

WHAT SORT OF LEADERS DO WE NEED IN 2022?

“Strategies for survival in a World of Permanent White Water” Peter Vaill 1996

The crisis with leadership in the UK is concerning many of us at the present time. Just as our world is in the “white water” of disturbance and uncertainty, leaders have emerged with large egos, the sense of entitlement, narcissistic personalities, passive aggressive behaviours, projections of blame, misogyny, racism, and sadly as a consequence a real lack of understanding of others and their own actions. What we have at the present time is a “power model” of leadership at many levels in our society. This is not a good way for really helping people meet their needs and aspirations.

Most leaders in 2022 work according to a control model with these characteristics:

- Blame and punish people. It is your fault you are in this mess.
- Add rules “must not happen again”. Tighten legislation making life for some ever more insecure. Enact legislation that limits scrutiny by citizens.
- Bolster monitoring and reporting, as leader, trust few people, unless they are beholden to the leader, which results in them toeing the line.
- After severe financial downturn and loss, reduce operating costs (staff transferred to self-employment, or import cheap labour, or reduce hourly rates of pay, resulting in no sick pay, pension contributions etc, and also reduce investments).
- Take bonus and share options as automatic reward.
- Move on to new position before whatever hits the fan.

Others work as the “Professional Manager”, who is geared into “professionalism”, which results in short termism and eye on individual gain for self, working to the view:

- No need for local or product knowledge, an MBA/ right schooling and a sense of entitlement are sufficient. Arrogance with a qualification.
- Results in breakdown of teamwork.
- Fads, “others are doing it”.
- Finance manipulation seen as OK.
- Outsourcing without good controls. So cheaper products, third world exploitation, environmental degradation.

A recent book by Peter Hennessy (2022) lays out the changes since the great post second World War efforts, and resulting changes to our society. In 1942 Sir William Beveridge wrote: “...a revolutionary moment in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching.” The Beveridge Report of 1942 remains the most comprehensive and striking document which identified ‘five giants on the road to post-war reconstruction’ – **Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness**. Tackling these giants of Poverty, Health, Education, Housing and Employment was a primary focus of the 1945 government’s social programme and remained important throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Gradually over time, especially since the 1990s that coherence of purpose and vision for everyone and working together for the good for every citizen has been eroded, especially so since the financial crash of 2009. The state has been rolled back, and

the “free market” has been in control, profit for self before the vision and strategy for society for the long term. Cut backs everywhere: insecure employment, poor housing replacement, loss of support for families, and loss of free educational opportunities for crafts and practical skills.

Those post-war leaders showed a different style of leadership, closer to the model of servant- leadership, one who serves their community first and leads from different behaviours, and is an alternative positive model to the present crop of this country’s leaders; the prime purpose of such a leader is to help people to grow and learn, promoting team work and a sense of inclusion and longer-term success and enrichment in more ways than just a bottom line.

So, what are the differences between control leaders and servant-leaders?

GOVERNANCE:

- Bosses take an *authoritarian* approach to governance and management. They make the important decisions. They hold unilateral power over their subordinates. They periodically judge the performance of each employee when, how and even if performance reviews happen.
- Servant-leaders use a *participatory* approach to governance and management. Important decisions are made by group process and consensus. They share their power with others. They ask to be coached and given honest feedback as well as offering the same to those served.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL:

- Bosses have accountability and control
- Servant-leaders are first among equals, rather than chiefs. They have accountability *without* control.

GOALS:

- Bosses work to maintain existing authority and privilege. They focus on meeting the needs of *particular* stakeholders.
- Servant-leaders practice moral symmetry, striving to balance the legitimate needs of everyone affected. Staff, community, suppliers.

FOCUS:

- Bosses focus on taking care of what already is, in their interest.
- Servant-leaders focus on evoking and shaping what is possible.

VIEW OF OTHERS:

- Bosses view subordinates simply as a human resource (means to an end in an organisation).
- Servant-leaders view others as partners and individual expressions of sense of purpose encouraged.

MEANING OF WORK:

- Bosses view work as a transaction, whereby time and energy are exchanged for money, or status and power, or all three.
- Servant-leaders view work as a co-creative act of individuals and community.

So, how can we develop as Servant-Leaders? Especially important in communities of people, a nation, a village, a business, a local authority.

Emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is a vital ingredient of Servant Leaders. It is **the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict.** To many it is considered as important as IQ in which an **IQ** test assesses cognitive abilities and provides a score meant to be a measure of intellectual potential and ability. Remember the 11plus and entrance exams?

According to Daniel Goleman (1995), there are five key elements to EQ:

- Self-awareness.
- Self-regulation/management.
- Motivation.
- Empathy/social awareness.
- Social skills/awareness and relationship management.

Each can help a leader face any crisis with lower levels of stress, less emotional reactivity and fewer unintended consequences. EQ is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and most importantly those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they are feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people. For leaders, having emotional intelligence is essential for longer term achievements of the team. After all, who is more likely to succeed – a leader who shouts at his team when he/she is under stress, or just exerts his/her power with silence and who stays in control, or as the alternative, a leader that calmly assesses the situation with others ?

Looking at these five elements in leadership challenges, consider your EQ.:

1. Self-awareness. If you are self-aware, you will know how you feel, and you know how your emotions and your actions can affect the people around you. Being self-aware when you are in a leadership position also means having a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses, and it means behaving with humility. So, what can you do to improve your own self-awareness?

