# 4 Leading by example

> My Lord, I am sure I can save this country, and no-one else can.
>
> William Pitt, British statesman to the Duke of Devonshire, 1756

> Donald [Trump] is good with the one-liners, but he's a chaos candidate and he'll be a chaos President.
>
> Jeb Bush, Republican Party Presidential Nomination debate, 15 December, 2015

> This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine.
>
> President Donald Trump, 16 February, 2017

> The Trump administration is going to run out of failure. So far, we've lived in a golden age of malfunction.
>
> David Brooks, *New York Times*, 7 April, 2017

## Your first 100 days

Donald Trump achieved the most improbable electoral victory in US political history when he secured the Presidency in November, 2016. A polarising figure, reflective of a divided country, he has thrilled and appalled his supporters and critics in equal measure. And the controversy that was a hallmark of the election campaign – one of the bitterest in modern times – did not let up when he assumed office. On the contrary, controversy has suffused every aspect of the Trump administration – not just over differences in policy, as one would expect, but also over the appointment of his White House staff, cabinet and public officials; his relationship with the media, the intelligence community and foreign powers; even the legitimacy of information sources ('alternative facts', 'fake news') and so on.

A graduate of Wharton Business School and celebrated dealmaker, his governing style – derivative of the 'give no quarter and take no prisoners' approach to management he outlined in *Time to Get Tough: Making America #1 Again* (2011) – is an unapologetic extension of his campaigning style. That is: 'Attack is the best form of defence'. His modus operandi is more that of a constitutional monarch than a modern-day president (Ferguson, 2017). He may have a strong sense of mission ('Make America Great Again'; 'America First') but his strategy as articulated by his former chief adviser Steve Bannon – that of national security, economic nationalism

and government deregulation – has not always been clear to followers (Green, 2017). His lament too that he should be judged – not on 'fake news' (like the 'witch-hunt' or investigation into links between Russia and his campaign team) – but on the issues he deems important (jobs, the economy, the fight against ISIS and border security) has not always been heeded (Vaidyanathan, 2017). Republican majorities in both the Senate and House of Representatives should also have ensured that the *c.*4,000 public patronage appointments at his discretion should have been filled considerably earlier in his tenure. Whether this was a deliberate delaying tactic on the part of the Great Disruptor 'to drain the swamp' or simple incompetence is not clear (Brooks, 2017; Green, 2017).

Either way, all this is a far cry from the relatively seamless transition that his Republican predecessor George W. Bush made into the White House. Bush assumed office, you will recall, as the 'minority' victor in the most controversial presidential election since the Hayes-Tilden contest of 1876 and many – including much of the Washington media – believed his presidency would be crippled from the outset. And yet, within the space of just one month, the same sceptics were openly baffled at the smooth way the new president moved into the old office, at how the White House became more akin to 'Bush Corp': an organisation defined by a business culture with the president as chairman of the board.

Much of the explanation for this remarkable turnaround was in fact due to the sole, but significant, characteristic which differentiated Bush Jr. from all 42 of his predecessors (as well as his successors) in the office. Sons may have followed fathers (as in the case of the Adams) into the White House before – as have 26 lawyers and seven soldiers for that matter – but George W. Bush was the first president ever to hold an MBA. And while his business career may not have been an untrammelled success, he did manage to apply the lessons he learnt at Harvard Business School to the business of running a government to telling effect in his first year of office.

His management style bore all the hallmarks of the MBA handbook. From the appointment of cabinet members (chosen on the basis of complementary expertise combined with an element of rivalry, alongside imperfectly defined portfolios, to foster 'creative tension' among advisers) to the approach to strategy (one theme per week, one speech per day) to the insistence on a strict code of dress and behaviour. Bad language, poor timekeeping and 'dress down' Fridays were made taboo. On the other hand, staff were encouraged to follow the president's lead and not overdo the overtime – to maintain in effect the balance in their lives between commitment to work and responsibility to family and community.

It was a management style which perceives politics as being a matter of performance goals more than motive, and of results more than process. For Bush the business of government was just that – less a matter of ideology than a theory of management. His job, as he saw it, was to sell 'the plan', get the right people to put it in motion and then stand back. A modus operandi most clearly visible in the 'corporate' relationship that existed between president and vice president; between Bush the chief executive officer who dealt with the broad-brush strategy, and Dick Cheney the chief operating officer who put it into practice.

Now while it is the case that Bush may well have been motivated to differentiate his administration from the informality characteristic of his immediate predecessor, and his adoption of MBWA ('management by walking about') and the use of joshing nicknames could be interpreted (as indeed it was) as a deliberate 'charm offensive'

to wrong-foot his opponents, it was equally the case that his actions demonstrated an astute business-based manoeuvre. One that reaped him a handsome dividend in his first hundred days and one from which we can all take heed. That is, irrespective of whether one shares Bush's conception of politics or the beliefs espoused by his administration, the style, tone and manner in which he reorganised the White House provides us with an exemplary model of leadership by example. Of how to undertake a new role, shape it to your design and make it your own. In Bush's case, to live up to his own maxim that: 'a good executive is one that understands how to recruit people and how to delegate. How to align authority and responsibility, how to hold people accountable and how to build a team' (Macintyre, 2001). His failing here, of course, was his inability to sustain this modus operandi throughout his term of office.

### Box 4.1 'New manager assimilation': San Diego State University

Not all universities are hesitant or sceptical of hiring external consultants to facilitate the assimilation of new managers. San Diego State University is a case in point.

#### The context

The desire of the newly appointed university president 'to take charge' – 'to begin building strong, positive and productive working relationships' with his eight-strong cabinet of top administrators. His predecessor had served 20 years in office.

#### The approach

The external facilitator – hired to help in the leadership transition – meets with each of the cabinet members for 45 minutes on a one-to-one basis. The one-to-one meetings are organised around a common set of questions (see below) which the new president has agreed in advance with the facilitator. Ground rules provide for anonymity. The facilitator concludes the process by convening the entire cabinet group, including the new president, and summarising the outcomes.

#### The findings

1 What do we want to know about the new president?

- He came from a state college – does he understand research, graduate education and Division I athletics?
- He seems to have a consultative management style – how does that really work?

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- How will he utilise the cabinet?
- What does he need from us?
- How will the campus relate to the system administration now?
- Is he Dr Weber? Stephen? Steve?

2 What should he know about us?

- He has a terrific faculty and staff.
- We have an entrepreneurial culture, which may be resistant to change.
- Our mission and identity need clarification.

3 What does he need to know to be successful here?

- Use your transition process to convey messages about the future of the campus.
- Become highly visible in the community.
- Bond with the faculty and the staff as soon as you can.
- Consultation is important, but don't forget that the president must make the executive decisions.
- You will be given an extended honeymoon – don't squander it!

4 *What significant issues need to be addressed quickly?*

- Establish and define your presidency, ASAP.
- Get 'up to speed' on athletics!
- Don't be afraid to delegate.
- Make any planned personnel changes ASAP.
- Improve our planning and budgeting processes.

5 What specific suggestions do we have for addressing the issues we have identified?

- Develop a shared vision and value system for us to use in decision-making.
- Don't get 'used up' in your first year – save a little for the 'third act'
- Get to know us – use us to help advance your agenda – work with us as a team.

## The feedback

Participants agreed the transition dialogues did facilitate an extremely valuable exchange of information in a way that was far less protracted than would be the norm. More than that, however, they also enabled:

- the president to signal he was 'eager for the views of senior officers and valued their feelings as professional colleagues';
- cabinet members to be more 'self-confident and comfortable in delivering bad news or identifying problems and issues that needed resolution';

- cabinet meetings to proceed 'with less game playing and more honest conversation';
- the 'top team' to approach an immediate crisis incident (a campus triple homicide) with 'a higher degree of readiness and effectiveness' than would otherwise have been possible.

Source: adapted from Krinsky and Weber, 1997.

This practice of reflecting on leadership – of how one should embrace a new role or tackle your existing one – is a trait not often found, unfortunately, in HE (Bolman and Gallos, 2011). Indeed, judging from a contemporaneous leadership study of UK university vice chancellors, it seems to have been a characteristic conspicuous by its absence. As exemplified in the typical response which researchers met when they probed individual vice chancellors on their preferred or adopted leadership styles: 'I don't really think about these things frankly. I just try and get on with the job. Basically I don't read books about it. I just get on with it' (Bargh et al., 2000). It may be – and one would like to think it is – that the VCs in this case study do not simply rely on 'playing it by ear'. That they do in fact consciously deliberate on their modus operandi, but did not feel inclined to admit doing so for reasons of culture or personal modesty. The popularity and commitment to the professional development programmes offered by sector agencies like the LFHE and HE Academy over the last decade also suggest a turnaround in this respect (Gentle, 2014; Wooldridge, 2013). Either way, the point is it is an activity we ignore at our peril. Private sector organisations indeed set such store by it that they invariably hire coaches to ease new post-holders through this process, an investment they willingly and regularly incur in the knowledge that the benefits which accrue will far outweigh the initial expense. In HE the hiring of coaches is (except for those at the most senior level) beyond the reach of many HEIs, yet, even if it wasn't, it is doubtful many would regard it as a priority for funding. For, as we noted earlier, leadership and management within HE is bedevilled by the low status and esteem in which it is almost universally held. A parlous situation exacerbated still further by the tendency of some managers to treat their role as if it were a temporary distraction from their 'real' work of teaching and research (see Box 4.1).

We all have a collective responsibility to address this malaise and as individual managers can do so, in the first instance, through the personal example which we set – the way in which we conduct ourselves; the style, tone and manner we set in managing day-to-day affairs; the ways in which we support colleagues, handle meetings, make decisions, resolve conflict, establish standards and so on. To be an effective manager requires you to give serious consideration to these issues. Put another way, if you are to make a real difference to your colleagues and make a distinctive contribution to your institution – and also, critically, one that meets with your own satisfaction – you need to consider these matters in a deliberative, reflective and self-conscious way. This fourth chapter seeks to help you do that by systematically examining these particular 'public' aspects of your role, viz. the establishment of a modus operandi, your first steps, the first hundred days, the chairing of meetings, the making and taking of decisions, the handling of conflict and the building of teams.

### Box 4.2 Conversations with yourself

Take each question in turn, take time to reflect on it and write down your answers on a sheet of paper. Discuss the accuracy of your judgements with someone whose opinion you value and trust.

- What is expected of me in my role?
- How am I doing in my role?
- How do I know?

[These are the basic questions which every employee in any organisation should be able to answer – including those who work for you. If you have difficulty answering them fully, you should consult the individual you report to immediately.]

What do I stand for; what are my values; do they match those of my HEI?

- *What or where is the level of fit?*

Do I have the right level of dissatisfaction with the status quo and the way things are?

- *Do I challenge the way things are?*
- *Do I encourage others to do so too?*

What are my comfort zones and how, if I choose, do I move out of them?

Do I aim big and just fall short, or aim smaller and hit the target?

- *How do I set goals and are they the right ones?*
- *Do I really stretch myself?*
- *How much do I push boundaries?*
- *Is my mindset 'better safe than sorry' or 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'?*
- *Do I aim for the upper reaches of the possible or the lower level of the impossible?*

How much am I engaged in activity and how much in action?

- *Do I mistake being busy with making things happen?*
- *How much of what I do is tangential to actually achieving things?*
- *Do I do things because I am interested in them or because they need to be done?*

What motivates me to act?

How much of the day do I spend thinking about the past – the present – the future?

- *Do I have to feel right about the past before taking action in the present to create the future?*
- *Do I live out of my imagination or memory?*

Do I know how to hit my pause button?

- *Do I suspend assumptions and preconceptions?*
- *Do I know what winds me up and how to stop that from happening?*

- *In what ways do I add/destroy value?*
- *What mind-sets usually drive me?*
- *Do I have a mind which is usually open to new possibilities?*
- *Do I have a positive inner voice?*
- *Do I know when not to interrupt others but to listen to their ideas?*
- *Do I hear what people are actually saying?*

How do I get that 'fresh feeling', how do I declare myself satisfied, how do I close the loop?

- *Am I satisfied at the end of each day that I have done all I can and draw a line under it?*
- *I got a 'fresh feeling' when I moved house, changed jobs, moved offices, completed that project, etc. How could I have that feeling at the end of each day?*

How could I redefine the issues and problems that face me?

How do I feel each evening when I walk through the door at home?

- *How long does it take me to unwind?*
- *How do I recharge my batteries?*
- *If someone asks me how the day has gone what do I usually say?*

What do I put my energy into?

How do I dance on a shifting carpet?

- *Do I move ahead with change or feel like the rug is (sometimes) being pulled from under me?*
- *Do I strive for step change or incremental change?*

Where will I be in five years' time?

What do I want to achieve with the rest of my life?

Now look in the mirror, literally . . .

What image and what example do I convey to others day to day about the quality of life I lead?

Are they the right ones? How should I change them?

### Box 4.3 The top 10 'stoppers and stallers' obstructing effective leadership

Consider each of the following 'stoppers and stallers' which have been identified as the most common obstacles to effective leadership. To what extent, if any, do these factors apply to you? How do you propose to overcome them?

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| | |
|---|---|
| • Failure to build a team | • the most common shortcoming<br>• failure to give credit to staff, to say thank you or to encourage them |
| • Arrogance | • an asset on occasion at some levels, otherwise a drawback |
| • Lack of composure | • failure to handle pressure or stress well<br>• tendency to become sarcastic, hostile or abrasive when things get tough |
| • Lack of ethics | • failure to recognise where the limits of proper behaviour lie<br>• losing the confidence of others in the organisation |
| • Betrayal of trust | • saying different things to different people<br>• not keeping promises |
| • Poor administration | • being bad at the detail |
| • No strategic thinking | • the converse of the previous fault; tendency to concentrate exclusively on tactics and detail |
| • Over-managing | • checking up on subordinates all the time<br>• demanding constant information on how things are going |
| • Failure of networking | • failure to maintain external links or to keep up with what others are doing |
| • Inflexibility | • failure to adapt; an expectation that increases with seniority yet can become more difficult with age |

Source: adapted from CMI 2013; Mintzberg, 2013; Work Foundation, 2006.

***1. Your self-awareness***

> I wish some power the gift would gi'e us, to see ourselves as others see us.
>
> Robbie Burns, Scottish poet, 1786

> There's a philistine and an aesthete in all of us, and a murderer and a saint. You don't reconcile the poles. You just recognise them.
>
> Orson Welles, actor, director, writer, 1967

One of the most difficult things to learn – and one of the last things we ever learn about ourselves – is the personal impact we have on those around us. Yet without such self-knowledge we cannot begin to determine how effective we are in our roles. Our path to self-realisation, however, has been made still more difficult in recent times. For, like it or loathe it, we cannot ignore the fact we operate in a radically different political and social world from our forebears. One which seemingly celebrates fame over originality, 'image' over 'reality', style over substance, sound bite over reason, and 'spin' over news story.

