

Top Ten Leadership Skills – Book 1

Skills 1–5

Sarah Simpson



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Sarah Simpson

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Skills 1–5

Top Ten Leadership Skills – Book 1 (Skills 1–5)
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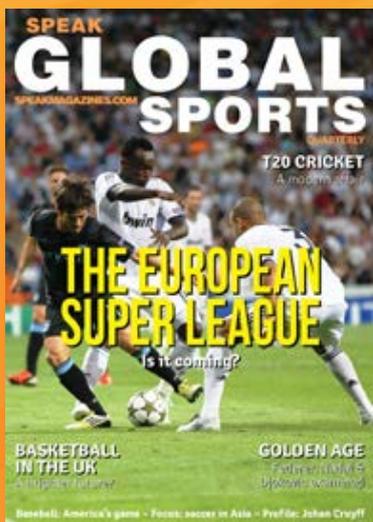
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Introduction

This book concentrates on leadership skills as being transformational and inspirational in nature. This is not to say that managers do not have these skills and indeed I am not making that distinction. Managers are often thought of in terms of following procedure and ‘getting the job done’ with less concern for staff development and needs. But, as far as this book goes the term ‘leader’ also refers to the ‘manager’. (For a more detailed explanation of managers vs. leaders please see the book ‘The Skills, Models and Philosophies of Leadership’)

In choosing my ‘Top Ten’ Skills I have drawn on:

Leadership theory

Staff surveys & Questionnaires

My own experiences of being a leader

My own experiences of having been led and been part of many teams

My Top Ten:

Book 1

1. Act assertively
2. Communication
3. Critical Reflective Learning
4. Feedback – Giving & receiving
5. Forward thinking / Strategic planning

Book 2

6. Know your self
7. Know your team
8. Manage team performance
9. Provide vision & Direction
10. Transformational Leadership

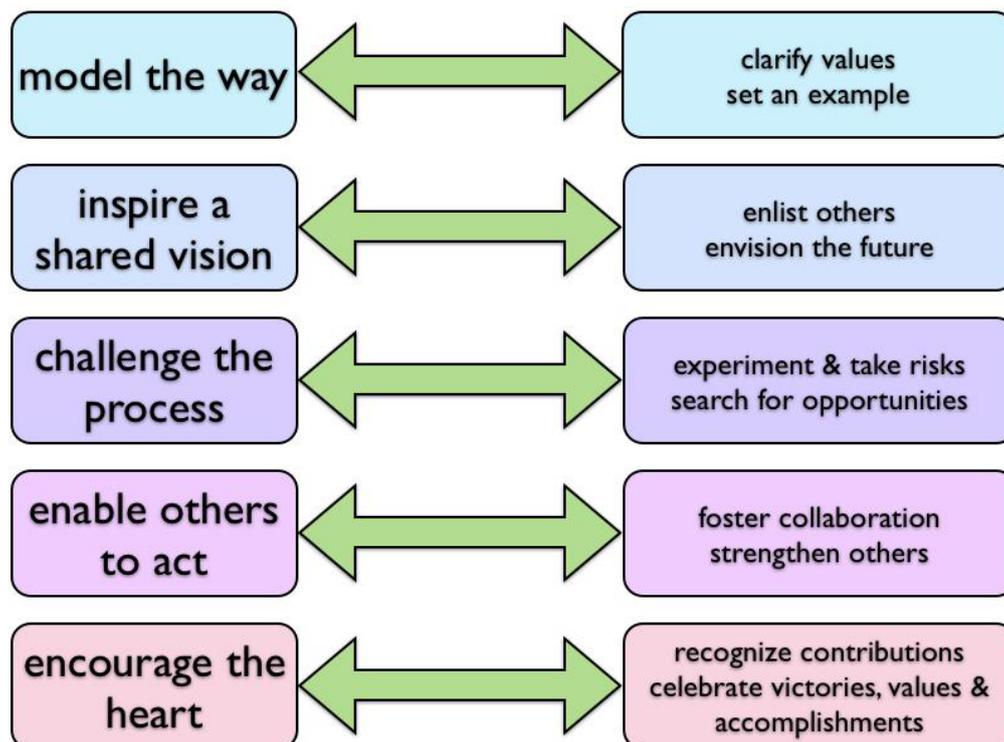
There are many contradictory theories, models and books which debate whether leaders are born or made. Trait theorists Carlyle (1841) and later Galton argued that great leaders had traits or characteristics that were unique to them and could not be developed.

Kouzes and Posner then attempted to give a definitive list of 10 key leadership qualities after surveying 630 managers. This list itemized what staff wanted from a manager not what they actually got!

The Kouzes and Posner list contained:

1. Honest
2. Forward looking
3. Inspirational
4. Competent
5. Fair minded
6. Supportive
7. Broad minded
8. Intelligent
9. Straight forward
10. Dependable

These 10 qualities were then used to develop their Leadership Challenge Model



Ralph Stogdill looked at this notion another way in that leadership qualities are difficult to define – the ‘*je ne sais quoi*’ factor – having a skill and knowing what to do with it are two different things.

For me leaders learn by:

- ‘Mirroring’ behaviors they have seen others use
- Learning by ‘trial and error’
- Picking it up ‘on the job’
- Moving from transactional to transformational practice

The skills, qualities and attributes in this book are designed for anyone who has staff responsibility and wishes to develop not only themselves but their team.

I hope you will find this useful and will actively seek to ensure you or those you appoint as leaders are given a stable skills foundation on which to develop themselves, their team and the wider organization. Leadership is an active not passive process. It requires constant inward and outward looking assessment and development.

1 Act Assertively

“The basic difference between being assertive and being aggressive is how our words and behavior affect the rights and well being of others”.

Sharon Anthony Bower

1.1 Assertive, Aggressive and Submissive

Assertiveness is described as ‘a form of communication in which needs or wishes are stated clearly with respect for oneself and the other person in the communication’

Aggressiveness on the other hand is described as “a form of physical or verbal behavior leading to self-assertion; it is often angry and destructive and intended to be injurious, physically or emotionally, and aimed at domination of one person by another”.

At the other end of the spectrum sits **submissiveness** which comes from the latin sub meaning under and mittere meaning send or put – “submitting to someone else’s will and / or putting your own desires lower than theirs”.

The table below shows the difference in these behaviors and how they can manifest in the workplace environment.

1.1.1 Workplace behavior

Assertive leader	Aggressive leader	Submissive leader
We can all win'	I win – you lose'	I lose – you win'
Ideas, opinions and feelings are expressed in an open honest manner	No debate	Apologetic if expressing an opinion
Both positive and negative elements can be discussed	Must win even if they not really bothered about the catalyst for the argument	Timid and unconfident
They don't blame or judge others	Threats, manipulation and blame are evident	They blame themselves and put themselves down
They work on facts not opinions and emotions	Demanding and quick to belittle others	Can't express their views and opinion
They work to find a compromise or solution	They want to get their own way	They allow others to 'walk all over them'
Things are not viewed in terms of 'I win – you lose'	Cold, hard and sarcastic tone of voice	Can appear unsympathetic to the feelings of others
They respect the rights of everyone else	Leadership position feelings of superiority. This may be maintained by putting other people down	Staff see you as weak and ineffective
They stand up for themselves but don't demean anyone else in the process	People can feel upset and demoralized after encountering these leaders	They can't and don't respect their own rights and feelings
Are able to except compliments		
Are comfortable asking for and seeking clarification		

As with any form of communication or behavior it is also what is **not** said that adds to the impact or standing as a leader. Expressing assertive views whilst displaying aggressive or submissive body language will give your team mixed messages. As will 'flipping' rapidly between different styles. We may have all encountered leaders who staff have to 'weigh up' in the morning to ascertain what mood they are in or what behavior they are showing.

1.1.2 Body Language

Assertive leader	Aggressive leader	Submissive leader
Open body language	Pointing	Hesitant
Steady eye contact	Aggressive gesturing	Strained 'un-genuine' smile
Respectful of body space	Striding around	Limited or no eye contact
Warm smile	Staring / glaring	Making body size small
Open steady gestures	Thumping fists	Fidgeting of hands
Face relaxed	pointing	Closed body language
Relaxed hand movements	Leaning over or toward	Covering mouth with hand
	Invading body space	Looks like expect the worst
	Crossing arms	Crossing arms
	Sneering / scowling	Biting lip

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1.1.3 Verbal Language

Assertive leader	Aggressive leader	Submissive leader
Firm but relaxed voice	Harsh clipped speech	Hesitant, faltering voice
Fluent fluid speech	Sarcastic tone	Pauses or rambling
Talks about fact and not opinion	Uses threats	Apologetic speech "I'm sorry" "I can't do this" "erm", "uh" "maybe"
Uses cooperative phrases that seek someone else's opinion	Boasts	Timidness / blaming themselves
Explores options	Blames	Voice may be: low, whining, soft, tailors off
Is firm in stating their needs and wants, but not at the expense of someone else's needs and wants	Condescending	

So, the above shows you the main differences between assertive, aggressive and submissive behavior but what are the main benefits to you as a leader and your team of being assertive?

Maybe an aggressive *'my way or the high way'* would work. At least you would get things done and decisions would be made quickly and without the need for endless meetings that don't decide anything anyway...right?

OK, well maybe a submissive stance wouldn't be that bad. You could be everyone's friend and everyone likes autonomy especially given that your team is made up of adults who are quite capable of self regulation... right?

1.1.4 The Importance of Being Assertive – To You

- Increased self esteem
- Increased self confidence
- You feel able to express yourself rather than leaving things 'bottled up'
- You can feel and be true to yourself, your opinions and your values
- You are less likely to blame others because you take responsibility
- You can have honest, open working relationships
- You are able to let people know exactly what you are feeling in a manner which doesn't undermine them

- You appear confident and therefore as a leader you are trusted and your decisions are Viewed with confidence
- You can make decisions quickly as you are not wasting time apologizing or ‘going round the houses’

