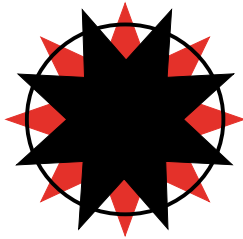




Managing in a Political Environment



SOLACE

Society of Local Authority
Chief Executives and Senior Managers

LEADERSHIP UNITED

A HANDBOOK OF TECHNIQUES, TOOLS AND PROCESSES



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Managing in a Political Environment

Anite is committed to supporting Local Authorities and Chief Executives through initiatives that promote best practice. As a SOLACE business partner, Anite is pleased to be associated with this report.

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HOW ARE YOU DOING?

The Leadership United (LU) report concentrates on a number of areas that relate to effective working in a political environment. It contains a number of recommendations and checklists aimed at enhancing your chances of navigating the challenges of political life more effectively. This handbook aims to help you assess how well you are managing in a political environment and to provide you with some tools, techniques, vignettes and interactive checklists to enable you to improve. It is not necessary to read all of it, just those sections where you might see a need. To help you to discover which parts you need to delve into further we have provided a questionnaire and scoring system. The results are plotted on to a 'spider' diagram illustrated below.

The higher your score on a 1-5 continuum the more successful you are in that area, the lower scoring areas are perhaps causes for concern, debate and action and we would encourage you to read and make use of the relevant section of the handbook to help you address these areas.

The four areas of the 'web' are based on the Commission's report.

Planning for success relates to those parts of the LU report that highlight the need for officers to sit down with politicians at the outset of the relationship and decide how they want to work together. It emphasises the need to agree on what you are trying to achieve, who is responsible for what, how things will be measured and what information is needed.

Leading relates to those parts of the LU report that consider the leadership responsibilities and styles of both politicians and officers. The complexity of Councils and the need to take into account multiple needs in considering courses of action requires a style of leadership that is engaging and facilitative but also clear and constant.

Managing relationships relates to the reality of modern local government, highlighted in the LU report, of working with partners and trying to influence agencies not in your control but crucial to success. It focuses on the scope and effectiveness of your relationships and partnerships.

Managing transition relates to the skills required to work in times of significant upheaval (and sometimes chaos) and reflects those times of change when the resolve of officers and politicians, their unity and commitment, is tested by the inevitable disruption that change causes.



THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the questions below and allocate a score based on the following criteria

Score 1 = Not true at all

Score 2 = There is some truth in the statement

Score 3 = This is mostly true

Score 4 = This is true

1.	Officers and members have agreed a set of ambitions for the community that are clear and measurable	
2.	Staff and partners know the goals of the Council and how they contribute	
3.	Partnerships are effective in achieving better outcomes for the community	
4.	We are able to take and stick to difficult decisions	
5.	We have identified the major risks associated with the Council's plans	
6.	The behaviour of officer and member leaders exemplifies the values of the organisation	
7.	We enjoy productive relationships with the full range of politicians	
8.	When the Council is going through change and uncertainty, we are able to stay united	
9.	Members set the direction and leave officers free to manage the organisation	
10.	We are aware of the views of the full spectrum of members	
11.	We spend enough time with politicians to understand their thinking and plans	
12.	We are aware of, and manage, the risks associated with change	
13.	We have agreed ways of measuring the performance of the Council	
14.	Our style of leadership ensures that we get the best from our staff	
15.	Our discussions whilst sometimes passionate are never abusive or disrespectful	
16.	We are able to notice and learn from mistakes	

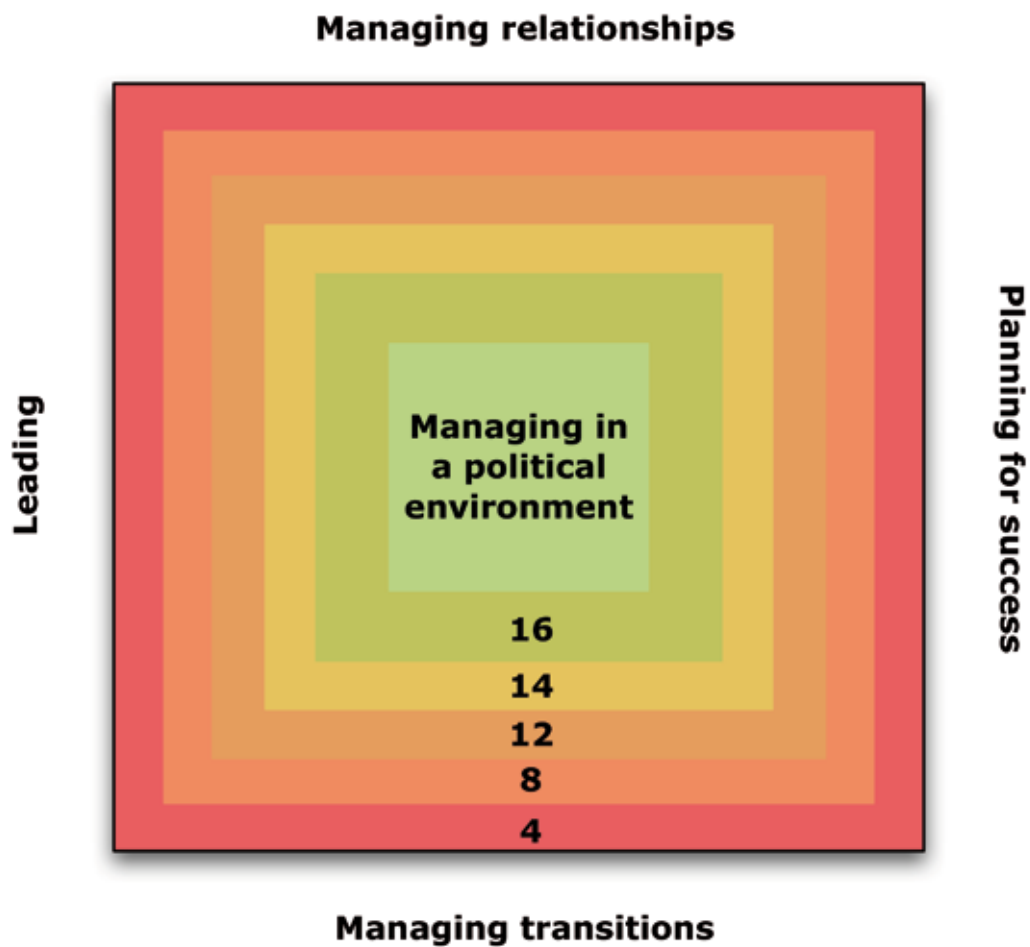


SCORING TABLE

Scoring table

1	5	9	13	=	Planning for success
2	6	10	14	=	Leading
3	7	11	15	=	Managing relationships
4	8	12	16	=	Managing transitions

You can now plot your scores on the following grid





PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

It was so important that first conversation, what are we trying to achieve, how will we work together....?

The Leadership United Report (p5) draws attention to the complexities of working in an environment where there are multiple influences and 'communities of interest', all vying to influence the Council as a whole to move in specific, and sometimes contradictory, directions. Officer and member leaders are the legitimate spokespersons for these communities of interest, they do not function as individuals but as people who carry the needs and wishes of diverse groups. Yet it is very important that they, as individuals, find ways of working together. If, as the Commission report says, politics and management are to combine to "be greater than the sum of the parts", then they have to find an agreed way of working together. Most practitioners seem to agree that it is important to have a detailed conversation at the beginning of the relationship to agree ways of working together. All too often this doesn't happen and they end up trying to deal with fundamental difficulties as they go along, which strains relationships, sometimes to breaking point. Though this is rare, the difference in Councils where members and officers are genuinely working together and those where they have achieved a kind of awkward accommodation is stark. Where there is confidence and trust then there is also increased capacity.

To enhance the chances of success, at the outset of the relationship there are a number of issues which need to be discussed and agreed.

- Finding a mutually acceptable and deliverable agenda
- Agreeing on information needs
- Agreeing on governance standards
- Identifying the high-risk areas
- Agreeing on communication methods

Approaches to agreeing the mutual agenda

The diagram below shows the number of agendas that come together, sympathetically or unsympathetically, to shape the work that officer and politicians do together. Where these different agendas are in harmony there is little difficulty but the reality is that there are usually areas of difference that have to be negotiated and tensions in one area will have effects in others.



Tensions are commonplace between the national political and local political agenda, especially when political control is different to the government of the day. These tensions may also affect relationships with partners. The number of possible configurations is often mind-boggling and a way through can seem a long way off when different players try to assert their agenda above others. How, in this potential minefield, should one proceed?

Negotiating a way forward

The process of reaching agreement requires negotiation; in more extreme circumstances it requires a gradual and respectful deconstruction and reconstruction of positions. One useful approach to this whole area can be found in the writings of Fisher and Ury who have written extensively about negotiation and negotiation styles. Their approach has been to find ways to take some of the posturing and conflict out of negotiation in favour of an approach that is both creative and sustainable. We shall refer to their work as we go along.

