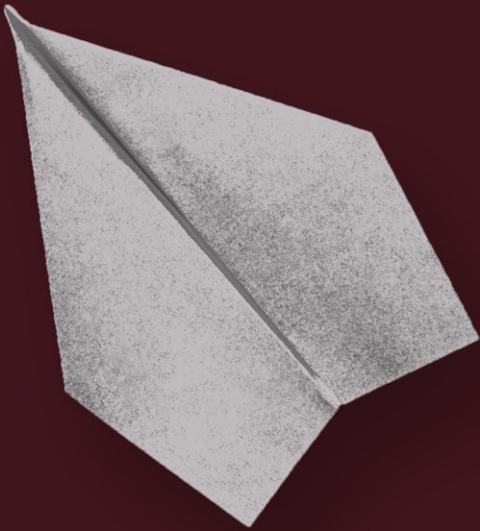




Berwick Partners
an Odgers Berndtson company



The Evolving Art of Leadership

The requirements to be an effective leader have never been more demanding



Introduction

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change" – Charles Darwin

COVID-19 and its social and economic impact have placed even greater significance on well-being and Berwick Partners is dedicated to providing solutions to your leadership challenges. Whether it is events, people or technology change, the requirements to be an effective leader have never been more demanding.

Throughout the last twelve months we have utilised our extensive, cross sector networks to interview a range of business leaders. We have undertaken detailed research to understand the skills and attributes that those spearheading organisations require. Our work focused on the Chair, NED, CEO, and functional leadership communities in the diverse sectors we serve.

Our faith in human ingenuity and spirit when the toughest task is at hand, was justified by the creation of numerous COVID vaccines in the space of nine months. Whilst disruption is a likely permanent by product of globalisation, we can be confident that the endeavour of people will enable us to navigate the future successfully. Evolving leaders will be a key facet of the journey and our work sought to explore this in more detail.

Our questions centred on three core themes:

- DNA for Leadership
- Vital Leadership Traits
- Organisational Alignment

"Organisations need clarity of purpose - what is this business about, why are we here and what do we need to succeed? People then need to be inspired and have a sense of alignment to that purpose"

