



introducing

3D Leadership

the balanced approach to
leadership

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Three-Dimensional Leadership - *the balanced approach*
By Simon Batty MBA MCMi MInstLM
Pondering the Question



Academics, trainers and consultants have struggled for years to identify and describe exactly what constitutes effective leadership. Often, they find themselves reaching into the worlds of sport, the military, charities, politics and even literature, to identify the 'ideal' model of leadership. Amongst this multitude of debate and discussion, some basic concepts seem to have been lost, as the definition of leadership increases in complexity.

Perhaps leadership is quite straightforward. What if it can be grown and developed as a capability based on clearly defined criteria? Maybe we don't need to look to Churchill, Mandela or Shakespeare's Henry V, to find the principles of becoming an effective leader. Outstanding leaders of distinction they may well have been; but their example is so far removed from the reality of the day-to-day issues of leadership in most organisations that it provides nothing more than a catalyst for an interesting discussion. A discussion which will no doubt focus on charisma, impact and personality, traits which lead us away from what it takes to be a real leader in the organisation of today.

Rather than trying to transform a few of your managers into world-class high profile leaders, focus upon creating a world-class organisation by developing core leadership skills in all of your managers. Getting the basic principles right and taking a balanced approach to leadership development is all that is needed for aspiring leaders to set the example that others may choose to follow.

Thinking in Three-Dimensions

There are three dimensions to effective leadership, each of which is within the control of the individual leader, and each of which can be developed through appropriate support and guidance. Effective leadership is about developing your ability in each of the three dimensions and then choosing to apply your skills and abilities in a balanced, three-dimensional way.

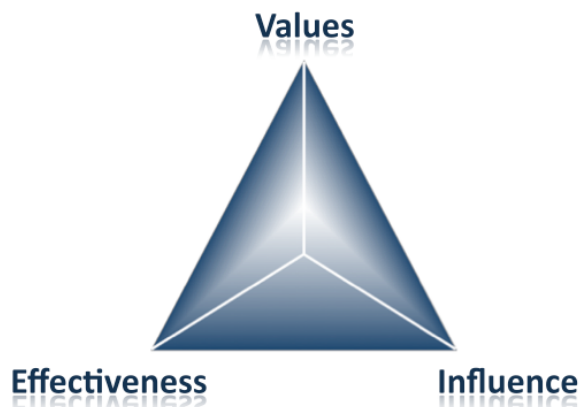


Figure One

Figure One shows, in graphic form, the three dimensions of leadership. Each dimension is of equal importance, which means that leaders who have development needs in one or more of the dimensions, will display behaviours that indicate an opportunity for improvement. Simply developing an already strong dimension will not work; a strength overplayed can become a weakness.

Values

The first dimension of leadership is that of values. These are the internal thoughts that influence the way a leader views the world around them. Some values are deeply embedded in our moral framework. For example, they guide us in the difference between right and wrong, good or bad. Developed as we progress through childhood, these values are constantly influenced by family, peers, experiences and environment. They are increasingly challenging to change or modify, as we grow older.

Other values are less deeply instilled in our psychological make-up. Take the example of a manager who acquired their skills and leadership style in a highly structured organisation; where discussion and challenge were frowned upon, and where process and adherence to rules were held in high esteem. On joining a more open and flexible organisation, this manager would, undoubtedly, bring with them a couple of inappropriate values. These would probably drive them to seek out procedural answers to problems rather than involving their team in actively brainstorming alternative ideas/approaches. Thus, as well as struggling to ‘find their feet’ in their new role, they may quickly develop a de-motivated team, confused and stifled by their leader’s mismatched values.

Although the specifics of the above example may change, this scenario is a common phenomenon, rooted in the fact that each of us develops a strong autobiography as we experience life and work. This autobiography influences many aspects of our behaviour, including the values that we believe to be appropriate in our working roles...*“If my approach worked there, it must work here”*. Fortunately, with guidance and coaching we can learn to change the way we think about a present role and align our leadership values to those more appropriate for our current organisation.

