LEADERSHIP

2nd Edition

LEADERSHIP

Perspectives from Practice

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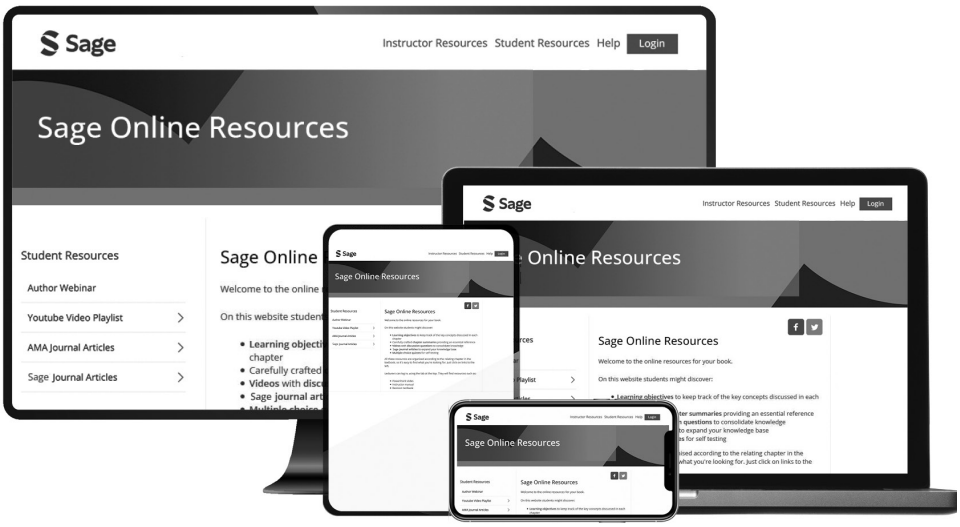
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laura Galloway PhD is Professor of Business and Enterprise at Edinburgh Business School at Heriot-Watt University and joint Editor in Chief of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship & Innovation*. She has a background of research in entrepreneurship, leadership and small business and has published widely in these areas.

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES



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A **Teaching Guide** including teaching notes and assessment suggestions for each chapter.

PowerPoints for each chapter that can be adapted and edited to suit specific teaching needs.

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LEADERSHIP CONTEXTS

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

Chapters 1 to 4 have outlined and summarised some of the evolution of knowledge on leadership. The following chapters turn to considering this knowledge as it is experienced and developed in practice in organisations. In this chapter, the challenges of leading in different circumstances and organisational contexts are explored. It is important at this stage to return to an earlier distinction – made in Chapter 1 – that leadership has two intersecting expressions. The first is to pioneer, to envision and to communicate that to others, what is referred to in this book as *thought leadership*. The second is to motivate and influence people so that they will contribute effort and action, referred to as *leading people*. Clearly, there is much overlap between these conceptualisations of leadership. Often a leader envisions a new idea and then has to find ways to make others commit and engage themselves in the actualisation of it. Equally, a leader of people often has to devise new ways of doing things and ideate solutions or opportunities. Despite this, they can also be discrete. For example, in organisations, a *leader of people* may not have any particular additional ideas and vision regarding strategic orientation or goals. Perhaps these are set by others in the hierarchy or elsewhere. But a leader must take them on and commit to them because a leader in organisational life will have a critical role in leading others to the achievement of them. On the other hand, *thought leaders* may have little direct contact with followers. *Thought leaders* are often those who pioneer, do things first, lead the way in terms of ways of thinking or of doing things. Public figures such as the humanitarian and climate activist Greta Thunberg or the campaigner for education for girls Malala Yousafzai have no direct reports, yet they are often referred to as leaders because they have advocated a different way of doing things, departing from traditional ways or older or contentious knowledge. Elsewhere, though,

leadership may involve smaller, less disruptive ideation – how to get things done, what processes to adopt to achieve goals. These require both *thought leadership* in the planning and envisioning, and *leading people* in terms of influencing efforts of others.

In this chapter, we will explore some contexts in which *thought leadership* and *leading people* occur. By exploring leadership in specific contexts, it is possible to link the theories and approaches discussed throughout the earlier chapters of this book with practice. First, the chapter will look at leadership and strategy and engage with the questions of how strategic leadership is done and why it is important. From there, three further example contexts are explored: *projects*, *creative industries* and *dynamic, high-stakes environments*. These examples are selected because of specific issues associated with leadership – project leaders tend to have little or no formal authority over the people they lead, leaders in creative industries must balance the ability to cultivate and develop creative people within commercial boundaries, and high-stakes leaders must lead in high-risk and constantly changing contexts. While the examples seem specific, the implications of them are quite wide, informing generally leadership in strategic, departmentalised, innovation-seeking or dynamic contexts of practice respectively.

LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY

Strategy is one of the most central and critical elements of all organisations, commercial, public or third sector. An organisation has to have leaders who know what they seek to achieve and have the ability to plan how to do it. Commercial organisations do not generate turnover or profits by accident. Similarly, third-sector and public organisations do not achieve their social or charitable goals by accident. Goals are achieved by developing and executing strategies. There is a canon of knowledge about strategy and several firmly established theories, including Porter on competitive position, Miles and Snow's typology of approaches, and Mintzberg's distinction between long- and short-term orientation of organisations (Porter, 1985; Miles and Snow, 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985, respectively). These are just a few of the most famous examples, and it is not the intention to explore these in detail here. Instead, the focus in this book is on how leadership may inform strategy and, in turn, the role of leadership in executing it.