If we analyse what actually happens when agreements are reached from seemingly incompatible and intractable positions some important lessons emerge.



In the first instance the starting positions of the parties seem far apart. Rather than trading positions the approach is to ask questions that uncover why a particular course of action is important, what is it that doing x,y or z will give them? Working in this way we start to uncover interests. In the gold triangle compatible interests are found and then built on, so that in the purple triangle other interests can be incorporated into the new approach, in the red triangle all major interests are incorporated and a new agreed position is found. This process is called **“inventing options for mutual gain.”** What if we can’t agree...

The process in action – an example

When the Conservatives took control of the Council they wanted to rein back the amount of money that was to be spent on corporate initiatives, their particular target was the amount being spent on Best Value reviews. They halted the appointment of Best Value review staff and ordered a significant reduction in the number of reviews. Focussing on interests not on positions enabled the flexibility to talk more openly. The Group wanted a re-direction of resources to front line services, the Senior Management Team wanted to ensure that there was an effective approach to Best Value that earned good Inspectorate feedback and hence reduced the overall resource spent on inspections. Eventually it became clear that taking an oppositional position on Best Value might end up causing the Authority to incur additional costs through increased levels of inspection and re-inspection. Nobody wanted that to happen. From this mutual interest they began to develop a more streamlined approach to fewer, more strategic reviews. That led to the development of a new programme in which members played a more direct role. In designing the details of the programme the areas for review focussed more explicitly on Council objectives and eventually a new approach was agreed which, though being awarded a smaller amount of funding than was originally requested, gave officers and members an agreed sustainable way forward which would pay dividends for the organisation.

The example contains several of the elements in Fisher and Ury’s negotiation approach. Their work contrasts soft, hard and principled styles. The central table of their book, ‘Getting to Yes’, is reproduced below.



NEGOTIATION PROBLEM

Positional Bargaining: Which Game Should You Play?

NEGOTIATION SOLUTION

Change the Game: Negotiate on Merits

SOFT	HARD	PRINCIPLED
Participants are friends	Participants are adversaries	Participants are problem-solvers
The goal is agreement	The goal is victory	The goal is a wise outcome reached efficiently and amicably
Make concessions to cultivate the relationship	Demand concessions as a condition of the relationship	Separate the people from the problem
Be soft on the people and the problem	Be hard on the problem and the people	Be soft on the people, hard on the problem
Trust others	Distrust others	Proceed independent of trust
Change your position easily	Dig in to your position	Focus on interests, not positions
Make offers	Make threats	Explore interests
Disclose your bottom line	Mislead as to your bottom line	Avoid having a bottom line
Accept one-sided losses to reach agreement	Demand one-sided gains as the price of agreement	Invent options for mutual gain
Search for the single answer; the one they will accept	Search for the single answer: the one you will accept	Develop multiple options to choose from, decide later
Insist on agreement	Insist on your position	Insist on using objective criteria
Try to avoid a contest of will	Try to win a contest of will	Try to reach a result based on standards independent of will
Yield to pressure	Apply pressure	Reason and be open to reason; yield to principle, not pressure



What if we can't agree...

Sometimes even taking the approach outlined in the table, we fail to agree. There may not be common or compatible interests or, despite a desire on the part of one side to negotiate in a principled way, the other insists on the 'hard' style of negotiation. What then?

"We had tried to get Members to focus on affordable housing, but they weren't having it. It mattered to us as a group of officers, both as a leadership team, with a duty of wellbeing and as a group of professionals who could see the scale of the problem, but they were adamant that it was not a political priority, no-one had talked to them on the doorstep about this and, hence, they wanted to pay it as little attention as possible, especially as, in their estimation, there was little the Council could do about it anyway.

We were stuck and no amount of passion and opinion was getting us any closer to a solution. A ray of light appeared when we started to use facts. Facts about the scale of the problem compared to other Councils, facts about the consequences of doing nothing, facts about the approach other Councils had taken and the outcomes they had achieved. In a strange sort of way we let go of the outcome and just started advising, "if you do this then this will happen". "the evidence is that our problem is comparatively large", "other Councils can show progress on this" and so on. The dynamic of our conversation changed and we began to have much more productive exchanges."

A number of things are going on in this example. The first is the importance of judging the moment when tussle and struggle has no prospect of reaching a useful conclusion. "Letting go of the outcome" does not mean that it stops mattering, it means that we stop trying to control it, accepting that we might fail and, if so, will have to think of alternative courses of action. The second is the insistence on evidence as the basis for a conversation, instead of trading opinion and subjective meaning; the conversation is based on facts. In Fisher and Ury's terms this is an insistence on "using objective criteria" and trying to "reach a result based on standards independent of will". The third element is the introduction of the idea that we might not reach agreement, this is not desirable but is possible and, if we don't, then what? In the example above use is made of the consequences of not giving the matter due attention, on the most objective basis possible. This begins to indicate the risks of a particular course of action and again the tone is factual.



What about the others?

In many places in Europe the notion of the 'neutral' civil servant is not as accepted as it is in the UK. The 'Chef de Cabinet' in some places comes and goes as political control changes hands. The issue here is that, whereas it is essential that a Chief Executive and the senior officers agree ways forward with the controlling group, over-identification with that group can have extreme consequences should there be a shift in power. The writer on leadership, Ronald Heifetz, talks in equal measure about the need for successful leaders to find partners but also about the need to "keep the opposition close".

Agreeing on information needs

Another common source of tension between members and officers is differing perceptions of performance. If you can agree a programme, it will be of little worth unless you can agree a way of determining whether you are achieving what you want to achieve. Today's organisations are often awash with data and information but still people say they don't know what is going on. It is often the case that Councils collect an enormous amount of information but struggle to make sense of it or to use it in any meaningful way. If unnecessary tension is to be avoided and if the relationship between officers and members is to be nourished, then agreeing on a set of indicators is vital.

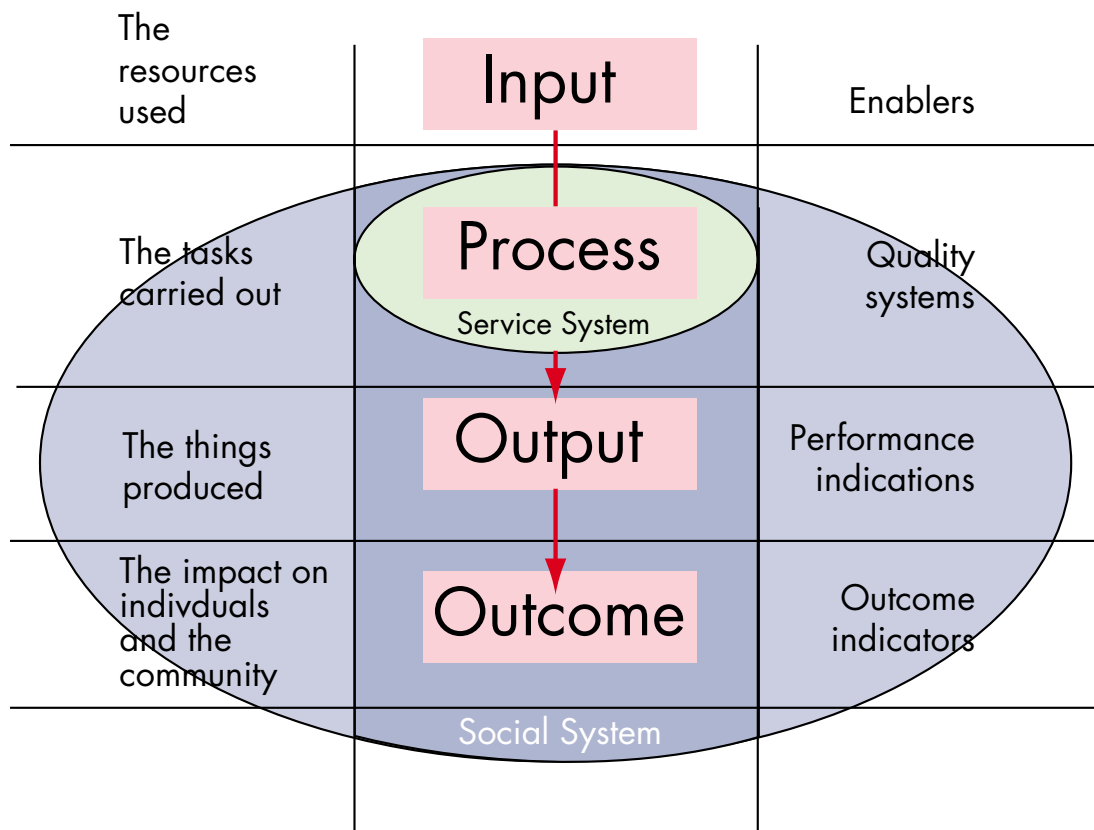
Every quarter we get a bewildering array of data in a publication the size of a small telephone directory. Each of the indicators have traffic lights next to them and we zoom in on those and debate why there is poor performance and what is being done about it.

