

*'We not I'
Thoughts on
Leadership
in practice
– a personal view*

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About the Author

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Our start point

1. I have written this guide to give you, as a current or potential leader, an insight into some of the strands of leadership upon which you can hang your own thinking and experiences. The series of thoughts I include have been formed from my own experiences, both good and bad. Those experiences shaped my own development as I progressed through my military and business careers.
2. Command and leadership was central to being an effective military leader, with the ability to manage resources to achieve the intended aim and above all, to motivate and lead people. On moving across to the commercial world, I discovered that command and leadership had its own part to play in giving the edge and polish to leadership in business.
3. In a tough economic environment, strong, sound and effective leadership, coupled with robust management, is vital to giving a business the edge, to beating the competition and to achieving successful growth. I hope this guide helps you do just that.

The need for Leadership

1. The need for leadership appears to be common sense but that very requirement is so often forgotten, or applied in such a way, it only serves to provide a leaderless environment. All organisations, no matter how small, require leadership to provide direction, purpose and a sense of belonging. This applies across the full spectrum of organisations, whether a local committee or a major, global corporate. Without it organisations will struggle and ultimately fail.

2. Whilst this may seem obvious, in so many instances I discover organisations which say they have leadership in place but are confusing it with management, much of it learnt on courses. Such confusion is common-place and can have a negative impact on the success of an organisation. The most successful companies consist of people who are motivated, enthusiastic and determined to do their best for the organisation. It is leadership which creates that environment. Management has a part to play but without sound leadership, success is elusive.

3. My experiences in the British Army taught me much about leadership, how to apply it and what style was appropriate for which circumstances. With commanding officers of regiments changing every two years or so, it was illuminating to see just how the fortunes of an Army unit could alter very quickly, depending upon whether or not a commanding officer was a good and respected leader. Equally, this is just as true in business. So what is leadership?

What is Leadership?

1. A simple definition of leadership is the ability to inspire trust and confidence in those you lead, such that they follow you, knowing that you will do the right thing. Or put it another way, strong leadership persuades those led to do willingly those things which they otherwise would not want to do! But it is more complex than that - inevitably.
2. Leadership is very much a personal thing and how you apply it is for you to decide, depending upon your own character and how you feel others perceive you - but more of that later. There are a number of contradictory views about whether or not leadership can be taught. I have been on a number of 'Leadership' courses during my career but none of them really taught me to be a leader - they provided principles to follow and examples from which to learn. It was for me and others on the courses to use those principles and examples to reinforce and enhance personal attitudes towards leadership and put them into practice.
3. Some people clearly found difficulty with this process, as their own characters were such that adjusting to the demands of leadership was not easy. Naturally reticent people lacked the confidence to be the leader in all circumstances and discovered that they were best leading small groups or as a team player. Some of the more overt characters found it difficult to adjust their dominant style to be the leader people wanted to follow out of trust rather than fear. I will address that trait later in this guide.

4. So in sum, leadership is a personal thing. You can be taught the principles and study examples of other leaders, both good and bad - there are lessons to be learnt from each. How you then apply those principles and lessons is down to you, the character you are and the degree of self-confidence you possess. Only you can determine what type of leader you are and how it will influence the business you are in.

5. Whatever your current views on leadership may be, it is vital that you remember one thing. Your actions as a leader will have a direct impact on your organisation's prime resource - the people on whom you and the organisation depend for success.

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Leadership is concerned with getting people to do things willingly. Successful leadership is impossible without the leader's total engagement in the task in hand and to the group committed to his care for its discharge.

**General Sir John Hackett - BBC radio broadcast - February 1968**



# Case Study 1

**Setting.** Northern Ireland in 1972, serving as an infantry platoon commander. It is late afternoon in December and I am leading a 4 man section along the main road through a Republican housing estate. My section is on the left of the road and my platoon sergeant is with his section on the right. Two other sections are 50 yards behind us. We are approaching some shops where a few shoppers are braving the cold for some last minute Christmas shopping before the shops shut at 5 pm.

**Action.** An IRA sniper opens fire on my section from a dark alley way to my left. One of my soldiers is killed and another hit in the ankle. We immediately go to ground behind a low wall, dragging the wounded soldier with us. Only two of us are now fit to fight.

