long enough to negotiate the omitted three 135-degree career shifts. Of course, had they done that, they may not have created Apple. (Just speculating.)

Initially, new supervisory-level managers feel proud and good about themselves and about the approval and recognition they have received for their performance as individual contributors. This sets up a paradoxical situation: They are promoted because of their
accomplishments as individual contributors into a supervisory role in which their technical skills should become increasingly irrelevant. Perhaps as a consequence, this first career shift is the one during which the greatest number of promotional errors occur. The majority of these errors are those of omission—that is, the implicit demands of the first-line supervisor role and the promotional candidates’ capabilities to recognize and satisfy those demands are typically omitted from explicit consideration. The result is that the organization loses high-quality individual contributors and gain supervisors with unknown managerial capabilities.

The characteristics of high-quality (promotable) individual contributors (Freedman, 1995a) are as follows: (a) good at details; (b) works well without supervision; (c) improvises when plans turn out to be incomplete and when equipment break down; (d) recognizes and corrects own mistakes quickly; (e) makes quick, insightful decisions; (f) accepts responsibility for mistakes and is impatient with self for making them; (g) pushes personal problems aside; (h) concentrates very hard on job tasks; and (i) works toward own perfection.

Implicitly, promotable workers pay little attention to coworkers—unless they are part of a centralized and tightly coupled value chain (e.g., production line) in which their success is dependent on the reliability of the work results produced by their up-stream suppliers. Instead, they focus on their own work. These individual contributors require little, if any, active supervision. Their supervisors notice them because they do not make great demands. Relatively few ordinary individual contributors develop this degree of proficiency. This may indicate that an organization’s selection and orientation processes, the individuals’ superior capacity to learn, their ambition, their engaging style, plus the substance of the supervision they received was, for them, at least, effective. The obvious questions of how many capable individuals fail to achieve these characteristics—and why—still lacks definitive answers.

Discontinuous responsibilities and requisite behaviors. The first-line supervisory role is not a straight-line extrapolation of the individual contributor’s job. Rather, the promotion constitutes something like a 135-degree turn—my term for indicating that newly promoted persons shift upward and move off—often unexpectedly, unplanned, and unprepared—in unprecedented directions into unfamiliar territory. There are few aspects of the individual contributor role that can be carried forward and applied to the first-line supervisory role. That is, these two roles—like those that follow—are mostly discontinuous. Instead of directly managing work-related action entirely by oneself, supervisors (and higher level managers) must learn to manage action indirectly by managing people so they take appropriate action, to manage information to influence people to take necessary action, or both (Mintzberg, 1994). To adapt and to function appropriately, new supervisors must stop performing or do less (i.e., let go of) some tasks, activities, and functions (responsibilities). They must start or do more (add on) other responsibilities. And, they must continue to do (preserve) still other responsibilities. Needless to say, a review of the sample of let go, add on, and preserve responsibilities (see Table 1) can be a shocking revelation.