Plotting a course of action in such a setting is no easy task. It requires that you are genuinely attuned to the needs and feelings of others as well as those of your own. Indeed leadership development programmes nowadays are less about testing the leadership capacity of individuals through various outdoor pursuit challenges and

the like, and more concerned with getting participants 'to reach inside themselves' to find the leadership style of their own that would most successfully mesh with their organisation. The questions set out in Boxes 4.2 and 4.3 are designed to help you – in conversation with the person who knows you best: yourself – to probe your modus operandi, to increase your self-awareness and reflect on your state of being. Their purpose is to provide you with an initial self-assessment, an on-the-spot 'health check' of how you are doing in your role.

There are also more formal and systematic ways of conducting a self-assessment which you should also consider. Indeed there are literally scores of such instruments on the market. The most popular and widely used include the:

- Visionary Leader Behaviour Questionnaire (Sashkin, 1995); a survey which enables you to compare your own perceptions of your approach to leadership with those who work for you (subordinates), alongside you (peers) as well as who you report to (your line manager), viz. it provides '360-degree contextual feedback' on your leadership behaviour, your leadership characteristics and your effect on the organisation as a leader.
- Myers-Briggs (Personality) Type Indicator (Myers and Myers, 1977; Quenk, 1999); an instrument which enables you to assess the deeply held ways – Extrovert or Introvert; Senser or Intuitive; Thinker or Feeler; Judger or Perceiver – in which you prefer to work. And hence is an indicator of how you are likely to behave in practice in solving problems, reacting to change, communicating and so on.
- Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas and Kilmann, 2002); a mechanism which enables you to assess the styles you have learned to develop (Competing, Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating and Compromising) in handling workplace conflict.

These three instruments while useful in their own right are especially incisive – given the critical insights they yield on quite different aspects of behaviour – when used in conjunction with one another. And this has become common practice across the private sector and parts of the civil service and public sector. They can also be just as illuminating for teams as well as for individuals and you may wish to consider using them with your own team or team of your peers, say the senior management team.

Either way, a health warning is in order. Such instruments can generate feedback and outcomes which some people, and maybe even yourself, find hurtful or offensive. The key, of course, is not to take offence or to deny the validity of the feedback, but rather to act on it propitiously. Not everyone, however, will be sufficiently able to do so. For this reason then you should enlist the support and help of your management and staff development adviser, or alternatively a reputable career management consultant, before undertaking this initiative. You should not be deterred, however, for the received wisdom to date indicates that the benefits of this activity – both collectively and individually – have far outweighed any particular drawback.

We can – and you should – extend this journey of self-exploration further in order to prepare you for the role you have undertaken.

## Box 4.4 Emotional intelligence questionnaire

Test your emotional intelligence. Tick a single response to each question then add up your score.

| | *Never* | *Rarely* | *Sometimes* | *Routinely* | *Always* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AWARENESS OF FEELINGS**<br>Recognising one's emotions and their effects. | | | | | |
| 1 Do you know which emotions you are feeling, can you say why and accurately label them individually? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 2 Do you recognise the chain from experiencing an emotion to taking action based on it (i.e. the links between your feelings and what you think, do and say)? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 3 Do you recognise how your feelings affect your performance, the quality of experience at work and your relationships? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| **PERSONAL INSIGHT**<br>Knowing one's key strengths and frailties. | | | | | |
| 1 Are you aware of your strengths, weaknesses and emotional boundaries in relationships? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 2 Do you consciously make time to be reflective? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 3 Are you open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning and self-development? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| | *Never* | *Rarely* | *Sometimes* | *Routinely* | *Always* |
| **SELF-ASSURANCE**<br>Sureness about one's self-worth and capabilities. | | | | | |
| 1 Do you present yourself with self-possession; have poise but with warmth? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 2 Can you celebrate diversity in teams, voice views that are unpopular? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| 3 Are you decisive, able to make sound judgements using emotional and analytical information, despite uncertainties and pressures? | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

**SCORING**

**ALWAYS**: Add 4 points for every tick. **ROUTINELY**: Add 3 points for every tick. **SOMETIMES**: Add 2 points for every tick. **RARELY**: Add 1 point for every tick. **NEVER**: No points.

**Score 36–27**

Congratulations. You have a high to exceptional awareness of your own emotions, thought and resulting behaviour. You would have the ability to reflect on incidents that did not go well or as expected and analyse your part in that sequence of events.

**Score 26–18**

Well done but reflect on the reasons why you put a 'sometimes' response. Think about questions you could ask others in future to check out what their motive is for their behaviour or their responses to you. Try to stop yourself from repeating mistakes.

**Score 17–9**

You may be puzzled by the way you act or the responses you get from others. You may feel misunderstood a significant amount of the time. Enlist the help of a friend to develop a plan for taking steps to improve yourself.

**Score 8–1**

You are very honest. Showing integrity is a great EI strength. You would benefit from a course to help you to increase your self-awareness. Your score shows you are not particularly aware of how or why you behave the way you do.

Source: adapted from Dann, 2001; 2008.

Let us take, for example, that aspect of your personality which will have a critical bearing on whether (or not) you will be successful, viz. not so much your IQ – a common mistake made in gauging individual's leadership potential, not least in universities (as in 'x is highly intelligent and must therefore be able to lead') – but rather your EQ. Popularised by American psychologist Daniel Goleman (1996, 2002), 'emotional intelligence' is defined as the ability to perceive one's own feelings and those of others. Thus the more emotionally intelligent person is characterised by a high sense of self-worth, an ability to express and understand their emotions and to understand their personal values. They also tend to be more aware of their own strengths and limitations and recognise these things in people working around them and accommodate them. Such individuals invariably outperform their less sensitive counterparts and not surprisingly EQ [comprising

personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and social competence (social awareness and relationship management)] has come to be regarded as – if not more – important than IQ in determining professional effectiveness and progression (Dann, 2008). How though do you fare? Box 4.4 enables you to assess your own level of emotional intelligence; a task you need not approach with undue reticence for, if you do not score as well as you anticipate, you can always take remedial action. Since it is still possible to significantly increase your EQ (unlike your IQ) in later life.

## Box 4.5 Cognitive biases – and how to avoid them

| *Cognitive bias* | *The tendency to:* | *What you could do:* |
|---|---|---|
| **Projection/ false consensus** | Assume that others agree with your position. | Do not jump to make a judgement too quickly. Reflect on how the perception of others may be different from your own. Seek out their views beforehand. |
| **Fundamental attribution error** | Jump to the conclusion that a person's behaviour in a particular instance is not an isolated event but represents his or her permanent traits. | Put yourself in that person's shoes and think of all the possible factors that could make you act the same way in that particular instance. Recognise we don't always act ourselves in certain situations. |
| **Curse of knowledge** | Make incorrect assumptions about how much other people understand. | Remind yourself how you were once less informed too. Check the sense of your audience's understanding. Keep jargon and technical terms to a minimum. |
| **Dunning-Kruger effect** | Believe we are much more competent than we actually are. | Actively seek and accept feedback on your performance. Learn from it for the future. |
| **Over-achiever syndrome** | Assume tasks that are easy for us must be easy for others as well. | Don't mistake lack of speed for lack of effort. We all learn and complete tasks in varying ways and at different speeds. |
| **Framing effect** | Reach different conclusions from the same information depending on how the information (or question) is presented (or framed) to us . | Think carefully about information and/or questions that others have framed for you and how you do likewise for your audience. Think through all the positive and negative outcomes before reaching a final decision. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Hindsight** | Believe (after the event) that you had accurately predicted what the outcome would be despite having no objective proof to support your claim. | Remember nothing is inevitable nor is everything foreseeable. The 'knew-it-all-along' effect can make you feel over-confident in undertaking future risks. Reflect again on the outcomes and consider why any of the alternatives did not happen. |
| **Sunk cost fallacy (or irrational escalation)** | Make decisions based on past investment to justify the investment already made even though it is unlikely to make a return. | Know when to quit. Make a list of all the possible pros and cons of continuing with a course of action. If negative outcomes outweigh the positive ones let go of your past investment and move on. |
| **Loss aversion** | Give more weight to avoiding losses than making gains when making a decision. | Recognise the aversion for what it is – misguided and unnecessary. Take a longer-term view and consider the bigger picture to put it into perspective. |
| **Outcome** | Assess the quality of a decision based entirely on having prior knowledge of its outcome – (positive if it has a positive outcome and negative if it has a negative outcome). | Recognise that the outcome is but one part of a much bigger picture. Seek to understand the process that went on in making and executing the decision – the conditions that led to the decision. |
| **Over-confidence** | Be overly confident in our judgements which in reality are not objectively accurate . | Re-evaluate the reliability of your sources of information – for accuracy, objectivity and completeness. What you *think* you know and what you actually know may be different. Suspend your judgement and consider seeking other sources. |
| **Risk compensation** | Adjust our behaviour according to the level of perceived risk: (we tend to take more risks when we feel protected and safe). | Remember to bear this proposition in mind when completing your risk assessments. |
| **Halo effect** | Form an overall impression of an individual (positive or negative) on the basis of a single perceived personality trait. | Ask yourself whether someone really has this certain quality or are you just assuming they do based on what you like (or dislike) about them. There's a strong chance your impression may be a false one. Test the accuracy of your impression with others. |

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

| *Cognitive bias* | *The tendency to:* | *What you could do:* |
|---|---|---|
| **Illusion of asymmetric insight** | See ourselves as complicated and others as simple and predictable. | Keep open-minded. You cannot just assume others don't understand you or you know them better. This is an arrogant premise which we are a victim of more often than we think. If others are providing logical explanations their view may just be right. |
| **Self-serving** | Think you are responsible for positive outcomes but not for negative ones. | Prepare yourself to be open about your mistakes and learn from them. No one is infallible and if we think we are we block our capacity to grow and develop. |
| **Illusion of truth** | Believe certain information is the truth on the basis that we have been regularly exposed to it rather than whether there is evidence to support it or not. | Knowing this bias will help you in recognising when it is being used. Do not blindly follow the trend. Do your own research and be open to other options as well. |
| **Egocentrism** | Overestimate the number of people that are consciously paying attention to our actions. | Remind yourself that others are just as focused on themselves as you are on yourself. Issues and things that loom large and seem important to you may not do so to others. Equally, do not let other people's opinions define your reality or necessarily affect your actions. |
| **Survivorship** | Heed lessons from successes while ignoring them from failures. | Remember to research both sides of the coin, not just the one. Learning from failures ('what-not-to-do') is just as important as learning from successes ('what-to-do'). |
| **Availability** | To make sense of the world on the basis of the immediate information that comes to our mind. | Do further research to acquire a full grasp of the subject. Facts and data are a sounder basis than our instincts for making decisions. |
| **The swimmer's body illusion** | To confuse selection factors with results (that diet and exercise will give you a swimmer's physique). | Have realistic expectations. We are all born with unique abilities. Strive to make use of them in the best possible way. Don't waste time chasing the impossible. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Negativity** | Give more importance to negative events as compared to positive ones of the same intensity. | Train yourself to be mindful about the positive events too – making them a permanent part of your long-term memory to counterbalance the powerful effects that negative events have on our emotions. |
| **Anchoring effect** | Over-rely on the first information we receive. | Always seek to look for comparisons. Make a virtue of it. Be open to alternative options. |
| **Confirmation** | Selectively interpret information to suit your own preconceptions. | Make the effort to challenge your own thinking despite the fact we are more physically and socially segregated than ever. Seek to understand how others differ from your opinions. Open yourself to challenge from your team. |
| **Identifiable victim effect** | Be more emotionally affected by the troubles and hardships of a single 'identifiable victim' than a larger anonymous group facing the same or greater problems. | Keep your sense of perspective. While a tragedy can often evoke strong emotions within us we should respond according to its actual impact. |
| **Hyperbolic discounting** | Choose a smaller reward given sooner over a delayed larger reward. | Exercise patience and wait for the greater dividend. |
| **Bias blind spot** | Confidently believe we are less biased than other people. | Knowing we all have a bias blind spot of varying degrees (a 'naïve realism' that our understanding of the world is objective and reality-based) is the first step towards learning to control it. |

Source: adapted from Holm 2015; Wood, 2015.

See also Box 6.11 on cognitive bias in job interviews.

### *3. Your susceptibility to cognitive bias*

Then there is the degree to which you which you allow cognitive biases to affect your behaviour. We all have the tendency overestimate our rationality to the point of denying reality and we have all fallen victim to cognitive biases at one time or another, if not repeatedly so: that is, to draw conclusions based, not on objective evidence, but on a particular predisposition of our mind. Sometimes these biases are caused by heuristics (or mental shortcuts) which help us reach quick judgements when we are pressed for time and others by situational factors or our inner motivations and emotions.

That said, we are not completely helpless in this regard. Knowing these biases exist can help us avoid them through conscious effort. They are not impossible to bypass and self-awareness will warn you next time you are tempted to jump too quickly to a conclusion. They will also provide you with additional insight on the decision-making processes of those around you (see Box 4.5).

***4. Your preparedness for the role***

> You have been appointed to get results not to hold office.
>
> Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to her junior ministers, 1985 (cited in Shephard, 2013)

## Box 4.6 Performance expectations of senior managers at one UK modern university

### Strategic ability

- balances immediate needs against longer-term objectives
- ensures day-to-day tasks and activities are clearly linked to the longer-term aims of the business
- develops a coherent picture of the school's/UWS's contribution to overall university goals and communicates this
- influences and contributes to wider university issues

### Leadership

- creates and secures commitment to a clear vision
- initiates and manages change in pursuit of strategic objectives
- is visible, approachable and earns respect
- inspires and shows loyalty
- builds and supports a high-performing team
- acts decisively, having assessed the risks
- accepts responsibility for the actions of the team

### Communication

- negotiates effectively and can handle hostility
- is concise and persuasive orally and in writing
- listens to what is said and is sensitive to others' reactions
- chooses the methods of communication most likely to secure effective results
- is comfortable and effective in a representational role
- builds, maintains and uses an effective network of contacts

### Judgement and decision-making

- ensures necessary information or evidence is collected and weighs the value of advice against its source

- assesses the degree of the risk in major plans and decisions, and balances against potential disadvantages
- takes timely decisions in uncertain situations or based on limited information, where necessary
- evaluates the potential impact of a decision on school/UWS priorities or on broader university objectives
- remains objective in assessing information when under great pressure

**Management of people**

- develops staff to meet challenging organisational needs
- establishes and communicates clear standards and expectations
- delegates effectively, knowing when to step in and when not to
- makes best use of skills and resources within the team
- gives regular face-to-face feedback and recognition
- addresses poor performance, builds trust, good morale and teamwork
- responds to feedback from staff
- secures commitment to change through appropriate involvement of staff

**Management of financial and other resources**

- secures value for money
- challenges existing practices and leads initiatives of new and more efficient use of resources
- negotiates for the resources to do the job, in the light of wider priorities
- commits and realigns resources to meet key priorities
- uses management information to monitor/control resources
- demonstrates commitment to using IT as a resource

**Delivery of results**

- defines results taking account of customer or other stakeholders' needs
- manages relationships with customers/other stakeholders effectively
- organises work processes to deliver on time, on budget and to agreed quality standards
- strives for continuous performance improvement and encourages others to do the same
- assesses and manages risk
- monitors performance and incorporates feedback in future plans

**Personal effectiveness**

- adapts quickly and flexibly to new demands and change
- manages own time well to meet competing priorities
- shows resilience, stamina and reliability under heavy pressure

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

- takes a firm stance when circumstances warrant it
- is aware of personal strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others
- shows commitment to own personal and professional development
- offers objective advice without fear or favour
- pursues adopted strategies with energy and commitment

**Expertise and professional competence**

- earns credibility and influence through depth and breadth of expertise
- ensures that decisions are informed by relevant technical/specialist expertise
- understands and operates effectively within the university framework
- accepts personal responsibility for quality of professional work
- gives professional direction to others
- seeks and applies best practice from other organisations

A more conventional way of assessing your preparedness is to examine your degree of competence for the role. The management competence framework, outlined in Box 4.6, is a generic template which one modern UK university has developed to clarify to managers the (benchmark) standards of performance expected of them; to help them assess their performance and to guide them in determining their development needs. You should take each of the nine core competencies in turn:

- Grade yourself Strong – Average (or) – Weak against the skills and qualities in each sub-category
- Determine your overall average for each of the nine core competencies
- Discuss your profile with a 'critical friend', someone whose opinion you value and trust. In what aspects are you strong – less strong – underdeveloped – undeveloped? Focus on the gaps and the weaknesses in your profile. What can you, ought you, do about them?
- Commit to an action plan to address them

***5. Your image***

A further, and by no means trite, consideration as to your 'roadworthiness' is image – your own image and that of your immediate surroundings. We cannot overlook the fact that one of the consequences of living in an increasingly image-conscious age is that first impressions really do count – particularly at work, and especially when dealing with external clients. Conventional wisdom, for instance, tells us that when we walk into a meeting, people form an impression which is based 70 per cent on our personal image, 23 per cent on the sound, pitch and modularity of our voice and just 7 per cent on the content of what we're actually saying (Hanscombe, 1998).