Chief Operating Officer, Real Estate

DNA for Leadership

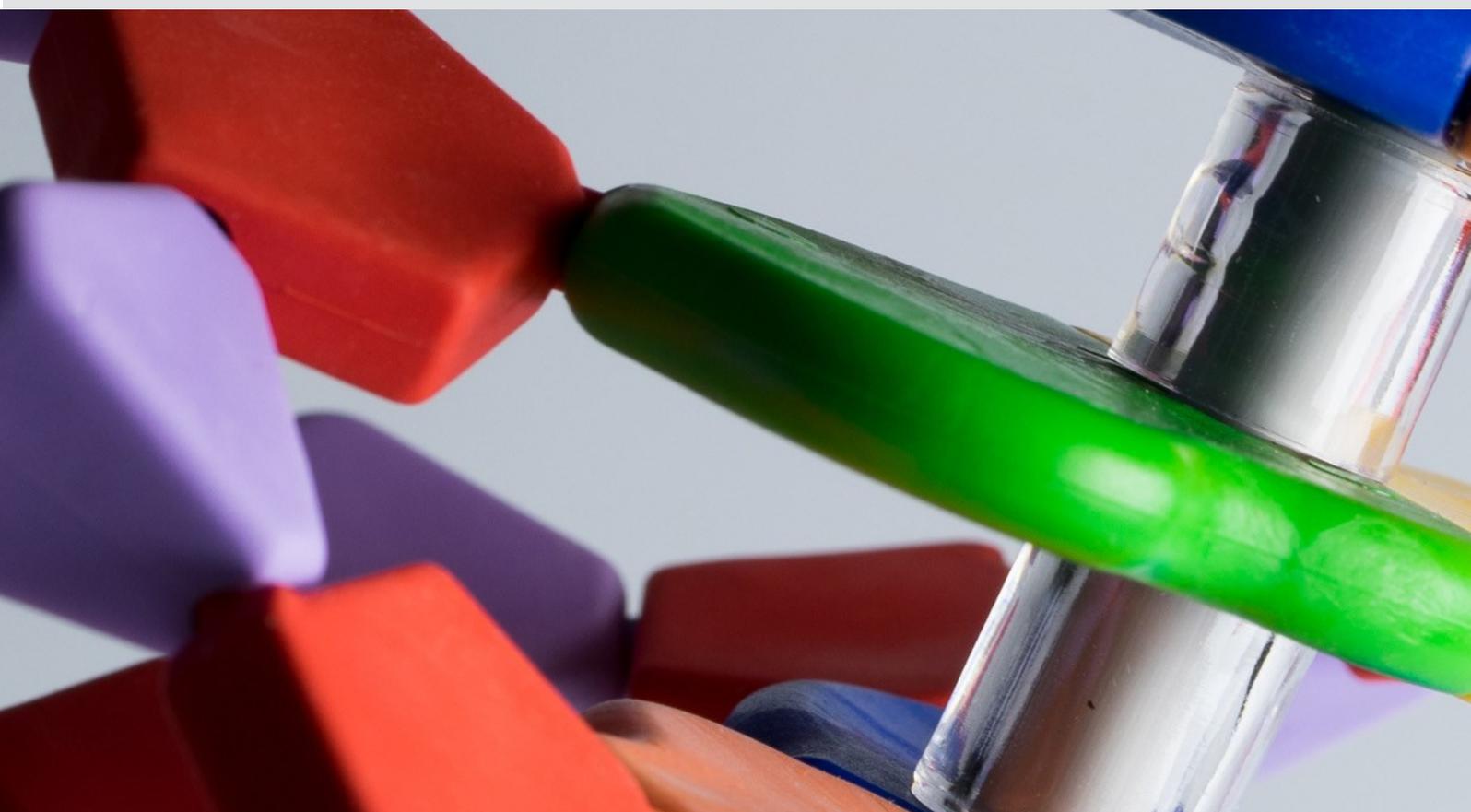
The origins of Nature vs. Nurture Theory are widely credited to date from 1869 and the work of psychologist Sir Francis Galton. It is now generally recognised that a specific 'leadership gene' does not exist. There is however, significant ongoing debate regarding learnable traits as opposed to the characteristics you are born with, and how this then manifests itself in your leadership style.

When our interviewees were asked if there is such a thing as a 'natural leader', 95% of respondents said no, but it was recognised that there are individuals who have certain qualities that can push them forward for leadership positions, such as being competitive or just more willing to put their hand up and take on responsibility.

Most felt that if an individual aspires to take on a leadership role, there were very few qualities which could not be developed through training, coaching or mentoring - there are many different ways to successfully lead.

Rafael Honigstein, author of the biography "Bring the Noise: The Jürgen Klopp Story", commented that whilst often perceived as a natural leader, one of the keys to Klopp's success is his desire to learn and evolve. Great leaders may be born with some leadership traits, but they also work hard over time to develop their skills and abilities. In addition, they are not afraid to recognise their weaknesses and utilise others.

One CEO who had risen through the ranks in the military before embarking on a career in industry, commented on the general lack of depth in leadership training in the private sector. The Services have learnt that whilst some have natural ability, all need to be developed hence the significant ongoing costs



of training at Sandhurst, Cranwell and Dartmouth; "To be good at anything you need coaching". The philosophy learnt was summarised as:

1. Focusing on the task
2. Understanding the dynamics of the team
3. Having a genuine interest in people

The military have long recognised the need to evolve the 'command and control' approach, and the assumption that teams need an assertive leader. Today, whether in the services or in in civilian leadership, there is increasing recognition we need more empathy and understanding. Trust, kindness, and vulnerability are now words associated with the best leaders that perhaps we would not have encountered as much in the past. Influencing skills are critical, where before it may have been a 'tell' approach, now you need to agree why.

