



Society of Leadership Fellows,
St George's House

Nurturing Wisdom

Insights from Leadership Fellows

Volume

I

September 2017

A Resource for Leadership Fellows

Volume I of Nurturing Wisdom brings together into a single document the products that were inspired by the first nine Leadership Conversations convened by the Society of Leadership Fellows at St George's House, Windsor Castle between October 2016 and July 2017.

We are immensely grateful to those Leadership Fellows who joined us for these Conversations and shared the insights that inspired the product created after each one.

We hope that Fellows will feel free to share Nurturing Wisdom with your teams and encourage them to use it as a resource whenever it might be of benefit to them. The Chapter headings on the next two pages are hyperlinked, so that you can quickly dip into any part of the document and scan it for insights that could be of benefit to you in your ongoing development as a leader.

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House
Windsor Castle
September 2017

Executive Summary

I From Good to Exceptional

Pages 4-12

This Chapter is written for leaders keen to speed up your transition from good to exceptional. It contains strategies for tackling the key challenge of limited self-belief through engaging more closely with others and leading with pace.

2 Driving Ambition for our Organisation

Pages 13-21

Explores how leaders can carve out sufficient creative thinking space to move from good to exceptional. The Chapter identifies a series of hard truths that hold us back from standing in our authority as leaders and suggests practical steps to enable us to drive ambition for our organisation.

3 Courage in Leadership

Pages 22-29

Outlines eight aspects of the courage required of leaders at times when we need to move out of our “comfort zones”. Among them, it includes the courage to be vulnerable, accept things are messy, work without a long-term plan, accept others’ high expectations and see off “saboteurs”. It also explores the vital importance of informal support networks in sustaining courageous leaders.

4 Leading Culture Change

Pages 30-40

Designed for leaders engaging with the challenge of leading culture change. It outlines a series of key characteristics for a healthy culture and argues that sub-cultures can be an asset, so long as they are connected to the rest of the organisation through shared values and a common purpose.

5 Developing Top Performing Boards

Pages 41-52

Drawn up in the form of a fictional “breakthrough news supplement” that shares the experiences of members of four imaginary Boards. Each story illustrates the thesis that top performing Boards take risks in the ways they work, for example through making more space for creativity, conducting regular Board “spring-cleans” and recognising that the Chair and CEO need to be close without becoming too close.

Executive Summary

6 Leaders as Innovators

Pages 53-64

Sets out a series of key questions that need to be addressed by leaders who want to become more effective as leaders of innovation. These include two of the most difficult challenges of all: driving innovation from the top without disempowering others in the process, and creating a culture of innovation in which there is both a commitment to succeed and also a readiness to learn through failure.

7 Leaders as Facilitators

Pages 65-77

Sets out the six different roles played by leaders as facilitators: as trust-builder, listener, empowerer, permission-giver, pace-setter and protector. Includes a bank of 15 possible groundrules for groups to adopt as the basis for a high trust ideas-building process, explaining the particular relevance of each groundrule.

8 Our Habits as Leaders: Breaking Bad

Pages 78-88

Explores how we can leave behind bad habits that detract from our effectiveness as leaders. It sets out a series of key questions and points of guidance to support leaders in “breaking bad” and then tells five tales of leaders who have changed their behaviours as conflict avoiders, reflectors, perfectionists, commentators and over-committers.

9 Leading a Winning Team

Pages 89-99

Addresses the challenges of leading a winning team, as seen through the eyes of an incoming CEO who became the “queen bee” in her previous organisation and wants to be a different sort of leader this time. Among other issues, it explores how she might develop more cross-team working, with Executive Directors being rewarded more for team performance and a greater focus on team-wide support and challenge

CHAPTER I



From Good to Exceptional

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

The key proposition

The key proposition that emerged through this Conversation was that many leaders are held back from moving from good to exceptional by **limited self-belief**.

Two key behaviours

We focused on two behaviours essential to moving forward:

- engaging more closely with others
- leading with pace.



Limited self-belief

Limited self-belief affects our behaviours in all sorts of ways, such as:

Being defensive

"I am who I am, take it or leave it"

Blaming others

"I can't do what I'm meant to do because others get in my way"

Over-thinking

"Everything is so complicated! I have to assess all of the risks and just don't have time".

These behaviours get us stuck. They make us lose pace and block close engagement with others.

The behaviours quickly become our masks. They hide us from being who we are and the effort of concealment saps our energy.

The gap opens up more and more between what we say and what we think.

Hiding behind our masks

The mask says one thing, while the person behind it is thinking something very different.

Lion

I'm strong, brave and in control. You'll regret it if you cross me



Please don't call my bluff and expose me as the coward I really am

Fixer

I set the standards
I want us all to achieve



I've got to check everything, as I don't trust things will be done properly without me

Loyalist

I'm there to support my Chair/CEO/team



Oh no, I've created a role trap for myself and now I'm boxed in

Strategist

I'm a big picture, blue-sky person



I'm not operational, others deal with the detail

Communicator

I inspire our vision and values with words



Don't ask me what difference it will make to our bottom line

Putting on a front rather than being our true selves traps us. It leads to under-performance. If we let it continue it can lead to crisis.

Dropping our front

Moving forward is not simple. It is a constant struggle to be as good as we can be. We need to be brave to pull off our masks to give us the space to create new leadership behaviours that nurture self-belief.

Exceptional leadership is pacey: not frenetic, but energised in an infectious and charming way to those around us. This attracts them to being part of our leadership 'bubble'.

We can drop our front by being more direct and open with others about:

- our intent
- our ambition for the business
- our acceptance that we can't control everything
- our openness to questions and
- our fallibility.



Freed, and engaging more closely with others, we can:

- share our vision and invite people to question it
- give up fixing and start coaching at a pace
- dare to get it wrong, knowing we will learn a huge amount whatever the outcome
- live in the moment, and not let our past get in our way
- rock the boat when needed
- be open to accepting it might be time to leave the boat and swim.

Closer engagement through different types of conversation

We each need a personal strategy grounded in our identity as a leader. The strategy sets our direction and helps us to move forward at pace.

We speak our truth as part of a conversation rather than a statement in its own right.

Engagement is two-way. We need to create a safe space in which others feel that they can equally be themselves.

Our tone needs to be light, the body language positive. Our purpose is to persuade others to see the impact of their behaviour on us, and help ourselves to see our impact on them.

Asking not telling can often transform a conversation from an aggressive/defensive encounter into something really positive.

Instead of...

Your are stopping me from...

You don't trust me

I can't take on any more

That's not my problem

**We need to stay focused and
not take on anything else**

Try...

Why do you feel this is the wrong approach?

What needs to be in place for us to give it a try?

Can we look at our priorities and see what we might need to drop?

That is worrying. Maybe some of us should put our heads together?

It's an exciting idea but how does it fit in with everything else?

Trusting in ourselves and others

It is fair to say that many of us started this Conversation with our masks on! It is often how we are with people we haven't met before.

We felt safe to drop them as soon as we felt we could trust each other and begin to engage closely.

Developing personal strategies for improving our leadership requires trust. Trust in ourselves. And trust in others around us acting as 'critical friends', who are committed to supporting us as leaders in moving from good to exceptional.

CHAPTER 2



Driving Ambition for our Organisation

Insights from
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St George's House, Windsor Castle

Hard Truths

We need to face a number of hard truths if we are serious about stretching our ambition and becoming exceptional leaders.

- 1 It is so easy for us to become embroiled in managing day-to-day challenges and internal machinations. By getting too involved, we find our tanks are running on empty when we try to think creatively about our ambitions for our organisations.
- 2 We don't give ourselves enough time to prepare for key meetings, especially those focusing on strategy. So often, we try to snatch thinking time late at night or early in the morning, because we feel it can't be found in any other way.
- 3 Most of us will go to some lengths to avoid difficult personal conversations if we think that they're likely to result in disagreement. As a result, unresolved disagreements often grow into protracted dramas and stand-offs.

So often we find ourselves distracted by the weight of stewardship of our organisation. The grind of keeping the operation going can easily sap our energy and turn what should be a series of stretching ambitions into little more than glimpses of an outline vision.

Driving ambition

We need to stand in our authority as leaders to drive ambitious thinking for our organisation. Our style can be collegiate but we need to be unapologetic about carving out sufficient time and thinking space for us to excel as leaders.

1 Creating thinking time for ourselves

We need to be firm with ourselves and others about setting aside time earmarked for creative thinking to:

- formulate ideas
- prepare for meetings and important conversations
- think through how best to share and develop our thinking at key stages.

Without this discipline, our ambitions for our organisation are unlikely to become reality.

Note to self

🕒 Set aside regular 'me' time for thinking and planning. Maybe a 'power hour' twice a week?

🕒 Let everyone know I'll be incommunicado during my 'power hours'.

🕒 Be ruthless with myself: don't let 'everyday business' priorities or other distractions creep into this time.

2 Sharing our thinking and ambition

We know we need the buy-in of our Boards and colleagues to achieve our ambitions for our organisation. This entails careful planning about how best to share our thinking openly and creating a sense of real shared ownership before any decisions are taken. 1:1 meetings need to be put in the diary with our Directors to listen to their ideas and feedback.

Note to self

🕒 Having thought this through, how do I give time and space to others to do the same? I don't want them to feel ambushed or pressurised - REMEMBER surprises can create 'fight or flight'.

🕒 At what points do I want to share my thinking and what is the feedback I'm looking for? Ideas? Alternative options? Challenges? Risks?

🕒 After my Chair, who do I need to book in to speak to personally next?

🕒 What's my plan for being relaxed in acknowledging concerns up-front in meetings? REMEMBER - I don't need to have all the answers.

🕒 In meetings I need to give everyone time to develop the proposals. An informal ideas-building session? (Re-read Product 3 for possible groundrules)

3 Inviting others to step up

Carving out the space to move from good to exceptional requires us, as leaders, to encourage others to step up and take on leadership roles in areas where they are stronger than us. The more we support others to excel, the stronger we are as leaders.