Let's explore first principles: ideas that become businesses or other types of organisation organisations have to start somewhere. So too do ideas that contribute value to existing organisations. Someone has to have the vision and foresight to ideate a future opportunity or goal, and thereafter a means by which to achieve that must be devised. This is likely to involve a mixture of both *thought leadership* and *leading people* in most organisations. Critically, though, in practice, this leadership may or may not come from one individual.

Entrepreneurs are often identified as commercial leaders, seen to enter markets with new ideas and disrupt – even revolutionise – them. This is especially true of the highest-profile entrepreneurs. Consider the *thought leadership* behind Microsoft and Amazon

and Fenty and Alibaba. The names Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Rihanna and Jack Ma immediately spring to mind. These four examples are almost universally considered to be leaders and, of course, in envisioning terms, they are. However, Microsoft, Amazon, Fenty and Alibaba did not become global giants on the strength of the original vision alone. The means by which to realise these visions was involved too, whether by these heroic figures, or by the teams around them. In addition, the original visions have since moved on – these entrepreneurial firms are the consequence of an original idea perhaps, but ongoing innovation and evolution of technology and new ideas have kept them competitive, and indeed the current offerings in all of these companies can bear little resemblance to the original propositions. Critically, this evolution involves far more people and their ability to envision and lead than the original founders. To achieve and maintain their status and performance, all of these companies have structures in place to this day that afford ongoing ability to innovate and realise opportunities. While the founders may have influenced the organisational culture that was created and may well still participate and contribute, the culture prevails because leadership is happening throughout these organisations in an ongoing and strategic way.

Entrepreneurship thus goes beyond the founders of new companies that enter a market and disrupt it, such as the four examples above. Entrepreneurship is also a strategic position and an ongoing commitment in commercial organisations. In fact, of the four examples, Microsoft was started in 1975, Amazon in 1994, Alibaba in 1999 and Fenty in 2017 – hardly start-ups. Yet we consider them entrepreneurial still. This is because they continue to act entrepreneurially, and this is strategic.

According to the entrepreneurial leadership scholar Christian Harrison, a leader must be able to recognise and exploit opportunities and be able to take risks. This describes how we think about entrepreneurs generally, but Harrison (2018) notes that this principle applies to leadership throughout organisations too. Leaders throughout hierarchies are able to perceive or envision opportunities and use influence to exploit them. Those at the top of management structures will have the broadest view, while others dispersed throughout the hierarchy may have more specialist perspectives.

The most successful organisations have created a culture of strategy and leadership that enables the creation of vision and influences people to contribute to the co-creation of the operating environment that will realise it. For corporate and other private enterprises, recent research on what theorists such as Schoemaker et al. (2018) refer to as *dynamic capabilities* of firms underlines the importance of understanding leadership more broadly than just referring to the top management or the C-suite. In the complex, turbulent and fast-paced market environments of most competitive industries, a commercial organisation's reaction times and ability to seize opportunities – its *dynamic capabilities* – are critical to survival and success. The entrepreneurial organisation must be alert to both opportunities and to competitive and other pressures, and critically the leaders in these organisations must have means by which they may create or seize opportunities or mitigate threats. An organisation in context is complex and the bigger the organisation the greater the complexity. For leaders, therefore, the more sophisticated

their knowledge and understanding of complex environments, the better an organisation will fare. The ability to vision, communicate and execute responses to opportunities or threats is therefore not optimally confined to the few.

Linking Theory to Practice

For commercial organisations all over the world, strategy may be focused on maintaining service or market position or on growing it. Research has shown that for either scenario organisations must strategise. Here we will focus on growth strategy, as appropriate for a textbook on leadership for developing careers and organisations. The focus is private or corporate commercial firms, but the principles apply equally to third-sector organisations and there are clear implications too for public sector leaders.

There are three ways to grow a firm:

1. Increase the number of things you offer (increase range).
2. Increase the number of people who buy your offering (increase market).
3. Do both.

While the description may be simple, the achievement of growth is not, and there are countless books and articles and research studies exploring ways to manage and achieve it in different industries and locations. Important here is the role of leadership. To lead with a view to organisational growth, leadership must be mindful of organisational culture and must be able to generate a vision of the idea or future. This will be optimally enabled by having as much contribution and exchange of knowledge as possible and so lines of communication throughout the organisation must allow for efficient flows of information *into* the strategy. Once decisions are made, the vision or idea must be 'sold' throughout the organisation so that others can subscribe to it and so that they can work towards achieving, advocating and making contribution to it through work effort and through their own ideas and emerging leadership. From an organisational strategy point of view, there are three key enablers:

1. The greater organisational strategy must be clear to participants throughout the organisation so that they can subscribe and contribute.
2. Means of communicating contributions upwards, downwards and laterally must be accessible.
3. Risks that limit the generation and communication of ideas must be minimised, including operating a 'no-blame' culture.