"I believe certain people start with a burning fire to achieve something, a relentless desire that comes from within, but otherwise it is experiences and learnings that shape your ability to lead"
**Managing Director, Advanced Materials
Manufacturer**



Vital Leadership Traits

We considered the interventions that influence and shape career success and aimed to understand how great leaders develop their skills. Communicating, overcoming failure, adapting to the circumstances, and developing resilience have always been important but what are the core characteristics that are required to be effective today?

Communication

When leading through or out of a crisis, leaders need to be able to articulate a story that is true to people's lived experience, providing a compelling vision for moving forward through challenges. There is no point having great ideas or knowledge if you cannot then get your message across clearly and positively. There are many examples of prominent leaders being great story tellers with examples cited by interviewees including; Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr, Barack Obama and Julia Gillard.

Berwick Partners ran an online poll over the preceding six months and more than 47% of respondents selected communication as still being the most important skill for contemporary leaders. It is clear that strong two-way conversations remain the best means to keeping workforces together, motivated, and aligned to shared objectives.

The CEO at one of the UK's leading charities has a mantra to "listen to the quiet voices". Leadership includes asking and really listening to everyone with the belief that you will hear something that will educate you. A great leader recognises subject matter expertise, uses it, and gives credit where credit is due.

"When gathering a team, I will always have someone who might not want to speak up but might reflect on the topic and come back later with a fantastic contribution. Further individual contact will typically generate lots of rich ideas"

Managing Director, Precision Engineering

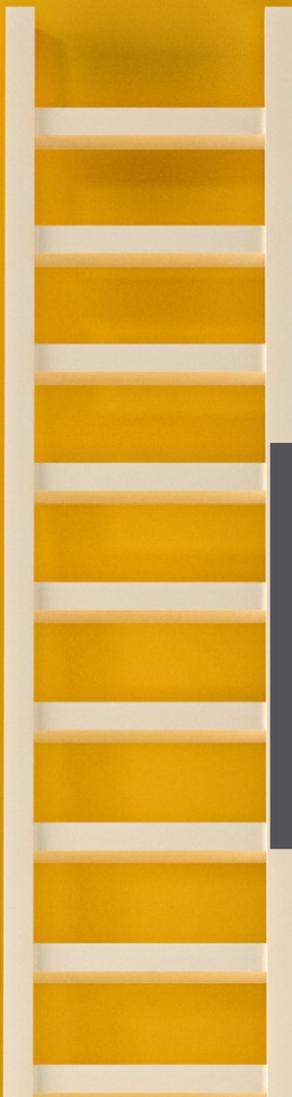
Emotional Intelligence

Self-Awareness / Self-Regulation / Motivation / Empathy / Social Skills

There was consistency in interviewee responses that leaders with all the skills a role requires, but lacking in the EQ to work effectively with a team, are unlikely to achieve long term success. Understanding your own strengths, weaknesses, and impact on others is critical. Recognising you do not have all the answers is a powerful leadership tool.

In the documentary 'The Edge' regarding the then successful England cricket team, Head Coach Andy Flower looked back reflecting that if he had his time again, he would pay more attention to people rather than focusing predominantly on the result. To gain success through people there has to be a genuine interest to develop and nurture; you have to care. Think deeply about how you can alleviate stress, through flexible working arrangements, strong team culture, and health & wellbeing programmes.

Currently there is a huge emphasis being placed on employee forums and consultation, with the belief they lead to better decision making at the top. Getting 360° feedback from all levels of the organisation is hugely important to measure performance. Equally, well-structured feedback enables a greater degree of self-assessment and reflection on what the individual could change to become more effective.



Emotional Intelligence

"Great leaders really interrogate their own performance and its effect on others"

University Vice Chancellor

Kindness

The COO of a leading Property firm spoke about his own CEO who had arrived with a tangible deficit in sector knowledge. He immediately sought advice from within, showing modesty and recognition for the need to learn and adapt. What might once have been perceived as weakness is instead acknowledgement of a shortfall with the humility and desire to rectify it quickly. This enables a faster transition whilst also bringing new thinking from outside the sector.

