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# Leadership as a model for PhD students

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Recommended minimum time required: 0.5 hours

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# **Introduction**



## 1. What makes a leader? Self-leadership

Many theories exist which tell us about what does and doesn't make a leader, as well as the different types of leadership.

In this training course, we're going to base our definition of a leader as *someone who exerts an influence on others*.

This means that the person not only possesses both wide knowledge and has received solid training, but they also possess skills and abilities that are based on emotional intelligence to exercise such leadership.

Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2010) examined studies that demonstrated in order to lead and be successful in our professional and personal lives, 20% is based on natural talent and the possession of knowledge, while 80% lies in the ability to inspire people and teams, over which a person can exert some form of influence, energy, passion and enthusiasm (thus contributing towards a person's development).

According to these authors, the leader becomes someone who brings the best out of people, by channelling their emotions in a positive direction, regardless of the situation they find themselves in, which has a **resonance**.

An effective leader recognises and manages their emotions effectively which allows them to create a climate of connection while, at the same time, encouraging their team or the people over whom they exercise leadership, which generates resonance.

These authors speak about **resonant leadership** as a type of leadership "that tunes into people's feelings and channels them in an emotionally positive direction".

Alongside the existence of resonant leadership also lies a type of **dissonant leadership**, which is something that mobilises negative emotions creating a climate of irritability, frustration and anger, where they are found to be disconnected from the emotions of the team or people whom they lead.

The way in which a supervisor manages and channels emotions so that a group or a PhD student finishes their work, is going to depend on their soft skills of emotional intelligence. The connection that is made between a supervisor and a PhD student is going to give them a special meaning to their thesis project and to the work which is involved, given it shares variables such as motivation

and satisfaction of a job well done. This enables them to focus, express any difficulties that they encounter or their understanding, to reinforce actions, take decisions and handle states of uncertainty.

*The resonant leader, in this case, the thesis supervisor acts as a model, as a mirror in front of their PhD students, resonating as such with every step that is taken. It is logical that many PhD students feel admiration for the person who is chosen to lead them in their project, looking to them for knowledge and certain skills and abilities that they want to learn and exercise in the future.*

The abilities of a resonant leader include:

- 1) Maintaining sufficient emotional control to achieve professional success.
- 2) Being able to recognise feelings in others, including reasoning and emotion.
- 3) Being empathic.
- 4) Knowing how to instil respect, trust and sincerity.
- 5) Analysing people.
- 6) Identifying how a person should act in a certain situation. Having an awareness of their environment.
- 7) Providing assertive feedback.
- 8) Identifying different points of view in others in an assertive way.
- 9) Knowing how to use resources.

All of these abilities will be worked upon during the following modules.

Dr Richard Boyatzis. *Resonant Leadership*. UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

Fuente: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxjNu6kSpKc>

“Great leaders inspire us to visit places we would never have visited and to do things that we never thought we could do”. Walt Disney

### **Reflection**

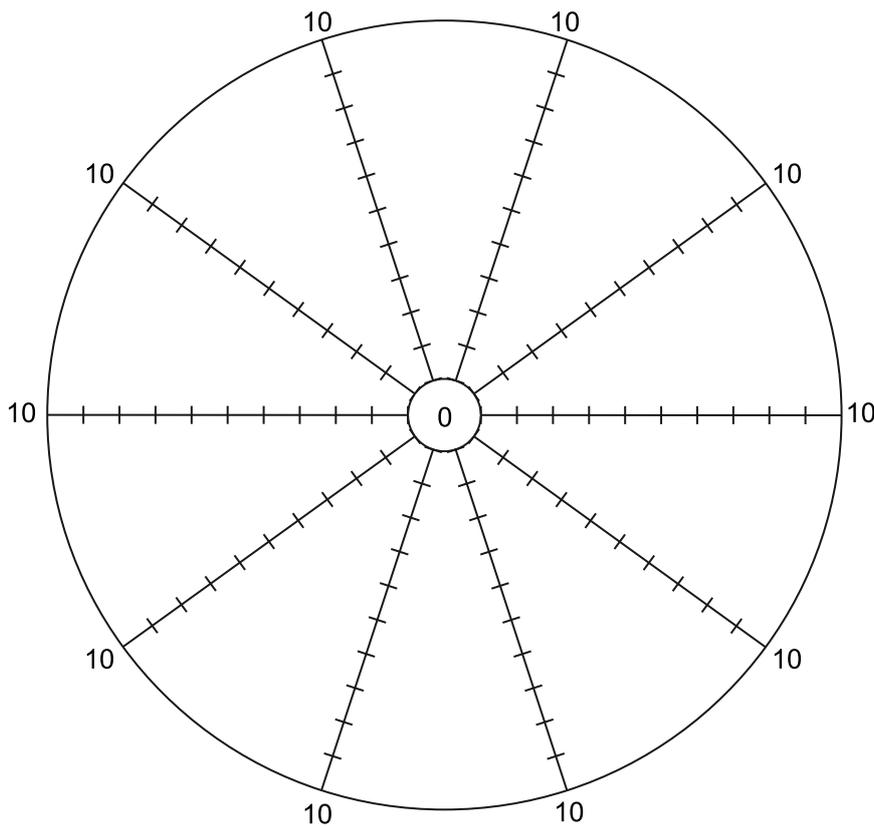
Ruiz (2008) challenges us about a leader's role in his book and proposes: “what we're going to achieve and how we're going to achieve it are two inevitable questions in achieving high goals in leadership. Intention plus behaviour gives way to talent”.