Note to self

- 🕒 Hold an away-day 'safe session' with my senior team to consider our collective strengths and weaknesses. Be first to share what I see as my shortcomings.
- 🕒 Follow up by being open about my trust in them to step up where I feel they are stronger than me. The sum of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- 🕒 Get the balance right. Avoid over-directing: when something needs to be fixed, rather than jumping in quickly with solutions, first ask what they would recommend. But don't be so hands-off that people flounder in their attempts to get it right.

4 Fast-tracking our best people

We know that amongst our staff there are those who can move from good to exceptional because of their ambition and hunger to learn. We want them to feel that we will invest time in supporting them to grow and blossom.

Note to self

- ⌚ Does my top team know who our best people are? What is it about them that persuades us they are the best?
- ⌚ With the top team, what opportunities can I give each of them to grow their strengths so that they become truly exceptional?
- ⌚ Where do we see them 18 months from now? How do they fit in with our succession plans?

⌚ Are we sure that we're not overlooking any 'rising stars'?

⌚ Among the best, are any 'stuck'? Would they benefit from a move within the organisation?

5 Creating the right pace

Getting the pace right in achieving buy-in to a stretching organisational ambition is probably the toughest nut we all have to crack. Too fast and decisions are likely to be challenged; too slow and inertia will begin to take hold.

As leaders, we need to listen hard and be open to feedback at every stage, before moving forward. If there is dissent from a minority, we need to acknowledge it openly and take from it whatever we can.

Note to self

- 🕒 Use my 'power hours' to sharpen up my ideas at each stage so that they can be easily understood, making it clear to all that it is all 'work in progress' (briefing notes no longer than 1 side of A4).
- 🕒 Personalise and sign emails with briefing attached so that the recipient knows that it is me dedicating time to them personally.
- 🕒 With full Board backing, share the organisation's ambitions with all staff with an outline timetable of the key stages involved in developing our thinking.

6 Permitting our ambitions to evolve

By allowing our ambitions to evolve in response to others' ideas and insights we encourage buy-in. We demonstrate strong leadership when we are seen to let go of some of our ideas in favour of stronger ones put forward by others. In this way, our behaviour persuades others of the value of ideas-building in an open and transparent way.

Note to self

- 🕒 At each key stage, focus on what I need to do to encourage my Board and Senior Executives to share ownership of our ambitions for the organisation.
- 🕒 Show openness to new ideas in the way I respond - both verbally and physically
- 🕒 REMEMBER - so long as we're agreed on the direction of travel, there are options about how we get there and how far we need to stretch.
- 🕒 REMEMBER - ambition isn't a specific goal but a state of constantly striving for our organisation to be the very best.

Final notes to self

⌚ Energising others to develop and share ambitions for our organisation demands my time. It won't happen without me leading it.

⌚ I need to carve out space to plan for the future.

⌚ I need to prioritise more.

⌚ I need to accept that if I want to empower others, I must first empower myself.

⌚ Buy more Post-It notes!

CHAPTER 3



Courage in Leadership

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

Courage in Leadership



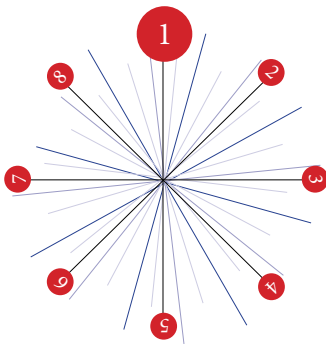
As leaders, having a higher belief gives us a reason beyond simply our egos to be courageous. We move out of our comfort zones to do the best for our organisations. But these acts are still personal: every time we are courageous we know there is some type of personal risk involved.

Taking the risk is easier when our backs are against the wall. We're all familiar with the way our popular culture projects a derring-do image of leadership courage: leading from the front, taking our people over the top and defying the odds.

It is a lot harder when, as leaders, we have choice: the choice to let things ride or take the more difficult route that carries the risk of failure.

Courage is completely subjective: what makes one person feel vulnerable holds no fear for another. Only we will know which of the following types of courage would take us, as individuals, out of our comfort zones and help in making us stronger leaders.

Different aspects of courage



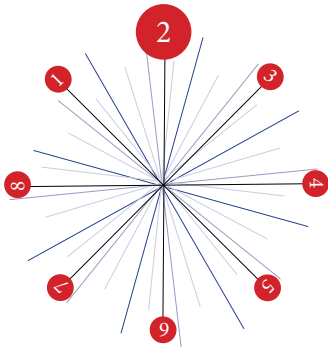
Having the courage to be vulnerable as part of our leadership

Sharing when we have doubts, and are uncertain, can be tremendously difficult. As leaders, it makes us vulnerable, and some of us resist showing our uncertainties because we don't want to risk appearing weak. The danger of masking this vulnerability is that others can so easily feel that as leaders we can't be trusted because we are pretending to be what we are not.

More and more, those around us expect us to be honest with them about our doubts and anxieties.

Courage helps us to own our vulnerability and regard it as a natural part of our leadership. We want those who work for us to feel that we are real and 'authentic'.

Having doubt also helps to build our credibility as leaders at times when we say, "On this issue I have no doubt, which is why I ask you to back me wholeheartedly".

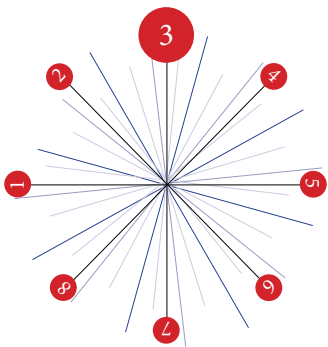


Having the courage to slow down

As leaders, many of us like to move fast. For us, slowing down and getting close to those who are struggling to keep up is way out of our comfort zones. And yet, we might need to slow our pace if they are to have any chance of co-owning our sense of mission and purpose.

Our challenge is to help them in moving out from their safe spaces, by stopping and listening to what they have to say and encouraging them to share why they're struggling.

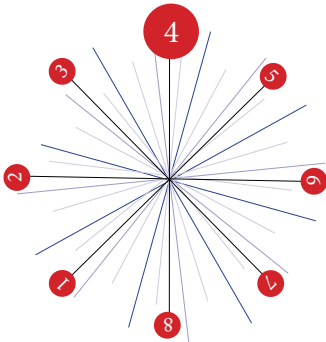
Courage helps us to slow our pace so we don't become detached from our teams. It makes it possible for those in the 'slow lane' to speed up. Then we're off again – connected.



Having the courage to accept things are messy

As leaders, many of us want a high degree of “tidiness” around us. It gives us a sense of control and order. The problem is, though, that sometimes it's a sham - and a way of avoiding the mess that we know is all around us (if we say the word Brexit, nothing more need be said!).

Courage helps us to accept the limitations on our ability to control the mess around us. We might still aspire to greater tidiness, one day. But we remind ourselves of the virtue of patience so that we can focus on the deeper challenges we face. If there is to be mess, better to have it on the surface where we can see it, rather than lurking in corners unseen.

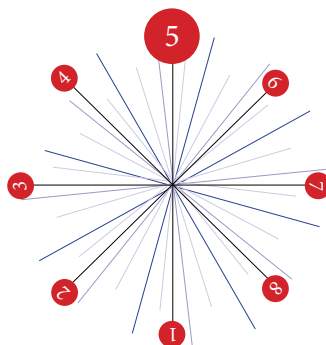


Having the courage to work without a long-term plan

Many of us plan our professional development – where we want to be in 10 years time and the stages for achieving this. But what happens if, en route, there are unexpected opportunities that we haven't anticipated? Do we blind sight or discount them because they're not in our plan?

For some leaders, taking opportunities is part of their DNA, while for others the risk of leaping into something unplanned takes a real act of courage.

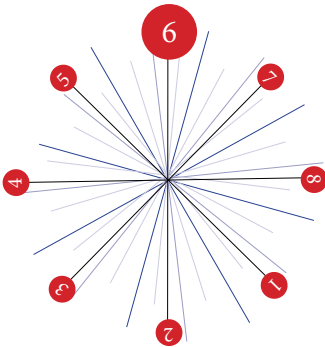
Courage helps us to trust our intuition by taking opportunities that feel right and, if they turn out wrong, treating our failures as building blocks, not quick-sand.



Having the courage to be unpopular

As leaders, many of us have learnt that the more successful and visible we are, the more we become a target for those who disagree with or dislike what we stand for and say. We interpret the criticism as personal, whereas it might well be generated by our leadership success and recognition of the team that we lead.

Courage helps us to accept that as leaders we will be disliked by some. Albeit uncomfortable, being disliked can be an indicator of our success as leaders. When we are grappling with feelings of unfairness and hurt, it can be good to challenge ourselves on whether we would rather be ignored. This is not the ambition of many successful leaders!

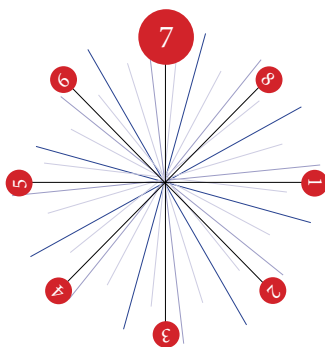


Having the courage to see off saboteurs

At some point we all encounter behaviours that go beyond criticism, and are designed to undermine our leadership and the culture we want to set for our organisations.

For many of us, direct confrontation is deeply uncomfortable. An effective way of handling sabotaging behaviours is to tell ourselves that the attack is on what we stand for - our higher purpose - and not on us personally, although it can feel like that in the moment!

Courage helps us to challenge the behaviour of those who want to scupper our intent, however uncomfortable this is for us. It keeps us focused on our wider mission and strengthens us in not getting drawn into a personal battle with the would-be saboteur.



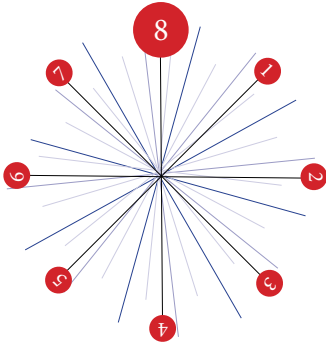
Having the courage to accept others' high expectations

One of the most terrifying aspects of leadership is when we feel others believe that we're better than we think we are. We're frightened that if we try to do all that they are asking of us we will fail to rise to the challenge and show that their faith in us has been misjudged.