Virginia Bottomley, Chair at Odgers Berndtson recently wrote an article on kindness as a key leadership trait. "Kindness is the face of a more purposeful business agenda. Leaders must become comfortable projecting kindness – the language, the humility, the thoughtfulness. Kindness is no longer a word in a HR folder labelled 'culture'. It is a trait which will define leaders of the future".

Vision

Leaders need to be able to paint the vision, engage, and then positively relay to people where the business is heading, and more critically, why. The latter point has, according to our interviewees, become increasingly vital. No longer is making 'profit' an acceptable purpose in isolation. Work-life balance, organisational prestige, sustainability, and social worth are as much critical factors to retention as remuneration.

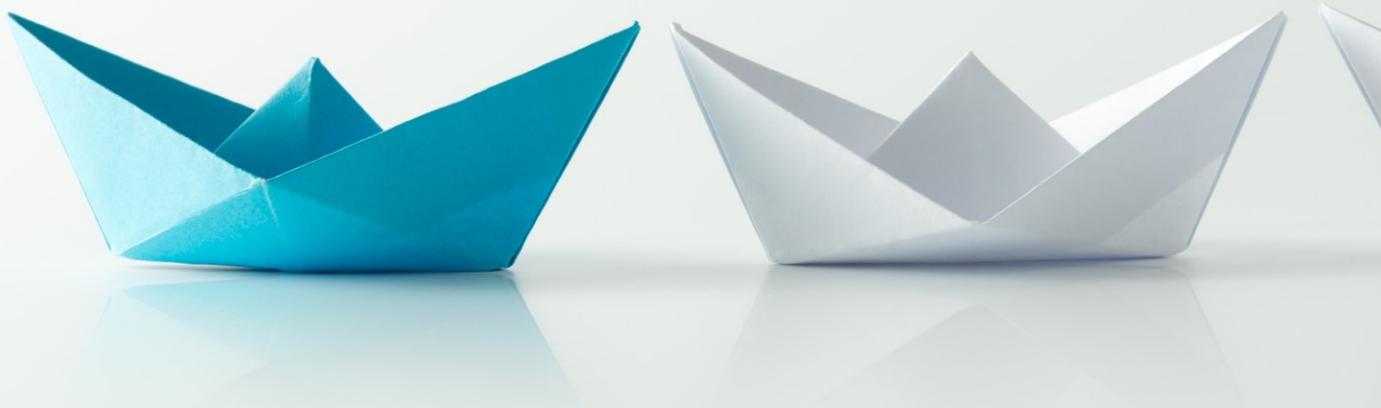
The modern leader has to inspire; be brave and courageous; call out poor behaviour and say this is what I believe in, this is what I stand for. Collaboration between those who lead and those who follow should be driven by a clearly communicated vision that ensures mutual motivation to achieve shared goals.

"Leaders who can see furthest into the future are the ones that are most successful"

Chief Executive, Business Services

"Great leaders can articulate their vision to a team and their stakeholders; and are confident enough to not have to be the smartest person in the room"

CFO, Healthcare



Judgement

Political instability, economic uncertainty, Brexit, COVID-19, climate change. The only future certainty, is uncertainty. Leaders need to be comfortable that they will have to deal with the 'next normal'. Good decision making comes with experience, but increasingly quick decisions have to be made with limited data. Uncertainty leads to ambiguity and the best leaders are agile enough to make informed decisions, sometimes without the full picture.

Leaders need to learn quickly, be decisive, and prioritise information. This comes down to judgement and understanding when you need to dive into the detail. You have to know when your personal presence is critical, recognising you cannot be everywhere.

