

To lead and succeed

Ann Stevenson, Partner at Stillpoint Associates LLP, considers the adoption of a new language of leadership in effecting behavioural change in the workplace...

Leaders who make major changes of any sort show courage. To get the best out of people and bring about transformation, leadership first of all needs to undergo its own transformation. Rather than new structures, processes and procedures taking precedence, and the people agenda pushed way down the list, it would indeed take courage to give this agenda priority – and even more for the senior leadership team to consider their own behaviours and ways of working first.

It could be argued there is a need to spawn a new generation of leadership language within which new administrative and working practices are developed. Change is born and nurtured by those who are willing to put their head above the parapet. Leaders live at all levels in the organisation and their leadership attitude and how they embody it is the crucial lynchpin to creating and sustaining a new way of working.

It is time for ACT – to bring Authenticity, Consciousness and Trust to the leadership repertoire as a new and embodied ‘way of being’. One such CEO has decided to take the long-term pioneering step of creating a new culture of leadership, starting with himself and his team. Steinar Nesse runs a council in the Norwegian municipality of Fjell, which is rapidly shifting from a rural into an urban community thanks to the increase in well-educated people moving there.

Nesse recognises the important role of people in how the public sector world is changing and wants to be ahead of the game. Norway’s tradition of equality, diversity and inclusion has been developed further in employment law, including a requirement that all employees should have the right to work that develops them as a person. This is creating an urgent need to look differently at how people contribute to their work roles.

This CEO has determined that the old managerial language so roundly embedded in Management by

Objectives (MbO) is well past its sell-by date and should be dropped as it stymies people’s creativity and innovation. His vision is to create a new leadership language that draws out these abilities so crucial to success. Given today’s short-termism, Nesse has stated at the outset that it is a long-term investment. Full language change will take years, not months.

During an initial executive team retreat in London in April, Nesse said: “I know the words we choose to use as leaders are critical in engendering positive attitude and behaviour in others, and at the same time the words are in fact the final product in a process of behavioural change that goes to the essence of who we individually are.”

‘It could be argued there is a need to spawn a new generation of leadership language within which new administrative and working practices are developed. Change is born and nurtured by those who are willing to put their head above the parapet.’

Leadership mentor Jon Frang Mostad said that the group was using the Intuition, Discourse, and Analysis (IDA) model to collaboratively develop this new language of leadership. “This is a highly organic process that has started here in London, with this executive team becoming more aware of how they might lead differently,” he said.

This investment in a behavioural change programme has aroused doctoral interest among universities in Norway and Sweden, and is therefore clearly something to watch.



Ann Stevenson MCIPD, CPCC
Partner
Stillpoint Associates LLP
Tel: +44 (0)131 624 9808
ann@stillpointassociates.com
www.stillpointassociates.com