If you are to make the right impression, then attention to your image is as critical as with any other aspect of your role. Put another way, it is as important to

'look the part' and 'feel the part' as it is to 'fit the part'. This is not a question of acquiring an expensive wardrobe or of becoming 'the packaged executive'. Such techniques – like the penchant for 'power-dressing' in the 1980s – are rarely sustainable or desirable for they are, at bottom, transparently manipulative. Rather it is a matter of reflecting on the example you convey to others about the quality of life you lead. It is about projecting a positive image – thinking positively and being positive. This is not always easy for everyone. Indeed we're all familiar with the individual who has the unfortunate tendency to enter a room as a kind of walking apology – 'Sorry, it's only me'. Again however, as with emotional intelligence, there are ways in which we can cultivate such positive habits and we will be exploring them later in chapter 11 'Managing yourself'. And while it might mean you do indeed need to refresh your wardrobe, the important point is that your credibility with colleagues and clients is intimately related to the image you project. You will get back, be it positive or negative, what you give out.

Equally, the impression others have of you is often informed by your surroundings as much as yourself. As such you also need to cast a critical eye on your immediate working environment – notably your office. If you have one – and we tend to assume it is essential we do, even though it may not be so – what does your office say about you? Is it a stimulating or stale environment? Organised or disorganised? Tidy or cluttered? Bright or dull? Green or barren? As Churchill once said, 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us'. The same can equally be applied to offices if we allow them to. You therefore need to consciously reflect on the 'messages' your office gives to colleagues and to visitors about you. Does the way in which you have utilised the space, decorated the walls, furnished the surroundings and personalised it convey what you really want? For example, if you have a desk – and again we tend to automatically assume we should have one even if it may not be necessary – how is it positioned? In the centre with you behind it, your visitors – made to sit in front (of it) – may convey the sense that you like to be the 'controlling adult' of your environment. Alternatively, they may also feel you are an insecure manager with something to hide – or simply both. Placed alongside one of the walls and the position of your desk conveys a quite different impression. One of a person who is willing to share their space on an equal footing with others while simultaneously maybe running the risk of being thought a soft touch. Either way, the point is you need to ensure that whichever way you choose to organise your office – and again we will pick this issue up later – it reflects your personal style.

### *6. Your mindset: understanding your university*

None of us sees the world as it is – only as we are. We typically think the response to an issue or problem is obvious and this solution is the right one. Yet our worldview can often be a very narrow one even when we consciously recognise our judgement of events is shaped by our own personalities and experiences. However this doesn't always have to be the case, for while perspective is indeed an important part of our identity we have a lot more control over it than we often assume. For example, a disaster to one leader may be perceived as a godsend by another in the exact same situation – it all comes down to the perspective which the two individuals choose to take on it.

*Table 4.1* Four different ways of reading your university, your department and the challenges and opportunities you encounter

| *Cognitive frame:** | *Structural* | *Human Resources* | *Political* | *Symbolic* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metaphor for university: | Factory | Extended Family | Jungle | Theatre; temple |
| Characterised by: | Institutional policies and procedures; organisational chart; the strategic plan | Agendas (open and hidden); individual motivation; human needs | Alliances, coalitions and conflicts | Organisational culture and traditions; institutional memory; 'the way we do things round here' |
| University and departments viewed as: | Hierarchies with clear established lines of authority | Collectives whose major resources are members of the department | Formal and informal units vying to control departmental processes and outcomes | Cultural systems of shared meanings and beliefs |
| Focus: | Structure, written rules, decision-making, control, evaluation, rewards and penalties | Egalitarianism; minimising conflict; meeting human needs | Bargaining, negotiation, coalition building, compromise | Individuals and departments pursuing their own goals, loosely connected |
| Conflict: | Illegitimate | Avoided | Expected | Unpredictable |
| How you can be effective? | By rationally analysing problems, determining alternative solutions, selecting the best one and executing it | By ensuring your department is meeting the needs of staff and helping them to realise their aspirations | By analysing preferences of different groups and designing solutions to find common ground | By emphasising expressive actions and key departmental values |

Source: Adapted from Bolman and Deal (2017); Bolman and Gallos (2011).

*Cognitive frames refer to the way in which our minds organise and help us interpret what we see. Bolman and Deal (1988) identify frames as 'both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. Frames filter out some things while allowing others to pass through easily. Frames help us to order experience and decide what action to take'. We all develop personal frames, and the four frames here are those used most often by us in universities to interpret what we see, and to suggest what to do about it.

Put another way, universities are very complex enterprises and to be effective you must likewise be as complex as the issues and problems you encounter. You must therefore seek to cultivate a flexible, multiple mindset and avoid relying solely on a singular approach. One fruitful way is by looking at an issue or problem you face from alternative organisational perspectives. Bolman and Deal (2017) have identified four different perspectives (or cognitive frames) as a means of helping us to think about the reasons behind an issue or problem and indeed how our organisation actually operates (See Table 4.1).

### Box 4.7 Broadening your mindset: assessing your own cognitive preference

To help you broaden the range of cognitive frames you use, you may find it helpful first to reflect on the frames you tend to prefer, so that you are aware of your own unconscious tendencies and can compensate for them.

Each of these questions contains four descriptions of individual attributes. For each question, give the number '4' to the phrase that best describes you, '3' to the item that is next best, and so on down to '1' for the phrase that is least like you. This is your self-assessment – there are no right or wrong answers here.

1 My strongest skills are:

   a) Analytic skills
   b) Interpersonal skills
   c) Political skills
   d) Flair for drama

2 The best way to describe me is:

   a) Technical expert
   b) Good listener
   c) Skilled negotiator
   d) Inspirational leader

3 What has helped me the most to be successful is my ability to:

   a) Make good decisions
   b) Coach and develop people
   c) Build strong alliances and a power base
   d) Inspire and excite others

4 What people are most likely to notice about me is my:

   a) Attention to detail
   b) Concern for people
   c) Ability to succeed, in the face of conflict and opposition
   d) Charisma

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

5 My most important leadership trait is:

a) Clear, logical thinking
b) Caring and support for others
c) Toughness and aggressiveness
d) Imagination and creativity

6 I am best described as:

a) An analyst
b) A humanist
c) A politician
d) A visionary

**Score:**

a Structural frame
b Human resources frame
c Political frame
d Symbolic frame

Which frame set did you feel most alike to? Which did you feel least described you?

**Feedback**

The frame to which you felt the closest connection may be the frame through which you are *most* likely to view a problem. Is this in fact the frame you believe, in general the *most* useful and, if so, why?

The frame, which you think describes you the least, may be the frame through which you are *least* likely to view a problem. Is this in fact the frame you believe, in general, to be *least* useful and, if so, why?

Compare the characteristics of the four different frames again in Table 4.1 to help you consider if you are placing too much emphasis on some frames and not enough on others, or whether your use of the four frames is balanced. To what extent do you believe that either emphasising one frame, or balancing all four, may be most helpful to you?



Each of these perspectives – structural, human resources, political and symbolic – reveals certain aspects of the issue or problem, while concealing others, and each leads to different conclusions about what you might do. Viewing the issue from each of these four different perspectives in turn then will help you to:

- create a number of different possible solutions;
- consider the potential effects of choosing one of the many alternative behaviours available to you;
- 'read' your university, and your department, in a more comprehensive holistic way.

Indeed, given the complexity of universities we could in fact add a few additional frames of our own to build an even richer picture: e.g. a stakeholder frame; a mission frame; a balance-sheet frame and so on.

Research suggests that many people in a university limit their options by regularly using only one cognitive frame when considering a problem (Bolman and Gallos, 2011; Birnbaum, 1992). You should seek to expand the number of possible solutions to consider, and then select the one that seems to be the most appropriate given the specifics of the situation. The most effective university decision makers regularly use multiple, rather than single, cognitive frames, and respond in quite different ways to different kinds of problems. What though is your cognitive preference? What other cognitive frames could you usefully employ? (See Box 4.7).

### Box 4.8 The seven habits of highly effective people

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey identifies seven key steps that will lead to truly effective behaviour, whether at work or at home.

The first three habits are 'private' steps the individual must take personally before being able to achieve significant results in the outside world. The next three habits are 'public' activities for the public realm where interaction and, crucially, interdependence are called for. The final habit is to stay fresh.

- **Be proactive.** Covey does not use the term proactive in the more recent sense (where it is synonymous with 'active'). He genuinely means taking responsibility for your life and your actions. A key principle for Covey here is that 'between stimulus and response people have the freedom to choose'.
- **Begin with the end in mind**. This means having clear goals and knowing what it is you want to achieve. Covey even suggests drawing up a personal mission statement that is based on your most valued principles.
- **Put first things first**. Effective management of time, tasks and responsibilities. This includes developing trusting working relationships, delegating effectively.
- **Think win/win**. Creative problem-solving, not aggressive negotiating or feeble passivity. The approach transcends current difficulties and finds alternatives.
- **Seek first to understand . . . then to be understood.** Covey talks about 'empathic listening'; allowing others to express themselves, letting them know they are being listened to and understood.
- **Synergize**. This for Covey is the 'miraculous' part – catalysing, unifying and unleashing the greatest powers within people. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

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- **Sharpen the saw**. This is about renewal and staying fresh. The man struggling to cut down a tree is too busy to sharpen his saw, so it takes him far longer.

If you observe these seven habits, Covey believes you can constantly renew yourself. Beyond that the leadership challenge – or Eighth Habit – Covey identifies is to 'inspire others to find their voice' by modelling the right behaviour, path-finding shared vision, aligning goals and systems for results and genuinely empowering those around you.

Source: adapted from Covey, 2004, 1989.

## Box 4.9 Five practices of effective leaders

- **Modelling the way** – leading by example, living your values
- **Inspiring a shared vision** – developing a compelling vision of the future
- **Challenging the process** – yearning for improvement and willingness to experiment, to learn
- **Enabling others to act** – promoting collaboration, building trust and empowering others
- **Encouraging the heart** – recognising and celebrating achievement

Source: adapted from Kouzes and Posner, 2017.

## Box 4.10 Characteristics of the transformational leader in the public sector

### Leading and developing others

- Has genuine interest in staff as individuals; values their contributions; develops their strengths; mentors; has positive expectations of staff abilities
- Trusts staff to take decisions and initiative on important matters; delegates effectively; develops potential; supportive of mistakes
- Approachable and not status-conscious; prefers face-to-face communication; accessible and keeps in touch
- Encourages staff to question traditional approaches to the job; encourages new approaches/solutions to problems; encourages strategic thinking

### Personal qualities

- Transparency: honest and consistent in behaviour; more concerned with the good of the organisation than personal ambition

- Integrity: open to advice, criticism and disagreement; consults and involves others in decision-making; regards values as integral to the organisation
- Decisiveness: decisive when required; prepared to take difficult decisions and risks when appropriate
- Charisma: in touch; exceptional communicator; inspires others to join them
- Analytical and creative thinking: capacity to deal with a wide range of complex issues; creative in problem-solving

**Leading the department/organisation**

- Inspiring communicator of the vision of the organisation to a network of internal and external stakeholders; gains the confidence and support of various groups through sensitivity to needs and by achieving organisational goals
- Clarifies objectives and boundaries; team-oriented approach to problem-solving, decision-making and identifying values
- Has a clear vision and strategic direction, engages various internal and external stakeholders in developing; helps others to achieve the vision

Source: Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2002.

***7. Your approach to leadership***

In developing your own way forward you also, as we noted earlier, need to not only consider aspects of yourself but of your institution – its distinguishing characteristics; its climate, structure, politics, culture and so on. You then need to determine which leadership approach is likely to have the most successful effect in your working environment. Some such as Senge (2006) argue that 'taking a stand' is the first leadership act. And in his case, he argues that the 'learning organisation' is a 'good idea' but will remain only that unless, and until, individuals make a conscious and deliberate choice to build such organisations. There are, too, other models as we have seen from which you can draw – the visionary leader, liberating leader, transformational leader, transactional leader and so on. The general management literature is also awash with sage advice on everything from *Thriving on Chaos* (Peters, 1987) to the *One Minute Manager* (Blanchard and Johnson, 2000). Of this, three further generic perspectives are worth considering. One, Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989) because it is one of the few successful codes of behaviour to have stood the test of time, and because it also provides you with a sound reference point to question your actions (see Box 4.8). A second is Kouzes and Posner's (2017) leadership challenge model for the same reasons (see Box 4.9) And the third – a transformational leadership model for the public sector – because it offers an approach more closely suited to universities than probably any other. One, that is, which not only recognises the critical differences (in governance and management and accountability) between the public and the private sector (principally, the lack of clarity and greater complexity of the former compared to the latter), but also reflects the variation in the perception of leadership of those who work in the two areas (see Box 4.10). In the private sector the greatest expectation of the leader is to be a role model, while in the public sector the most important pre-requisite for a leader appears to be what

they can do for their staff. An inclination that closely resembles the model of leader as servant (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2002).