"I believe to succeed now you have to act fast, fail fast and succeed fast"
Managing Director, Building Products

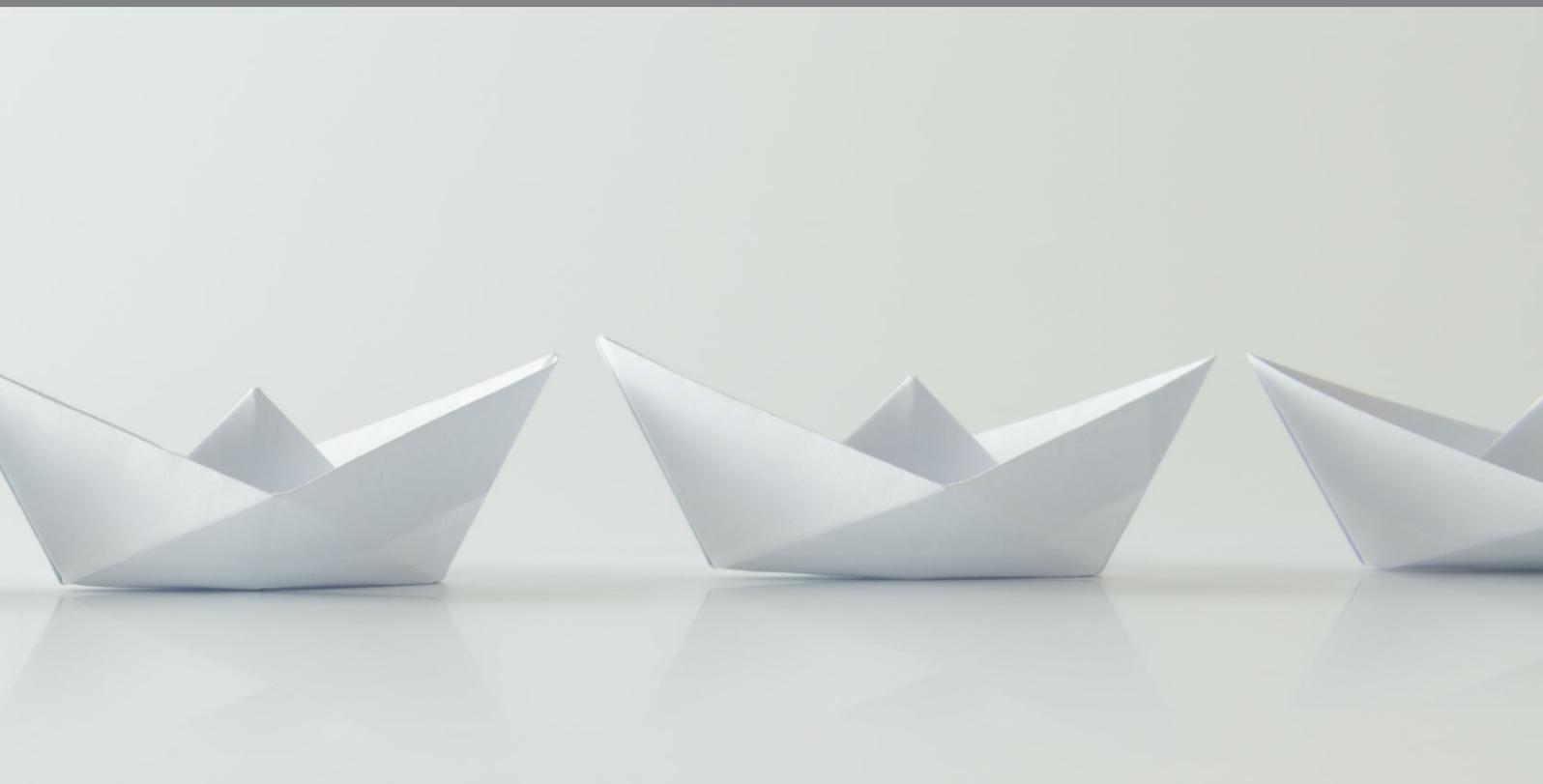
Enabling

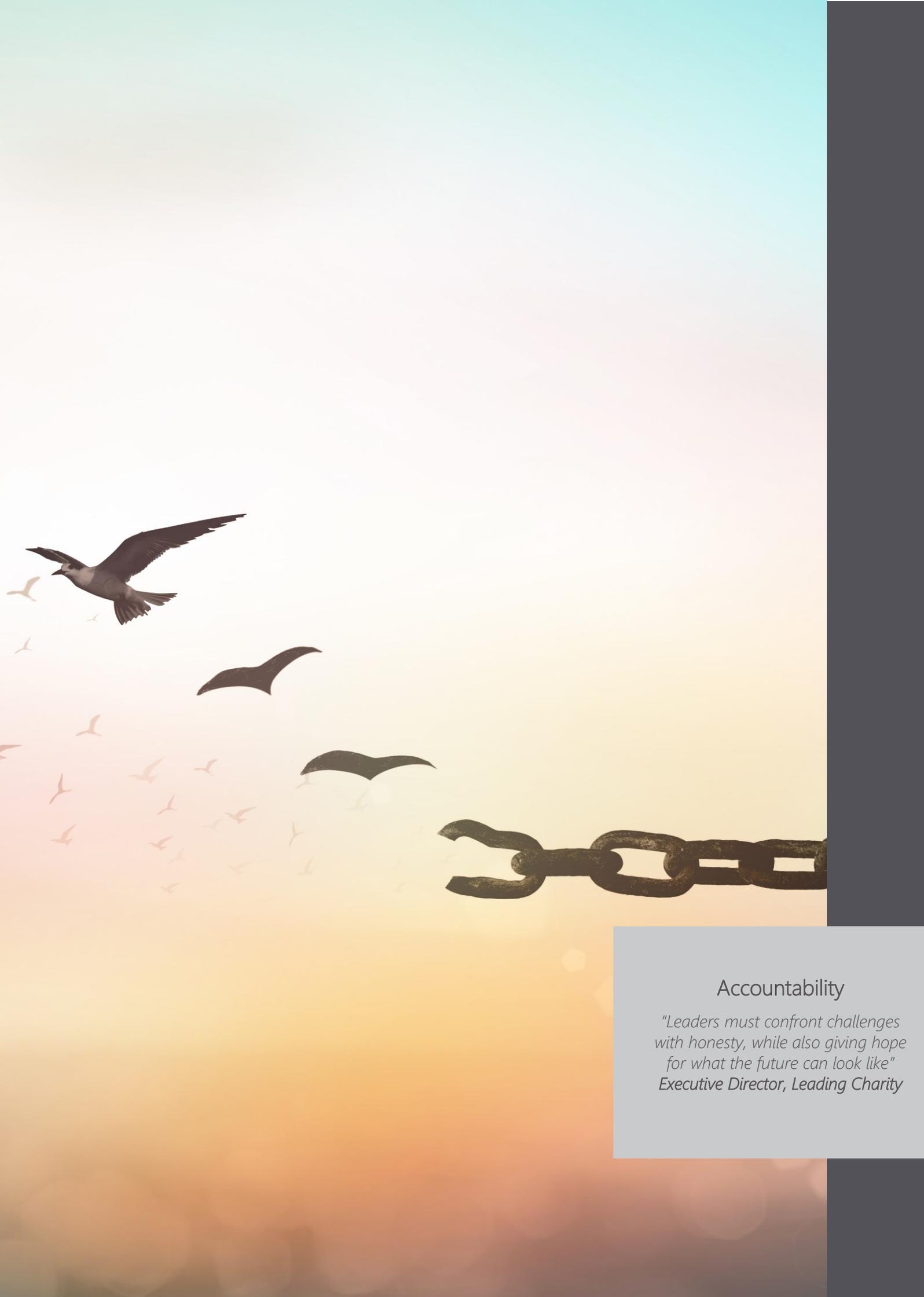
The way you transform organisations is by cultivating staff, empowering and engaging them. An Orchestra is an oft used analogy, but it makes sense. If the leader is the conductor, how do you get the diverse group of contributors to come together, maximise their talent, and produce an outcome greater than the sum of the parts?

Everyone understanding their role and feeling like a valued contributor is as important to an orchestra as it is to a corporation. Enabling people to be their best selves is a vital attribute. Equally, the ability to invest in people and trust individuals has never been more important. Modern leadership requires being personally comfortable with saying 'I don't know, what do you think?'

