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Unprecedented Times: Why a New Kind of Leadership Is Needed

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future; but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen. D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928)

Unbeknownst to him at the time of writing, D. H. Lawrence would be poignantly accurate when it comes to the numerous crises that have punctuated the century to come, events that for all of us have been in some way life changing.

In the context of business, a literary quote may seem misplaced. However, there are few other arenas in which decision making, mobilising and motivating a team are so pivotal to an organisation's survival. How a leader is to manage these events is the premise for this book. By assembling perspectives from both practitioners and academics, it considers how today's emerging leaders must learn to adapt and respond to crises in the face of uncertainty.

The twenty-first century has experienced a frequency and level of crises never before seen. For many years, the acceleration in climate change has been at the forefront of concerns, demanding a complete rethink by governments and organisations, not only in terms of investment in new energy sources but also in how we travel, produce, and package goods and provide services.

Exactng a more immediate and complete reaction, however, has been COVID-19, the pandemic from which few of us have emerged untouched. If not bereavement and illness, anxiety levels have left many with a poorer

quality of life. Firms and organisations have struggled for survival, many have disappeared altogether, and mental health is suffering as a direct consequence of lockdowns. Some economic consequences may be addressed rapidly once the pandemic abates, but mental health issues may persist for many years, blighting people's lives.

Organisations are having to adapt at short notice to a very different future in which town centres, communication, and trade undergo or have already instigated major change. The days of the office commute seem numbered, or at least vastly diminished. In addition, a trend towards economic isolation and protectionism has had significant implications for the UK. Although sudden changes in trading partners may have severely damaged trade in some sectors, they may also create opportunities in the future.

From these apparently bleak circumstances, there are lessons to be learnt, particularly when it comes to leadership. As crises arise, accelerate, and change the face of business, leaders must learn to adapt; the need for different approaches is now unprecedented.

Crises, major change, and ethical dilemmas demand a level of leadership for which few have previously been prepared. Seizing opportunities and anticipating and responding to events require a level of capability which is not developed overnight. Agile leadership is needed in which leaders move with pace and purpose, whilst enlisting commitment and support from their team; this is when true leadership prevails.

How Crises Provide a Critical Test of Leadership Capability

Crises and significant change initiatives test any leader. Indeed, this is where many learn what leadership is really about. Relationships within a team are key to rapid and effective mobilisation, whilst still aligning efforts towards achieving the organisation's objectives.

It is at this time that leadership means motivating followers; indeed, leadership is nothing without followers. The more capable the team, the better the chances of a successful outcome. Previous team development and team involvement in decision making will be rewarded by overall motivation and commitment; practice makes perfect, or at least it certainly improves performance.

Leaders need to feel confident and secure in their team members' ability to manage even the most robust challenges. They need to build a team willing to

contribute, work together, and instate better decisions and plans. Ultimately, those which do none of these things will contribute far less. Often at this stage leaders make the mistake of avoiding challenge by recruiting people with whom they feel comfortable, instead of those prepared to introduce new ideas. This is usually the way to create an underperforming team.

Teams acclimatised to working together are far more likely to achieve objectives and manage crises than those which do not. In addition, the climate of mutual support and tight focus improves the wellbeing of team members that, in times of crisis, is vital.

In the first throes of the COVID-19 pandemic the UK was not alone in being slow to make decisions and take action. The government and its departments initially failed to recognise the scale of the problem, before internal bureaucracy slowed the response to urgent needs, such as procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical staff and care workers. In addition, tightening border controls on travel and beginning widespread testing were unnecessarily delayed as the government awaited better data. However, as the pandemic progressed, the ability and speed of the government to decide and mobilise vastly increased, culminating in a highly successful vaccine roll out.

It has been clear from an early stage that COVID-19 presented major challenges to businesses. Most faced the need to coordinate employees working from home, others to downsize their organisation in the face of diminished demand. Closing sites, relocating operations, and often permanent geographic dispersal are major change initiatives which can, and often do, go badly wrong; often it is the quality of leadership that dictates this outcome.

A team relying alone on digital communication already contains the risk of discontentment, anxiety, and unsettled staff. Once the novelty of working at home wears off, the consequences become abundantly clear. Evidence is slowly emerging to suggest that home working slows personal development and discourages innovation. In the workplace, contact with colleagues motivates new ideas and developments. It is likely that in the future many organisations will opt for a hybrid model founded on both home and office working. This will hopefully increase staff satisfaction and reduce commuting whilst still providing the necessary environment for informal interaction and development. Once again, the nature and implementation of this fall to the leader.