In terms of being a resonant leader and what Ruiz discusses, reflect about the type of leader you want to be in front of a PhD student. What aspects play in your favour? Which can you put into practice more? What can you highlight as an improvement objective?

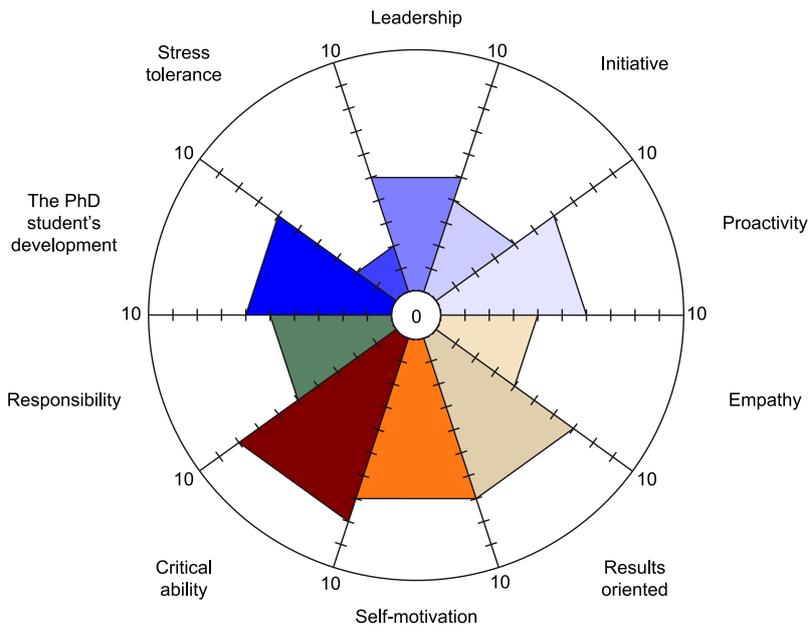
## 2. The wheel of competencies as a supervisor

In the following wheel, this involves:

- 1) In every section, write down a professional competency that you have to develop in your role as a thesis supervisor (the 10 competencies that you believe are the most important).
- 2) As you can see, every line is numbered from 0 (from the centre) to 10 (the most external point). With it, you can mark each section as to how much you are developing each competency (0 means you're not developing it at all; 10 means you're developing it fully).
- 3) Once you've written down the competencies and marked each one with a number, colour each section in so you can identify it in a graphic way.



An example of a wheel of competencies



Source: own creation

The **aim** of this wheel is to become aware, and as a result, see if there is a balance between all your competencies and improve those that have a low score.

### Interpreting and reflecting on your professional wheel:

The sections with a high score are those which must be maintained and which have already been established naturally. Those which have a lower score are the ones that must motivate you to enable you to work on the attention areas.

### 3. My professional values

**Values** are the principles which are formed in behavioural norms or attitudes, which direct you towards personal fulfilment. They can change as a result of crucial moments.

Values are your “axis” and you learn them via interaction with your microsystem (family, school, etc.).

They control and motivate you, and you act in accordance with these values, so you need to be aware of your personal values given that they translate into other areas of your life (professional life, relationships and family life).

For example, when making a decision, you have to relate the different options to your values in order to see which would be most aligned to them.

If a person’s values do not align with those of their partner, the institution or business where they work or their friends, this causes demotivation. As Olivé (2010) states: “The whole universe of motivation and demotivation can be understood from the concept of whether someone is near or far from experiencing their own personal values”.

