

Leadership for life

A short course on leadership skills
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Unit 1: Understanding leadership roles in different contexts

Unit 1: Introduction

This short course on leadership skills can be studied independently or delivered as a facilitated workshop for groups.

The course will give you an introduction to a range of leadership skills and styles, a framework for working through common challenges that leaders face in different contexts, and a set of exercises to work through on an on-going basis to support you as you develop your own leadership skills over time.

There are four units within the course, each of which will take up to an hour to work through, or collectively the units form a one-day workshop. The four units are:

1. Understanding leadership roles in different contexts
2. How to use different leadership styles for different purposes
3. Facing and overcoming the challenges of leadership
4. Developing yourself as a leader on an on-going basis

Benefits of this course

By the end of this course you will:

- understand the role and functions of leadership
- know a range of leadership styles and be better able to adapt your own style for different situations
- be able to tackle the challenges of a leadership role with increased confidence and capability
- have an achievable plan for further developing your own leadership skills.

Many people say that leaders are born and not made. That may be partly true, but remember that even the most accomplished sportsmen, musicians and artists reach their peak through training, coaching and practice. So it is with leadership. Training, coaching, practice. These three things help us to develop our capabilities and talent in any field.

Unit 1: The role of a leader

Aims and objectives of this unit:

- to understand what a leader does and why it matters
- to explore leadership roles in different contexts
- to identify the aspects of your role, or your target role, that embody the functions of a leader.

Starter activity

You will need:

- a pack of post-it notes or a notepad
- something to write with.

Take a few minutes to think of every task or function you think a leader performs in his/her leadership role. Write each task on a separate post-it note. Try to think of at least six tasks, focussing on what a leader **does**, not what a leader **is**. (5 mins)

Now organise the tasks into three groups. The groups will depend on which tasks you have thought of, for example: decision making; problem solving; motivating others. (5 mins)

Give each group a heading and keep these headings visible as you work through the rest of this unit.

Functions of leadership 1

Here is a summary of how Harvard Business School defines the role and functions of a leader. How do your groups and the tasks you identified compare to this definition?

'Leadership is the activity of leading a group of people or an organisation or the ability to do this. It involves:

- *establishing a clear vision or common goal*
- *sharing that vision with others so that they follow willingly towards the common goal*
- *providing the information, knowledge and methods for that vision to be made in to reality, the goal to be met*
- *co-ordinating and balancing conflicts of interest and keeping everyone on track towards the goal*
- *stepping up in times of crisis to act and think creatively and decisively in difficult situations.'*

Functions of leadership 2

How do your groups of leadership tasks compare to the definition on the previous slide?

If you focused more on delegating to others rather than on inspiring and motivating others, you were thinking more about management than leadership!

Here is a comparison to help you understand the difference.

Can you add some more rows to the table?

	A manager...	A leader...
1	communicates a goal and delegates to the team to work towards that goal in achievable steps.	creates a vision, inspires blue-sky thinking, focuses on the horizon and the big picture.
2	directs and trains others.	inspires and coaches others.
3	delivers what is expected.	is an agent for change.
4	conforms to requirements and controls risk.	is unique, takes risks.
5	builds systems, processes and teams.	builds relationships and concepts.
6	has employees or team members who work for him/her.	has people who want to be like him/her.

Main activity

Refer back to the definition of leadership and to the table on the previous slide.
Use a notepad and pen if you are working alone, or a flipchart if you are in a group. (20 mins)

Write a short job description for each of the following types of leader:

- a school leader, for example the Head Teacher
- a community leader, for example a politician
- the leader of a charity or sports club.

What do all of these have in common?

Underline all the words that are common to all three job descriptions.

All the things you have underlined are what are known as 'generic' leadership skills. These are the leadership skills that are common to all situations and all contexts. Most leadership skills are generic in nature and can be transferred to any context or situation.

Now think about yourself as a leader. Reflect back on the previous slides and all the notes you have made.

- Following the model on Slide 6, write a description of a leadership role that you undertake or would like to undertake. (5 mins)
- Using the format of the table on Slide 7 and the description you have just written, make a table that separates the leadership functions from the management or team-member functions. (10 mins)

Well done! You have identified and understood what a leader does and how this is different from a manager or team member role. Keep the definition and table that you have just created as you will need them later in the course.

Thank you for working through Unit 1 of Leadership Skills.
You will find Units 2, 3 and 4 at: www.library-nepal.com

Contact us by email at any time on
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