

How Effective are Your Partners as Leaders?

By Tony Reiss

When we talk to new partners about what is the main difference in their role now they are partners, we frequently hear something along the lines of “we are expected to be leaders now”. The word *leadership* gets used a lot these days. We use it all the time. But do we all agree what it means?

- Are good leaders born or can they be made?
- Do you have to be popular to be a leader (or will being a good leader make you popular?)
- Is leadership different to management? If it is, what is the difference?

More textbooks have probably been written in the last 10 years on this topic than any other, which unfortunately makes the matter even more confusing. So this article looks at what some of the top academics think about leadership and, in particular, how *leadership* differs from *management*.

A later article will look at the challenge of how to develop leadership capabilities, as well as other skills, in partners.

John Adair: Action-centred leadership

Adair was one of the first academics to study leadership. Many of his studies looked at effective leadership in the armed forces. He showed that people can be trained to be good leaders. Before this research there was a widely held view that leaders were born not made. Adair saw leadership in terms of three overlapping circles represented by *task*, *team* and *individual*. He believed that working teams all had three common needs:

- The need to accomplish a common task
- The need to be maintained as a cohesive group
- The needs of each of the individuals in the group

The leader's job was to identify these needs and meet them.

In an interview for Director magazine in 1988, Adair said:

"Leadership is about sense of direction. The word *lead* comes from the Anglo Saxon word that means a road... It's knowing what the next step is. Managing is from the Latin "Manus", a hand. It tends to be closely linked with machines and the idea of controlling, particularly financial control and administration."

Elsewhere Adair lists the functions of leadership as follows:

- **Planning** - seeking information, allocating tasks and developing a workable plan
- **Initiating** - briefing the group, allocating tasks and setting standards
- **Controlling** - maintaining standards and ensuring progress
- **Supporting** - encouraging, disciplining, creating team spirit, reconciling differences
- **Informing** - clarifying tasks, keeping group informed, summarising ideas
- **Evaluating** - checking feasibility of ideas, evaluating group performance

Peter Drucker: Management by Objectives

Whilst Adair was developing his thinking in the UK, Peter Drucker was coming to similar conclusions in the USA. Drucker summarises the roles of senior management as follows:

*"A manager in the first place **sets objectives**. He determines what the goals in each area of objectives should be. He decides what has to be done to reach these objectives. He makes the objectives effective by communicating them to the people whose performance is needed to attain them.*

*Second, a manager **organises**. He analyses the activities, decisions and relations needed. He classifies the work. He divides it into manageable jobs. He groups these units and jobs into an organisation structure. He selects people for the management of these units and for the jobs to be done.*

*Next, a manager **motivates and communicates**. He makes a team out of the people that are responsible for various jobs. He does that through...*

*...the practices with which he works
...his own relations to the men with whom he works
...constant communication to and from his subordinates...his superior...his colleagues*

*The fourth basic element is....**measurement**. He sees to it that each man has measurements available to him which are focused on the performance of the whole organisation and which, at the same time, focus on the work of the individual and help him do it. He analyses, appraises and interprets performance.*

*Finally, a manager **develops people, including himself**."*

Stephen Covey: Seven Habits and Seven Endowments

Covey's habits are considered fundamental to being an effective leader (ie doing the right things) not just an efficient leader (ie doing things right). Covey identifies a unique human capability or endowment associated with each habit, as follows:

Habits	Description	Endowments
Habit 1 Be Proactive	Taking responsibility for our attitudes and actions; knowing what needs to be done and deciding to do it	Self awareness or self knowledge
Habit 2 Begin with the End in Mind	You are far more likely to be effective in your work and life if you have a clear sense of the direction you are heading in and what you are trying to achieve. This is linked to the concept that thought is creative; thinking things up has a habit of leading to their creation.	Imagination and conscience
Habit 3 Put First Things First	This is about organising activities in line with priorities identified by Habit 2. Covey says that we spend too much time dealing with urgent issues, both important and not important.	Willpower

	Focusing more on important and not urgent issues will increase our effectiveness.	
Habit 4 Think Win-Win	Covey believes this is <i>the</i> habit of interpersonal leadership. Managing interactions with people on the assumption that it is possible to find a solution that is mutually beneficial, will lead to bigger 'pies' from which slices can be shared out.	An abundance mentality
Habit 5 Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood	This habit is concerned with effective communications. It is about listening with empathy and clarifying what people are saying before trying to put your own point across. Before offering solutions or advice, assess the situation and people's needs. You need the courage to hold back from putting your viewpoint across and the ability to take into consideration other people and wider issues.	Courage balanced with consideration
Habit 6 Synergize	By being able to value differences in people and appreciate the uniqueness everyone brings to a situation it is possible to work with others to create a solution that is bigger than the sum of the available ingredients. Synergy is the ultimate goal of collaborative working.	Creativity
Habit 7 Sharpen the Saw	Covey advocates a constant process of self-maintenance, on our physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual aspects. <i>"Without this discipline, the body becomes weak, the mind mechanical, the emotions raw and the person selfish"</i>	Continuous improvement or self renewal

Covey's principle centered leadership is advocating what he calls a new paradigm in management, the **PS Paradigm**, named for the one **P** and seven **Ss** that form its core. The seven **Ss** of Covey's new paradigm are directly related to the long-standing McKinsey 7S strategic management model.