When you distance yourself from your values, **countervalues** materialise that are opposed to personal growth (hedonism, manipulation, infidelity, irresponsibility, for example).

To continue, we are going to work with the following **list of values**:

Relationship of values			
Acceptance	Awareness	Balance	Perseverance
Welcomed	Consistency	Spirituality	Power
Adaptability	Creativity	Stability	Pragmatism
Appreciation	Control	Status	Prestige
Happiness	Cooperation	Ethics	Protection
Friendship	Growth	Excellence	Reasoning
Love	Curiosity	Family	Reality
Opening	Giving	Happiness	Realisation
Support	Decision	Loyalty	Reinvention
Continuous learning	Dedication	Flexibility	Relaxation

Relationship of values			
Assertiveness	Professional development	Generosity	Religion
Daring	Personal development	Honesty	Revitalisation
Lacking effort	Dialogue	Mood	Respect
Austerity	Dynamism	Humility	Responsibility
Authenticity	Control	Idealism	Wisdom-Know-how
Self-affirmation	Money	Equality	Health
Self-control	Discipline	Initiative	Satisfaction
Self-esteem	Distinction	Innovation	Clarity
Autonomy	Ecology	Integration	Meaning of life
Help	Economy	Integrity	Being
Beauty	Impartiality	Intelligence	Service
Beneficial	Effectiveness	Intuition	Sincerity
Wellbeing	Efficiency	Research	Sobriety
Kindness	Empathy	Justice	Sociability
Calm	Energy	Loyalty	Solidarity
Collaboration		Leadership	Tolerance
Convenience		Modesty	Usefulness
Sharing		Motivation	Courage
Compassion		Objectivity	Value
Competence		Opportunity	Consistency
Commitment		Optimism	Vitality
Communication		Order	Vocation
Connection		Patience	Will
Trust	Dedication	Passion	
Knowledge	Enthusiasm	Forgiveness	

### Activity

Once you've read the list of values:

- Choose 10 values in a hierarchical order i.e. from the 10 that you choose, the first will be the most important value chosen and the tenth will be the least important.
- Now, from these 10 chosen values, write down the corresponding countervalues.
- From these 10 values and countervalues, pick 5.
- From these 5, pick 3.

This polarity allows you to be clear about the values that rule or don't rule your behaviour and the way that you act at the moment. The selected values will drive you with inner strength when facing moments of adversity.

To think about yourself as a thesis supervisor, ask yourself the following questions based on the first 5 values chosen:

- a) Why is this value important to me?
- b) How does this value affect my professional life?
- c) What value do I need to explore my role further?
- d) Which value is unnecessary from those chosen?
- e) How should I reorder my values to achieve my improvement objectives?

## 4. Self-sabotage when faced with a thesis

Self-sabotage is a process, an act or an unconscious behaviour that immobilises you in your personal and/or professional duties.

You can sense you are self-sabotaging when:

### 1) You don't finish tasks and you justify yourself

Work involves complications and incomplete plans, the search for resources, difficulties in finding funding, the PhD students drafting may not be good quality thus making revision of the work more complicated, the PhD student's progression may be lacking which has repercussions on their work, needing time to read, think and formulate ideas despite having no available time to do it, etc. Uncertainty could be a reason.

### 2) You procrastinate

The term **procrastination** comes from the Latin “pro” (ahead of) and “crastinus” (tomorrow). According to a researcher from the University of Calgary, Steel (2012), “the word procrastination not only refers to postponing something, but also to postponing it irrationally i.e. when we postpone tasks voluntarily despite knowing that the delay will hamper us”.

When we procrastinate about a specific task, we become productive in other tasks at that moment in time, which are not important. For that reason, procrastination works as a strategy, and we keep it up as it diminishes the feeling of “guilt” and anxiety for avoiding what we have ahead of us.

It may possibly be caused by insecurity in making decisions regarding the project, where there is a “gap” between the current situation and the ideal one, by having to tackle bureaucratic processes. According to the cited author, there is an excessive amount of perfectionism behind procrastination.

### 3) Due to a high degree of rigour, exactitude and perfectionism, you never end up approving work

A perfectionist is someone who **seeks flaws**, and only looks for perfect results. They usually think in polar terms (black or white, acceptable or unacceptable). They are people who fight hard with themselves. Self-demanding people are usually inflexible.

#### Recommended reading

P. Steel (2012). *Procrastination* (pp. 17-331; 180-181; 200-203). Barcelona: Random House Mondadori.

The alternative to highly self-demanding people and perfectionism is **optimism**.