In successful relationships in complex organisations data need to be arranged so that it tells a story. Officer and member leaders need to know

- What are we putting in, 'the enablers' (budgets, partnerships, staffing, capital etc)
- What are we doing with it (strategies, processes, systems, procedures)
- What level of performance are we producing (outputs, cases dealt with, % of satisfied people)
- What outcomes or results are we achieving (progress against Council objectives, impact on the community)



This set of measures at different levels is illustrated below.

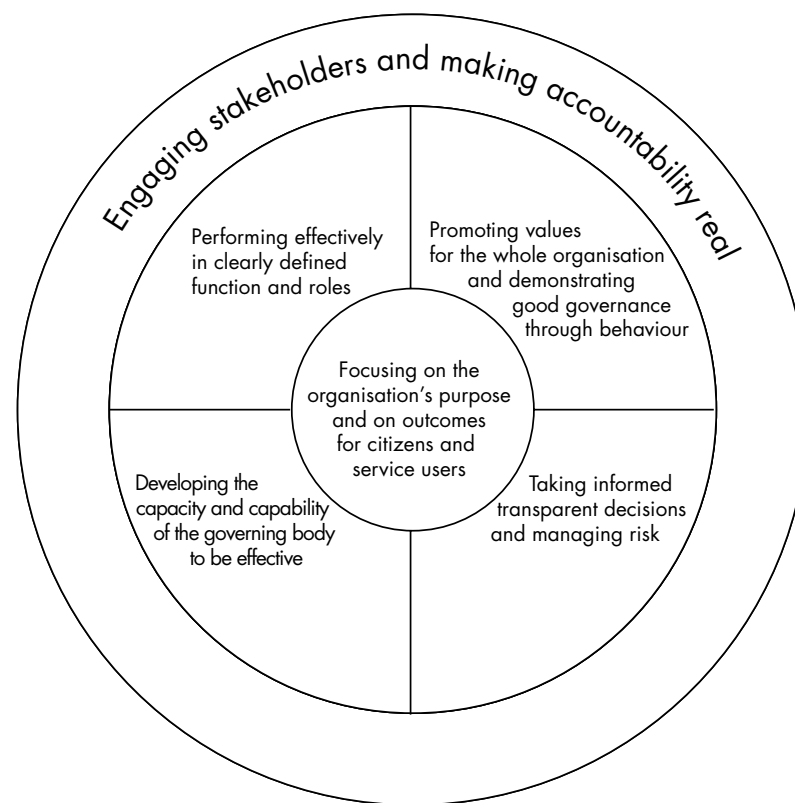


Early agreement to a set of measures organised in this way contributes a number of things:

- It enables officers and members to see clearly what is happening in the organisation
- It enables them to focus on important information (outputs and outcomes) and delve into supporting information (enablers and systems) as needed.
- It enables them to delegate the tasks of managing and improving performance to others.
- It enables them to focus on what is important rather than simply 'what is going wrong.'

Agreeing on Governance Standards

As well as a conversation about what we set out to do together there is also a need to agree, independent of the 'programme', a definition of how the organisation should be run. The Independent Commission for Good Governance in Public Services published, in 2004, the 'Good Governance Standard for Public Services', which sets out six core principles of good governance.^s



Discussion around the standard should be a vital element in achieving agreement about how we work together. The standard sets the groundrules for working together irrespective of the political programme.

Identifying high-risk areas

Any plan will have areas of risk associated with it. It is important in planning the relationship to look ahead to the possible 'hotspots' that may affect the delivery of any programme. One possible approach to this is scenario planning. There are a number of possible contexts in which this activity is advisable. It may be used to help members look at the risks associated with their proposed programme. It may also be used by officers to consider the impact of changes in political control between or within political groupings. Risk is a combination of two factors, how likely is an event to happen and what impact might it have. By combining the two and relating them to a particular plan it is possible to assess the level of risk.



Partnering in Customer Relationship Management

“The debate about customer access had been going on for some time. On the one hand there were high levels of customer dissatisfaction with being pushed from pillar to post and, from what we could see, that could only get worse unless we acted to make things more joined up. On the other hand our financial situation was very poor and we had to take substantial amounts of money out of the organisation year on year over the next four years. The ruling group, holding a slender majority, favoured a public-private partnership in which significant investment would be attracted from a long-term deal. The opposition was implacably opposed to this and, with an election in 18 months time, vowed to take a different course. If we took the course of the ruling group we ran the risk of signing up to something we couldn’t sustain. If we did nothing we ran the risk of declining satisfaction and a substantial impact on the reputation of the Council and the morale of its staff. We had to find a different scenario, that allowed us to work in a long-term, sustainable way.

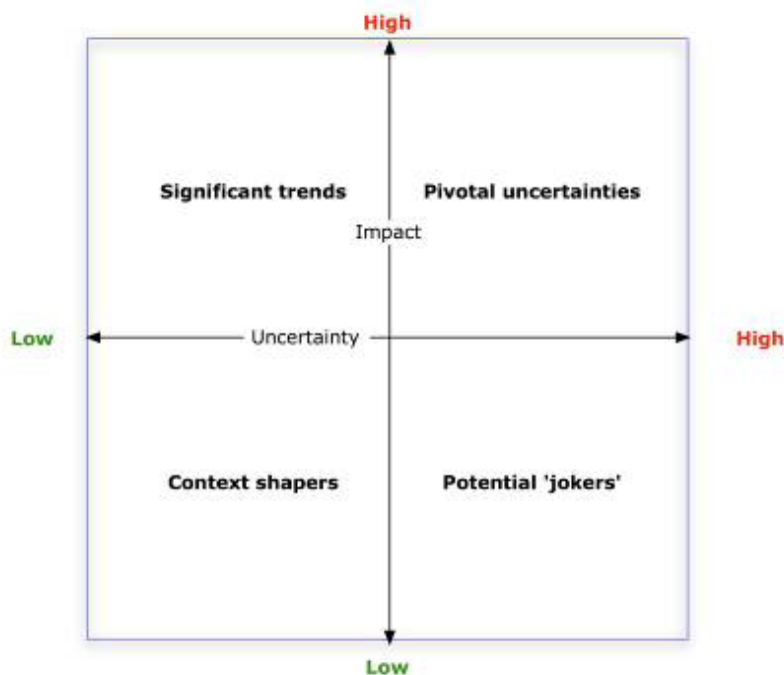
Scenario planning

The first step is to identify the key areas of the programme that members want to implement.

Decide on your timeframe for your work, this typically is based on the political cycle.

Identify the driving forces. What factors are important in influencing the future of your area of concern? These could be demographic, technological, economic, financial, legislative and so on.

The final step is to analyse the driving forces and assess them as to the impact that they are likely to have on the proposed plan. A grid for doing this is given below.





In relation to the Customer Relationship Management example given above, taking the Public Private Partnership scenario, the levels of customer satisfaction and the financial situation are significant trends: It is known that they are happening and that they constrain future plans. But the question of the election is a pivotal uncertainty; it could either make or break the scenario. Based on this the PPP scenario would represent a very high risk and would, it could be argued, represent poor governance to proceed.

Communicating

“There have been times when it seems that the Group have assumed that I am driving some kind of agenda that I am not. There have been times when my habit of going from thinking to deciding quite fast has aggravated that”

The LU Report stresses the need for good communication (see pages 15-16 in particular). The need for a good communications ‘architecture’ is obvious; agreement on communication needs and the development of systems that meet such needs through formal and informal channels.

Communication is not, however, simply about meeting together it is about working in ways that ensure that people understand each other and that the message that one person intends to convey is the same as the one that another receives. This is a simple idea, but in practice it can be fraught with difficulty. For effective communication to happen three elements are necessary.

- Transparency
- Congruence
- Mutual understanding

Transparency

Transparency is about openness and a willingness to share information about specific facts and whole agendas. The political landscape sometimes hampers this; where plans are hatched that, for example, majority groups do not want to reveal to the opposition or the press, it can lead to cards being played very close to the chest.

Officer and political leaders need to balance the ideal of transparent communication with political realities and take account of the effect of one on another.



Congruence

The Oxford English Dictionary defines congruence as “in agreement or harmony”. Congruence is about a match between what people feel, think say and do. When these things are mismatched, when for example a leader says one things and does another, the result is incongruence. The usual consequence amongst followers and other leaders is distrust. Leaders are always leading, whether they intend to or not, and consequently their congruence is under constant examination.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the messages people convey are not always the ones they intend. Communication therefore requires self-awareness; knowledge of how one ‘comes across’, how one is perceived by others.

One way of exploring this is the so-called ‘Johari window’ reproduced below.

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Open	Hidden
Not known to others	Blind	Unknown

The “**open**” quadrant represents things that both I know about myself, and that others know about me. For example, The knowledge that the window represents can include not only factual information, but feelings, motives, behaviours, wants, needs and desires.

The “**blind**” quadrant represents things that you know about me, but that I am unaware of. Others can see it, but I cannot. It may be a blindspot which may reveal some incongruence of which I am not aware, a mismatch for example between the values espoused and those lived.

