

LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE



IN A COMPLEX WORLD
LEARNING PORTFOLIO: STAGE 1



U4848115

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Table Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Establishing goals and expectations.....	4
2.1 The power of S.M.A.R.T goals	4
2.2 Applying an Action Learning Cycle	5
3. The Leadership Challenge – Learning to Lead in a Complex World	7
3.1 A dimensional View of Influence	7
3.2 Guide to Leading the Way	8
4. Learning Through our Peers	11
5. Leadership and Influence at Large	14
5.1 Understanding Business and Leadership	14
5.2 Understanding Social Influence from a Psychological Approach	15
6. Enhancing the Student Experience.....	16
References.....	18

1. Introduction

“We ought to be grateful to language for making life messier than ever”

Richard Poirier

At the beginning of this course I was adamant that leadership was a basic concept applied to taking control through the use of power. However, since being exposed to beliefs and applications my view of leadership and how it leads to influence has dramatically changed. The aim of this portfolio is not to simply recount all that was taught about leadership and influence, but I would be remiss not to acknowledge the widespread amount of thought many insightful speakers have given to the topic. It is therefore, my intention to formulate a comprehensible model that both recognises what was said and how I formed an understanding.

2. Establishing goals and expectations

2.1 The power of S.M.A.R.T Goals

It would be tempting to assume that all leaders achieve their goals simply by virtue of their position, which I can safely say was what I had originally believed. However, these five weeks have taught me setting goals and achieving them requires specificity. What does this mean? To best appreciate this you must take note of the acronym S.M.A.R.T – in which Geoff Mortimore spoke of during week 1 and 2. Where goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. On the whole, goals become specific when they incorporate criteria by which progress, growth and achievement can be evaluated. What I found to be fascinating and highly motivating is that the S.M.A.R.T goals are articulated in such a way, as to describe the echelon of desired performance and the time by which it is to be achieved. This makes planning a breeze, and I only wish I had known of such a method during my first year of university. There is something so remarkable and easily approachable about expressing goals to keep you focused, but also revisiting them as you travel down the path of success.

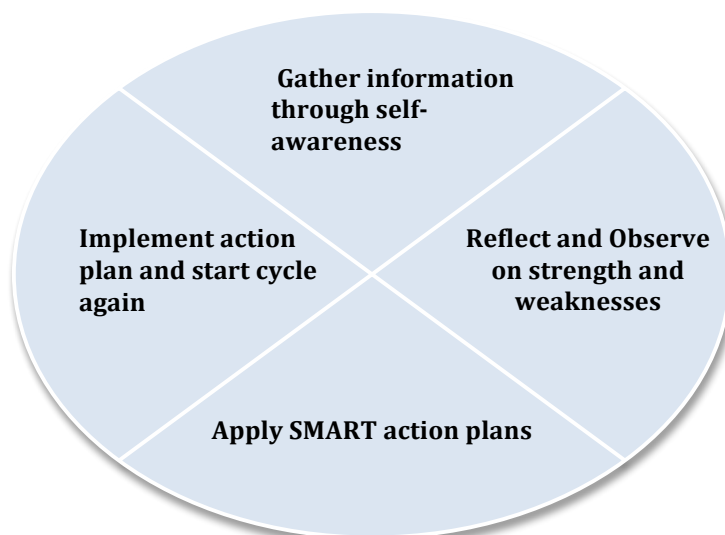
The concept of generating meaningful specificity was not always a walk in the park for me, more like a marathon through the wilderness. I thought that setting such specific goals would be too time consuming, especially in circumstances when say, a leader must obtain results quickly. Following some reflective thinking, it was quite obvious that having a measure in place allows us to learn from setbacks and failures. It makes sense because leaders cannot manage their future performance if they are unclear in how to review their

accomplishment. For myself, I have taken on this idea of SMART goals and now apply them to getting assignments done among other things. In this way, they may be used for diverse objectives.

2.2 Applying an action learning cycle

SMART goals allow leaders to manage future ambitions and as I mentioned are quite effective. Like this, the action learning cycle delves into the heart of planning and reflecting, while also implementing the S.M.A.R.T goals. Geoff Mortimore, during week 2 asked us to use an action learning cycle for future based learning. I took this upon myself to see how I would respond to the cycle, first gathering information, reflecting, applying SMART goals and then implementing the newly revised plan.

Action learning Cycle



At first, it was daunting, since it was hard to sit down and become self-aware of what I do well, i.e. I'm better at criticizing myself than offering praise. I wasn't

going to give up that easy, so I continued to try the action learning cycle. I found it quite useful, and I'm learning to offer praise when I deserve it. That is, its possible for me to look at what I'm doing right and head in that direction, while also changing things that I seem to be doing wrong. I've found that this cycle is a way to develop my capabilities and I agree it is something large organizations should consider; especially in adjusting to chaotic situations. It has been effective in promoting my performance and learning as a leader.