Crisis management therefore means leading under conditions of sustained stress, during which they face challenges of an unknown, volatile, and constantly changing nature. These may permit little time in which to make decisions and mobilise their team. These same basic skills for leading underpin internal and external crisis management, and we can be assured of one thing: crises will continue to arise and leaders need to be prepared.

Being on the Same Side: Exploring the Leadership Relationship Between Self, Teams, and Organisations

An essential intention of this book is to explore the interrelationship between self, team, and organisation. This is a complex, often delicate dynamic in which the capable leader is a facilitator, aligning team performance with organisational needs. Getting the best out of the team begins with the self and one's own behaviour.

If we take the analogy of football, we can see that teamwork, alignment, and mutual support will often beat a team of far better individual players. Time and time again international country teams perform well below the combined qualities of the individual players. This is principally because they all play for different clubs and only occasionally meet to represent their country. In 2016, Leicester City won the English Premier League with a team paid a fraction of the other major clubs and with players who cost little to assemble. This was a victory for teamwork and by players who had developed together over the previous three years. Many clubs, pressured by fans, attempt to buy success in the form of top players; however, few succeed until the players learn to play as a team. It is no different for teams in any organisation and the key lies in development and working together. There are many ways that leaders can help accelerate this development. We also know that a team made up of the best players which are used to playing together may be virtually unbeatable. So too is it within an organisation—getting the best people on your team and developing your team so that they work together will make them difficult to beat.

In leadership, there are few rules which fit all contexts, nor any formula or 'one size fits all' approach. Team members are often motivated in quite different ways. The leader's job is to determine what works both for individuals and the team. We do know that some approaches are more likely to be effective than others, and that the role of the leader is very different from that of a team member. Exploring the differences will be more than helpful for newly appointed leaders and those with experience who wish to progress further and become effective in their roles.

Differing cultures react more positively to certain leadership approaches and may have widely varying expectations. Knowledge workers, or those with high levels of expertise in their area, are less likely to follow new initiatives unless they have a significant input to policy or project formulation. Whilst in some manufacturing environments, there is an expectation of clear 'orders'

from management. You may hear ‘just tell us what you want us to do’ but that does not mean that there isn’t a challenge from the workforce to follow which may well subsequently modify the original demand. To some extent, this direct approach may be necessitated by the high levels of coordination required, for example in manufacturing, which relies on specific jobs being repeatedly completed without error. Differing cultures, approaches, and expectations may be found within the same organisation: sales, marketing, finance, manufacturing, information services, human resources, and research and development can all require varying leadership approaches to be effective. Regardless of what approach is chosen, there are still common elements: leaders are expected to set the objectives, motivate, communicate, accept, and discuss challenges and lead decision making. In this book, we will discuss how readers can effectively develop each of these elements.

Leadership training is often diverse, ill focussed, and irrelevant, to the effect that individuals may have transitioned into leadership positions whilst being unprepared for its realities. Indeed, the criterion for selecting leaders is often competence at a technical role or level which does not necessarily translate to the very different skills and qualities needed to lead a team.

What we do know is that many people study to become better leaders as an academic pursuit, rather than through developing philosophical and experience-based understanding of the subject. This book is intended to help readers improve their practical leadership skills. It combines theory with numerous examples and mini-case studies to produce useful, pragmatic advice which will help equip readers to become better leaders.

Translating Theory into Leadership

Learning from Other Leaders

Whilst there is debate as to the extent with which leadership skills can be taught, there is little doubt that people can improve their skill sets under the right circumstances. For some, this may not always be a positive experience, some may entail encountering leaders demonstrating behaviours which you really do not want to adopt. Good or bad, it is part of the development process and there is a school of thought that believes when developing your career, you should pick jobs with leaders from whom you wish to learn. There is little doubt that previous leaders are highly influential when it comes to your style and approach.

Case Study: Learning from Leaders: What We Do and Do Not Want to Be

From my earlier career, I specifically recall learning much from one particular leader who was both dynamic and driven. Counter intuitively, he was the ultimate change agent with a leadership ethos of 'If you won't do it, I will find someone who will'. He could be quite threatening and directive, yet his sheer drive and clarity of objectives provided the motivation for managers to produce novel approaches and imaginative ideas. He could make things happen in a business no matter what.