**Response.** The wounded soldier, a large, tough but gentle Corporal, 10 years my senior and arguably more experienced than me with only 4 years' service under my belt, is lying next to me, while I am attempting to pinpoint the sniper and return fire without endangering shoppers. At that moment two more IRA gunmen open up on us with automatic fire. Bullets are striking the wall and the pavement around us - they clearly have no regard for the safety of the shoppers in their desire to kill us. At that moment my gentle Corporal turns to me and asks: 'what do we do now sir?'

**Lessons.** As I am able to write this we clearly fought our way out! But that one question focused my mind starkly. As a leader you are responsible for your team, no matter what the circumstances. No matter your own individual feelings or pressures (frankly, I was frightened), you have to put those fears away and concentrate on how you can achieve the desired result - which in this case was to get my men to safety and ideally to kill some IRA gunmen at the same time. It is no time to reflect or discuss - you have to weigh up the risks and act! I got my act together, training took over and we achieved a successful result, losing no more men and giving a good account of ourselves in reducing the terrorist threat. A leader must be able to think quickly and decisively, assessing and weighing risks, then communicate his intent clearly and simply. That way, those in your team will know exactly what is required of them.



# Leadership and People

1. Without committed, motivated and enthusiastic people, organisations at best will stagnate and make little progress, and at worst will become moribund and fail. In the complex commercial world, businesses should be forward-looking and innovative in order to maintain momentum. They need well-led people to do that.

2. Some would say that people can be motivated by financial incentives to meet targets and deliver what is required. I would not disagree with that view. But where I do differ is that whilst financial inducements have a part to play, there is a real risk that such incentives on their own will simply create a culture of self-centred individualism, with little thought for the overall objectives of the business. There is no substitute for people knowing their place in the organisation, working together to achieve objectives, along a path set by a thoroughly researched strategy, with a trusted leader at the head.

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Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of his men is one element of leadership that a leader can hardly possess too fully, for its results are always positive and never negative. From close observation of his unit he can often predict with accuracy how the entire organisation will react. He can thus not only forecast but even create reaction and conduct.

Colonel Munson US Army - Leadership for American Army Leaders - 1954

3. It is here that I turn again to my hard-won experiences in the Army. An Army commander, no matter at what level, needs to be confident that he or she can move forward knowing that the unit is following. This is achieved by bringing together a number of complementary factors:

- a. Knowing your team: their individual circumstances, personalities, likes, dislikes, fears, motivating factors, health - in other words, what makes them tick.
- b. Setting a clear strategy with clear objectives, which is well-understood by all.
- c. Ensuring that your team know you, how you operate, the standards you require and how you react in difficult circumstances.
- d. Equipping your team with the right tools for the job, whether it is the skills they need or the resources they require.
- e. Trusting people to do their jobs and conduct themselves without constant, time-consuming and stifling supervision.

4. With these factors integrated across the organisation, a successful leader can use people in the most cost effective way, which in military language is termed 'Mission Command'. In essence this can be characterised by:

- a. Setting a clear strategy, communicated and understood by all. At Annex A on Page 28, I describe a practical way of creating and communicating a strategy.
- b. Clearly and simply defining objectives.
- c. Defining operational boundaries.
- d. Giving people the freedom to achieve those objectives, operating within the set boundaries and only seeking agreement if circumstances change to such an extent that the boundaries or the means of achieving the objectives are likely to be breached or radically altered.

5. Achieving this situation will require the training of your team in this different culture, giving your people the confidence to act in this way and trusting you to support them. Some will fail the first time but this should not be a reason not to do it.

6. You should accept failure and ensure people learn from it - not penalise them to such an extent that confidence and trust is eroded. Clearly if individuals do not learn and fail again, then it is time for more rigorous personal development of those concerned.

7. Implicit in this approach is the confidence to assess and take risks. If you are to have confidence and trust in your people and vice versa, then the attitude to risk should be positive. Any venture, to be successful, will have risks. How the risks are assessed, mitigated then accepted requires an understanding of the nature of the task, of what will be required to carry it out and of the desired outcome.

8. Taking risks, properly assessed, greatly assists the achievement of the objectives. It speeds up decision making and generates competitive momentum. It is in these circumstances that I always apply the OODA loop principles to provide the foundation:

- a. **O**bserve what is happening.
- b. **O**rganise the factors in your mind.
- c. **D**ecide what you are going to do and how to do it.
- d. **A**ct!

9. Being risk averse can prolong decision making, introduce unnecessary complexities and add considerable costs. When this occurs, then invariably you lose sight of the intended outcome and price yourself out of the market. Such actions are not conducive to the principles of Mission Command outlined earlier in this section. But if you persevere then you will create a team which is not afraid to take measured risks and will consist of innovative people who will take a decision and ask for forgiveness afterwards, rather than not make any decisions until they have permission from you.

