

Leadership

Leadership is a choice we make, not a place we sit. It is a decision we make to influence the thinking, behaviour and development of others. To accomplish this we need to develop a sincere interest in people, a commitment to delivering outcomes, and a mindset of continual renewal of our own thinking and knowledge. Force and directive behaviour will not lead to long-term commitment from your followers, sustainable change or optimal solutions.

Leaders don't empower their people, *empowerment* is a given; they inspire them. Leaders create conditions that foster openness, trust and release energy by strengthening the cultural bonds between people and respecting them as members of a cohesive social system. This is based in two way relationships and personality; you cannot be a leader without followers!

Effective leadership is not some technical profession taught in a University, it is not a science or even an applied science (although sometimes the application of science helps). M.B.A. degrees are not qualifications for either leadership, or management; they are technical training for specialised jobs, such as marketing research and financial analysis. Leadership is an evolving practice; a craft learned by emulating others and through mentoring¹, that changes as your personality evolves and the relationships with your followers evolve.

Everyone in a leadership role has to be open, honest and transparent, and be able to communicate with confidence², style and passion to inspire people³; because if you don't, you are not going to be leading for very long. However, excellent communication skills⁴ are not sufficient in themselves; unlike celebrities, successful leaders need substance and content as well as style.

Greek philosopher Aristotle saw leadership as the merging of three key elements⁵:

- **Ethos:** our moral character and credibility, which instils in people a sense of trust and confidence in the message we are delivering⁶.
- **Pathos:** our ability to put the listeners in the right frame of mind, so that they are capable of hearing us.
- **Logos:** the reasoning or logic we develop and the action-oriented words we use in convincing others.

Good leaders combine these elements and enable the free flow of relevant information to build a pool of shared meaning and mutual purpose and respect. They use their skills to create a common purpose within the team or organisation: the transforms *'me'* into *'we'*.

Paradoxically, great leaders in business are not focused on beating their competition. What they focus on is how to make their own organisation better at achieving their goals and be more responsive to stakeholder requirements, particularly clients and customers. They balance strength of purpose with humility and a willingness to promote the success of others in the organisation. Humility doesn't correlate with self doubt or weakness. Humility *"is not a question of thinking less of yourself, it's a question of thinking of yourself less"* and consequently allowing room for others to help you succeed.

¹ For more on **Mentoring** see: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Training-PM%20Coach.html>

² For more on **communication theory** see:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1066_Communcation_Theory.pdf

³ For more on **Motivation** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1048_Motivation.pdf

⁴ For **Communication** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PMP_Sup/PMP_Mod10_Communication.html

⁵ For more see **Heart of Influence** by Jürgen Oschadleus: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Books.html#influence>

⁶ For more on **ethics** see WP1001: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1001_Ethics.pdf

Leadership is not without risk. It means being willing to get out in front; being 'ahead of the curve'. It means defining the issues on your terms and setting your own agenda, not having it set by others. There are many different aspects and styles of leadership, some are discussed below.

The 3 Ls - Listen, learn, and then lead

Importance of Listening

Listening is an acquired art. It is fact-finding and intelligence-gathering from clients, customers, stakeholders, and the employees who are on the front lines of the marketplace. The leader who will not take the time to listen has effectively closed his mind as well as his ears⁷.

Always Learning

Leaders are always learning. They are on high alert for new ideas and insights; they are keenly interested in the changing world around them. Great leaders are lifelong learners, typically voracious readers with insatiable curiosity.

From listening and learning comes the foundation from which to lead. Real leadership is about being authentic, which is a trait that endures. Leadership is also about compassion and the genuine development of the people you are leading. Leadership is never about the one who leads; it is always about the team and the organization. Leadership is about helping people feel sufficient common purpose so that they are able to achieve extraordinary things. Leadership is stewardship; as a steward the leader recognises and articulates the shared journey to create a legacy based on vision, mission, and values. Leadership is much less about the leader, and much more about the followers and the mission.

One simple way to become a more effective leader is to make sure you recognize and challenge each of your team members every week. This involves speaking to each person by name three times a week to recognise something they have done and one a week challenging them to do something better.

The Servant Leader

Project managers are in the perfect position to act as servant leaders. The servant leader is someone who recognises that they are a servant first and focuses on the development of their team members and building a sense of community among the team. The emphasis is on the leader as someone who is there primarily to help the team overcome obstacles (and there are always obstacles that the team will require assistance in overcoming).

The servant leader uses skills such as trust, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight and empathy; they lead their team not through a command-and-control approach, but through activities like coaching and listening to empower each of the team's members to contribute fully to the team's success.

The concept is very old, there are passages that relate to servant leadership in the Tao Te Ching, a document attributed to Lao-Tzu, who is believed to have lived in China in the 4th century B.C., but has modern application in a wide range of project management areas and is particularly relevant in many Agile methodologies where a key function of the project manager is to 'clear roadblocks' to allow the team to perform.

