CHAPTER 2

OPEN SOURCE LEADERSHIP

So far we have painted a picture of the new game and the new rules driving the need for open source leadership. It is now our intention to concentrate on the skills required to practice open source leadership. Leadership is perhaps one of the most overused and least understood terms of our age. It is probably the most researched topic in organizational behavior and there are more leadership theories than you can poke a stick at, each giving partial answers to highly complex leadership questions. As Nobel Prize-winner Richard Feynman (1994, p. 22) once said:

I have approximate answers and possible beliefs and different degrees of certainty about different things, but I am not absolutely sure about anything and there are many things I know nothing about.

Not bad, coming from a Nobel Prize winner and pretty good advice for those of us crazy enough to seek absolute certainty about a phenomenon that has so many competing theories. There are, however, points where there does appear to be absolute convergence and these are that leadership is the power of one individual to guide the actions of another. Leaders are individuals who advocate change and who try new approaches to problems. Leadership is often conceptualized as a set of behaviors or a product of the interaction of the leader’s personality and the demands of the leadership situation. This view leads to contingency theories of leadership, which is whole different pathway. So, in order to weave our way through this maze of definitions, we borrowed from the helpful approach adopted by Ken Wilber (1997) who is regarded as the world’s most influential integral thinker. When faced with a complexity of conflicting theories, Wilber simply backs up to a level of generalization at which the various conflicting approaches actually agree with one another. For example, Wilber (1997, p. 22) says:

Take the world’s great religious traditions: Do they all agree that
Jesus is God? No. So we must jettison that. Do they all agree that there is a God? That depends on the meaning of “God.” Do they all agree on God, if by “God” we mean a Spirit that is in many ways unqualified, from the Buddhists’ Emptiness to the Jewish mystery of the Divine to the Christian Cloud of Unknowing? Yes.

That works as a generalization – what Wilber calls an “orienting generalization” or “sturdy conclusion.” Wilber likewise approaches all the other fields of human knowledge: art to poetry, empiricism to hermeneutics, cognitive science to meditation, evolutionary theory to idealism. In every case, he assembles a series of sturdy and reliable, if not irrefutable, orienting generalizations.

Using this method during the course of our study, we find as a generalization that leading is different from managing even though both processes can be performed by the same person. A manager is a person who performs the specific process of managing and holds a formal title or fills a formal role in the organization. The manager is responsible for the performance and productivity of one or more subordinates in a particular organizational subunit. We often think of managers as advocates for the status quo and stability, while a leader resists the status quo and proposes changes. Leaders are also able to influence others to pursue their goals. Thus, the study of leadership is much broader than the study of management. For example, in his attempts to understand the roles of the manager, Henry Mintzberg (2004) has developed a formulation that analyzes the manager’s job in terms of roles. He based his managerial role classification system on detailed analyses of how managers spend their time. He identified 10 roles that managers fill in their jobs, which can be generalized into three broad categories:

- **Interpersonal roles** – connect managerial behaviors that establish working relationships.
- **Informational roles** – allow the manager to collect and distribute information.
- **Decisional roles** – those behaviors used to set, implement and monitor progress toward goals.

Managers often sequence their roles to build working relationships based on mutual trust and high performance expectations. Managers often get to know their subordinates and become involved with other departments. Networking allows the manager to gather information