10. In the latter case the opportunity will usually have been lost to the competition. A military commander who waited for permission before acting would be overrun by the enemy and lose the initiative - the analogy is clear! With this change in culture completed, you will have created the environment for success - highly motivated, knowledgeable and confident people with implicit trust in their leader to support, guide and encourage them, knowing that it is a team effort from top to bottom - 'we not I'.

11. Above all, as a leader you should - no must - remember one thing above all else: any decision you take will have an impact on the people you lead. On the battlefield, the wrong decision can result in the death of some of your soldiers. Whilst not as radical as that in business, the wrong decision can have a life-changing effect on someone's career, salary or target-related bonus. So think about what you are going to do, assess the risks, then act accordingly. With a little thought and with all factors considered, you invariably will do the right thing.

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The leader must prove himself conspicuously careful in the matter of forage, quarters, water supply, outposts and all other requisites; forecasting the future and keeping ever a wakeful eye in the interest of those under him ..... and share with his men the profits of success.

**Xenophon - his writings - 4th Century BC**

## Case Study 2

**Setting.** The company is bidding for a major, global contract with one of the principal Government Departments. I am the MD of the division in which area this work sits and success will grow revenues and profits significantly, as well as removing a major competitor from this segment of the market. The bid is seen by the company as a 'must win' - the pressure is on!

**Action.** The bid is progressing but difficulties are starting to arise as risks escalate and appear insurmountable - rather than accept risk, the risk averse nature of the company requires every risk to be mitigated. This leads to rapidly growing costs and over-engineered solutions. Despite being a 'must win', resources are in short supply and team members are removed by their business units elsewhere in the company to work on other opportunities. Under growing pressure and stress, the bid director becomes increasingly dictatorial and people refuse to work for him. He is replaced. The company directors are increasingly concerned about cost and whether this bid can be won at a competitive rate. My immediate superior goes on holiday leaving me in charge with instructions to win the bid.

**Response.** I ask the new bid director to do a review of progress and to let me know the state of the bid. It is clear that costs are spiralling, resources are inadequate and there is no flexibility in the solution to enable development as future Government demands change - as they undoubtedly will. I am now of the view that we cannot be competitive on price to beat an agile competitor and, despite the significant amount of costs incurred, we cannot win. I go to the Board and tell them I am going to pull the company out of the competition. Reluctantly they agree but concede that it is the right decision. When I tell my boss on his beach holiday he is furious but my decision stands.

**Lessons.** Overall, the story of this bid points to a failure of leadership at every level and a failure to understand the requirements and set a realistic, achievable objective. In sum:

- a. Despite declaring this bid a 'must win', the company leadership failed to ensure that this was clearly understood and give the right priority to resource allocation.
- b. There was a real aversion to the acceptance of risk leading to escalating costs. Leaders must be prepared to accept risks, provided they are clearly defined and the consequences understood.

- c. The bid director was under increasing pressure and lacked support from those above him. I should have stepped in earlier but didn't, assuming that he knew what he was doing. This was my failure to really get to know him so that I could help him through the bad times.
- d. When this bid started to fail the company directors should have stepped in earlier to stop it. They didn't so I took the lead and made the unpopular decision - but ultimately the right one. There are times when courage and conviction to do what is right are paramount.

This bid was missing the prime ingredients of clear leadership: well-understood strategic intent; clear objectives; clear communication; adequate resourcing; assessed and mitigated risks; knowledge of the team; strong leadership.



## Serving to Lead

1. 'We not I' implies that a leader is also a member of the team, creating success and momentum. It is not about the cult of ego but about operating together, sharing success and failure. In essence, a leader is in place to serve the team. I have already emphasised the requirement for you as a leader to support your people. You are there to provide for their needs and to equip them properly to do the jobs required of them. Leading is not simply about directing. It is about providing for all the needs complex human beings have and moulding them to be successful in their appointed roles.
2. It is a misnomer that in the Army, commanders simply have to direct and soldiers will jump to do their bidding. Nothing could be further from the truth. That might have been the case in the pre-20th Century Army when fear of punishment held sway but when the Army became increasingly professional during and after the Second World War, so leadership had to become more understanding of those being led and the part they had to play, then manage the complexities of the individuals making up the team.
3. Providing for basic human needs to ensure that people were comfortable in their environment and comfortable with their abilities was an act of service. As a leader it is your task to do just that - to serve the people you lead. Unless you do so, the respect you require to enable you to have their trust, and the respect they deserve from you, will not be forthcoming. Serving those in your team is a much misunderstood but essential characteristic of leadership.

