

LEADERSHIP

Inspirational Leadership *in* Action

B. Kim Barnes

THE INFLUENCE GURU

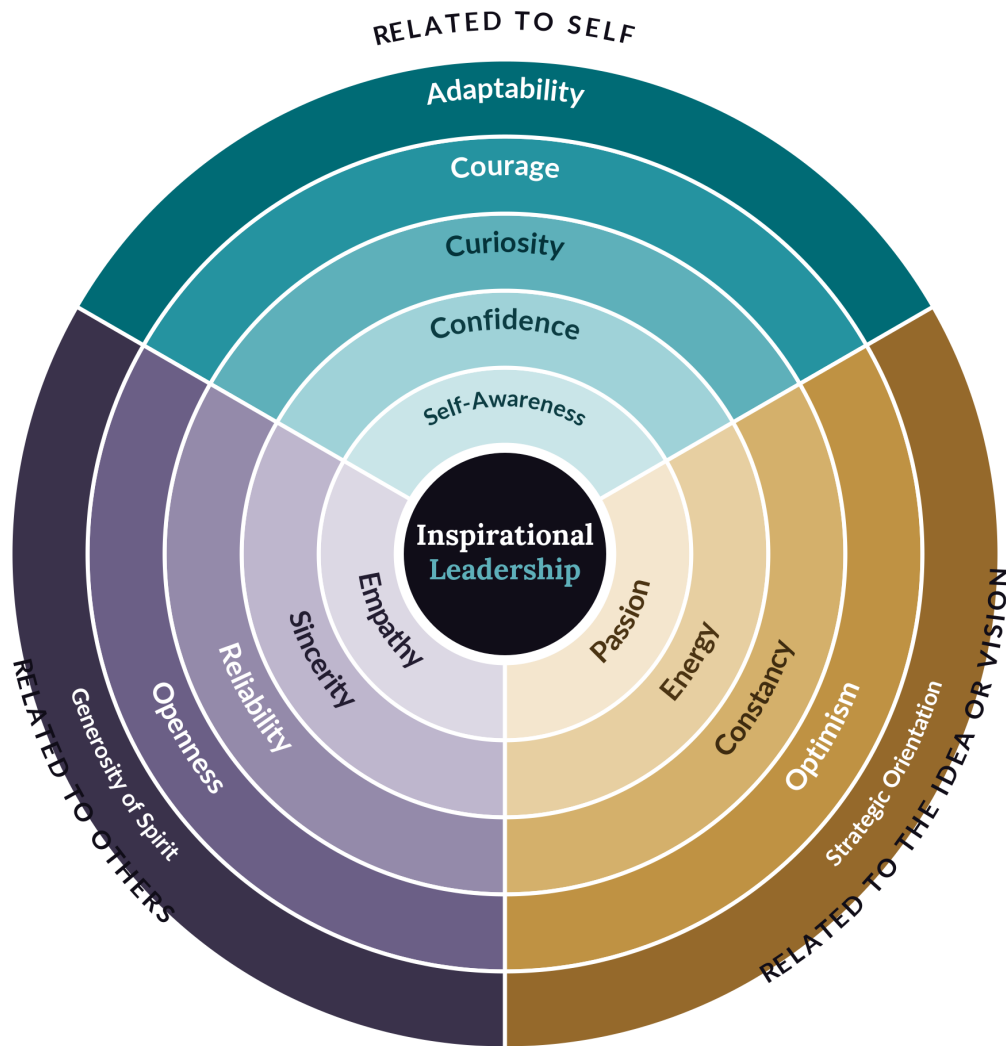
The characteristics of inspirational leaders are not exotic. They are practiced — and they show up most clearly when the moment demands them.

As I watch, spellbound, the drama unfolding in Ukraine, I see everything I've ever learned or taught about inspirational leadership being demonstrated on the streets of Kiev. Volodymyr Zelensky, comedian turned political leader, has manifested every aspect of the model¹ shown — and in doing so, has influenced world leaders to take unprecedented actions to support him and his people. In recent years, we have seen political leaders provide poor examples — showing a lack of courage, self-awareness, constancy, empathy, and generosity of spirit, among other qualities. It's hard to know the outcome of this situation, but he has provided us with an inspiring example of how to lead under the most challenging of circumstances.

Inspirational leadership like that shown by Zelensky can, as we have seen in the followers of that leader, turn fear into determination, weakness into strength, confusion into steadfast commitment. We needed this example to show us what's possible. I am grateful and in awe.

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In studying the characteristics of especially inspirational leaders some years ago, I found that they can be sorted into three categories: characteristics related to the self, to others, and to the idea or vision. Not all inspirational leaders manifest all these characteristics, nor do they manifest any of them all the time — but they are attuned to what the moment calls for and are capable of demonstrating them when they are most needed.



THE INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL – THREE DOMAINS, FIFTEEN CHARACTERISTICS

The three core characteristics are self-awareness, empathy for those they lead, and a genuine passion for the idea or vision they are carrying forward. Without these, the other characteristics or qualities are less focused and thus less powerful. Watching Zelensky's speeches and seeing him in action is a lesson in how all of these characteristics can be used to align and inspire others and move them toward achieving extraordinary results.

When you find the moment, or the moment finds you, as it has for President Zelensky, which of these characteristics will you be able to demonstrate? Conscious practice and reflection as well as skill development will prepare you to surprise yourself and inspire others when events demand this of you as a leader.

¹ From *Inspirational Leadership*, a program originally developed by B. Kim Barnes for Barnes & Conti Associates, Inc.

B. Kim Barnes

Founder of **The Influence Guru**, Kim Barnes is a coach, facilitator, and author with more than forty years of experience in leadership, influence, and organization development. She was a founder and, for many years, CEO of Barnes & Conti Associates, and developed or co-developed programs including *Exercising Influence*, *Inspirational Leadership*, *Intelligent Risk-Taking*, *Consulting on the Inside*, and *Managing Innovation*. She is the author of six books, including *Exercising Influence* (Wiley) and *Building Better Ideas* (Berrett-Koehler). She works with enterprise companies, government agencies, small businesses, and individuals from the San Francisco Bay Area.

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