

Business Leadership: Increasing leadership capability in the change management and project management professions.

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A critique submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctoral degree in Business Leadership



Australian Graduate School of Leadership

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mark Cowan-Aston, hereby declare that this critique is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, and no materials which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Torrens University Australia or any other institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. I acknowledge that copyright of published work contained within this critique resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I agree that this portfolio be made accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan, and reproductions of such documents

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Melbourne 2025

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Dion Accoto for his continuous support throughout my Doctor of Business Leadership research and in the creation of this Critique. After a considerable period spent in stormy waters, when the navigation of this work seemed increasingly likely to end on jagged rocks, his patience, input, and understanding brought this ship into safe waters and alongside the pier of tranquillity, a destination that, for several years, had appeared unattainable.

Throughout this journey, I have been motivated not only to produce a body of work that reflects my desire to keep learning and growing as the number of days behind me vastly surpasses those that lie ahead, but also to leave a legacy for my three beautiful daughters. They have been my constant source of joy and meaning, and I offer this work to them as inspiration to keep striving, to seek to grow constantly, never to accept limits imposed by others, and to suck the marrow out of life, which passes far too quickly. Rachel, Lucy, and Sophie, I love you.

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And of course, to my life partner, Jill, thank you. This is yet another step on our journey together.

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ETHICS STATEMENT AND CONTRIBUTOR APPROVALS

The research associated with this critique was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Each respondent completed the Research Respondent Consent Form to participate in this research, and it can be provided upon request. Most respondents agreed to share their information for the research, with the condition that no personal identifying details are published. This confidential information will only be given to appointed examiners upon request from the database, in accordance with the provided consent.

The following Ethics Statement reflects that each survey respondent was provided with a clear explanation as to why the particular information, documentation, and/or artifacts were being sought.

- Informed that it was their right to withdraw their participation in the research at any stage;
- Assured that any information or personal details gathered in the course of the research are confidential and that neither their name nor any identifying information will be used or published:
- Assured that the information, material(s) and/or instruction(s) provided would be held in a safe, secure location whilst being utilised and after use would be destroyed or disposed of in a manner that would not jeopardise its confidentiality;

- Advised that a recording device was to be used whenever necessary, and their permission was obtained prior to this use; and
- Advised that if they had any concerns or complaints about the research, to contact:

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Declaration: I used Artificial Intelligence tools in preparing this submission

Reflection: In preparing this critique for submission, at no stage was Artificial Intelligence used to produce any part of the original content of the critique. I confirm that one hundred percent of the content of this critique was produced using my own intellectual property, personal experience, and knowledge, together with information sourced from references, all of which have been included in the document.

In addition to Grammarly, which I used to edit the critique's grammar, I used Leximancer, an AI tool that analysed the targeted interviews and produced a summary, which was then used to compare the interview outputs with the "manual" assessment. Leximancer produced qualitative data, which the author then interpreted to assess its value to the review. The value of Leximancer lies in its ability to produce an objective assessment of the targeted interviews.

The website, www.grammarly.com was used to edit the critique before submission. At no time did the use of this tool add any original content to the final document.

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REFERENCING STYLE

American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition referencing has been used in this Critique and supporting portfolio.

REFLECTION # 1

Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, UK, April 1977

An icy wind swept across the parade ground. Spectators huddled in their coats, rubbed their hands, and stomped their feet. Even the Adjutant's magnificent white stallion, a veteran of these events, shook his head and pranced in a frustrated, equine comment on the cold. Somewhere in the crowd, my mother sat, later I learned, torn between pride and survival. The voice of the inspecting officer echoed as he spoke of what he believed it meant to be an officer in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. My colleagues and I stood still, determined that this parade would show we had reached our goal—that we were trained, fit, committed, ready, and immune to minor things like the weather. Higher ideals now occupied our minds, such as duty, service, integrity, leadership, and loyalty. We had already considered how this training and these ideals would hold up when tested in places like the streets of Northern Ireland or the windswept hills of the Falkland Islands. Many of us would find out soon enough. I was 19 years old.

The training to reach this day had been relentless, thorough, exhausting, and sometimes even brutal. I was immensely proud and excited, fully prepared for whatever lay ahead. Despite the challenges of recent months, I knew that this day was not the end. As the band played Auld Lang Syne, we turned our backs on our families and the lives we were leaving behind, and slow marched in time-honoured tradition up the steps of Old College and through its doors. It symbolised a departure from our previous lives and an entrance into the unknown future. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, himself an alumnus of the Academy, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. It is, however, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

REFLECTION # 2

Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1978

“Mark. There’s a report of a pretty major disturbance up at the Glen Road, Shaws Road junction.” Paddy, my boss, checked his notes. “Around 150-200 people. They have hijacked a bus and set it on fire. They most likely will have some petrol bombs, and intelligence reckons there could be a weapon as well.” He looked up from his notebook and smiled at me, “They don’t appear too happy.” I looked back at him, knowing what was coming next. He had that way of making you feel at ease, of communicating his total faith in your ability, and in the fact that we will all get the job done. “I want you to take a patrol up there to check it out. We’ll have 5 Platoon on standby, but we don’t want a major show of force. I just want to find out what is going on and to confirm the reports we have. I want you out in 30 Minutes. Let me know if you need anything.”

It was dark. Most of the streetlights had been shot out or smashed. We came out of the laneway, faces blackened, weapons ready, senses working overtime. Scanning the flames and the crowd about two hundred metres up the hill, I recall Paddy’s briefing less than an hour earlier. More like a chat, really, but he let me know exactly what was required, and more importantly, that he had full confidence in my ability to carry it out. I motioned for the squad to move up with me, and as I reached my next piece of cover, I instinctively turned to check where the team was. As usual, they were all where they were supposed to be, looking outwards for danger, checking on each other, and working out where they were going to when next they moved. I smiled. They were a good team, well-trained, and we trusted each other. We had to.

They saw us the next time we moved. A shout, another shout, many voices screaming abuse and threats. A group of four or five ran down the hill at us. The first rocks began to fall. We adopted a defensive posture as I tried to accurately assess the crowd's numbers and disposition. "Boss!" hissed one of my boys across the road. I saw what he was referring to, as two youths ignited a molotov cocktail and hurled it towards us. I watched it curl and splutter and explode with a fiery roar about thirty metres in front of us. It seemed to be a rallying call for the mob, as suddenly 60 or 70 of them broke from the main group and charged down the hill, raining rocks and bottles and profanities at us in the process. Immediate action was now necessary, the seven members of the patrol waiting on me to decide what it was going to be. It was August 1978, the anniversary of internment in Northern Ireland. We were in Belfast. I was 20 years old.

ABSTRACT

"All I can do is be me, whoever that is." – Bob Dylan

Introduction

Leadership: it is a concept nearly as old as humanity itself. In the Iliad, Homer describes how, "Odysseus shows endless consideration for all of his men, which makes him a strong leader. He always looks out for his men and encourages them to keep moving forward when hope disappears." (Odysseus Leadership, 2020) The Holy Bible contains many references to leadership, both direct and indirect, such as, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." (Holy Bible Philippians 2:3)

Leadership has always fascinated me: In primary school, I vividly remember trying to understand how one cricket team captain appeared confident and assured as the players looked to him for decisions, while a peer with similar experience seemed unsure and did not inspire the same level of followership. Why was that, I wondered? And so, my journey began.