# Characteristics and Styles of Leadership

## Characteristics of Leadership

1. Whilst styles of leadership can vary, depending upon the individual and the prevailing environment, the characteristics of a good leader tend to be constant. I have observed many leaders in action, both Army and business leaders and have both benefited and suffered from the experience! But I have gained a practical view on characteristics of the good leader. In no particular order these are:

- a. Know your job and those of your team. That way your people will have confidence in you.
- b. Be a good communicator. Tell people what is going on, leave them in no doubt what you require, keep them informed.
- c. Have personal integrity. Be straight with people, do not mask the truth, do not fabricate.
- d. Set high personal standards to be emulated by your team but be constant in your approach so that you enhance trust. Do not blow hot and cold.

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There is one trait in the character of a leader that above all things really counts. Being straight. No amount of ability, knowledge or cunning can ever make up for not being straight. Once those under him find out that a leader is absolutely straight in all his dealings with them they will love him as their leader, trust him, work for him, follow him

Field Marshall Sir William Slim - Radio broadcast - 1956

e. Have courage. In a military sense such a trait is essential. It is no less so in business - you may not have to endure enemy fire (though at times it may feel like it!) but many decisions you will take will be life-changing for your team. Take them boldly but well-considered. They may not always be popular but try not to flinch from doing the right thing.

f. Support your team in what they do for you - you are responsible for them. Protect them from the policy 'noise' coming from the upper levels of the organisation to allow them to get on with their jobs unhindered - following the strategy you have put in place.

g. Ensure your people know how they are performing both through formal appraisals and informally as appropriate. A quiet word of encouragement will be very much appreciated by a hard-pressed individual. Provide development opportunities to enable people to grow and enhance skills and capabilities.

h. Avoid the use of 'I'. You may be the leader but everything is a team effort and the use of 'We' encourages that. 'We not I' should be your watchword.

2. These characteristics are within the reach of everyone: you may have to work at some of them. Having assessed your own character, through formal personality assessments, talking to your colleagues (which can need courage!), or by candid self-examination, decide where you need to focus. The result will be worth it - for both your team and you. Then you will be able to concentrate on what style of leader you are, or would like to be.

Leadership Styles

3. How you lead others is very much related to your character and your character is a product of the environment in which you developed and shaped yourself. No matter what style you adopt, at its core is you! You will have observed or worked for people in leadership positions with many different traits: self-effacing and humble; loud and extrovert; calm and self-contained; measured and thoughtful.
4. You will also have observed the bully in action. A bully often suffers from insecurity arising from a lack of capability. I have worked for a bully and the atmosphere in the team was not conducive to success. The fact that he was reasonably successful was created by fear: fear of failure; fear of retribution. He did not realise that he was a bully - he thought that he was a robust, charismatic leader. If he had listened to advice, as a wise leader should, he would have been the better for it. His legacy was a demoralised team badly in need of rebuilding and individual development.
5. To be truly successful you should examine your own character and work out how you would like to position yourself. As a leader you are there to serve your team, to direct them, to manage them, guide them and provide for them. You will need 'presence', so you are recognised as the leader, confidence to accept responsibility, the ability to recognise the strengths of others - strengths you may not have - so you can weld the team together to be a capable and effective entity. Leaders who are calm in a crisis, know what they want and can communicate clearly and succinctly, tend to be the most successful and respected.

6. The environment in which you find yourself will often dictate how you act. When you and your team are in a tight spot then 'leadership from the front' will be appropriate. Even if you feel unsure this will be no time to show that - personal courage will be needed. On other occasions, when facing tight deadlines for example, it will time to roll up the sleeves and lead by example - 'we not I'.

7. Then there is always that moment when you need to pass on unpopular or ill-informed decisions from those above you. As a leader you should never use the phrase: 'we must do it because he/she said so'. Any decision from above must appear to come from you, but couched in your terms, using such words as: 'this is what is to happen and this is how we will do it' - or similar. How you convey an unpopular instruction from your superior should be tempered by words of mitigation so that the instruction can be enacted in a sensible way without casting blame - this can be tough on you as your team will know exactly where it has come from!