## Box 4.11 Leadership by example

To lead by example you must ensure that you:

- work hard to high standards
- actively encourage feedback on your own performance
- communicate an air of enthusiasm
- help out/walk the job
- work on your own learning
- practise what you preach
- openly admit your mistakes
- set a good example to others by your own behaviour
- are *corporate*
- don't compromise yourself
- don't panic
- don't let it get you down

You should never say . . . (and should try to resolve):

- no one tells me
  - what's going on
  - what my exact job is
  - what my responsibilities are
- the university should do . . .
- it's not down to me

## Box 4.12 The new public sector manager

**As public bureaucracies evolve:**

| *From mechanistic organisations which build on:* | *to more human organisations which build on:* |
|---|---|
| • rules | • values |
| • procedures | • meanings |
| • job descriptions | • commitments |
| • structures | • shared understanding |
| • rationality | • rituals |
| • planning | • communication |
| • management by objectives | • learning |
| • control | • collaboration |

**Then the role of the new manager moves:**

| *From* | *To* |
|---|---|
| Close Control – 'hands-on'<br>The manager as:<br>• supervisor<br>• expert<br>• director<br>• controller<br>• constraint | Remote Control – 'hands-off'<br>The manager as:<br>• resource<br>• coach<br>• catalyst<br>• explorer<br>• orchestrator<br>• boundary manager<br>• networker<br>• champion<br>• politician<br>• negotiator<br>• conflict raiser/resolver |

## Box 4.13 Effective leadership in higher education

Conventional wisdom indicates that the distinctive features of leadership effectiveness in HE are characterised by the intensity of academic staff expectations. That heads of department will:

- Seek to maintain staff autonomy
- Consult over important decisions
- Foster collegiality with regard to both decision-making and mutual cooperation
- Fight the department's corner with senior managers and through university structures.

### How to lead

- Provide a clear sense of direction; strategic vision
- Create a department structure to support the direction
- Foster a supportive and collaborative environment
- Be trustworthy
- Have personal integrity
- Have credibility as a role model
- Facilitate participation in decision-making, consultation
- Provide communication about developments
- Represent the department and proactively advance its cause
- Respect existing culture while seeking to realise the vision of the department.

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

**How not to lead**

- Fail to consult
- Do not respect existing values
- Act in ways that undermine collegiality
- Do not promote the interests of those for whom you are responsible
- Be uninvolved in the life of the department, the university
- Undermine autonomy
- Allow the department to drift.

Source: adapted from Bolden, 2011; Bryman, 2007.

This is not to say, however, that leadership is simply about meeting staff needs. On the contrary, it suggests that while individuals may ascribe characteristics to (distant) leaders such as charisma, vision, courage, passion and so on, these are not necessarily the same qualities they value in their own (immediate) boss. Here it would seem public employees set greater store on line managers who have particular attributes: namely, being sociable, open and considerate of others; having a sense of humour; being credible in their field of expertise; being intelligent; and setting high performance standards for themselves and for others. In other words, leaders who set an example by 'practicing what they preach' (see Box 4.11). In this context then leadership is about engaging others as partners in developing and achieving a shared vision and enabling staff to lead. It is about creating a fertile supportive environment for creative thinking and for challenging assumptions about the status quo, as well as having genuine sensitivity to the needs of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders. It is in short the transformational model of leadership – that of the *democratic* leader who seeks to take an organisation through change while transforming people's beliefs in themselves and encouraging leadership in others. This approach also has clear implications for management too and the role managers are expected to play: i.e. principally, not so much a case of 'hands-on' as 'hands-off' (see Box 4.12). In HE specifically, conventional wisdom also indicates a striking symmetry between leadership effectiveness in universities on the one hand, and that of transformational leadership in the public sector and Kouzes and Posner's leadership challenge model, on the other (see Box 4.13).

Either way, the options are for you to consider and the choice of approach yours to make. Ultimately it is about finding out what works for you. There is, as we noted earlier, no magic formula to leadership and management. In developing a personal style, however, which is consistent with your beliefs and values and with your working environment, you will be well on the way to becoming an effective leader and manager. How though does this (theoretical) effectiveness translate into your (practical) day-to-day activities? It is to these seemingly mundane – yet in terms of your ultimate success, critically important – aspects of your role we turn next.

*8. Your first steps*

You have considered your self-awareness, emotional intelligence, susceptibility to cognitive bias, preparedness for the role, image, mindset and approach to leadership, you are now ready to take your first steps:

- As one **new** to the role ensure that you:

  Start as you mean to go on;
  Listen more than you speak;
  Maintain a flexible mindset;
  Keep a disciplined focus on four to five key objectives;
  Do unto others as you would have done unto you (and, even better);
  Do unto others as they would have done unto them.

- Liaise with **your personal assistant** – one of the mainstays of your support. Take time and effort to go through and agree how you can best work together. Get it right and your PA will be an invaluable source of authentic feedback as in 'this is what is really going on' and 'what you are doing right/wrong'. Respect your PA and do not forget their personal and professional development.
- **Introduce yourself** at every opportunity – face-to-face, in writing et al. Explain that you look forward to meeting everyone on a one-to-one basis in the near future as well as in their course teams, research groups and staff forums.

  Avoid the cliché of the 'open door policy' – it's misleading, unsustainable, wasteful, distracting and you may well be in open plan anyway. Instead make clear that you are willing to meet with any staff member by appointment.
- Adjust your **style of leadership** to fit with your university and departmental context.

  Is your context – a turnaround situation – one of wholesale change – a new start-up – or about sustaining success? What are the implications of your context for how you should lead?

  UK vice chancellors typically fall into one of four categories: academic icons; friend-raisers; energisers or institutional healers. Which one applies most closely to your head of institution? What are the implications for your leadership style?
- Confront the **brutal facts** but retain unwavering faith. Find out the latest figures on the **KPIs** for your department from your Strategic Planning Office or Finance Department. What is going well? Less well? What particular areas need to be addressed?
- Initiate a meeting with **your line manager** to agree a mutual way forward. Use your first meeting to consider:

  The *situational diagnosis*: does their 'world view' of your department match your own 'world view';

  *Expectations:* what is their expectations of you in your role – the immediate priorities; the next six months; the long-term objectives? What can you expect in return?

  *Style*: what kind of interaction would they like – face-to-face; by telephone; in writing; voicemail or email? And how often? Monthly, fortnightly, weekly?

*Resources*: what is it that you will need to be successful (people, money, support, etc.)? What would you like from your line manager?

*Personal development*: how will this role contribute to your personal development? Are their areas in which you need to strengthen your capabilities that your line manager can support? Agree an induction programme.

- Confirm your department's **budget** for the year with your line manager and Director of Finance.

  Consider – what can your department be best in the world at? What does your department feel deeply passionate about?

  Seek to align the distribution of your budget and resources with these priorities.
- Suspend your assumptions – and arrange to **meet with each member of your department** on a one-to-one basis. What do they see as the key challenges and opportunities for the department? What are they most proud about the work of the department? What do they most/least enjoy about working in the department? What would they like from a new head of department? What are they seeking to achieve over the next year?
- Convene and agree the membership of **your departmental management team** – include your business partners: e.g. your management accountant from Finance; staff relations adviser from HR et al. Discuss and agree terms of reference.
- Convene **a general meeting** of all the staff in your department – as a staff forum that is rather than a head's platform. Use it to flesh out the key challenges and opportunities for your department and to identify any hot topics. Be prepared to share your views on the external and internal environment but do not present a formal SWOT analysis of the department as a fait accompli in the first instance.
- Invite your course **student representatives** to your first informal monthly lunch gathering to discuss feedback on their issues and your own. (Students are more likely to attend and offer fuller and more authentic feedback if the setting is more relaxed and focused solely on student matters, than in a formal committee with a wide-ranging agenda. Food is also an incentive!)
- Arrange an informal forum for all the **part-time members of staff** in your department. Ensure you are thoroughly briefed beforehand on likely topics of discussion: e.g. issuing of contracts; access to facilities and staff development; payment et al.
- Aim to visit each one of your department's **key stakeholders**:

  *Internal*: course teams, research groups, Dean of Faculty, Director of Finance, Registrar, Head of Student Services, Director of Research, Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement et al.

  *External*: partner schools and colleges, funders, local community groups, national bodies.

  In each case, consider: What do they need and want from me? What are they hoping for? What do they require to succeed? What do I need and want from them?

- Initiate a meeting with your **Head of Marketing** and student admissions to determine what you and your department can do to help them in promoting your course provision and vice versa. And likewise with regard to promoting both the internal and external profile of the department.
- Identify those in the same role as you across your university. Arrange to meet up with **your peers**. Seek to establish an informal meeting once a month over lunch. Over time this network should evolve into a source for mutual support, the sharing of ideas and a means of increasing your power and influence across your university.
- Take the lead on your **equality and diversity** working group. Arrange your first meeting in a church, mosque, synagogue, public housing community centre or at one of your college partners.
- Initiate the conversation on the **vision and strategic plan** for your department (from scratch or as a review) using the examples outlined in chapter 3.
- Assess **your vulnerabilities** with regard to technical, political, cultural and professional matters:

  *Technical:* strategies, budgeting, people management, marketing, technologies and processes;

  *Political*: the power and politics in your university;

  *Cultural*: the values, norms and guiding assumptions of your university;

  *Professional*: learning and teaching; research and enterprise; quality assurance; service excellence.

  Create **a learning plan** to address them.

- Identify and build **your support system**: on the home front, internal and external peer network, internal or external mentor, your PA.
  - Which of your colleagues – within and beyond your department – can also help you as a:
  - Technical adviser (on strategy, technology and markets);
  - Political counsellor (or sounding-board for ideas);
  - Cultural interpreter (to influence key individuals, groupings and committees)?
- Take time for **quiet time** with yourself on a weekly basis: How do you feel so far? Excited? Confident? In control? If not, why not? What can you do about it?
  - What has bothered you so far? With whom have you failed to connect? Why? Of what you have seen and heard and the meetings you have held what has been the most troubling? Why?
  - What has gone well or poorly? Which interactions will you handle differently in future? Which interactions exceeded your expectations? Why?

## Meetings, meetings, meetings . . .

> Meetings are a great trap . . . However they are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.
>
> J. K. Galbraith, economist, 1969

I chair from the front.

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister, 1979–1990
(cited in Campbell, 2003)

> Wilt stared out of the window at the new Electronics building and wondered for the umpteenth time what it was about committees that turned educated and relatively intelligent men and women, all of them graduates of universities, into bitter and boring and argumentative people whose sole purpose seemed to be to hear themselves speak and prove everyone else wrong. And committees had come to dominate the Tech.
>
> Tom Sharpe, *Wilt on High*, 1984, p.2

Meetings are one of – if not – *the* most distinguishing characteristics of university life. Whereas in business such commonplace gatherings are rightly regarded as an important part of work, academia caricature has elevated them into a celebrated art form. This satirical tradition, stretching from F.M. Cornforth at the start of the last century to Laurie Taylor in this, tells us 'what everyone knows' about HE – that it is beset by committees in which people spend hours of their time while someone takes minutes (Lucas, 1995; McNay, 1996; Ryde, 2013). An activity whose prodigious consumption of time many staff believe – and with good reason – is an unwelcome distraction from their 'real and proper work'.

Academia is, of course, characterised by a far greater range of forms of authority than business. Indeed Burton Clark (1983) has identified no fewer than nine such forms of authority in academic settings – four based on disciplines (personal rulership (professorial); collegial rulership (professorial); guild authority; and professional authority); two are characteristic of institutions (trustee authority and bureaucratic authority); and three operate at the level of the system (bureaucratic authority, political authority and what he calls 'system-wide academic oligarchy'). These various forms of authority – and the stakeholders they represent – help explain why HEIs have developed an elaborate network of committees to accommodate them. But this development in itself is not the root cause of staff disaffection. After all there is, too, an equally long-standing commitment to collegiality within academic cultures, and with it an express (and to outsiders, probably excessive) desire that consultation and decision-making are both extensive, and mutually, deliberative processes.

The real source of staff grievance appears to lie in the fact that this 'system theory' is too rarely adhered to in practice. Critics, for instance, invariably complain that committees often have an unclear remit or are poorly controlled, or both; that they are sometimes used as devices to, at one extreme, deliberately stall or avoid reaching a decision, or, on the other, disguise the fact that decisions have already been made elsewhere. Collegiality, as the latter implies, is breached as much as it is honoured in practice and as such can alienate a significant minority of staff. More than that, collegiality also allows negative (as well as positive) attitudes and behaviours to flourish unchecked, which the determined and the unscrupulous are free to exploit, without being held to account. When other new forms of authority are introduced into such a setting – and in particular, ones such as that exercised by managers which many insiders regard as illegitimate – it should not surprise us that staff perceive it as yet another unwarranted and unwanted intrusion on their autonomy, their time and their energies (McNay, 1996; Ramsden, 1998).

The challenge for managers then is a considerable one. Indeed, credibility in your authority will stem from:

- the way in which you determine to schedule meetings (or not);
- the types of meetings you hold;
- the way in which they are organised;
- the manner in which you chair them.

Your mastery of these critical key skills, moreover, will not only enable you to enhance your effectiveness as a leader *within* your department or service but also – given that performance targets nowadays are invariably dependent on a far greater degree of internal collaboration than hitherto – your contribution as a member representing your area in different fora *across* the institution. How to do it, though?

### *To meet or not to meet, that is the question*

It is widely accepted that the committee culture symptomatic of academic institutions is, as we noted earlier, simply a reflection of the plurality of forms of authority and of the collegiate tradition that persists within them. The harsh reality, however, is that this culture is also fuelled by those who enjoy, or have most to benefit from, such gatherings: i.e. managers and others in authority. Indeed it is not uncommon to come across managers who pride themselves on having diaries that are 'wall-to-wall' with meetings. It is as if they have adapted Parkinson's Law and expanded their number of meetings to fill the amount of time they have available. It is also a mistake you will find yourself making unless you exercise the most stringent self-discipline.

After all, we need to recognise that meetings can be *seductive* in the sense that they are social occasions in which you meet with other colleagues, they get you 'out of the office'; they can fill you with a sense of importance, are often relatively undemanding and usually free from interruption. They can also be a fatal attraction too. For they can delude you into thinking that 'I am busy therefore I must be being effective'. Nothing however, could be further from the truth. Being occupied is not the same as making things happen. Activity is not the same as taking action. Indeed too often meetings can be little more than occasions for social loafing. As such, Senge's (1998) 'rule of thumb' is that as a manager you should aim to divide your time in roughly equal proportion between that spent in meetings and that devoted to action outside of them.

### *Is a meeting really necessary?*

This is the first question you should ask yourself when either planning to hold a meeting yourself, or have been asked to attend one organised by others. What is the purpose of the meeting? What do you want to get out of the meeting? What do you want others to get out of the meeting? What would be the consequences of *not* meeting? Are you meeting for meetings sake? Could you not instead send an email, a voicemail, a memo, make a telephone call or write a report?