My father was a naval officer, and in 1970, at the age of 14, I was privileged to spend a week at sea on a ship he commanded. I watched him work, listened carefully, and observed how the crew responded to his words and actions. One day, while talking with some of the crew, I heard one of them say that Dad was "a pretty good skipper." It wasn't until much later in life, when I became a military officer, that I truly understood how high a compliment that was and what it signified in terms of leadership.

This Leadership Critique reflects my leadership journey spanning nearly five decades; how I became a leader before fully understanding what leadership entails, and how my leadership evolved over many years and across various environments, marked by some successes,

notable failures, and the valuable lessons learned from both. The purpose of this critique is to examine my leadership development from different perspectives to understand how I have reached my current position as a leader. More importantly, it aims to identify areas for improvement, ways to be more effective, and how my accumulated knowledge and experience can contribute to developing and nurturing more leaders. This effort will benefit leaders, those they serve, their organisations, and the communities in which they operate. For me, this is the ultimate goal; after nearly 69 years on this spinning orb, my time as a leader may be limited, but the impact I can make in cultivating new leaders will endure beyond my lifetime and, hopefully, leave a lasting professional legacy.

This critique's reflection aims to develop and refine my individual leadership model, the "Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm" (PCLP), a flexible framework that describes and guides my leadership behavior. The PCLP shows how my values have evolved over time, with the ultimate goal of demonstrating how it might broaden to address my future challenge as a leader of leaders and the potential impact and importance this could have on leadership practice. It is important to note that an "as is" PCLP has been developed early in this Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL) program, based on my leadership knowledge and experience so far, and that the main research outcome is an aspirational PCLP that will shape and direct my leadership development and capabilities moving forward.

The reason I undertook this research was to deepen my understanding of my own leadership knowledge, abilities, and potential. This was mainly through my leadership experiences spanning over 50 years, including my early and later military careers, more than 30 years as a management consultant specialising in organisational development, change, and project management in the corporate world, and nearly eight years of involvement with Toastmasters International, a nonprofit organisation dedicated to improving the public speaking and leadership skills of its members.

My christening gift from my Godfather was a prayer book in which he wrote, “From your Godfather, Bob; and this above all else, to thine own self be true.” After a full and varied lifetime, in which yesterdays now far outnumber tomorrows, this remains a guiding principle, especially when applied to leadership. For how is it possible for one to lead, guide, and influence others if you cannot know and lead yourself?

After leaving the Army in 1991, I began working as a management consultant. I started as a training specialist, then gradually took on change management roles before becoming a project manager—almost by accident! The next 35 years of my career were spent mainly defining, establishing, and managing projects within organisations. Projects are how businesses implement change—such as deploying new IT systems, restructuring departments or entire companies, or adopting new business strategies to stay competitive amid industry or societal shifts. Through hundreds of projects across diverse industries—including, but not limited to, banking and finance, timber, manufacturing, aviation, railways, healthcare, defence, and education—I have long been concerned about the leadership gap in both change and project management. Specifically, I focus on the lack of leadership experience among change and project managers. In a global business environment driven by projects, the high failure rates and associated costs suggest that project management skills are far from optimal. (Sandbox, 2015) The role of change managers is critical here; however, I am also troubled by how they are often subordinated to the project managers they work with, and how this dynamic unfolds. A review of job listings for Project Managers and Change Managers shows that most of these ads include little or no mention of leadership experience as a requirement. The situation is nearly identical for project management as a whole. This helps explain why about 70% of projects fail to deliver their promised outcomes, with many either failing completely or failing to meet all their goals. (www.teamstage.10, 2022)

This lack of leadership knowledge, experience, and capability could extend to many other areas of management across the corporate world and reveals a clear deficiency in systemic

leadership development. Recognising this through the critique will help me identify where I can expand and improve my PCLP to support aspiring leaders in enhancing their skills.

Although there are, and have been, many project managers and change managers with highly skilled and effective leadership abilities, feedback from the interviewees who contributed to this critique, along with empirical and anecdotal evidence, suggests that leadership in this sub-sector is at best average and has significant room for improvement through dedicated and well-managed interventions. Enhancing the leadership skills of project managers and change managers is essential to maximising the impact of this critique's outcomes.

Critique Design Approach

To design the critique and to develop my aspirational PCLP, the following was undertaken:

- A general review of leadership theory with particular attention to principled leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and situational leadership. Additional leadership theories were also considered and reviewed. The purpose of this literature review was to establish a solid grounding of leadership theory on which to build subsequent knowledge.
- A literature review of the effectiveness of leadership within the change management and project management industries, which will help to triangulate my own experiences in these sectors
- An analysis of my own leadership experience has provided the foundation for developing my interim PCLP. This analysis will be conducted through case studies of three specific areas of professional practice, including:

- 15 years of experience as an Army officer serving in the British, Australian, and Malaysian armies.
- 30 years of experience as a project manager, change manager, and line manager in a wide variety of industries, and
- 8 years of leadership experience in Toastmasters International, a global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to developing the public speaking and leadership skills of its members.

It should be noted that this collective experience provided the basis for my “current state” PCLP.

- Interviews with current project and change managers to gain insight into the issues and problems facing practitioners today, and how they view leadership as a key factor in performance (or lack thereof). The results of these interviews will form the basis for developing and possibly implementing a pathway to enhance the effectiveness of project and change management.
- An analysis of recruitment advertisements for project and change managers to assess how much employers prioritise and value leadership knowledge and experience when hiring for these roles.
- A final evaluation of how the above information and data have influenced my aspirational PCLP and how it can evolve to become more effective and applicable in supporting my goal to foster leadership skills in individuals and organisations.

Results

Research into leadership in general, and into my own leadership of nearly fifty years of practice, has clearly shown an evolving and increasingly informed approach. My long-standing commitment to Servant Leadership has been reaffirmed as the foundation of my PCLP.

The analysis of job ads shows that when searching for change or project managers, the market clearly does not view leadership as an essential factor in selecting candidates for those roles. After reviewing 50 job postings over 12 months on two different recruitment websites (Seek and Indeed), 50% (20) did not mention leadership experience or skills at all. Among those that mentioned leadership in the advertisement, 55% (11) referenced leadership indirectly or vaguely (provide examples), and 45% (9) explicitly required leadership experience and skills. This confirmed my belief that leadership is rarely seen as a key attribute when selecting project and change managers

The approach I have taken to achieve the outcome has been demonstrated through my case studies, surveys, and interviews. Over nearly five decades, my growth and development as a leader have brought me to a point where I am confident in my leadership abilities. More importantly, at this stage of my journey, I am able to guide new and aspiring leaders to confront their inevitable challenges, especially in the “new” post-pandemic world. I chose this research design to understand my own growth, identify the issues facing the industry I have worked in for over 30 years, and ultimately positively influence the change and project management professions by enhancing the effectiveness of leaders within them.

