

3 ENGAGING MANAGERS

ENGAGING MANAGERS facilitate and empower rather than control or restrict their staff; they treat their staff with appreciation and respect and show commitment to developing, increasing and rewarding the capabilities of those they manage. (*Engaging for success*, MacLeod and Clarke 2009)

Without exception the chief executives and HR directors we spoke to highlighted the need to upgrade the skills of their managers to empower and engage those on the front line to work in new ways, as well as to become more comfortable in managing across organisational boundaries.

These public sector leaders are looking to embed culture change in their organisations through developing leadership skills among their managers, from the board down to the front line, that reflect their organisation's values and core purpose. In most cases they have developed or are developing a leadership capability framework which is closely aligned to the organisation's values (see box below).

These leadership skills are essentially progressive people management skills around self-awareness, listening, empathising, coaching, and knowing and understanding the individual. There was also a recognition that managers need situational leadership skills; for example, in the Police Force and Fire Service, uniform managers will need to flex between a more command and control style of management when responding to incidents and using a more participative approach to leading their people the rest of the time.

However, in most instances the leadership development activities are still at a relatively early stage. Many of the interviewees highlighted the importance of generating good-quality data from managers' performance appraisals and employee attitudes/engagement surveys to help build a clear understanding of overall leadership capability and to highlight areas of strength, weakness and development need.

Most of the CEOs and HR directors interviewed also expressed the belief that the development of such core 'leadership' skills should apply to all employees as a means of improving the quality of engagement between the front line and members of the public to improve customer service and facilitate innovation. With limited resources available for buying in external help, in most instances HR teams are themselves supporting a wide range of developmental activities, including for senior leaders. However, a couple of organisations, such as Sussex Police Force and Cornwall Council, have managed to secure budget to invest in leadership and management development.

Employee engagement workshops offer another vehicle for developing leadership capabilities. In many instances leadership development programmes are integral to organisational development activities and are regarded as mutually reinforcing:

'We had no funding for corporate leadership and development – all the money was tied up in professional and mandatory training. So we proved the value of investing in developing managers and members have given me a £1 million budget, which has enabled us to double the amount of training we do.'

HR Director, Cornwall Council

'Our values feed into the leadership behaviour we want from our managers. We run a series of activities. All managers have to go through the programme. They share the knowledge already in the organisation. It's free and

Values-based leadership

The CIPD Research Insight *Perspectives on Leadership in 2012* identified values-based leadership as an emerging strand of leadership theory which requires leaders to demonstrate honesty, integrity and strongly held ethical and moral principles. Values-based leadership models such as 'ethical leadership' suggest that leaders, by role-modelling ethical conduct, inspire others to behave and act similarly. In fact, within the academic literature, ethical leadership has been

shown to create positive outcomes in employees, including organisational commitment, willingness to exert effort, willingness to report problems, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviours (going the extra mile) and trust and satisfaction in management. A study by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) found that ethical leadership (measured in CEOs) was positively related to top management effectiveness and employee optimism about the future. This study also found that the key important elements of this form of leadership for CEOs are morality and fairness.

fluid – people are responsible for their own learning. The programme is cost-effective and largely dependent on internal resources. We are clear who is in a managerial role and we have a common manager profile.'

HR Director, Kingston Council

Leadership starts at the top

Almost without exception, the chief executives interviewed for this report have thought quite deeply about what is required of them as leaders and have very clear views of their own leadership style and how this sets the tone for the organisation.

Bruce McDonald at Kingston discusses different models of leadership, including Nelson Mandela and Winston Churchill, but says:

'The reality for me is more prosaic. The picture I put up at presentations on leadership is Alan Titchmarsh. It's about nurturing and sticking with things.'

McDonald also focuses on the need to give meaning to messages:

'What is leadership? I used to believe it was about strategy and some complaints-handling. Now I think I'm the organisational storyteller. No one else can do it. I need to communicate where we're going and continually make sense of what we're doing.'

David White at Norfolk reflects on the need for CEOs to develop personal resilience:

'This is my third CEO job. I become more myself the older I get and I have more strength and self-belief. Nothing fazes me.'

The model of leadership in the police and fire services is not so different from that in local authorities. It's about coaching, not telling people what to do, and developing a vision and values for the future on a collaborative basis. The old model of charismatic leadership is being set aside in favour of a model of 'distributed' leadership which focuses on supporting, developing and motivating staff. Tony Melville, the former chief constable of Gloucestershire Police Force, said:

'My personal take on leadership is that for the last 10 to 20 years policing has encouraged and rewarded what I would call a heroic leadership style.... I think that served us well, but I also think it is time to move on from that. My aspiration is that people would say of me that I had a much more collaborative style of leadership where I valued the wisdom that people's contributions can bring.'

It would be characterised as setting the direction but then really working with people about how to arrive at that destination – almost a sense of cheering people on and coaching them as much as working in a controlled and directive way.'

Similarly, the chief fire officer in Derbyshire, Sean Frayne, says:

'A lot of people still think managing people is about telling them what to do. From my experience it is about motivating, coaching them and encouraging them to be the best they can be. It's about continual professional development and enhancing personal skills. I expect crew managers to know what their watch managers are like as individuals and what their fire fighters are like. I also expect them to be approachable so that if someone has a problem they will feel comfortable raising it with their manager.'

The CEOs interviewed for this report recognise that a new model of distributed leadership is needed if service transformation is to become a reality. This principle applies across the public services and the success or failure of the Government's public service reform efforts will, to a large degree, depend on the extent to which this type of leadership can be developed and embedded.

What skills/behaviours do managers need to exhibit to support and embed public service transformation?

The change from delivery to commissioning roles will also require changes in career pathways for council staff and will require commissioners to come from a range of backgrounds. The transfer of public health from the NHS from April 2013 will also mean new responsibilities for council staff. These changes have also informed management development activities in some organisations, for example City of York Council:

'We've focused on developing project management and leadership skills. This is a key feature of our top-level leadership change programme. We are building a programme (now under way) using developmental activities, including secondments, volunteering, coaching and shadowing. We're helping people experience things through action learning and sharing problems, for example working with charity and voluntary sector organisations to bring it alive.'

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