ELEMENT 4b

People & Organisational Development

BEING A LEADER

Takes responsibility and acts with integrity based on strong self-awareness and continuous reflection

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Leadership – Boundaries

If you manage a team you are a leader. Team members look to you for decisions, colleagues look to you to take responsibility for the output of your team, the organisation relies on you to hold its perspective in view. For example, there may be times when a specific directive may seem irrelevant to your staff, and a waste of time, but crucial to the organisation in order that it fulfil its legal obligations to all its employees. As a manager you have an organisational role as well as a personal and professional role.

An engaged leader knows the extent and boundaries of their roles and inhabits the leadership space – their presence is felt.

When this is clear and consistent, the boundary between the leader and follower is trusted and the team can concentrate on the task. When the leader is disengaged or inconsistent or absent, the team become uncertain and the system becomes agitated – focus is lost and performance dips, sometimes there are problems between team members – work becomes a place one would rather not be.

Even high-functioning teams can experience this when a manager is unexpectedly absent. In the absence of information, a team will spend energy trying to feel safe enough to get on and will not settle until the leadership role is filled in some way. There may be enough leadership skill and experience in team members who are willing to step up temporarily, or the organisation may send someone in to take charge, and the boundaries become clear again. This will only work for any period of time if there is clarity around the manager's absence. If not the leadership boundary will not hold and the agitation will continue.
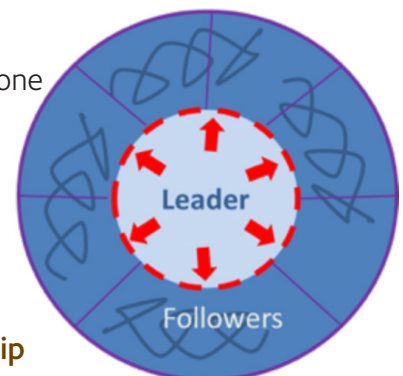
An Organisational System

Work gets done   Work does not get done
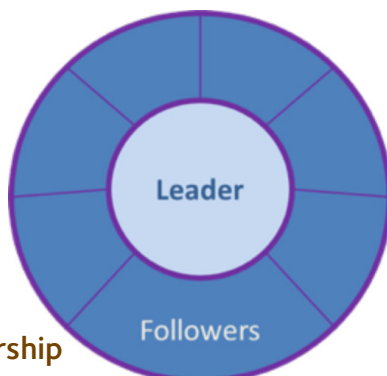
Engaged Leadership   **Uncertain Leadership**

From Eric Berne's theory of systems in Structure and Dynamics of Organisations and Groups (1963)

ELEMENT
4b

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR MANAGERS
Takes responsibility and acts with integrity based
on strong self-awareness and continuous reflection

ACTIVITY ≫

Self-Reflection Activity
Think of a time you worked in a high-functioning team.
How did you know your manager was in charge?

What was clear and what could you rely on?

Think of being part of a less well functioning team; what was different?

When are you happy to inhabit your own leadership role – what are you doing?

When do you find it more difficult? What do you do or not do instead?

Can you think of a time when you have avoided 'stepping up'? What happened in the team?

Complete the Reflection sheet