The targeted surveys (12) conducted with current project managers and change management practitioners have revealed a concerning perception among these professionals that leadership in these roles is subpar at best. This is elaborated on later in this critique.

Having concluded the case study analysis, the surveys, and the recruitment advertisements, I am now able to formalise my PCLP and transition it from a static baseline to a “living” operational model that will continue to evolve alongside my practice. The positive outcomes that have resulted from this process include (but are not limited to):

- Placing the needs of the individuals within the team, and the needs of the team above my own needs and ambitions (in accordance with the principles of Servant Leadership)
- Building and valuing diversity within teams
- Committing to growing the leadership capability of all team members.

The industries of project management and change management need more and stronger leaders. As the main catalysts for change in organisations worldwide, projects are essential for introducing new processes and technology. However, the leaders of these projects often struggle to achieve their agreed-upon and necessary outcomes. My aim is to make a positive impact by supporting, educating, mentoring, and guiding key project staff and change practitioners to become more effective and better leaders.

I see this critique, the final PCLP, and the lessons I gain from this process as part of my journey toward becoming a leader who develops other leaders. To re-quote Sir Winston Churchill, “This is not the end. This is not even the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” (Churchill, W.S. 1942)

CHAPTER ONE: MOTIVATION FOR THE DBL AND HOW TO ADDRESS THE CRITIQUE

Why the Doctorate in Business Leadership?

In developing this critique, I needed to consider the drivers that led me to undertake the DBL in the first place to properly contextualise my approach, the outcomes, and where this might lead. The personal nature of the program, an account of my unique journey, required significant reflection. The model of self-reflection described by Argyris and Schön (1978) has helped me understand how my tacit or implicit “theories” about myself have guided my behavior, and the extent to which this has actually helped me make these implicit theories explicit.

The model of change, based on Lewin's work (1947, 1958), helps explain how the process of reflection unfolds. Lewin describes his model as, “successful change includes therefore three aspects: unfreezing (if necessary) the present level L1, moving to the new level L2, and freezing group life on the new level. Since any level is determined by a force field, permanency implies that the new force field is made relatively secure against change. (Lewin, 1947a, p. 35)

This is understood as the ability to reflect on existing practices and behaviors, “unfreezing” deeply ingrained habits, consciously working toward new actions, values, and behaviors, and then “refreezing” the new model to ensure its sustainability. It is a straightforward yet powerful method for addressing any area of practice, especially when considering one’s leadership journey. It is recognised that ongoing behaviours that form habits or repetitive actions influence everyone, with a large portion of daily actions being repetitive and habit-based. Humans are neurologically wired to seek organisation and patterns in their environment and behavior.

Marien, Hans & Custers, Ruud & Aarts, Henk. (2018) echo this idea, aiming to understand how habitual mechanisms develop in human action, from automatic stimulus-response behaviors to the automatic execution of routines or habitual skills conditioned by desired goals. This creates a neural economy by relying on predictable, familiar routines, so we can navigate the day on 'auto-pilot'. Consequently, our best attention, effort, and energy are available to manage new and unfamiliar events and experiences. However, this "habit"-driven behavior does not necessarily support positive change and underscores the importance of effectively and objectively reflecting on past and present behaviors.

Throughout the literature review and reflecting on it, I found it to be a valuable way to evaluate my leadership behavior over the years. When I first began thinking about leadership in general, and my own leadership specifically, I was a young soldier thrown into an unfamiliar environment that no amount of reading or talking could truly prepare me for. When I joined the British Army at age 18, my leadership experience was limited and had never been formally examined. Starting a military career sharpens leadership—both of yourself and others—and for the first time, I was learning about leadership in action.

Learning about leadership is one thing; actually practicing it is quite another. Three months after completing my officer training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, I marched into the 1st Bn Queens Regiment in Werl, West Germany, as a platoon commander of four armoured personnel carriers, and 30 soldiers all with more regimental experience than I had, and all who had to call me "Sir." This was leadership training on steroids!

Many years later, I learned about John C. Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership (2011). In this straightforward yet powerful approach to leadership development, Maxwell suggests that anyone stepping into a new leadership role in a different environment, regardless of their previous leadership experience, begins as a Level One leader. This means they are in the leadership position because of their designated role, rank, or title. Their followers do not know

them personally, are unaware of their capabilities, and will follow them only because they are the boss. Leaders at this level are not yet effective at influencing others. They primarily rely on positional power to get their work done. I now realise, as I eventually understood back in 1978, that I was a Level One leader.



Figure 1: 5 Levels of Leadership - John Maxwell, 2011

My leadership journey had truly begun; the first thing I did was get to know my troops as people first, not just soldiers, to understand their drivers, aspirations, capabilities, fears, hopes, and attitudes. This did not happen overnight. As Maxwell says in the 5 Levels of Leadership, 2011, “When people feel liked, cared for, included, valued, and trusted, they begin to work together with their leader and each other.” (Maxwell, J.C, 2011) This is the bedrock from which respect and loyalty begin to grow. As the soldiers came to see that I cared for them, my own technical performance as a soldier began to show them that I would not ask them to do anything I couldn't do myself, which brings the 5 Levels of Leadership model to Level 3.

Four months after joining the battalion in Germany, the unit was sent to Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the summer of 1978, the height of “the troubles”. I was finally going to be tested

in a real-world operational environment where we faced a calculated, deadly enemy, and decisions truly mattered for life and death. By the time we reached Belfast, I had built a certain level of trust, respect, and loyalty with my soldiers, and after five months of rigorous, stressful operational deployment, we successfully completed the tour and returned to Germany, all of us fit, unscathed, and somewhat wiser for the experience.

As a professional Army Officer, I believed I had earned my spurs, but returning to our Cold War roles quickly taught me that becoming comfortable can lead to complacency. The need to keep learning, growing, and seeking ways to improve as a leader became clear, and the military system, with its ongoing programs of professional development and education, helped make this possible. A professional army doesn't have room for only private soldiers or lieutenants; excellence in these ranks is the goal, but at the same time, promotion to the next rank is essential for the service to grow and uphold its standards. This realisation sparked my lifelong fascination with leadership—understanding it, practicing it, and embodying it.

After my three-year short-term commission ended, I declined an offer to stay in the British Army and went back home to Australia – (big mistake, HUGE!). I didn't plan to join the Australian Army; I had been in uniform since I was 18 and wanted to pursue a different career. I found a role at a business machine company in Sydney, where I trained and worked in the sales team. While I quickly realised that leadership in business was different from military leadership, in 1980, business leadership was also quite different from what it has become today. At that time, the directive style of business leadership closely resembled the British Army's leadership model. However, the difference was the lack of preparation and development for staff before they were promoted to leadership roles. For example, a successful salesperson was typically promoted to sales manager simply because they excelled at sales. There was very little professional development for staff, especially compared to what has been in place in business over the past 20 years or so.

After two years of working in business, I decided that the rifle grease still coursed through my veins and in 1982 enlisted in the Australian Army as a Lieutenant, Platoon Commander. I served as a paratrooper, Training and Development Officer, Company Commander, Brigade Staff Officer, and Adviser to the Malaysian Army. These roles mainly involved jumping out of aircraft, planning to jump out of aircraft, training soldiers to jump out of aircraft, and writing doctrine, policy, and plans for parachute units to jump out of aircraft, all while maintaining the necessary skills and fitness to be an effective infantry soldier.

