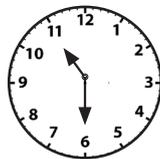




# Crafting your story as a leader



from 10.30am until 4.30pm  
on Thursday, March 12th 2020

**Background Note and Agenda for our 47th Leadership Conversation**

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

## **This Leadership Conversation** forms part of our theme on **Defining your brand as a leader**

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*The quote below comes from our report on this theme.*

*A link is on the final page.*

*Our brand as a leader must be truly owned by ourselves. It is not a mask that we can choose to put on, and take off, at will.*



# Our mission from 10.30am on March 12th:



*To support each other in crafting our stories as leaders, enabling us to feel more confident as we share with others our personal offer as leaders.*

## We will ask ourselves:

- Can we each recall a time in the past few months when we didn't represent ourselves as well as we could have done by the way we told our own story as a leader?
- What was it about this situation that put us on the back foot, and if we had our time again what would we have done differently?
- Drawing on the insights gained through our answers, how might we best capture our stories as leaders in future?
- In particular, should we customise our story according to the audience we are with? If we favour this to some degree, how should we differentiate between that aspect which is common to all situations and that which can be tailored to our audience?

*In the final stages of this Conversation we will work together in small groups in recrafting our stories as leaders.*

*"This is me!"*

*"Tell us more"*

*"Yes I can!"*



# The three stages to our Conversation

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## 1 "This is me!"

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We put stage one under this heading because early on we want to encourage you to **share a story** that enables us to understand better where you are coming from as a leader.

To help us achieve strong connections across our group, please be up for sharing something about yourself in a way that helps others gain some sense of the sort of leader that you are.

## 2 "Tell us more"

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Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all want to mobilise the power of questioning to draw each other out.

We want to **draw on our shared curiosity** as we think through how we might better craft our own stories as leaders to enable us to step forward with a greater sense of personal confidence and clarity about our offer.

## 3 "Yes I can!"

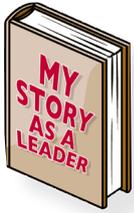
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Our third stage is about each of us developing a greater sense of control over our stories as leaders and recrafting them to capture our offer in ways that enable us to develop **more authentic connections** with others.

**For every breakthrough in thinking that we achieve during this final stage, we will be able to identify its origins in the stories that we have each shared and the curiosity that others have shown in response.**

# "This is me!"

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After agreeing our Guiding Principles for this Conversation, we will explore our first question in small groups. We want to start by asking you to try to bring to mind a moment during the past few months when you shared your story about yourself as a leader and weren't entirely happy with the experience.

- *Did you feel that you under-sold yourself, or perhaps over-sold yourself as a leader?*
- *If you had your time again, what DIDN'T you say that you would like to have said - and is there anything that you said that you would like NOT TO HAVE SAID?*

If you can't bring to mind a moment such as this, please ask yourself what you think you would say if you were to be "bounced" by a business acquaintance to tell your story about how you come to occupy your current position as a leader.

*"Looking back, I think I was too coy - so keen to come across as humble that I sounded too self-apologetic"*

*"I knew they were going to ask me about myself and when it came to it I just GUSHED! I should have stopped earlier"*



# "Tell us more!"

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As we move into the second stage of this Conversation, we will press ourselves to draw lessons from our stories that we can convert into positive outcomes later in the day.

We will keep in mind one key principle that underpins all of our Leadership Conversations:

- we support each other in developing particular strategies that work best for **our own personal styles of leadership**.

This is particularly important for this particular theme, in how we handle one key issue:

## **How vulnerable should we be in the stories that we tell?**

In previous Conversations, some Leadership Fellows have made a point of saying that they wish to demonstrate a greater degree of vulnerability as a way of achieving a stronger personal connection with others.

Others have argued that they wish to customise their personal story according to the audience they are with, so that in general they hold back from sharing anything that could potentially be used to call into question their credentials as a leader.

There are important choices to be made between rather **reflective and self-critical** styles of story-telling at one end of the spectrum and styles that seek to offer a sense of **confidence and clarity** at the other.

We will make a point of engaging with them on the basis that there is **no single right answer** and our role as a group is to help each other develop the answer that works best for us as individual leaders.



# "Yes I can!"

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From lunchtime onwards we see ourselves moving into our "stretch zone", when we hope to push ourselves as hard as we can in sharpening up our own personal strategies for crafting our stories as leaders.

We will sharpen up the particular question for lunch in light of our morning discussion.

However we frame this question, we will be keen to draw you out on:

- *What for you personally was the most challenging proposition that came out of our morning discussions, and what does it imply for how you craft your story as a leader?*

So often we find that the most powerful insights come when we make a point of pausing and reflecting, and then pressing ourselves harder on what this reflection means for us.