You should not proceed with a meeting unless you are able to respond positively to these questions. And if it has been arranged by another you should seek clarification from the chair prior to the meeting as to its purpose. If not satisfied you should lobby other attendees and challenge the purpose at the meeting itself or (so long as your interests are not threatened) opt not to attend giving your reasons why.

That said, we need to recognise of course meetings can have very different purposes and that there are indeed many different types of meeting, viz.

### *Purposes of meetings*

All meetings serve one or more of four main purposes.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Information-giving | – | 'have I got news for you?' |
| 2 | Information-gathering | – | 'what do you think of this?' |
| 3 | Decision-making | – | 'what are we going to do?' |
| 4 | Problem-solving | – | 'how should we resolve this?' |

They are also invariably used to satisfy one or more of the following objectives:

- to test colleagues' reaction to information given; (inviting opinion);
- to gain their acceptance of the given information;
- to identify the need for further information;
- to pool ideas and experience on a particular subject; (to learn from one another);
- gain understanding of each other's point of view; (to gain cooperation);
- give individuals the opportunity to test their ideas and attitudes with those of others (and possibly change them);
- build group morale.

### *Types of meetings*

Meetings too can vary in many different ways according to their:

- size: large, small, mass or one-to-one;
- status: formal, informal; official, unofficial; open, closed; academic or management;
- scope: team-, group-, unit-, department-, faculty- or institution-wide;
- function: steering group or working party; exam board or user group; think-tank or project team; mitigation panel or public forum; course committee or staff seminar, etc.;
- nature: brainstorming or briefing; presenting or discussing; monitoring or evaluating; negotiating or consulting; lobbying or assessing, etc.

You need, therefore, to give careful consideration as to how you want to organise meetings in your own area. You should not fall into the trap – as so many others do – of assuming that the 'all-purpose meeting for all staff' is the most appropriate – nay, only viable – way to manage the work of your department. Such gatherings can indeed improve team spirit and resolve difficulties. Too often, though, they invariably waste time (and money), increase hostility, treat 'acorns and oak trees as if they are alike' and skim over deep divisions among staff. You can take much of the heat from such meetings – and simultaneously make them more meaningful and effective – by preparing your audience sufficiently beforehand. By arranging, that is, to hold, or have others hold, different meetings (as suggested above) to satisfy different purposes. Small advisory meetings say to gather and exchange information, others to test new ideas, still others to develop policy papers and so on.

## Box 4.14 One-to-one meetings: key features

### Why have them?

One-to-one meetings offer you one of the most effective and efficient ways to manage your department while developing your own management team at the same time.

You should aim to hold them with the two to three individuals in your department who have a particular and significant responsibility either for an activity (e.g. admissions, research, community links) or the management of staff (e.g. team leader, programme leader, subject coordinator).

### Key features

You need to ensure, if you are to achieve your goals, that your one-to-ones:

- are scheduled on a regular basis, typically one hour every other week (a great time-saver and not a time-waster, for regularity ensures that you and your colleagues do not feel obliged to interrupt each other every time a development arises);
- are literally (rather than virtually) a face-to-face discussion in private;
- cater for a discussion which reviews the whole of the role, not just a single aspect of it;
- are structured meetings and not just a casual chat;
- include a discussion of the past, present and future (up to three months in either direction);
- are a genuine two-way dialogue aimed at assessing and reviewing the effectiveness of both parties as a partnership;
- have outcomes (revised or amended targets, agreed deadlines, etc.) that you record briefly in writing on a file note: specific action points to be picked up and to form the basis of your next regular meeting.

Source: adapted from Pearl, 2012; Thomas, 2008.

## Box 4.15 Team briefings: key features

### Why have them?

A team briefing, as the term implies, is more like a systematic flexible drill than a conventional meeting. A well-established practice which has its origins in the commercial sector, it has been increasingly adapted to good effect in public sector organisations, including HEIs. Briefings, of course, have an obvious practical application if you are responsible for a university-wide service

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

but they can and have been used equally well by academic leaders, who tend to place more emphasis on the format (the 5Ps) of the briefing and play down the enforced formality of these occasions (often substituting half-hour informal meetings over lunch in their stead).

Either way, team briefings can be particularly useful in helping you to:

- correct misunderstandings within your group;
- reduce the effect of damaging rumour, of the grapevine, etc.;
- seek cooperation from your colleagues in preparing for change;
- improve the commitment and morale of group members;
- reinforce your role as leader and manager of the department.

**How do they work?**

- face-to-face; to facilitate a free range of Q and A;
- small teams (four to 15 people);
- regular: 30 minutes every other week or once a month depending on circumstance;
- relevant: the focus and information must be on the 'here and now' if the briefing is to command sufficient interest and commitment.

**Format: the 5Ps**

- ▶ Progress: how we are doing in relation to our targets (budgetary, planning, admissions, etc.)?
- ▷ Policy: new initiatives; changes in policy, systems and routines
- ▷ People: who is coming, who is going and why; promotions; scholarly activities; publications; professional development opportunities
- ▶ Points for action: what do we have to do before we meet again? Agree on who will do it
- ▷ Praise: for the group and for individuals as appropriate

▶ at every briefing
▷ not necessarily at every briefing

Source: adapted from Pearl, 2012; Thomas, 2008.

You also need to consider the types of meetings you intend to have with staff on a regular basis – team briefings, team meetings, all-staff meetings, one-to-ones, and so on (see Boxes 4.14 and 4.15). Their nature and frequency will depend on the size and complexity of your department or service. Thus,

- If, for instance, your department is a relatively small (under 15), stable, single-site operation you should anticipate holding all-staff meetings either once

a term or twice a semester, and one-to-ones with one or two individuals who have a particular and significant responsibility every other week: e.g. subject co-coordinator, course leader, team leader.

- If you have responsibility for a university service, your meetings with staff should be of greater frequency, typically every other week – and you may like to consider alternating them with team briefings.
- Likewise if your department is a large academic one with multiple programmes on different campuses and a diverse range of interests, you should anticipate holding additional staff meetings and alternating them between sites. You will also need to build in additional one-to-ones to ensure you embrace the full range of your department's interests and responsibilities, e.g. with your research director, enterprise activity coordinator, community liaison officer and so on.

Now you have decided the combination of meetings, both regular and occasional, which best suits you and your department's needs, you face a more difficult task still – that of conducting them.

### *Effective chairing*

Academics are fond of remarking that management is little more than common sense. If that were so then the poor reputation of meetings – chaired by academics as well as managers – suggests it is a commodity in relatively short supply in universities. Staff complaints as we noted earlier are manifold. The most common being:

- an unclear remit; a lack of clear purpose or objective;
- the absence of an agenda, or a poorly prepared agenda, or an over-ambitious agenda;
- held at the wrong time, with the wrong people there, or in the wrong environment;
- behavioural problems; getting sidetracked, going round in circles, individual soap-boxing and gamesmanship, time-wasting and waffling;
- interruptions from outside the meeting; messages, phone calls, etc.;
- too lengthy; no time frame;
- no agreed actions; poor minutes.

These complaints, however, are all attributable to a common source – poor organisation and control on the part of the chair. You will be well on your way to being an effective chair if you do not fall foul of any of the above. To that end, you should treat these serial complaints as a checklist of don'ts.

Put another way, the effective chair pays due regard to the planning and organisation of all aspects of the process, not simply part of it. They recognise that a successful outcome is as much dependent on what is done *before* the meeting, as it is on what happens *during* it, and equally what action is taken *after* it. As such they place equal value and importance on each stage.

***Before the meeting***

You should:

*1 Plan*

Be clear about your precise objectives and why you need the meeting. Meetings, as we've noted, often lack such objectives. Indeed they are invariably no more than a list of activities: e.g. discussion of the latest government initiative on 'widening participation' and so on. The real objective would be the desired outcome from this activity: e.g. 'to elicit people's point of view', 'to agree a course of action', 'to plan one', 'to decide a response' etc. That is, the objective should be clear, explicit and challenging (and not implied, vague or non-existent). Objective setting is critical, for without one it is unlikely the meeting will have an appropriate structure, and the structure of the meeting should flow logically from your objectives.

List the subjects for:

- information-giving (this may entail clarification: either way, this aspect should be kept to a minimum; circulate via. email, voice mail or internal post instead);
- information-gathering;
- decision-making;
- problem-solving.

*2 Inform*

Anticipate which people and what information may be needed. In identifying participants you need to take into account that:

- The ideal meeting size is probably around seven to ten and certainly no more than 15 (formal rules governing the membership of Academic Boards and Senates, notwithstanding).
- Meetings are not just time-consuming but very expensive too. Do your participants need to be there the whole time, or simply for a single item?
- If you need information, ask individuals to prepare a 'position statement' in advance of the meeting: one to two sides of A4 (max.) in bullet-point format.
- Ensure everyone knows what is being discussed and why.

There is nothing so irritating, nor so unnecessary, as for individuals to be asked to assemble in ignorance of the matter at hand. It not only guarantees a 'cold start' to any meeting but also limits the potential contribution of participants from the outset.

*3 Prepare*

- Draw up a logical agenda and circulate (with papers) in good time; i.e. at least 48 hours in advance.
- Schedule the most important, difficult or contentious items first to catch people when they are fresh.

- Try and save a 'high-note' item for the end to send people away in an up-beat mood. (Or in the event that the meeting does not go well you should at least be prepared to thank participants for their honesty).
- Do not permit 'any other business' (AOB) – other than important announcements – unless it is cleared with you before the meeting. Otherwise you run the risk your meeting will be hijacked. It also encourages sloppy practices and time-wasting. To give of their best, participants need to be forewarned of an issue not confronted with it 'on the spot'.

Estimate the length of the meeting – up to one hour preferably, certainly no more than two – and allocate time for each item on the basis of its importance. Some chairs also advertise this time limit for each item though it is a practice that can backfire. As it leaves you open to challenge – for being presumptive, manipulative etc. – which itself precipitates yet more time-wasting. A more prudent course of action is to set a time limit for the meeting as a whole and to start the meeting at an unorthodox time – at a quarter to or quarter past the hour rather than on the hour. That way you convey the message to participants that time is important to you and also to them.

Determine and establish the most suitable physical setting for the meeting. It may seem self-evident that the actual layout and configuration of the meeting rooms can make a critical difference, yet it is surprising how often in practice this is left simply to chance – typically an inheritance from the room's former occupants. You should be proactive in this matter. Ideally you should hold your meetings in a convenient place in surroundings that are reasonably comfortable (but not too comfortable!) and arrange the seating in such a way that you have a clear view of everyone and they in turn have one of you and of everyone else. In other words, you should avoid the political gamesmanship inherent in the meeting configurations of some universities – the raised platform, the 'top table', the 'over-long' rectangle, the elongated tuning fork, the linear ranking and so on. Depending on the circumstance, there may be occasions (e.g. to facilitate group consultation or formal negotiation or team-building etc.) when you need, or want, to alter the group dynamic. In which case you should consider assigning places to named individuals or alternatively breaking up the collective group into smaller sub-groups organised around different tables (for example, laid out in a circular fashion or in management parlance, 'cabaret style'). Either way, the point is you should consciously reflect on the optimal physical configuration that will help you to realise your meeting's objectives.

### *During the meeting*

You should aim to keep control:

- of the subject under discussion;
- of the people at the meeting.

This is far easier said than done. All your planning and preparation, however, will have been in vain if you fail to do so. As such you need to recognise that one of the main reasons why chairs fail in their duty is due to the inherent contradiction within their role, viz. the expectation they should, as chair, remain uninvolved, disinterested and impartial and suppress the impulse to intervene, even though they

invariably have a direct and personal stake in the discussion in hand. In reality few can resist the temptation to participate. Getting involved in the subject matter of a meeting, however, while simultaneously chairing it, are two quite different things that simply do not mix.

### Box 4.16 Chairing meetings: chairs we have endured . . . role models not to follow

- **The pedant** Sticks to the script and nothing but the script. A stickler for protocols and obsessive about procedures rather than the process. Can't see the wood from the trees and doesn't let others in who can.
- **The 'populist pretender'** A dedicated follower of fashion: unstintingly politically correct. Poses as 'man of the people' yet support for social inclusion and mass participation does not extend to those around the table. Speaks 'left of centre', acts well to the right.
- **The philosophiser** Conducts a meeting as if it were a tutorial. Takes (academic) 'heart on sleeve' very seriously. Boldly goes where few have gone before. An interesting and diversionary journey which never arrives at a destination.
- **The 'fat controller'** Often well-meaning but has not graduated beyond traditional pedagogic style. Applies a didactic approach which yields predictable outcomes: apathy, boredom and non-engagement on the part of the majority.
- **The benevolent dictator** A charming and engaging character who leaves nothing to chance. Has it all 'done and dusted' beforehand, presents the group with a fait accompli and lines up the troops accordingly.
- **The dictator** As above though without the style, wit, grace or charm. An unadorned bully.
- **The functioning cipher** Suffers from a distorted perception of corporate responsibility. Acts as a cipher for a higher authority. Abrogates responsibility for any decision or action. Adds nothing, contributes nothing and alienates everyone.
- **The 'collegio-phile'** Wants to please all the people all the time. So wedded to – and self-conscious of – the collegiate tradition is paralysed by indecision for fear of upsetting any colleague. More led by the gang than a leader of the gang.

### Box 4.17 The differences between chairing and facilitating a meeting

| *The chair system* | *The facilitator system* |
|---|---|
| Chair often has a direct and personal stake | Is impartial, looking only for a successful outcome |
| Relies on rules and procedures | Is rooted in common sense and courtesy |

| | |
|---|---|
| Identifies each idea with its owner | Uses teams and group dynamics |
| Calls for immediate valuation of input | Requires deferred judgement |
| Controls the flow of ideas and inputs | Ensures a free market for contributions |
| Is commonly rooted in mistrust | Is transparent, with no hidden agendas |
| Frequently is 'win-lose' | Aims for 'win-win' and consensus |
| Is open to manipulation | Ensures good behaviour, protects individuals |
| Underpins the 'sage-on-the-stage' | Offers a 'guide by the side' |

And it is, of course, the case that some chairs deliberately choose to ignore this contradiction (often those intent on outright manipulation) while others bask in it (usually those eager to parade their knowledge; the so-called 'sage-on-the-stage') and still others (those who through misunderstanding, lack of self-esteem or other personal shortcoming) flounder on regardless. All these examples of poor practice – of role models not to follow – are familiar to many in HE (see Box 4.16). To avoid joining them you must 'manage this contradiction' in a positive and constructive way. How? By conceiving of your role as that of 'facilitator' rather than 'chair'. These terms are invariably used interchangeably to describe the conduct of meetings yet they are in practice very different types of modus operandi (see Box 4.17).

