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## Reflections: A mandate for distributed leadership

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*This holiday season The Bee's editorial board asked local residents this question, "What is the most important lesson that Sacramento or the region should take from 2007, and how can it be applied next year?"*

The following is from Susan Frazier, CEO and managing partner of the regional nonprofit Valley Vision:

It has always been there, but 2007, more than any other year, surfaced this simple but powerful truth: Leadership in the Sacramento region does not require a hero.

During my tenure at Valley Vision, the lament has been long and loud: "Where is that one strong person? We need someone to take the helm, clear the way." That plea ignores award-winning regional collaborations and enviable connections among leaders from all sectors.

The hierarchical model of leadership is crumbling as cities and regions discover the innate power of building coalitions and creating solutions that work for most. As a wider diversity of citizens escalate their participation in civic dialogue, a new way of leading becomes obligatory if initiatives for change and improvement are to be sustainable. This is democracy at its best – something to celebrate as a gift in our society.

In this region, we are blessed with many engaged and informed citizens and leaders. This creates a mandate for distributed leadership – for influential people to show up as the need arises. Not the same person or group for every task, but the right people for each new situation. This kind of leadership is nimble, responsive and effective.

Wonderful examples of this new way of thinking have matured and will guide the way in 2008 and beyond. For me, the quintessential moment came as the champions for an initiative on making our region a hub for clean energy gathered last month to decide the path forward. This project has enjoyed a successful start-up phase but needs long-term leadership. As savvy leaders in this core group considered options, they talked just a bit about the need for a "super person." But that conversation quickly died. Instead, as each team member looked around the room, they knew that together, arms linked, they were more than enough to make this initiative work. They are, in fact, heroic.

I, for one, think this bodes very well for our collective future, and I salute all of our region's leaders as they choose to step up when their turn comes around.

Go to: [Sacbee / Back to story](#)

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