The “**hidden**” quadrant represents things that I know about myself, that you do not know. This relates to the description of transparency given above and also to the Baddeley / James table on page 20, the critical issue here is integrity, whether the motivation for keeping information hidden is in the best interests of the organisation and the public or not.

The “**unknown**” quadrant represents things that neither I know about myself, nor you know about me. It may be some previously unexplored or unfamiliar set of circumstances which causes me to not know how I will react when the time comes.



This quadrant most strongly relates to the section of this handbook on transitions where leaders may go into a period of change not knowing fully what to expect or how they might react.

The Johari window may serve as a useful framework within which to review your communication either on your own or with other leaders. Asking for feedback, particularly in relation to the 'blind' quadrant, might be useful and processes such as 360° appraisal can help.

Mutual understanding

What happens when all the effort you put in to being transparent and congruent seems only to result in being misunderstood? When spending time communicating seems to make things worse not better. When you can't see "eye to eye", when you are not on the same "wavelength", where you just can't appreciate the other's point of view? The chances are we are dealing with personality differences. These differences are about the way we experience the world, about the language we use to describe it and about what is important to us in living in it.

A method of identifying personality types was put forward by Carl Jung 1961 . It is appealing because it uses four aspects of human functioning which are common to everyone. It provides a useful model for understanding the communication differences between people in a way that appreciates the attributes of all rather than finding some 'better' or 'healthier' than others.

The Four Functions

Jung identifies four aspects of human functioning which he called: *sensing, intuiting, thinking and feeling*. The first two functions concern people's way of perceiving themselves and the world and receiving information from it. The second two relate to how we make judgements and decisions about ourselves and the world. Everyone has the capacity to use all four functions but each of us has a preferred way of gathering information and a preferred way of organising it. We are likely to have one function which is the strongest and most effective for us. We may then refer to ourselves as 'a sensation type', 'a thinking type' and so on.

Sensation types literally use their five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling) to gather information and make sense of the world. This means that sensors attach high importance to tangible facts. They notice details and are excellent at working through problems in a systematic and logical way. Realistic and practical, they are normally very methodical and efficient though they may at times become somewhat overly concrete as their



attention to facts may mean that they miss possibilities. They are grounded in the present and enjoy activities, often physical ones.

Intuitive types tend to overlook details and even become impatient with them as they see the world in a broader way, absorbing a wide range of data and making sense of it as an impression of the whole. When seeing the following sensors are more likely to see “a row of dots” while intuitives may see “a pause with something to follow.” Intuitives are especially different from sensors in that they are more interested in possibilities and new ideas for the future than they are in the realities of the present. Seeing patterns and connections between things, they are comfortable with change and good at initiating projects; they are exceptionally strong at knowing what should happen next. They are not, however, so effective at carrying through a project in a systematic way, as the sensor would do.

The thinking type as the name implies, likes to think things through carefully in a logical and objective way. While they do have emotions, they are likely to be able to put them on one side while they address a situation logically in order to work out what is the correct and fair solution. The thinker is rational, good at analysing and operates from clear and firm principles. S/he can sometimes appear rather unsympathetic as s/he deals with the facts and their consequences rather than how people feel or how they are affected.

Although **the feeling type** may be freer in showing emotions than the thinker, the word feeling in this case refers not to emotions but to a deeper experience of whether things ‘feel right’. This means that they are likely to attach importance to subjective impression, both their own and others’. Feeling types are concerned with connection between people and are swayed in their judgements by how people feel in any situation. Their understanding of people is based on their empathy and ability to identify with others feelings and circumstances. This empathic understanding inevitably springs from their own experience of life, which leads them sometimes to believe that what ‘feels true’, because it has been true in the past, must be true still. They can sometimes, therefore, appear illogical to other people, particularly thinkers.

When impasses develop it may well be that it is because of a clash of ‘types’. It is important to know your own type and that of other leaders or those you are trying influence.

The Jungian 'types' form the basis of what is today called the Myers-Briggs type indicator. For more information contact SOLACE Enterprises on telephone number 0845 601 0649.

Leading

"I can sometimes see the way forward very quickly but only you know how it will play politically"

"Pre-briefing can sometimes seem like us trying to undermine the ability of the Group to take its own decision whereas post-briefing seems like it is then too late for us to be as fast as you want us to be on the uptake."

Interdependent Leadership; Leading in a political environment

The first step towards enhancing the leadership capacity of any organisation is to consider the kind of leaders it needs. The challenge for today's leaders is to function in complex environments where much of what they are trying to achieve is not wholly in their control. Much of the time the challenge is to engage, influence and gain the commitment of others.

The quotations at the beginning of the chapter convey some of the fine judgements that need to be made in working together and emphasise the need for an acceptance of the fact that Councils are not simple 'command and control' organisations with a single decision making point. They are, in fact, quite elaborate networks which seek to serve the interests of disparate communities of interest and contain multiple decision making points.

In this environment different styles of leadership have positive and negative effects. Baddeley and James¹ draw attention to this whole area of how management styles fit (or don't) in the politics of an organisation.

"Examples of political incompetence include the manager with a reputation for dynamism, brought into a large and unwieldy organisation to get it back on the rails, who soon resigns with the complaint that he or she is not being allowed to manage, or the manager who blithely and enthusiastically pursues a pet project without noticing the growing coalition of opposition....."

It seems that the most important quality for managers to have is not vision or integrity or organisational ability but 'nous'.

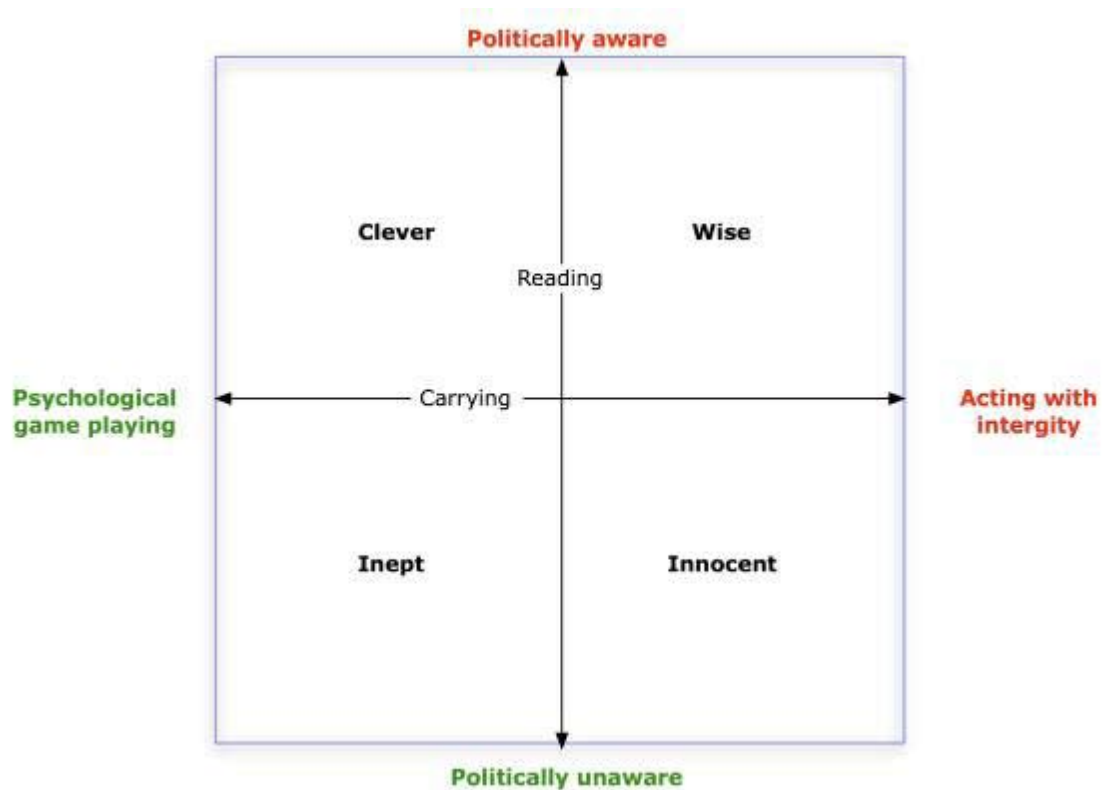
They go on to state that

"Being politically skilled means being able to manage the requisite variety of your organisation. It means that you can make the most of the multiplicity of experiences, abilities and perceptions of the people you work with. Politics is not something to which you resort when management fails. It is, on the contrary, at the very heart of management"

¹ Jung C.G. The Collected Works. Vol. 6. Psychological Types. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London 1971