3. The leadership challenge - Learning to influence in a complex world

“You can’t follow someone who isn’t credible, who doesn’t truly believe in what they’re doing – and how they’re doing it.”

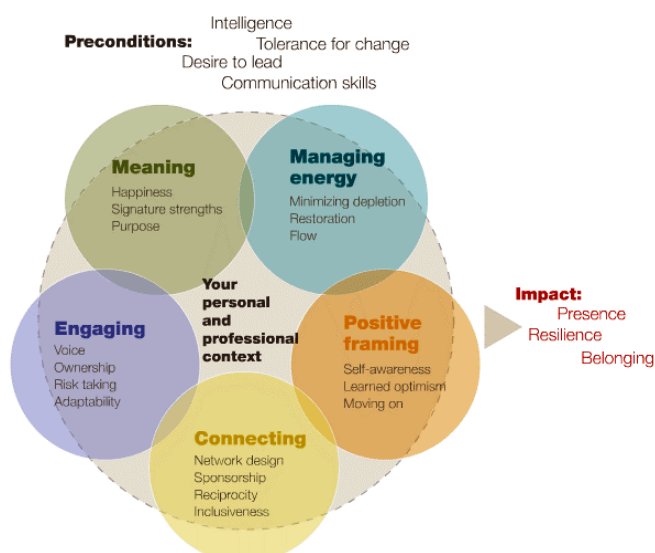
Gayle Hamilton

In this section I will explore two models that in my opinion best support the inspiration of the course, and offer sensible behaviors that that can serve as the basis for learning to lead.

3.1 A dimensional view of influence

After reading “how centered leaders achieve extraordinary results” by Barsh et. al., (2010) it is impossible not to be struck by the nature of what constitutes effective leadership in today’s society. The model presented really grabbed my attention and was so eloquently put together, that it is hard not to be influenced by it. The flow chart below was taken from the article.

Five dimensions of centered leadership



This figure is put together in a simplistic but nonetheless meaningful way that really defines and embodies the elements needed to successfully lead by influence in this complex world. My interpretation of this model is that you must find your strengths and inspire people by forming a reliable connection between other individuals. These connections then open the doors to a world with many possibilities. Moreover, by adopting a positive frame of mind it ensures all opportunities are in reach, as well as giving you a sense of control to infuse life with a sense of confidence and meaning. To me, this epitomizes what values a leader should embody in the quest to influence others. Applying this model to my job at first was quite difficult, because like most changes there is the fear of failure. However, I'm starting to see the benefits of relating these five dimensions to all aspects of my life, not just work. Just as many of the leaders during week 3 discussed that we are all connected to each other through other people. This really got me thinking about the value of forming connections with people and how a simple practice can change the experience of leadership for the better.

3.2 Guide to leading the way

The five practices of exemplary leadership model given to us by Geoff Mortimore during week 2, was the second model of leadership that really stood out for me (figure 3 below). It emphasized the idea that your behavior wins respect but titles are just simply granted. Its important for a leader to model the way and in my view, this can be done by setting an example through daily actions that demonstrate they are committed. What I have come to appreciate is that there are no irrelevant tasks in an organizations effort to succeed. At the beginning of week 3

we were introduced to Lawrence Cram who discussed projects he had been apart of. I was captivated by how his actions to set an example were often simple things. It was fascinating to hear him speak of the importance of modeling the way by working with colleagues to make values come alive and also to be available during times of uncertainty. I thought that his approach really fit in nicely with the purpose of this model.

What I gained from hearing Allan White speak (week 3), was the notion of a leader forms an image and it is this image that pulls an organization forward. It is this idea of inspiring a shared vision that truly leads to influence. Leaders create a unity, by enabling them to see the exciting possibilities that the future holds. For me, it comes down to the idea that a leader creates unity by enabling followers to see the exciting possibilities that the future holds. It is this relationship between the leader and the followers that leads to the practice of – challenging the process.

Figure 3

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®	Ten Commitments
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals. • Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. • Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve. • Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships. • Strengthen others by increasing self determination and developing competence.
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. • Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

Challenging the process requires someone to venture out and seize the moment. By applying this form of practice to influencing individuals it allows a leader to not only learn from experience, but also it builds their credibility. I think it's important for a leader to built trust and confidence because when there is support, subordinates are more likely to keep the organization alive by taking risks. In the end this can result in the leaders turning their subordinates into leaders themselves, that is, it allows for them to develop the confidence they need to one day lead. Just by recognizing the efforts of subordinates and creating a harmonious atmosphere it really makes a difference to leadership and influence in a complex world.