In summary, leadership must communicate, enthuse, enable and support. Leaders who seek to grow or otherwise develop organisations must personalise the mission, and connect with and inspire the team who will deliver it. That will vary depending on the job at hand and the people involved and so there is resonance with context-based theories of leadership and the need for leaders to consider and adapt their approaches according

to context. Thereafter, respect, trust and value will motivate participation. The links with transformational approaches to leadership are clear (consider the role of the four I's – see Chapter 3). The links with relational forms of leadership are also clear. Transactional leadership approaches will form part of this culture too, with rewards and incentives (intrinsic and extrinsic) built in. But newer thinking about leadership is also relevant here as the organisational cultures best suited to enabling meaningful contribution are those that can, in effect, facilitate the emergence of leadership (thought-based and person-based) throughout an organisation. At the same time, though, in commercial organisations there is a need to manage this culture and the processes in it. Rowe (2001) categorises three types of leadership: *visionary*, *strategic* and *managerial*, broadly representing *thought leadership*, *leading people* and the more structured administrative functions of *management* (see Chapter 1). Rowe notes that in entrepreneurial organisations all three of these functions are required for success.

PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE 5.1

Jannie Tam is the founder of the Hong Kong-based talent development company GROWDynamics. More information about Jannie can be found on page 2.

John Black is a station manager with one of the UK's fire and rescue services. More information about John can be found on page 2.

Claire McCarthy is the Director of Operations and HR at a large children's charity in Wales. More information about Claire can be found on page 1.

Priyanka Thali is a managing editor at CACTUS Communications, a technology company headquartered in India. More information about Priyanka can be found on page 3.

Jannie Tam explains the need for entrepreneurs to communicate that a start-up is going places to keep people engaged and invested:

> [As an entrepreneur/founder] your colleagues are either under you or work with you. I have no boss to report to. You must try to embed their aspirations, and you also have to make sure that your business is growing, even if it's slow. Because no one will wait forever. If it is a small organisation and the growth is not happening, you will lose people. Because they also want to see that they can grow with the business and no one can wait and wait. So the growth comes from better revenues, better partnerships, and people will need to see something is happening. So I think as a leader you just need to demonstrate your perseverance and you have to create some exciting news,

(Continued)

> exciting prospects … to make them feel like OK it is still something that is moving and growing. … You have to demonstrate you are not gonna give up. But that doesn't mean that I stick to the old tricks. I need to modify things, reflect the changes in the market and that doesn't stop. I bring some of the challenges to them so as a team we have to find ways to crack the situation. So they're not just blindly following someone. They also feel like they can contribute their thinking; that is important.

Jannie refers specifically to her entrepreneurship. Her assertion of the need to inject ideas from colleagues and afford them a sense of ownership of the strategic aims of her firm is echoed by Victor in the multi-national corporation he works in too, though in his case it is specifically enabled in the organisational structure and procedures. He explains:

> Where you're shaping up the opportunity and you're coming up with the delivery strategy to deliver that project the workshop style normally works very well with the wider team in terms of brainstorming and pulling together ideas. As you can appreciate, there are also quite a few experienced people around the table, and so you want to make sure you're pulling in that experience where possible, and both regionally and globally as well. So that is the kind of shape it takes. It's a very formal process most of the time in the organisation, where you run a sort of a chattering session of some sort, where you shape that strategy and make sure that it gets fed into the delivery plan of the project so you can set the vision.

John Black relates a similar approach to strategising, but this time in a public service context:

> We meet up regularly and not only with the watch managers but meet up regularly with the crews themselves and disseminate any information down and take questions. It is very important to make the strategy clear and as things develop … And in terms of community engagement and fire prevention, the [greater organisational] strategy broadened out from us being there to save lives, to saving lives before an event happened. And the idea was that we would save lives by going out and fitting smoke detectors for vulnerable people. We go to fires in the same household involving the same people on a regular basis and these people are very vulnerable because it is only a matter of time before they really hurt themselves or people around them. These people became targets. But we have a lot of unknown people who basically slip under the radar. So we have had to develop a strategy for dealing with people we couldn't find, for the vulnerable and disaffected people. So it was very important that all of this was discussed with the fire crews that worked in and knew the communities. And it was a discussion as opposed to 'this will be

> the strategy'. To achieve these aims we have proper discussions with the watch managers, the line managers and the crews themselves.

As noted in Chapter 3, Claire McCarthy advocates inclusion in ideation and implementation of strategy too in her charity context. Priyanka Thali notes in particular the need for people to understand where they fit in the value chain of a strategic aim of the organisation. In her role as a publisher, she notes of her team that:

> They need to be aware of the organisation's goals. They need to know what they're working towards and what part they're playing in it. So it can't just be like, 'OK, I tell you to do this, and then you do this'. They need to understand why they're doing certain things. They need to understand what is in it for them. And that's how I try to foster ownership of tasks. So it's not just about you doing it because you're meant to do it, but you are responsible for this. You own this and this is how it will benefit the organisation as well as you.