1.15 The Importance of Being Assertive – To Your Team

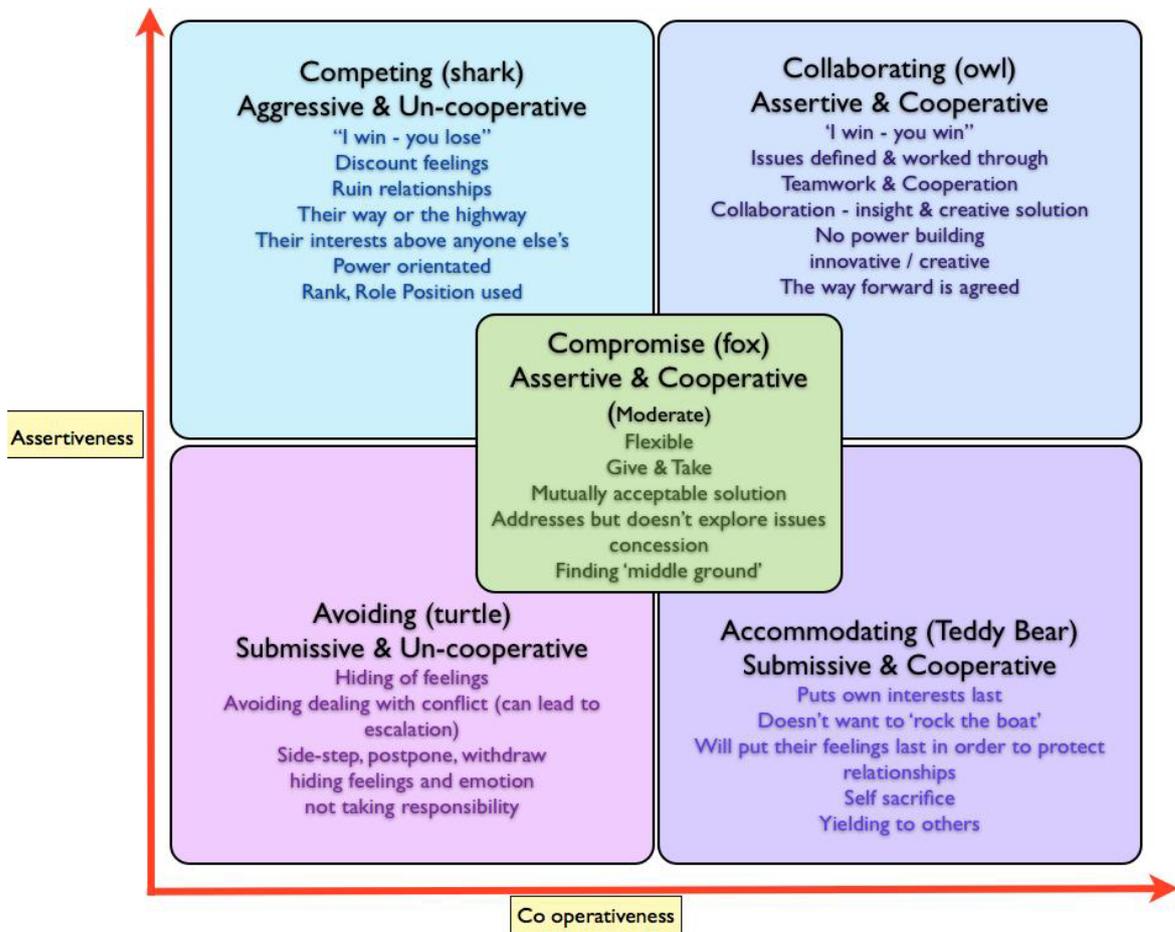
- Your team gain confidence in themselves because they are listened to and are an integral part of the team
- Your team has confidence in you and your ability to make sound judgements
- You are more able to deal with aggressive and submissive team members thereby ensuring everyone has an equal weighting
- There is less chance of a conflict situation and if begins you are more able to deal with it at an early stage*
- The team knows what you expect from them
- Your team knows what to expect from you
- Everyone is able to ‘put their cards on the table’ knowing that their opinion will count
- They are confident your judgement is based on facts and evidence and not emotion

*conflict stages: no conflict, latent conflict, emergence, escalation, stalemate, de-escalation, settlement / resolution

As you can see the notion of acting assertively and being able to manage potential or actual team conflict are entwined. Leaders who are assertive work towards a win-win situation. This is in stark contrast to submissive leaders who lose whilst someone else wins, or the aggressive leader who wants to win at any cost.

1.2 Thomas Kilmann Inventory (TKI)

A highly practical model that I use when looking at this behavior and conflict is the Thomas Kilmann Inventory (TKI) which I have adapted in order to show where different (aggressive, assertive and submissive) leaders would sit.



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Therefore, as a leader the optimum approach for the vast majority of the time would be collaborating, with compromising following.

Collaborating (high assertiveness and cooperation) allows you to:

- Understand the views and opinions of others
- Test your assumptions
- Find a collaborative solution
- Gain insight and perspective
- Get commitment through consensus

Compromising (moderate assertiveness and cooperation) allows you to:

- Establish temporary agreement
- Reach a compromise when goals are similar
- Prevents anguish caused by only settling for ‘winning’
- Show that you are a reasonable leader

1.3 Transactional Analysis (TA)

The other way of looking at assertiveness and team interactions is through Transactional Analysis (TA).

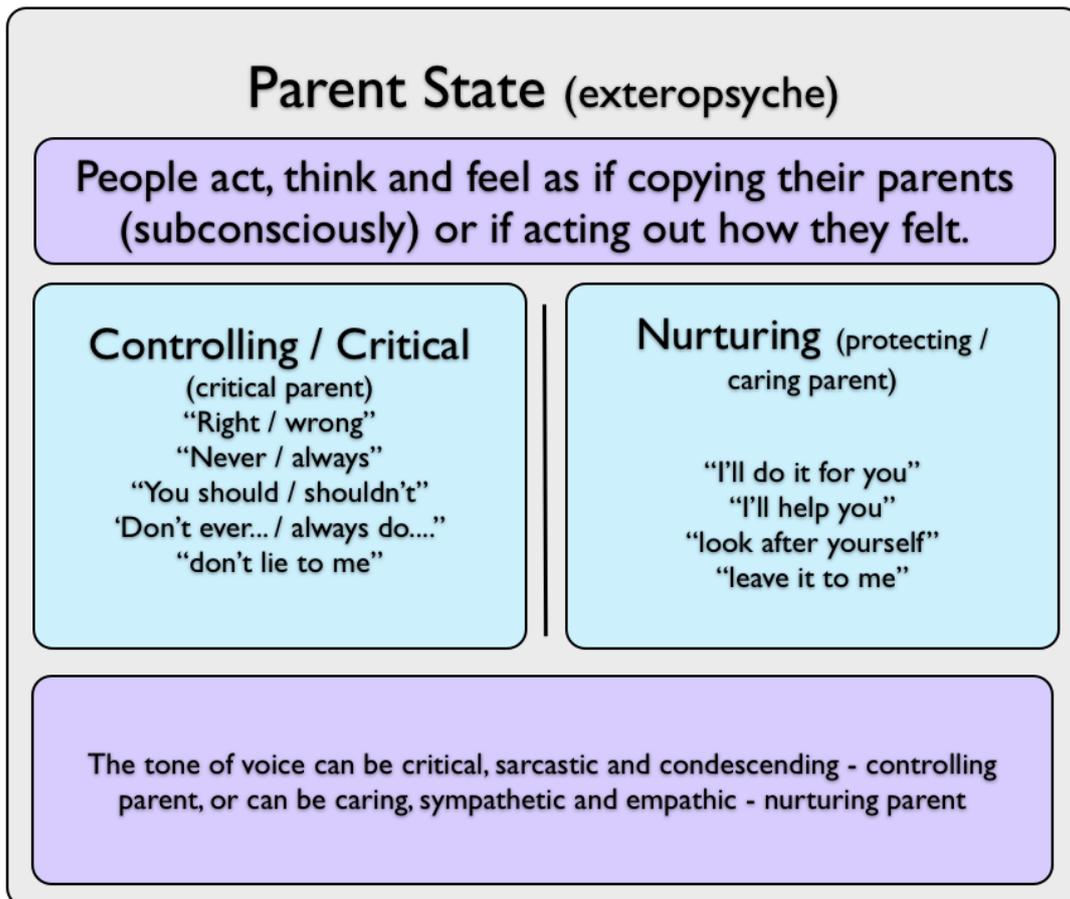
TA is the interaction that occurs when one person (the agent) says something (transaction stimulus) and another person (the respondent) reacts (transaction response).

TA was developed by Eric Berne in the 1950s and it describes the communication ‘ego states’ of:

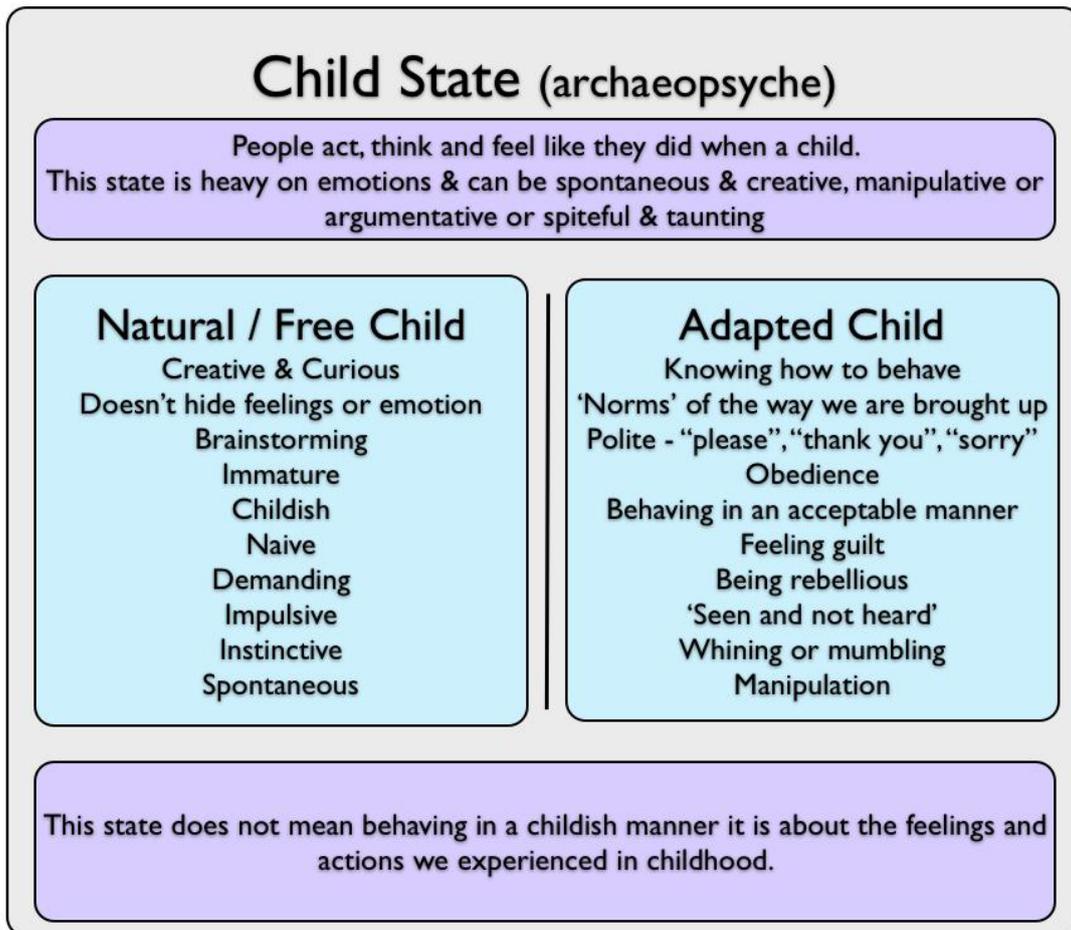
- Parent
- Child
- Adult

The importance of TA in relation to leadership is in being able to recognize what frames or ego states others are using and adopt a frame which prevents misunderstanding or ‘crossing of transactions’.

