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Module 4: Leading across Boundaries

Systems Leadership



Systems Leadership

With squeezed healthcare budgets and pressure to work together to “do more with less”, healthcare leaders are increasingly having to think of their leadership spanning beyond their immediate team or organisation.

Management vs. Leadership

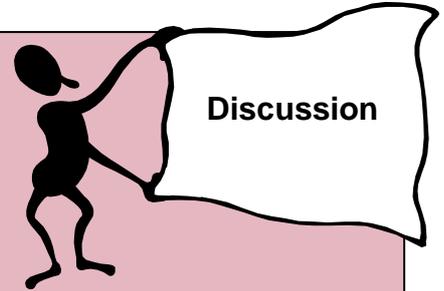
Perhaps the most useful differentiation here is that between system management and leadership (Welbourn, Warwick, Carnall, & Fathers, 2012)

Managers	Leaders
Set a clear purpose and direction in order to provide clear instruction for what must be achieved	Set a compelling vision which attracts followers and inspires them to share that same vision
Managers develop resource plans that show how the goals will be achieved	Must establish credibility to attract followers
Should define the values of their organisation in order to set the norms of what is expected	<p>Will openly live-out a set of values that attract followers sharing similar values</p> <p>It is these lived values which create an empathic bond between leader and follower</p>
“The business of management is to strengthen the system as it is” (Oshry 1999)	“The challenge of leadership is to create what else the system can be” (Oshry, 1999)



Leading across Boundaries

Can you think of a time when you have collaborated across boundaries (at work or outside of work) to achieve an outcome?



What made it difficult / easy?

What was the outcome?



Teaming

Project teams where delegates are part of a multi-disciplinary team involving multiple stakeholders often face challenges. More and more people in nearly every industry and type of company are now working on multiple teams that vary in duration, have a constantly shifting membership, and pursue moving targets. In this context traditional team structures aren't practical.

Instead what is needed is **teaming**...

Definition

*“Teaming is **flexible teamwork**. It’s a way to **gather experts** from far-flung divisions and disciplines into **temporary groups** to **tackle unexpected problems** and **identify emerging opportunities**” (Edmondson, 2012)*

Traditionally, teamwork across organisational boundaries is unnatural. We, as people and organisations, have a natural tendency to optimise locally.

But why?...

In-Group vs. Out-Group

We quickly categorise people into those we see as part of our team or group (in-group) and those we view as not in our team or even in another team (out-group). This leads us to here are some fundamental differences in the way we subsequently perceive and interact with people:

In-Group	Out-Group
Make our group and its members unique	distance self, seeing as different to us, same as each other
Notice similarities > differences to yourself, reinforcing the positive attributes	Notice differences > similarities to yourself, reinforcing the negative differences
Ignore mistakes and attribute responsibility to luck/ chance/ someone else	Recognise mistakes and attribute reasonability for mistakes to the individual
Want to spend time with and share ideas with individual	Want to avoid individual and hide ideas from them
Willing to sacrifice reward for them and will share your personal resources	Deliberately hold back resources and actively try to diminish their reward share



If this is how we treat people we don't identify as part of our group, it is easy to see why working across 'boundaries' can be so difficult and be so unnatural for us.

So... how can you as a leader merge in and out-groups?

CARE Model

- **C** create
- **A** advance
- **R** represent
- **E** embed

Alex Haslam (2013) builds on Social identity Theory to show how leaders can bring people together as a cohesive team to achieve results.

Our social identities are internalised and is part of us. We want to make our group stand out as the best and unique. Our group gives us communication, trust, well-being and engagement. And leadership is a large part of this. Leaders are the prototype of our group, and need to embody and develop this social identity.

Haslam outlines 4 steps to leading successful cohesive teams:

1. Be one of **us**
 - Show how you are one of the team
 - Emphasise similarities between members and between members and yourself
 - Highlight shared values
 - Use 'we' often
2. Stand up for **us**
 - Show interest in the followers – they'll come up with better ideas
 - Advocate the group to others
 - Share member and team successes



3. Craft sense of **us**

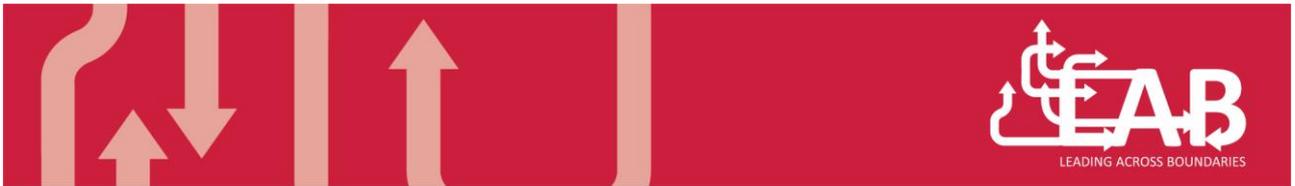
- Listen and try to understand member needs, issues and views
- Emphasise the team's prototypical-ness
- Build good relationships within the team