8. There will also be times when you will need to be tough on others and exert your authority strongly. At other times you will need to be encouraging, persuading or cajoling. But remember, whatever the circumstance, the inner leader will always be you and the standards and values you have set yourself.

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A leader has got to learn to dominate the events which surround him; he must never allow these events to get the better of him; he must allow nothing to divert him from his aim; he must always be on top of his job, and be prepared to accept responsibility.

**Field Marshall The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein - Military Leadership**

## Case Study 3

**Setting.** In the rank of major, I am the commander of a communications unit in Germany. I have been in post for over a year, so am pretty confident of my abilities and standing. My unit is capable and I feel that I am well-liked by my soldiers. It is summer, the days are long and hot and we are on manoeuvres in the flat region of Germany, bordering on Denmark. The brigade commander to whom I report is new in post and has a fearsome reputation!

**The Action.** For almost two days, the brigade headquarters had failed to provide communications for the brigadier to command his forward battle groups. It was my unit's task to provide those communications and the responsibility was mine. My senior team assured me that they had done all in their power to establish communications but to no avail. They informed me that the equipment was not designed to work over such dry, flat ground. I accepted their word.

**The Response.** Angry with sheer frustration, the brigade commander took me to one side and we sat together on a pile of old tyres while he vented his frustration. I thought that my career was about to come to an untimely end but his last words were: 'sort it out and never let it happen again'. My respect for him increased ten fold and my relief was palpable!

**The Lesson.** I had failed. I had assumed that my team were on top of their jobs and had not questioned their advice and actions. I had become complacent. They in turn, when faced with flat terrain (most of their experience had been gained in typically hilly German countryside well-suited to good communication), assumed it was the failure of the equipment to cope with different circumstances - but it was a failure of leadership and ingenuity. My senior team had become complacent and lazy. Above all, we had let our soldiers down, I had let my soldiers down. In sum:

- a. Never again did I take things at face value.
- b. I ensured that I knew my senior team and the individuals in it - their capability, enthusiasm, sense of urgency, leadership qualities, level of ingenuity.
- c. I trained them to think laterally, take risks and have courage to try different things, no matter how novel or untried.
- d. I ensured that I knew their roles better than they did and that I stayed on top of it. And I made certain that they knew that I was on top of it.

We never failed again. We became a strong team.

# Leadership and Values

1. In the last section I raised the issue of integrity, of being honest and straight in dealing with those in your team. Such a personal value is so important in any activity in which you may be engaged. Dishonesty is quickly discovered and once revealed, a leader no longer has the respect required to do the job.

2. This is not an essay on morality but I would simply say that to serve those in your team in the best possible way and to achieve the objectives and outcomes you have set, you should treat others and interact with them in the way you would wish to be treated. A leader who possesses the values of integrity, courage, regard for others, respect for equality and diversity, will earn respect in turn and be the better for it. If I can sum up values in one phrase, it is this: treat people as human beings - not numbers on a balance sheet - people with the needs, desires, fears and complexities we all possess.

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In looking for someone to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. But the most important is integrity, because if they don't have that, the other two qualities, intelligence and energy, are going to kill you.

Warren Buffet - American businessman and writer on leadership.

Leadership and Management

1. In the minds of some people leadership and management can become confused. Management is not leadership but a manager without the ability to lead is ineffective. Similarly, a leader without a grasp of management can be dangerous!
2. In the previous sections of this manual we opened up the inner workings of leadership. I suggested that to be a leader you need to grasp the skills of motivating and inspiring your team and equipping them to do willingly the job you have set. That very act of equipping your team is management - a subset of leadership - but a very important subset.
3. For any operation or venture to be successful, the resources to support the achievement of the objective require to be marshalled and used well. In military terms, a successful campaign, battle or operation needs a number of resources, such as: intelligence - to determine where the enemy is and what its state is; armour, infantry, engineers, artillery, airpower, signals and logistics to provide the Force necessary to do the job; training to ensure that the Force is ready and prepared - and so on. Warfare is a complex business - get it wrong and people will die needlessly.

4. But in the commercial world, life is no easier or less complex, but hopefully no-one will die if you get it wrong! Resources still need marshalling: intelligence on the client and the competition; people on the Board, on the Bid Team or in the Project Team with the right skills and experience; the budget within which to manage. Whilst a manager can coordinate these resources, it is the leader who provides the judgement on how to use them where, when and in what manner. Judgement comes with practice and making mistakes from which you learn - there is no substitute for this - it cannot be taught on a management course. Practice, trial and error is how you develop and grow as a leader who will be respected and followed. I continue the exploration of these leadership issues at Annex B - Creating an effective Bid Team.