We were asked to reflect on what qualities are required for effective teamwork, and for me it comes down to 4 important qualities. To begin, the most important thing to remember is that there is no me in leadership, in other words, it involves a team effort. The group needs to have a clear vision of what results they want to achieve, because without this the team will not be able to move forward. The vision must be clearly expressed; this is an obvious quality that is sometimes neglected. To end the group as a whole must be flexible to the views that are presented by other members. It is the integration of all ideas that leads to a sustainable idea.

I recognize the value of having this relationship in place and this model has changed the way I will approach my future leadership aspirations, I hope that it has for others also.

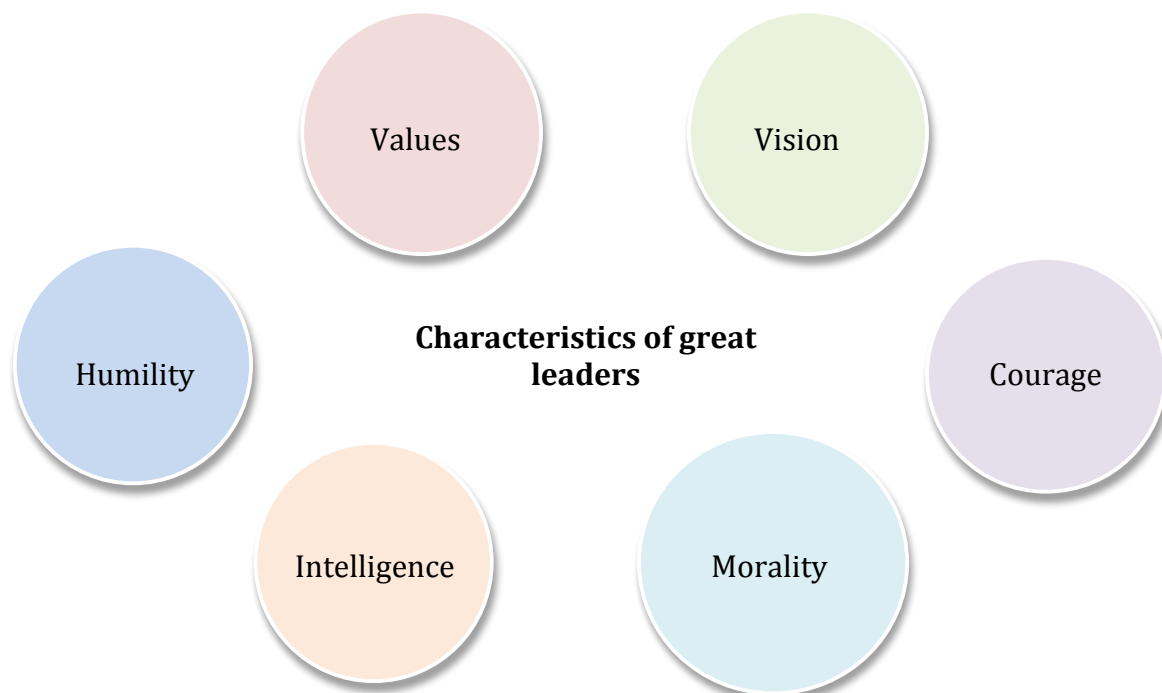
4. Learning through our peers

“Having faith in my principles and beliefs gave me the courage to navigate difficult situations and make tough decisions”

Tim Avila

During week 3 of the course we were asked to present a short oral on a leader who we greatly admired and found to be quite influential. The leaders chosen ranged from Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Jamie Oliver and Nelson Mandela just to name a few. The noticeable similarity I came across while listening to everyone present was that their chosen leaders had strong beliefs and unwavering commitment to a clear set of morals. The lesson from this tutorial was quite unique, in which it gave us the opportunity to learn about leadership and influence from our peers.

Each member from the tutorial presented something with substance and I've come to understand that everyone has certain values and morals, but in order for people to lead they must connect with them. In addition, be able to authentically communicate them to an audience. Recall what Kouzes and Posner's (2007) first law of leadership was, – “if you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message.” This is plausible because the people we most admire are those that have powerful and clear beliefs, which are articulated succinctly, allowing us to know what the messenger believes in.

Figure 4

To become an effective leader who is able to influence and maintain credibility you must possess many of the characteristics represented in figure 3, but also understand how these drive you. Furthermore, leaders do not speak solely for themselves but represent the larger population of followers. It is therefore necessary that a leader express a commitment to quality, innovation and service that will have the best interest in the organization or group without compromising their ideology. It all comes down to having courage and getting in touch with your core values and having faith in them. Which makes sense, because how can we expect people to follow if we're not willing to trust our inner self. How can we judge how influential a leader is in such a complex world? A leader is someone who uses his or her intelligence to change the world or organization for the better. Personally, if a leader lacks intelligence then he or she will never achieve authority. Why? Because an influential leader is someone who does the utmost to be both

textbook and real world smart. Lacking in either type of intelligence leads to failure and none of us want to invest, time, money, sweat and tears into someone who will disappoint. In this world, a leader can only survive if he or she is capable of adapting to the environment. Ideally, a leader is someone who has humility in times of success and failures, while maintaining a support system for all followers.