### Box 4.18 The five stages of decision-taking: the five Cs

As guardian of the decision-making process, you should:

- rehearse by yourself the five different stages involved in the solving of problems and the taking of decisions;*
- be prepared to lead your colleagues through the same process – the five Cs.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Consider the issue and clarify the facts | • Don't immediately react to the problem or issue. Take time to think about it.<br>• What is the problem or decision? Have you got all the facts? What additional information do you need?<br>• Who is involved in the problem or decision?<br>• How urgent is it? Must it be done now? What would happen if it were delayed?<br>• Are you dealing with the actual problem or just the symptom?<br>• What is the effect of the problem? What is the real cause?<br>• Why has this situation arisen? |
| 2 Consult with your colleagues | • Use the meeting to draw on the existing experience and skills of your colleagues.<br>• Generate ideas, options, scenarios, alternatives.<br>• Identify the outcome you would like. |
| 3 Commit to a decision | • Summarise the options available to you.<br>• Elaborate the pros and cons of each option.<br>• Make the decision. |

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Communicate the decision | • Take the action you have decided on.<br>• Communicate with all the individuals involved who will be affected by the action – email, voicemail, memo, briefing, 'walk the job'.<br>• Explain the rationale for your decision and the process by which it was reached.<br>• Be assertive in helping to sell the decision. |
| 5 | Check and evaluate the implementation | • Monitor that the agreed actions are in fact being carried out.<br>• Has the problem or issue been solved?<br>• How can you avoid it reoccurring?<br>• What have you learned from the process?<br>• How can you pass that knowledge on to others? |

In practising the five Cs you will avoid the most common causes of *bad* decision-making:

- complacency
- taking the easy way out
- prejudice.

*Note*: * Decisions, that is, which require reflection and consultation – not the predictable operational ones which form part of the everyday norm or the ones you need to take in an emergency.

Source: adapted from Pearl, 2012; Thomas, 2008; Work Foundation, 2006.

As facilitator you are more 'a guide by the side' and less 'the sage-on-the-stage'. This is not to say, however, that you have to deny any interest in the issues at stake, or have to adopt a laissez-faire approach to proceedings. On the contrary, you are there as 'custodian of the process' to guide the meeting in an informed and transparent manner. Thus, for example, you don't go into the meeting and say 'What shall we do?' You go in and give a sense of direction; you present the case, outline the alternatives and say 'We can do a, or b, or c – what do you think?' To do otherwise is to abrogate your responsibility (see Box 4.18).

Put another way, it is your duty to:

- first of all, enforce time discipline. So start the meeting on time – 'on the dot'. Make no allowances for latecomers: i.e. start as you mean to go on;
- clarify the objectives at the outset and check that all participants have a shared understanding;
- introduce each topic (the 'what') succinctly by putting it into context and explaining the purpose or objective (the 'how') and outlining the alternatives (the 'means');
- use your 'internal clock' to control the pace of the meeting so that the time allotted is proportionate to the gravity of the issues at hand;
- keep the discussion to the point; ask questions of clarification and summarise at frequent intervals;

- conclude each topic with a summary of what has been agreed or decided;
- conclude the meeting by recapping the actions that have been placed on individuals and checking that all participants have a shared understanding.

These responsibilities are well known but, as we've said earlier, are not necessarily well done. The way in which you have physically configured the meeting should help you in this regard. And while there may be no substitute for experience, there are some practical guidelines you can follow which will make your task that much easier and your performance as chair more effective:

Seek to establish ground rules for your meetings: e.g. to start and finish on time; no food or drink; no mobile phones; no emailing; no interruptions and no sidebars when an individual is talking; a three minute time limit for each speaker etc.

### Box 4.19 Chairing meetings: contributors you will recognise . . . and must handle

- **The rustler** Always has papers ready and prepared for the meeting they've just come from and the meeting they're going to next but never the one they're actually in now! As such, constantly rifles through their material. Pin down quickly and identify papers for them lest distraction persists.
- **Chatterer** Already thinks they're at the next meeting. Always wants to hold a separate meeting to the one they're actually attending. Shame them into silence by asking their opinion on the item they were not listening to. Remind them of the no sidebars rule.
- **The late arrival** Usually a recidivist. Do not make any allowances unless justified. Put them 'on the spot' soon after they arrive. They may reform their habit sooner rather than later.
- **The doomsday merchant** 'The department is doomed. The university is doomed. We're all doomed'. Don't necessarily take the interjection seriously. Test out the views of others. Carefully dissect the nature of the issues at hand. Stick strictly to the facts, not opinion.
- **The cynic** 'Who gives a stuff anyway?' Appeal to others to respond. If not forthcoming, then respond yourself but keep it brief. A prolonged dialogue may do more harm than good. Make a mental note to have a one-to-one with the individual within the next three days.
- **The oppressed** 'We've had enough. We can't do anymore'. Has full-blown victim complex. Time and energy wholly consumed in worrying. Review workload and agree a customised professional development programme including counselling, if necessary.
- **The Trot** Wears several hats. Is often engaging in private if menacing in public. Espouses the most radical of political ideologies yet typically practises the most conservative of teaching pedagogies. A revolutionary keen on upholding academic tradition (and preserving their own privileges). Don't let the irony get the better of you. A 'straight bat' is the safest bet.

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

- **The comedian** In moderation a terrific aid in facilitating the work of the group; one to cherish. In excess, one to muzzle outside the meeting.
- **The old sea dog** 'Been there, seen that, done it and got the T-shirt to prove it.' Often has much to offer – and is willing to – if you can get beneath the world-weariness. Cajole and encourage to give more and do it yet again!
- **The maverick** A loose cannon in every sense. Nobody's fool, proud and independent and not without influence. Often has much to offer yet too unpredictable. Prime them in advance. Seek out their views beforehand and respect and value their contribution.
- **The barrack-room lawyer** A pedant of the rule-book and champion of 'points of order'. Engage with first time round. Use group members to assert the primacy of the (agreed) process over that of formality and procedure. Don't let them sulk. Bring them back into the fold.
- **The unsung hero** A hidden gem. For whatever reason, too self-effacing by half. Often a fount of wisdom and an invaluable source of new ideas. Sees things others don't, including you. Nurture and encourage at every opportunity.
- **The MBO** 'Master of the Bleedin' Obvious'. Invariably means well but has the irritating habit of reiterating what everyone knows already. Can be an asset when you and others have 'lost the plot'; otherwise interject without giving offence, summarise and move on.
- **The 'tribune of the people'** A class warrior with monomaniacal tendencies. Is only too willing to let you know they've got 'your number'. Don't rise to the bait but do show you're not 'just another suit'. Make a genuine effort to get them to make the valuable contribution of which their commitment shows they are capable.
- **The oracle** A loyal pillar of the institution, touchstone of the department and a fount of stories, gossip and myths about the past. Knows where you've been and how you got there. Respect and value their contribution and they will more often than not be a godsend in times of change.

Just as teachers face the difficult task of individuating learning in a mass system of HE, so you as chair must respect, value and foster contributions from all meeting participants. Ideally, all colleagues should feel able – and be encouraged – to contribute in an open, honest and enthusiastic way. As not all colleagues will be so inclined, you also need strategies to hand to deal with the many varied and idiosyncratic characters who populate university gatherings (see Box 4.19).

Do stick to a systematic approach to discussion – specify the issue or proposition; produce or hear the evidence; hear the arguments for and against; summarise the arguments; come to a conclusion or verdict; decide and record what action to take.

*Unite the group*

- Be open, honest and enthusiastic yourself. Genuinely aspire to a win-win outcome.
- Be open about acceptable forms of dissent and negativity.

- Do not, however, resort to gimmicks, unless you and your group jointly agree them. And even then, think again about the consequences. The decision by the BBC for example – like that of an American HEI – to import football's yellow card system into meetings (encouraging participants to wave a yellow card bearing the words 'Cut the Crap, Make it Happen' at anyone perceived to be blocking a good idea) is more symptomatic of a public corporation desperate to change its bureaucratic culture, than it is a considered or viable means of achieving change (Snoddy, 2002). Which is not to say such devices are not effective. On the contrary, they can be a very powerful tool in influencing behaviour. However, the risks associated with them are that much greater for the device is open to abuse and the likely consequences can be as much negative as positive.
- If there is a disproportionate number of procrastinators in your group, schedule your meetings either prior to lunch or towards the end of the day. The desire to get away will often focus people's attention and curb their natural propensity to verbosity.
- Don't be afraid of 'healthy' aggression. Allow others to let off steam; to 'get things off their chest'.
- Do be wary, however, of 'unhealthy' aggression that which invariably leads to 'a stand-off dialogue between the deaf'. In such instances, do not take sides. Remain impartial. Be aware of those who 'withdraw from the group' and seek to bring in others. Ask value-free questions. Stick to facts, not opinions. Never ask an individual for their opinion if they're aggressive.

If the aggression is aimed at you – do not feel obliged to respond to every remonstrance. Keep an even temper, even if provoked (if you lose your temper in public, your credibility will suffer too). Stick to the same approach. Remember not everyone will agree or feel comfortable with the aggrieved parties even if it might seem that way. Agree to meet with the aggrieved parties – but not later that same day. Move on to the next business.

*Focus the group*

- Stay alert. Keep 'a hand on the wheel'. Steer clear of rogue issues and red herrings.
- Be proactive. Keep asking questions. Test the group's understanding.
- Paraphrase the debate and seek approbation. Modify as appropriate.

*Mobilise the group*

- Protect and draw out the quieter members of the group.
- Do not jump to 'quick fix' instant solutions. Take time to consider the pros and cons of alternatives.
- Check round the group if two or three individuals are dominating the discussion.
- Record suggestions as they're stated.
- Be open to, and build up, ideas, including those you may initially feel are 'wacky'.

***'Take a leaf out of the book' of others***

Just as there are some chairs who set a poor example there are others who offer an exemplary one. Like the referee of a football match who has a 'good game', these

are conspicuous by their apparent absence. Yet they will invariably have done their homework beforehand: by eliciting support for a particular proposal, having others introduce it rather than themselves, and by gaining the confidence of those might oppose them. During the meeting they always manage to strike the right balance between direction and consultation, have a cat-like sensitivity for those who may feel excluded, and maintain a brisk pace, sound order and good humour throughout, even in the most difficult circumstance. Most importantly they 'get the job done' by moving beyond the inevitable divisions of opinion towards an agreed plan of action. It is these role models – those who chair seamlessly with such apparent ease – you should seek out in your own institution. Observe them, learn from them; emulate them.

### *After the meeting*

- Reflect and review whether or not the meeting was successful in achieving the set objectives; what went well? What could have gone better? Test your perceptions against the views of others whose opinion you value.
- Double-check and proofread the 'minutes' and circulate them to all participants as soon as practicable after the meeting, and no later than three days afterwards.

Minutes in the literal sense – i.e. a detailed summation of arguments and actions – are not always necessary or indeed desirable. They are usually required nowadays only (and not always even then) in the case of formal academic committees. For the purpose of 'business meetings', however, you should focus on producing a brief set of notes with transparent action points. As this is not always so straightforward – and there is indeed a general tendency within universities to underestimate and undervalue minute taking as a skill – be prepared to take advantage of the professional guidance your minute-taker can offer. Fortunately there is now just such a professional cadre of minute-takers in most universities; a legacy for the most part of the demands made on HEIs by external agencies such as the QAA. If your assistant is not one of them you should ensure they are trained in like manner. This small investment will reap you a great dividend.

Most importantly, check that those who are responsible for taking actions:

- actually receive the notes of the meeting;
- do indeed carry out the actions as agreed, viz. you should not let the process simply slide into abeyance but rather monitor their progress (without 'over-managing' them) in implementing the action(s) in accordance with the agreed timescale.

## Team building

> Make it clear (to the communications team) that horn-tooting and denigrating of colleagues is unacceptable.
>
> Anthony Scaramucci, White House Director of Communications, work plan, July 21–31, 2017 (cited in Tapper and Grieve, 2017)

> Great things in business are never done by one person, they're done by a team of people.
>
> Steve Jobs, co-founder,
> Apple Inc., (1955–2011), 2003

The ability to schedule, organise and handle meetings in constructive ways which lead to meaningful action is a critical leadership skill, albeit an underrated one. No matter. Your success in this regard will make a significant contribution to the way in which your department operates. You will need to develop this momentum, however, if your department is to build and realise its collective 'shared vision'. In particular, you need to examine ways in which you can actively and deliberately promote dialogue, collaboration and team working.

Put another way, you must avoid making the same mistake that has ensnared so many other leaders: i.e. assuming (falsely) that you can achieve everything by yourself. Attractive though this proposition may be – and particularly so to those of a very self-confident disposition – its adherents invariably share the same tragic fate: total burnout to no good effect. The simple reality is that much of what we can achieve as leaders can be done only with the help and consent of others. Hence the necessity for collaboration.

This need is particularly more difficult to meet, however, in an academic setting than in the conventional business one. We are all familiar, for example, with the celebrated practices of the lone researcher and the teacher who proclaims 'I am God in the universe as soon as I close the classroom door'. As well as the contention that universities are characterised by a tribal culture rather than a team one; a condition famously reflected in the observation (now a tired cliché) that managing university academics is akin to 'herding cats'. And yet it is equally the case that the nature of teaching and research is evolving in ways – the shift towards the facilitating rather than the directing of learning; the external assessment of research on the basis of unit rather than individual contribution, etc. – which will necessitate collaborative effort if they are to be fruitful.

Nor is it nearly so alien as traditionalists would have us believe. At Miami University, Ohio, for instance, teamwork is explicitly acknowledged as one of six core values which make up the university's 'Academic Quality Model'; a conceptual framework that is applied to all the institution's units – department, division, college and office (see Figure 4.1). Three values drive unit relationships: leadership, mutual trust and teamwork. Leadership entails 'creating a shared vision of a quality culture and modelling behaviours consistent with that philosophy' while trust refers 'to the positive expectations (openness, reliability, caring and competence) between chair and department members'. And teamwork 'enhances collaboration to create synergistic outcomes that surpass the wisdom of individuals'. An additional three values are recognised as guiding individual actions: learner (faculty-staff) empowerment, the acquisition of process improvement skills and a partnership orientation. Learner empowerment involves 'giving faculty and staff the permission, power and protection to make decisions so that they become involved, self-sufficient, responsible, committed and intrinsically motivated'. Process improvement uses 'objective and subjective data for analysis of the work system and decision-making'. And finally, a partnership orientation anticipates 'focusing on satisfying the validated needs of

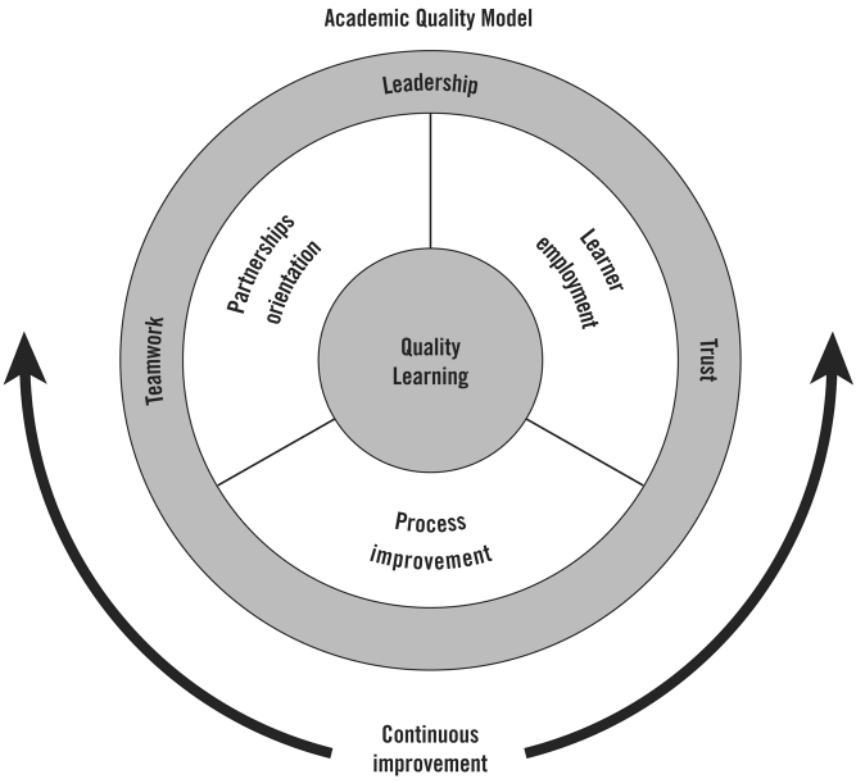


*Figure 4.1* Academic Quality Model: Miami University, Ohio
Source: Shulman, 1998.

people engaged in professional relationships (i.e. internal and external department constituents)' (Shulman, 1998).