The responsibilities that newly promoted supervisors must let go, preserve, and add...
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<th>Let go: Stop/do less</th>
<th>Add on: Start/do more</th>
<th>Preserve: Continue to do</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical expert work (you are no longer an individual contributor).</td>
<td>Influence those who depend on your team for their success (your customers) and on whom your team depends for its success (your suppliers) to cooperate (e.g., define their requirements and preferences, provide reliable information and feedback, make realistic commitments, deliver what you promise).</td>
<td>Expect and foster high performance from yourself and your coworkers. (However, at this level, your peers are other first-line supervisors of teams that are doing the same work as yours or they are supervisors of your team’s customer or supplier teams.)</td>
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<td>Feeling and acting like the work results belong to you alone.</td>
<td>Build or develop your group of individual technical specialists into a high-performance team who share ownership of the work—and the results.</td>
<td>Strive for excellence through your sustained commitment to your own continuing personal and professional development.</td>
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<td>Demand accommodation from coworkers, suppliers and providers, bosses, and consumers of your work results.</td>
<td>Orient new employees, support and develop subordinates; answer questions and provide information (consulting style); Compete, fairly, with other supervisors whose goals and responsibilities are similar to yours; cooperate with those whose goals are complementary.</td>
<td>Do things right. Work against schedules, budgets, cost estimates, or sales forecasts.</td>
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<td>Learn as much as you can about your new subordinates’ work—how they transact business with each other and with the suppliers and customers that are parts of your unit’s value chain.</td>
<td>Integrate your team’s deliverable work results or products into the overall work flow. Experiment, take reasonable risks. Free yourself from tasks your subordinates should do—even if these are your favorite activities. Delegate to your subordinate individual contributors; push responsibilities down to lowest possible level. Make sure your subordinates understand and accept their work assignments. Schedule and monitor workflow; help in problem-solving, action planning. Provide direction. Communicate organizational intent and purpose down to your employees. Report your group’s progress to higher management. Explain to workers what is expected of them, provide feedback on their progress and give recognition for results. Assure that workers receive necessary and sufficient training and coaching to perform essential tasks. Counsel/refer employees with personal problems.</td>
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on in their new roles have been outlined above. To actually do these things, ambitious, upwardly mobile individuals must acquire adequate proficiency in applying a new or latent set of relevant prerequisite competencies. When people feel confident in using only a familiar, narrow, limited set of skills—skills that have, in fact, served them well when they functioned as individual contributors and enabled them to achieve success and recognition in that now-outmoded individual contributor role—they will continue to use those skills whether or not they are relevant to the discontinuous demands of the unprecedented, discontinuous first-line supervisor role they are now expected to perform. By mastering a new set of skills that are relevant and offer the realistic probability they will enable new supervisors to cope with their new role's demands, they are more likely to refrain from using—and they will let go of—their no-longer-appropriate behaviors. Further, once they feel confident and comfortable in applying these new competencies, they will be far more likely to engage (not avoid) their new responsibilities and gain sufficient proficiency in applying the requisite add-on behaviors.

Prerequisite competencies and attributes.

- Awareness that they are traversing a 135-degree career shift that will make unprecedented, discontinuous demands on them—demands to which new supervisors must respond
- Ability and courage to let go of anachronistic but familiar responsibilities and competencies and to quickly add on new competencies—as well as the good judgment to distinguish between those responsibilities and behaviors to let go and those to preserve
- Supervisory knowledge, practices, and skills—including relevant human resource policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and practices
- Authority—has the feeling that he or she belongs in boss’s role (Levinson, 1980)
- Sensitivity—able to perceive and respond to subtleties of others’ feelings (Levinson, 1980)
- Involvement—sees oneself as a participating member of an organization (Levinson, 1980)
- Maturity—has good relationships with authority figures (Levinson, 1980)
- Interdependence—accepts appropriate dependency needs of others as well as of him- or herself (Levinson, 1980)
- Stamina—has physical as well as mental energy (Levinson, 1980)
- Adaptability—manages stress well (Levinson, 1980)
- Sense of humor—doesn’t take self too seriously (Levinson, 1980)
- Team-building and team development skills
- Participatory management theory and methods or procedures for team-based problem-solving, decision-making, and planning of corrective and preventive actions
- Conceives of self as a manager–leader (not just as an individual contributor)
- Communication skills (verbal expression, active listening, literacy, and numeracy)
- Conflict management and utilization skills
- Orientation to business (profit and loss, accountabilities, economic value-added orientation)
- Diplomacy—after learning about the prevailing political factions operating at one’s level within the organization (and at least one level above and one level below) and their respective positions on their high-priority issues, adopting a nonoffensive attitude toward all significant parties that projects your understanding and appreciation of the legitimacy of each perspective, without necessarily making a personal commitment
- Reliability (trustworthiness)—acting on what you say; walking your talk;
demonstrating dependability
• Systems perspective: (a) viewing one's own unit as having to contribute to and being dependent on the larger organization and (b) viewing other organizational units as elements of an interdependent network where some are suppliers of essential inputs to one's own unit and others are users or customers of one's unit's outputs

From Supervisor to Managing a Single “Business”

First-line supervisors encounter their second basic career crossroads when they shift into roles in which they manage a “family” of specialized but interdependent units that are parts of—and contribute to—the same supply chain. This is a dramatically sharp 135-degree turn for most managers in transition to negotiate (see Figure 4).

