

Leadership for life

A short course on leadership skills
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Unit 4: Developing yourself as a leader

Unit 4: 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 4: Developing yourself as a leader

Aims and objectives of this unit:

- to understand your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader and to identify areas for development
- to analyse your natural propensity for leadership and my own style
- to construct a strategy for developing my leadership skills on an on-going basis.

Starter activity

You will need:

- all the notes, lists and tables you have created so far in the course
- a pack of post-it notes or a notepad
- something to write with

Refer to the descriptions of leadership styles from Unit 2 and to the lists you created in Unit 3. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 4 against each of the six leadership styles described in Unit 2. Use your lists from Unit 3 to help decide on your ratings. (10 mins)

- 1 – I don't use this style of leadership in any situation.
- 2 – I might use this style of leadership if I think about it.
- 3 – I use this style of leadership whenever I need to.
- 4 – This is a natural style of leadership for me.

Developing core leadership traits 1

In Unit 2 we identified that **domain knowledge** is a common or core competency of leaders – they know their stuff!

In Unit 3 we identified things that leaders did and behaviours they displayed that led to positive outcomes in challenging situations.

Harvard Business School and other theorists of leadership skills identify that there are four core traits or competencies that are a prerequisite for leadership.

Look back at all the notes and lists you have made throughout the course. Make a note of the four things that you think are the four traits or competencies that are a prerequisite for leadership. Justify your choices. (10 mins)

The four core traits as identified by Harvard Business School are shown on the next slide. Did you identify these? There are no wrong answers, but ensure you understand why the four traits or competencies on the next slide are important.

Developing core leadership traits 2

Trait or Competency	Characterisation
Domain Knowledge	Expertise and experience in a particular field. The ability to foster confidence in others by one's expertise, and to have confidence in one's own knowledge and ability.
Charisma	The quality of inspiring others by strength of personality, personal energy, motivation and inspiration of others. Others want to emulate. Not the same as being liked, but results in being admired. A positive aura. People want to be near one with charisma.
Rhetoric Oratory Communication	Leaders have to be able to communicate a vision to others, to communicate their will and wishes, knowledge and expertise, and energise others via communication. Not all communication is verbal or spoken, especially in the digital age, but the ability to speak to followers remains paramount.
Focus Single-mindedness	For better or worse, the most successful leaders are single-minded and focused on their vision. Look back at the list of leaders in Unit 3. Each one has one vision that has been the core of their leadership; a great leader is not dissipated over a number of areas.

Developing core leadership traits 3

Assess your own level against each of the four competencies outlined on the previous slide, on a scale of **1** – poor; **2** – insufficient; **3** – satisfactory / adequate; **4** – exemplary. Most of your scores will be in the range of 2–3. (5 mins)

Make a chart for yourself following the suggestion given below. Include the four core competencies **and** all the items from your KISS analysis in Unit 3 that you identified for improvement or to start doing.

Competency or Trait	My Score	My Aim	Actions to achieve my aim
Domain Knowledge			See following slides

DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE

- Be honest and truthful with yourself and with others about the extent of your knowledge.
- Be clear with others about what you do **not** know and invite others to display and deploy their **own** domain knowledge. **No-one** knows everything. **Everyone** knows something.
- Never, ever bluff. Think of politicians who lose credibility by trying to pretend they know more than they do.
- No-one can **give** you domain knowledge. You develop it yourself by: accessing up to date information; being open to new developments in your domain; reading; listening; being **receptive**. It may involve training courses, research, further study or other learning opportunities.
- Surround yourself with those who know things that you do not know and learn from them, from every situation.

CHARISMA

- It's not possible to learn charisma, but it is possible to **develop** one's image and the way that one is perceived.
- The basis of charisma is the natural ability to inspire admiration and respect for oneself from others.
- Admiration and respect are not dependent on personality. That is different from charisma.
- Both introverts and extroverts can develop charisma.
- Respect and admiration come from: being truthful; delivering on one's goals / promises; having follow-through.
- Drive, dynamism, determination, direction. These are the **constituents of charisma**.

COMMUNICATION, RHETORIC, ORATORY

- Be honest with yourself about your communication skills; ask others for feedback on how you communicate.
- Identify your preferred communication medium and hone and develop this. Not every leader needs to be an inspirational orator; develop how you communicate by email if this your preference, or by tweet, by telephone.
- Keep instructive communications short and to the point. Imagine you are giving a military command. This will help to avoid confusion and superfluity.
- Be clear in your own mind about the difference between 'instruction' and 'inspiration'. When communicating a vision or transformation, or calling up others to follow you, this is the time for more compelling language, to use powerful phrases and even to quote other leaders.
- Take every opportunity to use rhetoric and oratory, to deliver presentations, to put yourself in challenging communication situations. It really is a case of practice makes perfect.

SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND FOCUS

- Leaders in all contexts usually have many competing priorities to juggle, but over-arching these is usually a **single vision** or **goal** or a guiding principle or philosophy.
- Know what your **vision** or **goal** is. Be able to describe it in three or four sentences. In order to expect others to follow you, you have to be able to convey your vision clearly.
- Ask others to repeat back to you what they understand of your vision. If they can't, or if they convey something different or unexpected, your vision is not clear. Re-define it; repeat the exercise until everyone can tell you what your vision is. Only then can others follow.
- Re-test your vision at set intervals. Sometimes it is necessary to recalibrate a vision; single-mindedness risks becoming blind and dangerous when a leader cannot change to suit new circumstances.
- If you know that you sometimes lack focus or get distracted easily, impose fixed points for yourself where you reassess your vision and bring yourself back on track. Don't leave it to chance. Impose a structure.

Summary

- Take time to complete your development table using all the work and thinking you have done throughout the course. You may not get it all done in one go. Do it in the format and medium that best suit you, for example in an Excel file, in an online planning tool such as Trello, or in a notebook, as you prefer.
- Impose fixed times on yourself when you will go through your development table and add to it, analyse how you are getting on, and work out new ways to develop your skills. At least every three months as a minimum. Re-assess yourself, ask others for feedback, make a new plan. It's a good discipline to have.
- Remember that only **you** can develop yourself as a leader. It is not something that can be taught. This course has prompted you to think about yourself as a leader in the context of other leaders and has given you a framework for developing your skills. It is up to you to use that to your best advantage.
- Never stop learning as a leader. There is always someone who can contribute to your learning: a mentor or guru, a colleague or friend you look up to, professional networks of other leaders. While you are leading others remember not to neglect your own learning; it is more important than ever.

Conclusion

This short course has helped you to:

- 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.

Thank you for working through this short course on
Leadership for Life.

You will find all course units at: www.library-nepal.com

Contact us by email at any time on
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