- **Keep a journal** – Journals help you improve your self-awareness. If you spend just a few minutes each day writing down your thoughts, this can move you to a higher degree of self-awareness.
- **Slow down** – When you experience anger or other strong emotions, slow down to examine why. Remember, no matter what the situation, you can always choose how you react to it.

2. Self-regulation. Leaders who regulate themselves effectively rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, stereotype people, project blame or compromise their values. Self-regulation is all about staying in control. This element of emotional intelligence, according to Goleman, also covers a leader's

flexibility and commitment to personal accountability. So, how can you improve your ability to self-regulate?

- **Know your values** – Do you have a clear idea of where you absolutely will not compromise? Do you know what values are most important to you? Spend some time examining your own "code of ethics." If you know what is most important to you, then you probably will not have to think twice when you face a moral or ethical decision – you will make the right choice.
- **Hold yourself accountable** – If you tend to blame others when something goes wrong, stop. Make a commitment to admit to your mistakes and to face the consequences, whatever they are. You will probably sleep better at night, and quickly earn the respect of those around you: Also lower high blood pressure, less comfort eating and other stress relievers!
- **Practice being calm** – The next time you're in a challenging situation, be very aware of how you act. Do you relieve your stress by shouting at someone else? Practice deep-breathing exercises to calm yourself. Also, try to write down all of the negative things you want to say, and then rip it up and throw it away. Expressing these emotions on paper (and not showing them to anyone!) is better than speaking them aloud to your team. What's more, this helps you challenge your reactions to ensure that they're fair!

3. Motivation. Self-motivated leaders work consistently toward their goals, and they have extremely high standards for the quality of their work. How can you improve your motivation?

- **Re-examine why you're doing your job** – It is easy to forget what you really love about your role. So, take some time to remember why you wanted this role.
- **Know where you stand** – Determine how motivated you are to lead. How motivated are you in your leadership role?
- **Be hopeful and find something good** – Motivated leaders are usually optimistic, no matter what problems they face. Adopting this mindset might take practice, but it is well worth the effort. Every time a challenge is to be faced, or even a failure, try to find at least one good thing about the situation. It might be something small, like a new contact, or something with long-term effects, like an important lesson learned. But there is almost always something positive, if you look for it.

4. Empathy. For leaders, having empathy is critical to managing a successful team or organization. Leaders with empathy have the ability to put themselves in someone else's situation. They help develop the people on their team, or in their community, challenge others who are acting unfairly, give constructive feedback, and listen to those who need it. It will earn the respect and loyalty of your team, and demonstrate to them you care about them and their development.

How can you improve your empathy?

- **Put yourself in someone else's position** – It is easy to support your own point of view. Take the time to look at situations from other people's perspectives.
- **Pay attention to body language** – this tells others how you really feel about a situation. Learning to read body language can be a real asset in a leadership

role, because you will be better able to determine how someone truly feels. This gives you the opportunity to respond appropriately.

- **Respond to feelings** – ask questions as necessary to find about a situation. Do more listening than speaking. Create an atmosphere where people can speak out.

5. Social Skills. Leaders who do well in the social skills element of emotional intelligence are good communicators. They are just as open to hearing bad news as good news, and they are expert at getting their team to support them and be excited about a new mission or project. They are also good at managing change and resolving conflicts diplomatically. They are rarely satisfied with leaving things as they are, they don't sit back and make everyone else do the work: they set an example with their own behaviour. So, how can you build social skills?

- **Learn conflict resolution** – Leaders must know how to resolve conflicts between their team members, customers, or vendors. Learning conflict resolution skills is important if you want to succeed.
- **Improve your communication skills** – How well do you communicate? Invite feedback on this area of leadership and how it can be better.
- **Learn how to praise others** – As a leader, you can inspire the loyalty of your team simply by giving praise and appreciation when it is earned. An important skill of leaders.

Hennessy (2022) writes about before and after Covid and sees a great need for another period of consensus politics, a new Beveridge. I would suggest some servant-leadership too, to take the country, all of us, along with this vision and strategy. One that would carry a “duty of care”. An array of policies and initiatives is desperately needed to tackle injustice, inequality and technical underperformance simultaneously. We all saw how we could work together in our communities to care for each other during the Covid lockdown. We felt the duty of care. We, as a society need to initially tackle five shared tasks: social care, social housing, technical education, preparing our economy and society for artificial intelligence and combating and mitigating climate change. **All** have an immediacy and urgency. Even in normal times, it is difficult to regain trust and authority once it is lost by politicians as we have witnessed by parties at No 10, and no proper ferry contract or strategy, dodgy contracts to friends for PPE, denials and denials. The politicians must think we are stupid! We all need consensus and shared vision in politics to drive forward. We need to set aside cabals, power, entitlement and replace it with work and policies with leadership for the good of all our citizens for the future.

Vote wisely on 5 May!

“Sane leadership is the unshakeable faith in people’s capacity to be generous, creative and kind. It is the commitment to create the conditions for these capacities to blossom, protected from the external environment. It is the deep knowing that, even in the most dire circumstances, more becomes possible as people engage together with compassion and discernment, self-determining their way forward.”

Margaret Wheatley 2017 “Who do we choose to be?”

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