Perspectives from Practice Questions

1. Why is it important to Jannie that her team feel part of the development of GROWDynamics?
2. Why do you think it is important for her team to feel that Jannie has plans for the development and growth of the firm?
3. Why is it important that Victor and John are inclusive about setting the strategy and vision in their respective examples?
4. Does the variation between their sectors (private and public) affect the reasons for inclusivity?
5. Why do you think Priyanka asserts that people need to understand how their work fits with the strategy and goals of the organisation? Do you see any links with some of the motivations theories outlined in Chapter 1?

LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS

Creative industries include those involving art, design, performance and composition, but in fact creativity is required in all industries to some degree. Problem solving always requires a degree of creativity, and for an organisation that seeks to foster innovation, enabling and supporting creativity are especially critical. In charitable or public organisations this must be done within the confines of, and compliant with, financial and budgetary parameters. In commercial organisations, the ability to profit is a further priority. The issue for leaders, therefore, is how to enable creativity so that it makes a value-adding contribution to an organisation, but contain it too. The following scenario in Box 5.1 exemplifies the challenge.

BOX 5.1

Exploring an Example Creative Case

Let's take the example of a medium-sized photography firm. The revenues for this firm come from two main sources. The first, Activity A, is its specialism in landscape photography for clients which serves provenance-oriented markets, such as food and drinks firms and the tourism and hospitality sector that use these images for advertising purposes. The second main revenue stream, Activity B, is contracts with local authorities to take annual individual and group school photographs. There is a third activity too, Activity C: the firm showcases its quality and artistic credentials by hosting and contributing to photographic exhibitions. This is used as a means by which to profile the business and the quality of its offering amongst the photography and media community.

Most of the photographers in this firm join in order to develop in and contribute to Activity A, and most hope one day to contribute to Activity C. Indeed, the reputation of the firm is built on its style and artistry in these activities. However, the schools contract is lucrative and the income from it supports the ability to fund the more aesthetic pursuits of A and C. There are two key tensions here, though. First, all the photographers in the firm want to do the landscape work rather than the school work. Second, some require escalating amounts of resources, such as personnel, light, equipment, etc., to create landscape images of spectacular beauty. For the senior management of the firm, there is a balance to be struck in terms of maintaining income, quality in all activities, developing reputation for excellent art and ensuring cost-effectiveness.

Similar to the circumstances in our imagined photography company, along with a colleague, I conducted a study of similar issues amongst a sample of architecture firms (Galloway and Haniff, 2015). This research not only explored the tensions of leading in creative environments, but also focused on these issues in the specific contexts of projects, exploring how these were managed and led while maintaining conditions that were stimulating and motivating for creative workers. The section below looks at leading in projects in more detail, but more generally, similar to the photography example, the tensions emerging concerned the need for the architecture firms to develop creativity but within commercially feasible parameters. In particular, the need to afford opportunities to create designs of aesthetic interest and even beauty for buildings sat alongside the need to fulfil contracts for more routine work, such as designing functional, affordable municipal buildings. In terms of leading in creative industries, or any circumstance in organisations where innovation or problem solving or new ideas are important, there is a need for leaders to reflect on and consider carefully how to extract best creative effort in a cost-effective way that affords development of both the individual and the organisation.

Practical implications include that it can be useful to allow people autonomy and discretion in order to get the best from them – to allow them to express their creativity, try new things, experiment and develop. At the same time, some focus and incentivisation of business objectives is required too. So leadership that enables creativity may be most effective when it comprises a person-centric approach that affords people creative autonomy,

but exercises some control over the extent to which that may occur within the parameters of business objectives and constraints. Unless creatives are allowed to flourish and develop, though, there will be no innovation. That is fatal for an organisation in a creative industry, and will stifle growth in any other industry. Equally, unrestrained pursuit of art can be reckless and counterproductive for an organisation in survival terms too.

Linking Theory to Practice

Theories about leadership suggest that for creative people to really flourish, they should be enabled to work autonomously, be trusted to do a good job, be encouraged to try new things and develop new techniques. These are suggestive of consensual, supportive, even laissez-faire approaches to leading, with a suggestion also of the importance of relational qualities, such as trust and value and respect, required of quality autonomous work. The inspirational and supportive features of transformational leadership are also recognisably informative here too, as people are encouraged to develop and excel and, indeed, there is resonance with the sharing and distribution of leadership too as people are enabled to pioneer and prospect. At the same time, though, there is a balance to be struck with commercial interests, and so while these techniques are critical for the development of quality and creativity, so too is there a need to manage and lead people in line with budgets. Means by which this balance may be struck by leaders include the affordance of equality of opportunity and distribution of different types of work amongst those working in the organisation. Another approach might be to have people work on more than one service at a time so that each may experience the range of work required by the organisation in the competitive environment. However developed, the role of leaders is to manage and balance the tension between being progressive as a creative organisation and budget-compliant or profit-based as an economic one. This requires consideration and reflection from leaders, including the ideation associated with *thought leadership* and the influence needed for *leading people* effectively and commensurate with the organisation's ambitions.

PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE 5.2

Jeroen Nusteling is Director of childcare company SDK Kinderopvang. More information about Jeroen can be found on page 2.