Values are intensely personal to the individual, and to the organisation. We may be forgiven for thinking that the easiest way to ensure leaders have the right values for the organisation, is to recruit people with the right values in the first place! Indeed, this is one approach. However, to get a ‘perfect’ match could be a long and arduous task. More significantly, it can lead to missed opportunities in overlooking candidates that demonstrate strengths in other dimensions. This can be avoided by identifying the desirable *core values* that every leader within the organisation must display. You can then recruit those people who broadly match the value set and also demonstrate the potential to develop those values that are not yet strengths.

Table One illustrates the range of values that leaders may be expected to demonstrate, but remember that core values vary between organisations as much as they vary between individuals.

Effectiveness

Glasshouses and stones. In order to lead people effectively, the individual leader must *first be able to self-manage*. This means that they must be ‘personally effective’ in performing key tasks. Time management (or rather, effective use of time), is a prime example. Leaders who fail to identify and manage their own priorities are unlikely to help team members do any better. Worse still, they may feel threatened by a team member who is more accomplished in this basic management skill than they are.

The effectiveness dimension requires that a manager is in control of their own workload, their own decision making processes and is capable of planning and goal setting. It also requires that they have sufficient specialist ability to carry out the functional aspects of their role. A leader struggling with professional competence may have to compensate by allocating a disproportionate amount of time to their own tasks, thereby failing to delegate, or coach and guide their team members towards achieving their true potential.

Table One illustrates some of the aspects of the effectiveness dimension, which have significant impact upon the ability to lead.

Influence

It is important to note that truly influential leaders are not necessarily those who are seeking the popular vote. Leaders who use their personal charisma, or popularity, to motivate and influence, whilst neglecting to develop their values or effectiveness dimensions, need to beware of the following, ‘How the mighty fall when the popular vote disappears!’ Charm may work for a while, but real credibility and respect are based upon the ability to deliver results in all areas.

In a world where presentation and style are increasingly revered, it is tempting to invest considerable amounts of time and money in developing these skills at the expense of others. Whilst this is understandable, it is not always wholly appropriate, particularly depending upon the individual concerned.

The ability to influence others is crucial to effective leadership and is of equal importance to the other two dimensions. The key message here is ensuring we develop influencing skills suitable to the level of leadership involved. Those leading substantial organisations are going to need a wider portfolio of influencing skills than those leading one or two team members. Honing presentation skills to a fine art is of little benefit, if the leader concerned delivers very few presentations. Balance plays its part again.

Finally, Table One illustrates some of the key abilities that comprise the influence dimension of the three dimensional leadership model.

Leadership Dimension	Example Criteria
<p>Values</p> <p><i>These are different for every organisation and are uncovered during careful research to identify the 'unwritten rules' that describe behaviour appropriate to the organisation and its goals. Remember that organisational values should also be open to change and challenge!</i></p>	<p>Process or Outcome</p> <p>Controlling or Empowering</p> <p>Consensus or Challenge</p> <p>Certainty or Risk</p> <p>Rigid or Flexible</p> <p>Collaboration or Competition</p> <p>Individual or Team</p> <p>Department or Company</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p><i>These are the task-based competencies, which enable a leader to be effective in basic self-management, functional specialism and personal organisation.</i></p>	<p>Problem solving, information handling, decision making, functional skills, prioritisation, numeracy, literacy, IT skills, desk management, administration, organisation, commercial acumen</p>
<p>Influence</p> <p><i>These are the people-based competencies, which enable the leader to influence those within and beyond their team.</i></p>	<p>Communication skills, presentation skills, meeting facilitation, assertiveness, negotiation, appearance, confidence, commercial acumen, emotional intelligence, media handling, public relations, political ability</p>

Table One

Assessing Three-Dimensional leadership

Three-dimensional leadership manifests itself in the way a leader behaves. Therefore, in order to identify leader's strengths and weaknesses, we obtain feedback from peers, managers and team members via a profiling tool.

Using a three-dimensional leadership appraisal *tailored* to the organisation is critical to this process. It ensures that the feedback is relevant to both the leader and the organisation. Each of the dimensions represents behaviours, assessment of which can be highly subjective. In quantifying subjective observation, it is important to ensure that a balanced view is portrayed – hence the 360° nature of the feedback. Omission of an entire tier of respondents would imbalance the three-dimensional diagnosis.

