

The seven essences of leadership.

1. Understand that effective leadership has changed dramatically in a decade.

Today we can only hold 10% of the information we need in our brains, compared to three quarters just a generation ago. Our society is developing so fast, with social and technological change, globalisation and the growing concern for the future of our planet - while our genetic brain remains stone-age! The human gene defaults. Does your firm define leadership as: “knowing everything, and telling people what to do” – especially in stressful times?!

Leaders need to earn staff respect and loyalty. You must embed understanding that followers need their own insights, rather than just your rules or commands.

2. Increase Self-Awareness.

Self-awareness is the first rung on the ladder to Leadership excellence. Knowing “who” you are increases self-confidence and enables you to take on challenges more effectively. Do you think or feel your way to solutions? Do you like to leave things open or make judgements and decisions quickly? Are you rational when making decisions or intuitive, or both?

We need to know our personality preferences.

Are you competitive? Optimistic? Good with change? And we need to map out our values and ethics, using tools that really help build a picture of who we are.

3. Manage emotions to improve performance (EI).

The science of Emotional Intelligence, developed in the 1990s, shows us how handling emotions effectively has a huge effect on performance and those around you. The angry person who blows up for a minor reason ruins others’ ability to act for a week! Leaders who cannot manage sadness, disgust, fear or surprise can have devastating effects on those around them.

Leaders’ Responsibilities:

- ✔ *Empowerment:* Of individuals to take decisions
- ✔ *Delegation:* To the lowest possible level.
- ✔ *Support:* Continue to provide guidance but encourage others to create solutions.
- ✔ *Maximise Potential:* offer new experiences, development programmes and challenges.
- ✔ *Share as much information as possible:* Only keep information confidential when you really have to.
- ✔ *Do-what-you-say-you-will-do-when-you-say-you-will-do-it:* Organisational harmony and efficiency require certainty.
- ✔ *Involvement:* Everyone who implements a decision should help make it.
- ✔ *Absence of “blame” culture:* Mistakes are where learning takes place. In successful cultures processes can be replaced by guidelines.

4. Developing different styles.

No one has the acumen to use the whole range of leadership styles naturally. Even those considered very competent usually only have a couple of different ways of operating, suiting their personality and environment. But there are six main styles (Visionary, Coaching, Affiliative, Democratic, Pace-Setting and Commanding) to cover the full range of leadership contexts. They have to be absorbed by learning new behaviours.

For example, some personality types will find it hard to use the Coaching style effectively – by learning to be empathetic. But by focusing on effective listening and then reflecting accurately what people are saying, we find leaders actually become more interested in others.

5. Learning to create a culture to promote performance.

Leaders often mistakenly believe they have a direct impact on the performance of an organisation. But, except when negotiating an acquisition or major contract, they can only set the “climate” in which others operate. The culture then determines performance.

For optimum performance, honesty, transparency and mutual respect must be the norm. The leader must set the example. This will allow trust to develop.

LeaderShape finds virtually everyone in an organisation (including its leaders) wishes to decrease the power structures and increase support for real, measurable achievements.

LeaderShape can look at culture across your company in four areas; Power, Structure, Achievement and Support. After our work, our surveys show the development of performance-enhancing cultures.

6. The contract between leader and follower: expectations understood.

Leaders rarely clarify what they expect from people around them. This frequently causes misunderstanding and relationship breakdown – or at best inefficiency. For effective operations, people need to understand the goals and the leaders’ own responsibilities. See panels for our suggestions, (remembering all leaders also sometimes follow.)

7. Identify key strengths and behavioural development needs.

The real barrier to change is knowing what to change and how. In our experience, a 360° assessment is vital to show where people’s strengths lie and their key development needs. Many such tools don’t do the job well or there is little useful follow-up. The assessment must measure behaviours not skills, be confidential to the individual (and not on the HR file!) and inputs (apart from the line manager) must be anonymous. Most important of all, a process to change the key behaviours identified must be implemented. Leaders themselves often resist assessment – usually out of fear of what they will find.

Overcome that barrier and you are well on your way to excellence.

To boost your leadership skills and understanding, please call: jknight@leadershape.biz 01869 337697.

Individual’s Responsibilities:

- ✔ *Taking Responsibility:* For this kind of culture to prosper, individuals must own what they do and how they contribute.
- ✔ *Accepting Accountability:* This means being willing to be measured by results and rewarded only when they are delivered.
- ✔ *Being self-disciplined:* Self-management is about doing what is needed regardless of enjoyment, organising in an orderly way and not letting emotions spoil performance.
- ✔ *Proactivity (Initiative):* No-one waits to be told what to do – everyone shows initiative where appropriate. Individuals are always thinking about what they should or could be doing... and they get on with it!