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You have got to have judgement. You have got to be able to assess values, and assess them quickly and under difficult circumstances, and that calls for judgement, and judgement is only learned by experience and practice. You will never learn to judge and to assess value if you are afraid of making mistakes - never. So don't be afraid of making mistakes. Don't be afraid of errors of judgement. You will have them alright. They come to all of us. You have to learn to judge and to weigh up priorities.

**Field Marshall The Lord Harding of Petherton - address to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst - July 1953**

## Developing yourself as a Leader

1. You already have an intent to grow and develop as a leader, otherwise you would not have read this guide to the point where you are now. All leaders seek to develop, they never stop learning and neither will you.
2. How you develop and at what rate is down to you. I spent 30 years developing my skills and I am still developing. There is no magic wand to wave to become a better leader. There are a number of things I would recommend, simply because they are what I did. They include:
  - a. Observe and learn from those leading you, both good and bad. What are they like as people? Are they respected or feared? Do they get the job done but at what cost to those around them? Do people follow them willingly? Are they egotistic? Or are they humble and self-effacing?
  - b. Read books notable leaders have written - from all walks of life. Learn how they achieved success. Observe where they failed and what they did about it. Study them as people, their values and attributes.
  - c. Take decisions - right or wrong, do something. Don't become stifled by rules and policies. Assess the risk, mitigate it where you can, then act. Much of the time you will be right - at other times you will fail. Learn from failure but don't make the same mistake twice.

d. Ask your friends how you are doing. Conduct after-action reviews with your team. Ask them how you did, where you could improve. This could be tough for you but the results will be worth it, provided you learn from them. In return, the respect your team has for you will rise by a few notches!

3. There will be other ways you will think of to develop your own leadership capabilities. But above all just remember that no-one is too old to learn nor should be too proud to accept criticism and learn from it.

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Consult your friend on all things, especially on those in respect of yourself. His counsel may then be useful where your own self-love might impair your judgement.

Seneca - Roman Stoic, Philosopher and Statesman - 3 BC to 65 AD

Case Study 4

Setting. I have been an Army officer for only 3 months and have just been posted to Malaya to a regiment in the Brigade of Gurkhas. My Commanding Officer sends me into the jungle on a navigation exercise for a week, leading a patrol of 8 Gurkha soldiers. They speak no English and I have yet to learn Gurkhali! I also have yet to acclimatise fully to the heat and humidity of Malaya in June. I am proud of my map reading skills learnt at Sandhurst on Salisbury Plain, in the Brecon Beacons and the Lake District

The Action. Within 2 days of entering the jungle I am lost. My soldiers follow me silently, occasionally conversing with each other in a language I do not understand. Unwilling to seek help (though it would need sign language!), I press on, deeper into mountainous terrain of unbroken jungle, becoming even more comprehensively lost and disorientated. Nearly a week passes. Our radio does not work, food is short and I have no idea what to do. Every time we stop, my soldiers just gaze at me silently and impassively. Eventually I try to ask for help, admit I have failed them and seek guidance. My sergeant takes over, points out a stream to me and gestures that we should follow it downhill. Within a day we reach a river, then a village and finally a road. The spot we reach, after a week of walking, is but 5 miles from where we started!

The Response. On return to camp I ensure my soldiers get food and rest then report to my Commanding Officer. He reprimands me for failing in my first duty of an officer and leader - that is, to put your men first, irrespective of your own comfort or sense of pride. Returning dejected to my quarters, I find my sergeant waiting for me. It transpires that he can speak English - though chose not to - just to test me when in the jungle! He has prepared a series of jungle navigation lessons for me and then invites me to join him and the rest of the team for a party, where, after a few drinks, they told me how green I was, how untrained I was, how foolish I was - but with a promise to change me. They did just that and, after 6 months training they felt I was capable of leading Gurkha soldiers!

The Lesson. In sum: humility; never be afraid to seek help; you are never too old to learn; use the skills of your team; involve your team in planning and decisions; look after your team; respect them as people and professionals.

The future of Leadership - change or status quo?