Jeroen Nusteling notes the importance of enabling creativity in his business:

> We have three main things we say in our business: it's personal, we need to grow, and the last one is that it needs to be fun! And that's what we tell our employees constantly. And so it's important that there is a balance between giving space to our employees and what we are doing centrally in management.

(Continued)

> We are looking at details that are important but we don't get too much into the little details of them [the daycare centres].

Claire McCarthy in the children's health service charity notes the tension as a director of operations with dealing with the creative people in her organisation. First though, she notes:

> I've always argued that in the back-office systems there's a lot creativity as well. So if you're going to build a decent process to manage all that wonderful income that their advertising is going to bring in you have to be quite creative sometimes. I think that you have to be quite creative in most forward-thinking organisations whatever department you happen to be in.
>
> We've got fundraisers and marketers and people who you know have to design and make things appealing and attractive, though, and one of the things I try to do is evidence to the creative people the value of the back-end operations being a party to the conversation right from the get-go. It's great they're having all these wonderful ideas but how on earth are we going to process that? I think if you're able to collaborate well with the more creative side of the business they soon see a value in you … to the point now where my creatives will always include me in the initial planning because they know that at some point, I'm going to have to get the income they're bringing in channelled to their coding. Ultimately their coding is going to show whether they've achieved their objectives or not and if I can't code it properly then they're not going to see that reflected in the accounts, all the work that they have done. So you can evidence to them that you're on board with them, you are as excited about this campaign as they are, and that you will try and troubleshoot as much as you can to make sure that the fulfilment process, the pre-sales, the after-sales, are all complementing, you are all working to the same aim, to the same outcome.

Perspectives in Practice Questions

1. How does Jeroen enable his staff in the daycare centres to make the service fun for children?
2. Why do you think Claire seeks to be involved in the conversations about the creative parts of campaigning and marketing the charity?
3. What do you think would be the outcomes if the creatives in the children's charity did not have to consult with Claire?
4. What do you think Claire means when she says that all staff in 'forward-thinking' organisations have to be creative?

LEADERSHIP AND PROJECTS

Projects are temporary organisational teams of people from different specialisms most often brought together to achieve a specific goal (Pinto, 1996). The use of projects has

been a key business driver in many industries and companies, used for all sorts of purposes, including reducing inefficiencies, innovation, developing expertise and contributing to organisational growth (Winter et al. 2006; Martinsuo, et al. 2024). The project management scholar David Cleland describes projects as often cross-functional, and sometimes including multiple people matrixed from different parts of the organisation or external to it. Haniff and Galloway (2022), highlight that for large or complex goals, many different organisations may be involved, and these multi-agency projects are observed to be of particular complexity.

The key issue for leadership of projects is that people join project teams on a temporary basis with a particular remit, oftentimes in a purely transactional process (Cleland, 1995). Certainly, some projects operate just like this, with specialist personnel, sometimes from multiple organisations, injected in, paid and then moved on to the next job. On first sight, therefore, projects appear to be ideally suited to managerial or transactional leadership since they are considered task-focused and time-bound with specific budgets; the classic project management triad of time, cost and quality. The key problem for those who lead projects is their lack of legitimate power though. Project leaders in the main have no authority in terms of pay, promotion or punishment. They can neither incentivise nor penalise. So, in fact, there is little extrinsic means of transaction available to them. Projects are thus, at least to some extent, often staffed by employees or contractors who require other types of motivation and leadership. With no authority or power to affect pay, rewards or penalties, the project leader appears to be left with limited means of motivating people so that they may contribute their efforts. As the complexity of projects increase, so too does the complexity of leading, especially where there are project members from different organisations.

Critical to project leadership, according to the project management specialist Aaron Shenhar, is the need for a leader to encourage engagement amongst project team members by sharing the vision and inspiring people to work on its realisation. This sharing and advocating the vision is only possible if the project leader – and the project team members – understand the importance of the project in the wider context. Whether that be the pursuit of a single objective by multiple organisations or the strategic goals of a single organisation, a shared understanding of the value of the project to achieving aims and objectives is critical. Shenhar (2004) refers to the concept of *strategic project leadership* as a means by which organisations that use projects might optimise performance by communicating between the hierarchies so that everyone knows how their efforts fit and what role and value they have to the greater strategic goals. From there a project leader may devise an appropriate strategy for leading his or her team, commensurate with the overall corporate strategy or goals.

In their book on project leadership, Burke and Barron (2007) note that while a project team is often understood as a resource, leadership to encourage excellence will maintain focus on team members as individuals, able to add value if encouraged and motivated. While this suggests transformational techniques, these opportunities can also be seen to be transactional. A leader in these circumstances might give project members challenging work, the opportunity to develop skills or develop experiences that may improve access

in the future to other projects and areas of work, or even contribute to overall development that may be useful for promotion and reward in the future. These are offered in exchange for engagement and effort. At the same time, though, they are also transformational as they are people-centred, individualised and developmental.