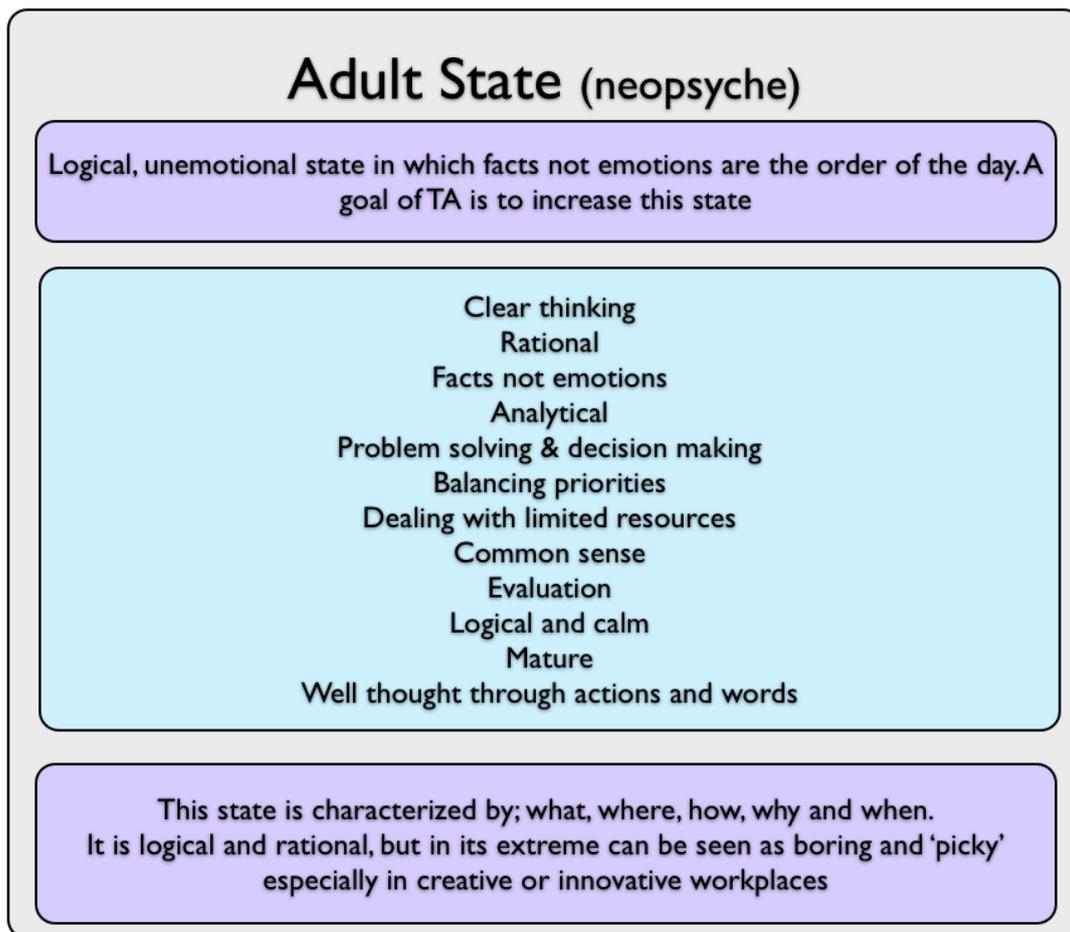
1.3.1 Parent State – teaching



1.32 Child State – feeling(s)



1.33 Adult State – thinking

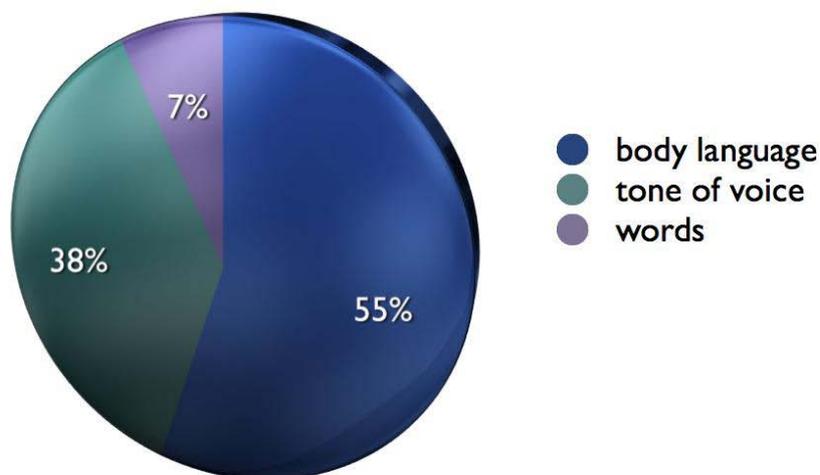


For a successful interaction to occur all parties involved must receive and send communications in a complimentary state. For example if the communication is from parent to child the communication back the other way would need to be child to parent.

You must always remember that when we talk about communication we are including how something is said and the body language that accompanies it. If you wish to read more on communication a great place to start is the work by Albert Mehrabian.

How a Message is Communicated

(source Albert Mehrabian)



1.4 Fogging

Part of being an assertive leader is having the ability to deal with people who are being aggressive.

A technique for doing this is called ‘fogging’. The principle behind it is that aggressive people expect you to respond to them by submissive backing down or by matched aggression.

The fogging technique centers around:

- Giving the aggressor a response they weren’t expecting
- Giving the **impression** you agree with them
- Using the word ‘yes’
- You maintaining your view and integrity

Example 1

Person 1 – “You are so stupid”

Person 2 – “Yes, well we all have a stupid side to us”

Example 2

Person 1 – “I see you are dressed in your usual awful suit”

Person 2 – “Yes, I am dressed in my usual suit”

Advancing this technique further you can use it to firstly stop the aggressor in their tracks and secondly to move the discussion forward in a more positive direction than how it started.

Example

Person 1 – “Why do you always act like an idiot in meetings”

Person 2 – “Yes, I do like to put my point of view forward. How do you think is an appropriate way to give your opinion?”

You can see that by counteracting the aggression with fogging and then asking open questions the conversation is able to progress and become a constructive interaction.

2 Communication

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”.

George Bernard Shaw

Communication is probable one of the most overused used management and leadership terms. “You must be a good communicator”, which is great, but how?

In order to examine the art of communication properly I have broken it down into:

- Verbal
- Open questioning
- Active listening
- Non verbal
- Written
- Email

Communication as a whole is made up of:

- Sender
- Message

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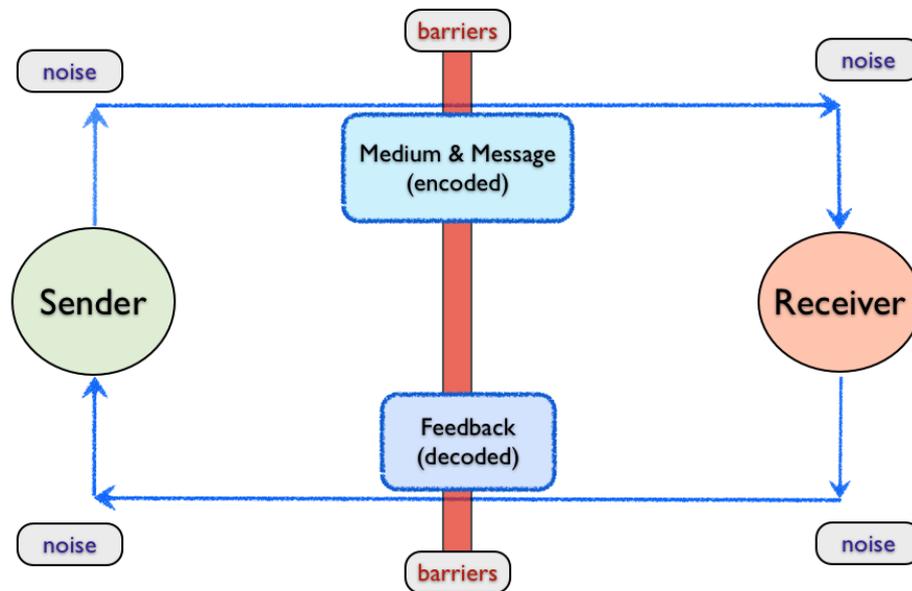
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- Medium / method
- Barriers
- Receiver
- Feedback
- Noise



2.1 Verbal

Verbal communication describes the use of words and sounds to communicate a message. It could incorporate face-to-face and telephone interactions. So, in general day-to-day operations you may communicate verbally with: individuals, your team, other departments (internal customers), customers (external customers), ‘management’ and other stakeholders.

In order to have the most successful verbal communication you should ensure:

- Speech is calm, focused and polite
- You listen as well as speak – it has been estimated that verbal communication is 25% speaking and 75% listening
- Be assertive
- Be specific
- Speak eloquently
- Be convincing and genuine
- Avoid using 20 words when 1 will do
- ‘Own’ your comments and don’t blame others

Verbal language also contains paralanguage which includes; volume, speaking style, rate, pitch, rhythm and pronunciation.

2.2 Open questioning

An open question requires a longer answer than a closed question and often starts with *“how, what, why”* or wanting someones opinion, knowledge or thoughts.

The benefit to you as a leader is that open questions:

- Show you are genuinely interested in someones opinion and thoughts (approachable)
- Open questions and a dialogue with staff who are more submissive in nature
- Can be accompanied by open, warm body language
- Allow you to ‘dig further’ into a issue, subject or discussion
- Results in greater levels of understanding and cooperation
- Helps to create a positive learning and sharing environment
- Show the respect you have for your team and their opinion
- Demonstrates that you are wanting and willing to invest time in conversation
- Encourages a culture of openness and and honesty

2.3 Closed questioning

Closed questions on the other hand results in a single word or very short statement of fact. Closed questions:

- Can be used to summarize or conclude a longer discussion
- They close discussion down – good for when quick decisions are needed i.e. Matters of health and safety where prolonged conversation may result in unwelcome consequences
- Reduces the confusion of discussing multiple scenarios
- Closed answers are easier to assess

Close question example

“Is your project done yet”

Open question example

“I’d really like to hear about how your project is going”

Closed questions can also be used as part of an advanced communication ‘funnel’ technique. This starts with questions to obtain general information and then uses a progressively narrow focus to hone in on specific information (narrowing the funnel). This is similar to **deductive reasoning** in which thinking moves from general to specific detail.

Example

Person 1 *“I was hit by a red van”*

Person 2 *“Can you tell me more about the van?”*

Person 1 *“It had a white sign on the side”*

Person 2 *“What did the white sign say?”*

Or, the reverse would be widening the funnel and asking questions that move from specific detail to a more general discussion. This technique is similar to **inductive reasoning**. Phrases seen with this technique include “what else”, “who else”.

“What else could you do”

“Who else is going to the conference”

2.4 Active listening

When you are waiting to speak or do you actually listen or are you just pausing before speaking again? Active listening is the process by which you listen and restate back to the speaker what you have heard. This listen, restate and speaker confirmation ensures that you have heard what is being said accurately rather than hearing what you think you have heard or ‘filling in the blanks’.

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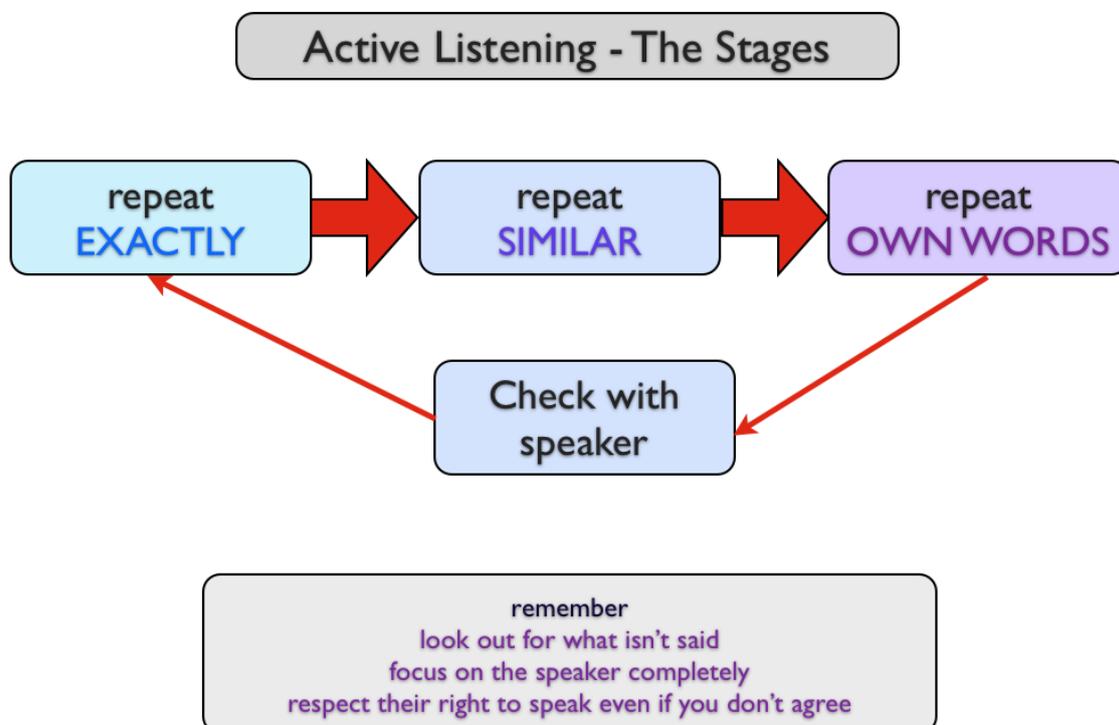
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The stages in active listening are:

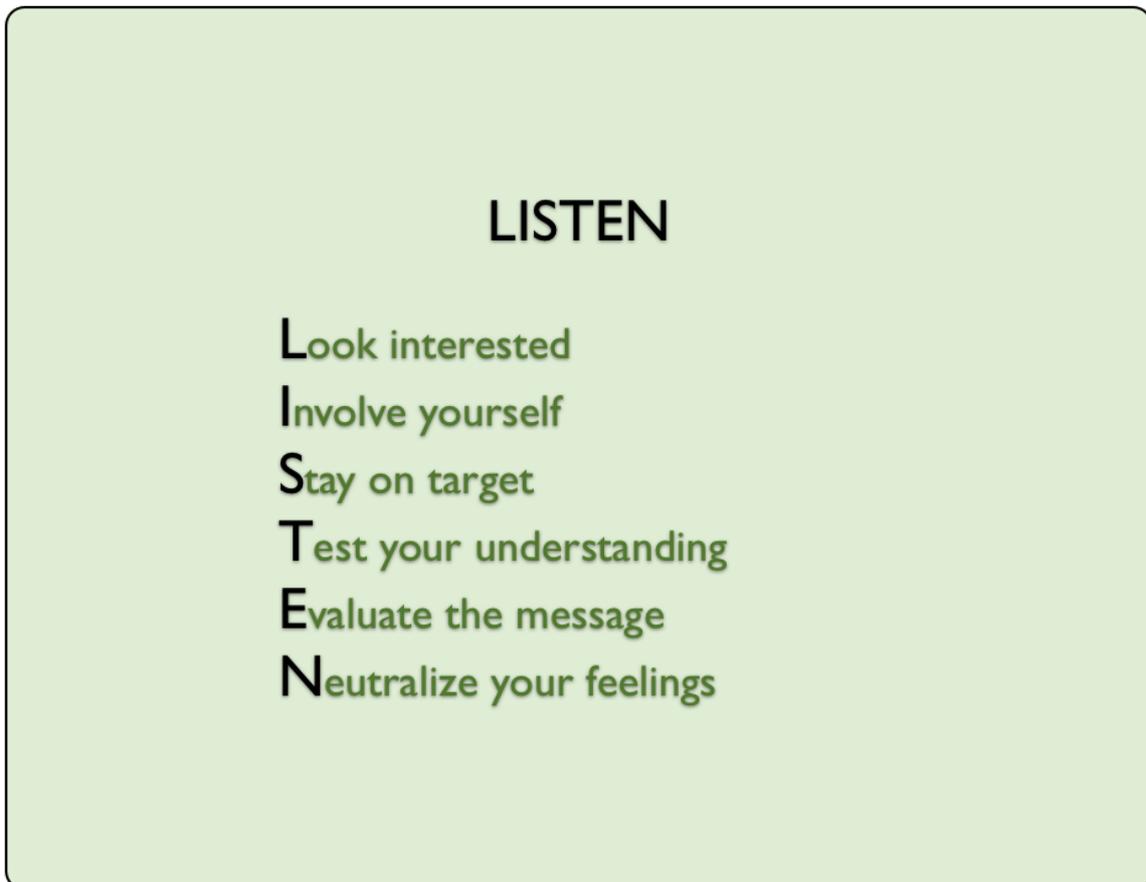
1. Repeating what has been said in the exact words
2. Repeating what has been said in similar words
3. Repeating what has been said in your own words
4. Checking with the speaker that you have heard correctly

You should also:

- Observe what is not said – body language
- Focus on them completely – don't 'fiddle', answer the phone, check emails or appear distracted
- Respect their right to say their say even if you don't agree with what they are saying



The listening acronym is often shown as:



The active listening process is important all the time, but takes on particular significance when:

- There may be communication barriers – time zone delays or language difficulties through disability
- Parties have different primary languages
- You think you have ‘heard it all before’ and it’s bound to be ‘the same old story’
- You are dealing with complex technical or industry specific language
- It is an emotional situation
- Someone is in distress

2.5 Non verbal

Non-verbal communication was first described by Charles Darwin in ‘The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals’.

It describes communication through non verbal cues. These are mainly; gestures, touch, posture, facial expression, eye contact and signing. How many times have you heard or used the phrase *'it's not what you say its how you say it'*.

It is estimated that the non-verbal element of a conversation makes up $\frac{2}{3}$ of its understanding.

As a leader non verbal communication involves:

- Being at the same height as others when interacting e.g. not standing over them
- Not invading someones personal space in an aggressive or uncomfortable manner
- Having relaxed facial features
- Ensuring eye contact is not staring or sarcastic
- Using open gestures such as hand movement and arms that are not crossed
- Being aware of staff who may find interpreting and showing non verbal communication difficult e.g. Autism and Aspergers

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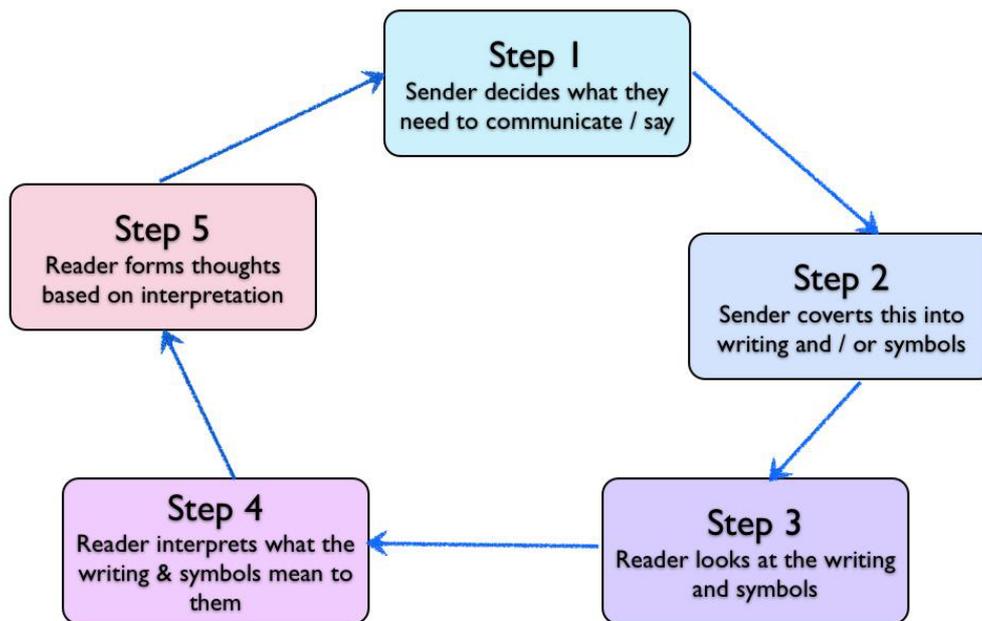
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2.6 Written

The written piece is made up of three main elements:

1. How the content is laid out – its structure
2. How it is written – its style
3. What it's about – the content

The process of communication through writing involves 5 steps.



When communicating through writing you must ensure:

Structure

- Ensure key points, facts and themes are clear and in a logical order
- Be aware of the central message or aim of your communication and ensure it meets that
- Don't use 20 words when 1 will do
- If it is more than a couple of paragraphs ensure key points can be seen quickly – think about bold, bullets and highlighting
- Space in a reader friendly manner

Style

- Use terminology and jargon that the reader can interpret
- Don't use extraneous detail as it will detract from your main message
- Your formality / informality is appropriate. Smiley faces may not be appropriate on a business plan that will be read by the chief exec.
- Ensure that grammar and spell checks have been carried out
- Check for consistency e.g. The use (or not) of full stops in a bulleted list

Content

- Are your points logical and easy to follow
- Is your argument well balanced and detailed
- Have you ensured the content is suitable for the reader
- Have you been professional and courteous – don't send anything that you wouldn't mind others reading

2.7 Email

Many large organizations have 'An Email Etiquette' Policy. Below I have compiled my list of email do's and don'ts.

Do's

- Remember they are permanent
- Keep it short and to the point – don't ramble
- Make sure it is relevant to the reader
- Reply to the emails of others in a timely fashion – we are all inundated with email communication and it is easy to fall behind leading to confusion and people resending 'just in case it got lost'
- Only send one key message per email
- Ensure you include a subject line
- Ensure that there is a level of warmth
- Always include your contact details
- Keep email correspondence in logical easy to access folders for future reference

Don't

- Be aggressive or abrupt even in jest – remember the reader won't be able to interpret the intension behind it
- Send personal or confidential material
- Forward junk mail or chain letters
- Don't CC or BCC everyone if it is not necessary
- Fire off emails out of anger or frustration – they will come back to haunt you
- Avoid over capitalization and its inference that you are shouting
- Forget to still use correct grammar and punctuation
- Send emails off until you have read them for meaning and accuracy
- Send offensive material

2.8 Intrapersonal

This is personal internal communication, or the conversation you have with yourself (inner dialogue) and it is thought to contain three elements:

1. Expectation
2. Self awareness
3. Perception

It relates to you in terms of:

- Daydreaming
- Talking to yourself – out loud or in your head
- Writing down your thought
- The way you interpret non verbal communication
- The way your body talks to you e.g. Your stomach telling you it must be time for food when your hungry

Some ways that intrapersonal communication can help you as a manager include:

- Working through ideas whilst talking out loud. This enables you to hear how things sound and give you a different perspective
- Going over conversations you need to have. This ensures you are well prepared and have covered everything you need to
- Practicing a presentation – remember this is always best done out loud as our speed, pitch and tone of voice changes if we practice in our head or out load
- Prioritizing what you need to do

2.9 Barriers

Communication barriers interrupt or distort the message sent being received in its intended format and meaning.

In order for any kind of communication to be successful barriers and noise must be eliminated or reduced. Below is a table that summarizes these obstacles.