A particularly memorable meeting with the heads of finance departments encapsulates his leadership technique. The matter in dispute concerned centralisation of the finance department, and interjecting several dissenting opinions, he simply stated, 'I'm starting to wonder whether I have the right team. I'll be back in ten minutes, when you've had time to consider the matter', before standing and leaving the room. Needless to say, the rest of the meeting was much more positive.

As employees we were far too reasonable when his demands went way beyond reason, and he often did not know when to stop in his drive to cut costs and develop the business. However, he took us well beyond what we thought possible and succeeded in turning a major loss-making business into a highly profitable concern.

In many ways, he was an enigma, as threats always wear thin with time; however, for the period in which I was under his leadership, he created a driven environment in which people were able to thrive. In all situations, you must take from your leaders those styles you wish to emulate, be wary of extremes and, most importantly, put your skills into practice.

A quote often attributed to George Bernard Shaw observes that 'The world was never changed by reasonable people. When you accept reason, you accept failure. Deadlines go back, targets are lowered whilst unreasonable expectations spur outperformance'. George Bernard Shaw was one of many to observe that a reasonable person adapts themselves to the world, whilst an unreasonable person adapts the world to their own wishes. For developing leaders, the challenge is to decide the style you wish to exhibit and avoid the elements you feel less comfortable with. The leader in the example above could never be described as reasonable, however he developed a clear vision and used his uncomfortable behaviour to drive the team on, far beyond their own expectations. The ideas *did* flow and change *did* occur albeit at a frantic pace. There was never any doubt that we would get there. As Napoleon Bonaparte said, 'A leader is a dealer in hope'.

Defining Leadership

Henry Kissinger said, ‘The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been’. Certainly, this is a reasonable starting point for a definition of leadership. Many approaches to leadership are driven by identifying specific behaviours or characteristics such as charisma, confidence, persuasiveness, drive, and communication skills; others rely on developing behavioural skills and varying their leadership style depending on the challenge. In reality, context is critical to effective leadership. Context not just in terms of the industry and type of business, but business size, and the nature and culture of its employees. Whilst relevant, we favour definitions which focus on the outputs as well as the means of getting there.

Any definition of leadership is likely to identify that the leader’s job is not just to align the team’s efforts with the objectives of the organisation but to create conditions in which team members can work collaboratively so as to achieve far more as a team than as individuals.

This surprisingly simple view contends that leadership is principally leading teams of people in the pursuit of clearly established and agreed objectives. There are more subtle elements to consider however, such as actively encouraging coordination and integration within the team, more often than not creating higher and more sustainable levels of motivation.

Whilst there may be many different approaches to leadership, there are also recurrent strands, which may include the following: providing clarity of objectives in what you are trying to achieve; creating motivation, optimism, and hope; supporting high levels of communication; leading decision making within the team; developing members both as a team and individually; and providing emotional support when required. Each in turn means developing a very different skill set. We will explore these individual factors further in later chapters.

Exploring the Leadership Relationship Between Self, Teams, and Organisations

Typically, technically proficient people are often selected for promotion to leadership positions. Initially they may offer advice to team members, usually of a technical nature, allocate work and check quality, undertake the annual development interview with team members, and take on the more difficult jobs. However, this is not leadership and is unlikely to produce exceptional performance. So, what *should* leaders do?

Leadership training can be sporadic and somewhat peripheral when focusing on the necessary requirements of a business. It may provide an interesting experience, but does it create long-term improvement of an individual's leadership? Indeed, leadership development is usually amongst the first activities to be cut when finances tighten. Does this reflect corporate priorities, and what does this say about corporate belief in the effectiveness of leadership training?

Leadership research, training, and guidance literature often describes the world the way people would like it to be, rather than the way it is. In fact, leadership means dealing with the harsh realities of difficult environments, people, and high expectations from their seniors. Much of what is decided and implemented is a pragmatic compromise between 'getting things done' and complying with the stated higher demands. Many situations simply do not fit the rules, instructions, and models, all of which leave significant scope for interpretation. That is the real job of the leader.

Regrettably, some leaders do what is best for them, not the team or the organisation. They pursue their own career at the expense of others. Teams all too often function less like teams and more like individuals fighting their own corner. This can be particularly evident at boards where members avoid challenging others, simply to avoid reprisals in a 'I'll stay out of your area if you stay out of mine' manner.

What Does a Leader Actually Do?

