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# The Mind Map of Blue Ocean Leadership



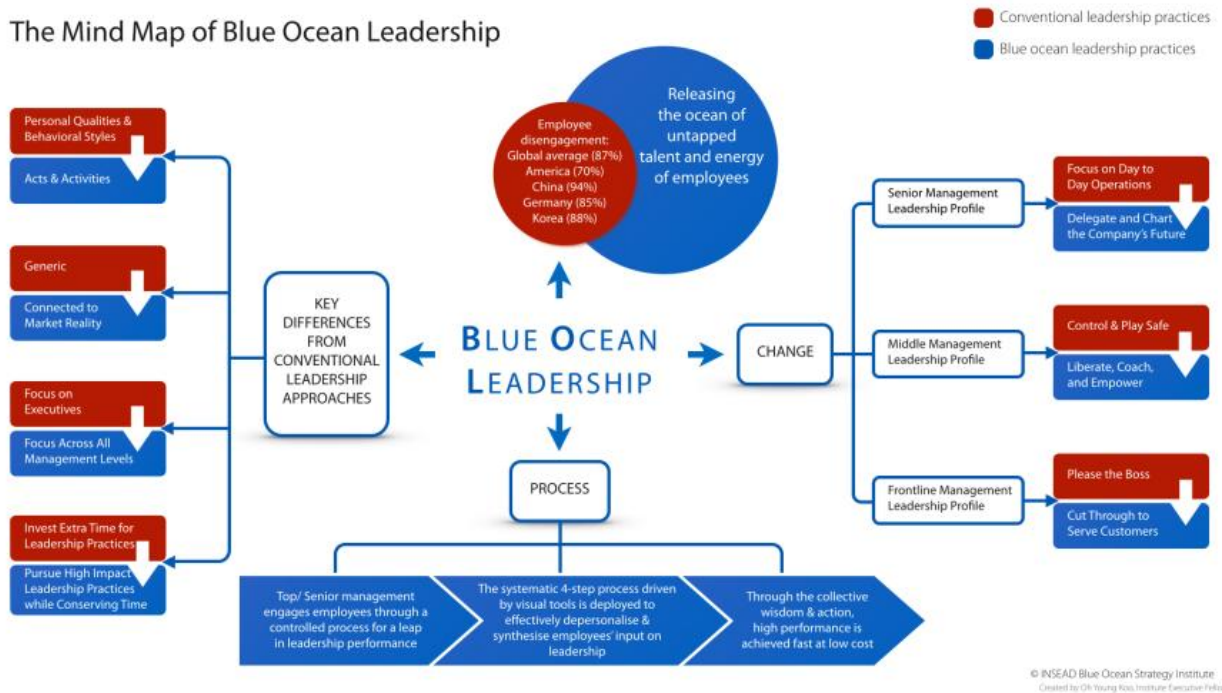
By W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, INSEAD

**Releasing the ocean of untapped talent and energy of employees is something few companies can afford not to do. Visualising blue ocean leadership in comparison to conventional leadership practices will help you with implementation.**

As we describe in our recent series of articles on INSEAD Knowledge, blue ocean leadership can help organisations realise oceans of employee potential and stop leaders from wasting their time. The step-by-step process we've outlined gives organisations and leaders a clear roadmap to approach the implementation of blue ocean leadership.

We're glad to share this Mind Map, which will help you to visualise the whole process.

## The Mind Map of Blue Ocean Leadership



To explain the map, it is important to start at the top, realising that there is a wide gulf in organisations between the potential and realised talent within. According to Gallup’s State of the Global Workplace report, the majority of employees in the countries surveyed around the world are disengaged, merely doing what it takes to get by, or actively disengaged and acting out their discontent in unproductive ways. These disengaged employees are effectively the noncustomers of leadership.

### Key differences

While leaders don’t intentionally leave untapped talent and employee potential on the table, their understanding of this issue is key to turning the situation around. To do that, it’s important that leaders and HR directors start by understanding the principles underlying blue ocean leadership. These are: that leadership should be connected to market realities; be focused on acts and activities that have a direct and measurable impact on performance; be distributed across the organisation; and, to be achievable, should focus as much on what leaders should eliminate and reduce in what they do as on what acts and activities they should raise and create to achieve a step change in leadership strength. Without eliminating and reducing to create room on leaders’ plates, few have the time to up their game even if they wanted to (the left of the diagram).

As we illustrate, this is different from conventional leadership approaches (red oceans). We have observed that leadership approaches used in firms are often focused on personal qualities and behavioral styles that are hard to change and are detached from what firms stand for in the eyes of customers and from the market results employees are expected to achieve. Using blue ocean leadership to connect to the market, the people who face market realities every day are asked for their direct input on the acts and activities of their leaders, and what they need from their leaders to effectively serve customers.

## Starting the process

Blue ocean leadership is based on a **four-step process**. Before making changes in leadership, it is important for the organisation to understand where leadership stands today and where it is falling short. This is done by creating the “As-Is Leadership Canvas”, which creates a company-wide conversation on what actions actually absorb leaders’ time at each level. From there, organisations should:

- **Apply the blue ocean leadership grid** to determine which activities should be eliminated, reduced, raised or created.
- **Develop alternative “To-Be Leadership Profiles”**
- **Present To-Be Leadership Canvases at a “Leadership Fair”**
- **Select “To-Be Leadership Profiles”**

The bottom of the diagram provides a high level understanding of how the four-step process is executed, who drives the process, and how it achieves high performance fast and at low cost while gaining employees’ commitment for change.

## Making the change

The development of To-Be Leadership Profiles will have given organisations the ability to see the changes needed. Once the leadership reality is realised, a case for change can be made (right side of the diagram).

Operating on the blue ocean leadership foundation, the leadership actions of frontline and middle managers will be reset, giving senior leaders the ability to delegate more and spend more time charting the company’s future rather than focusing on day-to-day operations.

It will also liberate, coach and empower middle management, making them less controlling and nervous of acting alone. The frontline managers will spend less time trying to please the boss and more time serving customers.

While leadership is by no means an exact science, rethinking the acts and activities of senior managers can free them from forms, reporting and dealing with day-to-day operational issues to focus on strategy and communication. With more empowerment, frontline managers can make decisions and spend less time reporting upwards on all aspects of the day-to-day. Together, this can unlock high performance at the top and unleash an ocean of unrealised talent and energy on the front lines.

### Find article at

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/leadership-organisations/mind-map-blue-ocean-leadership>

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### About the author(s)

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### About the series

#### Blue Ocean Strategy

Developed by INSEAD Professors of Strategy W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, Blue Ocean Strategy provides theoretical and scientific contributions to the fields of strategy and management that companies, governments and non-profit organisations can use to improve their practice and performance.

This series showcases the two professors' thought leadership amid their work as Co-Directors of the [INSEAD Blue Ocean Strategy Institute](#). They are also the authors of the New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller [Blue Ocean Shift - Beyond Competing](#), the international bestseller Blue Ocean Strategy and [Beyond Disruption: Innovate and Achieve Growth Without Displacing Industries, Companies, or Jobs](#).