An optimist person is more flexible in that they don't expect the final result to be perfect as they are focussed on the mini-successes of the process involved in achieving their objective. They search for alternatives and have a constructive approach when faced with their mistakes. They are practical and possess positive emotional balance.

Self-sabotage can be avoided and on the basis of this we can:

- Clarify work objectives: by making a list of mini objectives to be achieved during a certain short period of time and by listing the different actions that need to be carried out.
- Plan time. Keep track of your time. (Module 7).
- Manage your energy: when you feel tired, it is easier to avoid doing something. Follow a balanced diet and do exercise.
- Carry out the most complicated task first which requires the greatest focus.
- Find out the possible obstacles together with a list of possible solutions to enable you to tackle them.
- Learn to say no when faced with commitments that involve delaying you applying yourself to the review of a project.
- Avoid distractions.
- Turn any task involved in the thesis project that may be repetitive and boring into a routine or a habit.
- Create a reward system for goals achieved.
- Make the requirements of the project flexible.

Do or do not. There is no try. *Star Wars*. Lucas Film Ltd.

Source: <https://youtu.be/Sxj4Gyk7UAc>

#### Reflection

When I self-sabotage:

- What limiting dialogue do I have with myself?
- How do I feel?
- How do I behave in a way that stops me from moving forward in the achievement of each goal?
- What solutions can I put in place to stop this situation?

## 5. The hero/heroine when faced with a thesis

A thesis supervisor promotes learning about knowledge and abilities to the PhD student. As a result, they expect you to become their guide and “guru” when entering into the world of research, as someone who motivates them to acquire the necessary skills, where you supervise the quality of their work and take an active role, and know how to direct them when they face difficulties.

A supervisor has to feel the “call to adventure” ahead of every project which is unique and involves a new challenge, given that every project will experience its own difficulties and has its own goals to be achieved, and the learning process for the PhD student is not always easy which has repercussions on the thesis project.

For that reason, you have to discover and reinforce those behaviours and strong points, which help you to lead a project when faced with difficulties as a thesis supervisor. These would be, for example, motivation, determination, perseverance, mastery of subject matter, energy and optimism.

### Reflection

In your role as hero/heroine when faced with a PhD student's project:

- What makes you feel energised?
- What do you value most about yourself as a supervisor?
- What do you think about?
- How do you feel?
- How do you behave?
- What is it that attracted you to your role?
- How do you want to carry on progressing in order to get the best out of yourself?
- Describe your internal hero/heroine.

## 6. The PhD project's SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis, an acronym for the concepts of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, is an analysis tool for current situations that lead towards decisions that need to be made and, in turn, with the creation of a strategic plan.

It allows internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors related to your surroundings (opportunities and threats) to be identified, which helps you to draw conclusions based on how you can tackle changes in the context based on the internal factors.

### Matrix features applied to a thesis:

#### 1) Internal analysis:

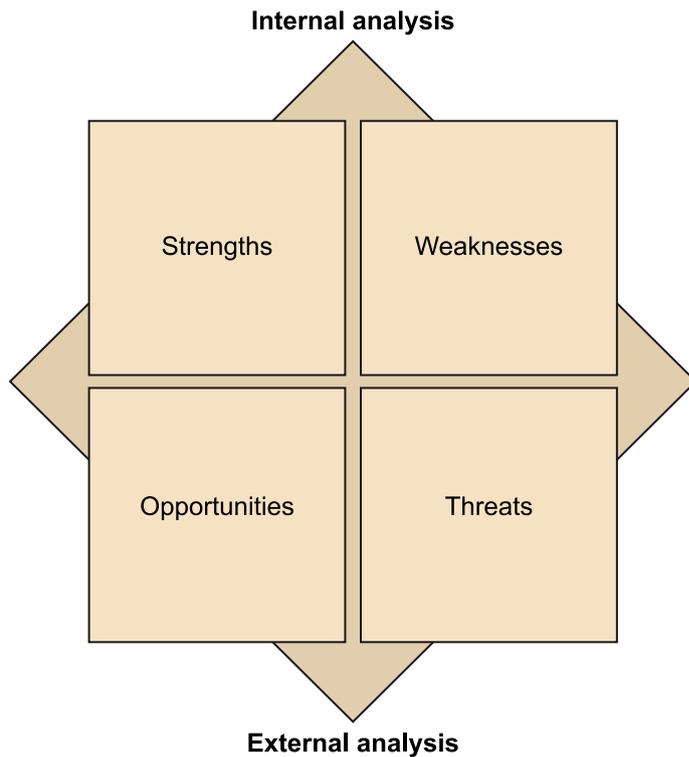
**a) Strengths:** Strong points. These are the positive aspects, activities, and supportive resources that give rise to a piece of quality work.