A leader is best when people barely know he exists. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say 'we did it ourselves'. LAO TZU

Teams need a clear sense of purpose, direction, and hope. They need to know they are contributing to something worthwhile and meaningful. A priority is identifying the right objectives to benefit the organisation, followed by motivating and developing the team to become more effective. This means developing relations with sponsors to ensure the team both enjoys an effective profile and produces output which supports the organisation. The leader needs to take a high profile in any change initiative to convince others of its importance. After all, many view 'showing up' as the most important part of leadership. If the leader is absent from important meetings others may take this as a sign of the relative importance with which they view the subject. Teams watch what a leader does for signs of commitment rather more than what they say. Does the leader 'walk the talk'? As responsibilities increase then being an agent for change matters more and more.

How Team and Individual Development Form the Bedrock of Leadership

In my 13 years teaching leadership to executive MBA students, a recurring question of much interest is the challenge and importance of delegation. What I contribute to this debate comes from having chaired businesses for 25 years, studied what makes leaders effective and honed my own leadership practice according to my experience.

You may ask why so many leaders, particularly those at a crucial time in their career development, find delegation so difficult. Typically aged between early to late thirties, students may soon be encountering significant leadership responsibilities for the first time and leading increasingly large teams. Unless they can effectively delegate, they become overwhelmed by work and fail in their primary role—to lead.

Simply working harder than the team is not leadership and fails to allow for the necessary consideration a managerial role demands. Leadership is about extending your influence through the team as a whole. It requires the ability to identify what is really needed, set objectives, and communicate effectively, the core skills that will lead your team to be more effective than they would be as individuals. There is little chance of successfully leading new initiatives and projects without the perspective and time to lead.

So Why Is Delegation So Hard?

Firstly, due to a strong work ethic that says we can only earn our salary premium by working harder than others, it goes against the grain to ask team members to do our work. The team may well think this, but does that matter? Leadership is a completely different job to being a team member, and it is a job that demands delegation regardless of the push back that may come.

A second key reason leaders may not delegate is insecurity. New leaders may not trust team members to do the job as well as you could. The old mantra ‘if you want a job done well, then do it yourself’ might sometimes be true but will prevent you developing both your team and your career. You have to learn to trust the team and accept that not everything will be perfect. Indeed, I have usually found that team members often make a better job of delegated work than I might.

A further inhibitor is having enough people to delegate to. If this is an issue, which at some stage it almost certainly will be, you might have to make a case for more resources to support your work. If you do, make absolutely

certain you have eliminated low-value work first. This is because a primary objection from senior management may be that you struggle to prioritise, so be decisive in establishing which work is essential to ensure they are not correct in their objection.

How Do You Go About Delegating?

A natural response I have repeatedly observed is for team members to delegate work back to you. You may well hear ‘but I’m not trained’, ‘I’m already over-stretched’, or ‘your predecessor did this’. If they require further training, then arrange it. If a review of their workload proves it to be excessive, then establish a plan to stream-line or re-distribute tasks. Ultimately, they will develop the capability to do more complex and interesting work. Each employee review must end by making clear their job, responsibilities within the team, and their next review date.

Perhaps most importantly, team members need to understand that the future is not the same as the past, and organisations must constantly develop and evolve to maintain standards. Your role in leading a team is to ascertain how your team can better advance the organisation’s vision. Unless you can demonstrate effectiveness on a wider scale, then you are unlikely to progress further in leadership.

Regularly reviewing employee progress is a means of deterring the need for open door policies. Yes, a supportive work environment is important, but being *too* accessible only encourages team members to avoid making any real decisions. They will not develop unless they learn to make decisions for themselves and draw confidence from that process. Clear review dates and times help people to do their own thinking, and not take the easy option of trying to push work and decisions back to their bosses.

The role of the leader is to prevent their team from being overwhelmed with work. In modern matrix organisations, initiatives abound to the point of being overwhelming, and an overwhelmed team will not perform well. This is particularly notable in regard to any work that is perceived as being low value and not worth doing. Ultimately, this will only act to destroy morale and motivation—the cornerstones of any successful business.

Most aspiring leaders want to be positive, keen, and willing to please; however, discussion of priorities is essential. Team leadership often entails saying ‘no’ to people: ‘No’ to team members who prefer to do what interests them rather than what the organisation needs, ‘no’ to sponsors and ‘no’ to senior managers requesting low-value work when the team needs to focus on what

really matters to the organisation. We all like to be popular but leaders have to accept that decisions are often unpopular in some quarters; if you want to lead, you can't be everyone's friend all the time.