***How then can you develop teamwork as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of your department?***

*1 Be aware of the language you use*

Talking about 'teamwork' in an abstract sense is more than likely to have the opposite effect you wish – a collective mental 'switching off'. Rather you should regard your role as that of fostering and nurturing a dialogue with colleagues on the concrete matters that collectively face you. Indeed for Senge (1994) 'the discipline of team learning starts with *dialogue*, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together''.

You need to help establish an environment in which colleagues feel confident enough to do just that: to discuss their ideas openly, to articulate their assumptions

without ridicule, to disagree in a constructive sense, to discover insights not attainable individually. In other words, a setting in which collegiality can genuinely flourish. Again you will need to lead by personal example in this regard in the way which you seek to lay the foundations of such an environment, principally, as indicated in the Miami University model, one of trust and, one might also add, mutual respect. The irony of course – and one you should use – is that, far from being an alien business concept, teamwork in its essence is nothing other than the positive aspect of the collegial spirit writ large. Given that academic communities can be rather jaundiced about teams however you will find it more productive to refer directly to the labels they use: Research Centre/Institute; Subject Group; Course Executive; Syndicate Group, etc.

**Box 4.20 Characteristic differences between teams and groups**

| *Activity* | *Members of groups tend to be . . .* | *Members of teams tend to be . . .* |
|---|---|---|
| Dependence | independent | interdependent |
| Ownership | 'hired hands' | owners of the process |
| Contribution | directed | encouraged |
| Climate | divisive | trusting |
| Communication | cautious 'game players' | open and honest |
| Training | constrained by dominant supervisors | mutually supportive of development |
| Involvement | individually uninvolved | collectively engaged |

Source: based on West, 2012; Maddix, 1998.

*2 Recognise that:*

- *Teams are not the same as groups*. While groups may be little more than a collection of individuals who believe themselves to be a group, teams are special in that they manage to accomplish more than the sum total of their individual members. They evolve from groups who have learned to work together skilfully and achieve, in management jargon 'synergy' or as it is sometimes expressed '1+1=3' (because you count the 'plus', which represents the interaction between different people, the 'ones'). In fact, 'a real team', as Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith (2005) put it is, characterised by a 'discipline of team basics', viz. it is 'a *small number* of people with *complementary skills* who are committed to a *common purpose*, *performance goals* and an *approach* for which they hold themselves *mutually accountable*'. In other words they can in practice differ from groups in almost every conceivable way (see Box 4.20).

## Box 4.21 Belbin's eight individual types who contribute to effective team performance

| *Type* | *Team role* | *Positive qualities* | *Allowable weaknesses* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chair/ Coordinator | • Coordinates the way the team moves towards group objectives<br>• Makes the best use of team resources<br>• Recognises team strengths and weaknesses<br>• Maximises the potential of each team member | • Welcomes all contributions on their merit<br>• Strong sense of objectives | • Is unlikely to be the most creative member of the team |
| Shaper | • Shapes the way in which team effort is channelled<br>• Directs attention to the setting of objectives and priorities<br>• Seeks to impose a shape or pattern on group discussions and outcomes | • Drive and a readiness to challenge inertia, ineffectiveness, complacency and self-deception | • Prone to provocation, irritation and impatience |
| Plant | • Advances new ideas and strategies<br>• Pays special attention to major issues<br>• Creative approach to problem-solving | • Imagination, intellect, knowledge | • Inclined to disregard practical details or protocol |
| Resource/ Investigate | • Explores and reports on ideas and developments outside the team<br>• Creates external contacts | • Capacity for contacting people and exploring anything new<br>• Ability to respond to challenge | • Loses interest once the initial fascination has passed |
| Monitor/ Evaluator | • Analyses problems, evaluates ideas and suggestions<br>• Enables team to take balanced decisions | • Judgement, discretion, hard-headedness | • May lack inspiration and ability to motivate others |
| Implementer | • Turns concepts and plans into practical working procedures<br>• Carries out agreed plans systematically and efficiently | • Organising ability, practical common sense<br>• Self-discipline, hard-working | • Lack of flexibility, unresponsive to new or unproven ideas |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Team worker | • Supports team members in their strengths<br>• Builds on suggestions<br>• Compensates for team members' shortcomings<br>• Improves communication between members | • Ability to respond to people and situations<br>• Promotes team spirit | • May be indecisive at moments of crisis |
| Finisher | • Ensures nothing has been overlooked<br>• Checks details<br>• Maintains a sense of urgency | • Capacity for follow-through<br>• Perfectionism | • Tendency to worry about small things<br>• Reluctant to let go |

Source: adapted from Belbin, 2010, 2013.

- *It is the differences rather than the similarities between members that are the critical factors in determining team success*: the interplay of different individuals with different ways of behaving and their willingness to undertake a specific role. Meredith Belbin (2010) has, as is well known, demonstrated that effective teams tend to be comprised of eight such role types (see Box 4.21). Put another way – and this is significant in terms of the HE environment – team success is not simply a function of talent and intelligence. Indeed Belbin discovered that the teams managers were predisposed to select (invariably the cleverest and most talented people they could find) were, in fact, the ones most likely to fail in practice!

## Box 4.22 Moving through the four stages of team development

| **Characteristic behaviours:** | **Development actions:** |
|---|---|
| *Stage 1: Forming* | *Leader's style: Tell* |
| • Attempts to define the task and decide how it will be accomplished<br>• Attempts to determine acceptable group behaviour<br>• Attempts to determine how to deal with problems<br>• Decisions on information to be gathered to solve a problem<br>• Abstract discussions of concepts and issues, and for some, impatience with such discussions and a desire to get on with the task in hand | • Get to know and access one another<br>• Examine the function and purpose of the team<br>• Look at the skills, knowledge, cohesiveness and balance already present<br>• Identify the blocks, frustrations and culture |

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

| **Characteristic behaviours:** | **Development actions:** |
|---|---|
| • Discussions of symptoms or problems not relevant to the task in hand<br>• Difficulty in identifying relevant problems<br>• Complaints about the organisation and barriers to the task in hand | • Don't jump to conclusions too quickly and impose 'instant' changes |
| *Stage 2: Storming* | *Leader's style: Sell* |
| • Argument among members even when actually agreeing on the real issues<br>• Defensiveness and competition between team members<br>• The emergence of factions and 'taking sides'<br>• Questioning everything: 'why should we do it this way?'<br>• Establishing unrealistic goals<br>• Concerns about excessive work<br>• A perceived 'pecking order', leading to disunity, tension and jealousy | • Debate risky issues<br>• Consider wider options<br>• Encourage openness and feedback<br>• Handle conflict positively<br>• Remember it takes time to build trust<br>• Bring in external help if necessary |
| *Stage 3: Norming* | *Leader's style: Participate* |
| • An attempt to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict<br>• More friendliness, confiding and a sharing of personal problems<br>• Better discussions and the development of effective team dynamics<br>• A sense of team cohesion, with a common spirit and goals<br>• The establishment and maintenance of team ground rules and<br>• Clearly defined roles<br>• The establishment of a framework of formal and informal communication | • Maintain openness<br>• Conduct regular team reviews<br>• Encourage challenges to established ways of doing things<br>• Celebrate success<br>• Focus on individual as well as team developments boundaries |
| *Stage 4: Reforming* | *Leader's style: Delegate* |
| • Humour used in a constructive way to progress the task<br>• Constructive self-change<br>• The ability to prevent team problems or work through them<br>• A close attachment to the team<br>• Accepting responsibility for themselves and for the achievement | • Be wary that established methods do not become an end in themselves<br>• Remember to look outwards<br>• Nurture creativity |

Source: adapted from West, 2012; Katzenbach and Smith, 2005; Turner, 1998.

- *Teams are not static but have their own internal dynamic*. And typically evolve through four different stages of development – forming, storming, norming and performing – each with its own distinctive characteristics which will require you to adapt your leadership style accordingly (see Box 4.22).

Team performance is often hampered by the persistence of a number of enduring myths:

- *Myth: a team should function as a team whenever it meets*. This myth suggests that every task to be tackled, no matter how routine, should automatically qualify as a team opportunity. In practice, routine matters are better handled by meeting as a working group and teamwork reserved for the tougher more challenging activities.
- *Myth: teams need to spend more time together building consensus*. This myth assumes that building consensus is synonymous with reducing conflict and that less conflict will somehow lead to more team-like behaviour. In practice, real teams do not avoid (constructive) conflict – they thrive on it. Nor is it always the case that decisions built on consensus are necessarily better than those handed down by individuals.
- *Myth: teamwork will automatically lead to improved team performance*. This myth assumes that by focusing solely on the 4Cs of effective teamwork – communication, cooperation, collaboration and compromise – an improvement in team performance is guaranteed to follow. In reality teamwork and team performance are two different things and the latter will only be achieved if team members are equally rigorous in applying the 'discipline of team basics'.
- *Myth: teams composed of the 'brightest and the best' will inevitably outperform any other*. Or, put another way, assuming that those immediately around you have the necessary requisite skills to be an effective top-performing team. This is simply not always the case – not even for senior management teams and so-called 'top teams'. See Belbin (2010; 2013).

*3 Consider your options carefully*

Whether you are starting from scratch or have inherited an existing group of individuals *you should consider your options carefully*. Teams go by a variety of different names according to their various purposes and goals.

One common way forward is to collectively bring together as a departmental management team those you intend holding one-to-ones with on a regular basis, i.e. those individuals with significant responsibilities.

Another, the optimum size of teams as six to ten members notwithstanding – is to conceive of your whole department as a team.

And still another is to identify and establish a variety of single purpose groups organised around the main challenges facing the department – e.g. a strategic issues group, a departmental policy forum, a learner experience set, a commercial development group, a research and innovation body, a quality circle etc. – and then staff

them on the basis of the range of skills individuals will bring to their respective teams, rather than on the basis of their formal title or position.

Each of these ways is equally valid and you should not feel obliged to stick rigidly to one or all three. Indeed you should above all aim to be open-minded and flexible in your approach irrespective of the size of your department.

*4 Nurture the four Cs of teamwork*

You should indeed attend to the basics of effective teamwork by actively seeking to nurture the four Cs (communication, cooperation, collaboration and compromise).

- Agree a team code of conduct such as to:

  respect each member

  criticise ideas, never people

  listen actively

  seek to understand before being understood

  contribute thoughts, feelings and questions

  keep an open mind

  share responsibility

  attend all meetings.

- Undertake formal team-building activities through away-days, retreats and the like. Away-days, that is in the genuine sense of the term, are organised sessions held off-site to 'step back' and explore issues over and above the everyday run-of-the-mill. Not, that is, as they are too frequently (mis-)used nowadays – as a vehicle for an elongated meeting (held on-site more often than not and) devoted to matters of immediate concern. See the CIPD's portfolio for an extensive range of authenticated activities that you can use in promoting effective teamwork within your own group.
- Establish peer-support networks in:

  research – fortnightly or monthly seminars; grant application syndicates; publications workshops; 'brown bag' luncheons to discuss 'work in progress'; outside speakers forum;

  learning and teaching – a peer review of teaching scheme; a pedagogical innovation workshop; a learning and teaching research seminar; an employers' liaison forum.

*5 Pay attention to the composition of your team*

You should seek to encourage and increase individual team members' awareness of their team role by analysing the composition of your new or existing or inherited team. One way of doing this indeed is by asking all your team members to complete the questionnaire Belbin (2010) devised to identify one's own team-role preferences.

This activity is a relatively low-risk one for both individual members and the team in that it is confined to highlighting strengths and 'allowable weaknesses'. There are thus no winners or losers in the analysis.

More than that, it not only satisfies the inherent curiosity of individual members who want to 'see how I come out and how others score in my team', but also yields a most valuable insight on others' self-perception, which in turn typically generates an animated and usually good-natured discussion on the outcomes. It, furthermore, enables the team to modify its behaviour to compensate for any obvious omissions in its role make-up highlighted by the questionnaire. Thus the team, for example, which struggled to meet deadlines in the past for want of an obvious 'finisher' could formally assign an individual to undertake this responsibility for each task or project as it arises.

That said, there can, of course, be drawbacks to team-role indicators – they are based on subjective perceptions that can lead to stereotyping (as in, 'What do you expect, Colin is a shaper!') and having them all does not automatically guarantee success. Overall, however, Belbin awareness should enable you to heighten both the sense of expectation and responsibility on the part of your individual members while simultaneously enhancing the degree of your collective group consciousness for the better.

*6 Identify team development needs*

You should seek to identify your team's development needs – and to raise your collective group consciousness still further – by reviewing your team's progress along the 'forming-storming-norming-performing' development continuum. This activity, like the previous one, is based on self-perception and self-assessment. Unlike the one above, however, which your team should find relatively straightforward to handle itself, this activity has a greater likelihood of generating a more authentic and reliable outcome if facilitated by an outside party. As such, you should enlist the services of your management development adviser, or an experienced colleague respected by all your team's members, or an external consultant. Whichever, their role would be to tease out your member's perceptions – both individually and collectively – of the functioning and effectiveness of the team.

One simple yet very illuminating way of doing this is to conceive of the team development process as a 'clock face' – with the undeveloped (forming) team starting at midnight and evolving through the experimenting (storming) and consolidating (norming) stages to reach maturity (the performing team) by noon.

In essence you and your team members should be aiming to:

- identify which stage of development, or 'time on the clock face', the team is currently at (the first quarter, second, third or final?) and to share your views freely with one another;
- identify and explore any issues of concern around the team's development and the *internal* and *external* perceptions of your team;
- explore and identify strategies which can take your team forward to the next stage;
- to identify team development needs and how they can be met.