We don't have to prove to them but to ourselves that we are as good as they believe we are.

Of course, they may have got it wrong, and we might end up failing to meet their high expectations of us. But we also know that we almost certainly fail as leaders if we don't try.

Courage helps us to accept others' belief in us. We engage with our fears that they might have over-estimated our natural abilities. We then apply ourselves to leading according to the highest standards that we set ourselves, clear that if we do fall short at some point we will convert that into a key learning moment in our ongoing leadership development.



Having the courage to test ourselves rather than waiting until we're tested

When we think of courage, we tend to think of situations where our back is against the wall. It is easier to be brave when the only other option is defeat!

Harder still can be the courage that is called for when we try to do things differently, because we think that is the right way to go.

It's about moving out of our comfort zones to take us from good to best. No one else is asking for it or expecting it, only ourselves.

Courage helps us to have the energy and drive to strive to be our best even though we know we're already 'good enough' to keep others satisfied with our performance as leaders.

As leaders, if we don't have the courage to challenge ourselves to be the best, and constantly to raise our game, how can we expect people across our organisation to want to go 'from good to great'?

Finding our strength to be courageous

However strong we may appear as leaders, we all need at least one person who we know is watching our back and is 'there for us'. Whether our personal support network is just one person or more, they do so much in helping us to find our courage in those moments when we are challenged to move out of our comfort zone.

Their relationship with us, whether personal or professional, is one of absolute trust. These are the people who know when we are being courageous, when no one else does – and often also when our courage is in danger of deserting us.

We can share our doubts with them, allow them in to ask the hard questions, and share our shortcomings because they know who we are, what we want to achieve and the courage we need to do so.

In so many ways, they remind us that our courage needs to draw on the strength and recognition of those closest to us.

Whilst leadership is so often a lonely experience, courageous leadership is invariably an experience made possible by the informal support network that picks us up when we are down and affirms us when we are up.



CHAPTER 4



Leading Culture Change

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

Challenging two key assumptions

Assumption I

A strong culture is a single culture, and sub-cultures should be resisted because they can undermine the unity of a common culture.

Breakthrough in thinking

Sub-cultures can be healthy. Rather than posing a threat, they can be of real value so long as they are connected to the rest of the organisation through shared values and a common purpose.

Enter the flotilla

We found the analogy of a flotilla helpful in developing our thinking. Each boat has its own identity and ways of working, but under clear leadership, all keep on course to a common destination.

Any boat that becomes isolated from the rest of the group would be in difficulty. Without the flotilla, the boats would be disconnected and adrift of clear direction and purpose. Knowing this, and sometimes being reminded by the leader, each boat stays connected with the fleet. X

The flotilla benefits from the unique perspectives, experience and creativity offered by each boat, so long as there is an overriding connection with achieving its purpose to reach a single destination.

Assumption 2 *Strong leaders have no doubt about the behaviours needed to achieve the organisation's purpose. They convey certainty and are seen to be resolute and steadfast.*

**Breakthrough
in thinking**

As leaders we need to be clear about our organisation's purpose and values. At the same time, we need a culture that defines itself by its openness to questioning and challenge about how we can best achieve our purpose.

We need to drive this culture by example. If we want staff to feel able to question themselves and challenge others, we need to be relaxed about occasionally demonstrating uncertainty about the best way forward. This means being prepared to question openly our own assumptions as well as inviting challenge from all levels in our organisations.

Our leadership is defined not just by the strength of our resolve, but also by the quality of our thinking, our openness to fresh ideas and the latest evidence as we weigh up the best decision at any point in time.

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Characteristics of a healthy culture

When we use the phrase 'culture change' we are not referring to a one-off event, but an on-going process of learning and development. This process of learning defines our organisation's culture as much as its values and purpose.

A statement of intent pinned to a wall won't do. Our people need to feel they have our permission and support to share their doubts and uncertainties as they puzzle over the best way forward.

The process of change within healthy cultures feels inclusive, pacey and geared to continuous improvement.

These characteristics apply equally to organisations that are boats and those that operate as flotillas; form doesn't matter. Similarly, whatever the size of our organisation, leaders need to create and nurture the following conditions for their culture to grow and thrive.

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Characteristics of a healthy culture I

Our organisation's purpose is always clear to everyone working within the organisation.

The more complex the process is to meet our purpose, the more important it is to keep it in sight. When staff are concentrating only on one part of the process it is easy for them to forget our overall objectives.

Staff and Board members need to feel confident that what they are doing is not just excellent in its own right but also helping the organisation achieve its purpose.

The culture grows through the high visibility of leaders (including Non-Executive Board members) to staff.

As leaders of culture change, we need to be seen and heard frequently as authentic and sincere by those we want to influence.

There needs to be an emotional connection that leaves no doubt about our commitment to achieving the purpose of our organisation.

We need to avoid using ambiguous, abstract or clichéd words and phrases, and instead use simple phrases that we can imagine our staff taking on and making their own.

Our staff need to feel that we are talking to them personally and they can connect with what we're saying.

The best communication is pacey, short and frequent, whether in person or using technology – videos, mobile and computer apps.

Characteristics of a healthy culture 2

We constantly proclaim our organisation's full and wide reaching ambition. Our ambition is outward looking; it is about the impact that our organisation has by achieving its purpose.

As leaders, our role is to ensure staff and Board members co-own our organisation's ambition.

Our culture means we measure our success in achieving our purpose by how far the organisation is fulfilling its ambition.

The culture grows *through honesty about the distance that needs to be travelled to fulfil the organisation's ambition so that it is not perceived as a pipe dream but as achievable.*

Alongside an uplifting 'call to arms', leaders need to demonstrate empathy so that staff feel we understand how it is to be in their shoes. The challenge for us is to create a conviction throughout our organisation that our ambition is within reach.

We use external regulation, compliance, and quality assurance as tools to assure our standards and keep our organisation's purpose in plain sight. In this way we ensure that they don't weaken our staff's ownership of our ambition and standards.

Everyone in our organisation knows that our purpose won't be achieved if we concentrate on internal dynamics without keeping our ambitions at the fore. External assessment is of course to be welcomed, NOT as a way to keep assessors happy, but more as a way of helping us to achieve our ambitions.

To create flex and attitudinal change amongst our staff, we like the idea of replacing job descriptions with job profiles. Job profiles not only set out the skills required of a job-holder, but

also the flexibility and connectivity essential in helping achieve the organisation's purpose.

The profiles should be regularly assessed to ensure that individuals and teams can see the links between their own responsibilities and tasks, and the organisation's wider ambitions.

Characteristics of a healthy culture 3

We are disciplined in concentrating on making one or two really significant changes. We select the changes because they are challenging, will be quickly visible and will help us to create the culture necessary to achieve our purpose.

Before determining the key challenges that we want to take on, we share our thinking with colleagues at all levels in the organisation. We encourage challenge and debate about our proposals and explain openly why, after weighing up various options, we have selected these challenges.

As leaders, we demonstrate how these changes require us to work differently alongside everyone else, in leading by example.

We set the pace following through the changes and embedding them, making a point of assessing our progress at regular intervals.

As soon as we have evidence that the changes are being adopted within our overall culture, and taking us in the right direction, we proclaim the progress that is being made, to help create the confidence and momentum necessary to take on other challenges.

The culture grows by permitting ourselves to use 'good enough' as our starting point, and not letting the perfectionist in us hold us back from beginning a process of change.

Our style is to improve as we go, inviting constructive criticism to enable us to move from good enough to excellent at pace.

We want to be known as a learning organisation, with innovation and development at the heart of what we do to achieve our purpose. We support our staff in experimenting with new ideas and taking managed risks knowing that, whatever the outcome, we will learn.

Characteristics of a healthy culture 4

As leaders we demonstrate candour and openness in sharing with others what might be holding us back from achieving our purpose and ambition as an organisation. We are willing to question ourselves and encourage others to challenge their own thinking.

With our organisational purpose and ambition in sight, we encourage our staff and Board members to work through issues where there is no single right answer. Our culture values everyone as a problem-raiser, whatever the problem, with the caveat that all are up for having a go at being problem-solvers too.

The culture grows by concentrating on 'what' not 'who' is holding the organisation back. We work at creating a culture in which people do not bottle up their frustration but are supported and given the vocabulary to speak their truth.

'Questioning the questioner' is recognised throughout our organisation as a coaching technique.

As leaders, we acknowledge openly how sensitive we need to be in questioning the questioner and speaking our truth, because everyone hears what is said differently.

We work at ensuring our tone and body language are relaxed.

What we are saying or asking needs to be easily understood by the listener without them becoming defensive.

We lead by example and recognise that we may need coaching ourselves or need to coach others to feel confident about the language we are all using - and how we are using it.

Using narratives can be helpful too, especially using the viewpoints of those who the organisation wants to serve, and who feel they have been failed in some way.

Narratives need to focus on what's failing rather than who, so that everyone who has been 'part of the problem' feels that they can step free from their past role without feeling a finger of blame being pointed at them.

Sub-cultures can be an asset

So long as these conditions are being met, we champion distinctive sub-cultures as a real asset of our organisation.

As leaders, we don't assume our organisation's culture is under threat by the existence of sub-cultures, whether we're captaining a single boat with some 'change terrorists' on board or a large flotilla with some singular vessels within our fleet.

We recognise that at first sight they can appear to be blockers of culture change.

On closer examination, however, they can prove to be the grit in the oyster needed to sharpen up and strengthen our overall offer as an organisation.

A healthy culture celebrates the diverse range of identities and behaviours that make up our Boards and organisations, so long as all can sign up to shared values to achieve a common purpose and ambition.

Those unable or unwilling to do so may need to be left behind.

The importance of connectivity within the organisation needs to be stressed to ensure that individuals or groups don't become cut off and isolated.

Everyone needs to understand that the value of their contribution depends on it being bound with that of others to achieve the purpose of their organisation.



A deeply personal process

For all leaders, culture change is a deeply personal process. It requires us to understand the sort of leader we are, and how others perceive our leadership behaviours.