Managers of a business within a larger organization are persons who manage several different but interdependent subunits—these may be single-discipline functional departments (e.g., customer service call centers, warehouses) or multidisciplinary teams (e.g., new product development, marketing). In a small company, like many family firms, this promotional shift could take a person all the way to the CEO position. In a large, complex organization, the “business” may be structured in a variety of ways—by function, business unit, region, or product. Such middle managers might be called regional manager, group or product group manager, or plant manager. The role may carry a vice-president title. New single-business managers quickly discover they are in less-than-total control of their own businesses. They gradually realize their success depends on satisfying their downstream customers by eliciting the cooperation and effectiveness of their “subordinate” departments—and that of their upstream suppliers. Few new single-business managers assume their positions with an adequate and comprehensive appreciation of the operations and interface transactions among all their subordinate departments and between their business unit and its suppliers and customers.

This is the level above which very few ambitious managers rise. New single-business managers are very vulnerable. There is a tremendous discontinuity between the reasons they are promoted and the responsibilities they must perform to be successful in this new role. Hogan et al. (1994, p. 495) speculated that these “middle managers...are often chosen from the ranks of first-line supervisors on the basis of likeability and perceived ability to work with senior management.”

Discontinuous responsibilities and requisite behaviors. Those persons who achieve and function effectively in their new, single-business middle manager roles have to make the following 135-degree shifts in their behavior patterns and activities (see Table 2).

Prerequisite competencies and attributes.
• Tolerance for ambiguity—can tolerate and cope with ambiguity, confusion,
Table 2
Transition From Supervising Manager to Manager of a Single "Business"

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<td>Work against budgets, cost estimates, or sales forecasts (important as these are, they are no longer the sole criteria for your success).</td>
<td>Make quick tactical trade-off decisions within a strategic context (match decisions against corporate mission).</td>
<td>Influence those who depend on your business team for their success (your customers) and on whom your business team depends for its success (your suppliers) to cooperate (e.g., define their requirements and preferences, provide reliable information and feedback, make realistic commitments, deliver what you promise).</td>
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<td>Win-lose competition with peers and between your business and other organizational units.</td>
<td>Rely on collateral managers (peers) and subordinate first-line supervisors. Work against strategic business and marketing plans. Do the right things. Become computer literate; begin to become familiar with the capabilities and potentialities of information systems and the management of information.</td>
<td>Experiment, take reasonable risks. Develop high-potential subordinate staff. Do things right. Compete fairly with other managers at your level; collaborate with senior managers and with managers of staff groups. Integrate your department's deliverable work results into the overall workflow (assume a customer-based, open-system orientation). Delegate (push responsibilities down to lowest possible levels). Build and develop your group of subordinate supervisory managers into a high-performance business management team.</td>
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and uncertainty until things become clear (Levinson, 1980)