Put another way, this 'team development clock' activity will help bring out perceptions, often striking in contrast, which would otherwise remain hidden; differences of view, that, is which are invariably stimulating in themselves and which you can use to enhance the working of your team.

### Box 4.23 School-management-team development at one UK modern university: characteristic perceptions and behaviours

**Undeveloped team**

- Unclear objectives, values and guiding principles
- Bureaucracy and lack of informal communication
- Weaknesses covered up
- Poor listening skills
- Workplace is only for work
- Feelings and stress not dealt with
- Role conflict and lack of recognition of individuals' areas of expertise and accountabilities
- No 'rocking the boat'
- Lack of equality in team
- One or more team members seen as outsiders or scapegoats
- Head of school takes most decisions and seen as a strong leader without vulnerabilities

**Experimenting team**

- Greater openness
- Experimentation and risk-taking
- Increased listening
- Challenging and confronting each other
- Issues of concern debated and grievances aired
- Failure regarded as learning opportunity
- Questioning of problem-solving and decision-making methods
- Review of team performances begins
- Head of school offers high level of facilitation and begins to share her/his own needs

**Mature team**

- Experimentation *plus* consolidation *plus* flexibility
- Bridges built with other teams inside and outside the school
- Willingness to learn from other teams
- Team leadership changes with the needs of the task
- Experiments with different forms of leadership
- Insularity and a sense of being better or different are resisted

- Team provides enhanced input into meeting wider needs of university
- Team functioning open to external evaluation
- Maximum use of individual and team energy
- Team and individuals are role models and change agents for other school teams
- High levels of support given to each other
- All members contribute equally to the facilitation of continuing team development

**Consolidating team**

- Agreed procedures and established ground rules by which the team and individual members operate
- Balance of experimentation and methodical working
- Team problem-solving and decision-making skills develop
- Team develops capacity to compensate for individual weaknesses
- Individuals' skills are developed
- Strengths are shared and successes are celebrated
- Team performance and objectives regularly reviewed and improvements implemented
- Increased levels of support given to each other
- Head of school gives moderate level of facilitation and enables other team
- members to develop facilitative skills

One modern UK university indeed used this development tool to good effect when it established a new academic structure based on Schools of Study. In doing so, it identified the characteristics that typified School Management Teams as they evolved through different stages (see Box 4.23). Can you identify where your team is in this cycle?

*7 Review progress regularly*

Finally, you should develop the habit of reviewing your team on a regular basis. This practice is as important for teams as it is for individuals. Use the signifiers listed below as a checklist to guide the review of your team's performance every quarter. Regular reviews – when combined with your understanding of team development and your support in helping your team to move through the different stages can have a significant impact on your team's effectiveness (Lencioni, 2005).

Checklist for reviewing your team's performance:

- Clarity and understanding of roles
- Achievement of the team's objectives
- Openness and confrontation
- Support and trust
- Cooperation and conflict
- Procedures

- Appropriate leadership
- Development of individuals
- Good relationship with other groups
- Good communications (West, 2012).

## Handling conflict

Team building is neither a smooth nor uncontested process. Not everyone is prepared to help or to give their consent. On the contrary, since people, psychologists tell us, do not really 'change their spots' between home and work – viz. they bring their 'unseen baggage' with them to work even if they believe they don't – you should not be surprised if emotions run high. Put another way, you need to recognise that conflict is an inevitable corollary of the team-building process. And you must anticipate and prepare to handle it (Lencioni, 2005).

We have already noted that conflict is not without merit; that it can be constructive as much as destructive and that good teams thrive on it. This is because conflict is used in such a way – as a source of energy and creativity – to allow new ideas to surface and to create positive forces for innovation and change. Handled constructively then, conflict enables individuals to examine their ideas and beliefs and to stretch their imagination, thereby providing the team with a wider range of options and the prospect of a more favourable outcome. Conflict is unhealthy, however, when it is either avoided or approached solely on a win/lose basis. Handled destructively in this way, conflict will manifest itself at best in a breakdown in communication and the deterioration in mutual trust and support, and at worst in open hostility and revolt. Either outcome would have a deleterious effect on your department, your institution and your own credibility. How then can you avoid such a scenario; how do you handle conflict constructively?

***1 By not being taken off guard. Conflict does not come out of the blue and you should be alert to the early warning signs – silence and withdrawal, anger, dissent and intransigence escalating to open dispute and meeting walkouts.***

Put another way, by understanding your departmental environment and knowing that conflict arises from individuals' 'unseen' (but often not unknown emotional) 'baggage' – i.e. their differing needs, objectives, values and beliefs; perceptions and motives; expectations and levels of commitment – you should be able to anticipate the degree to which prospective changes or issues are likely to be contentious; and to monitor them. Thus knowing how the conflict is developing you will be better equipped to deal with it.

Conversely, if you have a group in which everyone gets on well together and there are no public disagreements you should not delude yourself into thinking you have an effective team. Very often such teams are inhibited by *groupthink* – the reluctance to discuss individual member's ideas openly for fear of upsetting the group consensus. This condition not only may perpetuate poor decision-making and low performance, but also may conceal the cumulative build-up of individual frustrations and resentments.

***2 By recognising there is no single best way of handling conflict; or that the alternatives are limited solely to fight or flight. There are in fact five different ways in which we can approach conflict:***

*Non-confrontational strategies*

- Avoiding: 'leave well enough alone'
- Accommodating: 'kill your enemies with kindness'

*Control strategies*

- Competing: 'might makes right'

*Solution-oriented strategies*

- Collaborating: 'two heads are better than one'
- Compromising: 'split the difference'

## Box 4.24 The five ways to handle conflict and when to use them

| *Style management* | *Conflict approach* | *Characteristic context: the circumstances in which you should apply it* | *Assessment* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Competing<br>*'1 win, you lose'* | • Assertive and uncooperative<br>• Must win at all costs<br>• Entails 'standing up for your rights'<br>• Defending a position which you believe is correct | • When quick, decisive action is vital, e.g. in emergencies<br>• On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing; e.g. discipline, cost-cutting, enforcing unpopular rules<br>• On issues vital to the organisation's welfare, and when you know you are right<br>• To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour | • A power-oriented mode you should be careful in using<br>• Are the benefits worth the cost, possibly in lost goodwill? |

*(continued)*

*(continued)*

| *Style management* | *Conflict approach* | *Characteristic context: the circumstances in which you should apply it* | *Assessment* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 Accommodating<br>*'I lose, you win'* | • Unassertive and cooperative (the opposite of competing)<br>• Agreeable to others at the expense of oneself<br>• Entails selfless generosity<br>• Yielding to another's point of view when you would prefer not to | • When you realise that you are wrong – to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others and to show that you are reasonable<br>• When issues are more important to others than to you – to satisfy others and maintain cooperation<br>• To build up social credits for later issues<br>• To minimise loss when you are outmatched and losing<br>• When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important<br>• To help other develop by learning from mistakes | • Not a good strategy if used out of fear or with reluctance<br>• Good if the issue is more important to the other person than to you and you want to show goodwill |
| 3 Avoiding<br>*'I lose, you lose'* | • Unassertive and uncooperative<br>• Does not address the conflict<br>• Entails sidestepping or postponing an issue, or simply withdrawing | • When an issue is trivial, or more important issues are pressing<br>• When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns<br>• When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution<br>• To let people cool down and regain perspective<br>• When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision<br>• When others can resolve the conflict more effectively<br>• When the issues seems tangential or symptomatic of another more basic issue | • Fine to use when the issue is unimportant, but wrong if burying it stores up long-term trouble |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 Collaborating<br>*'I win, you win'* | • Assertive and cooperative (the opposite of avoiding)<br>• Working with others for mutual gain<br>• Entails digging into an issue, exploring disagreements, learning from one another and searching for creative solutions | • To find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised<br>• When your objective is to learn – e.g. to test your assumptions; understand the views of others<br>• To merge insights from people with different perspectives<br>• To gain commitment by incorporating others' concerns into a consensual decision<br>• To work through hard feelings which have interfered with an interpersonal relationship | • Overcoming hard feelings and assimilating different concerns and perspectives could lead to a superior solution when commitment to that is important<br>• It is not a good approach, however, when time is urgent |
| 5 Compromising<br>*'I win and maybe let you win more'* | • Intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness<br>• A middle ground between competing and accommodating<br>• Entails seeking an expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties | • When goals are moderately important, but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes<br>• When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals – as in management–trade union bargaining<br>• To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues<br>• To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure<br>• As a back-up mode when collaboration or competition fails to be successful | • This is not as good as many would have us believe. Both parties can be unhappy at giving up something<br>• Decisions are fuzzy |

Source: adapted from Thomas and Kilmann, 2002.

Each of us is capable of all five conflict-handling modes (Thomas and Kilman, 2002). Their effectiveness, however, is of course dependent both on the circumstances and the skill with which they are applied. You need to ensure therefore that – since all five are useful in some situations – you select the 'right' mode to fit the particular requirements of the conflict situation (see Box 4.24).

## Box 4.25 Potential risks of your own preferred style of handling conflict

| *Style* | *Questions you should ask yourself if you rely on this approach more or less than you should* | *Risk* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Competing | | |
| If *more:* | • Are you surrounded by 'yes' *men?*<br>• Do colleagues find it difficult to confess ignorance and uncertainties to you? | • You close yourself off from vital information.<br>• You fail to help those around you to learn. |
| If *less:* | • Do you often feel impotent in situations?<br>• Do you find it hard to take a firm stand, even when you see the need? | • You restrict your influence unnecessarily.<br>• You exacerbate the suffering and resentment of others. |
| 2 Accommodating | | |
| If *more:* | • Do you feel your ideas and concerns do not receive the attention they deserve?<br>• Do staff have a casual approach to fulfilling obligations? | • You lose influence, respect and recognition within the department.<br>• You lose the respect of other stakeholders. |
| If *less:* | • Do you find it difficult to build up goodwill with colleagues?<br>• Do colleagues consider you to be unreasonable? | • You miss opportunities which are important to others, if not yourself.<br>• You will not be able to garner support when you need it most. |
| 3 Avoiding | | |
| If *more:* | • Do others complain about getting your inputs on issues? Is your coordination impaired as a consequence?<br>• Does it often seem that others are 'walking on eggshells'?<br>• Are decisions on important issues made by accident rather than design? | • You become a 'lame duck'.<br>• You ignore issues that urgently need addressing.<br>• You end up with a poor decision and maybe the wrong one. |
| If *less:* | • Do you often find yourself stirring up hostility in others?<br>• Do you often feel swamped by a number of competing issues? | • You stoke up unnecessary conflict through your lack of discretion.<br>• You fail to prioritise what is really important. |
| 4 Collaborating | | |
| If *more:* | • Do you devote a disproportionate amount of time and effort to issues that do not warrant it? | • You waste your most precious resources time and energy. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Is your collaborative behaviour failing to elicit a collaborative response from others? | • You may be overlooking some cues defensiveness, impatience, conflict, competition. |
| If *less:* | • Do you find it difficult to see differences as opportunities for mutual gain?<br>• Are your colleagues uncommitted to departmental decisions and policies? | • You are being unduly pessimistic.<br>• You will not establish 'ownership' if their concerns are not addressed. |
| 5 Compromising | | |
| If *more:* | • Do you focus so much upon the practicalities and tactics of compromise that you sometimes lose sight of the 'bigger picture' – principles, values, objectives, institutional welfare? | • You compromise your own position. |
| | • Is the emphasis on bargaining and negotiating creating a cynical climate of gamesmanship? | • You sacrifice the merits of the issues being discussed. |
| If *less:* | • Are you embarrassed or too sensitive in bargaining situations to be effective?<br>• Do you find it difficult to make concessions? | • You lose an opportunity you can ill afford.<br>• You make a 'rod for your own back'. |

Source: adapted from Thomas and Kilian, 2002.

Knowing *when* and *where* to apply it is one thing. *Doing* it, however, is quite another. Each of us, for example, has our own set of social skills, our different predispositions and our preferred ways of handling discord. You need to recognise, however, that these may lead you to rely upon some approaches more, or less, than you should. To use them, that is, in situations which do not warrant it while neglecting other approaches which would be better suited. Taken too far, your predisposition could well have adverse consequences. Box 4.25 helps you to identify the potential dangers and the associated risks which you must counter. Again you should take heart, these warning signs and risks are not insurmountable – for they are a legacy of the styles you've learned or failed to learn in the past. There is no reason why you cannot develop anew.

***3 Through the adoption of an assertive rather than an aggressive or non-confrontational approach in those instances (i.e. the great majority which you will have to contend) in which your goal is conflict resolution.***

You should recognise that while there may be occasions when it is best to let things go (why risk losing the war for the sake of a minor battle?) and others where

prudence is the most appropriate course of action (Is the benefit really worth the amount of hassle?) the option that offers the greatest potential is that of facing the conflict rather than avoiding it or diffusing it. How you face it though makes all the difference. Tackling it aggressively – by: exaggerating your case; belittling and interrupting the other party; dogmatically refusing to make concessions and so on – may well reap you dividends but the effect will not be lasting, and you are more than likely to alienate your colleagues. Handling it assertively, on the other hand, offers you not only the best prospect of resolving the conflict but also in such a way as may benefit all.

Managing conflict assertively, or positively, means you should seek to do the following:

*Examine the cause*

- Work with the other parties.
- Attack the problem, not the people.
- Allow others to 'let off steam'.
- Listen actively, show you understand their views.
- Value openness.
- Speak in your own voice, do not adopt a passive voice (as in 'Others have been saying . . .').

*Clarify expectations*

- Focus on interests and compatible areas.
- List interests.
- Ask questions, don't make statements.
- Encourage questions.
- Be hard on the problem, not the people.

*Develop options for mutual gain*

- Divide the problem into smaller and more manageable units.
- Agree on common areas of interest.
- Clarify remaining areas of disagreement.
- Summarise the discussion periodically.
- Ask objectors to state their reasons and offer a better alternative.
- Look for new ways or thoughts; brainstorm; generate new ideas.
- Ask for members' preferences: what do you like? Rather than – what do you not like?
- Involve other parties (if helpful).

*Agree a course of action*

- Relate the problem to your work objectives.
- Ask for members' solutions.
- Recognise disagreement and acknowledge everyone's contribution.

- Present your preferred solution.
- Agree mutual actions.
- Explore ways of avoiding repetition of conflict.

All this, of course, sounds fine in theory but will be harder to achieve in practice. And particularly so since our reasoning is strongly affected by our emotions and most of us find it difficult to be completely rational when dealing with conflict. Nevertheless, provided you have, or are prepared to develop, the necessary advanced interpersonal skills – self-awareness, strong listening and observational skills, empathy and a fundamental belief that the other person's point of view may be right – as well as the ability to 'read situations', you are, or will be, well equipped to achieve control in conflict situations. Acquiring and maintaining such skills and applying the most appropriate conflict-handling mode will not be easy. And you may well need professional training to help you. Either way, there is no reason why, with practice and growing confidence, you should not succeed, or be denied the satisfaction that conflict resolution can bring – a job well done.