"Now more than ever we must trust our teams, the right people know what they are doing, and we must support them. More 'management' is definitely not the answer"
Managing Director, Consumer Goods

"One of the signs of a great leader is the ability to surround themselves with good people, obvious but not always replicated"
Performance Psychologist and Author





Accountability

"Leaders must confront challenges with honesty, while also giving hope for what the future can look like"
Executive Director, Leading Charity

Resilience

One of the few things you can guarantee in life is that you will have defeats along the way. All leaders we spoke to had experienced failure at some point. Learning from this had shaped their career perhaps more than when the outcome was more immediately successful. After building her business empire, Arianna Huffington commented "Failure is not the opposite of success; it's part of success."

Tough formative years are often cited by business leaders as a reason for their later success, building the resilience necessary to overcome setbacks. For example, Ursula Burns, former CEO of Xerox and Board member at Uber, grew up in extremely humble beginnings, immigrating to the US from Panama and growing up in a New York housing project. This created a resilience that stood her in good stead when entering the workplace.

Early on in your career it helps if someone gives you self-belief and encouragement. Mentoring schemes are a critical part of a leader's pathway, those offered, but critically also those you cultivate and harness yourself. Mentors can support your problem solving and resilience building by overcoming the challenges that inevitably emerge during your leadership career. The Berwick Partners Emerging Leaders Programme ([insert link here](#)) is firmly established and feedback from participants has reflected the value people place in having appropriate sounding boards to guide them as they evolve.

"Leadership can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you have always been told you are great at something it feeds the courage and passion to flourish in any environment"

Authenticity

Confidence is important but authenticity is key. People want to trust in their leaders and, when they do, the leader themselves become part of the reason others want to succeed. In challenging times people do not need mission statements, they want to know they can trust their leadership.

Leaders are just human beings. As one contributor put it, "we should resist the temptation to place them on too much of a pedestal, as though they are almost mythical entities. Like all of us, they have strengths and flaws, hopes and fears, limiting beliefs and irrational thoughts".

During the last eighteen months one of the globe's most admired leaders has been New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern. She talks about 'we' not 'I'. She has built a relationship of trust with the people she represents, and she genuinely cares. She says, "one of the criticisms I've faced over the years is that I'm not aggressive enough or assertive enough, or maybe somehow, because I'm empathetic, it means I'm weak. I totally rebel against that. I refuse to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong."

The key is finding your own method of leadership. You might be someone who leads by example, through quality and work ethic. Or you might be someone who leads through the enduring nature of the relationships and trust that you build. Do not underestimate your capability to lead. Be authentic and true to your own moral compass in the way you do it, realising that people can tell if you are faking it.

Accountability

Leadership has changed and there is appreciation for a calmer, more thoughtful and engaging approach that brings out the best in others. However, success is unlikely to stem from a completely risk-averse strategy and great leaders need to have the confidence to take some risks, whilst remaining accountable. Social Media has created increased scrutiny and leaders are answerable for any organisational failings.

Curiosity

Intellectually someone must have the bandwidth to process information. They also must have the ability to thrive when dealing with ambiguity. Embracing new ways of working and thinking has been amplified by the Pandemic. A curious mind is a listening mind, seeking information and then having the talent to act on it.

Great leaders seek diverse views, knowing that two minds are better than one. They create an environment where challenge is welcomed. One participant commented, "I have gained confidence from people's honesty and interventions which have made me re-think and become a better leader".

"As a leader, I love it when people challenge conventional thinking"
Managing Director Strategic Consulting

Organisational Alignment

We assessed how aligned Chairs, NEDs and CEOs are identifying what is integral to their own leadership teams, and how this plays into succession planning. How does each organisation define what good leadership looks like and how do you bring diversity of thought into your team to best reflect societal change?

There is a real challenge aligning experienced leadership with the opportunities created by digitalisation and rapid technology change. A recent Imperial College Study suggested nearly a fifth of CEO's were unsuited to the organisation they lead. Boards are struggling to adapt fast enough. Every generation brings change, but the increasing pace of it affects the ability of different generations to understand each others mindset. The strategic horizon is getting shorter.