- Judgment—knows when to act (Levinson, 1980)
- Activity—takes a vigorous orientation to identifying and seeking ways to satisfy the needs of the organization (Levinson, 1980)
- Achievement—oriented toward organization's successes rather than personal aggrandizement (Levinson, 1980)
- Articulateness—makes a good impression (Levinson, 1980)
- Vision—is clear about progression of his or her own life and career, as well as where the organization should go (Levinson, 1980)
- Perseverance—able to stick to a task and see it through regardless of the difficulties encountered (Levinson, 1980)
- Personal organization—has good sense of time and how to use time efficiently (Levinson, 1980)
- Integrity—has a well-established value system that has been tested in various ways in the past (Levinson, 1980)
- Utilizing and managing legitimate but conflicting simultaneous demands (from subordinates, bosses, peers, suppliers and users)
- Awareness of and appreciation for other departments' work functions that are interdependent with your business
- Fundamental, strategic—often quantitative—business management skills (various disciplines like marketing, production, information systems, human resource management, accounting, strategic planning, corporate modeling, etc.)
- Diplomacy—after learning about the prevailing political factions operating at one's current level within the organization (and at least one level above and one level below) and their respective positions on their high priority issues, adopting a nonoffensive attitude toward all significant parties that projects your understanding and appreciation of the legitimacy of each perspective, without necessarily making a personal commitment
- Reliability (trustworthiness)—acting on what you say; walking your talk; demonstrating dependability.
- Psychological mindedness: recognizes and applies psychological factors in viewing, understanding, and acting on organizational issues (Hogan et al., 1994). Understanding corporate organizations as complex social—technical, open, political systems

From Managing One “Business” to Managing Several “Businesses”

The third career crossroads is the 135-degree shift from managing a single business to the executive management of several related (interdependent) businesses (see Figure 5). In medium-sized companies, this may be the CEO position. The amorphous criteria that too many large, complex organizations apply in deciding which single-business middle managers are to be promoted to executive manager positions are

**Figure 5.** The third crossroads.
the following: adapt well to their seniors, fit the prevailing corporate culture, and are acceptable, for whatever reasons, to the key decision-makers (Hogan et al., 1994).

If no internal candidates satisfy these criteria, the executive position may be filled by searching outside for someone who, theoretically, can step into the vacancy and "hit the ground running." Curiously, organizations seem to rely on nominations of candidates by search firms (which are motivated by their commission structure to induce their clients to accept one of their nominees—quickly), background checks and references from the candidates' previous employers (which, because of litigation anxiety, are rarely candid or explicit about candidates' foibles, soft spots, or developmental needs), and screening/selection interviews (in which decision makers are rarely skilled; see DeVries, 1992). Alternatively, and particularly if the organization has a strong "promote-from-within" philosophy—and as long as there are no current, major organizational crises—the "best available" existing middle managers within the organization will be selected. Far too often, this candidate will not be good enough.

The demands of the role of senior executive responsible for leading a team of single-business middle managers are qualitatively and substantively different than those for lower level positions. The 135-degree shift to this senior or executive vice-president role is much more complex than appearances may suggest. A straight-line extrapolation based on effective single-business middle manager behavior patterns may be tempting, but it is not realistic. A global shift in self-concept, attitude, and perspective is essential. Senior vice-presidents and executive vice-presidents must redirect their attention from a mostly internal to a primarily external perspective (e.g., to interactions with unfamiliar stakeholder groups). The challenging problems and opportunities the senior and executive vice-presidents must face are far more complex than those faced by single-business managers. They must actively manage a variety of dilemmas or dual perspectives that have always been in the background at lower levels and now emerge to the foreground (e.g., local plus global events, short- plus long-term time perspectives, parts plus the whole of the larger organizational system; Collins & Porras, 1995; Johnson, 1992). The pressure is more intense and cannot be ignored as easily and it comes from more sources than the senior and executive vice-presidents can influence. The issues to be analyzed and decided on are more consequential. The uncertainties and the risks are greater. The anxiety levels are higher.

Yet, criteria for promotion to this executive level are rarely comprehensive, nor do organizations always recognize or satisfy the need to fully prepare candidates to assume this role. As a result, as Peter Drucker pointed out almost 30 years ago, two thirds of those who have been elevated to executive management positions do not know what it is to adopt an entrepreneurial approach. Nor do they understand how to make strategic policy decisions. Instead, they continue to perform the operational and firefighting responsibilities of middle managers. I know of nothing that suggests that this ratio has changed over the intervening years.

Discontinuous responsibilities and requisite behaviors. Those few individuals who reach this organizational level and perform effectively and appropriately in this unique environment have to make the adaptive shifts in their behavior patterns and activities (see Table 3).