1. The question I raise here is whether or not leadership needs to change to reflect the society in which we live and within which the potential leaders and workforce of tomorrow are developing. Current societal and demographic changes represent a revolution in the way our young people think and the expectations they have. I would argue that today we see a spectrum of thinking and behavioural trends not witnessed since before the Industrial Revolution.
2. Young people today are encouraged to think more freely, to seize the moment and develop in a way where they interact with their environment. Education is less structured, family life does not always provide a secure environment for growth and society in general is more aggressive and threatening to the maturing adult. For some this works and they grow up as responsible people with a sense of right and wrong. Others develop materialism and an egocentric view of the world around them. Yet others are caught up in cycles of depression where society appears set against them.
3. Some would say that identifying future leaders will become more difficult and that leading teams will require a different approach. But will it?

4. Everyone needs to feel that their needs are taken care of, that their efforts are appreciated and that they feel motivated. Part of the solution to Society's problems today is to provide that sense of belonging, to make people feel valued and worthwhile, to educate and train them to give them feelings of self-worth and esteem.

5. When one thinks about it, the values, principles and standards I have covered in this short guide have stood the test of time (over 2000 years!) so I would suggest you just get on with it and lead!

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'Let us admit, without bitterness, that the individual has his distinct interests and can, without felony, stipulate for those interests and defend them. The present has its pardonable amount of egotism; momentary life has its claims, and cannot be expected to sacrifice itself incessantly to the future. The generation which is in its turn passing over the earth is not forced to abridge its life for the sake of the generations, its equals after all, whose turn shall come later on'.

**Victor Hugo - Les Miserables - 1862**



## In Conclusion

1. To conclude, if you remember nothing else, just remember that leadership is a very personal matter: it cannot be taught, though principles can be imparted; it cannot be assumed with the mantle of authority invested by position. It is an affair of the heart. At the heart of the way I operate, both now in business and when I was a serving soldier, are the very people for whom I am responsible and on whom the organisation depends for success. Knowing them, their strengths and weaknesses, their desires and fears, is fundamental to enabling them to give of their best. Deep down all individuals want to do well - and the environment to do just that is created by leaders who know, respect and encourage their people.

2. With those words in your mind and in your heart you will be a good leader and will get better. You will serve your people well and they will serve you. You can ask for nothing more.

**For more help and advice, email me: [Johnstokoe2@btinternet.com](mailto:Johnstokoe2@btinternet.com)**

## Creating and Communicating a Strategy

1. Communicating a vision and its supporting strategy clearly and simply is essential if every member of your team is to understand it and move in a common, coordinated direction. I find that a graphical form of communication works well, portraying your vision and strategy in such a way that it is readily understood, easily explained and always available.

