

# LEADERSHIP INJECTION

People need injections of leadership development at critical stages of their career. Here management writer and consultant, Anthony Landale, looks at the issue of leadership transition and focuses on a modular programme that has been helping Unilever's fast trackers to become the leaders they want to be.

Here's the reality ... there is no single, silver bullet on leadership. Rather, when it comes to leadership, there are critical moments in people's careers when they need intensive injections of leadership input in order to help them get to grips with exactly what is required of them when they are promoted into new roles.

Recognising these moments of transition, as leaders arrive at these career junctures, is fundamental both to those who have responsibility for people development as well as those who are managing the business. So let me clarify these transitional stages and briefly consider what challenges they present to leaders and developers alike.

## 1. Leading self and others

The first rung on the ladder, for those who are about to take on their first leadership position, is to get to know more about themselves and what they bring to the role. As such the training at this level helps would-be leaders to address those fundamental questions of personal values, core qualities and the impact they want to make on their colleagues and teams.

## 2. Managing resources

People who get promoted to the



next level of leadership typically have bigger roles, bigger teams and bigger targets. The essential challenge for leaders at this level is to develop those skills that will enable them to manage their resources effectively. This requires of leaders that they further develop their ability to get results through others and expand their leadership range.

## 3. Leading leaders

The next step up in the transition model can be seen as that role when leaders take on the responsibility of managing other people who have their own teams and direct reports. This is a senior executive role and requires a balance of both engagement with people as well as that ability to step back and allow others to deliver the results.

## 4. Leading the business

At this level, leaders no longer have any sort of functional role but, rather, have a focus on strategic activity and organisational skill. They are building an organisation which is worthy of people's commitment and ensuring that people in the business feel a sense of both stretch and ownership for what they are creating.

## 5. Leading the culture

At the top of the leadership pyramid are those leaders whose key responsibility is to create the environment in which talent can perform. This includes finding ways to engage hearts, mind and soul and can be summarised as the ability to manage and maintain the organisational culture.

So far so good, but there is another key question to ask here to do with how leaders, whatever their level of seniority, bring their leadership to life. What is it that makes one leader inspirational and another not so? Ian Lock is head of the leadership development consultancy Ian Lock Associates and his answer to this question is that in order for leadership to come alight three essential conditions need to be in place. First, inspirational leaders need a clear picture of where

they are heading. Second, they need to engage others in wanting to create a future together. And third they need to know how to ensure that their teams bring energy, commitment and velocity to the tasks in which they are involved.

"A leader will be at his or her best when they are connected to a future that they care about. This is how commitment and the spark of inspiration is generated," said Lock. "And that is also why leadership is associated with courage and boldness. "Powerful leadership always includes a vision that breaks through the limits of current reality and says 'not this, but that is how it could be'. "When a leader has that sort of vision then it is infectious and it almost compels people to join in. "But the vision is just the start of leadership. The ability to engage people is more than communication. It is about inviting people to co-invent, to own, to enrol themselves in a future that they believe in.

"And then there is the delivery aspect of leadership and this is where vision and engagement pay off. Effective leadership brings added zip to all those projects and plans and policies and procedures that are an essential aspect of corporate life. And leaders in delivery mode also hold people to what it is that they say they are going to deliver by committing with them to those results, and making sure they have the resources they need to succeed."

## Setting the foundations

To illustrate this model of leadership transitions let us consider a modular programme of leadership development, run by Ian Lock and The McLane Group, for fast track graduates at one of the UK's most successful companies, Unilever.

This bespoke programme was designed to help graduates at the beginning of their careers to



*No vision, no leader*  
*Charles Handy*

build a practical platform for their leadership. There is a lot of investment and expectation placed in these young high-achievers and Unilever has an established reputation for being at the forefront of leadership development thinking.

The approach that was developed with Unilever has been to take these fast trackers on a developmental journey that not only encourages them to look at high performance characteristics but which also gets them to consider a major question that will be relevant throughout their lives, namely 'what is it that they want to lead for?'

It is perhaps surprising how many people end up with ambitions to build a successful career in business, who haven't identified who they are in the process. Yet successful leadership begins with a deep enquiry into this issue. More specifically participants on this programme are invited to consider the following questions:

► How they can bring the best of themselves to the role? Leadership isn't a set of skills to apply. Nor does the authority of leadership rely on positional power. The big insight that participants get here is that, as well as everything they know, what they need to bring and communicate in their leadership is a real

sense of the person that they want to be

► What values underpin their leadership?

This is often a breakthrough moment for participants on the programme and a real stretch for those who have, until this moment in their careers, only judged success through the lens of educational achievement. What would it be like, they are asked, if they could bring more of their passion and drive into their work? What difference would it make if their working life was fulfilling?

► How do they limit themselves?

We all limit ourselves to an extent; but too often we dismiss as unattainable those futures that might otherwise spark our inspiration. Finding out what beliefs we hold that cause us to think, act and behave in the way we do is a powerful catalyst for change and helps people to make dramatically different choices in the way that they lead.

Ian Lock designs and leads many programmes and he suggests that this programme confronts people with the reality of their leadership. "What we have been doing on this programme is getting people to examine how they show up as leaders. This includes looking at all their assumptions and opinions and ideas and seeing if these are helpful when it comes to being the leader they want to be.

"People often find that there is a gap between who they being and the person they want to be and while that isn't always a comfortable inquiry it gives people a powerful lever for change. They can continue to behave in the same way as usual or act in line with the future they want to create. This perspective gives people a clear sense of the choice and responsibility they have for their own lives."