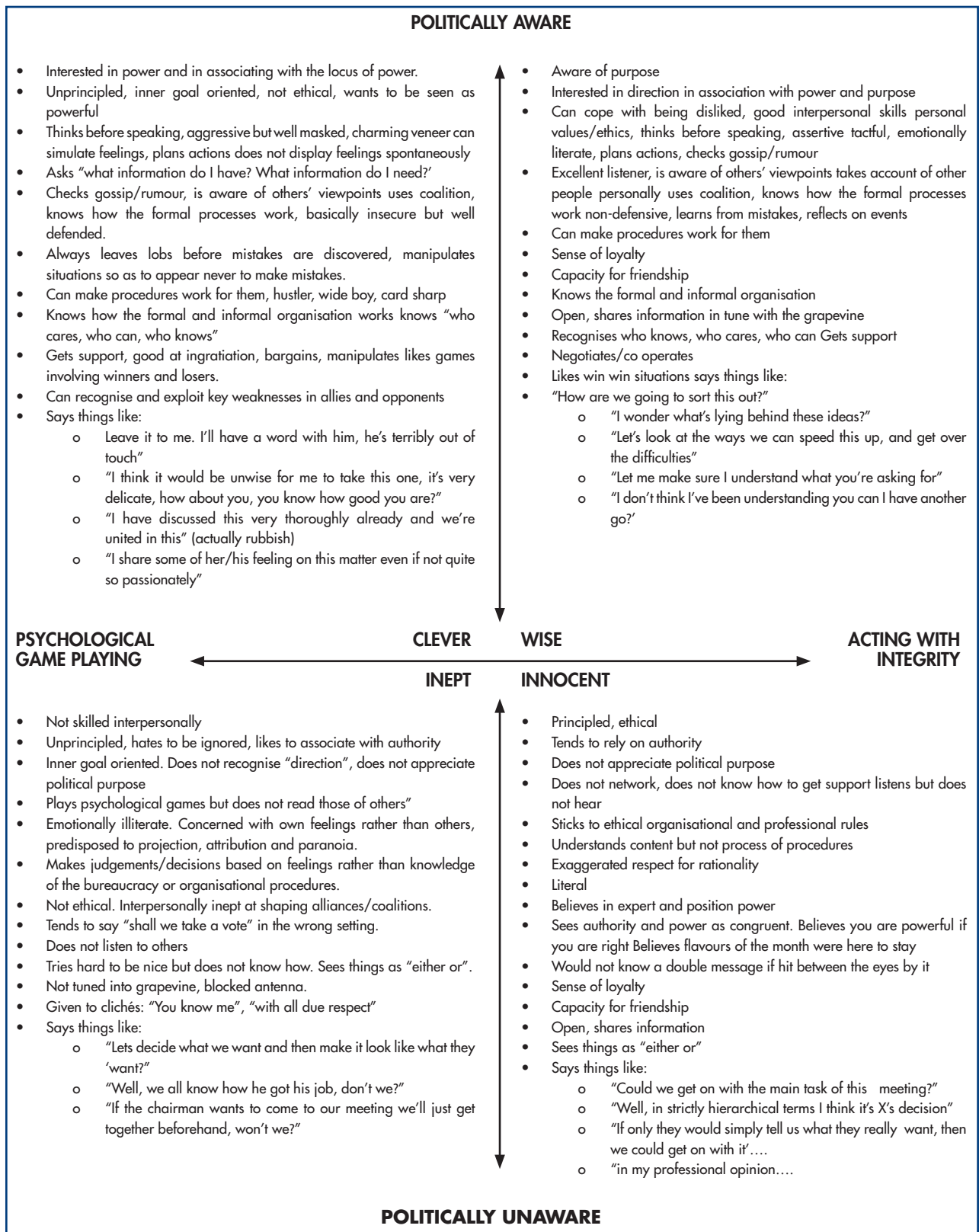


In describing the elements of political skill Baddeley and James pinpoint the ability to 'read' or understand the different facets of the world around them, coupled with the ability to 'carry' that world and act within it. An inability to read the world results in a naivety or innocence that means individuals simply do not pick up the signs or the nuances of significant things around them. Politically aware people can be sensitive, shrewd and highly intuitive. This may look (particularly to the 'innocent' manager) like 'clever' behaviour. There is, however, a possible downside to this cleverness and that is that it conjures up unpleasant images of scheming, conniving and 'stitching up' people or situations. This is the shadow side of 'nous', the realm of Machiavelli. The second continuum is that of 'carrying' information from the political realm and deciding how to act in the face of it. The authors put, at either end of this continuum, 'acting with integrity' and at the other, 'psychological game playing'. The completed grid then looks like this.



If we read well and then act with integrity, then the model see this as wisdom. If we read well and act at the level of game playing, then this is cleverness with all its negative connotations. Ineptitude is the bull in a china shop, trying simply to get his or her way with little awareness of what is going on around.

The authors then develop the grid to describe further some of the thought processes, actions and statements of people in these quadrants. We leave it to you to find yourself in their descriptions.





Wisdom is clearly a goal but it is not as if people are always free to choose whether to be wise or clever, sometimes 'cleverness' comes from a poor skills set. Hence we need to look at these behaviours within a context of preferred leadership style, always trying to move in the direction of 'wise' behaviours.

The Commission's report (p7) describes the characteristics of effective leaders in today's political environment.

The following questionnaire is a tried and tested one in relation to leadership styles, it enables you to self-assess the styles you most and least prefer. Each style is analysed, based on the Baddeley-James model and the Commission's description of successful leadership characteristics.

Leadership styles

Instructions

- 1 Reflect on each of the items in the questionnaire, and select a score that best represents how you generally behave when trying to influence others.
- 2 Use the following scale for scoring:
 - 0 'I never do this'
 - 1 'I rarely do this'
 - 2 'I sometimes do this'
 - 3 'I often do this'
 - 4 'I always do this'
- 3 Transfer your scores to the summary sheet and mark up your profile noting those styles that score highest and lowest.
- 4 Read the descriptions of the influencing styles and identify the ones against which you score highest.



Questionnaire

Question	Score
1 I fully express my personal values when I talk to others.	
2 I work hard to ensure that aims and objectives are absolutely clear.	
3 I try to find out exactly what sort of help other people need.	
4 I excite other people's imagination by communicating images of how the future should be.	
5 I use rational argument to make my points.	
6 I am prepared to make a fuss to get things done.	
7 I get myself into formal positions of power and influence.	
8 I take great care to educate others so that they can understand what I am thinking.	
9 I encourage and support other people with good ideas.	
10 I am passionate when expressing what I believe in.	
11 I make sure that people understand the objectives they should strive to achieve.	
12 I help other people to solve their own problems.	
13 I am good at vividly communicating what the future could be like.	
14 I carefully collect data to demonstrate the validity of my case.	
15 I push other people to give me support.	
16 I take steps to acquire formal authority to enable me to implement my plans.	
17 I encourage people to learn new ways of thinking.	
18 I support those people who want to make changes for themselves.	
19 I have clarified what I believe is important to me.	
20 I carefully monitor the performance of others who are working with me	
21 I help people find effective answers to problems that concern them.	
22 I am able to communicate what needs to be done to create a better future.	
23 I ensure that my views are based on demonstrable facts.	
24 I challenge people who are not pulling their weight.	
25 I acquire formal authority to back up my cause.	
26 I ensure that people are given training.	
27 I go out of my way to encourage people struggling to change things for themselves.	
28 I have a clear code of values, which I communicate to others.	
29 I make sure that I check up on other people's performance.	
30 I help people find answers to their own problems	
31 I strive to inspire other people by the way I present my ideas.	
32 I take great care to present logically sound arguments.	
33 I try hard to persuade people to my way of thinking	
34 I try to acquire formal authority and responsibility for getting things done.	
35 I use 'education' as a way of opening peoples' minds.	
36 I give moral support to people who want to make changes.	



Scoring Sheet

					Totals
1	10	19	28	A	
2	11	20	29	B	
3	12	21	30	C	
4	13	22	31	D	
5	14	23	32	E	
6	15	24	33	F	
7	16	25	34	G	
8	17	26	35	H	
9	18	27	36	I	



Profile Sheet

Style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
A Value driven																
B Goal setting																
C Need fulfilment																
D Visioning																
E Rational presentation																
F Pushing/driving																
G Institutionalising																
H Educating																
I Supporting																



Leadership style — the strengths and pitfalls

Your profile gives you an opportunity to think about how you set about managing in a political environment. There are nine distinct influencing styles described below. Consider each and identify those styles that you should develop further on the action-planning sheet. It is helpful to discuss your profile with another person who can help you consider how to increase your skills.