This period saw increased growth and awareness of my leadership. As a Parachute Jump Instructor, I had the significant responsibility of training not only first-time jumpers but also of planning, preparing, and executing the ongoing “continuation” jump training for an entire battalion of 500 soldiers. I was, by rank (but not by experience), the senior officer of the instructor group, and the decisions I made directly affected training levels, operational readiness, and the health and welfare of the whole battalion.

As acting Company Commander, I personally commanded about 100 soldiers, and they all looked to me for leadership and guidance. The decisions I made carried potential life-and-death consequences, and I recall realising during this time that I was truly serving as a leader. There was nothing academic about it; it was real-world and real-time. Everything I did was aimed at ensuring the success of our mission and prioritising the safety and well-being of the soldiers.

In 1989, I was posted as an advisor to the Malaysian Army to help that country develop an airborne force capability. I was the only Australian in a garrison of 3,000 Malaysian soldiers. While I might have been seen as a bit eccentric by the Malaysian soldiers, it was another environment where I needed to adjust my leadership style to fit the different culture. In the Malaysian Army, officers were very directive, the troops knew their subordinate role, and discipline was quite strict. I chose to apply my leadership style of open communication,

listening, participation, and concern for the soldiers' welfare, and I found that they responded well to this. I, in turn, felt that the relationship I built validated the principle of servant leadership that I aimed to practice.

After 16 years of service, I decided to leave the military while I was still young enough to start a new career. One Friday in Sydney in 1991, I hung up my uniform, and the following Monday, I put on a suit to begin a new chapter as a management consultant at a second-tier consulting firm. I started as a mid-level manager responsible for helping project managers deliver technical and financial results by working on the “people” side of client business—change, training, and communications. This was my first introduction to projects and project management, an area I had no experience with and very little knowledge of. It was truly an eye-opener!

I realised that the “project,” with its unique structure, dedicated budget, agreed delivery timeframe, defined scope, dedicated team members, and specific deliverables, is the mechanism used by businesses to drive change within organisations. After two days of induction, I found myself on a project team working at a major bank in Canberra. Three weeks later, I was assigned to a cost reduction project at a timber mill in Mt Gambier, South Australia. That marked the start of over 35 years of working in or leading project teams across various industry sectors, including (but not limited to) banking and finance, timber, heavy and light manufacturing, aviation, public sector, railways, telecommunications, defense, health, and education.

The project became my place of employment for periods ranging from a few days to over a year, sometimes working on one project, other times on two or three simultaneously. I worked wherever the business needed, locally, across the country, and even internationally. I collaborated with clients who welcomed our involvement and contribution to their organisations, and with others who had been instructed to use us but were either passively or

aggressively opposed to our presence, perceiving us as a threat to them, their businesses, and their staff. From the beginning, driven by my deep interest in leadership, I observed the project managers to learn from them and to understand the different styles and levels of success each achieved. As in the classic Western, there was "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly."

Without a doubt, I worked with some of the most effective project managers I have met - people able to develop a clear and accurate project plan, create a realistic and manageable budget, set challenging yet achievable milestones, and steer the project toward success. They were in the minority. All this while leading, motivating, and monitoring the project team's performance and emotions, as well as handling the client's concerns and expectations throughout the process.

Most project managers were only functionally competent at best, able to simply check off items on the project management technical checklist, but they struggled with problem-solving regarding people, whether their staff or the client. If no issues arose, progress continued smoothly; however, once trouble caught the project, these managers' limitations quickly became clear. Staff issues, discipline problems, and non-compliance by the team or the client exposed the weaknesses of the PM, often causing the project to suffer. In such cases, external intervention was usually necessary; once the issues were resolved, the project would return to normal and move forward. Projects in this category frequently experienced delays, exceeded budgets, and faced staff turnover.

Suffice it to say that projects in the "Ugly" dimension rarely succeed. They often had project managers appointed because there was no one else available, or because they were good technicians but lacked leadership, technical qualifications, knowledge, and experience. It was not their fault; the system and their "leaders" set them up for failure by appointing them to the

project management role. Projects with this type of leadership were prone to scope, time, and budget overruns, and all too often, failure.

This all seemed reasonably straightforward to me as I observed these varying levels of project leadership in action, until, that is, I was suddenly placed into a PM role on a long-term project in Tasmania after a medical emergency caused the current manager to withdraw. Seeing is not doing, and I initially struggled with the demands of the role, both internally and externally. From that moment on, the numerous projects I have worked on as a project manager, project director, or change manager have shown me that each project has its own uniqueness but also shares common features. One thing the wise project manager never says is, "I've seen it all." No one ever can. Some key lessons this experience has taught me include:

- Projects fail at the beginning. Failure to accurately scope, budget, and resource the project at the beginning sets the project (and therefore the project manager) up for failure.
- Many projects, especially large ones, are initiated by senior executives as mere ideas, without a practical understanding of how they will be implemented. Ideas can be valuable, but they need to be tested, validated, and road-tested before a project is actually launched.
- Projects today often have a level of complexity that exceeds the organisation's ability to effectively deliver them. However, this doesn't mean they shouldn't happen; it indicates that this complexity should be recognised and that appropriate people and resources should be allocated to achieve the desired results.
- Good people are what set successful projects apart. Achieving technical outcomes is usually possible. The real challenge is getting the project team to align, stay focused, and work together toward the goal. It's also crucial to ensure all business members affected by the technical changes are informed, trained, and understand

“what’s in it for them.” A system can be successful only if the people who use it are capable and willing. Without that, it’s a waste of money.

This background, then, motivates me to use my experience, knowledge, and concerns about project management as one of the three “pillars” of my DBL critique. By being able to analyse leadership issues and challenges in the sector, I will be better equipped to develop strategies that enhance the leadership skills of both project managers and change managers, thereby improving organisational outcomes, increasing the likelihood that projects will meet their expectations on time and within budget, and providing managers with the knowledge and skills needed to lead their projects more effectively than they currently do.

Before moving on to the next chapter, it should be understood that the problems faced, as described, by project and change managers are made worse by the lack of effective leadership from those senior to them in the project organisational structure, specifically the Project Directors, Project Sponsors, and the executive leadership teams responsible for the higher-level governance of projects. While my post-DBL focus aims to improve the effectiveness of project and change managers through better leadership, intervention at higher levels will also be necessary. However, this is outside the scope of this critique.

CHAPTER: TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Part A - Evolution and current status of contemporary leadership theory

The history of leadership as a practice

Leadership as a concept and practice is ancient, nearly as old as humanity itself. The Holy Bible contains many clear references to leadership, along with numerous implied ones. For example, Matthew 20:26-28 states, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Holy Bible, 2017) In emphasizing that leaders should be trainers, it also says, "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." (Luke 22:26)

The Qur'an also explicitly discusses leadership, for example, "And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command; and We inspired them to do good works, and to observe the prayer, and to give out charity. They were devoted servants to Us." (Qur'an 21-17). These are clear references to the theory of servant leadership, developed centuries later by Robert Greenleaf. (Greenleaf, 1970). Leadership, then, is mentioned in two of the oldest and most influential books ever written.