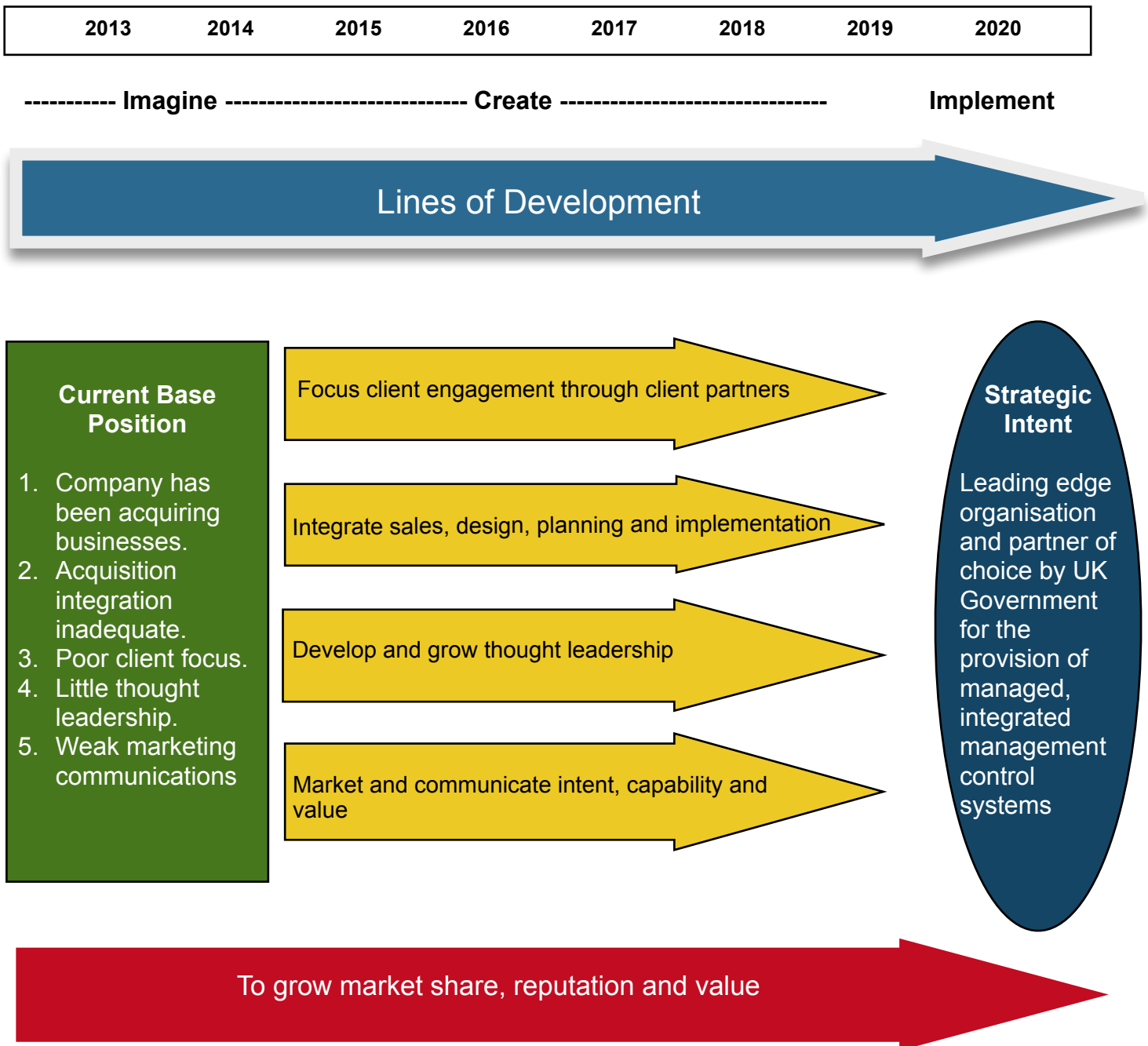
2. On the next two pages I show the graphical display which is captured on two sides of A5, printed back to back and laminated for protection. I give each member of my team, whether a team of 5 or 500, their own copy to keep in briefcase or handbag. The vision stays with them and becomes part of their working lives. In addition, I recommend giving a copy to the executive level above so that they also understand where you are taking your business. The detail I show on the following example is fictitious but you can adapt the style to suit your business and the way you intend your team to work. In essence it covers:

- a. Side 1: Vision and outline Strategy. (Where you want to go - your intent).
- b. Side 2: Timeline; startpoint; end objective; lines of development. (How you want to get there).

## Side 1



## Side 2



## **Creating an effective Bid Team**

1. Project or Bid Team leaders are just that - leaders. Too often do I see bids being led by steering groups which simply resort to decisions being taken by committee. Without one individual being responsible for the actions of the Bid Team, the bid is likely to take on a momentum of its own, growing in complexity and cost, with failure as the likely outcome.
2. As with any task, the leader needs to ensure that the team is furnished with the right tools for the job, then ensure that such tools are used effectively, economically and judiciously. Such tools include:
  - a. Detailed knowledge of the prospective client, the requirement and potential win themes.
  - b. Knowledge of potential competitors and their likely strategies.
  - c. A team of sufficient size and capability committed fully to the task, operating in a dedicated Bid Room with adequate administrative support.
  - d. Funding support.
  - e. A clear, simple process for milestone reviews and ongoing approvals.
  - f. A process for effective peer reviews.

Of fundamental importance is the need for a clear and well understood Bid win strategy, recognised not only by the Bid Team but also by key executive decision makers.

3. Whilst this may appear self-evident, I have witnessed so many instances where these fundamental requisites are either not available or are forgotten. It is the leader's task to draw this web of capability together and motivate the team to steer an effective course to successful Bid submission.



## Personal Notes



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# Personal Notes

To me, leadership is a very personal matter: it cannot be taught, though principles can be imparted; it cannot be assumed with the mantle of authority invested by position. It is an affair of the heart. At the heart of the way I operate, both now in business and when I was a serving soldier, are the very people for whom I am responsible and on whom the organisation depends for success. Knowing them, their strengths and weaknesses, their desires and fears, is fundamental to enabling them to give of their best. Deep down all individuals want to do well - and the environment to do just that is created by leaders who know, respect and encourage their people.

**John Stokoe - extract from an interview on leadership - November 2010.**

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