Style	Characteristics and strengths in a political environment	Possible pitfalls in a political environment
A. VALUE DRIVEN STYLE	<p>You have deeply held beliefs about what is good and bad, important and unimportant. By expressing values you capture interest and goodwill. Your values touch a chord in others and your conviction is persuasive. You invoke respect and admiration. Your skills include value clarification, effective presentation and ability to delve below the surface. You attract others by appealing to their moral sense.</p>	<p>An over-emphasis on values can lead you to work only with people who are like you or who share the same values. This can make partnership or collaborative working difficult at times, and leave you vulnerable when power shifts and you have to work with people whose precise values you do not share. It may not always be necessary to reach 'deep' agreements in order to find a way forward.</p>
B. GOAL SETTING STYLE	<p>You ensure that aims and objectives are clearly understood by all concerned and direct effort towards achievement. You monitor the performance of others, set success measures and provide co-ordinated plans. By setting milestones and avoiding being put off the scent, you manage situations. Your style</p>	<p>There is a danger that too much goal setting can lead to tunnel vision and rigidity. You may need to take extra care to 'read' developing convictions and reflect those changes in goals and targets. Everybody may not share your excitement at setting and measuring targets. You may need to take care</p>



	<p>is administrative in the best sense of the word. You use management techniques to channel effort. Your skills include objective setting, action planning, performance measurement, controlling and giving feedback. You drive others by obtaining their commitment to objectives, then keeping performance on track.</p>	<p>to ensure that goals are shared and targets owned by those making judgements and being judged by them.</p>
<p>C. NEED FULFILMENT STYLE</p>	<p>You are concerned with being practically helpful. You identify others' needs and show how these can be fulfilled. You work at being a useful resource to others in problem solving. Your credibility and influence come through being genuinely helpful. Your skills include sensitivity, active listening, being client-centred, action planning and co-operative counselling. You attract others by winning confidence and being a valued colleague.</p>	<p>There is potential here to display a lack of leadership and too easily give way in the face of opposition to tough decisions that may not be comfortable in the short term, but are necessary in the long-term. You may need to use scenario planning to identify properly risks and assess the impact on governance. You may need to accept as inevitable the more difficult effects of change and find ways to live with unpopularity.</p>
<p>D. VISIONING STYLE</p>	<p>You create 'pictures' of a desirable future which offers better ways of doing things or redressing wrongs. You bring meaning and direction into people's thinking and give an understanding of what could happen. Your strengths are the capacity to</p>	<p>Sometimes looking to the future can be a way of avoiding the past and present. Some may experience you as idealistic and not very 'grounded' in practical realities. Some may also experience you as uncaring about practical problems that need</p>



	<p>express vivid images, imagination, opportunism, farsightedness and practicality. You are an architect of the future. You attract others by providing a positive direction.</p>	<p>solving now. You may need to focus on gathering support for your vision and connecting it with the practical strategies needed to achieve it. Your attachment to particular visions may make you vulnerable to shifts in power, you need to be realistic and take care to read the political environment for signs of what might be possible and what might be a step too far.</p>
<p>E. RATIONAL PRESENTATION STYLE</p>	<p>You are good at argument and debate. Your facts are valid. You collect data, evaluate information, build a logical case and present sound, evidence based arguments. You appeal to reason and intellect. Your position is always defensible and reasonable. Your skills include analysis, concept development, logical thought and formal presentation. You attract others by the force of argument and rationality.</p>	<p>Some people and organisations may see you as cold and aloof. People who are visionary or driven by values may become frustrated at what they see as a kind of detachment or lack of passion and values. You may need to be willing to accept that data has limitations sometimes and to find a legitimate place for different interpretations of the facts. Beware of appearing overly bureaucratic.</p>
<p>F. PUSHING/DRIVING STYLE</p>	<p>You are influential because you are clear about the outcomes you want and you are willing to cajole, demand, or insist that people act differently. You have a forceful, up front and passionate style.</p>	<p>Taken too far this may be seen as intimidating or brash. You may come into conflict with other people who don't your view, or those who do but who equally seek to be seen as leading and who want</p>



	<p>You are prepared to make a fuss to get change. Your skills include deep knowledge of people, assertion, and the constructive and productive use of conflict. You drive others by personal will-power and commitment</p>	<p>to compete with you. It may be necessary for you to be sensitive to the reactions of others and to be prepared to share power and recognise the need for compromise. Politically this style can leave you vulnerable to being reined in or pulled back.</p>
<p>G. INSTITUTIONALISING STYLE</p>	<p>You believe that to really achieve change, formal power is necessary. You want to obtain powerful positions and build a legitimate role. You seek to acquire the right to decide how to allocate resources to further a cause. You concentrate on getting the foundation properly laid. Your skills include organisational design, planning, performance control and administration. You drive others by legitimate power.</p>	<p>There may be times when people experience you as domineering and may try to resist you. A crucial question will be the extent to which the kind of change you are trying to bring about is in your control or whether it need the active co-operation of others. If it does then you may find it hard to build the ownership you need for your plans to become reality. Be careful of the 'inept' quadrant in the Baddeley-James model and challenge yourself to 'read' and 'carry' more effectively.</p>
<p>H. EDUCATING STYLE</p>	<p>You expose people to new ideas, experiences concepts, possibilities or inner reflections. You act as a teacher, educator, catalyst, counsellor and guide, enriching people's experience through demonstration</p>	<p>Others may experience you as superior or condescending and perhaps a little too complicated for the task at hand. You may need to accept the fact that, at times, it may be necessary to push</p>



and the opening of minds. You cause people to discover that their current thinking/behaviour is, in some ways, inadequate. Your skills include diagnosis, designing learning, communicating principles and teaching. You attract people by causing them to re-evaluate the world around them.

ahead rather than deepen people's understanding. Unless your purpose is clear then people may find your style too 'clever' and treat you with suspicion.

I. SUPPORTING STYLE

You encourage and empower people to identify needs, evaluate options, formulate action programmes and take initiatives on their own account. You are supportive and positive, adding extra energy and giving confidence. You do not seek to guide, but to enable others to act. Your skills include listening, counselling, giving positive feedback and advising.

You give permission to act, moral support and, sometimes, practical support. You drive others by giving them energy.

There may be times when supporting people leads to a loss of focus on the ultimate goals of the organisation and its customers. You may need to learn to recognise when quick action is required and be clear where your limits and boundaries are.

Adapted from: Francis, Fifty activities for unblocking organisational communication.



MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

Managing relationships

The Commission report makes it clear that the current political agenda steers councils in the direction of achieving things through relationships and partnerships with others. Improvements in the environment, in educational results, in crime levels, in housing and employment cannot be achieved by one council acting alone; they are not in the gift of any one public sector agency. They can only be achieved through collaboration between public, private and voluntary agencies with the engagement of the community. The network, of which local councils and hence their leaders are part, is large and complicated.

Although partnership working has become common place and the agencies involved have become more comfortable with, and adept in, working together, managing relationships and partnerships is not always as easy as it might at first seem.

Relationships between officers, politicians and partners are pivotal if a Council is to achieve better outcomes for communities. These relationships between individuals unfold in a public arena, are the source of speculation and rumour, and hence are conducted under public scrutiny and pressure. If they go wrong the tendency is to blame the individuals. The assumption being that they are free somehow to do as they please in their relationships and should they fail in some way this is attributable in whole, or in part, to the personalities and skills of the individuals. Nothing could be further from the truth. Individuals they are with character traits, but these are secondary to the role they have as representatives of larger groups who have their own views, cultures, histories and priorities. A more useful way to see the individuals in the relationships is as people **through** whom the conversations between the large groups are conducted. Hence they are not free, they are constrained to act in particular ways and to try and loosen these constraints involves taking risks.. How they 'get on' is therefore of paramount importance and their interpersonal skills are vital in achieving successful outcomes. But many who work in partnerships will testify that interpersonal relationships can become strained. Committed, reasonable people can end up at loggerheads and find it hard to explain how they ended up there.

This may be because the causes of the dispute are beyond the control of the people themselves. As they sit down for their first meeting, they are not just individuals but representatives of their respective organisations, carrying the perspectives, culture, priorities and objectives of their employers with them.



IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy relationships between leaders are characterised by a set of 'Interpersonal factors'. These are

Availability

- For relationships to work then individuals need to be available to each other. They have to meet and talk to make the relationship what it is. Without this basic exchange partnership is not possible. Hence people need to make the time to be with each other. In successful relationships this seems to include the opportunity to meet in formal and informal ways.

Trust

- Trust is vital in partnership. The key factor is congruence, in which individuals demonstrate a match between what they think, say and do. Hence there are no hidden agendas, no renegeing on promises, no supporting in public and undermining in private. Where congruence is not demonstrated then the effect is conflict or inertia in the relationship and people find themselves unable to 'get on with it' as suspicion and a lack of faith take over.

Flexibility

- The degree of flexibility in as relationships is dependent on the needs of each party and how those match the needs of the other. In times when these needs differ, individuals in relationships need to be flexible enough to move beyond the initial stance they took or perspective they brought, in order for a new perspective to emerge. This has to be balanced by the extent to which that new perspective can be 'sold' to the groups that each individual represents. This means people being willing to understand, respect and negotiate their differences. Where rigidity becomes entrenched then this will threaten the viability of the relationships.

Bonding

- If partners are available to each other and act in a flexible and trustworthy way then the relationship will be able to 'bond'. Individuals enter a partnership bonded (or loyal to) their organisations. Successful partnerships enable a simultaneous bonding to their respective interest groups **and** the aims of the **relationship**.