Linking Theory to Practice

The project management specialists Rodney Müller and Ralf Turner refer to leadership in projects as requiring key competencies ranging from critical analysis and vision to sensitivity and conscientiousness – all resonant with transformational leadership techniques (Müller and Turner, 2007, 2010). While there are various competencies associated with different projects in different industries and sectors (and that thus resonate with context-based theories), Müller and Turner (2010) assert that any project leadership has four key stages. These are outlined in Box 5.2 below.

BOX 5.2

Exploring the Key Stages for Leading Projects

1 Understand the Project Goal

The project leader should understand the overall mission and the component part the project plays in it. S/he is thus enabled to develop an informed plan of how the project will be achieved within the cost, time, quality scope.

2 Personalise It

The project leader should take on the aims and goals of the project and envision ways of making them happen. Thus, the leader invests and engages personally and this allows him/her to communicate the aims and scope well – even enthusiastically – so that members may engage too.

3 Connect with the Team

A project leader should make a point of knowing the team members – their names, their professional backgrounds and expertise, their work and career ambitions, their external talents and interests. This knowledge will inform the ability to provide opportunities and experiences that will be tailored and valuable for members. In gaining this knowledge, there will be exchange in terms of members' opinions and comments about the project, its aims and its operations, and these too may be valuable.

4 Conduct the Project

The project leader should assign people to appropriate tasks, as informed by knowing them and their aspirations.

In summary, project leaders should delegate responsibility and authority, encourage ideas and autonomy, operate a no-blame culture, lead by example and participate. The need to represent the team in other parts of the management structures of the organisation is critical to enabling the trust required for effective project leadership. All of these resonate strongly with transformational leadership and its four I's (Kapasi et al., 2016a, 2016b).

In concert with this, Prabhakar (2005) also recommends transformational leadership techniques for projects. As with any environment that could be described as low authority, there is an emphasis in projects on team building. For project managers specifically, they must demonstrate competence in the project purpose, efficiency in using project techniques and leadership. From a *thought leadership* point of view, it is the project leader who develops the project's strategy for goal achievement. From a *leading people* point of view, it is the project leader who resolves conflicts and manages expectations amongst stakeholders at the start of the project. And it is the project leader who motivates the different members of the team to deliver project success.

While the tools of leadership that are available to line managers are not usually available to project leaders, there are other ways to lead effective and successful projects. In particular, while the extrinsic rewards usually reserved for those with headship roles or otherwise official authority within an organisation are largely not available to those who lead projects, transactional leadership is still possible. The opportunity to do challenging work, build skills and experience, work on tasks one enjoys, these are all often within the gift of a project leader. At the same time, the overlaps with transformational techniques are clear: consider the need to inspire, through enthusiasm and conduct, the benefits of providing support and stimulation, and from a transformational and relational point of view, a project leader may well have good knowledge of the people in his or her team and tailor these opportunities accordingly. The distributed and temporary nature of projects also comprises inherent suggestion of distribution of leadership and diversity in terms of team members (followers) and different strategic and operational purposes. There is resonance in this respect too therefore of an appropriate fit to situational and contingent approaches to leadership.

PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE 5.3

Lone Stubberup is Vice President for Sustainability for the biotech/pharma company Ellab. More information about Lone can be found on page 3.

Victor Ikande is a regional head for the US-based construction firm Hollins. More information about Victor can be found on page 3.

Lone Stubberup describes her approach to project leadership in the biotech/pharma industry:

> We try to have shared meetings, all staff meetings, because I think it's important that each team has a good understanding of the company and

(Continued)

> understands the goals that we have. … And I train [project leaders] to think 'What's in it for the team members', to try to work with the team. And they need to spend time with them to make sure that they understand why this is important because that's when you get the buy-in in projects teams.

Victor Ikande describes his take on the challenges of leading in projects, including very complex ones with multiple stakeholders in construction:

> If it's a matrix organisation like we have, where you might have line management responsibility but not the project responsibility for people, quite often people are in contact with somebody else on a day-to-day basis. And there's always a problem if a project manager is more task oriented, and they are just drilling people to get what they need, and then send them back when they're done and the line manager can console them and make sure they are motivated. And that's a very prevailing culture unfortunately in organisations where the project management is different from the line management …
>
> I am both a line manager and a project manager, but in the past when I wasn't a line manager, I tried to make sure that I told people if I thought they were doing great. I also made it obvious to whoever was responsible for delivering that person's career objectives so they were aware of that. And so the person feels that while I'm not responsible for promoting you directly, I care about your career. And that worked a trick and really helped and quite often I would deliberately go push if I felt somebody was due a promotion. There's also this strategy where there's a next role for a person and you try to give them experience for that role in the project. So you don't see them purely as a resource into your project. You start working with them towards achieving some career goals for the next level. And those are ways that work effectively. If they tell you that they want to go to the next level as a project manager, you go, 'OK, I'll start giving you PM responsibilities now so that when you have your conversations with your line manager you have the ammunition', and in the background you are also doing some lobbying on their behalf where possible – putting in a good word for them.

