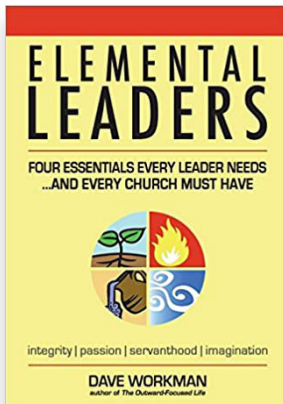


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## Elemental Leaders

### THE NUTSHELL

Partnership Advisors Resources 2016v

After decades of leading in various capacities and observing leaders as a follower, I've come to believe that effective leadership could be boiled down to four basic factors, what I call elemental leadership. For the sake of simplicity and retention, I use the four foundational elements that the Ancient Greeks reduced the world to: Earth, Fire Water and Air.

*Earth/Integrity* There's something solid, rooted and grounded in the elemental leader's character. What's more, they build a similar integrity in the organizations they lead. They are driven by principles and values and a deep desire for praxis in their personal lives, their teams, their organizations and their practices.

*Fire/Passion* This catalytic element fuels inspiration and energy; elemental leaders bring heat to others and situations in order to enable things to combust. Things happen. Every successful leader I've known had a fire in their belly for a mission that ignited in others a sense of empowerment and a longing for accomplishment. That doesn't mean they have a salesperson-type personality or are extreme extroverts. It does mean they have to be able to express that inner-passion for a particular purpose in some contagious way.

*Water/Servanthood* Elemental leaders deeply understand that the organization (or family or team) is not about them because it's more important than oneself. Elemental leaders innately grasp they're part of something bigger than themselves. They regularly fight with and shake

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off any sense of entitlement, giving life rather than expecting it. They are outwardly focused and feel as though they are being poured out. Many leaders with a Water/Servanthood orientation have grown up in the organization.

*Air/Imagination* There's a certain amount of blue sky-ing elemental leaders enjoy with their teams and leaders. They have no problem grilling up sacred cows or questioning organizational methodologies. There's a "what-if" factor that fires their neurons regularly and a certain amount of calculated risk that cultivates organizational "room-to-breathe."

Healthy organizations can be characterized by these same four key traits: Integrity, Passion, Servanthood, and Imagination. While each of these is significant in its own right, and while different organizations may naturally excel at some more than others, all must be present and effectively balanced.

As a leader, you have the responsibility of assessing which elements in your church need attention, but you cannot do that alone. For one, you more-than-likely lean into one or two of them as your primary mode of operating and that's the paradigm by which you view your organization. In other words, you can't help but have blind spots.

*Earth/Integrity.* At its most basic level, the Earth/Integrity element can be assessed by a simple metric: is the mission of the organization being accomplished? Any healthy organization has some way of measuring its success. It may even be by benchmarking and being challenged against itself year over year. Even if accomplishment is measured in a squishier way like influence, there is always a way of measuring that.

Regardless of the tool, the only way an assessment has any value is by the degree of self-awareness the one being assessed has. This is where the value of a team comes into play and a broader view of reality can be determined, particularly if they've learned humility and a lack of defensiveness and protection is modeled for them.

*Fire/Passion.* Is your church (or team, department, or ministry area) lagging in passion? Has a dull acceptance of the status-quo settled in? Is there a growing sense of "organizational boredom," a ho-hum approach to the mission? When was the last time your team sensed the need for a big challenge? Elemental leaders know that periodically their people need to be challenged with something that is beyond their abilities at an individual level.

*Water/Servanthood.* A true servanthood atmosphere has to be modeled, taught and clearly expressed as part of the corporate culture. It will never just happen. We human beings naturally look out for number one as it is part of our fallen nature, and, of course, the leader must assume responsibility for the culture. Culture is often difficult to assess, simply because it's the water we swim in. I'm sure no fish gives a second thought to being in water because it's all it knows. It's so important to get

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an outsider's view of your world. Don't be afraid of using assessments and bringing in coaches and consultants that you trust.

*Air/Imagination.* Organizations have a relatively short shelf life without innovation and, oddly enough, few allot time resources to imagination and creativity. The simple fact is that innovators think differently and as a result, act differently.

First, they have the ability to practice associational thinking. They love connecting seemingly unrelated ideas and difficulties to create new ways of thinking. Innovators never seem to shy away from uncovering other organizations and people who had solved similar problems, often simply asking if someone else had already come up with a solution. Second, they tend to be keen observers. Third, observation leads to the practice of questioning why, as in why we or others do this or that. Fourth, innovators practice networking with a diversity of people. They see their interaction with people of various backgrounds as a way of garnering new understandings. Finally, imaginative leaders experiment. They typically don't want to wait for data; instead, they want to make data! Experimentation allows for the creation of new data points. At an organizational level, how are those five practices being developed in your leaders?

The people you lead and the world your church or ministry has the opportunity to influence and transform deserve the best. No organization can flourish long-term without the four foundational elements: Integrity, Passion, Servanthood, and Imagination. My deepest hope is that you bring out the best and highest capabilities in the people you are privileged to lead. It's all for the Kingdom.