Hiring leadership roles is a complex process and there is a danger of not having enough perspectives. Most interviewees said succession planning was incredibly important to them, whilst some saw progression of one of their team into a top job elsewhere as vindication of their own development capability. Appointing an outside hire was never a failure on the part of the organisation to 'grow their own', just simply recognising the importance of bringing outside perspectives into an organisation to inspire new thinking and maintain a competitive edge. The risk of always promoting from within is ending up with a population that is 'institutionalised' and lacking in diversity.

"I've always believed in internal development but it's a balance. The injection of a different perspective from the outside is really beneficial"
Managing Director, FMCG

It is a massive vote of confidence in leadership for people to 'stay the course'. However, it is widely recognised that there is a need for healthy churn, with most surveys citing up to 15% annualised attrition as acceptable. Research from LinkedIn suggests that the top reason people leave their job is a lack of opportunities for advancement (45%). Indeed 94% of respondents in a recent survey said development would be the most likely reason they would stay longer in an organisation.

"You need to be brave and not think that you always have to be in control of the direction of strategy. You can have different views as long as you have the same values."

CFO Financial Services

In identifying what organisations seek when they are appointing to their leadership — or promoting from within — it is apparent that sector experience is increasingly of fairly low importance. Skills are transferable, cross-sector learning is invaluable, and innovation is key.

There was a mixed response to the use of assessment tools to support hiring and leadership development, ranging from invaluable to not used at all. Where they were seen as beneficial the reasons cited included:

- Brave appointments where you seek someone who can be quickly developed.
- Supporting the identification of people with really strong EQ and individuals who are natural collaborators.
- Assessing willingness to adapt and drive change.
- Judging the chemistry beyond meeting the people you will be working with.
- Ensuring you understand your future employee to aid successful onboarding.
- Considering diversity in teams to provide breadth of thought and greater collective strength.

360° feedback is increasingly valued and the prevailing view was that, if you are serious about values-based leadership, it is critical. The mixed view of assessment was in stark contrast to the statistics. Our assessment partner GFB's statistics indicate that a CV discussion and interview approach will result in successful recruitment as little as 13% of the time. This increases to a 94% chance of success in role when combined with psychometrics and behavioural competency interviewing with a qualified psychologist. Understanding the person as well as the skills is a vital part of successful hiring.



About Berwick Partners

Berwick Partners is an agile, proactive executive search and recruitment firm, with offices throughout the UK, as well as in Europe, the US and Asia Pacific.

Recruitment at all levels is an increasingly difficult task and selecting the correct partner is critical. Established in 2004, Berwick Partners has a long heritage in senior leadership recruitment, with a reputation for helping our clients to get these decisions right. The reasons are simple:

We have experienced sector and function specialists

We have deep sector and function knowledge across industries and regional economies. Our Consultants use this unique insight to help you find senior leaders with the right blend of skills, experience and cultural fit to drive your organisation forward.

We identify the best talent

Working from our offices throughout the UK, as well as in Europe, the US and Asia Pacific, Berwick Partners provides exceptional coverage. Our rigorous approach to search and assessment ensures that we identify exceptional talent, and persuade the best candidates to consider your opportunity.

We find leaders who will help to transform your business

At Berwick Partners, we specialise in tough assignments, identifying those who can bring genuine competitive advantage to our clients.

We are regularly mandated on the 'hard to fill' assignments where there is a real need to identify key talent to support the sector in its transformation. A business is only as good as its employees and in a highly competitive environment, hiring and retaining top talent is a vital role in which we excel.

We lead with our insights

We are uniquely placed to understand trends and insights from across a diverse range of sectors to help you stay competitive. We customise our solutions to meet your needs and help you be prepared for the future.

We are part of the Odgers Berndtson Group

Berwick Partners is part of the Odgers Berndtson Group of companies alongside Odgers Berndtson, Berwick Talent Solutions, Odgers Interim and Odgers Connect. These businesses combine to create the largest search firm in the UK; judged to be the number one in the UK by revenue, by Executive Grapevine. This gives us access to unparalleled resources to meet your senior recruitment needs.

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