Priyanka Thali conducts much of her work with teams that come together from across departments. She outlines the issues thus:

> Influencing people from other departments to work towards shared goals, that is a challenge. It could be a managing editor from a different department and an operations manager and a client manager, so different sorts of hierarchies there … I think the problem lies with the fact that we have a different set of values probably, and we haven't had the opportunity to know each other, on a closer level. So I think lack of context is one barrier, because I may not know what context that person has been working in and vice versa. And then there will be differences of opinion and things like that, different perceptions. I think

> these are things that are barriers when it comes to influencing across departments. We try to overcome that by having conversations.

Claire McCarthy enjoys leading projects in her third-sector organisation where appropriate, and notes that they can help with organisational leadership more generally:

> With a project, it's just much more focused than an ongoing leadership role. So you can see a beginning, a middle and an end to it. And it can be quite good because you are going to see an outcome, whereas other things are just trundling along. Projects bring people together. You use a little bit of flattery you know: 'You're here for a reason, we think that you've got something to give to this project.' People like that especially if they feel that maybe they've got a hidden talent that hasn't been noticed. So they can quickly get engaged because they think, 'Oh I've been picked for this, I'm somebody they want for this'. I think it can give a bit of confidence to people. But you do have to explain on the first meeting why they are all here. I think until people see that they're there for a reason, that they've been picked for a reason and that this isn't just for the sake of it, I think if people see a purpose, they get involved especially if that purpose is going to have a direct impact on their day job.

Perspectives from Practice Questions

1. Why is it important for project leaders to think about 'what's in it for the team' as Lone says?
2. Do you have experience of projects in which people were expected to perform and leave, as Victor describes? How did that affect motivation?
3. To what extent do you think Victor's strategy of influencing people in his projects was transactional or transformational?
4. Why do you think it is important for Priyanka to have conversations with people when she is on cross-departmental jobs?
5. Why do you think Claire finds leading temporary projects useful for her leadership?
6. Do you think it is appropriate that Claire 'flatters' the people she selects to work in projects with her? Why do you think she does this?
7. Why do you think people engage with projects in Claire's charity especially well when they think it will affect the greater organisation?

LEADERSHIP IN DYNAMIC, HIGH-STAKES ENVIRONMENTS

Circumstances that are dynamic and high risk are where there is greatest need of strong and effective leadership, according to scholars such as Boin et al. (2016) writing about emergency responses to crises. Dynamic, high-stakes environments describe situations

where there are risks to safety, health and lives, but include too any circumstances where the situation is dynamic and risks are high, including to things such as property or quality of offering. Consequently, medical emergencies, military combat situations and emergency services rescue responses are all examples of where leadership must account for dynamic environments and high stakes, but so too are busy commercial kitchens, for example, where the whole value proposition relies on fast, quality service and performance, made more complex by the need for efficient safety measures and procedures. For these sorts of circumstances key elements of leadership include competence, reliability and flexibility in terms of being able to envision and envision again as circumstances change. Writing about emergency medicine in particular, Shanahan et al. (2020) add that the ability to stay calm, keep a clear head and be alert to ongoing unanticipated changes in the situation are also key.

Linking Theory to Practice

In teams that routinely deal with fast, high-stakes circumstances, trust comes into play in a very clear way. Often there is substantial pre-planning, rehearsal and practice of simulated scenarios, and these activities can be critical in real emergency situations; they test the structures that dynamic, high-stakes leadership relies on, the chains of command and communications procedures necessary in an emergency, all of which have to be well-established before the emergency occurs. So for teams that exist, at least in part, to provide emergency response, communication lines must be pre-established, clear and effective. Thereafter, members of the team should know who does what, when and why. This is all suggestive of a directive, even autocratic, approach (see Chapter 2). However, recent research has found also that there are advantages to taking more dynamic approaches to leadership in dynamic situations. For example, the person in overall charge may relinquish control where necessary so that specialists may lead as appropriate to circumstances, and resonant with the principles outlined in Chapter 4 on shared and distributed leadership, there may be shifts in leadership throughout an emergency situation. In a paper on emergency obstetrics, for example, Mesinioti et al. (2020) present research that finds that leadership is discursively achieved in emergency circumstances, as different specialists take the lead interchangeably as circumstances dictate. Mesinioti et al. observe that these subtle changes in leadership occur as a result of verbal and non-verbal signals in the dynamic environment. This is not possible without trust. It is also not possible unless the person who is officially in charge is able to understand that in these sorts of circumstances, leadership may include *relinquishing control* when necessary and resuming it as the situation allows.

Other dynamic, high-stakes environments may be more complex again. For example, in circumstances of crisis, such as a terrorist attack, natural disaster or other catastrophic event, there may be multiple different agencies involved. According to Waugh (2018), the greater the complexity of the situation, the greater the potential ambiguity about who is in charge – who is the leader? While in many countries, governments, military

agencies and emergency response bodies do conduct multi-agency scenario planning and simulations, the point is that dynamic, high-stakes environments are by definition loaded with the potential for the unanticipated and unexpected to occur in situations that are continually changing. For leaders, there is a need to:

- know who has overall authority, what the chains of command are amongst leaders and personnel throughout the situation, and how the communications between these work;
- achieve team compliance with authority and leadership throughout the chain of command;
- be able to understand and deal with complexity;
- understand and deal with changes in circumstances in real time; and
- make fast, clear decisions calmly.

