



★ Leadership thinking

We need to be investing in leadership development early and across all levels and roles. Linda Hutchings contributes her thoughts.

Why do you think NZ has a leadership deficit?

I believe there are many answers to this question but these reasons first spring to mind:

- ◆ First, we start too late! Many organisations don't provide any leadership development until people have been promoted into management positions (and then often not until they have been in the role for several years). This is too late!!
- ◆ Second, we tend to treat leadership development as a one-off event. However in my view leadership wisdom doesn't come from one workshop, one book or one person. We need to see leadership development as a life-long journey with learning opportunities coming from multiple sources - workshops, reading, mentoring, making mistakes, reflection etc.
- ◆ Third, during the past 10-15 years many organisations have invested much of their development dollar on technology / technical training – often at the expense of so called 'soft skills'. We now have people moving into critical roles who have had little exposure to leadership thinking.
- ◆ Fourth, organisations often only provide leadership development opportunities to senior staff – I believe you don't need a title to be a leader and we need to be investing in leadership development early and across all levels and roles.
- ◆ Fifth, people often overlook the fact that they have a responsibility for their own development. I frequently see people waiting for their organisation to pay for their leadership development rather than taking personal responsibility. There are many ways to develop leadership skills that cost nothing!
- ◆ Sixth we confuse leadership development with management development!

Is leadership purely a learned ability or do inherent characteristics and qualities contribute?

Ah, the nature / nurture debate! In my mind there may be some lucky individuals born with leadership qualities however all the stunning leaders I know have chosen to work hard to learn, develop and practice the skills and qualities required to lead and they keep learning despite many hiccups and setbacks!

Do leadership competencies exist in an historical context? Would leaders of the past be leaders of today and vice versa?

I think the principles of great leadership have been always been pretty consistent. For example remarkable leaders throughout time have always been positive role models who are driven by clear values (eg integrity, honesty etc). They have the ability to inspire a shared vision to create a better future. They challenge the status quo through innovation and risk taking. They build and maintain strong relationships with people at all levels. They develop more leaders not more followers. These key leadership behaviours extend through time and across borders.

There is so much written on leadership. How can you make it operational on a daily basis?

Yes there is a monumental amount of information about leadership – if you google ‘leadership’ you get about 113,000,000 results!! To make it operational I think it helps to:

- ◆ Define what leadership actually means to you
- ◆ Develop a clear vision of the type of leader you want to become
- ◆ Undertake a regular and realistic assessment of your leadership qualities and areas for development
- ◆ Ask yourself daily ‘how I am doing?’ Take a few minutes to reflect and review - ask yourself - am I modelling the behaviour I want, am I walking my talk?
- ◆ Keep learning and practising a range of practical ‘how-to’ tools eg calling inappropriate behaviour early, providing ‘actionable feedback’
- ◆ Commit to ongoing leadership learning eg find a mentor, read leadership blogs / books, teach others what you know etc

To be a leader do all your values need to be aligned?

For me this quote sums it up - “management is 9-5, leadership is 24 /7”. Leadership is who you are all of the time – it’s who you are being while you are doing what you are doing. It’s not just who you are and how you behave at work, it’s who you are and how you behave in every aspect of your life. So yes, to be a leader all of you values need to be aligned.

What does adversity contribute to leadership?

A lot! Warren Bennis & Robert Thomas wrote a great book called Geeks & Geezers. One of the key differences they found between leaders and nonleaders is the ability to transform even the negatives in their lives into something they can learn from. Nelson Mandela is a great example of this!