Ultimately, you will never become a leader unless you can effectively delegate. You simply will not have the requisite time to think and lead. Many an intelligent individual and promising career has foundered on this fundamental obstacle. Don't let yours go the same way. To quote Andrew Carnegie 'No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself or to get all the credit for doing it'. (Fig. 1.1)

Case Study: 'Sink or Swim' and Learning to Delegate

In my first major job as Director of Finance to a large subsidiary, part of a multinational business, I had a team of over 50 people reporting to me. This not only included various accounting roles but Information Systems, Legal, and Estates. In previous positions, I had perhaps six or seven reports. I was completely overwhelmed by the new job. Huge amounts of work arrived and I attempted to take on far too much of it. In reality, the rest of my team could leave at 5.00 pm whilst I was there most of the evening. The 'penny eventually dropped' and I realised that I must trust the team and delegate almost everything controlling the quality. This required a daily discipline and determination to delegate as it is a different way of working. As I discovered, they were talented people and quite capable of running the place themselves with clear direction and motivation. Learning to lead taught me some harsh lessons that every morning the job is to delegate and through frequent section leader meetings get them to work together as a team. Good quality people will rise to the challenge.

Many team leaders spend far too much time looking upwards and trying to convince their seniors of what a great job they are doing. Whilst some upwards awareness and management is necessary, too much irritates everyone. Let the team do the talking. Their achievements will be seen as the leader's achievements without proclaiming your own role. Give the team the credit, it costs you nothing and encourages and motivates the team.

Reflection

How good are you at delegation? Could you be better? If so, what changes could you make?

What sort of a leader do you want to be?

Once a leader has created the time to lead, the next question becomes 'What sort of a leader do they want to be?' What approach do they want to take to their new leadership role? Personal and team wellbeing will be a high priority as mental health and resilience by necessity become much higher

MAIN BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE DELEGATION
 And remedial behaviours and actions

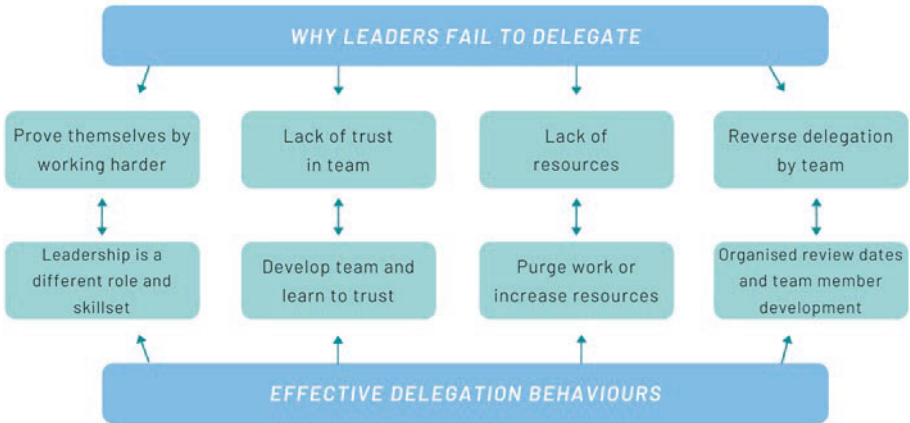


Fig. 1.1 Main barriers to effective delegation

priorities, both the leader’s own and the team. Poor decision making is predominantly a consequence of personality rather than lack of data or inexperience. For example, experienced leaders often become overconfident and take excessive risks or worse engage in ‘bet the house’ deals. We will explore the impact of personality on decision making in the chapter ‘Decision Making’.

Views from Practice: Responsibility, Accountability, and Power

Some years ago, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview Willie Walsh, CEO of British Airways Ltd (BA) (2005-10) and then CEO of the parent International Consolidated Airlines Group (IAG) (2011-20). IAG owned not only BA Ltd but also Iberian, Aer Lingus, and Vueling Ltd with a combined turnover of £23 bn in 2019. BA in particular had, prior to Willie Walsh, been viewed by many as a ‘basket case’ with a high cost base, intransigent unions, bureaucratic processes, and overstaffed at almost every level. Previous CEOs had not effectively addressed many of the key issues despite marginal and intermittent profitability. Willie Walsh certainly faced these challenges although the repercussions in terms of reputational damage from a saga of disputes linger on.