Each dimension is assessed by the use of twenty questions designed to elicit a numerical grading. These grades are supported by narrative comment from the respondent. This enables the leader to understand the respondent's perception of their behaviour, the relative strengths of each dimension and suggestions for personal leadership development.

Symptoms of Two-Dimensional Leadership

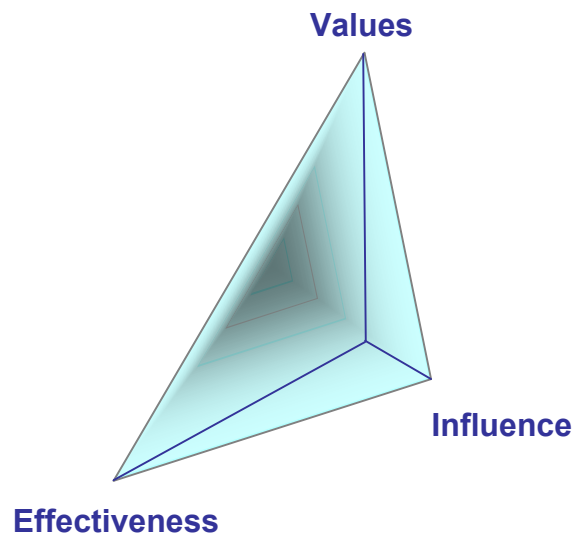
Leaders who have developed two dimensions, at the expense of the third, usually exhibit behavioural characteristics that are symptomatic of their development needs.

Relative strengths and weaknesses are just that - relative. When a manager has two dimensions extremely well developed, with a slight weakness in the third, their need to develop will be less marked than a manager who is virtually devoid of a third dimension.

Our experience of training and coaching leaders across industry has shown that the following symptoms manifest themselves in two-dimensional managers. They describe leaders with a strong imbalance: where relative scores show a markedly unsatisfactory score in one of the three dimensions.

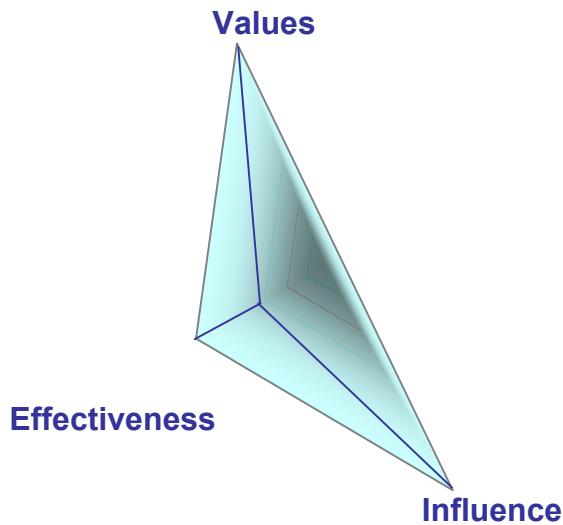
High Values & Effectiveness Score, Low Influence

These leaders care passionately about organisational goals and are strongly task driven. They set a fine example by managing their own workload effectively, prioritising their tasks and setting goals for team members. If responsible for a professional or specialist function, they often display prowess that the team members respect and admire.



VEi leaders struggle to motivate, enthuse or guide their team members beyond that required to get the task done. They fail to communicate the reasons behind goals and, whilst delegating tasks may not be a problem, they struggle to make team members feel involved or empowered. These leaders express concern at their lack of understanding what 'makes their team members tick'. Consequently, these leaders may be effective while present, but find their ability to manage remote or dispersed teams limited. Alternatively, they may influence their own team well, but struggle immensely with the more public face of leadership – presentations, meetings, or contributing effectively in senior workgroups, for example.