Barrier / noise	Description
Language	Jargon, terminology, 'shortcuts' Different primary languages Cultural differences
Physical time zones	Communicating cross-country, international time zones and delays in telephone or email
Distracting gestures	Fidgeting, playing with pens etc Gestures should add to and reinforce your communications not distract and take away

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Barrier / noise	Description
Hesitant speech	erm, 'er', 'hmm' Make sure you know what the goal of your communication is and how best to put this across
Distractions	Give your communication full attention. Don't answer phones, texts or emails when you are engaged in conversation
No enthusiasm	
No focus	Don't use extraneous words Be specific and concise Stay on track and don't wander off topic
No eye contact	Use assertive eye contact – don't stare, glare or avoid looking at someone
Not listening	Employ the skills of active listening we discussed in section 2.4 above. Remember there is a difference between hearing and listening
Too much information	Do not overload your messages with too much information otherwise you will lose the main points you wish to make
Emotions	Be aware of peoples emotional state and be confident and controlled in your use of body language and personal space
Media	Ensure you media enhances your message not detracts
Agendas	Do not focus on your agenda only as you will switch off to other view points and information
External noise	Try to limit physical noise – turn off phones and extraneous noise
Experience	Don't let your judgement be clouded by pass experiences either regarding the subject you are discussing or the person you are discussing it with
Lack of confidence	Ensure you adopt an assertive stance to communication

3 (Critical) Reflective Learning

Critical reflective learning is a process in which you learn:

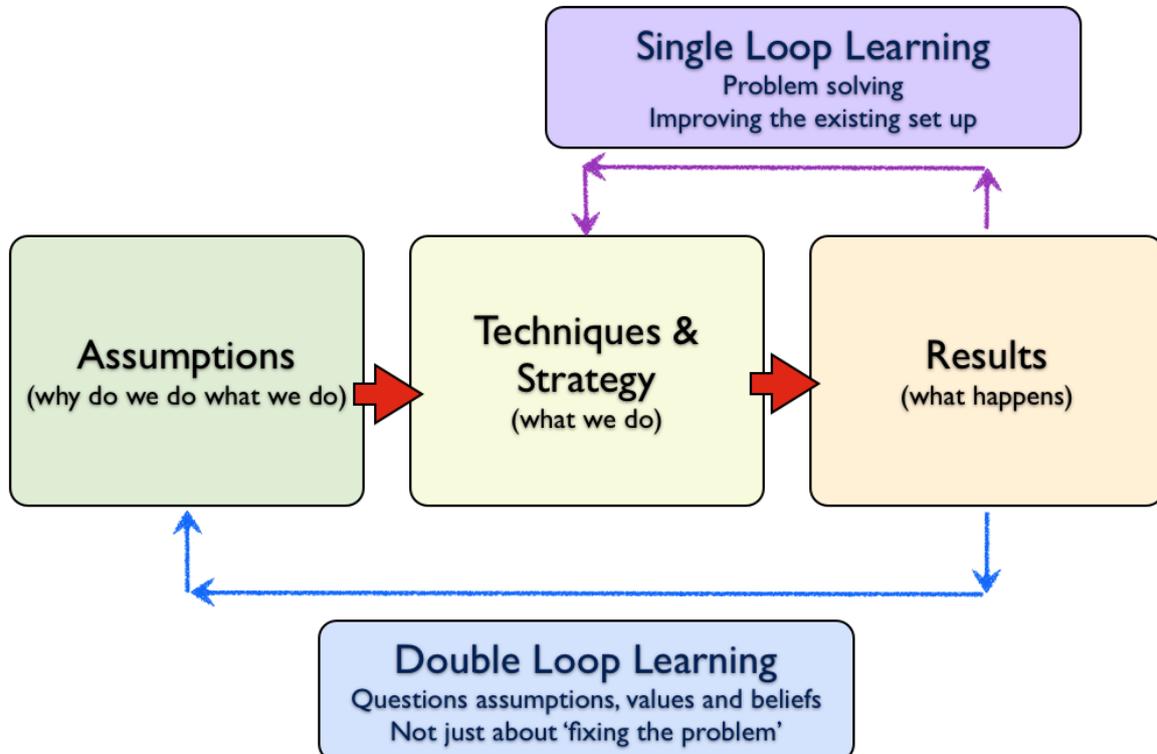
- What worked
- What didn't work
- What could have been done differently

In other words it is a process of analysis, consideration and questioning.

There are many models exploring this and the most common are:

- Argyris and Schon – single and double loop learning (1978)
- Gibbs Reflective Model / Reflective Cycle (1988)
- John's (1995) Reflective Model
- Kolb's Reflective Model (1984)
- Rolf's Reflective Model (2001)

3.1 Argyris and Schon – single and double loop learning (1978)



As a leader single loop learning is adaptive and looks at incremental change. This learning is focused on problem solving but not on why the problem arose in the first place. Single loop learning can lead to organizational stagnation.

Double loop learning on the other hand is generative and is concerned with transformational change and challenging the status quo. This type of learning uses feedback and knowledge gained from other situations in order to question and challenge. This type of learning requires you to ask not only why you do what you do, but what you should do next and why alternative options are not being tested. This in turn leads to a learning organization which is constantly adapting and changing – dynamic and proactive not reactive in nature.

3.2 Gibbs Reflective Model / Reflective Cycle (1988)

This reflective cycle pushes you to think about an activity or experience in a systematic fashion. In this way we can constantly question how effective or worthwhile our actions are.

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3.3 John’s (1995) Reflective Model (Model of Structured Reflection)

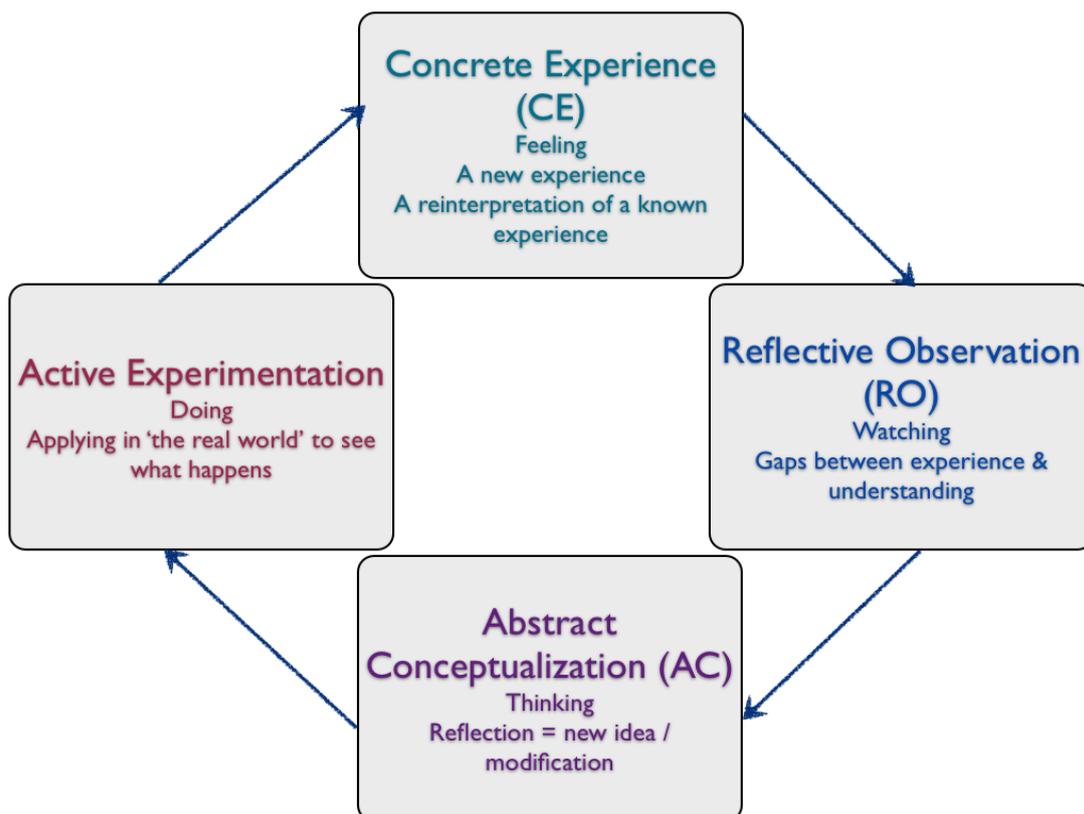
John’s build on the work of Carper (1978) to produce 5 questions that enable you to deconstruct and reflect on processes and outcomes.

Question	Expansion
Describe	What was the experience you had and what were the significant elements or factors involved? Are there any significant background factors?
Reflect	What were you trying to achieve? What were the consequences? Why did I act like I did? How did I feel as it was happening? How did those around me feel & how do I know this?
Influencers	What affected you decision making process? Knowledge Internal factors External factors

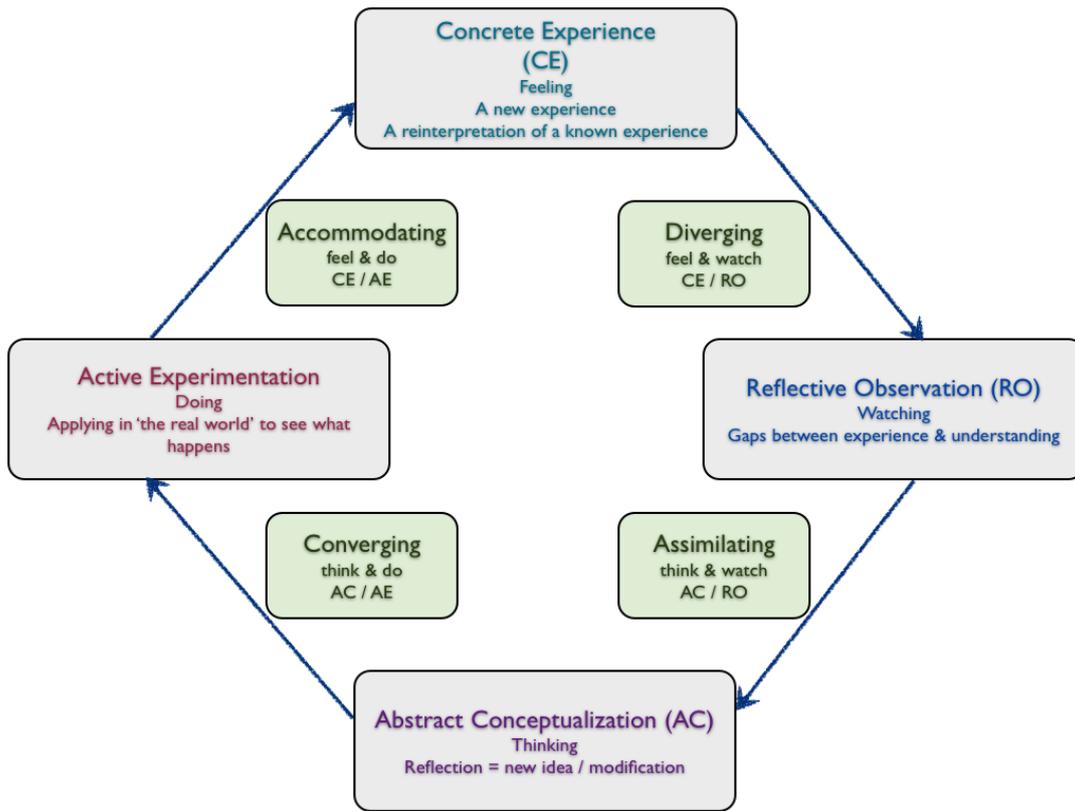
Question	Expansion
Better?	Could you have done it better? What other options did I have and what consequences and outcome would these have produced?
Learning	Now you have had this experience what will you change? How do you feel now (after the event) about what happened? Has this experienced changed my level of knowledge?

3.4 Kolb’s Reflective Model (1984)

This is also known as The Kolb Cycle, The Learning Cycle or The Experimental Learning Cycle. This 4 stage cycle shows the stages of learning and suggests that you can’t just experience something in order to learn. You must in fact reflect and form concepts which you can then apply to future events. In other words you must link theory, action and reflection in a continual cycle.



Kolb also developed four learning styles that combine two of the four stages of the cycle above to produce:



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So, as a leader you can approach things by either watching others and reflecting on what happens (**reflective observation**), or by 'going for it' ourselves (**active experimentation**). We can then take this experience and turn it into something useful by gaining new information (**abstract conceptualization**) or through tangible consequences (**concrete experience**).