Leadership is a complex and multi-dimensional concept, and creating a single, workable definition is nearly impossible. Over the years, researchers have proposed many definitions of leadership, most of which developed from management theories that were considered innovative at their time.

It is interesting to note that while leadership theory has been written and published throughout the twentieth century, the genre of leadership literature did not truly develop until the 1980s. The twentieth century also saw the development of several organisational theories, including:

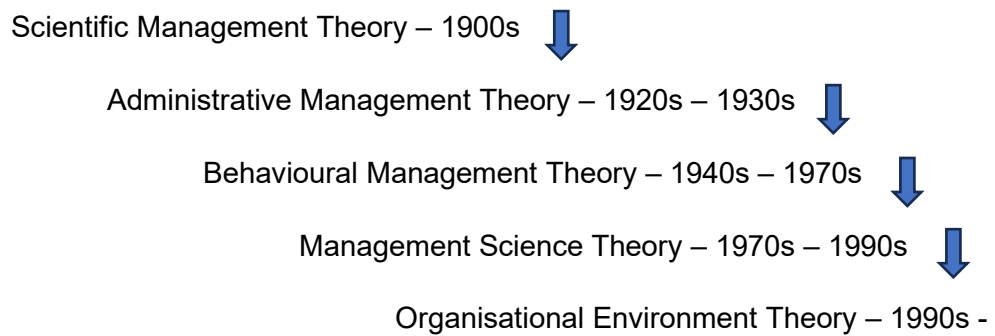


Figure 2: Evolution of Management, Khorasani, Almasifard, 2017

The theories described in Figure 2 were written by some of the most famous management and behavioural scientists and practitioners of the twentieth century, including, but not limited to, Fredrick Taylor, Henri Fayol, Max Weber, Mary Parker Follett, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, W. Edwards Deming, Robert Kahn, and Daniel Katz. The works of these authors have shaped management thought and practice into the late twentieth century, and, in a non-linear way, each theory builds on the principles of earlier ones to some extent.

The leadership theories that will be reviewed include:

- Great man leadership
- Transactional leadership
- Transformational leadership
- Servant leadership

- Adaptive leadership
- Aspirational leadership
- Situational leadership
- Laissez-Faire leadership
- Contingency leadership
- Charismatic leadership

However, while this critique is not meant to be a detailed treatise on management theory, it is important to understand where modern leadership theory and practice originate and how the development of theories is influenced by their historical context. For example, Scientific Management Theory, developed by Frederick Taylor in the 1880s, was a response by social scientists, engineers, and capitalists to understand the monopolistic factories and production methods that emerged during the Industrial Revolution. It aimed to analyse workflows to enhance economic efficiency, especially labour productivity. The interesting aspect of these theories is that none of them explicitly aimed to define or clarify the role of leadership, or to emphasise its importance in achieving superior results. Instead, management, supervision, process, and hierarchy were the main focus.

The one sector where leadership was actively pursued and taught as a practical concept is the military, and there have been numerous efforts throughout history to understand and communicate what leadership is, what it represents, and how it contributes to achieving goals. Much of the military leadership, as it developed before the nineteenth century, was based on class and entitlement, with the “officer class” generally drawn from upper-class, wealthy, educated, and often titled sectors of society. At the same time, the other ranks mainly came from less prosperous and less educated parts of the population.

Leadership has always been a central concept in the military and is frequently discussed and referenced within Defence Forces worldwide. This has fostered the idea that military leadership is different from leadership in other areas, and that it is only about military influence and command in warfare. In reality, many of the styles and concepts used in military leadership are also found in leadership in other fields. (Kernic, F., Elbe, M., Richter, G. 2023) list various types of leadership styles.

Personality-based theories. The strength of this approach is that it focuses on the leader (Great Man Theory), with particular attention to character, abilities, and personality. These theories, also known as Trait Theory, are based on comparative analysis of different leadership personalities and their specific characteristics. These characteristics have evolved into a “checklist” of qualities that an effective leader would possess or demonstrate. These include:

- Ability - intelligence, vigilance, verbal dexterity, originality, and judgment
- Achievement - school performance, knowledge, and sporting achievement
- Accountability - reliability, initiative, perseverance, aggressiveness, self-confidence, and desire to excel
- Participation - activity, sociability, willingness to cooperate, adaptability, and humour
- Status - socioeconomic position and popularity
- Intelligence
- Clear, strong value
- High personal driving force

Trait theory aims to answer a central question in military leadership: What characteristics do troop leaders and commanders need to achieve leadership success?

Indeed, while I was an Officer Cadet at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the UK in 1976, the understanding and application of these traits were regarded as essential to becoming a commissioned officer in the British Army and to leading effectively.

The "Great Man" theory has recurred throughout history worldwide, with prominent charismatic leaders standing out in all spheres of society. In politics, figures like Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Bob Hawke, and Golda Meir; in business, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Andrew Forrest, and even Donald Trump; and in the military, Norman Schwarzkopf, George Patton, and Sir John Monash, have all displayed strong charisma to enhance their capabilities and standing as leaders. Perhaps the earliest mention of this theory was in the 19th century by proponents such as the historian Thomas Carlyle, who argued that the course of history is essentially a collection of biographies of great men.

The interesting thing about the Great Man theory is that it necessarily raises the question, "Are leaders born, or are they made?" - a question that has sparked much discussion and debate. This critique is not meant to explore that issue, but it is worth noting that many great leaders have emerged due to the circumstances they faced. Would history have recognised Sir Winston Churchill as a great leader if Adolf Hitler had not built the Third Reich and threatened the world? Churchill rose to leadership greatness because of the threat Hitler posed; whatever leadership qualities Churchill had might never have come to light if the Second World War had not occurred.

My personal leadership experience and observations have led me to the conclusion that "Great" leaders might be born, but individuals with little or no natural leadership ability can be trained to become good, effective leaders.

Transactional and transformational leadership theories are viewed as opposing concepts. (Burns, J. M., 1978) identified these two types of political leadership. Transactional leadership

occurs when one person initiates contact with others to exchange something of value; that is, "leaders approach followers with an eye toward exchanging" (p.4). Transformational leadership is based on more than just followers' compliance; it involves changes in followers' beliefs, needs, and values. According to Burns, "the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Kuhnert, K. W., Lewis, P., 1987).

Transactional leadership involves exchanges in which both the superior and the subordinate influence each other, each gaining something of value (Yukl, 1981). Essentially, in this model, leaders provide their followers with what they want, and in return, the leader receives what they desire — a mutual exchange of valued outcomes. The ongoing effectiveness of transactional leaders depends on their ability to consistently offer tangible rewards to their followers for completing required tasks.

Transformational leadership, by contrast, depends on establishing, communicating, and gaining acceptance of embedded values and beliefs between the leader and followers. Both Bass (1985) and Burns (1978) indicated that transformational leaders operate from deeply held personal value systems that include justice and integrity. This model can be much harder to create and operate, but if successful, it will result in a more committed and enduring form of leadership. There are four factors of transformational leadership (also known as the "four I's"): idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration.

