



Sketching Leadership with Your Kallion Leadership Sketchbook

A Short Guide

Sketching leadership is a way of taking ownership of your leadership development by thinking more deeply about problems of leadership, creating a clearer and more precise vocabulary for yourself, and visualizing what your own leadership would look like once it has been informed by your sketch. Your sketches can also serve as a record and a reminder of your leadership journey. A sketchbook is thus a kind of amulet you carry with you, with the power to unlock your potential at any right moment. Below you will find a process for getting the most out of your Kallion Leadership Sketchbook.

Two Paths, Same Journey

There are two easy paths you may go down to start your sketching journey, depending on your immediate interests and comfort level. The first is to start paying attention to the sketching techniques of others. Watch a film about someone in a leadership role and ask yourself how the director is choosing to talk about their subject. Are they interested in how this person looks, dresses, and behaves? Are they more focused on the person's psychology or the moral and intellectual problems they face? Read a biography of a leader who interests you and study the biographer's sketching techniques: how much emphasis do they place on the subject's early life and education, their lineage, or their signature accomplishments? Does the biographer admit their own subjective impressions of how the subject makes them feel (inspired, disappointed, sympathetic)? Does the biographer offer evaluative judgments as to when and where the subject is most capable of meeting the needs of others? You may find it helpful to go through this process with a small group of friends or colleagues, in order to build an even larger and more nuanced understanding of what someone might do to sketch leadership.

Now that you have familiarized yourself with some of the sketching techniques of others, think of someone's leadership that you are intimately familiar with and try to sketch that person in language that seems natural to you. This could be a relative, a coach, a boss, a teacher, or anyone you know who has shown you meaningful ways of meeting the needs of others. As you sketch, you can think of yourself as working with different "palettes":

- the sensorial palette: How does your subject look, sound, dress, and move?
- the narrative palette: What is your subject's story? What have been your subject's major accomplishments? What was their education, formal and informal? What were their defining experiences?
- the psychological palette: What are the defining character and personality traits of your subject? Do they have a familiar personality *type*?
- the comparative palette: Who or what is your subject *like*? Here you could consider comparisons to other people, other kinds of leader (director, architect, physician, gardener), animals, and even physical objects (a rock, a pillar, a ray of hope). Try to unlock your inner-poet!
- the subjective palette: How does your subject make you feel? What is your relationship to your subject and how does that affect your impression? Do you identify with your subject?
- the evaluative palette: What human needs is your subject good at meeting? What limitations do they face?

Your sketch may be as long or short as you like. It might be done in prose, poetry, or an imagined dialogue--even a skit or a play. You may find it helpful to share your sketch with others, to get their impressions and think more carefully about your own techniques.

The second path to begin a sketching journey is very similar to the first; but rather than begin with the techniques of others, you may reflect on some particular and immediate problems of leadership you are interested in. What are your impressions of your own leadership right now? What are some needs in your own organizations that you could be better addressing? How do you need to grow to meet them? Have you received any feedback from a colleague or coworker that suggests room for improvement? With these reflections in mind you can be more deliberate about the leadership sketchers you engage with to develop your own techniques.

Reflection and Action

I happened to undertake the sketching of the lives on account of others, but I am continuing and enjoying it now for my own sake too, attempting to use historical inquiry like a mirror in some way or another to arrange my life and make it resemble the virtues of those people...By spending my time in historical inquiry and by my habit of sketching, since I welcome the memory of the best and most worthy characters in my soul always, I have prepared myself, if ever my associations by necessity toss something foul or wrong or disgraceful at me, to drive it away and reject it, and instead gently and calmly to turn my attention

away towards the most beautiful of examples. [Plutarch of Chaeronea (46-120CE), *Life of Timoleon* 1.1, 5; translation by Mallory Monaco Caterine]

Whether you begin with path one or path two, you will end up in the same place, with a leadership sketch that is all your own, with your ideas, your language, and your perspectives. Here is where the really meaningful leadership development begins. Now, you will challenge yourself to reflect on how this sketch might help you become a better leader. You can ask yourself how your sketch has enhanced your knowledge or **appreciation** of leadership. You might want to capture your appreciation by giving your sketch a title or giving yourself a one-sentence motto, to help you remember to apply the lessons of your sketch whenever the right time arises. You may also want to strive for some more direct and immediate development. You may notice certain leadership **behaviors** that you can practice more frequently and better. Maybe you sketched someone who regularly calls attention to problems facing their community. Maybe they do this in a remarkably clear, forceful, timely, and tactful way. Where in your own life could you be showing this behavior more frequently and better? Make a note of it in your reflection. In addition to your behavior, you can use your sketch to make **decisions** and develop new **relationships**. Do you need to change jobs or pursue a new course of study to make the most of your leadership potential? Are you currently working with the kinds of people who work best together? What can you be doing to strengthen the collaboration? Finally, you may use your sketch to reflect on the **reputation** of your subject and how that reputation came to be. What is your own reputation for leadership? What opportunities do you have to improve it? Do you need to announce your intention to cultivate new behaviors to your team? Do you need to acknowledge past deficiencies? Perhaps it is enough to share with your community the appreciation of leadership you have formed from your sketch.

As you develop in your practice of sketching, you will notice ways in which these questions inform all stages of the process. Ultimately, you will discover the practices, occasions, and frequency of sketching that will be best for you. Periodically you should be able to refer back to sketches that contributed to your appreciation, behavior, decisions, relationships, and reputation for leadership (BARRD), in pursuit of your mission to make creative, benevolent, and lasting improvements to our common condition.

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April 13, 2020

Resources

Listen to [The Art of Leadership](#) podcast and sketch the leaders interviewed.