

CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Foundations



“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done, because he wants to do it.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Leaders lead people and managers manage processes. This appears to be the most succinct and common distinction between the two titles, yet I find it difficult to define roles and responsibilities based upon titles, having coached managers who lead large teams, and some who have no-one reporting to them at all.

Whatever your current or anticipated title, I am making the assumption that you are about to have, or already have, a team of people reporting to you. Your first time managing and leading a team, whatever the size, can be one of the most difficult periods of adjustment in your career. Approaching leadership was recently described to me as preparing to “stand at the top of the pile and be shot at”, an interesting perception!

When you are new to leadership, your world will change from being self-centric to putting others first. Getting to grips with your new role will be easier, and more productive, as you develop the skills required to be a strong leader of people, not just a manager of processes.

1. SOFT SKILLS FOR STRONG LEADERS

It is natural to assume that technical expertise, hard work, and enthusiasm will help you to progress up the career ladder. Yes, these are all important, but they do not make a great leader. You might be able to get tasks completed, but do you have the necessary skills to deliver results through others?

Leaders are required to inspire and motivate others, to get *“someone else to do something you want done, because he wants to do it”*. In order to get people *“to do something”*, it helps to recognise what drives their behaviour, and to understand what compels them to take action, without you having to constantly push and cajole. This is where soft skills come in.

When you have the necessary soft skills, you will be able to influence those around you, to do what needs to be done. They will be more engaged, and will want to go the extra mile for you. Your unique range of soft skills will set you apart from those who have similar technical expertise and experience. You will be able to progress your career faster, and deliver results more easily, with the full support of those around you.

Soft skills will help you adapt to the constant changes around you, enabling you to become more creative, productive and resilient, and so better able to handle everyday challenges. When you have direct reports, you must master a wide range of management skills; managing the business, managing your team, and managing yourself.

So what is the difference between hard and soft skills?

Hard skills

Hard skills are the technical competencies and expertise which are required for your profession or industry. For example, a Human Resources Manager will require specific knowledge of employment law, recruitment and pensions. Hard skills are the result of tangible and measurable knowledge, gained from training and qualifications in a chosen field. Hard skills enable you to do your job by completing certain tasks, producing results and delivering outcomes.

Soft skills

Soft skills are your character traits, your interpersonal and communication skills. These are the visible behaviours, attitudes, and personal attributes that you demonstrate when interacting with others. They are more about who you are, rather than what you know, and are determined by your personality, values, beliefs, culture and experience.

Although we usually consider the term ‘soft skills’ in relation to how we communicate with others, the quality, and effectiveness, of our soft skills is reflected in how well we understand and communicate with ourselves. As a leader, before you can positively influence the behaviour of others, it helps to be aware of what drives your own behaviour.

Soft skills are difficult to evaluate, often being perceived as intrinsic. However, they can be developed if you have a strong desire and motivation to do so. If you are determined to be a great leader, then you will want to develop your soft skills.

2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Soft skills are often used to describe and measure a person’s Emotional Intelligence (EI). This term was thought to have been created in the 1990s by Peter Salovey and John Meyer. They described Emotional Intelligence as “*a set of four inter-related abilities that involves the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions*”. The roots of EI can be traced back to Robert Thorndike in 1937, who wrote about ‘Social Intelligence’, but it was Daniel Goleman who popularised the term with his book ***Emotional Intelligence – Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*** in 1996.

Goleman stated, “*If your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.*” To explore this topic further, a good starting point is to read ***Leadership: The Power of Emotional Intelligence*** by Daniel Goleman.

Emotional Intelligence is not about being soft and fluffy, it is about behaving and interacting with others in an effective way that helps get the job done with ease. Emotionally intelligent leaders

have finely-tuned people skills, and they lead with energy and motivation. Their teams perform better, contributing to employee engagement, productivity, and loyalty. They also have better relationships with their peers, their boss, other stakeholders in the organisation and customers.

The five components of Emotional Intelligence

1. Self-awareness – being aware of your own internal mood, your preferences, resources, and intuitions. This includes recognising your emotions and their effect on your behaviour, being aware of your strengths and limits, having a strong sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and knowing your capabilities.

2. Self-regulation – includes:

- Self-control – keeping strong and potentially disruptive emotions and impulses under control.
- Trustworthiness – maintaining standards of honesty and integrity.
- Conscientiousness – taking responsibility for your personal productivity and performance.
- Adaptability – being flexible when dealing with change.
- Innovation – being comfortable with new ideas, approaches and handling new information with ease.

3. Motivation – understanding what drives you to achieve your goals, or to take action. It includes:

- Achievement drive – stretching to meet or exceed a standard of excellence.
- Commitment – being aligned with goals of your team or organisation.
- Initiative – being ready to act when opportunities appear.
- Optimism – being positive and persistent in striving towards goals.

4. Social Awareness – picking up on what is going on for those around you.

- Empathy – sensing other’s feelings, and taking an active interest in their needs and concerns.
- Service orientation – anticipating, recognising, and meeting client’s needs.
- Leveraging diversity – developing opportunities through a variety of people.
- Political awareness – noticing a group’s emotional needs and relationships.

5. Relationship Management – motivating others, leading and developing them. It also includes collaborating, confronting and facilitating relationships, influencing and persuading, and creating group synergy in pursuit of collective goals.

Throughout the book we will be exploring many of the attributes, attitudes, and characteristics that are encompassed in emotional and social intelligence. These skills are essential as you transition through the different stages of your career, as well as being incredibly useful life skills.

Where are the gaps?

The first step to developing your soft skills, and to understand which areas need working upon, is to assess your perceived current level of skill. This is, of course, subjective, so you may want to ask some colleagues for their opinion. Remember though, that it is merely ‘their opinion’, and not necessarily fact, but do be open to the concept that there might be some truth in their perception.

Pause here and take out your journal. Follow the instructions in the next exercise to assess your soft skills, and then ask someone you trust to give you their view.

Record their comments in your journal to compare with your own, along with your thoughts as you reflect on the two sets of scores.

Exercise 1.1 - Soft Skills Assessment

Review the list of common leadership characteristics and attributes.

Assess how satisfied you are with your ability to demonstrate each characteristic or attribute.

Rate your assessment on a scale of 1 – 10 (10 = high).

Adaptable		Inclusive	
Assertive		Influencer	
Authentic		Intuitive	
Collaborative		Initiative	
Committed		Innovative	
Communicator		Integrity	
Compassionate		Listens	
Confident		Manages Stress	
Conscientious		Manages Time	
Courageous		Open	
Creative		Optimistic	
Decisive		Passionate	
Delegates		Patient	
Determined		Persistent	
Develops others		Positive	
Driven		Problem Solver	
Empathetic		Purposeful	
Energetic		Rapport Builder	
Flexible		Reliable	
Honest		Resilient	
Humble		Respects others	

Respects self		Self-esteem	
Self-accepting		Self-motivated	
Self-belief		Sensitive	
Self-confident		Sincere	
Self-control		Socially aware	
Self-disciplined		Takes responsibility	

1. Now, jot down in your journal which attributes you are most proud of and why.
2. Next consider which characteristics or attributes **you** think you need to develop.
3. How is this different to the views of other people?
4. Take the **top five attributes/skills** that you would like to develop, and describe in your journal what the difference will be, once you have enhanced these skills.
5. Record the date of your first assessment, and make a note to review your assessment at the end of the book, or after you have worked on some of these areas.