As leaders, we understand the tension between encouraging everyone to co-own a shared purpose and ambition and, at the same time, allowing the space for individuals and groups to feel free to express their own identity.

We chart a course that allows room for individuality and innovation to flourish, while being strong enough to keep our common purpose always in sight.

What we must be is authentic: 'the real deal'.

This doesn't mean everyone always likes what we say and do. But they do feel we are honest about who we are, and the purpose and ambition that we want to achieve for our organisation.

**Don't be
fooled by
what you see**

Appearances can be deceptive. For example, it is easy to believe that a single large boat is more likely to have a healthy culture than a flotilla of small boats.

But the point about a healthy culture is that it isn't about appearances. It's about what goes on inside an organisation, hidden from view. A flotilla can have a culture that is less or more healthy than that of a single boat.

No surprise, really, given that culture - like so much else - is unavoidably linked to the quality and strength of leadership.

CHAPTER 5



Developing Top Performing Boards

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

BOARD TALK JOURNAL

BREAKTHROUGH NEWS SUPPLEMENT



Stories
to inspire
you to top
performance

- Making space for creativity
- Regular spring-cleans essential
- Recognising that close can become too close
- Post-traumatic stress in the Boardroom

Four top stories of how Boards took risks to become top performers

Making space for creativity

Imelda Estelle, Chair of Letushelp, the major national charity, shares how winning top marks in governance distracted the Board from a downturn in the organisation's performance. Pages 44-45

Post-traumatic stress in the Boardroom

A phrase known in combat has been carried to the Boardroom. **Ita Schock**, CEO of Stepover, a regional third sector organisation, tells the story of how burying the trauma created by a rogue Executive led to 12 months of stepping on land mines. Pages 48-49

Recognising that close can become too close

Non-Exec Director **Hugo Warey**, of Ourway PLC, reveals how close the Board came to rebellion because of the close relationship of Chair and CEO. Full story on Pages 46-47

Regular spring-cleans essential

Ivor Brush, Chair of Growth, a rapidly expanding PLC, explains how he and his CEO have had a major spring-clean and reduced meetings by over 40%. Pages 50-51

Making space for creativity

Imelda Estelle, Chair of Letushelp tells her story



The trigger point was our drop in performance despite ticking all the boxes for excellent governance. I knew the Executive was working its butt off but it was having no impact. I persuaded our Trustees that we should bring new blood on to the Board that would strengthen our leadership in improving performance.

Problem solved, I thought. But no: the two new appointments to the Board were visibly becoming disengaged. After one of our regular awaydays, I tackled them individually about this and was shocked by their response.

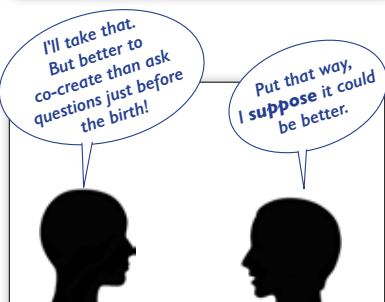
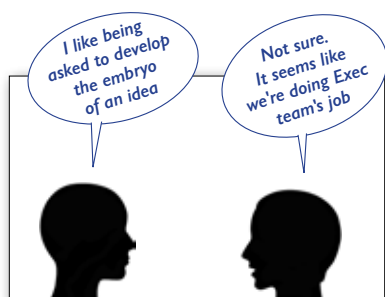
They said they felt stifled. Every Board meeting was governed by the need for assurances on all sorts of issues with no real ‘elbow room’ for discussion. Okay, I agreed, but our single agenda item awaydays are different. No, they said: they are still about ticking the boxes we need to tick to keep the regulator happy. They are not about working with the Executives in a creative way.

Of course, what they were saying was true. The way we’ve always worked is to question the Executives’ proposals and reports to ensure they are fit for purpose and bear independent scrutiny. It took fresh eyes on the Board to make me realise that we were trapped in a ‘them and us’ culture. And if we carried on, the two Non-Execs recruited to help solve our problem could walk.

Change of use

I felt between a rock and a hard place. I couldn’t justify any more awaydays but I could see that having creative space for co-production of ideas between the Board and Executive team could be what we were missing. With my CEO’s agreement, I decided to take what for me felt a really risky decision and change the way we ran Awaydays.

Non-exec chat



No more detailed briefings. Beforehand, Executives would identify the one burning issue that needed fresh thinking and circulate a 2-page note highlighting why new ideas were needed. On the day, Executives would invite our Non-Execs to an ideas-building session in tackling these issues. Our first session was on 'why performance is dropping'.

Some Board Directors were doubtful that this was a good use of their time, but others loved it – and so did senior Executives.

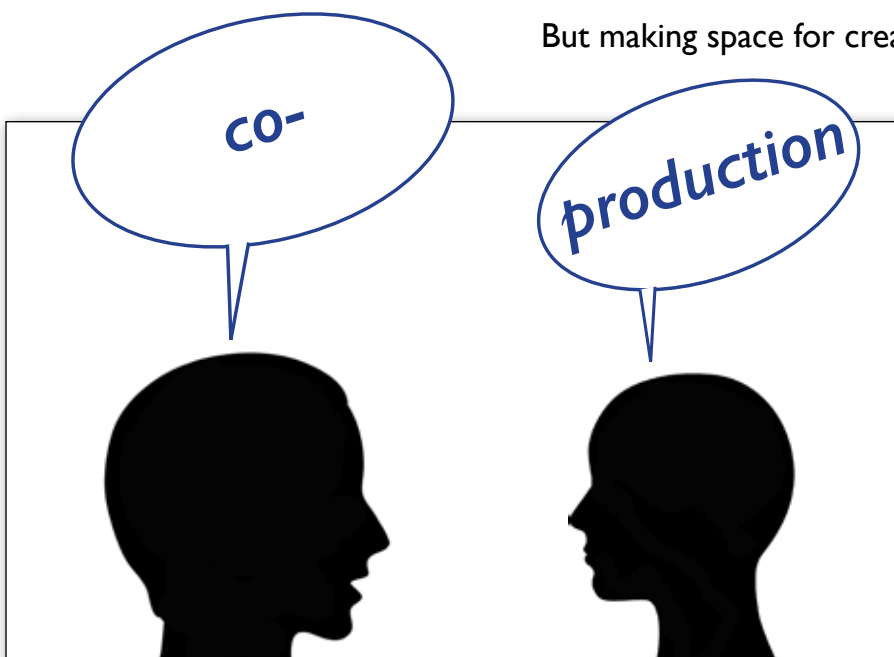
Of course, there were too many ideas generated to take them all forward. But there was an amazing willingness to prioritise. And the real win in my view was the level of engagement and co-production of ideas happening. For the first time, the Executive team were asking the Non-Execs questions instead of the other way round!

We now access up-to-date briefings electronically. We hold two full-day creative sessions a year. At the start not all Non-Execs attended, but numbers increased with each session.

Our performance and customer satisfaction ratings have improved significantly. This hard evidence has helped win over the doubters.

But making space for creativity has had other positive

spin offs. The Executive is no longer defensive in the way they present proposals. There is a genuine feeling that we're all batting on the same team. ”





Becoming close *but* not too close

We all know that a close relationship between a Chair and CEO is pivotal to the success of an organisation. But it can badly backfire when it becomes too close, as *Hugo Warey, Non-Executive Director of Ourway PLC* explains.



Around three years ago, we appointed a new CEO. The Chair had told us some good things about Justine Thyme and he appeared to be spot on. She had the company turned round and facing in the right direction within 12 months.

What I didn't like, though, is that our role as Non-Execs changed at meetings. The Chair and CEO appeared joined at the hip and in complete agreement on every proposal put forward.

Their confidence meant that opening up anything for discussion felt awkward. There wasn't much point, anyway, as they always had an answer. I felt we were just there to rubber stamp their decisions rather than make them as a Board. I have to confess that the more I felt this happening, the more I found myself wanting to derail their tight control.

I made the rubber-stamping point in our annual Assessment of Board Performance. Interestingly, so did others. The Senior Independent Director agreed to arrange a meeting for me to discuss the issue with him and the Chair.

At first, our Chair was really defensive. For him it was a bolt from the blue. He was completely oblivious of how he had sidelined us! He said that of course he and Justine have differences, but they thrash them out prior to Board meetings. Would you believe, he thought they were helping the Board by giving us a clear steer. He had no idea of how close he'd been to a full rebellion!

Once he could see how we were feeling, the Chair conceded that he needed to change the nature of his pre-Board meetings with the CEO. Differences between himself and Justine on important issues would be aired openly with respect on both sides.

In terms of our regard for Justine, it has made a terrific difference. Now that we've had a chance to know what she thinks, rather than having her views made Board-friendly by the Chair, we trust her much more.

And I believe it has worked well for both of them as well as us. Sometimes discussions at Board meetings reveal a better way forward than either of them had considered. ”





Recognising Post-Traumatic Stress

My story by Ita Shocke, CEO of Steptover

“ Taking over as CEO was a baptism of fire for me. I discovered that my Chief Financial Officer (CFO) had been engaging in some rather over-creative accounting in presenting figures to the Board. This had been going on for some time. I told the Chair and had the CFO out within a week – and I must admit that after the shock I felt rather pleased with myself. Job done.

But the problem didn't end there. In some ways, it was only the start.

The stress of what happened affected the behaviour of the Board. Not just for a few months. For nearly a year it felt like we were stuck in the middle of a minefield with occasional explosions. And the person most badly affected? Our new CFO and her team – all of whom were completely innocent of any wrongdoing.

Having been burnt once, the Board was distrusting of the Executive team. We were all tarred with the same brush, even me who had called out the CFO!



The Board demanded such detailed and frequent reporting that it really impacted on performance. Executives at all levels were spending a disproportionate amount of time preparing evidence-based reports on everything and anything. The Execs felt that reporting to the Board was like being in front of the Inquisition. They dreaded the monthly meetings. Even worse, every suggestion we made to remedy a fall in our performance had to be justified in detail.

There was a real frustration and anger amongst staff at the clear distrust being exhibited by the Board, and a significant number left the organisation.

