

Bringing Leadership to the People Being Led

Leadership can be a role with authority and responsibilities attached – that is a person in a leadership position. Leadership is also a human capability. That is, something that people show, a judgement they make, a position they hold, a behaviour they display – using your initiative can be a leadership act, or being pro-active or supporting colleagues.

Not all leadership is good or effective – you can lead people astray or lead them into trouble. People who are given the authority to lead have a responsibility to do it wisely. They will have people reliant on them for a better future. They can give them greater confidence and hope in the future or leave them with greater doubt. If we are all as humans, a work in progress, continually evolving more of our potential, then leaders have the opportunity to accelerate this development. Just as parents would want to encourage the development of their children, leaders too are in a position where they can further the development of the people they lead.

In the past this was expected of the few at the top, but in the world we have today which is more complex and ambiguous it is beyond the scope of the few no matter how talented. Today we need team leaders at all levels, but these must be leaders who don't reserve leadership for themselves but who build leadership capability in the people and teams they lead.

In a world where the pace of change was slow and more predictable, one good leader could chart a course for the future. Today organisations need the agility to change direction quickly, the innovation to change in new directions and the collaboration within to change coherently and comprehensively. This needs leadership embedded in people and teams spread throughout the organisation.

To be truly effective leadership requires the active and pro-active participation of the many. Getting more from the people within an organisation will provide the next leap forward in organisational performance. Unleashing the so far unrealised human potential within, will be the next great opportunity for organisational growth and performance. This will need a new style of leadership and a new breed of leaders.

In order to do this the new leaders will be able to:-

1. **Slow down to be present** so that they are empathetic, respectful of people and available for their encouragement, coaching and development.
2. **Create a safe space** where people can have honest, constructive conversations. Psychological safety where people feel safe to be open in discussion is a pre-requisite for building trust and performance.
3. **Ask inviting questions** to bring quieter people into the conversation. Leaders need to create an inclusive environment where not only the loud voices are heard, but the diversity of perspective is valued.
4. **Listen with willingness to be influenced** by showing a genuine interest in the contribution of others. Leaders need the humility to know that even their best ideas can be improved and appreciate that others know something they might not know.
5. **Use reflection to deepen the learning** by taking the time regularly to review what is happening and the impact it is having. Learning can be enhanced by reflection on the process as well as the content and by taking the time to review not only what is happening, but how and why it is happening.
6. **Summarise and ask for commitment** by keeping people on the same page and as agreement is reached, asking for their commitment to endorse, support and act on what has been agreed.
7. **Acknowledge people** and express appreciation for their support and provide feedback to enable them to increase the value of their contribution and grow in their development.

Never has there been a better time to lead, nor to be a leader. The challenges are extreme, but the opportunities have never been greater. No longer are the designated leaders the ones expected to make all the decisions, and provide all the energy required by relentless change. Leadership is not about the leader doing the work, but rather the leader creating an environment where the people want to do the work themselves. What leaders have the power to do is to create the context for change. It is people who have the power collectively to provide the best solutions.