Improving relationships

The Outside-inside relationship model²

This tool is intended for use when relationships first form or as part of a routine review of the relationship. It is focussed on the experience of the individuals who work together and seeks to make sense of that experience and to find ways of helping partnerships to increase their effectiveness.

² ©Max Wide - Used with permission



Hence there are a series of interpersonal factors (how people get on with each other) that are influenced by contextual factors (the circumstances that bring them together). People can make all the difference, but the complexity of their task is made easier or harder by the groups that they represent. If the circumstances in which people come together are not at first favourable to the development of a successful partnership, then the individuals will need to work much harder to achieve a good outcome.

Contextual factors

The following factors are defined as contextual because they are outside the control of individuals yet they impinge on the job of those trying to progress the partnership.

Resources

The key question here is about whether the resources available to pursue joint objectives are adequate to carry out the required tasks. The word resources is here used in its widest sense and therefore covers time, money, knowledge, skills, technology, influence and so on.

Where resources are abundant then the job of individuals within the partnership is made more straightforward. Scarcity puts relationships under strain and generally means that choices have to be made.

Roles

Political and officer leaders enter partnerships from different perspectives and set out to play different roles. Some are founders and some are followers, some leaders, some co-ordinators, some fund, others consume, some offer expertise, others permission and so on. Effective partnerships reach agreement about roles and functions so that tasks can be carried out effectively.

Priority

Because people come together in relationships does not mean that the outcomes matter equally to the organisations involved. To some people a particular outcome may be vital, to others it may be of secondary importance. The question is how strategically important are the aims of the relationship. Individuals have to know that there is 'enough in it for me' to live with the costs incurred in reaping the benefits. Where priorities are the same then the job of individuals is made easier, but where one organisation has more at stake than others then it leads to an increased anxiety within the relationship. (see the chapter on Planning for Success).

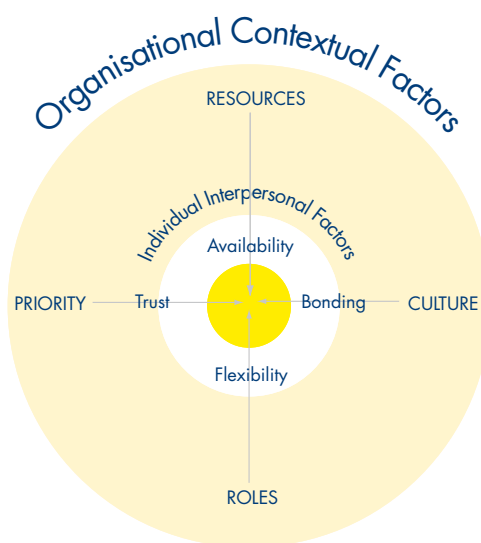


Culture

Different groups have different cultures. Smaller organisations tend to be much more focussed on the actions and styles of individual leaders, larger organisations can be much more rule bound. Culture relates to 'the way we do things around here'. Individuals carry their own culture with them into relationships. When individuals from incompatible cultures co-exist in partnerships, then it can feel very disturbing, as the whole way of working seems unfamiliar and the language usually used to 'do business' starts to get in the way. Individuals are therefore faced with the challenge of understanding and respecting each other's cultures and evolving a new way of working.

The outside/inside relationship model

Based on the above it is possible to present a model for analysing the dynamics present in relationships and for predicting the likely success of ventures. It shows the individual interpersonal factors as being closest to the delivery of the targets or aims of the relationship. It also portrays the organisational contextual factors as surrounding and impinging on the people in the centre, setting the conditions for the work, determining how difficult the job of the individuals will be.



Using the model

The model can be used to plan relationships (particularly forced ones) or to help existing partnerships that are stuck. If resource, priority, culture or role conflicts can be exposed then participants can be enabled to work out the differences and find ways forward, this may entail

- agreeing to respect and work with cultural differences rather than trying to change the way others work
- finding ways to acknowledge the different roles that each plays and to find ways of ensuring that they are clear and distinct .
- being clear about the scale of ambition relative to the available resources and working out what is feasible.
- being clear about differing priorities in partnership and negotiating win-win agreements.

Managing transitions

Transitions are danger times for officer and member leaders. They are the times when the pain of change is at its most evident and when those in power are most likely to have to endure criticism and attack. These dangers may have been identified earlier on, but they still have to be dealt with. It is important, to increase the chances of maintaining productive relationships during transitions, to understand some of the dynamics of transition in order that they can be navigated more effectively. In a political environment there are numerous types of transition.

- from one way of working to another
- transitions as a result of external demands on the organisation
- from one set of political arrangements to another.
- from one set of managerial arrangements to another.

What happens in transitions?

It is often said that people do not like change. Despite a whole body of literature that told us, one way or another, to 'thrive on chaos', the reality is that real change has 'costs' for people. Even if they agree with it people will inevitably go through periods of feeling

- disorientated by changes in their role, team membership, location or management.
- de-skilled by changes in the tasks they have to carry out or by the context in which they have to do them.
- disturbed by the behaviour of those around them who are also going through a change process.
- disillusioned if they don't understand the reason why change is necessary.

In local government there is so much change that people can feel the above several times during any given year, leading people to state "when all this change stops we will be alright". The reality is that, given the complexity of local government and the changes in legislation, expectation, inspection regimes, technology, demography that all require some response from local government, change is unlikely to stop and so people will continue to experience the feelings laid out above. The issue is how can leaders do as much as possible to develop their own and their organisation's change capacity so that they can deal with the effect on themselves and others.

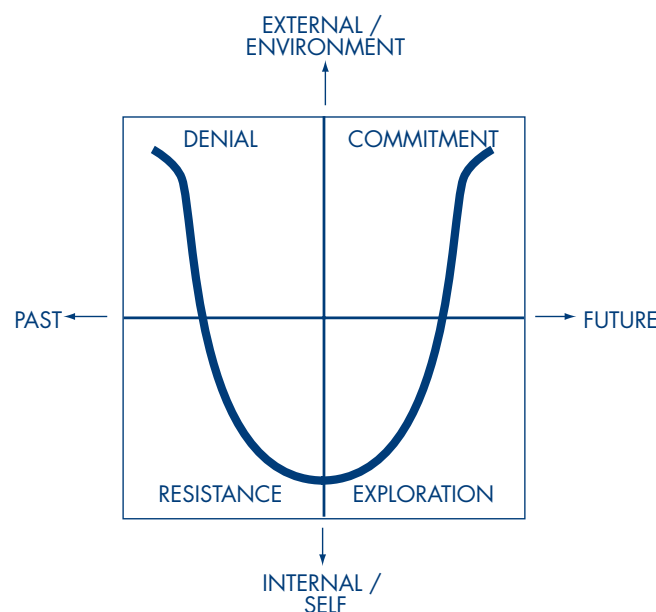


There is a view that for people in organisations and in life generally change is not the same as transition;

- Change is about external events; the new Chief Executive, Leader, Cabinet etc.
- Transition is the internal process of integrating the change, of accepting that you have changed, that you have moved on and can now accept that you are different to before.

Transition may not happen for some time. You may have had the experience of moving home and then going on holiday, you have the holiday and then, preparing to go back, you realise that you are going back to a different place to the one with which you are familiar. When you stop thinking that you have probably made the transition, it is no longer a new thing, it is part of who you are.

The process of transition involves individuals in a complex set of emotions that relate to different stages of the transition process. These are illustrated in the diagram below



The first stage involves individuals and organisations going through a period of denial when they do not want to believe that change is coming. This period is characterised by people studiously trying to carry on with 'business as usual' denying that anything has changed or needs to change. "The new leader is from the same party so not much will change". The task is to keep focussed on the issue, to keep coming back to it, to 'perturb' and feel sufficiently perturbed yourself to understand and accept that a major change has happened.



In the second stage, it is tempting actively to resist change. In organisational change there may be active campaigning to stop it, there may be dire warning of its consequences, there may be personalised attacks on those that are trying to lead it and there may be people who seek to leave the organisation rather than live with it. This phase is the most disruptive and the difficult for any leadership team in that it has the potential to

- test the commitment of team members and potentially expose divisions within the team who are proposing the change.
- place under great scrutiny the proposed plans and expose weaknesses and loopholes.
- raise fears that are exaggerated or unfounded.
- demand certainty and detail that may not be available at the planning stage.
- attribute motivation to the change leaders that is not true.

When the transition is political, resistance may take a different form. It may be tempting to try and minimise the amount of change taking place or conversely see it as the perfect opportunity to put all past wrongs right.

In organisational change the leadership task is to utilise the challenge and make it part of the basis for exploring how the proposals will work; using the challenge to improve the detail of the planned change rather than becoming defensive or authoritarian. It will always be important to be clear about the purpose of the change and the goals it serves: Research on change management is clear that change often fails because people do not own the need for the change nor the methods proposed. It may be necessary to reassure people where possible about the likely effects of change, putting in place processes deal with uncertainty and acknowledge and minimise risks.