(Deng, C., Gulseren, D., et al., 2022) found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on many important outcomes, with performance being just one. In fact, outcomes such as organisational citizenship behaviours, extra effort, employee or work engagement, trust in the manager, higher leader-member exchange, psychological empowerment, and

identification with the leader, along with follower motivation and many other factors, provide benefits to both employees and the organisation.

In developing my initial PCLP, the leadership theory that resonated most with me was Servant Leadership. The idea of a leader as a servant isn't new; as referenced in earlier passages in the Bible, it's clear that leaders serving their followers predates modern literature.

Servant leadership theory, which formally dates from the 1970s, argues that leaders have a duty to focus primarily on their subordinates' needs, rather than on their own or those of the organisation.

Robert Greenleaf is recognised as the first to coin the phrase "Servant Leadership" in an essay he published in 1970 (Greenleaf, R 1970). He stated, "The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is a leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual drive for power or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them, there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature,"

The difference manifests in the care the servant-first takes to ensure that other people's highest-priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

A servant-leader mainly focuses on the growth and well-being of people and the communities they belong to. While traditional leadership often involves accumulating and exercising power

from the top, servant leadership differs. The servant-leader shares power, prioritises others' needs, and helps people develop and perform at their highest potential.

I was fortunate to be selected to attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) in the UK in 1976. Shortly after the merger of the Royal Military College Sandhurst and the Royal Military Academy Woolwich in 1947, the new academic staff compiled an anthology to introduce cadets to the complexities of military leadership. They chose the motto of the new Academy as the title, "Serve To Lead." This motto perfectly captures the ethos of both Sandhurst as a leading leadership training institution and the UK Army as a whole. There is no greater privilege than serving those willing to give their lives for the country.

While most leadership theories have existed for decades or longer, it's encouraging that a contemporary theory has recently been added to the collection. This is Aspirational Leadership, a theory developed and formalised by Ramzi Fayad (Fayad R., 2022). Aspirational Theory builds on the work and content of earlier theories, but importantly includes a cycle of reflection followed by design that creates a Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP). This paradigm serves as a roadmap of leadership behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and actions that effective leaders should consistently practice to keep their leadership fresh, relevant, and effective.

Aspirational Leadership is characterised by Driving (Core) Values, which include:

- Being ethical in all decision-making
- Maintaining high trust levels
- Being adaptively resilient
- Having a service mindset (Fayad R., 2022 pp143)

A key aspect of aspirational leadership is currency: any position or value expressed must be constantly re-evaluated and updated to align with the situation, team needs, and leadership style that best address the current needs. The Doctor of Business Leadership program aims to guide candidates towards developing an aspirational Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP), which requires them to actively reflect on their individual leadership style and actions to continually improve their leadership effectiveness.

While Aspirational Leadership is the newest leadership theory, it draws on other theories such as servant leadership and adaptive leadership, and this connection shows that no single theory can capture all aspects of leadership's complexity; to a degree, all theories become interdependent in practice.

Adaptive leadership is also a modern leadership model, first developed and promoted by Ron Heifetz in his book, "Leadership Without Easy Answers", (Heifetz. R., 2009). Heifetz observed that change can challenge people's familiar reality, and in any context where this occurs, many will feel threatened by the push for necessary change. Leaders need to find ways to navigate this, and the practice of Adaptive Leadership can be a valuable tool in doing so. This initial book was followed by Leadership on the Line, by Heifetz and Marty Linsky, (Heifetz, R., Linsky, M., 2017). Adaptive theory holds that in a constantly changing business environment, leaders must go beyond merely solving problems and addressing challenges; they must also anticipate potential issues and identify root causes. Effective leaders must also be capable of assessing risk, focusing on relevant issues, and distinguishing those that are less important.

Like all leaders, adaptive leadership emphasises making key decisions and is characterised by a style that welcomes feedback, anticipates inevitable change, is skilled at handling adaptive challenges, and can quickly shift direction when necessary. It also varies based on the type of challenge. A technical challenge is solved with a one-time fix, whereas an adaptive challenge requires time and may involve cultural changes within organisations. The latter often

occurs when a company is in transition—whether expanding or downsizing—and needs to adjust its long-term business strategies. Leaders prepared to navigate change tend to find great success. (WGU, 2021).

Adaptive leadership is underpinned by four core principles:

- **Emotional intelligence.** Adaptive leaders are sensitive to others' feelings. They know that change isn't easy. Their empathy has the added bonus of boosting morale throughout the organisation because it builds trust. A workforce that feels heard and supported is much more likely to put in the hard work required to achieve company goals.
- **Organisational justice.** Adaptive leaders must be open and honest, even if the truth is hard to hear. They need to give employees and stakeholders the facts. Their honesty will ensure that changes are accepted and understood.
- **Development.** Adaptive leaders love trying new things (strategies, processes, etc.), especially when they help the organisation succeed and be better prepared for change. They also have the propensity to innovate and experiment, and are not afraid to fail in the process. Perhaps most importantly, they encourage and empower employees to reach their full potential.
- **Character.** This principle emphasises earning the respect of those you lead. Again, transparency is essential. The leader must be completely open and comfortable admitting mistakes and knowing when to say stop if something isn't working. As much as they welcome change, an adaptive leader also values diversity and finds ways to make it benefit the entire company. (WGU, 2021)

Successful adaptive leaders possess the following traits:

- Think outside the box and challenge the way things have always been done.
- Are flexible and accept change as part of the organization's evolution.
- Embrace rather than fear uncertainty, learn from it, and use it to find better solutions.
- Are proactive instead of reactive.
- Are open to experimentation.
- Welcome a diversity of viewpoints

While Adaptive Leadership is a solid leadership theory, it clearly has interdependencies and draws on most of the other theories, particularly those, such as Servant Leadership and Aspirational Leadership, that promote integrity, character, and effective decision-making. Laissez-Faire leadership is often seen as Empowering Leadership, although there are important differences between the two. In Laissez-Faire leadership, leaders are more "hands-off" and give team members autonomy and delegated decision-making power. They generally avoid micromanaging their team and trust employees to solve problems. The effectiveness of laissez-faire leadership decreases when team members are empowered but lack the competence to handle the trust and responsibilities given to them. This leadership style can promote personal growth and decision-making among team members, but often, it is the lack of strong leadership and competence from the leader that encourages this behavior. Additionally, laissez-faire leadership can lead to ambiguity in roles and accountability, as team members, without clear guidance, may act based on their own judgment, even if the team's goals are not being achieved.

A specific example of laissez-faire leadership that I encountered during my consulting career was a General Manager in a manufacturing plant who operated by the edict of his "open door policy". Indeed, his door was always open, but no staff ever came through it, and the GM never went outside it. At his level of incompetence, he allowed staff to essentially run the floor

operation while he sat in his office and handled all management tasks except leadership. The result was different groups formed on the manufacturing floor, competed for position, made decisions that were often at odds with the company's priorities, and inter-racial violence between groups occurred. These outcomes are reflected in the 2007 article by Anders Skogstad, Ståle Einarsen, Torbjørn Torsheim, Merethe Schanke Aasland, and Hilde Hetland, "The Destructiveness of Laissez Faire Leadership Behaviour". (Skogstad, A., et al, 2007).

