

## Leading in the Complex Social Age

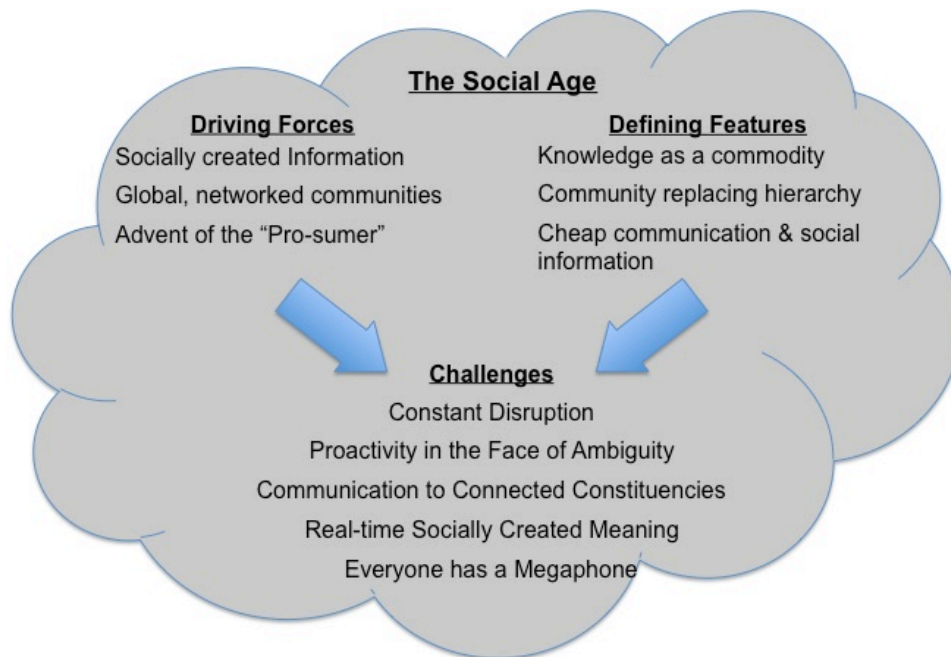
By Frank Guglielmo, Ph.D.

The Pope, the President of the U.S., you, all of your employees and every teenager you meet at Starbucks have one thing in common – access to the same tools to speak to the world. If you are over 35 you can recall a world where every fact and every purchase was further than a click away; you can remember a world that came together to be told things by leaders and news reporters. That world is gone. Welcome to the Social Age where anyone can speak to everyone at anytime. We now live in a world of global conversation – multi-way communication and instant access to everyone’s views.

The Social Age is characterized by a set of defining features and driving forces that are creating a new reality. This is an age where knowledge is a commodity and information –i.e., knowledge plus a point of view - is socially created through continual multi-way conversations. These conversations happen across global, networked communities where interests and passions determine who is involved. And it all occurs through communication channels that are immediate, ubiquitous and cheap.

This sense of community has become more than just a feeling among participants in a global conversation. Increasingly *community* is becoming the underlying model for successful businesses and organizations enabling them to connect with a new type of constituent – the *prosumer*. Prosumers are customers who are no longer content with the mere purchasing of goods and services. They fully expect to participate in the creation of the products they purchase. They even expect to engage the companies they buy from in conversations regarding social issues. When Google, for example, wanted to launch its new Glass product it began by offering a beta version of Glass to a select few *prosumers* who paid high prices to be among those who would provide early direction and guidance to Google on the final product.

The Social Age also brings new challenges for leaders. Discontinuity, ambiguity, and complexity have become commonplace. The digital communications that bind us together create social energy that can be harnessed either to drive a leader’s agenda or can spiral independently to forge new forces with which a leader needs to contend. Amidst all of these challenges leaders need to be adroit in communicating in a world where everyone has a megaphone.



As the Social Age shifts the structure of companies from hierarchies to communities we need to rethink the way we approach leadership. Succeeding in the world of hierarchical organizations required a leader who was a *general*. Today, succeeding in a world of connected networks requires a leader who is a *mayor*.

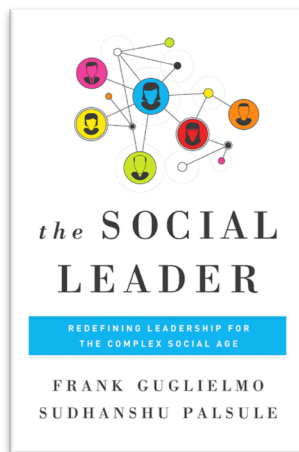
How does a leader act like a mayor? There is no one set of behaviors, actions or conversations for a leader to have, no one model of proper behavior to which a leader should aspire. Leading like a mayor, being a Social Leader, requires one to focus on five core areas, what we call the Tenets of Social Leadership. They are:

- **Mindfulness:** the capability to maintain and act on four types of awareness: *Temporal awareness, Situational awareness, Peripheral awareness, Self-awareness*
- **Proactivity:** the belief that one is in control of one's own actions and seeing oneself as able to influence events rather than being dragged along by them
- **Authenticity:** engendering in others a belief in your own credibility; the ability to build personal trust in a relationship and positively confront disagreement and competing points of view
- **Openness:** the capacity to act, thrive, and learn from situations that are complex, novel, and ambiguous
- **Social scalability:** fluidly communicating separately and jointly to: one individual, a small group and the entire organization

There is no one right way to succeed in these five areas. Each leader must find his or her own authentic approach to each of these tenets. However, each of these tenets is crucial to address the challenges of the Social Age: mindfulness to address discontinuity, proactivity to manage ambiguity, authenticity to address interconnected constituencies, openness to handle complexity and the notion of social scalability in communications to address the reality that in the Social Age anyone can speak to everyone.

Our new book, *The Social Leader: Redefining Leadership for the Complex Social Age*, looks at the transition that the world has made to the Social Age, the leadership challenges this new age creates and the how a leader can become a Social Leader. Since the dawn of the Social Age we have been thrust into a new world. We have all immigrated to this world from the one in which we first learned to lead – a place without social media or the expectation that everyone could share a point of view with everyone else on any topic they chose. And like all immigrants before us, we need to adopt our ways if we are to thrive as leaders in this new Social Age.

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**The Social Leader: Redefining Leadership for the Complex Social Age** by Frank Guglielmo and Sudhanshu Palsule will be available in bookstores in September and is available for pre-order now on Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Bulk orders are available through the publisher, Bibliomotion Books + Media