Building Connections

Powerful leadership connections are built through hundreds (or thousands) of interactions with people that occur every day. Each of these 'touch points'⁸ can build your leadership and advance your message. To be effective each time you connect with someone you need to engage effectively – start by asking 'How can I help?' Then listen *actively* to hear what is really going on and what is needed, then frame the issue to ensure everyone in the 'touch point' has the same understanding. Then you can advance the agenda by deciding on

⁷ For more on Active Listening see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1012_Active_Listening.pdf

⁸ **Touch Points** by Douglas Conant & Mette Norgaard; J-B Warren Bennis Series

the next steps, who will take them and what follow up is appropriate. Each 'touch point' needs to be managed consistently, authentically and effectively within your overall leadership mission; every person, every time, every day! And remember, each person you 'touch' will in turn interact with other people in their network and provided your message is clear and understood, they will spread the message onto this wider audience.

Conversational Leadership⁹

Conversations with others in the organisation, up, down and across the hierarchy can advance or impede progress towards our objective. As a leader, the conversations you have (or refuse to have) define the quality of your thinking and are central to the building of effective relationships that ultimately affect the outcomes you deliver.

Effective leaders create a safe environment in which all participants can contribute to a shared meaning rather than needing to constrain their thoughts to protect themselves. Within this safe environment people can confront reality and challenge both your thinking and their thinking which in turn encourages curiosity, leading to understanding and the discovery of optimal solutions to problems.

The Virtual Leader¹⁰

Leading a virtual team is one of the most difficult jobs in business. Challenges include: infrequent face-to-face contact, lack of resources, difficulties in building a collaborative atmosphere virtually, lack of time to focus on leading the team, shifting team and organizational priorities, and difficulties in managing poor performers. Some of these are management problems such as ensuring adequate time for the work and minimising unnecessary change, others are a fact of virtual life. Communication is the most important skill required to successfully overcome these issues, particularly responsiveness and following-up. Key practices the virtual team leader needs to master include:

Effectively managing change. You must develop a process for helping your teams adjust to change and help them consistently handle and implement changes. One important step in this process is to involve your team members in decisions that affect them. Doing so increases the quality of the team's decision making and helps maintain high levels of enthusiasm and commitment for the duration of a given change.

Foster an atmosphere of collaboration. Look for new and innovative ways to infuse team spirit and trust into your team. This will help to boost productivity and cooperation. Build an environment that supports collaboration by finding ways for team members to interact and communicate informally. For example, you might choose to use *same-time* technologies such as Instant Messaging and other collaboration tools to help increase more spontaneous communication (but be aware of global time differences). Another important component of promoting collaboration is productively managing the conflicts that emerge¹¹. Because conflict can often initially go undetected in virtual environments, as a virtual team leader you must proactively look for signs of it and take steps to resolve it in a timely manner.

Communicate team goals and direction. Successful virtual team leaders clearly articulate team goals and direction to ensure that everyone has a shared vision. They also periodically revisit these factors to both reinforce their importance and make adjustments as necessary. Shared team goals are especially crucial for virtual teams, because they give members a sense of purpose and meaning that sustains them when they are working alone or without regular direct contact with the team leader or other team members. Clear goals also help to unify the actions of a geographically dispersed team and keep members focused on execution.

⁹ Jürgen Oschadleus: PMI Global Congress – Asia Pacific 2009.

¹⁰ For more on virtual team leadership visit: www.onpointconsultingllc.com.

¹¹ For more on conflict management see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1041_Managing_Conflict.pdf

Develop strong interpersonal communication skills. It's no secret that team members who work virtually sometimes feel isolated and find it more difficult to tap into the office grapevine. This feeling of isolation can negatively impact morale and productivity. Therefore, the most effective leaders establish informal and formal communication methods to ensure that people have the information they need to do their jobs and to feel *plugged in*.

Virtual working arrangements do not suit everyone. People work differently, they have different work styles, and they have varying degrees of comfort with using electronic communications technology. In order to effectively manage a virtual team, the project manager needs to accurately assess each person's level of comfort or willingness to be in a virtual setting, and look for any behaviour that may signal that a virtual team worker is suffering from "disconnection". If so, assess the problem and be prepared to implement appropriate actions to overcome the issue.