I knew I had to try and get the Board to realise that their behaviour was destroying morale. We couldn't continue in this way. I first spoke to the Chair who was initially reluctant to challenge the Board's behaviour. She eventually agreed to talk to Non-Execs individually and explain the impact of their behaviour on the organisation.

Following the conversations, there was a closed Board Meeting for Non-Execs to which I was invited. We discussed in depth how the Board's post-traumatic behaviours were undermining those innocent of any crime. We agreed that trust needed to be rebuilt on both sides.

Most important, we created the space for people to say how they felt about the old regime under the previous CEO. I then asked them to judge me by my standards and behaviours – not by those of anyone else. Of course, they agreed. Many of them came up to me afterwards and apologised. They hadn't been aware of how destructive their behaviour had become.

We are still in the early days of recovery, but things are beginning to work well again. When we do slip back into low trust behaviours, we carefully remind each other rather than storing it up. That's the key difference now: we know that we need to help each other let go of the trauma and the best way to do that is to be really open and say it as it is.





Regular spring-cleans essential

A Chair's view by Ivor Brush, ACME Enterprises



Over the past few years we've had great growth, but it's begun to slow down and, as a Board, we have got worried. So we've been asking ourselves what's slowed us up.

The conclusion we've come to is that we've asked our Executive team to spend far too much time managing the organisation, in committees and sub-committees, and not enough time driving it.

As our Group has grown and diversified, so has the number of committees and sub-groups – like topsy. I did a count and six months ago we had 55 different committees, groups and meetings, averaging over one a week.

Each one needed a secretariat, papers prepared beforehand and minutes drawn up and circulated afterwards. Finding dates for all of them, especially for the senior Executives, was a nightmare.

Staff were spending far too much time servicing the meetings at the expense of getting on with their jobs. We'd spawned a monster that was beginning to consume the energy of far too many people.

I asked my CEO to sit down with his senior team and review the need for each and every meeting. The key question I wanted them to answer was why a particular committee/sub-group was needed. Their discussions revealed as the business has grown that about 25 of them have become irrelevant, overlapping in purpose or needing new terms of reference.

As a Board, we then planned out how we should set about spring-cleaning.

For me, a priority was to manage the process in ways that didn't lose the tremendous support we have from our Non-Execs. Some of them had been chairing groups for over 3 years and I didn't want to devalue their contribution in any way. Also, the Board felt that the changes needed to be proof-tested by the groups themselves to ensure no babies were thrown out with the bath water.

We introduced a number of time-limited task groups to replace standing committees. This has been a real success in troubleshooting specific areas of performance and driving forward ideas. Other groups have been merged and refocused. We now have 32 different groups, some time-limited. It's still too many, but we're moving in the right direction.

Generally the Board has been very supportive. Some Non-Execs were concerned that important information may be lost if particular groups were disbanded, but they were quickly persuaded by evidence that this wasn't happening.

I must say the whole process has been truly liberating. The organisation feels fresher, sharper and more action-oriented. This has been the first major spring clean we've had, and the Board has voted unanimously for it to be established as a bi-annual review – led by a time-limited task group!

Our principle now is that every committee or group needs a powerful justification to keep going after two years – and if it isn't obvious, then we assume that we no longer need it. ”



Top
performing
Boards
take
risks
in
the
ways
they
work

CHAPTER 6



Leaders as Innovators

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

Innovation

Innovation is about responding to change in a creative way; generating new ideas, conducting R&D, improving processes or revamping products and services. It's also a mindset in your business.

Business Development Company

The process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay.

Business Dictionary

A spectrum of definitions

Technically, "innovation" is defined merely as "introducing something new;" there are no qualifiers of how ground-breaking or world-shattering that something needs to be only that it needs to be better than what was there before.

Business Week

Innovation: a creation (a new device or process) resulting from study and experimentation; introducing something new.

Wordnet

As a leader of innovation - *nine questions to help me become more effective*

**When I
 talk about
 innovation,
 what do I
 MEAN by it?**

KNOWING WHAT I MEAN BY INNOVATION

Some talk of innovation as just being about development and execution, after the stage where ideas have been nurtured and grown.

Others talk more generally about innovation being about ideas-building + execution + follow-up. They argue that staff become more attracted to the idea of becoming innovators if they can connect with the ideas behind proposed innovations.

Note to self

I need to know what I mean by innovation. Whatever definition I go for, I need to spell out the prize that I hope we will gain through innovations, without overloading people with more context than they need.

2

When I discuss innovations with others, how much should I share 'the WHY'? Or should I just concentrate on the HOW and WHAT?

PUTTING THE CASE FOR

If I take a broader definition of innovation, it's more natural to share the "why". I can explain the ideas and ambitions that are driving the innovation process and spell out what I hope we'll achieve if and when the innovations come to pass.

If I concentrate solely on innovation as execution, I need to be clear about my wider strategy for fostering a culture of innovation. I need to argue the case for innovation at a more general level, in a way that inspires people to bring forward ideas for doing things differently - and better.

Note to self:

One of my priorities is to promote a stronger culture of innovation. Understanding 'the why' could really raise people's motivation and confidence to become innovators themselves.

3

CONSIDERING PROPOSALS

When considering proposals for new innovations, how do I keep the process as simple and sharp as possible?

I know that different businesses have different systems for considering new ideas. One CEO told me that their people produce a one-side concept paper if they have an idea for an innovation. In some businesses, the technical people do full-scale proposals and drawings for an innovation and present them to their Development Director.

I am a little hesitant about asking people to draw up detailed plans before discussing their ideas, although I know there's one killer question for anyone with a new idea: precisely how would it work?

Note to self:

I need to make a point of asking whether our processes encourage people to come up with ideas and kick them around with others. I'm not sure they do. If other Directors agree, I need to ask them about their ideas for improvement before sharing my own.

4

At what stage should I assess the business case for an innovation? Do I wait until I'm satisfied about the technical case or should I assess the two as one?

ASSESSING THE BUSINESS CASE

Some businesses make a point a point of telling their people that if they have any ideas for innovations, they first need to explain how they would work. They are asked to focus on ensuring the idea is technically robust, before promoting the positive business impact it could bring. I know that some innovations are incredibly complex. BUT I'm really not sure about keeping the technical case for an innovation separate from the business case in this way.

I worry that this split approach could be very disempowering for the technical team. I could tell them I like their ideas and then a few weeks later, having done the figures, announce we've decided that the business benefits aren't big enough to justify doing anything with them. That might well make them feel "next time we have an idea, don't let's bother!"

Note to self:

I will send a note round my people saying that when we discuss ideas for innovation it would be good to talk through the business case once we're all clear how the innovation would work. Even though we won't be able to come up with detailed forecasts, we should have a pretty good understanding of the possible business benefits that the idea could bring.

5

When people are pitching to me, how should I respond? Concentrate on keeping quiet and listening-or question and probe?

SHAPING MY RESPONSE

Some Directors have a policy of holding back when people do their pitch. They may ask a few questions and then just listen – and decide afterwards whether to take the idea on to the next stage and work up the business case.

I tend to make a point of asking quite probing questions of those who pitch to me. They might have drawn up a concept paper, but I feel I learn much more about the potential of their ideas from how they answer my questions.

I make a point of saying what I think about the ideas there and then. So whilst I may take a few days to think them through, the team feel that they know where they stand with me.

I do wonder whether it's right to hold back and just listen when a team are pitching for a particular innovation. I can see the advantage that you're not making any commitments in the heat of the moment. But as a leadership model, I'm not convinced.

If we're not even demonstrating curiosity as leaders, and trying to get behind what people are saying to us, what sort of statement are we making about our style of leadership?

Note to self:

In principle, I want to be as curious and transparent as I can be. So when people are putting forward their proposals I will be up for drawing them out as much as I can and saying what I think, making clear that I'm still forming an opinion and nothing is chipped in tablets of stone.

6

**If I have to say
“no”, how do I
say so?**

SAYING NO

Aha, the case against being fully transparent! If I have to say no, I wouldn't have to say so to their face.

I can see the benefits of this – and as I think this, I know it's wrong. If I'm not keen on an idea, or I think the costs might outweigh the benefits, I think I have an obligation to say this there and then.

I know that what I mustn't be is dismissive. I need to thank them for all their efforts and suggest how the idea might be stronger. If this means modifying it significantly, I need to be ready to say so, stressing that I would be happy to talk to them again as soon as they have a revised proposition.

Note to self:

When I say no, I should also say that I hope to be able to give them a yes when they come back with a revised proposal! I also need to make a point of congratulating them on the tenacity they have already shown in moving their ideas as far forward as they have done.

Do we have some sort of “sandpit” for trying out innovations?

TESTING OUT INNOVATIONS

I am a great enthusiast for innovations and relish the opportunity to discuss ideas about how things might be done better. I am also very clear that innovations only flourish when the wider culture is right and people are given every encouragement to be ruthless with their own ideas so that if they're not working they are the first ones to say so.

This is why I like the language of having a “sandpit” where we try out innovations and let ourselves reshape and remodel them early on as we test them out in practice.

I know of so many situations where people become over-attached to “their” ideas and find it really difficult to start afresh if something hasn't worked in the way they intended. This is why, whenever we back a new idea, I want it to be clear that we expect its advocates and sponsors to be ready to recast it as they test it out, without anyone letting their ego get in their way.

Note to self:

At my next team meeting, ask the team to sign up to the principle that those proposing innovations are always encouraged to build in processes for continuous review - feedback, ongoing tweaking and innovation.

8

**When I drive
an innovation
myself, am I as
tough on myself
as I am on
others?**

BEING TOUGH ON MY OWN IDEAS

We all know that some of the most innovative leaders can be the least democratic! They also tend to be very intuitive.

Whilst it is a great strength, it can easily keep people trapped in the “I’m right” school of thinking! They can miss some of the early warning signals that their innovation isn’t working in the way intended. When they finally accept things have been going wrong for quite some time, the stakes are higher than they should be.

I need to be pretty tough on myself and invite others to be robust with me in working through innovations I propose. Under scrutiny, if the idea isn’t sound, I need to be the first to say so.

Also, I need to be up-front in saying that if we really want to become more innovative we all need to make sure that our fear of failure doesn’t get in our way.