Prerequisite competencies and attributes.
• Nonlinear, intuitive thinking
• Management of parallel activities
• Coping with multidisciplinary, multiorganizational complexities
• Deriving satisfaction from the successes of your subordinate managers, your peers, and your company
• "Maze brightness"—the intuitive understanding of what is organizationally possible, how to maneuver through organizational obstacles, and the capacity to
Table 3
Transition From Managing One "Business" to Managing Several "Businesses"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let go: Stop/do less</th>
<th>Add on: Start/do more</th>
<th>Preserve: Continue to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing with manager-peers, supervisors or individual</td>
<td>Identify, then challenge your own preexisting beliefs,</td>
<td>Make quick, tactical trade-off decisions.</td>
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<td>contributors at any level</td>
<td>assumptions, and convictions.</td>
<td>Build and develop your subordinate single-business managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus exclusively on &quot;local&quot; (internal organizational)</td>
<td>Collaborate with central corporate policy and decision-</td>
<td>Rely on peers and subordinate managers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>making (governance) group and other executive-level</td>
<td>Do things right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working only against business and marketing plans</td>
<td>managers</td>
<td>Experiment; take reasonable risks.</td>
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<td>Serve as mentor to promising subordinates.</td>
<td>Develop staff.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do the right things.</td>
<td>Integrate your deliverable work results into the overall</td>
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<td>Adopt &quot;global&quot; perspective, viewing the organization as</td>
<td>corporate workflow.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>being in a dynamic interaction with various external</td>
<td>Delegate (push responsibilities down to lowest possible</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and internal stakeholder groups (stockholders, suppliers,</td>
<td>level).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>customers, regulatory agencies, employees, etc.).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perform public &quot;ceremonial&quot; functions as required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participate in long-term, strategic planning for the total</td>
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<td></td>
<td>organization.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Choose among available alternative tactical options on</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the basis of their comparative potential to contribute</td>
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<td>to the company's mission and strategic goals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Play a prominent role and contribute to the desired public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>corporate image.</td>
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intuit nonobvious (innovative) strategies and/or methods to achieve one's personal or subsystem's objectives while avoiding organizational obstacles and impediments, without creating disadvantages for other managers or for the larger organization.

- Diplomacy—after learning about the prevailing political factions operating at one's current level within the organization (and at least one level above and one level below) and their respective positions on their high priority issues, adopting a nonoffensive attitude toward all significant parties that projects your understanding and appreciation of the legitimacy of each perspective, without necessarily making a personal commitment.

- Reliability (trustworthiness)—acting on what you say; walking your talk; demonstrating dependability.

**From Managing Several "Businesses" to Institutional Leadership**

The fourth career crossroads is the most visible and dramatic 135-degree shift (see Figure 6). Very few people are selected for institutional leader roles (i.e., the CEO and/or chairman position in large, complex organizations). When this rare, singularly momentous event occurs, it is extremely significant for the leader's former peers, the board of directors, the company's external stakeholders (like customers, suppliers, competitors, regulatory agencies, the financial community, investors, and employees), and the company's future prospects. A new institutional leader usually signals fundamental, systemwide changes that will affect all parts and all levels of an organization. The selection process is often far more political than are lower level promotions. Other than that, the selection criteria are quite similar to—and as soft as—those described (above) for promotion to executive manager roles. (For example, I got to know John Walter, former chairman and CEO of R. R. Donnelley & Sons, during a long-term consultation a few years ago. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in the board room to observe their decision-making process as he was being selected to be the new president of AT&T—and 9 months later when they decided to let him go.)

Increasingly, North American companies seem to be selecting their new institutional leaders by recruiting and selecting from a short list of external candidates—provided by executive recruiting firms—rather than by promoting from their pool of existing executive managers. In many instances, this may be realistic. It is also an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of most contemporary organizational efforts to ensure corporate continuity and executive succession through appropriate and effective planning and development.

