

# An Integrated Framework for Developing Leaders

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Developing senior leaders is necessary but insufficient for improving leadership across an organisation and restructuring alone won't resolve all challenges. Rather, leadership development and organisational development should be regarded as complementary and integrated activities comprising the development of leaders ('human capital'), leadership ('social capital') and organisational structures, systems and procedures ('organisational capital').

In this article I present a framework for leadership development, developed from an extensive review of leadership and organisational development literature and practice, which maps out *five main steps* for consideration at the individual and organisational level. From this perspective leadership development can be considered as a journey where the final destination remains somewhere beyond the horizon. What is most important is the process of travel, rather than the final destination. The processes of inquiry, experience, dialogue and reflection are key to moving forward and can provide a sense of location in relation to the past, present and the future. They challenge us to seek improvements, identify values, achieve a purpose and, most importantly, to connect the needs and aspirations of individuals with those of the organisation.

***Step 1 is direction setting*** and is underpinned by conducting dialogue, seeking understanding, and creating shared purpose. At an individual level, this involves identifying motivations, ambitions, identity, personal strengths and weaknesses. It is summed up by questions such as "who am I?" and "why am I here?" These can be deeply philosophical questions and may remain with the individual throughout the leadership development process if not their whole life. At an organisational level it involves identifying a common and connecting set of values, objectives, shared identity and strategic priorities. It is about how the organisation determines who/what it is and what it seeks to achieve. Such expressions may be captured in ethics or value statements, organisational mission and business plans and defines the ultimate purpose, and hence desirable form, of leadership within the organisation.

***Step 2 involves examining structure and processes*** and incorporates a review of systems, roles, and functions. At an individual level, this means focussing on formal and informal roles within and outside the organisation, career progression, development opportunities, networks and relationships within and beyond the organisation, and an in-depth and practical understanding of how the system works. Such a perspective should help reveal any barriers, conflicts, and sources of support for taking-on/developing a leadership role. At the organisational level, it involves reviewing how HR practices, resource allocation, communication processes, management and leadership approaches, and partnership working influences the distribution of power and resistance to change within the system.

***Step 3, leadership development, relates to the process of enhancing leadership capability of individuals and the wider organisation.*** For individuals, this involves

offering opportunities for learning, reflection and experimentation that builds on and extends prior experience. While an element of this may be about skills and knowledge acquisition it must also address the bigger questions and issues raised in Steps 1 and 2. At the organisational level, this requires the integration of organisational development, management development and leadership development. It may occur at several levels, through multiple channels, be associated with organisational change, and involve longer-term planning for staff development and succession. Ultimately the question here is “how can we facilitate an active engagement with leadership?”

***Step 4 is about learning transfer.*** Without application to, and implementation in, the work and life context of individuals and organisations, leadership development will fail to bear fruit. Thus individual leaders will require ongoing support, opportunities to apply their learning, and must be recognised as credible in front of their peers and colleagues. They need to take stock of their situation and discover how they can influence the system from their position. For organisations, the transfer involves embedding the learning within systems and processes, eliminating barriers, developing a sense of community and the establishment of new systems and processes where required. To be effective, leadership development requires long-term top-level support and investment and an ongoing commitment to supporting and developing participants.

***Step 5 requires evaluation and review.*** Without personal transformation, sharing the learning with others and a commitment to life-long learning individuals will not maximise on the value of their development. Likewise, at the organisational level there should be attempts to identify success, future needs and requirements and meaningful measures and indicators of impact and performance.

Each of these five steps influences the others, affects the context and helps define future directions and priorities. It is hoped that this framework offers some practical guidance to those charged with leadership and leadership development in organisations.

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