I’ve always liked the phrase “right next time”. It enables us to take some risks and go with the flow, sharing the mindset that if we’re not right this time there is always the next!

Note to self:

Share the message that we all need to be tough on our own ideas as well as those of others. That includes me! Everyone needs to know that I respond well to challenge. Simply put, I need to walk the talk - and that’s precisely what I intend to do.

9

**Could I be
doing more
to make
innovation
creative, fun
and rewarding?**

Making innovation fun

Innovation begins with playing with ideas. The challenge is to create a safe space in which to experiment.

In the past, I have been involved in some competitions for new ideas that have been terrific fun. We have split people into small teams and invited each one to come up with its own distinctive innovation. We have all had a vote for the idea that we favour the most (excluding our own, of course!) and have awarded a generous prize to the winning idea. At other times, we have offered prizes for the innovation that has had the greatest impact after three months in the sandpit! There is so much that can and should be done to make innovation fun.

Note to self:

Tell people I want to make innovation more fun and ask for their ideas. Maybe I should consider introducing a prize for the most innovative idea that is developed in a way that enables staff to have real fun putting it together?



***“Ideas won’t keep.
Something must be done about them.”***

Alfred North Whitehead

CHAPTER 7



Leaders as Facilitators

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows

St George's House, Windsor Castle

Leaders as Facilitators

The key proposition that emerged from our Conversation was that when leaders act as facilitators they need to empower themselves by taking on a number of different roles, as



Trust-builder



Lead listener



Empowerer



Permission-giver



Pace-setter



Protector

The balance of these roles depends on the purpose and composition of a group.

We put the role of trust-builder first because a facilitator has lead responsibility for building high trust relationships between themselves and all members of a group.

The level of trust a facilitator builds has a direct impact on the creativity of the group and the willingness of its members to take risks in testing out new thinking and ideas.

Roles



Responsibilities

- Setting out clearly up-front the aims of the discussion. All involved need to understand whether it is consultative or its purpose is to conclude with a final decision;
- Establishing clear boundaries for the discussion and acknowledging openly other agendas that will influence thinking within the group;
- Having a personal relationship with each member of the group that makes them feel safe in taking risks when trying out new ideas.



Responsibilities

- Underlining the importance of everyone learning from each other by listening closely to what each has to say;
- Demonstrating 'deep listening' by following and keeping the flow of discussion from one person to the next;
- In a generous and supportive manner, probing and questioning participants' ideas to understand more clearly what they are saying.



Responsibilities

- Affirming that everyone in the group has been invited because they have a distinctive and special role to play;
- Emphasising that everyone is invited to contribute on the basis of what they believe to be right at any point in time;
- Creating a safe space in which everyone's voice is heard and valued.



Responsibilities

- Encouraging risk-taking with ideas and changing our minds, with the understanding that we are always on the look out for a better idea;
- Taking away any sense of a participant having to defend any idea they have put forward, and actively encouraging open-mindedness within the group in moving forward and breaking new ground;
- Emphasising that creativity in building ideas is not a competitive activity, and often involves the development of radical new combinations of ideas that may have previously appeared to be opposed to each other.



Responsibilities

- Thinking through beforehand how to maintain the energy of a discussion and a sense of moving forward through physical movement (e.g. by changing chairs) and some plan for moving in and out of smaller ideas-building groups;
- Maintaining free flowing discussion by ensuring that everyone involved in the discussion responds to what has been said by the person beforehand and creating a shared awareness that prepared statements, recapping the whole discussion or going off at a tangent are not valued contributions;
- Keeping to agreed agenda times.



Responsibilities

- Protecting minority views at all costs by ensuring that those holding them feel their contributions are sought and valued. Those in the minority must never feel nervous of speaking up because of the strength of views expressed by the majority;
- Stressing that the group need to respect differences of view for thinking to evolve and move on. By giving space for different views to be expressed, it is far easier for people to accept that the majority view should prevail in the end as the way ahead;
- Adhering to the ground rules and the transparency of the discussion. Once the group own the groundrules they will look to you as the facilitator to uphold them.

Living the event beforehand in your mind

As a rule of thumb, you need to give as much time to planning a discussion as to facilitating it. As facilitator you need to live in the moment with your group, and you will only have confidence to do this if you're fully prepared.

The more you've thought through the event beforehand, the easier it will be to facilitate it.

Most team events and away-days that fall short of expectations don't succeed because trust isn't built within the group from the start.

Groundrules can really help a facilitator deal with behaviours that close down discussions, such as over-talking, bullying, breaking the flow, side-tracking and not listening.

Before the facilitation, you need to have considered:



Does the process you have designed allow enough time for everyone to have their say?



Who's in the group and what do you know about each of them?



How are you going to inject energy into the group if it becomes stuck and starts going over old ground?



What are the groundrules that you want the group to adopt to support you as their facilitator and build trust?

Groundrules

Groundrules are a shared commitment of the group to work together according to key principles agreed at the outset.

Groundrules are affirmations of how members of a group propose to behave as equal contributors to an ideas-building process. As such, they are expressed as positives: 'we will, rather than we won't'.

Some feel the expression 'groundrules' sounds restrictive and prefer to use other terms such as group protocols. Whatever term is used, agreement of the groundrules is a shared commitment of the group to work together differently from their usual conduct in meetings. Once they are agreed, they are owned by the group.

As facilitator, you are guardian of the groundrules and need to be diligent in upholding them.

The groundrules should be chosen and worded carefully to reflect the purpose of an ideas-building session, and help those involved to build the trust needed for them to be creative.

The bank of 15

On pages 72-75, we have drawn up a 'bank' or longlist of 15 groundrules each summarised with a memorable phrase. Such phrases can be helpful during discussions for you as facilitator to remind participants in a relaxed way the moment any of them are broken.

Bank of Groundrules

Groundrule memorable phrase	Why select it? To whom is it most relevant?
1 We build trust as we go	<p>Asks for an act of faith from all that trust will be built through the way group members work with each other. Acknowledges that many ideas-building sessions fall short of expectations because of a lack of trust within groups.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> everyone in a group, but especially doubters that the event will be an open and creative ideas-building session</p>
2 Be prepared to change your mind	<p>Loosens up those who find it challenging to move in their thinking through open debate; reassures everyone that you don't have to defend an idea you put forward.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> position-takers, trench-diggers</p>
3 Strictly confidential	<p>Gives group members the confidence to speak freely, without any fear of come back outside of the event.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> leaders wanting to test out options informally before taking them forward for formal decision-making</p>

Bank

Groundrule memorable phrase	Why select it? To whom is it most relevant?
4 Deep listening	<p>Encourages all to listen closely to what is being said and respond to the person who has spoken immediately before them.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> mobile phone and tablet junkies, side-talkers, prepared speech-makers, re-cappers</p>
5 No hidden agendas	<p>Encourages trust in the process, clarity about the context in which the discussion is taking place and what's in and outside of discussions.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> cynics and conspiracy theorists who assume that everyone has a hidden agenda</p>
6 All equal, all needed	<p>Reassures less senior participants that they have been invited because it is important their voice is heard, whatever their status in their day jobs.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> over-talkers who will need to be asked to hold back for others to have their say</p>
7 Connect not convince	<p>Discourages persuaders from making a pitch; encourages understanding without advocacy.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> highly passionate believers/ advocates who want to 'win the room'</p>

Bank

Groundrule memorable phrase	Why select it? To whom is it most relevant?
8 No bad idea or view	<p>Creates a sense of confidence and freedom; encourages everyone to take risks with ideas.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> those who want to close down discussion, bullies</p>
9 Contribute not compete	<p>Underlines that everyone's ideas are valued.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> those who want to prove their worth by 'taking out' those who disagree with them</p>
10 Clarity not consensus	<p>Emphasises the need for people to say it straight and avoid fudging differences for the sake of seeming to agree.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> quick decision-makers, those who are conflict averse</p>
11 Respect for minority views	<p>Protects those who disagree with the majority and helps them feel safe to voice their views. Demonstrates the integrity of the process; every idea will be heard and honoured.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> those who see themselves as in the majority and can become intolerant of minority views</p>

Bank

Groundrule memorable phrase	Why select it? To whom is it most relevant?
12 Free flowing discussion	<p>Prevents prepared statements from derailing discussions. Encourages deep listening, and the idea of building ideas rather than sharing position statements.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> speech-makers, poor listeners</p>
13 Breaking new ground	<p>Stops the group from staying in the 'safe zone' with what we know. Encourages creative risk-taking where no one is sure of the best way ahead.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> 'reflectors', those who are risk averse</p>
14 Tough on ourselves and each other – but always generous	<p>Prevents everyone from just accepting everything put forward and encourages questioning for greater clarity and understanding. Ensures that questions are expressed kindly and stops summary attempts to shut down ideas.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> non-enquirers, lazy thinkers, bullies</p>
15 Plain English	<p>Discourages the use of 'sound bites', jargon and acronyms unfamiliar to some members of the group.</p> <p><i>Most relevant to:</i> those who fear being seen as 'intellectually inadequate' and feel under pressure to use words of five syllables when they know that two would do</p>



3 Key Questions to consider when choosing groundrules

Having read through the bank of groundrules, there are three key questions we invite you to consider. Your responses will inform your selection of the three or four groundrules that best suit your needs and those of your group.

Which groundrules will be most helpful to me in building trust among the group?

What are my particular strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator, and which groundrules will best help me increase my confidence?

Which groundrules will help me ensure everyone takes part in the discussion?

To be continued ...

This Leadership Conversation was absolutely clear about the importance of a facilitator as trust-builder. When we return to this theme at a future Conversation, we want to focus on the energy that a facilitator needs to breathe into a group, and explore their immensely important role as pace-setter.



CHAPTER 8



Our Habits as Leaders: Breaking Bad

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

A framework

We can easily persuade ourselves that bad habits are part of who we are. Often we view them more as personality traits than unhelpful behaviours. The problem is that by defining ourselves in this way we persuade ourselves we can't change.

We might not be able to change how we feel, but we can change how these feelings make us *behave* when they reduce our professional impact.

This simple framework sets out a series of key questions and points of guidance that can support us in letting go of those habits that limit our potential as leaders and that of those around us.