Willie’s view of leadership is quite clear as being about accepting responsibility and accountability and not about seeking power or control. Many see leadership roles as about gaining power rather than accepting responsibility

for all the many stakeholders to a major organisation. Ultimately, responsibility is passed to one's successor with relief. In Willie's view, accountability is being willing to present bad news to stakeholders. Most senior people are very keen to announce good news but when it comes to facing customers, staff, or shareholders with bad news then few are so keen. During the disastrous teething problems when commissioning Heathrow's new Terminal 5 in 2008, when 42,000 pieces of luggage were parted from their owners and 500 flights were cancelled over 10 days, Willie Walsh was there at the terminal apologising to customers and listening to their grievances.

I myself have witnessed many board meetings when there seems to be an unwritten rule that only good news can be presented. Unfortunately, this inevitably results in the 'real' issues not being discussed and, as a consequence, they may not be addressed.

Leadership inevitably involves taking risks when facing key challenges and some will turn out badly. Without an appetite for risk, then progress is likely to be limited indeed. Decision making inevitably involves risk and the bigger the decision then the greater the risk. Indeed, Willie also points out that leaders have to live with criticism—if you take a leadership role your decisions are at times bound to attract criticism. Being unduly 'thin skinned' will make the job very difficult indeed, few practicing leaders will tell you otherwise. One has to be willing to take on difficult challenges that many may avoid in order to reduce their chance of failure.

Overview of Unprecedented Leadership

This book is organised into three major sections. The first, 'Crisis from the Ground Up' is authored by Professor John Colley and includes the following chapters:

Crises Global and Local: When Leadership Becomes Critical

The key leadership question arising during crises is how it differs from leadership decision making in more normal times. There are differences during crises in that the level of fear and prolonged pressure for the leader and the team can be 'off the scale', to the extent that activity almost comes to a halt. A key responsibility for leaders is to try and relieve the stress on their team so that they can be effective in identifying solutions and mobilising to implement an agreed plan. Crises are also characterised by ambiguity and uncertainty as often only limited information is available and the nature of the crisis continues to change leaving leaders constantly attempting to catch up.

We consider the many difficulties of leading during the COVID crisis and how leaders and teams can improve their performance during crises. We discuss the key elements of leading during crises and how to prepare for the next crisis, which will no doubt arrive from an unexpected direction. We consider how to create and seize opportunities during crises. Competitors are often struggling with exactly the same challenges which create a short-term focus in managing through the current difficulties. Those who can look beyond the crisis and position the organisation for the new future are those that in the long run will thrive.

Making Key Decisions in a Volatile, Uncertain World

Decision making is underrepresented in the leadership literature despite being the most likely reason that leaders may find their tenure terminated. Getting the 'big calls' right on strategy, people, and crises is often the difference between whether a leader is remembered as a success or failure.

Take UK Prime Minister Tony Blair who held office for 10 years from 1997 to 2007, his achievements are largely overshadowed by his decision for the UK to join the United States in the Iraq war. Similarly, David Cameron, who held the same office again for 6 years from 2010 to 2016, will be remembered for his decision to opt for a referendum on Europe and then losing the vote.

We will look at models of how leaders can improve their decision making and what key elements lead to poor decision making. How can we develop capability in making decisions for developing leaders of the future? Effective decision making normally requires experience which raises the question as to how new leaders can gain experience before they too are confronted with major decisions.

Clearly teamwork has a role to play, and we examine when the process of decision making should involve the team and when that might be unhelpful. We also consider how to select the right people, and where to direct questions when faced with significant decisions. Finally, we all have biases, how can we question our own biases?

Ethics and Values: Negotiating a Complex Minefield

Never has the concern for ethical practices been more important both within a business and when assessing those with whom you may be enacting business. Ethical standards are no longer 'nice to have' but absolutely critical for survival and are becoming a central requirement of leadership. However, most

leaders will admit that it is the ethical elements of leadership decision making that provide the greatest challenge. Dubious ethics have a habit of returning to haunt you in the future. On the other hand, pious decision making with little regard to value creation runs the risk of failure to meet organisational objectives. Leaders tread a very fine line between value creation and poor ethical decisions. We investigate this 'line' through the medium of a number of case studies. What decision would you make in each case? What are the likely short-, medium-, and long-term consequences? Information and evidence may be inadequate but there may still be victims. What are your values?

Ethical considerations are a complex minefield for any leader and maintaining good values is often under pressure from circumstances which require a degree of pragmatism if organisational objectives are to be negotiated and achieved. We will explore some of the ethical areas that leaders face and relevant theory which helps to make for a better ethical culture in organisations.