Leading by inspiring others

Leaders are leaders because their followers follow them! This means the leaders inspires others and connects to their dreams and aspirations. The traits needed to inspire others include:

- **Authenticity** – you need to be open and honest. Authentic people have weaknesses and invite others to partner with them to create success together. But they always have integrity and are believable and consistent.
- **Connect with their dreams** – tap into people's aspirations and dreams; help them align their tasks for today with achieving their dream for tomorrow. Emotions are by far the most powerful force for motivating people.
- **See hidden abilities** – find, nurture and develop the latent abilities everyone has. Notice the hidden talents, and then find ways to develop specific talents to the benefit of the team and the individual.
- **Walk the talk** – speak and live with credibility. Your actions and emotions are far more significant than your words. Contradictions destroy credibility and authenticity.
- **Help people achieve a work-life balance** – caring for others means encouraging balance. Help every individual develop a vision for their life first and their job second. What happens at work is only a portion of their life.
- **Create a culture of inspiration** – motivate and inspire your team by linking their work to a greater good. The value to society and the environment. The mission of the organisation to serve its stakeholders and customers. The 'bottom line' of time and cost will never inspire achievement.
- **Charisma** – Most really great leaders are charismatic. Charisma is an attribute ascribed to a leader by their followers. Charismatic leaders use symbols and metaphors to clarify and simplify their message, motivate their followers and to become someone in whom followers can express their ideals. This influence is rooted in emotional and ideological foundations rather than rational ones (but the two bases are not mutually exclusive). The art of creating charisma can be taught, but requires moral conviction and authenticity on the part of the leader to be effective.

The Trusted Advisor

Project managers should strive to become Trusted Advisors to their customer (and senior management), but this is a difficult position to reach. Trusted Advisors are involved in all stages of the client's decision making processes to help them create value. Achieving this requires high levels of ethics, credibility, and the ability to 'speak the customer's language'¹².

Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Leaders

1. **Be Proactive:** Principles of Personal Choice
2. **Begin with the End in Mind:** Principles of Personal Vision
3. **Put First Things First:** Principles of Integrity & Execution
4. **Think Win/Win:** Principles of Mutual Benefit
5. **Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood:** Principles of Mutual Understanding
6. **Synergize:** Principles of Creative Cooperation
7. **Sharpen the Saw:** Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal of body

Key leadership traits (in no particular order):

It's not enough anymore to simply have the stamp of power. Leaders are compelled to be fluid in their thinking, acutely self-aware and to continually recalibrate their influence over and through the people and environments they lead. This requires:

Effective communication¹³: including providing clear direction, open feedback and active listening¹⁴.

Effective time management: focus on the important issues¹⁵, delegate others.

Trust: leaders are both trusted and trusting¹⁶.

Relinquish the 'doing' role: focus on directing and leading the team so they can do great things. Charisma needs to be balanced with humility, firmness and self-discipline.

A collaborative management style: engaging the team and stakeholders in problem-solving and decision-making is critical for work management success.

Effective delegation: effective delegation is a skill that needs to be learned. Team members appreciate the authority and opportunities created by effective delegation and help their leader be successful.

Enthusiastic: with focused drive and energy to create their vision.

Organised: leaders need to be able to manage, coordinate and ensure the work they have delegated is capable of being accomplished effectively; as well as motivate and direct the work of the team.

Powerful motivator: praise and encouragement motivate¹⁷; as does authenticity and honesty.

Receptive to change: change is a fact of life, effective leaders are receptive to change and help their team understand the need for the change.

Adaptability and Flexibility: successful leaders are able to adapt and overcome new challenges. No matter how well a project is planned there will always be something or someone that causes unexpected changes.

¹² For more on **Advising Upwards** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_077.html

¹³ For more on communication see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PMP_Sup/PMP_Mod10_Communication.html

¹⁴ For more on Active Listening see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1012_Active_Listening.pdf

¹⁵ For more on problem solving see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1013_Problem_Solving.pdf

¹⁶ For more on the Value of Trust see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1030_The_Value_of_Trust.pdf

¹⁷ For more on **Motivation** see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1048_Motivation.pdf

Resourcefulness: out-of-the box thinking and creativity to solve problems along with a tenacious, never-give-up approach to overcoming obstacles.

Good EQ and SQ¹⁸: leadership is about leading people, good leaders manage their emotions effectively and relate effectively with the individuals in their team and the social structures both in and around the team. Tact, empathy and understanding are crucial skills to bond effectively with your followers.