4. Make **us** matter

- Act to embed the identity into the group
- Champion and market the group to others

Characteristics of Teaming

- Teaming – flexible teamwork – gathering the right group of people into temporary groups to focus on the task in hand
- To 'team' well, people and organisations must embrace good project management principles – to avoid chaos
- Team leadership should not be neglected
- Teaming allows individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and networks while responding quickly to new challenges
- Requires people to cross organisational boundaries



Teaming – Teamwork on the fly

In the accompanying slides, you are asked to discuss the Harvard Business Review Article

Feel free to use the space below to capture some of your discussions for future reference

Teaming – Teamwork on the fly

Discussion notes

A large, light-pink rectangular area intended for notes. In the top right corner of this area, there is a black stick figure holding a white banner that says 'Discussion' in bold black text.



Complex Systems

Whole systems are often referred to as 'complex'. This basically means that dealing with them is not straightforward.

“A complex system is one in which even knowing everything there is to know about the system is not sufficient to predict precisely what will happen”

By knowing a lot about the system, we may well be able to influence the way it will behave, but we can never control it.

Therefore, leadership (the stuff of influence) is more relevant than management (the stuff of control).

Providing whole-system leadership - Practical Tips

To emulate people who are successful in leading complex systems, the following seven key steps are critical:

1. Go out of your way to make new connections

To be a successful leader across systems, you need to go out of your way to make connections across team, organisation and sector boundaries.

Why do it?

Effective cross-boundary networking and co-operation contributes to:

- Greater flexibility
- Strengthens resilience
- Better knowledge-sharing, creating greater overall insight
- Expands effective joint capacity across the network

Leaders who are more likely to initiate collaborative working:

- Achieve higher performance
- Earn greater commitment, which has been shown to create greater resilience against system stresses such as higher demand and expectations at a time of budget reduction.



2. Adopt open, enquiring mind-set. Refuse to be constrained by current horizons

This mind-set is one which is not only open to new ideas, but which goes out of its way to seek new sources of ideas, invests time in generating insight and foresight, and shows humility to create the space for shared leadership.

For leaders who are genuinely open to complex thinking, no boundary is too far away to be worth seeking understanding from the other side. This mind-set seeks to look at the system from every possible direction.

Why do it?

Leaders and teams with an open, enquiring mind-set:

- Are more successfully at dealing with complexity
- Achieve better, cheaper, and more innovative solutions
- Dismantles silo thinking

3. Embrace uncertainty and be positive about change – adopt an entrepreneurial attitude

System changes and stresses lead to complex behaviours in previously simple organisations. While change is often seen as negative (toxic, chaos, variation), learning from this can become a strength.

Why do it?

- Uncertainty and confusion ironically lead to collaborations. People join together through a sense of obligation to compensate for the lack of working structures and because no one possess complete knowledge.
- Ignoring change is linked to higher organisational failure
- Embracing change is linked with greater innovation
- Those that embrace change can influence its direction



4. Draw on as many different perspectives as possible; diversity is non-optional

A large-scale Canadian study of cross-sector alliances in health care demonstrates that benefits flow directly from the diversity involved in such alliances. In this context, diversity includes both organisational type and sector. It is not simply confined to the traditional dimensions of ethnicity, gender, culture and social position.

It is not sufficient simply to respond to learning opportunities; it is essential to create a culture that positively seeks out new ways of learning from different perspectives

Why do it?

- Stronger innovation and adaptation.
- Encourages a learning culture
- Creates a system which positively seeks out new ideas and approaches with fruitful results
- New insights
- A proactive approach to cross-functional working is directly linked with improved performance
- Shows considerable benefits, especially in the treatment of complex comorbidities such as cancer, mental health and children's services.

The audit commission give advice on how to increase the benefits of cross-disciplinary joint working between clinicians and financial teams if you wish to explore it further.

