Exceeding Expectations: the principles of outstanding leadership

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The Background

- Qualitative research study designed to unearth the detail behind high performance leadership
- 77 leaders plus their line managers and direct reports
- 262 interviews in total - a rich source of data
- Delineation of leaders by performance level - fine comparison to see differentiating factors between good and outstanding leadership

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<th>Organisation</th>
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<th>Leader interview 2</th>
<th>Direct Report</th>
<th>Line Manager</th>
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Self as enabler

think and act systemically

people the route to performance
Think systemically and act long term

Grow people through performance

Put we before me

Give time and space to others

Talk is work

Take deeper breaths and hold them longer

Apply the spirit, not the letter of the law

Bring meaning to life

Aware and authentic to leadership first
Apply the Spirit, Not the Letter, of the Law

- OL enhanced by Systems and Processes and sustained by culture
- Focus on few key systems and process and pay real attention to them
- Develop what need if doesn’t exist
- To fulfil purpose not process
- Person first
- Work with the grain
Bring Meaning to Life

- Enable strong and shared sense of purpose
- Build bridges of understanding
- Interplay of vision and engagement
- Find emotional connection
- Mutual gains
- Use toolkit to create change
Think Systemically, Act Long term

- Seeing the big picture
  - Providing a long term vision
  - Embracing change
  - Navigate through complexity
  - Interconnected nature of events
  - Patience and consistency
  - Understand own impact
  - Understanding your symbolic role as leader
  - Act for long term benefit and seek sustainable relationships
Grow People Through Performance

- Passionately invest in others
- Develop their careers, not just their skills for the job
- Use challenge of the day to day
- Give feedback on performance and behaviour
- Facilitate, coach, nudge, question, challenge
- Focus on capability and engagement
- Build on both triumph and disaster
- Demonstrate your belief, underpinned with appropriate support
- Create conditions for success
Put ‘We’ Before ‘Me’

- Work hard on team spirit, shared decision making, collaborative working
- Diminish hierarchy
- Put collective needs above own
- Emphasis on power of collective
  - Nurture the team
  - Play to strengths of each individual
  - Co-creation, opportunities for dialogue
  - Step back
Give time and space to others

- Free people
- Give power to the team
- Locus of control is elsewhere
- Believe power to initiate must belong with others
- May have to bide time
- Focus on development, confidence and fulfil potential
- Give more time, allow more freedom
Talk is Work

- Make the most of every opportunity to
  - Create forums for dialogue as tool for action
  - Get to know your people
  - Build long term relationships
  - Create social environment of respect
  - Share stories of success, encourage ideas
  - Take the temperature of the organisation
- Strength of relationship determines strength of bond
Take Deeper Breaths...and hold them longer

- At the centre is trust
- Acutely aware of own role in creating conditions of trust
- Understand seminal moments
- Think about response to error
- Deliver promises/act with consistency
Authentic to Leadership First, Own Needs Second

- Understand people; watch, listen and learn
- Careful how they act and act with care
- Don’t walk past the negative
- Trust depends on their behaviour
- Minimise inconsistency and incongruence
- Authenticity?
- Self confident but not arrogant
- Focus on strengths and manage weaknesses
**Good**

Vision as clarity of purpose
Focus on objectives and targets
Act due to beliefs and values
Focus on and develop skill
Delegate task
Believe leader holds responsibility
Involvement in vision and strategy
Give time to others
1:1s to focus on work
Seek efficiency in meetings
True to values and self
Own learning about job
People and task important
WYSIWYG
Develop via training and advice
Monitor performance
See to many priorities

**Outstanding**

Vision as emotional clarion call
Focus on people and engagement
Act due to consequences
Focus on attitude and engagement
Delegate space
Believe team hold responsibility
Co-creation of vision and strategy
Focus on people as success
1:1s seek to understand people
Allow space for emergent thinking
True to ‘leadership’
Own learning about self & others
Task through people
Consistent and careful behaviour
Develop via challenge/support
Monitor temperature
Place emphasis on people first
What is resilience?

- The ability to recover or adjust to change quickly
- The capability of a material to recover size and shape, after being subject to stress
- Positive attributions of robustness, flexibility and strength
- Hardiness and optimism
- But also might create resistance to change and command styles of leadership

...how can leadership help?
Resilience

- **Emotion regulation**: The ability to stay calm under pressure
- **Impulse control**: The ability to shut out distractions and urges and to restrain our reactions
- **Causal analysis**: The ability to comprehensively and accurately identify the cause of a problem
- **Self-efficacy**: A sense of capability and confidence in the world
- **Realistic optimism**: A belief that things can change for the better and that you can control the direction of your life
- **Empathy**: The ability to read others’ cues to their emotional and physiological states
- **Reaching out**: The ability to seek out new opportunities, challenges and relationships

*Martin Seligman, Andrew Shatté, Karen Reivich - University of Pennsylvania*
What helps

- Confidence
- Reflection
- Vision
- Risk attraction
- Positive about failures
- Social bonds
- Problem solving (tame and wicked problems)
- Response to crisis
... thank you