10 Fundamental truths about leadership¹⁹:

1. The first truth is that **You Make a Difference**. It is the most fundamental truth of all. Before you can lead, you have to believe that you can have a positive impact on others. You have to believe in yourself. That's where it all begins. Leadership begins when you believe you can make a difference.
2. The second truth is that **Credibility Is the Foundation of Leadership**. You have to believe in you, but others have to believe in you too. What does it take for others to believe in you? Short answer: credibility. If people don't believe in you, they won't willingly follow you.
3. The third truth is that **Values Drive Commitment**. People want to know what you stand for and believe in. They want to know what you value. And leaders need to know what others value if they are going to be able to forge alignments between personal values and organizational demands.
4. The fourth truth is that **Focusing on the Future Sets Leaders Apart**. The capacity to imagine and articulate exciting future possibilities is a defining competence of leaders. You have to take the long-term perspective. Gain insight from reviewing your past and develop oversight by looking around.
5. **You Can't Do It Alone** is the fifth truth. Leadership is a team sport, and you need to engage others in the cause. What strengthens and sustains the relationship between leader and constituent is that leaders are obsessed with what is best for others, not what is best for themselves.
6. **Trust Rules** is the sixth truth. Trust is the social glue that holds individuals and groups together. And the level trust others have in you will determine the amount of influence you have. You have to earn your constituents' trust before they'll be willing to trust you. That means you have to give trust before you can get trust.
7. The seventh truth is that **Challenge Is the Crucible for Greatness**. Exemplary leaders — the kind of leaders people want to follow — are always associated with changing the status quo. Great achievement doesn't happen when you keep things the same. Change invariably involves challenge, and challenge tests you. It introduces you to yourself.
8. The eighth truth is that **You Either Lead by Example or You Don't Lead at All**. Leaders have to keep their promises and become role models for the values and actions they espouse. You have to go first as a leader. You can't ask others to do something you aren't willing to do yourself.
9. The ninth truth is that **the Best Leaders Are the Best Learners**. Leaders are constant improvement fanatics, and learning is the master skill of leadership. Learning, however, takes time and attention, practice and feedback, along with good coaching. It also takes willingness on your part to ask for support. Leaders need to be able to do the current job well but also be thinking about what comes next and how to move the team onwards and upwards.
10. The tenth truth is that **Leadership Is an Affair of the Heart**. Leaders make others feel important and are gracious in showing their appreciation. Love is the motivation that energizes leaders to give so much for others. You just won't work hard enough to become great if you aren't doing what you love. These are enduring truths about leadership. You can gain mastery over the art and science of leadership by understanding them and attending to them in your workplace and everyday life.

¹⁸ For more on Social and Emotional intelligence see:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1008_Emotional%20Intellegence.pdf

¹⁹ From *The Truth About Leadership*, J.M. Kouzes & B.Z. Posner.

Leadership and Management:

Leadership cannot replace management. Whilst both can exist in isolation, effectiveness in business requires both together. Management establishes information flows, processes and procedures to enable the work to proceed effectively; leadership inspires people to commit to doing the work effectively.

Organisations and teams are created to achieve goals larger than those an individual can pursue on his/her own, but it is still the individuals working within the organisation that actually do the work that achieves the goals. The basic purpose of management is to ensure the appropriate resources are available to allow the unit being managed (ie, the project or program) to achieve its basic purpose. However, the manager gets things done through other people²⁰ by coaching, motivating, building teams and directing focus; ie, by leading, so the people working within the unit take the correct actions to deliver the required outputs as effectively as possible.

The art of management is a practice that has to be learned; it uses scientific processes to determine facts and elicit information but this raw data needs interpretation and communication to the right people to engender appropriate action. Within the team, the manager moves intentions from conceptual ideas to concrete results by communicating information, to people to engender actions. The manager frames ideas to create context for everyone else working in the team and then schedules and coordinates appropriate actions. The manager also acts as the primary link between the team and the rest of the organisation and the larger stakeholder community²¹.

Michael Maccoby has identified three types of manager with different leadership focuses:

- Strategic Leaders: focus on the future and how to get there. They set the course for the organisation.
- Operational Leaders: focus on keeping the organisation working efficiently and effectively; the traditional management areas of logistics, processes, quality and resources.
- Bridge-building Leaders: connect people together. The newer management areas of knowledge transfer, networking, communities of practice and aligning aims and expectations.

All three traits are important within an organisation to ensure the right goals are set, everything is done that needs to be done to achieve the goal and that everyone is working together to achieve the common aim.

Summary

Leadership is becoming more complex and success is no longer about command and control and issuing orders. Social networks are opening up authority to challenges. Norms and tolerance levels are changing and transparency is increasingly testing leaders' behaviour. The most effective project and program managers are skilled in both managing and leading²²; they work with and support their teams to achieve the outputs expected by their primary stakeholders.

The concept of the *Hero PM*²³ who as a highly skilled practitioner could create project success almost singlehandedly is rapidly fading. In the second decade of the 21st century successful PMs will display '5th Level Leadership', attuned to the needs of the team as well as the power structures of the organisation. Successful PMs will combine the traits of effective leadership described in the first part of this White Paper with competent project management defined in documents such as the *PMBOK® Guide*.

²⁰ For more on delegation and personal time management see WP1054:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1054_Personal_Time_Management.pdf

²¹ For more on stakeholder management see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1007_Stakeholder_Cycle.pdf

²² For more on competency see WP1056: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1056_Compentency.pdf

²³ See: *The future of the PM Hero* http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_105.html