Also, a practical self-assessment guide has been published, deigned to help chief executives, assess the extent to which they are exhibiting helpful collaborative tendencies

5. Ensure leadership and decision-making are distributed throughout all levels and functions

A recent review has looked specifically at whether the current climate of austerity changes the leadership dynamic in the UK's public sector. There were no new requirements for changes to leadership – the new pressures simply reaffirm the importance of adopting complex systems thinking. The most valuable aspect of relevant leadership was distributing and embedding leadership throughout the system



Why do it?

- Greater autonomy
- More innovation
- Better awareness among all staff
- Stronger employee commitment
- Improved performance

6. Establish a compelling vision, shared by all partners in the whole system

When dealing with uncertainty and complexity, it is even more importance to emphasis on values such as integrity, authenticity, honesty, and not being afraid to face the difficult realities. Leaders need to be authentic when facing difficult conversations.

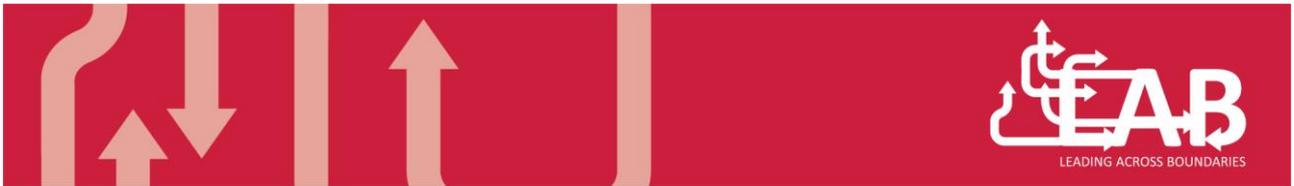
Why do it?

- Better employee commitment
- Improved performance
- Stronger resilience
- Lower turnover and turnover intention
- Improved employee well-being

For practical guidance on the importance of frequent and relevant communications to aid the process of leading people through chaotic change see (Karp and Helgø 2009) who stress the importance of paying attention to how people form identities within the system – a slightly different way of expressing the familiar themes.

7. Promote the importance of values – invest as much energy into relationships and behaviours as into delivering tasks.

Outcomes are strongly facilitated through better relationships and breakdown of traditional boundaries.



Why do it?

- Improved performance
- Lower employee anxiety and uncertainty
- Improved performance
- Better employee commitment



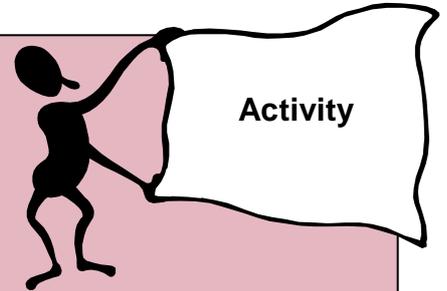
Improving your Systems Leadership - Activity

On the next few pages, we want you to outline 2 actions you will take after this session to improve in each of the areas covered by the 7 steps:

Remember to make your actions **S.M.A.R.T**

- S** – Is the action specific, significant and stretching? Why is it significant – what impact will it have on improving the issues faced? What are the consequences of the actions (positive and negative)?
- M** – Is the action measurable, meaningful and motivational? How will we measure the action?
- A** - Is the action agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable and action-oriented? What are the specific actions and do we all agree on them?
- R** – Is the action realistic (is it really achievable), relevant to addressing the issues identified, reasonable, rewarding and results-oriented? What will be the specific anticipated outcomes from the action?
- T** – Is the action time-based, timely, tangible and traceable? What timescales will be set to achieve the action and how will we track progress?

Providing whole-system leadership



1. Go out of your way to make new connections

Actions:

A.

B.

2. Adopt open, enquiring mind-set. Refuse to be constrained by current horizons

Actions:

A.

B.

3. Embrace uncertainty and be positive about change – adopt an entrepreneurial attitude

Actions:

A.

B.

4. Draw on as many different perspectives as possible; diversity is non-optional

Actions:

A.

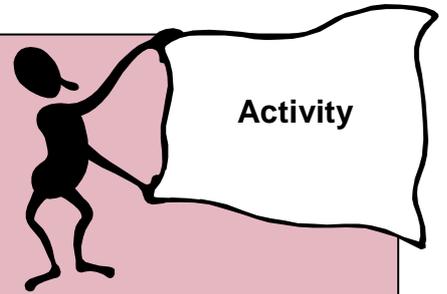
B.

5. Ensure leadership and decision-making are distributed throughout all levels and functions

Actions:

A.

B.



6. Establish a compelling vision, shared by all partners in the whole system

Actions:

A.

B.

7. Promote the importance of values – invest as much energy into relationships and behaviours as into delivering tasks.

Actions:

A.

B.