## **The most significant and challenging insight**

In the spirit of these insights being personal, we will ask each lunch table to nominate the Leadership Fellow with the insight that they regard as the most significant, to share with us after lunch in a way that is as lucid and bold and challenging as possible.

We will be especially keen to hear how any Fellows intend to **change the ways in which they tell their stories** about themselves as leaders - and why.



## Your key phrases - on the subject of YOU

After lunch, we will encourage those who are sharing with us their personal insight to let themselves "risk up" their idea as much as they can.

This is the stage when some inspiration and risk-taking from a small number of Fellows can make such a difference to what we achieve between now and the end of the Conversation at 4.30.

Once we have had a chance to reflect on their challenges, we will break into small groups for possibly the most important part of this Conversation.

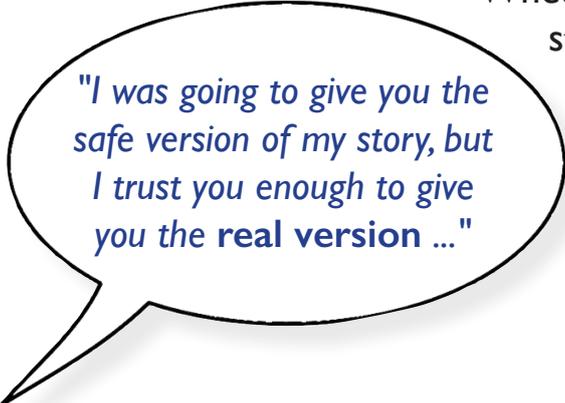
- *In this final round of small groups we will ask you to support each other in crafting the two or three most important phrases that you would wish to use when telling your story, capturing your credentials and offer as a leader in a way that really does you justice.*

### One or two versions

If your instinct is to vary this story according to your audience, it would be best if you could share with us:

- two or three phrases that you would use in your **safe version** of your story and
- two or three phrases that you would use in a **higher trust context**.

Whether you have one or two versions of your story (or more!), we will be keen to hear what you describe as the **distinctiveness** of your leadership offer in each version, and what it is about your background that has enabled you to make this particular offer.



*"I was going to give you the safe version of my story, but I trust you enough to give you the real version ..."*

## Welcoming peer feedback

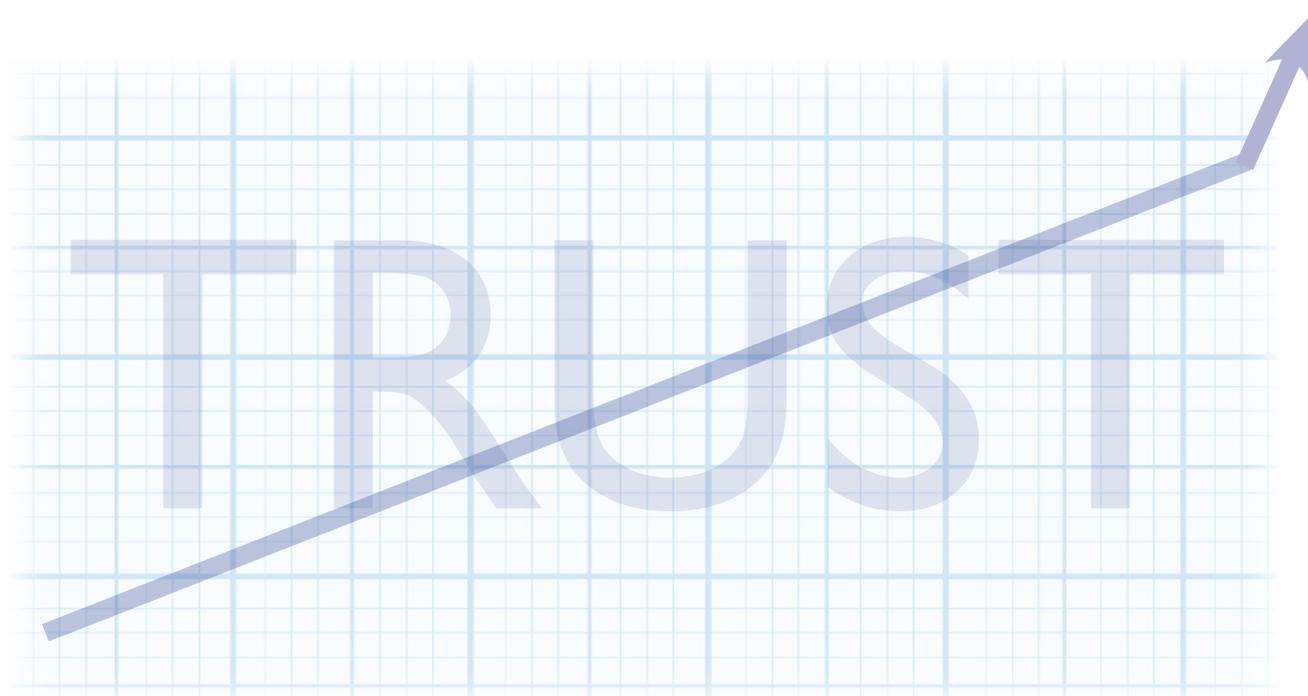
This is the stage in a one-day Conversation when we gain so much from our Guiding Principle of welcoming peer feedback.