The second section, 'Philosophical Underpinnings and New Directions', includes the following chapters from Associate Professor at Warwick Business School, Doctor Dimitrios Spyridonidis:

Leading Change in Turbulent Times

It does not take a genius to realise that as environmental change accelerates organisations have to adapt more rapidly. Indeed, one can argue that those that can readily adapt and change will ultimately be the victors. Those that are slow to realise that change is necessary, or do not wish to change, or simply are not capable of change will struggle to survive. The graveyard is full of such organisations. However, most organisations still struggle with major change initiatives. John Kotter, a Harvard Business School professor viewed by many as a major influence on change management thinking, contends that 70% of major change initiatives materially fail. Prime candidates include culture change programmes, organisational change, and major information system projects. Most change initiatives are judged against projections of outputs as well as time and cost. Few achieve what was originally expected, and indeed the basis for why funding was approved in the first place. Indeed, Kotter contends that the main reason is a failure to lead the project. This chapter considers a number of perspectives to improving outcomes which are based in leadership rather than process.

The chapter is accompanied by a case study which explores the importance of leadership and the roles of responsibility, accountability, and the power of internal politics when implementing major projects.

Creating the Capacity for Strategic Leadership

Any book on leadership needs to consider the relationship between the vision and purpose of a business and its strategy, ethics, and culture. Many successful organisations create an alignment between these factors which transmit through the staff to customers who are, at least in part, buying into the vision and culture of the business as well as the product/service. Disney is an example where the vision and culture integrate along the lines of family values. This transmits through the staff or 'actors' to customers. Starbucks similarly attempts to live high ethical values and a positive culture which staff are trained to transmit to customers. Clearly that culture needs to have a variety of positive characteristics if it wants to successfully negotiate increasingly volatile and complex conditions. Strategic leadership not only involves creating and developing the vision, strategy, and ethics but also a culture which can cope with constant and rapid change and display resilience during difficult times. Such leadership capabilities will necessarily require high levels of team involvement, creating a clear sense of urgency amongst teams. In effect strategic leadership is leadership on a grand scale which starts by determining the core values, direction and purpose of an organisation, and the leadership infrastructure to support achievement of these key features (Fig. 1.2).

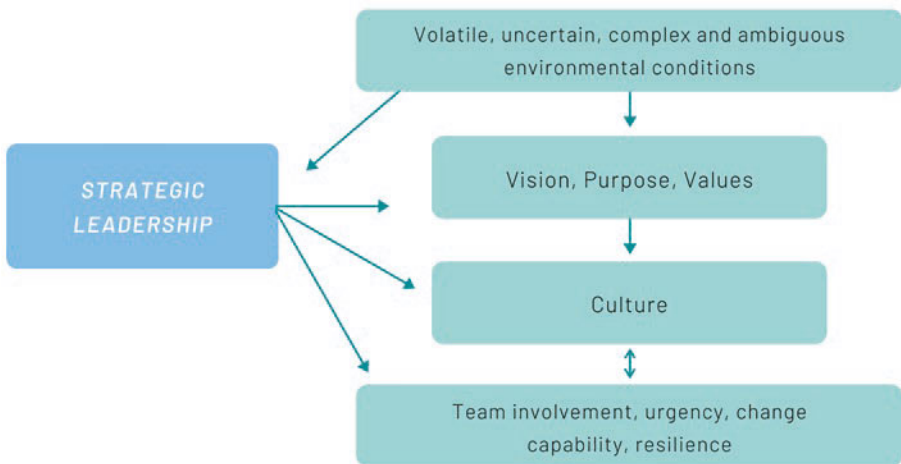


Fig. 1.2 Key elements of strategic leadership

Responsible Leadership and Sustainability

This chapter considers the emergence of a brand of leader who is concerned about the risks to the environment and upholding ethical and moral standpoints. Most leaders have concerns regarding reputational damage through customer and society criticism. Concerns emanating from environmental damage or poor treatment of workers are likely to affect sales levels and damage shareholder earnings. Indeed ‘greenwashing’ has become a common approach to managing stakeholders with high publicity given to relatively minor initiatives. Some institutional shareholders are moving investments towards Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) companies which has resulted in much repackaging of credentials to comply with the new demands. However, ‘Responsible’ leadership goes beyond this to upholding modern day values and ‘authentic’ principles. This sees leaders and stakeholders connected by a shared sense of meaning. We study Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever from 2009 to 2019, who successfully achieved excellent financial returns whilst at the same time driving the environmental and sustainability agenda in the business.