What Ian Lock is pointing to here is an insight that is also increasingly used in psychology, namely that major transformations do

not come from building new skills or competencies but, rather, from people changing the lens through which they are looking at themselves and the world about them. But does this programme achieve results? Does it prepare people for the leadership challenges ahead?

According to Kevin Havelock, Chairman of Unilever Foods UK, having the opportunity to think about who you want to be as a leader and being given the space to explore and practise what that means is extraordinarily valuable. "I only wish that I had had the opportunity to go on a programme like this when I was starting out on my career," he said. "Knowing what your values are, what impact you want to have and what gets in the way ... these are core issues for leaders. We all have to know what we stand for and we have to be able to put ourselves across in a way that is both authentic and engaging."

## Relational intelligence

This focus on fierce self-awareness as an essential leadership characteristic is one which takes some leaders a little getting used to but there is another distinguishing characteristic of this approach which is also worth drawing out and that is its emphasis on the value of relationships.

Ian Lock explained why they give relationships such priority: "The best leaders win commitment from the people they lead - and this is totally different from



*"When I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ and emotional intelligence as ingredients of excellent performance, emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels"*  
**Daniel Goleman**

grudging compliance. This ability to win commitment requires that leaders also know how to engage deeply. It also requires of them qualities such as integrity, openness and empathy."

"This can be a surprise to leaders. After all most of us have been educated to think that it is our intellectual capacity and our thinking prowess that will get us promoted at work. But, as Daniel

Goleman has discovered in his work on emotional intelligence it is our capacity for interaction and personal engagement that is even more critical than our cognitive and analytical skills."

In this context the model on how relationships underpin leadership performance is an interesting and relevant one - see panel opposite.

What is represented here, at the peak of the triangle, is the evident reality that all organisations exist in order to achieve results. Without results they will cease to exist. And, of course, in order to achieve these results people in these organisations have to take actions. Furthermore, in efficient organisations these actions will have occurred out of some sort of planning process.

It is in these three areas that organisations tend to focus. This is the arena of operational activity and it rightly takes a great deal of time and energy.

However, planning comes out of having vision and here we are entering the territory of leadership. Indeed it is at the vision stage where many companies and most leaders stop. But vision is typically set within an existing mindset. It comes with assumptions. It takes place within the box. Beneath, or beyond, vision there is another conversation to be had where anything might exist, where we have broken through the existing context and that is 'possibilities'. And yet we can only talk about possibilities when we have big enough relationships for these conversations to take place. If you have a small relationship then, quite simply, you won't share your ideas or your creativity. Vision will then be limited and so, of course, will be the subsequent plans, actions and results.

## Breakthrough programmes

Relationships are core to all Ian Lock Associates' programmes,



whatever the seniority of participants. Why? Because relationships are not something that you learn just once and then put aside.

"For most people, relationships are not the area they have been trained in," said Lock. "People feel more certain and more in control when they are in 'intellectual' territory and that is why they tend to operate from there. But engaging leaders also need emotional and spiritual energy to lead others."

So Lock and colleagues are suggesting that if leaders want to become more effective then relational intelligence is an area they will need to practise and refine throughout their careers. And there are many different ways in which leaders can learn to build such skills. On some programmes they will learn about how to power up their listening and speak straight. On others they will learn about coaching and empowering teams. Then there is the relational work that helps leaders see the gap between the impact they want to make and the impact that they do make or the relational work

that is all to do with having the right conversations at the right time on a delivery project. Said Lock: "We have run programmes and provided coaching for leaders at every level - helping them to develop their performance, ensuring they perform in their first 100 days of a new role and, in the case of Board level programmes, providing the input to help them transform their business. In every case we help leaders to see that breakthrough is achievable when they open themselves up to new ways of thinking and behaving."

So what's the next step for organisations which want some breakthrough leadership input? Ian Lock Associates' answer here is to start with some powerful questions. For example:

- ▶ what is your organisation's declared future or vision for leadership?
- ▶ how many leaders do you have who are committed and engaged to a future they really care about?
- ▶ what training input can help your leaders to make the shifts that they and the business requires?

Such questions are designed to provoke new thinking. All organisations depend on their leadership and know that the quality of their leaders underpins their future success. Knowing how to get leaders to be aligned in themselves and with the business - that's what breakthrough leadership programmes are all about.

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*Both in his coaching and in his programmes Ian Lock has made an extraordinary contribution to my leadership.*

*He has helped me to realise the impact I have on others around me and has highlighted key opportunities for my growth. He has also helped me to get to grips with the kind of leader I want to be both for myself and the organisation.*

*Stephane Jacqmin  
Level 4 Leader, Unilever*

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## START YOUR LEADERSHIP ENQUIRY TODAY

Ian Lock Associates has a range of leadership programmes that relate to the transitions that leaders experience in their careers. These include:

**Leadership foundations:** A first level leadership programme based around how people can break through their own limitations and start to inspire and lead others

**Running the business:** A three day programme designed around a business simulation in order to mirror the business and team issues that leaders have to face. Ideal for building practical skills and developing culture

**Leaders in transition:** A high intensity leadership programme for executive leaders. Designed for those who want to ensure they make the maximum impact in the first 100 days of a new role

**Igniting teams:** A turnaround programme for organisations which need to change culture and accelerate performance improvement. Designed for senior leaders, teams and businesses

**High performance leadership:** A programme based around a 36 hour business project and designed for managers who need to practise ways in which they can harness all their resources and inspire their people.

**For more information**  
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