Charismatic leadership is defined by a leader who uses communication skills, persuasiveness, and charm to influence others. These leaders, able to connect deeply with people, are especially valuable in organisations facing a crisis or struggling to progress. It's clear that a leader with traits common in charismatic leadership will generally lead more effectively than one without them. History features many successful charismatic leaders, such as Boadicea, Mark Antony, Lord Nelson, Otto von Bismarck, Sir Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Bob Hawke, and Ronald Reagan. These leaders communicate clearly and effectively, build rapport with followers, and inspire their teams and jurisdictions to achieve positive results. Conversely, some despotic leaders possessed similar talents but led their followers to disaster—examples include Adolf Hitler and Idi Amin Dada. Bill Clinton, a highly charismatic and skilled communicator, was likable but completely untrustworthy. Donald Trump, another charismatic leader, has widespread support among many of his countrymen but has also proven to be divisive and unpopular with half of the U.S. population over time. Charismatic leadership can be a force for good, but it also has the potential to be used harmfully against followers.

William, R. (2021) observes that there can be a fine line between charismatic leadership being a force for good and a force for harm. Charisma has been defined as "a special power that some people have naturally that makes them able to influence others and attract their attention and admiration", and "compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others," and "a divinely conferred power or talent." Sellars, P. (1996) asserts that charisma is a tricky thing; President John F. Kennedy oozed it - but so did Hitler and Charles Manson. Con artists,

charlatans, and megalomaniacs can make it their instrument as effectively as the best CEOs, entertainers, and presidents. When used wisely, it's a blessing. When indulged, it can be a curse. Charismatic visionaries lead people forward — and sometimes astray. They can be impetuous, unpredictable, and exasperating to work for, like Donald Trump, Steve Jobs, or Elon Musk.

While many successful leaders have demonstrated charismatic leadership traits, there are inherent risks in this approach. First, ongoing success and progress depend on the leader's presence, which creates problems later, especially with succession planning. Second, charismatic leadership can lead to unethical behavior, with leaders exploiting followers or organisations through their personality. Third, some leaders may fake the traits that brought them success, and if this is discovered, it poses a risk to the organisation.

The following is an interesting comparison between charismatic and transformational leadership:

Hodgson, P, White, R,. (2003) assert that, “truly effective leadership is not just about the qualities of the leader; it is about striking the right balance between behaviours, needs, and context.”

Comparing different leadership styles can help understand how they might differ in effectiveness and use. The following table from Williams R., 2021, compares charismatic and transformational leadership styles.

Charismatic Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Leader influences the followers with the dint of his/her personality and charm	Leader inspires change through his/her vision and passion to get things done
Leader is the “head of the show”	Leader is open to followers’ inputs and participation
Vision fulfilment by stimulating followers to the leader’s vision	Vision fulfilment inclusive of follower and leader vision
Charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge in chaos situations	Transformational leaders can emerge at different levels in the organisation
Behaviour aimed at leader-driven goals and promote feelings of obedience and dependency in followers	Behaviour aimed at encouraging teamwork and commitment to shared goals

Figure 3: Charismatic versus Transformational Leadership - Williams. R, 2021

Contingency Theory emphasises the variables that may exist in any environment and how these can influence the most suitable leadership style for that specific situation. Effective leaders can evaluate their followers' needs, assess the context, and adjust their behaviors accordingly. Success depends on several variables, including the leadership approach, followers' qualities, and situational factors. (Khan ZA, Nawaz A, Khan IU., 2016)

The final, and perhaps most overarching leadership theory to be discussed is Situational Leadership. These theories suggest that leaders choose a specific course of action, behaviour, and attitude toward their team based on the circumstances of each situation. In a case where the leader is the most knowledgeable and experienced member, it might logically follow that he or she would adopt a more authoritarian or even autocratic leadership style when addressing the situation. Conversely, if team members are better informed and more

experienced about the specific requirements of the situation, a more democratic leadership style would be applied more effectively.

Situational Leadership as we know it today was first developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in their 1969 book, "Management of Organisational Behaviour: Utilising Human Resources." (Hersey, P., Blanchard, K., 1969). The theory presents some interesting ideas; for example, would Sir Winston Churchill have risen to such great heights of leadership if not for the emergence of Adolf Hitler? In 1939, Germany posed a clear threat to Britain and the free world, and there was a leadership vacuum in England that Churchill stepped into. It is unlikely that without Hitler, Churchill would have become recognised as a great leader.

Which leadership theory is in action, and regardless of the leadership style applied, the immediate situation will, at least to some extent, influence how the leader behaves and responds.

Summary

All the leadership theories covered have developed from academic research, and, in most cases, they are valid in leadership discussions. When evaluating the effectiveness of each, it is not primarily about choosing the "best" or "worst," but rather about how each can be translated into a practical application that, in turn, positively impacts leadership effectiveness.

My leadership experience teaches me that Transformational Leadership is a theory that an aspiring leader can read, absorb, and apply in a way that perhaps the Great Man Theory could not. Similarly, the fundamental concept behind Servant Leadership is one that a practitioner can learn, reflect on, and adopt, thereby becoming a better and more effective leader. Of the theories reviewed, the last one with positive, practical application is Aspirational Leadership, which, by design, requires leaders to understand, absorb, and reflect on practice—shining a

light for better leadership, not on how leaders can influence their followers, but on how they can understand, reflect, and continually improve their leadership practice.

While the other theories inform a potential leader of “things to do” and “points to consider”, they do not, of themselves, offer practical guidance on “what to do” to become a better and more effective leader.

Part B – Literature Review - Leadership in project management and change management

The review of leadership theory in Part A provides a solid foundation for understanding the many leadership theories that explain past and current practice. However, leadership does not operate in the real world as a mere theory; it is a dynamic, living entity that influences organisations and people. While someone might label themselves as a “transformational” leader or a “Laissez-Faire” leader, it is their actions—rather than their titles—that subordinates, peers, and superiors will use to judge them. As often stated, effective leadership may not always be visible within an organisation, but a lack of leadership is immediately noticeable.

This critique aims to understand the leadership dynamics and effectiveness within project management and change management disciplines to develop a specific contextual rationale for my aspirational PCLP. In analysing this, I plan to focus the literature review for these areas on the industry sectors I have worked in over the last 30 years, namely:

- Financial services
- Transport
- Government
- Defence
- Manufacturing
- Timber
- Aviation

Over this period, I have worked on or contributed directly to hundreds of projects, ranging from small, low-budget initiatives to large, multi-million dollar projects that impact thousands of people worldwide. It is from this accumulated knowledge and experience that I will enhance the findings of the literature review on leadership in project and change management.

Firstly, it is necessary to define the key terms of this review: “Project Management” and “Change Management”.