- **People** Moving away from the efficiencies of business processes to the effectiveness of the people involved.
- **Self** Starting to work at the personal level and moving outward via those things we can actually have influence over.
- **Style** Participative styles of management lead to greater creativity which, coupled with the principles of trust and empowerment, can only benefit any organisation.
- **Skills** Continuing training and development of all managers and leaders is needed to hone up the skills of self-management, delegation, communication, negotiation, and so on.
- **Shared vision and principles** Developing working agreements based on a shared viewpoint and set of operating principles.

- **Structure and systems** Taking a systemic approach to the development of the necessary structures and systems any organisation needs to function effectively.
- **Strategy** Defining and designing a focused approach to closing the gap between the current reality and the future vision.

Warren Bennis: Strategies for Taking Charge

Bennis is a New York born industrial psychologist who has been advisor to four US presidents and is probably the best known writer on leadership.

His book, *Leaders - The Strategies for Taking Charge*, was based on interviews with 90 leaders in both the political and corporate world. He outlined four key strategies for effective leadership:

- **Attention through vision.** Bennis believes that the vision should be of a "realistic, credible and attractive future for the organisation...a target that beckons"
- **Achieving meaning through communication.** Bennis writes "...a leader must be a social architect who understands the organisation and shapes the way it works". He also stressed how important it was for a leader to be a good role model.
- **Achieving trust through positioning.** Bennis believes that leaders are not followed unless they are trusted. He believes trust is established not only by what the leader does, but also by who they are and how they do things.
- **The deployment of self.** Bennis stresses that good leaders are perpetual learners. "Those who do not learn do not survive long as leaders".

He observed that good leaders seemed to share some if not all of the following characteristics:

- Guiding vision
- Passion
- Integrity (defined as self-knowledge, candour and maturity)
- Trust
- Curiosity and daring

Bennis seemed to develop a rather poor view of managers and makes the following distinctions between leaders and managers:

Manager	Leader
Driven by context	Masters their context
Administers	Innovates
Maintains	Develops
Focuses on systems and structures	Focuses on people
Relies on control	Inspires trust
Short range view	Long term perspective
Asks how and when?	Asks what and why?

Has eye on the bottom line	Has eye on the horizon
Imitates	Originates
Accepts status quo	Challenges status quo
Does things right	Does right thing

Charles Handy: Best Fit Approach

Charles Handy offers a pragmatic approach. He suggests that a leader needs to consider four sets of influences in any situation, as follows:

- The leader – his or her preferred style, whether it is directive or supportive
- The subordinates – their preferred style in light of the circumstances
- The task – the job and its objectives
- The environment – the position of power the leader has in the organization and the relationship with the group

A 'best fit' approach maintains that there is no such thing as a 'right' style of leadership but that effective leadership will result from balancing the requirements of leader, subordinates and task and ensuring they fit the environment.

John Kotter: What Leaders Really Do

More recently, Kotter also looked at the distinctions between management and leadership. In his view, management deals with complexity and leadership deals with change.

He compares the principal tasks as follows:

Management	Leadership
Planning Budgeting	Setting a direction
Controlling Problem-solving	Motivating/inspiring
Organising Staffing	Aligning people

Kotter believes that the most common failings in leaders are as follows:

- Allowing too much complacency
- Not building a shared commitment to change (what he calls a guiding coalition)
- Lacking sufficient power of vision
- Under-communicating the vision by a factor of 100
- Allowing obstacles to block the vision
- Failing to get short term wins
- Declaring victory too soon
- Neglecting to anchor the changes into the culture

Daniel Goleman: Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is the latest topic to shed some light on leadership. EQ is defined as the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively. EQ consists of four fundamental capabilities:

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Social skills

Research amongst several thousand executives worldwide has found six distinct leadership styles. The most effective leaders use most of these styles depending on the situation:

- Coercive leaders – demand immediate compliance
- Authoritative leaders – mobilize people towards a vision
- Affiliative leaders – create emotional bonds and harmony
- Democratic leaders – build consensus through participation
- Pacesetter leaders – expect excellence and self-direction
- Coaching leaders – develop people for the future

Further research has shown that each leadership style has a measurable effect on the culture of an organization. See table below:

Drivers of climate	Coercive	Authoritative	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetter	Coaching
Flexibility	.28	.32	.27	.28	-.07	.17
Responsibility	-.37	.21	.16	.23	.04	.08
Standards	.02	.28	.31	.22	-.27	.39
Rewards	-.18	.54	.48	.42	-.29	.43
Clarity	.11	.44	.37	.35	-.28	.38
Commitment	-.13	.35	.34	.26	-.20	.27
	-.26	.54	.46	.43	-.25	.42
Overall impact on culture	negative	most strongly positive	positive	positive	negative	positive

Source: Goleman (*Harvard Business Review* 2000)

This would seem to have a rather negative conclusion for law firms, since the prevailing culture in most of the larger firms seems to me to be a pacesetter one!

Summary and Implications to Partnerships

So what does all this tell us? The academics don't seem to agree on everything. We wouldn't expect them to. But there does seem to be general agreement that:

- Leaders don't have to be born – they can be made
- Effective leaders seem to have a stronger vision, communicate their vision more clearly and are good at motivating and coaching others to achieve the vision
- An important starting point appears to be to develop skills in self-awareness and to be keen to learn

The key questions for partnerships are:

- Do you need your partners to be more effective leaders?
- Does your culture encourage leadership traits?
- Assuming we accept the definitions of good leadership, what can firms do to develop leadership skills in partners?

We will offer our thoughts on these questions in part two of this article.

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