Identifying the habit - questions to myself



Can I think of a habit that gets in the way of my effectiveness as a leader?



Is this a habit that I've developed recently or can I track it back over the years? I might be able to pinpoint the root cause of this habit. But this is private and there is no need to share this with anyone at work. What matters is minimising any negative impact it could have on my behaviour as a leader.



How could I be a better leader if I let go of this habit?



Have I spoken to anyone at work about this? If I have, is there any advice I need to take into account?



How will I feel asking others to support me in leaving this habit behind?

Owning the habit



Who does my bad habit affect the most – and could benefit the most if I can let it go?



How can I describe the habit in a way that I feel comfortable with when mentioning it to colleagues?



What is the most straightforward way of asking for support in freeing myself from the habit?



How do I get the tone right when asking for support? I want colleagues to understand that my determination to lose the habit is about improving my leadership at work.



Who can I try my thinking out on first?

Leading by example



Remember to thank people when they remind me that I'm slipping back into the old habit. I mustn't seem defensive – I've invited them to say something, and it's an act of generosity on their part.



When I feel I'm getting on top of the habit, remember to ask colleagues whether it is making a difference.



Draw on my experience to empower others and, with a light touch, ask them how I can support them in leaving behind habits that are getting in their way at work.



Encourage the rest of the team to follow my lead in leaving behind habits that hamper us, on the basis that we're all there for each other.



Discuss together how much we're improving performance as a result of our combined efforts.



Five Tales of Breaking Bad

We give you five everyday tales that depict how bad habits can get in our way as leaders - and be left behind.

The conflict avoider

*We all agree,
don't we?*

Identifying the habit

My worst habit is closing down discussion the moment I feel it's getting heated. I loathe confrontation of any kind. I know it goes back to a messy period in my personal life: the moment I hear raised voices, I want to head for the hills.

My fear of confrontation is getting in the way of me leading my top team. One of them said that they find my meetings more about ratifying decisions than discussing possible options. A couple of others have commented at times that they're not sure what we've agreed, because I sum up everything as a consensus.

Owning the habit

I'm aware I'm losing the respect of the team. They know from what I say and my body language that I shy away from any serious differences in view.

I'm thinking that our meeting next week on the 3-year business plan could be an opportunity to change and let the discussion flow. I am going to propose that we have an open discussion that is regulated by groundrules rather than closed down by me! The groundrule that will help me most as a facilitator is 'contribute not compete'¹ as it makes it clear that we will value every comment and idea put forward.

Before the discussion, I'll ask the team to remind me if I slip into the habit of closing down debate. However messy the process, I will strive to keep an open mind about the outcome, knowing that whatever it looks like we all have a real stake in moving our thinking forward.

The idea feels a bit like taking the plunge into the unknown, but it does excite me too. I know that if I let go of this habit and let people talk, there should be much greater energy and a real sense of shared ownership in taking forward what we've agreed.

The reflector

I'll need a few days on that one!

Identifying the habit

Yesterday's meeting with my Finance Director ended badly. She left simmering with frustration saying that I never share what I'm thinking. I know that she's not the only one who feels uncomfortable with not being able to read me.

I've always felt it is a strength to keep my thoughts to myself until I make a considered decision. Once or twice in the past I've been badly burnt by making quick decisions that have had unforeseen consequences – which is why I need time to reflect before I make my move.

I wasn't aware that my silent behaviour can feel threatening, though I am conscious that sometimes when I announce a decision people can feel uncertain whether I've considered their views fully.

Owning the habit

I've got to open up so that both my Board and Senior team feel that I'm engaged with what they're saying, without them thinking that I'm necessarily agreeing with everything they've said.

I've talked with my Finance Director to see if she could suggest how I can open up in ways that others will find helpful. She came up with some excellent ideas.

- Share my thinking at each stage: when I'm gathering ideas, weighing up the pros and cons of each, whether they could be combined, etc. Don't just listen and come back with a decision.
- Delve deeper into what people are saying by playing the role of devil's advocate so I give them a chance to sharpen up their own thinking.
- Be open about when I've changed my mind in the light of what someone has said. If I expect others to change their minds and take on new ideas that are stronger than theirs, I need to show that I'm up for it too.

What I want to do now is ask each of my team that they remind me when I go into silent listening mode. I'll ask them to make a point of saying to me directly: "What's your thinking at this moment - knowing that you might want to reflect further".

Where's my red pen?

The perfectionist

Identifying the habit

I've just spent my weekend sharpening up and correcting team members' reports and proposals. I can't believe their sloppiness. But I had a 'road to Damascus' moment on Sunday. I think they don't even try to give me a finished product because they know I'll get out my red pen and improve on whatever they do.

I know that I am a perfectionist. My parents never praised my efforts; they always expected more. What I think I'm doing is repeating their behaviour and it's disempowering my team.

I want to try out other approaches so that they no longer depend on me to polish their work. Also, I want to let go of my instinct to use my words rather than theirs, when theirs are just as good.

Owning the habit

At our team meeting in an hour's time, I'm going to be straight with everyone about my red pen habit.

What I want to say is that I'm de-skilling them by not giving them the opportunity to be more self-critical about what they produce. Selfishly, I've encouraged them to become too dependent on me acting as quality controller.

From now on, I propose that when they feel anything they've committed to paper is ready to share, I talk it through with them whenever time allows. And I'm going to do whatever I can to create the space to do this.

In our discussions, I will only ask questions if there is a lack of clarity about what they are saying. They will have charge of the red pen to make any amendments we agree. I'll also encourage them to ask each other to read through their work if they are concerned that they're not getting something across as clearly as they want.

I'm excited and nervous about this change. I see this as an opportunity to move from the standards being mine to becoming ours.

Quality and empowerment: we have to aim for them together now. And that's why I've just thrown five red pens in the bin and put one back in my drawer!



Sorry I'm late, it will be better next year!

The over-committer

Identifying the habit

I can't believe I've committed to take on something else! I know I'm already overloaded, running late for meetings and missing deadlines, but I'm still never able to say "no".

I've always been this way. I like to be needed, and show I have the skills to do a good job. The problem is that I'm not meeting my own standards because I haven't time to do anything well.

People around me keep on telling me that I don't have to prove my worth by continually committing to take on more. Now I know that I have to take control by NOT volunteering. When asked directly by my CEO to take on a new piece of work, I need to be ready to say that if I take it on we'll need to re-prioritise or reassign some of my workload, because otherwise I'll be promising what I can't deliver.

Owning the habit

I'm going to start owning the fact that I've been hooked on being needed. I'm addicted to others' confidence in me doing more and more, but I know I'm in danger of letting them and myself down by taking on too much.

Am I brave enough to say that? I feel uncomfortable just imagining saying it. I need someone I can discuss this with who'll bolster my determination to let the habit go.

There are three 'danger scenarios' in which I'm most likely to volunteer: Exec meetings, partnership meetings and one-to-ones with my CEO. There is a common message I need to share with others, but I want to nuance it so that they understand it is about me taking control and doing what I've already got on as well as I can. In the process, I need to make sure that I don't sound like an overworked victim!

I'm conscious that there is a growing culture in my Division of people promising more than they can deliver – and they know it. I need to say to my senior managers that they need to be honest with me about what they can take on. And if they're going to take me seriously when I say that, I've got to lead by example.

The commentator

*You won't
believe what
they've
done NOW!*

Identifying the habit

I've just come away from a meeting with my Chair. As usual, he's got yet another new shiny idea. He never stops meddling – and that's so often the green light for others to join in too.

I know I allow it to affect me too much. It distracts me from what I should be getting on with. After three years, I still let the Board wind me up too much, and then I go and wind up the Execs about the Board. They must feel that I'm like a stuck record.

From now on my rule is going to be: if I have any issues with the Board about something, I will discuss it with them face-to-face first, before mentioning it to anyone else. This way I'll spend less time talking about people meddling and more time getting on with being a leader.

Owning the habit

There are two colleagues I tend to vent my exasperation on. I need to tell them that when I start going on about the Chair or Non-Execs I want them to shut me up – and that goes for one-to-ones as well as team meetings. I've thought of a one-word code to use when I slip back into being the critical commentator. All they need to say is: "AND ...?"

Also, I'm going to explore with my top team our business ambitions where we've yet to develop our thinking. There are a number for my Chair to get his teeth into. I just need to present them in a way that he finds exciting and will run with.

It's going to be difficult to drop the cathartic release of a good rant! But I know it undermines people's confidence in my leadership. And I need others to follow my lead.

We're a small outfit of about eighty people and, of course, there's gossip! The problem is that the gossip is often divisive, with members of one team criticising those in other teams.

I now realise that, unwittingly, I've given approval for this to happen through my habit of criticising the Board. So I will now explore with my team how we can leave this habit behind as an organisation.

After Breaking Bad

Our behaviours move on, and so we are better placed to deal with other habits that get in our way as leaders.



Leading through humility

Anyone who has tried to let go of a habit knows how difficult it is. However hard we try, it's so easy to find ourselves slipping back into behaviours that we want to leave behind.

Whilst our openness to freeing ourselves from a habit demonstrates the strength of our intent, it also demonstrates vulnerability as we acknowledge that our habits get in the way of our effectiveness as leaders.

What we can easily forget is that others are already aware of what we're taking on. They've had to work with (or around) our habit! Once we own it, and share our resolve to let it go, we will be showing a measure of real humility that is surely one of the most important characteristics of a successful leader.

Having opened up, we can ask others to give us their support. We can invite them to remind us when we slip, stressing that this will be an act of generosity on their part and much appreciated by us.

The example that we set can encourage others to do the same. And we can approach more easily those who are unaware of how a habit of theirs can impact on their colleagues. If they can see how we have taken the plunge, it is far easier for them to give it a try.

The big prize of being part of a team supporting each other in this way is how this can radically change relationships. It builds trust and sets the foundation for different ways of working that maximise our impact as leaders and support others in following our lead.

CHAPTER 9



Leading a Winning Team

Insights from
Leadership
Fellows

Society of Leadership Fellows
St George's House, Windsor Castle

"Please allow me to introduce myself..."