In essence, therefore, leading in dynamic, high-stakes environments involves that leadership and process are clear, trust is unequivocal, and the leader is calm and able to make informed and important decisions in what can appear (and even be) chaotic circumstances.

PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE 5.4

Jeroen Nusteling described various means by which he has implemented means by which emergencies can be handled in his childcare business.

> Things happen to children, children fall off things and fall over. And we are all together in a small area with a lot of people [in the centres]. So we have a system in place where an employee only has to make one call and we can all respond. We have a WhatsApp group for that, an alarm group of all staff available. We have never used it, but the effect is that 50 managers and staff will be coming with cars and everything if necessary.

John Black explains how the structural operational model of a fire and rescue service works to enable leadership, including in emergency response situations:

> The rank structure within the stations consists of the station manager and then we have four watches within each station who cover the whole period of a week. And within that watch structure is a watch manager who looks after the whole watch personnel. And below him is a crew manager who looks after crewmen or firefighters at a fire. All this is designed in order to dovetail in with our operational requirements. For example, a crew manager will be in charge of four firefighters within a sector of a fire, and a watch manager will be in charge of anything up to four sectors, and the station manager will be in

(Continued)

charge of the overall operation and logistics and strategy of dealing with any type of incident. He will be the incident commander unless for some reason a higher-ranking officer is required to attend.

The way the structure is ranked like that is in order that it can be identified easily and quickly what everyone's role is and what level of responsibility that person can have, whether it be in charge of four people or 16 people or the whole fire incident itself. We need all that to be very clear for safety reasons. It was identified by some research that an incident officer could only reasonably have two or three spans of control to maintain safety and operational efficiency of the incident. So an incident commander without having the rank structure at an incident would be responsible for somewhere in the teens of spans of control, which is overloading the incident commander's ability to think sharply and clearly. So some of the responsibilities are disseminated down to other ranks who can make quick sharp small decisions based on a strategic vision that is disseminated from the station commander to the watch managers to the crew managers to the firefighters themselves. And that's the same organisation and structure that we use within a station for normal administration when we are not attending fires; we try to replicate both management systems within a normal working environment and at a high-pressure incident. In that way everyone is familiar with the structure and in an emergency incident it's very clear who does what.

One of the most interesting aspects of looking into fires is that most of the injuries to firefighters are caused after the initial phase of the incident is under control, because everybody relaxes. Once we've got the initial rescues done, fire under control or vehicles under control, whatever it is, everybody relaxes and that's when injuries are more likely to occur. So throughout the incident, once the initial aims of the event are realised, it is important to create more aims, maybe not quite as urgent, but certainly aims that people know about in order that we decrease the amount of firefighter injuries. It is quite interesting to think about that. During a rescue there are very few injuries to firefighters. However, when we are cleaning up the mess that's when all the injuries occur.

Perspectives from Practice Questions

1. Since they have never used it, why does Jeroen maintain his alarm group?
2. Why do you think it is useful that the fire and rescue service John works in has a single organisational structure for emergency and non-emergency context work?
3. How important do you think pre-defined reporting structures are in other types of dynamic, high-stakes circumstances? Consider for example, an operating theatre, a lifeguarding situation, a subsea pipe maintenance task or a busy restaurant kitchen?

SUMMARY

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which leadership can and does play out in practice. It refers to both *thought leadership* and *leading people* and the overlaps between these. In organisations both are needed, but it would be almost impossible for any single person to inhabit all the leadership requirements (and management) for success in most organisations. As such, the credibility of the heroic single leader seems undermined by observable practice in most cases. That said, many organisations do have their figureheads and often these are the founders or entrepreneurs or leaders or officers in charge who have shaped the organisational culture so that more leading may emerge.

This chapter has also explored how important leadership is in terms of formulating strategy and executing it, and, in turn, the role of strategy in informing how leading might optimise performance is identified as critical. Three example contexts of where there are particular challenges for leaders – creative contexts, project contexts and dynamic, high-stakes contexts – serve to illustrate the wider issues associated with leading in different types of environments. Throughout, there are links with theory to be drawn and it is clear that theory and extant knowledge about leadership that has developed over decades has a role to play in informing and shaping practice. The challenge for leaders is the reflection and consideration of the means by which the goals of an organisation, the teams within them and the individuals throughout can be facilitated and optimised through leadership practice.

EXERCISES

1. Outline the key issues associated with strategic leadership.
2. Give an explanation of the key issues associated with leading in creative contexts.
3. Can you think of any other example industries or types of organisation that would have to balance the tensions associated with simultaneously leading within commercial parameters but encouraging creativity?
4. Consider the photography firm example scenario in this chapter. If you were the owner/CEO of this firm how would you:
   a. distribute work?
   b. encourage the development of art?
5. Do you consider strategic leadership and leadership in creative contexts to require leadership at the top only or throughout the organisation?
6. Give an explanation of the challenges of leading in projects and other low-authority contexts.
7. Reflect on an experience of working in a project or matrixed team. How well led was it? What, if anything, would you do differently?
8. Give an explanation of some of the things that can be done in advance to help efficient leadership in a dynamic, high-stakes environment?