High Values & Influence, Low Effectiveness

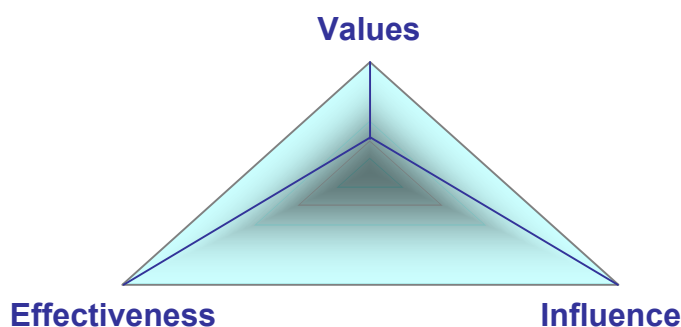


VIE leaders are inspiring to be around, charismatic and animated. As leaders they find it easy to enthuse their team members with the big picture and often inspire people to pursue challenging goals with limited resources. They feel comfortable in the organisation and prefer to lead people who also aspire to the organisation's goals. To these people, being part of the 'team organisation' and encouraging others to be a part of it, is what leadership is all about.

Unfortunately, VIE leaders are great at talking and influencing and though desperate to do the right thing, often fail to deliver on the basics within their own role. They may develop coping strategies to compensate for poor time management or decision making, they may move the goal posts through inadequate planning once too often, or struggle with their own professional competence.

The danger for VIE leaders is that their team, their bosses, or their peers, may find the passion and charisma eventually wears a little thin. Ultimately, the underlying respect they used to feel for their leader is marred by their poor personal effectiveness.

High Influence & Effectiveness, Low Values



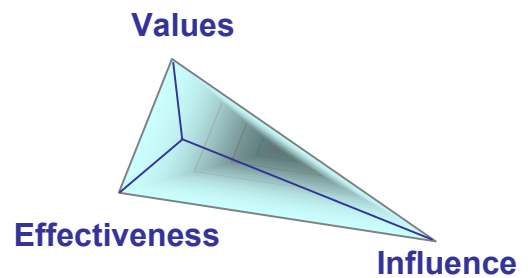
IEV leaders are influential and charismatic. Their team members admire and follow them because of their influence and task effectiveness. These leaders are effective at creating tight, close-knit teams, technically proficient, where the job gets done on time and under budget. Sales teams led by these leaders are highly visible and are often seen as impregnable fortresses, apart from the rest of the organisation.

It is common for IEV leaders to create their own little empires, either knowingly or unknowingly. This is because their values, and the way they think about their role/team mismatches the organisation's values. In highly competitive companies, or

those struggling with change, IEV leaders can create a silo of outstanding performance, whilst providing no help to those leaders or teams around them – referred to as the “We’re alright, Jack” mentality.

One-Dimensional Leaders

Leaders who score one dimension significantly higher than the other two, may require considerable coaching/training in order to be more effective. However, if the two lower scores are at an acceptable level, or better, when compared to the rest of the leaders in the organisation, this is simply a slightly more complex learning opportunity than for a leader with two strong dimensions. Appropriate training and personal coaching can be extremely effective in helping one-dimensional leaders make impressive strides in their leadership ability.



Restoring Balance

The key to three-dimensional leadership exists in achieving a relative balance between each dimension, with all dimensions at an average or better than average score when compared to the leaders across the organisation. Three equal scores at below average do not an effective leader make!

Life is a learning experience; so is leadership. We believe that it is the responsibility of the organisation to provide the following support to their leaders and potential leaders:

- Recruit leaders with broadly matching core values and the potential to develop**
- Provide leaders with tailored personal effectiveness training and coaching**
- Provide leaders with tailored personal influence training and coaching**
- Provide 360-degree feedback on actual behaviour against each dimension**

Organisations that provide their leaders, junior and senior, with training and coaching in each of the three dimensions will create an environment conducive to sustained performance. Investment in leadership benefits all members of an organisation, present and future, automatically accelerating the release of hidden potential throughout.

Conclusion

The debate, whether leaders are born or made, will rage for years to come. However, we believe with a passion that, given the right support, training and guidance, we can all become more effective leaders. If we develop leaders who demonstrate the right values, personal effectiveness and positive influence within our organisations, we are developing leaders who set the example that others want to follow.