A final point, I always considered a leader to be someone who was on the frontline of social change within co-operations. But after hearing some of the leaders my fellow peers spoke about, it made me realize I was quite silly, and that a leader does not necessarily have to play a big role. But is someone who is willing to transform the world or organization the way they see fit. So even though the world may be complicated by all who inhabit it, its good to know that anyone of us can make a difference from the sideline.

5. Leadership and Influence at Large

5.1 Understanding business and leadership

Coming from a science background my mindset was sculpted in such a way that I believed answers were either right or wrong. This tended to make things complicated at first, causing me to be confused by the complexity of the course, but also disillusioned by the simplicity of a simple question such as – what is a great leader? Having said this, I am starting to open my eyes to the idea of what it takes to successfully influence someone for the better, in a world that is built around the business of lying. For me, addressing the inter-related relationship between business, psychology and leadership has been quite educationally stimulating. It's obvious that in this world an influential leader will be remembered for many years to come, some who have tipped the scales for good and others heavy-handed in the fall from grace. In week 5 Keith and Ross introduced us to the idea of leadership and influence in business. Where Keith spoke of influence as being reciprocal, in that superiors in an organization influence subordinates, but subordinates also influence superiors. It is this balance between listening and accepting that I think truly makes an organization as a whole influential, therefore allowing them to obtain the desired results.

There is a common misconception that influence is a way to maintain the status quo, but what I have come to learn is that its more about implementing changes that are not dictated by leaders but rather reflect ideas of the group of followers and leaders as a whole. It is my belief that when a leader is transformed, so too is the organization. This idea was partly influenced by listening to Michael

Platow (week 4) discuss the social identity of an organization, and that leadership involves looking beyond the in-group versus out-group motif. With all the challenges observed in a complex world, it stands to reason that any business that provides a dynamic framework for leadership to overcome them will succeed.

5.2 Understanding social influence from a psychological approach

It seems relatively easy to just suggest the characteristics of a great leader and leave it at that. However, in order to understand the complexity of what it means to be a great leader, it's important to focus on social influence and its role in society. Just as Michael Platow (week 4) suggested there are broad approaches to understanding social influence. In this way it can lead to a thorough knowledge on the subject of leadership. Initially, I was left wondering whether people are aware that they are being influenced. The thought came to me while I was reviewing what I had learnt from Michael's session. I came to the conclusion that we are aware of it, but at times we may not completely understand an issue or are simply not listening. Interestingly enough, Michael talked about how we are not influenced by out-group members even if we are or are not listening. For me, this perspective does not represent effective leadership, and therefore I take it with a grain of salt. I am more inclined to the ideas that a great leader may influence anyone regardless of whether they are in-group or out-group; it comes down to their morals and strong vision. I agree there is quite a lot of evidence suggesting this in-group versus out-group idea, but I think when we look at leadership we need to look beyond this theme.

6. Enhancing the student experience

What is the student experience? It is a broad term, which is influenced by various factors, and in this way it would be pointless to attempt to define it.

However, in order to enhance the experience of students at ANU, it would be best to start off with looking at what is missing. In my view there are 3 main areas that need to be addressed.

First and foremost, the services delegated to students. What I mean by this is increasing the quality of support, facilities, resources and student accommodation, which will ensure that all the needs of students are met. This may be accomplished by formulating strategic plans for delegating time and money, which will be implemented as part of improving the living standards of students and support that is offered.

Expanding the teaching and learning standards of students by collectively offering more research based learning to undergraduate students. For this to be made possible the university needs to compose a practical and sufficient plan, which allocates optional research projects for those who wish to take on a different approach to classes. However, the continuation of normal assessment for those who do not wish to take part in research is essential, in order to meet the needs of the whole cohort. By fulfilling these requirements the university will exceed the expectations of all students and in turn enhance the student experience.

The final area of change is offering graduate to workplace assistance. I have spoken to a few family and friends who have recently graduated from ANU, who said, what they studied at university towards their prospective field (e.g. engineering) did not

necessarily apply to the practical aspect of the workforce As a result I think the university should form a partnership with certain companies and offer internships/experience to students in their final year. This in my opinion will better equip the students to transition from university to the workplace.

A final point, by applying all the models of what it means to be an influential leader ANU can attempt to further enhance the student experience by really delving into the heart of what students expect from their university. As a result it may influence other students and researchers to become part of the ANU in the future.

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