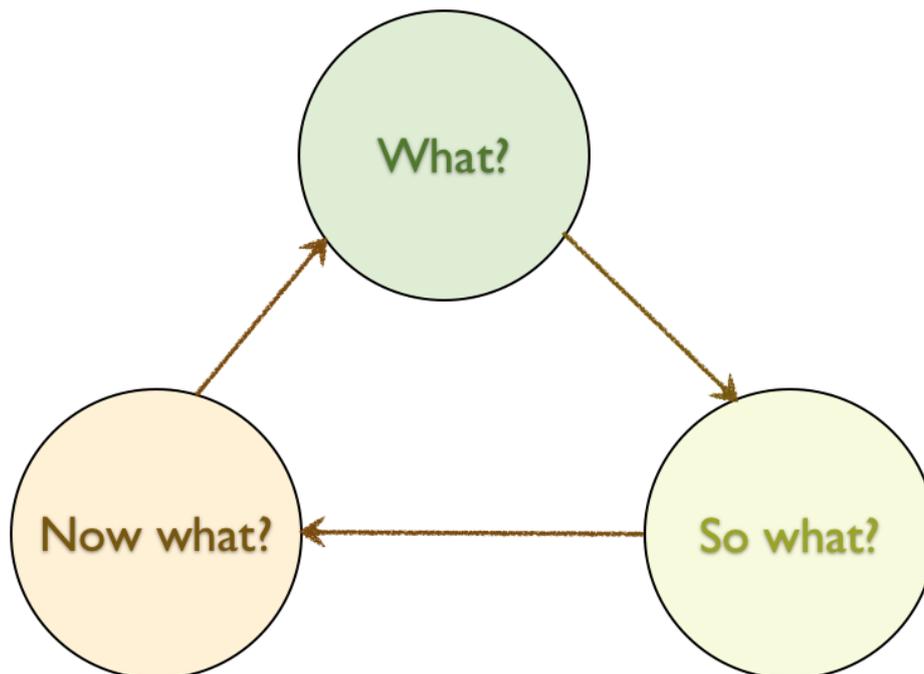
If you know your style and that of your team you can play to their strengths and can introduce new learning experiences in a manner conducive to their style.

3.5 Rolfe's Reflective Model (2001)

This is a lovely, simple model which is centered around three questions:

1. What
2. So what
3. What next

In essence this seeks to describe what happened, analyze it and build knowledge.



3.6 Summary of Reflective Learning

Whichever model or process you use critical reflective learning:

- Transforms experiences into learning
- Works at the level of; the individual, team, organization and wider community
- Allows stereotypes to be explored
- Allows assumptions to be tested
- Allows you to be critical rather than negative
- Provides a safe environment for questioning and analysis
- You develop an evidence based mentality
- Ensures you make informed decisions
- If you are able and used to questioning yourself you are more likely to consider the opinions, beliefs and experiences of others

4 Feedback – Giving & Receiving

“What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters; abcdef? Answer: feedback. Don’t forget that feedback is one of the essential elements of good communication”.

Anon

Feedback is defined as *‘the return of information about an activity or process’*.

Most peoples experience of feedback will revolve around ‘being told off for something’ and comments I receive when running courses on this include:

- *“They only talk to me when there’s a problem”*
- *“They never mention the good stuff”*
- *“I wish they’d let me know when I’m doing something well”*

Flip chart discussions usually involve words such as:

- Criticism
- Negative

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- Doing something wrong
- Being told off
- Being ‘picked on’
- Performance review

Feedback examples

Some actual examples from employee feedback sessions are;

“You should go far – and the sooner you start, the better we’ll all be.”

“You set low standards and then consistently fail to achieve them.”

“Your team might well follow you but this is only out of morbid curiosity”

Whilst these might be amusing to read, if you are on the receiving end it certainly isn’t. They are vague, attacking, emotional, lacking in specifics and with no plan of action. In other words all the things (constructive) feedback should not be.

As a leader we have already examined the art and importance of communication and feedback forms one of the most important and challenging one-to-one interactions.

Feedback differs from criticism or praise which is:

- Based on general or vague information
- Focused on the person
- Based on opinions and feelings
- One way and doesn’t encourage discussion or dialogue
- Likely to lead to a battle about whose opinion is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’
- Likely to lead to defensiveness on the part of the recipient

4.1 Why should you give feedback?

1. To continually improve a watch / teams performance
2. To correct performance (redirection)
3. To highlight good practice
4. To motivate
5. To learn from good practice (reinforce)
6. To increase two way communication
7. To implement an action (begin)

If one of these is not present **feedback should not be given.**

In order for effective feedback to happen staff have to have the skills to both give and receive feedback and an understanding that this is a supportive sharing of knowledge as opposed to a ‘witch hunt’.

4.2 Main types of feedback

There are two main types of feedback:

1. Redirection
2. Reinforcement

4.2.1 Redirection

This feedback is designed to identify behaviors and performance that either do not contribute to, or hinder individual, group or organizational goals and aims. For example:

- Poor performance
- Areas for improvement

4.2.2 Reinforcement

This feedback is designed to identify behaviors and performance that contributes to, or adds value to individual, group or organizational goals and aims. For example:

- Good practice
- Positive recognition

Both types of feedback should be discussed and shared with others where appropriate. This ensures that your organization is one that is continually learning from what they do (reflective learning).

4.3 Good Practice Guidelines

- Be supported by evidence
- Focus on acts not attitude
- Be specific – don’t use general sweeping phrases such as “always” or “never”
- Goal orientated
- Directed towards the future
- Supported by an action plan
- Continual
- Multidirectional
- A discussion not statement of perceived fact
- A two way conversation

- Undertaken in a timely manner
- Not done in front of other people – unless it is part of a team feedback session i.e. A debrief
- Be clearly understood by the receiver
- A positive experience

4.4 BEER

The best acronym for feedback that I find most delegates remember is ‘BEER’:

- **B**ehavior
- **E**ffect
- **E**xpectations
- **R**esult

Remember the common theme running throughout all leadership skills is to be assertive not aggressive or submissive. Feedback is not about character assassination and the rule of thumb is tact not apology.

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BEER	Explanation	Comments
Behavior	<p>What are you trying to reinforce (good practice / +ve recognition) or redirect (poor practice / constructive feedback)</p> <p>What is your evidence?</p> <p>Be specific / use facts not sweeping statements</p>	<p>Phrases such as <i>'you do my head in'</i>, <i>'you were useless'</i> and <i>'your attitude stinks'</i> are your emotional opinion and should not be used.</p> <p>Use 'hard' evidence and facts</p> <p>The goal of feedback is to enter into a conversation, not to give someone a piece of your mind!</p>
Effect	<p>What effect has an action had?</p>	<p>Ask yourself:</p> <p>Can I identify and accurately describe the behavior or performance I want to redirect or reinforce and its effects on others in the organization?</p> <p>Do I have detailed examples of the act and its effects that I can use to support my descriptions?</p>
Explanation	<p>Explain what you expect to happen i.e. sharing practice or changing practice</p>	<p>Ask yourself:</p> <p>Can I identify and describe the results that I hope my reinforcement or redirection will produce?</p> <p>Does the person receiving the feedback understand my expectations for his or her performance?</p>
Results	<p>What do you expect as a result of the feedback and how will you monitor / review it?</p>	<p>Explore future actions</p> <p>Get the recipient's commitment to make the action plan happen</p> <p>Remind the recipient of the positive intent</p> <p>Agree on a scheduling for a follow-up session</p> <p>Thank your feedback recipient</p>

4.5 Receiving Feedback

One of the guidelines for feedback above is that it should be a two way process, therefore as a leader or manager you must be able 'to take it as well as give it'. The feedback process should result in clarification of behavior and an action plan. This can only happen successfully if both sides communicate freely.

In order to receive feedback constructively you must:

- Listen (actively) to what is being said
- See it as an opportunity to increase communication and its channels
- Develop an action plan that is SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic & timely)
- See it as a way to increase team cohesion and productivity
- Be prepared to hear about the effects of your actions (good and bad)
- See it as part of reflective learning and leadership growth

Many people when learning about, or experiencing giving or receiving feedback will have been introduced to the ‘feedback sandwich’. The ideas behind which is that you give someone ‘good news’ then tell them what you actually wanted to tell them – ‘the bad news’ and follow up with another ‘good’ comment. I personally don’t like this approach. If feedback is given; correctly (fact not opinion), is timely, continual, given for both +ve and -ve aspects and has a follow up action this is not necessary. This ‘sandwich’ method only adds to the impression that feedback is a negative experience and something to ‘fear’.

4.6 Feedback Summary

- BEER – Behavior, Effect, Expectation, Results
- Reinforcement or re-direction
- It’s about facts not opinions
- Be clear about your motive
- Be specific and use supporting evidence
- Be assertive – ‘own’ the feedback
- Tact works apology doesn’t
- Listen as well as talk
- Be prepared to receive as well as give feedback – two way conversation
- Have an action plan and review progress
- Share both reinforcement and redirection with others where appropriate (reflective learning)

5 Forward Thinking / Strategic Planning

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world”.

Joel Arthur Barker

Strategic planning is the process by which you define direction (usually 3–5 years) and make decisions regarding the allocation of resources.

The benefits of strategic planning include:

- Clearly defining purpose and goals
- Communicating these to staff and stakeholders
- Ensuring staff can take ownership of specific elements
- Defining mission and vision
- Ensuring effective use of resources (including human)

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In simple terms strategic planning looks at three questions:

1. Where are we now? – the current state
2. Where do we want to be – the desired state
3. How will we get there? – the strategic plan

5.1 Where are we now? – the current state

In order to define and establish the current state a number of tools are at your disposal and these include:

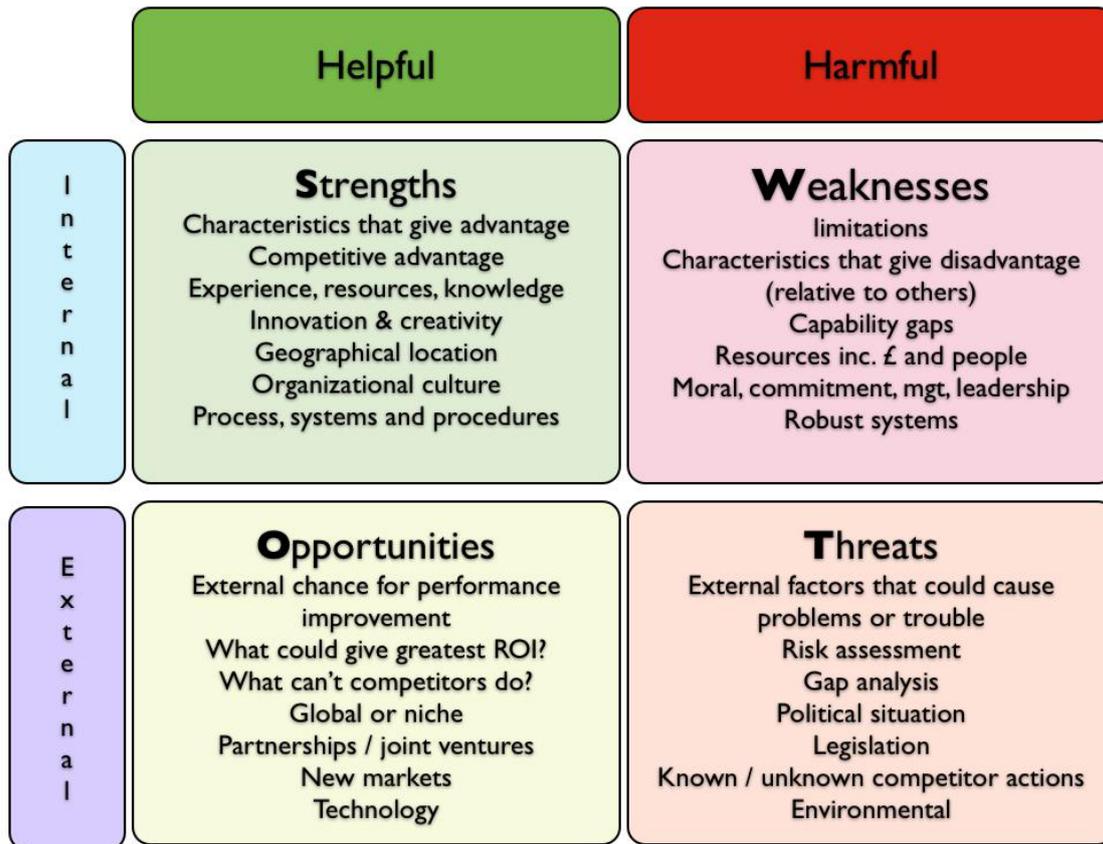
- SWOT Analysis
- Porters 5 Forces
- PEST(LE)
- Stakeholder Analysis – Internal and External

5.11 SWOT Analysis

Most people will be familiar with SWOT analysis or the SWOT matrix. This strategic planning tool evaluates your:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Strengths and weaknesses are generally considered to be internal in nature and opportunities and threats external.