In political transitions, a breakthrough is achieved when the 'real politic' of the situation can be accepted, without having to minimise it or inflate it. It gives the opportunity for an honest assessment of the scale of the change one is facing. There may be very uncomfortable realities associated with this. It may be that it becomes difficult or even impossible to the new managerial and/or political arrangements to work together (see the chapter on 'Planning for Success').

In organisational transitions the movement from resistance to exploration is a turning point in the process of transition where the task of the leadership team becomes less adversarial, there is now the opportunity for productive co-working between different levels of the organisation. The dangers of this phase include the inadequate exploration of possibilities, leading to incremental change where step change was intended. Another danger is that of failing to engage people in the development



of new practices so that change is implemented in a compliant rather than committed way. Finally, there is danger in trying to settle complex matters too early or in too simple a way leading to diminished effectiveness. The leadership task is to engage people in making the new approach work. This involves reframing problems into building blocks that deliver a more thought through and thorough approach.

The final stage is commitment and, whilst this is a sign that change has become transition, there are still dangers here, in that the new way of working is young and needs to be acknowledged and made 'normal' if it is to become established. The leadership task therefore is to acknowledge and reward the progress that has been made and to ensure adequate review and organisational learning

In political transitions reaching this stage represents settling in to doing business with a new regime.

The following checklist aims to help you to consider how you are managing current transition initiatives in your organisation. It is followed by a similar checklist that applies to political transitions.



MANAGING ORGANISATIONAL TRANSITIONS CHECKLIST

Managing Organisational Transitions checklist

Transition area	Question	Yes = 1 No = 0 Partial = .5
Overcoming denial	Are we sure that the change we are proposing is necessary and proportional to the scale of the challenge we face? _____	
	Have we engaged the relevant stakeholders in a dialogue about the changes we believe are necessary? _____	
	Are we protecting people adequately from further changes or, if we can't protect them, are we clustering those changes meaningfully? _____	
	Have we been clear why the change is necessary and what our goals are in doing it ? _____	
	Have we shown people the consequences of not changing? _____	
Utilising resistance	Have we done our best to normalise the transition zone by explaining it is an uncomfortable time that, with careful attention, can be turned to everyone's advantage? _____	
	Have we stuck together in the commitment we made? _____	
	Have we considered the merits of some of the challenges and questions and used them to refine improve the proposed changes? _____	
	Have we stepped back and considered how we need to become exemplars of the behaviours and values that we are asking other people to take on? _____	
	Have we acknowledged and found ways to preserve strengths that existed in the old way of working? _____	



Harnessing exploration

Have we seen to it that people can build their skills in taking responsibility, creative thinking and innovation?

Are we regularly checking to see that we are not pushing for certainty and closure where it would be more conducive to creativity to live a little longer with uncertainty and questions?

Have we provided the training programmes, necessary to sustain people through the transition zone?

Have we created the temporary roles, reporting relationships, and organizational groupings that we need to get us through the transition zone?

Have we created the temporary policies and procedures that we need to get us through?

Embedding commitment

Have we established ways of finding out how effective the change is in terms of the extent of implementation and the impact it is having on our goals?

Have we set short range goals and checkpoints?

Have we acknowledged the progress that has been made and rewarded people for the progress that has been made

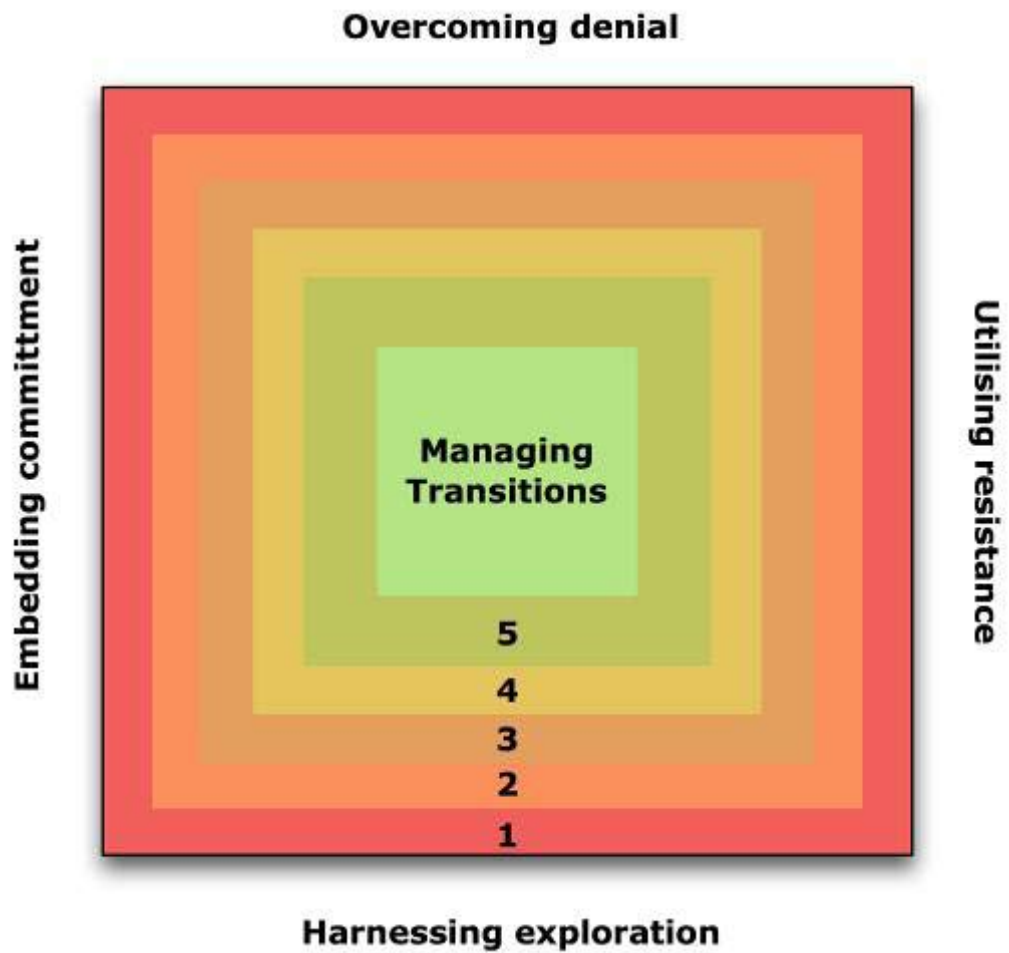
Are we willing to consider and accept emerging and innovative ways of achieving the outcomes we want, rather than insisting on rigid compliance?

Have we set out to review and learn from the experience so that future transitions can be handled better?

Total



It should now be possible to transfer your score for each section to the grid below.





MANAGING POLITICAL TRANSITIONS CHECKLIST

Transitional area	Question	Yes = 1 No = 0 Partial = .5
Overcoming denial	<p>Have I/we fully appreciated the scale of the change in political/leadership control and its consequences?</p> <hr/> <p>Are we aware of the how the personalities and styles of the new people differ from the old?</p> <hr/> <p>Have I/we taken account of the changes in opposition arrangements?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we assessed the likely impact on our partners of the change?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we marked the changes with the people involved by welcoming the new and saying goodbye to the old?</p>	
Utilising resistance	<p>Am I/ are we aware of my/our reaction to the change and to the positive and negative impact on me/us?</p> <hr/> <p>Have I/we identified what objectives and priorities, to which we were committed, have changed?</p> <hr/> <p>Have I/we taken account of any desire to hold on to the past?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we assessed the reaction of partners and taken steps to manage it where necessary?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we acknowledged and found ways to learn from strengths that existed in the old way of working?</p>	



Harnessing exploration	<p>Have we taken time to understand the different agenda now emerging?</p> <p>Have we considered the different risks and opportunities that the new agenda presents?</p> <p>Have we considered how the partnership agenda might be different now?</p> <p>Have we created the temporary roles, reporting relationships, and organizational groupings that we need to get us through this transition?</p> <p>Have we taken time to establish the new relationships?</p>	
Embedding commitment	<p>Have we translated the new agenda in to clear and manageable objectives?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we established a new way of working with the changed administration?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we ensured that the rest of the organisation is aware of changes and that new priorities are now embedded?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we taken steps to manage the risks within the new programme?</p> <hr/> <p>Have we reviewed and adjusted the scope and scale of our partnership involvement if necessary?</p>	
	Total	



FURTHER READING

William Bridges: *Managing Transitions; making the most of change*. Nicolas Brealey Publishing. London 1995

Oshry, B. *Seeing systems, unlocking the mysteries of organisational life*, Beret Koehler, San Francisco, USA 1995

Heifetz, R. *Leadership without easy answers*, Belknap, Harvard Massachusetts. USA, 1994

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Whole organisation or specialist areas: strategy development; service planning; performance and improvement; efficiency

Organisational Development

Organisation and system reviews; culture change; new service delivery models

Managing Relationships

Community leadership and engagement; effective partnership working; outsourcing support

Talent Management

Attraction, assessment and selection; workforce planning and career development

Executive Development

Leadership development (officer and councillor); coaching, mentoring and learning sets; appraisal; specialist short courses

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