This is my second post as CEO. I have a successful reputation. I turned around my past company and doubled its turnover. I'm known as a dynamic inspirational leader with an obsession for being the best.



That's my public persona. Privately, I know when and where I could have done better if I'd done things differently. In particular, I recognise that I developed a relationship with my old Executive that meant that I became the Queen Bee with my top people acting as drones!

They produced what I asked from each of them without question – which, of course, sometimes was not what I needed at all!

The responsibility for their behaviour was largely mine. My strength and drive meant that they saw me as always knowing what needed to be done. Challenging this perception was painful for everyone: you can't talk yourself out of what you've behaved yourself into. Before I left, I changed my behaviour and the team did begin to strengthen.

In this job, I want to make it clear from the start that our success is not all about me! Walking the walk, I give you my aide memoire for my first 100 days!

Tough on myself

I need to be a lot tougher on myself in the ways in which I work with others. If my top team can't see in me the values and behaviours I want from them, why should they make the effort? In particular, I will:

Be more liberal with my praise

It is easy to forget that we all want recognition when we've done something well, whatever our status. I've always affirmed top team members in their roles, and I know it meant a great deal to them.

What I didn't do enough was congratulate my top people when they moved out of their comfort zone to support another member of the team. I want to make a point of recognising individuals when they support the team by using their expertise to sharpen up a bigger picture in ways that every team member understands.

Be less of a manager, more of a leader

In the past, my relationship with my top people tended to be transactional: "I need this"; "Can you give me a forecast for that?" Of course, I explained the purpose but my approach was to assume this was what I needed, and their response was to comply.

At the time, it appeared an efficient way of driving forward. But it had unforeseen consequences. Sometimes, they gave me what I asked for but it was not what I needed. And nobody felt they could question me.

This time round, I want to make sure that the top team are clear about the organisational challenge we're facing, and ask them to pitch in with their expertise about ways forward. I want them to know that when I ask questions they're about what they think, rather than asking them to provide something for me because I'm the one doing the thinking.

The message I need to get across is that we're all responsible for driving the organisation forward.

Stress that challenge is ‘good’

I know my ‘can do’ energy is enormously potent. The downside is that people can find it difficult to disagree with me. I need to invite challenge in a very direct way, when any of the team feels that I’ve got something wrong, or that there is a better approach.

I want to get across to them that challenge feeds my creative energy.

In the past, I haven’t put enough thought into how to build in opportunities for challenge in meetings. Standing items on our agenda, together with my last minute one-line additions, didn’t put us in the right mindset for an open debate.

I want to structure, say, one in three of our meetings for creative debate on a specific issue. Beforehand, I will draw up a briefing paper so that we can spend our time together creatively (rather than getting up to speed) – and I will ensure that every one learns that I’m open to changing my mind. If this is to work, what I can’t be is defensive in what I say, and in my body language!

Remember pressing send doesn’t always hit the mark

I am a text and email person. I like the written word and I feel that people can pick up my communication as and when they’re free to do so.

But I’ve learnt this doesn’t work for everyone. Some of my top team really appreciated me picking up the phone. They felt that just me talking things through with them was an affirmation.

I found this difficult at first. It was way out of my transactional comfort zone. But it was amazing how much of importance I learnt by chatting to them.

I want my top team members to think why they’re sending an email. If it is because it’s less challenging than talking directly, then ditch the email and pick up the phone!



Make clear that silo working is not an option

I have been told that two of my top people are brilliant in their silos of expertise but are not team players. They need to understand that their work is most valued by me and their colleagues as an important element of the big picture, not as something that stands alone. If I can get this across, then we at least have a platform for team working.

From what's been said, I think our starting point is establishing a common language. They need to communicate in ways the team can easily understand – and the team needs to be prepared to stretch in understanding them.

Of course, as part of a team I want individuals to be themselves. The twist is that I want them to share the best of themselves working with each other. That is their challenge.



Shift the balance of reward

In my last CEO role, we did reward team performance, but that was always a small part of our bonus system. The lion's share of anyone's bonus was all about their personal performance.

This time, I'm going to experiment and make three-quarters of the bonus system about team performance. It feels risky, but it isn't set in concrete. I can always finesse the balance. What's important is to get a very clear message across that team working isn't 'a nice to have' but core to our success.

The criteria could be around service to colleagues. How well they support each other in understanding each other's perspectives, offer their expertise and demonstrate a sense of shared accountability?

This will need to be worked through thoroughly, but I can see its potential as an organisation-wide reward system.

Not all about me

I know that my behaviour will influence that of others, but what I don't want is just a strong relationship between my top people and myself. What I need is a strong relationship between them.

In my old role, I didn't work hard enough to build trust among the team. They worked pretty well together when I was present, but when I wasn't around they started bickering. Supporting each other in achieving a shared goal was an ambition that stayed on the page!



Building lateral relationships

This time round my priority is to build lateral relationships and trust, starting with my top team. They need to know what my expectation is of them - that they work as a team, whether I'm present or not.

This will involve a fundamental shift in the way people work with each other.

They won't be working within the familiar hierarchical framework for praise and criticism. Instead they will need to create a new framework for support and challenge.

In order to work creatively as a team, they may need to understand more about, and even stray into, each other's 'territories'. This will mean team members sharing with colleagues what's not working so well under them.

As a winning team, all will need to recast their loyalties and build the trust needed to feel that they are not in competition with each other, but there to support one another, and watch each other's backs.

I see it as my job to create the conditions to make this shift in working possible and then pass the baton and give responsibility to those in the team to make it work.



Making it OK to challenge each other

There are two types of challenge involved in team working. One is about challenging each other's views. By openly inviting challenge in my thinking, I will be demonstrating how I want it to happen within the top team.

I'm also going to introduce occasional 'support and challenge sessions', in which one of the team (starting with me) will share some aspect of their leadership style that is not working as well as it needs to, and ask for support and advice in becoming a better leader. This should do a lot to encourage openness and trust.

The other type of challenge is about behaviours. We've all been in a team with at least one cynic, point scorer, shirker or information withholder. They affect the energy and morale of a team.

At first, it is difficult to challenge colleagues over whom you have no authority about their behaviour. This is where placing greater value on team rather than individual performance bonuses may pay dividends by boosting motivation to challenge.



Giving space for experimentation

I don't expect my top team to produce winning ideas in the blink of an eye. They need time to build their relationships as well as develop their thinking, and time needs to be factored in for them to do this.

In my mind, success isn't just about coming up with a result, although this is important. It is also about people building trust so that they are relaxed about saying they were wrong or they don't understand what's being said.

My responsibility is to create the space in which the team are able to experiment and stretch thinking.



Making sure the team does not become a clique

The last thing I want to happen is that the stronger members of the team batter others into toeing a line and we end up with grey 'group think'. Winning behaviour is about getting the right balance between collaborative ideas building and allowing individuals to shine in their own right.

When I get to know my top people better, I'll be able to see more clearly whether this is a danger.

I'll be confident that we're working as a team when there is a collective sense of responsibility at times when things go 'belly up'. And I hope when things go really well, we will all want to give special recognition to the one or two individuals who went the extra mile.

Getting personal

As a leader, I want everyone in the organisation to feel that they have a personal stake in our business and that I have a personal stake in their success. Individual accountability for their performance is at the core, but this doesn't preclude building relationships across the organisation, starting with my top team.

Winning teams are inclusive. I've seen that when their members connect with others it has a ripple effect. Their behaviours become the norm. If they are not defensive, their staff will become less so. If they don't blame other people for failure, those working to them will know that this approach is unlikely to work.

We need an inclusive culture if we're going to be the best. I will drive this to create the ripple effect, though as an international and multi-sited business of around 1,500 staff I will need my top team alongside me.

These are the most important cultural characteristics I want to embed in the organisation:

Listening

I want my top people to understand the value of listening to staff at all levels and not just relying on what's said by those they work most closely with.

Together with my top team, we will make diary commitments to each spend informal time with groups of staff at least once every 6 weeks. The sole purpose of meeting them is to get to know a little about them, ask how they feel it's going and what more support we can give them. Between us, we will be able to cover everyone in the company in a year.

We will also book to go in on different team meetings, at least once a month. As well as listening, we can use this opportunity to bounce ideas around with those who may well be responsible for implementing them.

Smiling

I have a thing about people blind sighting each other in shared workspaces: in reception and moving from one department to another. I believe personal recognition is the foundation for building working relationships.

I will lead by smiling, nodding at everyone I pass, maybe even have a brief conversation with someone going the same way as me – and expect my top team to do the same.

Some people seem to think this is a bit idiosyncratic. I think it's about people feeling recognised and belonging.

Getting it right – next time

Often mistakes or failure to get something done are hidden or blamed on someone else. The risk of failure stops people from trying to do something in a different way. This impacts badly on the business.

I want my top team to spread the message that no one gets it right first time, all the time. The quicker an issue is dealt with, the less of a problem it is. Throughout our organisation the message will be: “Share what’s happened with those who can help because you have the potential to get it right next time - and if not next time, the time after that”.

It's only rock and roll, but I like it

Yep, I am a Stone's fan – that's why 'let me introduce myself' makes me smile every time I say it. My rock and roll is this business, and I don't just like it, I'm passionate about it and making it the best in our sector.

"You can't always get what you want" is another smile maker, because it makes me remember when I thought I knew what I wanted and then realised it wasn't what I needed at all. This is why I am going to try this time to get what I need – a winning, challenging, strong team, "oh baby"!

"Time is on my side". If only that was true. A great sentiment but we need to achieve results. What I've got to hold on to is that we'll achieve better results with me as part of a strong team, not as a queen bee.

So what I need is for my team to see me as one of them. What we want will change. There are no rigid certainties. There is no fixed winning line. Time might not be on our side, but so long as we're on each other's side, we'll be the winning team I want us to be.



Note

Apiarists and entomologists will understandably question my creative use of bee and drone behaviour! I know the queen bee doesn't take off her crown! She dies. That's not going to happen in my case - figuratively or in any other way! So please allow me poetic licence and let me remove my crown to create a winning team.



To return to any one of these Chapters, please click on the cover.