**b) Weaknesses:** Points to improve. These are aspects which limit work quality, those which are lacking or those which stop the progression of thesis preparation. They need to be overcome.

#### 2) External analysis:

**c) Opportunities:** These are factors which provide a positive or favourable advantage when applied in a thesis project environment.

**d) Threats:** These would be any negative situation caused by the environment or external factors which may harm, limit or prohibit a PhD thesis from moving forward.



For example:

- 1) **Strengths:** Sufficient use of concepts, extensive list of references.
- 2) **Weaknesses:** Appropriate data analysis not included.
- 3) **Opportunities:** Application in future research.
- 4) **Threats:** The research grant stops, little time left to finish the project.

Based on the creation and analysis of the four matrix features with multiple inputs in each one, conclusions need to be drawn about the current work situation and the need to launch a plan of action based on strategies.

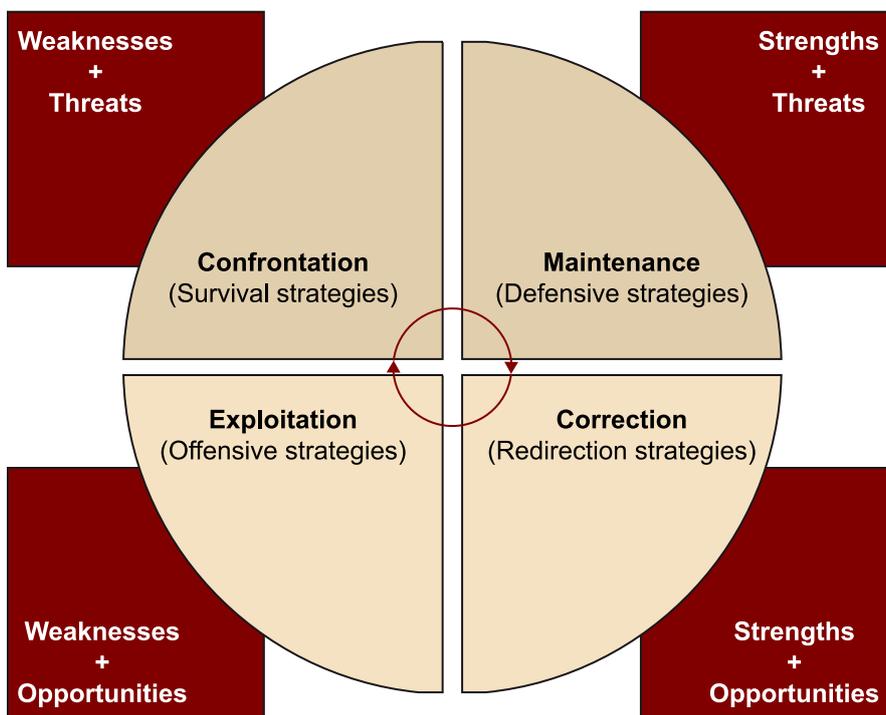
## 7. General action plan based on each SWOT analysis

Prior to creating an action plan, you can work on the CAME analysis (that is established from information extracted from the SWOT analysis) in order to define the action plan objectives to be carried out with the thesis.

The CAME analysis consists of:

- **Correcting** the weaknesses: what can be done to improve the weak points?
- **Adapting** to the threats: how will you tackle them and with what strategies?
- **Maintaining** the strengths: to maintain focus and work efforts.
- **Exploring** the opportunities: by placing value on the possibilities.

Based on this analysis, we obtain the following matrix:



Based on the creation of distinct strategies, you can create an action plan.

The action plan consists of a list of systematic actions which are carried out in order to achieve expected outcomes.

### The action plan must contain:

- Specific aims or micro goals.
- Actions to achieve aims must be progressive and sequential.
- Limitations and unforeseen circumstances that you might encounter.
- Resources that are available to you: which resources and people.
- Timing.
- Follow-up.

Example of an Action Plan template

Aim	Progress indicator	Start date	Micro-goal 1	Micro-goal 2	Target date	Follow-up	Comments

In module 7, the subject of action plans based on aims will be addressed more comprehensively.

#### Recommended reading

L. Soldevila (2014). *Éxito se escribe con A. Técnicas de consultoría aplicadas al rendimiento de personas*. Barcelona: Profit Editorial.