We have had moments at previous Conversations where a Fellow has said something about themselves as a leader in the final session, and others have felt so relaxed with them by that stage that they have felt free to question them about the path they are on and whether it resonates with the leadership style that they have projected since the start of the Conversation.

We really hope that you will be open to receiving feedback from other Fellows and also offering it.

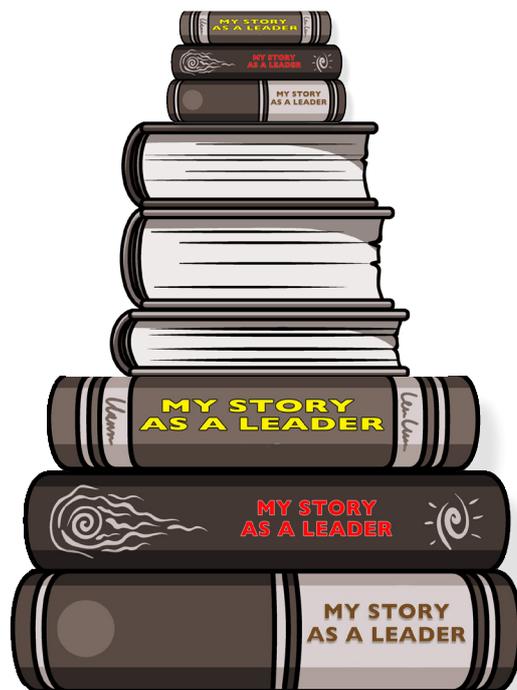
This dimension to our work as a Society is only possible because of the exceptionally high levels of **trust** that Leadership Fellows have worked hard to establish with each other, and the **generous spirit** with which Fellows have offered each other feedback.

It means that in the final stages of a Leadership Conversation a good number of Fellows can achieve some really significant breakthroughs because it matters to us all that we can each take away specific outcomes that support us in **moving forward as leaders**.



## Sharper and better crafted

We hope that by 4.30pm on March 12th you will feel that your personal story as a leader is sharper and better crafted than it has been before, and this is in no small measure due to the ways in which other Fellows have shared their own stories as well as the supportive feedback among ourselves as a group.



# Agenda

**Thursday, March 12th 2020**

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| <b>10.30am</b> | Please make sure you are with us by this time. Coffee and light refreshments will be served in the Vicars' Hall from soon after 10.00   |
| <b>10.45am</b> | We welcome you to the Conversation and invite you to agree on our Guiding Principles as providing the framework for today's Conversation. We then break into small groups for 15 minutes to consider our first question (Refreshments available)  |
| <b>11.15am</b> | We hear your stories and insights arising from small group discussions. After a while we agree on our key challenge for our second round of small groups  |
| <b>11.40am</b> | 2nd round of small groups consider agreed question (Refreshments available)   |
| <b>12.05pm</b> | Back in the circle in new seats, we capture the key messages coming forward from this second round of groups, drawing out the most challenging issues that we might want to return to later. From 12.45 we change gear and begin to think our way into the challenge that we want to consider over lunch                |
| <b>1.00pm</b>  | Lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall. Over lunch, working groups engage with the agreed question. At the end of lunch, each group nominates one of their number to share with us their own <b>stretching resolve</b> or "big idea" for how they might better craft their story as a leader in future                     |
| <b>1.55pm</b>  | We gain inspiration from a small number of challenging ideas and agree how best to organise ourselves in small groups to sharpen up the two or three key phrases - and perhaps more - that we would each expect to use when sharing our stories as leaders  |
| <b>2.30pm</b>  | In groups we support each other in sharpening up our key phrases. If we would rather have a safe version of our story and a riskier, higher trust version, we sharpen up the core words at the heart of each version  |
| <b>2.55pm</b>  | Back together again as a single group, we sharpen up our key personal resolves whilst including time for feedback from other Fellows to help us stretch ourselves still further   |
| <b>3.30pm</b>  | We have a 5-minute comfort break and light refreshments are available to bring back into the circle (to different chairs, please). We continue the process of sharing resolves, making sure that everyone has an opportunity to benefit from quality feedback from other Fellows before we finish on the dot of 4.30pm. |

Please click below  
to read  
***Defining your brand  
as a leader***



## Defining your brand as a leader

Insights from Leadership Fellows

October 2017

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