The third section, ‘Communications, Education and Coaching—Tools for Leading During Crises’, offers unique perspectives from three contributing authors, Tim Wray, Alan Matcham and Bob Thomson, and comprises the following chapters.

The Purpose and Power of Leadership Communication

In periods of uncertainty, communication fulfils the critical role of reducing anxiety and creating direction. Communication disseminates the confidence that someone is in charge, that there is a plan to escape the current circumstances, and that the new future will be attractive and a reason for optimism. It provides the motivation for personal involvement and team mobilisation. Whilst leaders attempt to transmit confidence (and that rather depends on their previous track record), a more powerful form of communication flows through informal networks. Communication has to be two ways and people need to believe that they have leaders who are listening and moving rapidly with an understanding of current circumstances.

How can leaders improve their communication skills? How can they create a strategic narrative which is fully understood and that people are willing to believe? We consider communication from the perspective of ‘Authentic Leadership’ and the views of Bill George and Peter Sims as to how to be authentic and communicate in a manner which transmits your beliefs. An

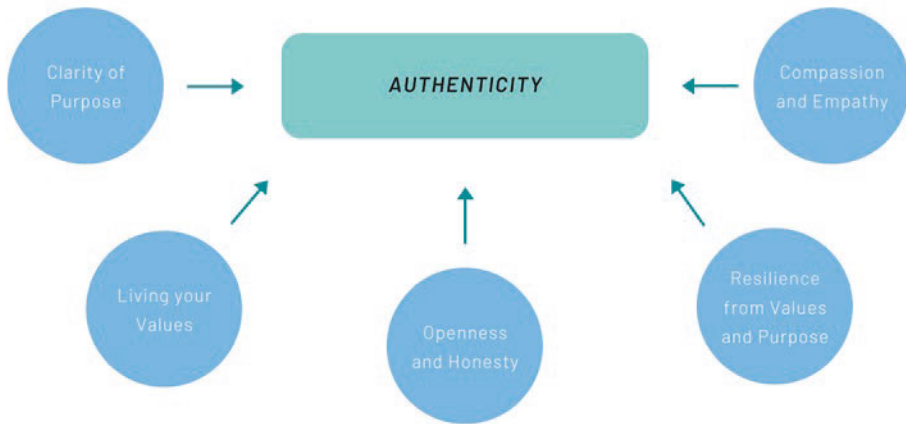


Fig. 1.3 Demonstrating authenticity when communicating

integral part of authentic communication is the power of stories which not only bridge the gap between theory and practice but illustrate the ideas in a manner which captures people's imaginations (Fig. 1.3).

Paradoxes in Executive Development

This chapter is written from the perspective of a long-term professional engaged in leading executive development programmes. The main paradox is that the relationship between traditional approaches to executive education and actual achieved organisational change is somewhat remote. Instead, such development programmes should be about challenging the status quo, asking fundamental questions, creating effective innovation and generating ideas. This perspective of leadership is difficult to achieve when leaders have full diaries which do not leave time for opportunities that might offer more scope for modern leadership approaches. Through a series of apparent paradoxes, traditional hierarchical leadership approaches are contrasted with flexible arrangements, cutting across functional and geographic boundaries to produce collaborative outputs and ideas. A view is constructed that in volatile, uncertain conditions, strategic and responsive leadership requires the ideas and motivation which less hierarchical structures can provide.

Coaching for Leadership

Unprecedented leadership has a clear focus on the relationship between the leader and the team members. We have discussed at some length how team and individual development both improves the performance of the team and alignment between the individual team members and the team and organisational objectives. The coaching approach has proved itself successful at enhancing team and individual performance and development. The coaching industry has expanded enormously in recent years and most major businesses now draw on coaching services, often throughout the organisation from board level down. This chapter explores how leaders can coach themselves and their teams to establish a coaching culture.

Our 'Conclusions' chapter considers the main themes and content of the book in the context of the future.

Unprecedented Leadership for Unprecedented Times

This book is motivated by the increasing difficulties which leaders face when negotiating rapid and major change as crises and major challenges arise. Its content provides practical dilemmas to illustrate the difficulties leaders negotiate, and theory forms the basis for the analyses with a pragmatic filter. The essence of leadership is found in the relationship between leaders, their teams, and organisational objectives. We explore many different perspectives and accept that there is no one right way. Leaders have to feel comfortable with their own values and approaches, but remain aware that team performance may necessitate evolution of their style. We provide plenty of practical options.