

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

The challenge for today's leaders is growing. This is why there are fewer and fewer people seemingly capable of fulfilling the role. There is a "Talent War," especially at the highest levels in organisations. If we are to fill this gap, we need a far better understanding of the skills, style and characteristics needed for successful leadership in today's world. To understand why this is not an easy process we need to reflect on what leadership was, is and will become – because demands are changing!

The Evolution of Leadership

Classic models of leadership – usually associated with great figures of military history – conjure up charismatic and sometimes despotic images. However, people often use the same language for leadership today - bold, brave and tough with a strong sense of purpose and resolve. The problem is that today's workforce does not accept the autocratic style often adopted by such leaders. We have seen an evolution where leaders have needed to match a growing sense of democracy and independence together with the reality that we have far more options and choices today than the foot soldiers of yesterday.

Leadership Tomorrow

We now face the need to manage and lead an "empowered" workforce. This goes beyond the consultative, co-operative and democratic styles of today. Consider what the new workforce demands :

- ◆ consultation and involvement – but leaders still get criticised for not having

and communicating a compelling vision and purpose

- ◆ autonomy and freedom – but leaders are still expected to take full responsibility when things go wrong
- ◆ opportunities for growth, challenge and glory - but leaders must be on hand to coach and mentor us so that we develop our potential
- ◆ inclusion and team spirit – but we still want our leaders to give us individual recognition and acknowledgement.

Leading an "empowered" workforce sounds very commendable but, in reality, the demands we are making of our leaders have become virtually impossible. Hence we have a leadership crisis – there are not enough talented (read super-human) individuals who are fair, wise, tough, strong, humble, compassionate and mature.

THE TEAM FOCUS LEADERSHIP MODEL

Our own work is based on many interviews, discussions and observations with senior people. We have captured these qualities in a "Leadership Model" which allows us to evaluate "the current reality" - a potential leader's current skills - and then identify areas where leadership qualities need to be developed. A simplified version of the model is shown below. It has 6 Major Areas subdivided into 12 Competency Groups :

| MAJOR AREAS | COMPETENCY GROUPS |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Manages Self | Demonstrates Self-Belief |
| | Acts with Independence |
| Understands and Creates Direction | Understands Issues |
| | Develops Ideas |
| Motivates and Influences | Convinces |
| | Stimulates Growth |
| Builds Relationships | Understands Others |
| | Stimulates Collaboration |
| Focuses on Results | Demonstrates Drive |
| | Raises the Standard |
| Builds Credibility | Shows Commercial Acumen |
| | Develops Technical Expertise |

HAVE YOU GOT LEADERSHIP QUALITIES ?

Assessing these qualities requires a variety of methods. At Team Focus we are increasingly using

new technology such as computerised simulations for analysing people's analytical and strategic thinking skills. However, one of the hardest areas to assess is the increasingly important area of self-awareness and maturity – areas associated with the current concept of "Emotional Intelligence". Self-report questionnaires asking people to judge their own awareness and maturity clearly have limited validity. This is why we have developed an alternative. Called 360 degree feedback, it involves asking others, typically managers, peers, direct reports and customers to rate a person using over 100 statements describing good leaders. The result is a comprehensive report detailing strengths, weaknesses and any differences in perceptions between the people involved.

The reason this is taking off is that it is now on-line. This means that we can administer questionnaires to anybody, anywhere in the world at any time with speed, flexibility and cost-effectiveness. If you accept that feedback is essential for all learning this system challenges complacency and can enable people to grow and develop. This is essential if we are to close the talent gap.

Conclusion

The assessment of leadership is complex but the need to do so is imperative. By using a comprehensive leadership model, sophisticated assessment techniques and a 360 degree feedback process which assimilates the observations of many people in a structured way, we can now build a far more accurate idea of people's potential and help them to develop and deliver what is needed.

For further details on leadership or the 360 on-line process, please contact Team Focus on 01628 637338.