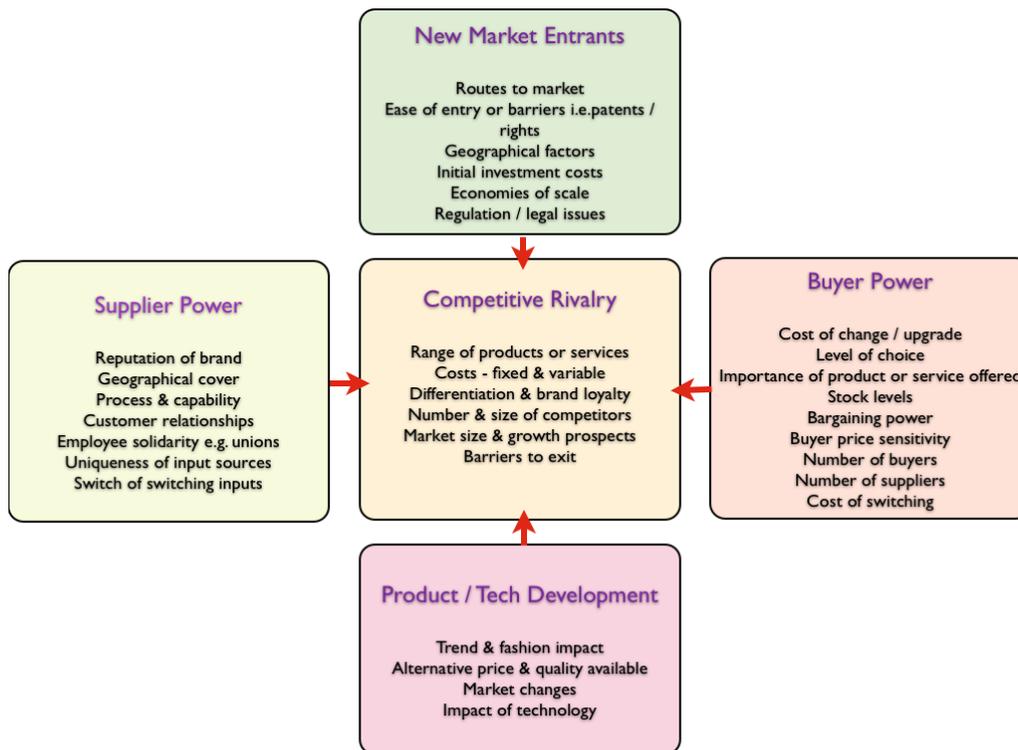


SWOT analysis is a great tool as a leader in order to get group discussions flowing freely. In this way brainstorming can occur and creativity, free thinking and challenging of previous positions occurs. However due to the limited 2x2 nature it is not enough to fully understand or answer “*where are we now*”.

5.1.2 Porters 5 Forces

This model is also known as Porter’s Five Forces of Competitive Position . It affords you a way of assessing and analyzing your competitive strength. It is made up of 5 elements or forces:

1. The existing rivalry between suppliers
2. The threat of new market entrants
3. The bargaining power of buyers
4. The power of suppliers
5. The threat of product substitutes



By understanding competitor dynamics you can:

- Assess potential opportunities
- Understand what differentiates you from the competition
- See the 'power' of the forces – a high power would suggest lower profit potential
- By understanding a market you can better direct strategy towards increasing your market share
- You can see how each force impacts on and is related to another – this holistic view can show changing dynamics and the linkages between the five forces. This prevents you from only looking at the positive

5.1.3 PEST(LE)

This analysis tool is designed to help you understand and appreciate market growth or decline. This enables you to see the potential, position and direction that could be taken.

The PESTLE model can be increased to STEEPLED to include ethical and demographic elements.

- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Technological
- Legal
- Environmental

Element	Description
Political	Current & future legislation Government policy Conflict Environmental concerns / policy Trade barriers and policy Global trade legislation
Economic	State of home economy State of international economy Exchange and interest rates Tax
social	Demographics Fashion and trends Advertising and publicity Ethical concerns Religious impact Media Brand image Buying patterns & trends Social media impact
Technological	How consumers buy Innovation Communication channels Technological 'age' Dependent technologies R&D
Legal	Consumer law & protection Employment law Health & safety International law Industry specific Competitive regulation
Environmental	Local, national and international environmental concerns & law Customer values Stakeholder attitude and consideration Staff engagement and moral Ecology

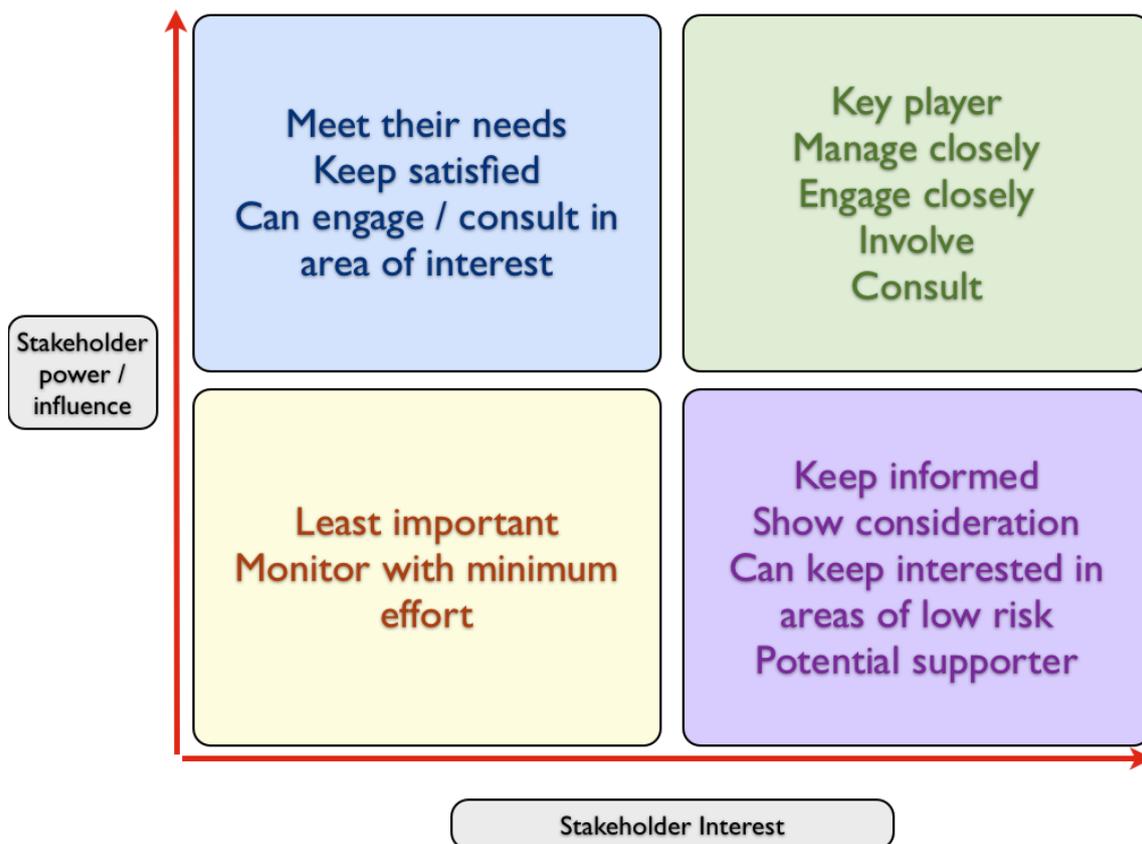
By analyzing market potential, attractiveness and the ‘bigger picture’ you can gain an insight into the potential and direction for business growth and therefore plan strategically for this direction.

5.1.4 Stakeholder Analysis – Internal and External

Stakeholder analysis is a process in which you systematically gather and analyze information (usually qualitative) in order to ascertain whose interests should be taken into consideration when developing strategic plans or assessing strategic options. A strategies success will be determined by the extent to which all stakeholders have their needs met and this is vital for both long and short term organizational success.



A way for you to further assess stakeholders in the context of strategic planning is to ascertain their power and interest and by doing so establish who key stakeholders are and what impact they have / could have on your strategic plan and vision.



Having completed:

- SWOT Analysis
- Porters 5 Forces
- PEST(LE)
- Stakeholder Analysis – Internal and External

You can now answer “*Where are we now*” / “*What is our current state?*”

5.2 Where do we want to be – the desired state

This is stage two of strategic planning and covers:

- Vision
- Mission
- Option generation
- Evaluation

5.2.1 Vision

‘Where are we going?’

A strategic vision is:

- A description of your destination
- Is customer focused
- Shows intended market position
- Gives proposed business activities
- Describes the capabilities it plans to develop

Good vision statements should be:

1. Easy to read
2. Easy to understand
3. Meaningful
4. Not too far fetched
5. Create motivation and excitement
6. Challenging but achievable

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Two examples of Strategic Vision Statements (2012)

Amazon

Amazon's vision is to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

Apple

Apple is committed to bringing the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals and consumers around the world through its innovative hardware, software and Internet offerings.

Some questions that can help you form your vision are:

- What are your values?
- What do you believe in?
- What are the values and expectations of your stakeholders?
- What excites you and your stakeholders?
- Where would you like the organization to go in the long-term?
- What would you like the organization to look like in the long-term?
- Why will your customers choose to come to you?
- What will the customer experience be?
- What will it be like for your organization?

5.2.2 Mission

'Who you are and what you do.'

Mission statements set out the reason for your organizations existence – what are its objectives and purpose. It is not a description of what you want to be, but rather its about why you exist.

Examples of mission statements:

Disney

"We create happiness by providing the finest in entertainment for people of all ages, everywhere"

Apple

“To produce high-quality, low cost, easy to use products that incorporate high technology for the individual. We are proving that high technology does not have to be intimidating for non computer experts”

General mission statement guidelines:

- Keep it short and sweet (KISS Principle)
- Gain inspiration from looking at those from other companies

Consider looking at:

- What are your products – quality, range and price
- What do you do for your customers and how well do you do it
- What is your USP
- Gain inspiration from your Vision, values and philosophy

5.2.3 Option generation

There are many methods you can use for generating strategic options, but one of the easiest uses the SWOT analysis we used earlier.

Strengths and Opportunities – What strengths can you capitalize on or exploit in order to take advantage of the identified opportunities?

Strengths and Threats – What strengths can you capitalize on or exploit in order to minimize or avoid the identified threats?

Weaknesses and Opportunities – Are there any opportunities that you can utilize in order to negate any weakness?

Weaknesses and Threats – what can you do to reduce your weaknesses and avoid threat?

5.2.4 Evaluation

One way in which you can evaluate, compare and contrast potential options is to develop a rating scale against criteria which is most important. A simplified matrix might look something like this.