Perhaps the most critical and most common error made by boards of directors at this crossroads is assuming that new CEOs should have very little to learn. It can be self-defeating if the involved parties assume that new institutional leaders need only continue to operate as they did as executive managers of a portfolio of several businesses or
as the CEO of a medium-sized company—simply adding a few new specialized businesses.

Unless the new institutional leader has already demonstrated competence and effectiveness as an institutional leader of some other organization, a revolutionary change in self-concept and sense of identity is required. Institutional leaders must cope with the natural anxiety that comes from realizing that their ultimate value may be based on the quality of only a handful of extraordinarily consequential decisions that they must make in any given year. The stakes are enormous and are matched by the pressure with which CEOs must learn to live. Paying attention to their varied experiences as they pass along their previous pathways and as they traverse their previous crossroads can prepare new CEOs to effectively learn how to learn.

An increasing number of innovative experts in some technical specialty have chosen not to move up the corporate hierarchy. Undoubtedly, some are unwilling to sacrifice their family and personal lives. Others may lack an essential attribute, patience. Or, they may have assessed the opportunities available to advance rapidly and to achieve senior executive positions as very limited and too competitive for their preferences. Perhaps they are unwilling to give up the gratification they derive from hands-on practice in their area of specialization. It may also be that they have become disheartened with their organization's unwillingness to develop a new business—perhaps with them as the business manager—based on their innovations. Many wunderkind have resigned and negotiated to take their patents with them to start up their own technology-based new ventures. These courageous innovators are leaping from the first or second to the fourth career crossroads, omitting quite a bit of essential developmental experience. Theirs is a truly revolutionary challenge. These innovative, entrepreneurial institutional leaders may be successful during the start-up of their new enterprises but are likely to be ineffective in leading them once they are established and have achieved some degree of stability. Such unique individuals may have to either fill in the gaps in their preparation to fulfill the role of effective institutional leaders, or they may have to let go of their creation and move on to start up another in a series of innovative enterprises.

Discontinuous responsibilities and requisite behaviors. Successful institutional leaders have generally made the adaptive changes in their behavior patterns (see Table 4).

**Prerequisite competencies and attributes.**

- Social responsibility—appreciates need to assume leadership with respect to that responsibility (Levinson, 1980)
- Subordinate one's own self-interest to the welfare of the corporate enterprise and its future
- Intense interest and curiosity about how to anticipate the future of the organization and the relevant aspects of its external environment
- Dedication to corporate effectiveness
- Surgency—desire to advance, dominance, assertiveness, energy/activity level, verbal fluency, sociability, social participation, decisiveness, self-esteem (Hogan et al., 1994)
- Emotional stability—stress resistance, tolerance of uncertainty/ambiguity, adjustment, emotional balance, independence, self-confidence (Hogan et al., 1994)
- Conscientiousness—inner work standards, responsibility, achievement, initiative, personal integrity, ethical conduct (Hogan et al., 1994)
- Agreeableness—nurturance, friendliness, social nearness, support (Hogan et al., 1994)
- Intellectual capacity—broad range of active interests, conceptual capacity to comprehend and use increasingly complex levels of vital information, recognizes needs for change (Hogan et al.,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Transition From Managing Several Businesses to Institutional Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let go: Stop/do less</td>
<td>Add on: Start/do more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-centered image building</td>
<td>Serve as the most observable company figurehead interacting with the various internal and external corporate stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making quick, tactical trade-off decisions</td>
<td>Authorize and monitor visioning and futuring research; decide on long-term and strategic policies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborating with peers (you won’t have any peers within your own organization now)</td>
<td>Empower and support your subordinate executive managers; consistently reinforce global perspective, quality, and customer service.</td>
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<td>Ensure consistency in your corporate leadership by managing: attention, meaning, trust, and self.</td>
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<td>Seek or create a sense of corporate mission and purpose with which employees at all levels, customers, suppliers and the community can identify and that they will endorse.</td>
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<td>Seek and develop mutually supportive affiliations with CEOs in other companies in your own and in other industries, with trade or professional associations and/or with executive consultants (these are the most likely candidates for your new group of peers).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurture or start a formal executive succession system (not just an emergency program).</td>
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<td>Consider what legacy you want to leave to the company after you retire.</td>
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</table>
This includes practical intelligence and capacity to abstract—to conceptualize, to organize, and to integrate different data into a coherent frame of reference (Levinson, 1980).