	Criteria				Average score (over all 4 criteria)
Option	1	2	3	4	
1					
2					
3					
4					

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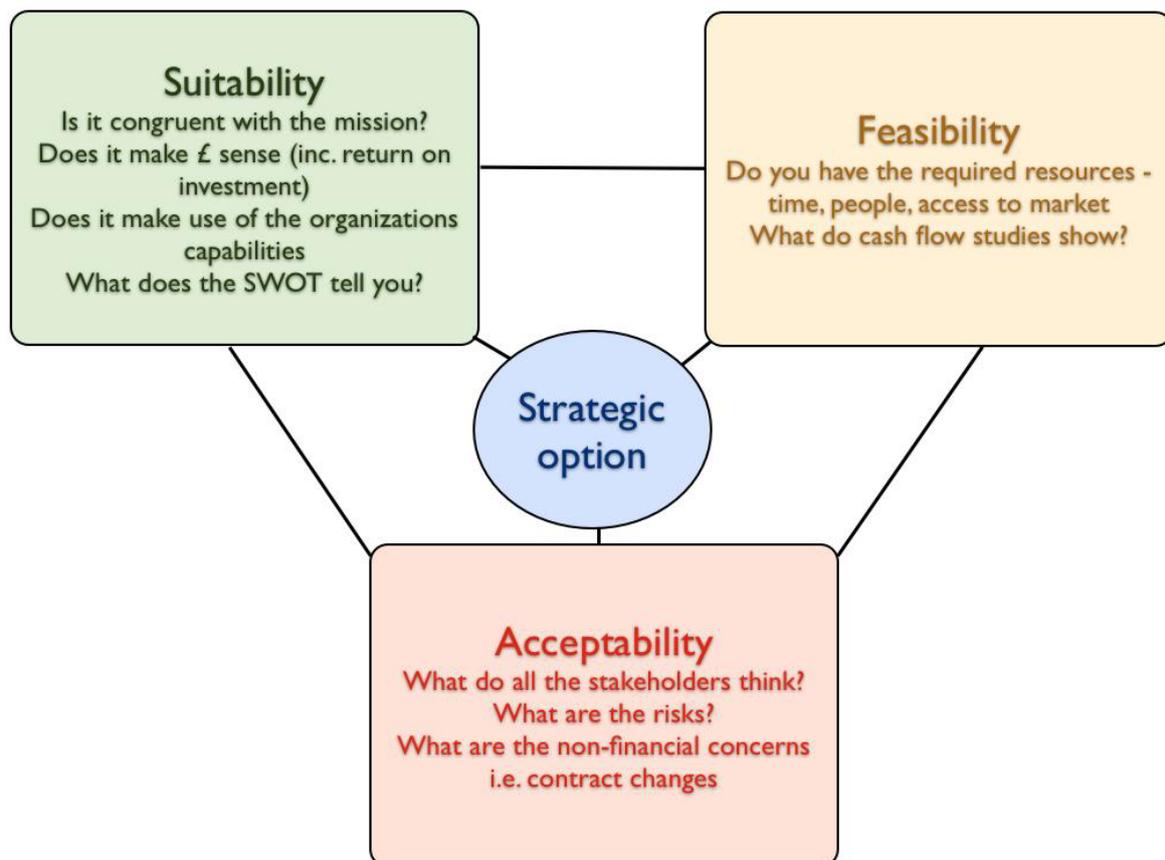
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Examples of criteria could be:

- Cost
- Time
- Environmental impact
- Return on investment

Another model that you may come across is Johnson and Scholes, which looks at evaluating strategic options against the three parameters of:

1. Suitability
2. Feasibility
3. Acceptability



We can now answer the second question – “Where do we want to be?”

5.3 How will we get there? – the strategic plan

So, you now know where you are currently and where you want to be. Now it is time for stage 3 – “*How will we get there?*”

The main elements in this stage are:

- Objectives
- Resources
- Work planning

5.3.1 Objectives

Objectives are an outline of how each of your aims are going to be achieved. These should be SMART in nature:

S – Specific

M – Measurable

A – Agreed / Achievable

R – Realistic

T – Time-bound / Timely

By using SMART as a guide you will know:

- What needs to be done
- How things will change
- When things will change
- Who is responsible for the changes

5.3.2 Resources

There is no point in developing a strategic plan if you know that you do not have, or will never have the resources in order to see it through.

Resources include:

- People / HR
- £
- Materials
- Technology
- Time

- Infrastructure
- Information
- Knowledge
- Equipment
- Intangibles – branding, reputation, goodwill, IP (intellectual property)

5.3.3 Work planning

This sets out the work required in order carry out the activities and objectives needed to fulfill the strategic plan. They may be referred to as an action plan, work plan or implementation plan. These plans detail and give information on:

- What will be done
- Who will it be done by
- When will it be done
- What elements are reliant or dependable on others
- What method will be used to do it
- What resources will be required

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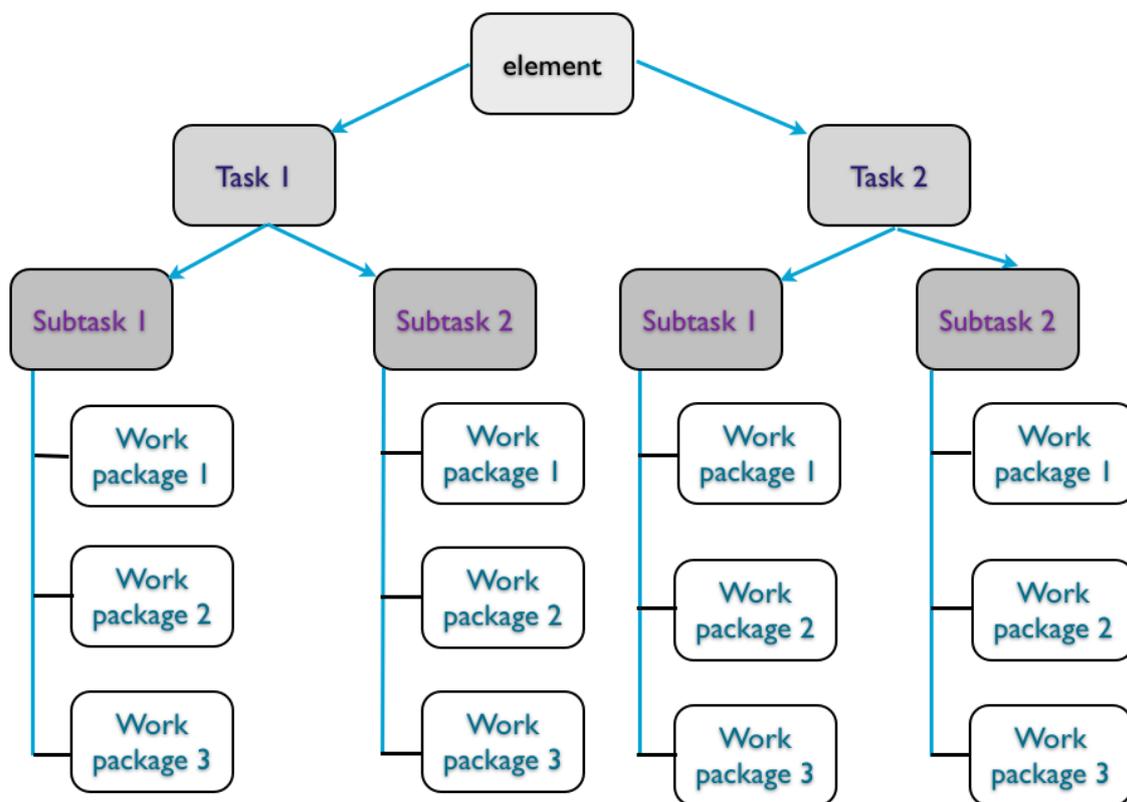


Methods you could use include:

- Work Breakdown Structure – WBS
- Gantt Charts
- Critical Path Analysis – CPA

Work Breakdown Structure – WBS

This breaks down elements into smaller components. In doing so time, cost and resources can be better managed and calculated. It can also be called; organizational breakdown, drill down, or product / structure breakdown.



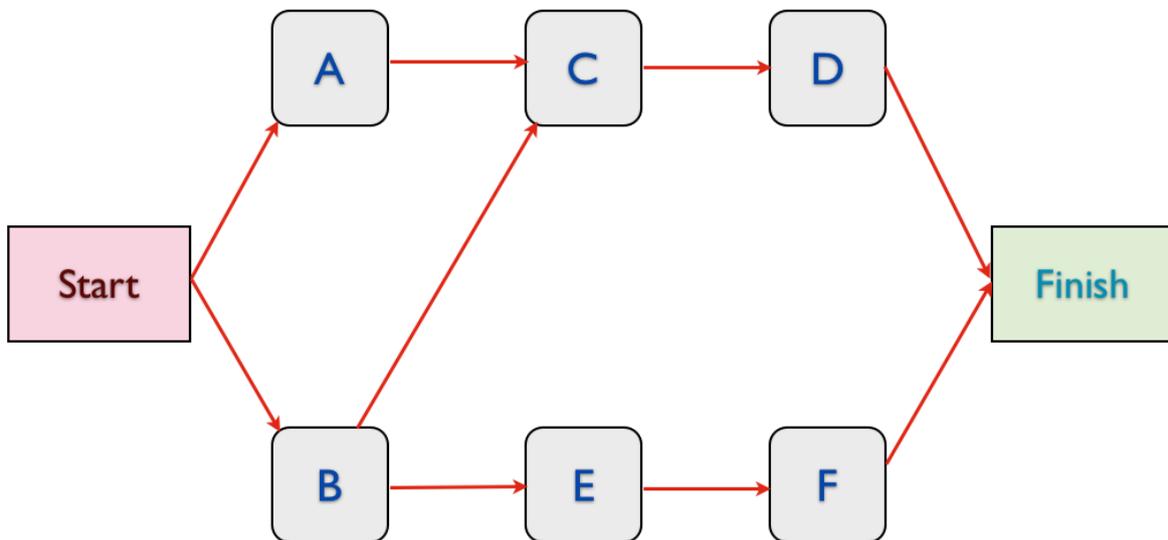
Gantt Charts

This allows you to set blocks of suitable time e.g. Days, weeks, months against component elements. It highlights what has to be completed before another element can start and you can allocate colour systems for team or individual responsibility.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Activity 1					
Activity 2					
Activity 3					
Activity 4					
Activity 5					

Critical Path Analysis – CPA

This is also known as the Critical Path Method (CPM)



By highlighting major elements and determining what has to happen when and what is dependent on what you can build up a picture of; where ‘blockages’ may occur, what activities are sequential, what are dependable and the time scales involved.

Summary

We have seen that the concept of strategic planning is simple. It ascertains; where you are, where you want to be and how your going to get there. It ensures:

- Resources are allocated in the most appropriate way and direction
- You know what is happening outside and inside your organization
- You can recognize the impact of external influences
- You consider all options and have a rigorous system of option appraisal
- You set objectives that are SMART
- Areas of poor performance can be identified and eliminated / minimized
- Staff can see ‘where you are going’ and ‘how you intend to get there’
- Staff are given organizational confidence from them seeing a long term strategy is in place and their future is ‘secure’



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6 Conclusions / Summary

“You don’t lead by pointing and telling people some place to go. You lead by going to that place and making a case”.

Ken Kesey

In this book we have looked at:

1. Act assertively
2. Communication
3. Critical Reflective Learning
4. Feedback – Giving & receiving
5. Forward thinking / Strategic planning

Book two will examine:

6. Know your self
7. Know your team Manage team performance
8. Provide vision & Direction
9. Transformational Leadership

We are different and our leadership style, skills and techniques will all vary. Great leaders use; influence, congruence and integrity not; title, power or aggression.

I hope you will take the skills discussed here and make them your own. Leaders should be inspirational and motivational not feared and revered.

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