- Charisma—creates compelling visions, recruits people who share the vision, builds teams that support the vision (Hogan et al., 1994).
- Diplomacy—after learning about the prevailing political factions operating at one's current level within the organization (and at least one level above and one level below) and their respective positions on their high-priority issues, adopting a nonoffensive attitude toward all significant parties that projects understanding and appreciation of the legitimacy of each perspective, without necessarily making a personal commitment.
- Reliability (trustworthiness)—acting on what you say; walking your talk; demonstrating dependability.

The Significance of Performance of Public Roles

No matter what career pathway they are travelling, no matter how many of the four career crossroads they have traversed, most people derive a sense of pride and confidence when they perform in their work roles with competence, comfort, certainty, and proficieny. They earned this pride and self-esteem by achieving tangible, high-quality accomplishments (usually measured by delivering expected results at or below budget and within schedule). Their pride and self-esteem is enhanced when their achievements are recognized as desirable and useful by their stakeholders—coworkers, subordinates, bosses, customers, suppliers, and others who are affected by their work and its results. Public (observable) performance of the tasks, activities, and functions that resulted in these accomplishments is one of eight basic anchors for a sense of well-being and coherence. For most people, such opportunities for public performances are integral components of their sense of identity—who they think they are as persons (Freedman, 1995a).

The Three Cs: Competence, Confidence, and Comfort

It is natural for people to seek repeated opportunities to display such valued public performances. They are familiar and comfortable in the role. Through their well-received public performances, people reassure themselves of their worth or value. Furthermore, people know they perform these well-practiced role responsibilities in a highly proficient manner—that is, they know they are competent. Thus, they feel most confident in themselves and in the methods and practices they apply when performing such routines.

Behavioral Addiction

Unfortunately, many people like these good feelings so much that they addict themselves to whatever results in feeling good. As with addiction to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, it is very difficult to let go and experience the pain of withdrawal. This is the primary basis of the hidden threat of excessive (limited) competence.

Leaders who are unaware of their behavioral addictions—that is, leaders who lack self-reflective awareness—are most likely to act in ways that are self-defeating. They "shoot themselves in the foot" and often displace blame onto others for interfering with their ability to "run the race." When they are confronted with unfamiliar challenges, they are likely to intensify their habitual ways of coping with their historical but no longer relevant issues. ("I don't know how to do this, so I'll do more of what I do know.") New circumstances, conditions, events, and situations become threats to such people. Over time and without modification, anachronis-
tic coping patterns are likely to become the addicted person's primary and flawed means of coping with anything new—and defending themselves against the threats to their self-esteem that radical, discontinuous change so frequently provokes.

In Conclusion

It serves little purpose, when we observe an underperforming or dysfunctional leader or manager, to castigate that individual. More realistically, we must keep in mind the concept of organizational collusion. With necessary and sufficient preparation of individuals plus organizational support and effective performance management, we might identify and do something about nonfunctioning managers and leaders. However, such ideal organizational conditions rarely obtain. Frequently, the dysfunctional manager or leader is merely a product of prevailing organizational conditions. Therefore, rather than blaming the victim, it seems more functional to examine the organization and its systems to determine how to ensure that individuals' behavior will match and contribute to the realization of the organization's vision, mission, goals, strategies, and philosophy or values.

Organizational conditions can either exacerbate or ameliorate flawed individual behavior. It can be enlightening to compare those organizational assumptions and practices that seem to be either positively or inversely associated with effective leadership. The results can be practical differential diagnostic criteria that could enable managers and their consultants to identify areas for supportive, corrective, or preventive intervention.

References