There are numerous definitions for project management, most are differently expressed versions of the same thing. An effective definition of project management is;

“Project management is the application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge, and experience to achieve specific project objectives according to the project acceptance criteria within agreed parameters. Project management has final deliverables that are constrained to a finite timescale and budget.” (Association of Project Management, 2024)

Most organisations today accomplish change through the application of projects; day to day business operation is generally referred to as, “Business as usual” (BAU). Formal projects will usually have a Project Manager appointed, and he/she will be supported and equipped with a structure designed to achieve the desired goals and objectives. This structure will often take the form of an entity in itself within the business. An example of this might look like:

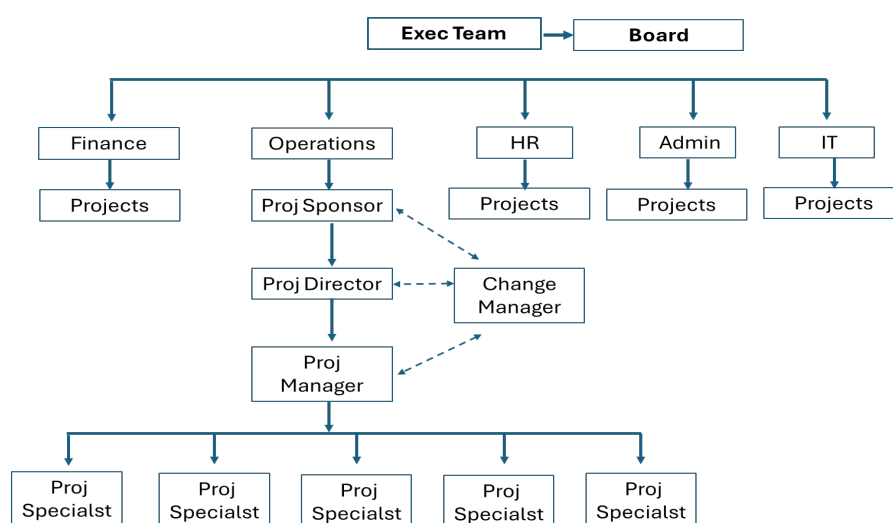


Figure 4: Generic Organisation Project Structure - Author

The key things to remember about any project are:

- The project exists to make an improvement and/or change to the organisation
- The project is not business as usual
- Projects have a defined life, with a start date, an end date, milestones, and deliverables
- Projects can be resourced from within or without the business, or a combination
- Project Managers are responsible for developing the project plan, managing the project budget, managing project resources, leading the project team, reporting to the Project Director, and delivering agreed outcomes.

It is important to remember that most organisations today include projects as part of their ongoing operations; BAU is how the business is conducted to achieve its mission, while projects are set up to create change within the business to improve mission delivery.

As with Project Management, there are many definitions of change management. Before progressing, it is important to distinguish between the two different types of change management. The first is the application of version control for software releases, e.g., Version 1.0, 1.1, 2.0, 2.1, etc. Version control involves tracking and managing changes to software code and has historically been referred to as change management. However, this is not the type of change management I am referring to in this critique.

One of the leading change management organisations in the world, Prosci, defines change management as:

“The application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the people side of change to achieve a desired outcome. Change management is about mobilising people to deliver

expected results and outcomes in times of change. It enables people to be successful on the journey they are sent on by their organisations. When it is done well, initiatives are more successful, and expected benefits are realised. Change then becomes a strategic capability that helps build organisational agility.” (Procsi, 2019)

Project management, then, is the “lever” by which organisations effect change, while change management is the means by which projects involve the people within the organisation to ensure success. Sandbox (2015) publishes damning statistics indicating that an overwhelming percentage of projects either fail completely or fail to deliver all their agreed-upon goals and objectives. These include:

- The estimated cost, in 2004, of failed IT projects in the United States is between \$50 billion and \$150 billion, and €142 billion in Europe,
- In a survey of 10,640 projects by PwC of 200 companies from 30 countries in various industries, only 2.5% of the companies successfully completed 100% of their projects.
- Over 50% of project managers stated that they do not consistently achieve stated project deliverables. (Source KPMG)
- One in six IT projects has a 200% cost overrun and a schedule overrun of about 70%. (Source: Harvard Business Review.)
- In 2013, less than one-third of all projects were completed successfully. (Source: Standish Group)

- 17% of large IT projects fail so badly that they pose a threat to the existence of the company. (Source: McKinsey&Company)
- Seventy percent of organisations surveyed experienced at least one project failure in the past year. (Source: KPMG)

(Sandbox, 2015)

These numbers show that while project management globally is the way organisations achieve change, simply starting a project does not guarantee success. According to the PwC Project Management Global Survey, Third Edition, the leading cause of project failures (32%) is poor estimation during the planning phase. The main causes of project failure are:

- Unclear objectives and business goals
 - Poor planning and an unrealistic schedule
- Unaligned team and lack of teamwork

PwC, <https://www.pwc.com/cl/es/publicaciones/assets/insighttrends.pdf> 2012

A graphical summary example of how project management and change management function and interact is:

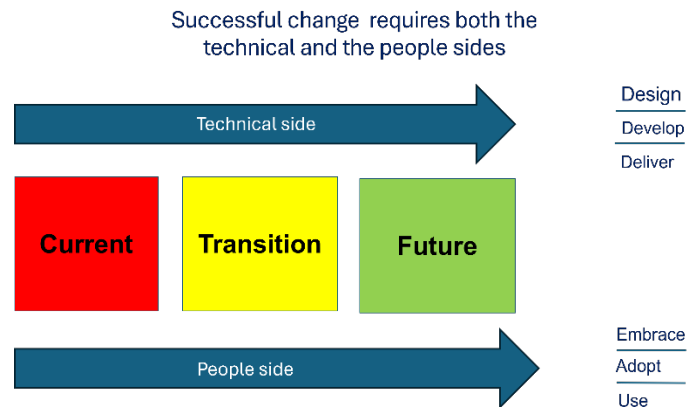


Figure 5: Change Model, Prosci, 2019

The explanations of, and the interaction between project management and change management have been necessary to clarify the roles and expectations of each discipline, enabling the Part B Literature Review to be conducted in the proper context.

These two vital management disciplines heavily rely on effective leadership. A project manager (PM) must not only handle the technical aspects of a project but also lead the team to achieve the agreed-upon goals and objectives; not just manage them but truly *lead* them. The project manager should be able to (among other skills) listen, empathise, prioritise, take responsibility, delegate, advocate, protect the team, make tough decisions, have difficult conversations, show the way, and ultimately be accountable for the project's outcome, whether successful or not. These leadership traits are reflected in some or all of the leadership theories discussed in Part A. They highlight the difference between management, which involves controlling resources, and leadership, which is about guiding people.

The Change Manager, while crucial to the successful delivery of a project, has a different focus. He or she is not responsible for the project's actual delivery but is tasked with ensuring the project team and all stakeholders operate effectively and cohesively. Additionally, the organisation as a whole must be informed, prepared, and trained to handle changes in how it

and the business operate as the project progresses. Effective change management is essential to success, and neglecting it can lead to partial or complete project failure.

A personal example of where this was demonstrated was in 2000, when I was involved in establishing a business to implement a major Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for a national client. This involved selecting and deploying a sophisticated CRM system across the organisation and directly impacted how many employees performed their work. In particular, the national sales teams were required to be more proactive and accountable in their roles, and there was significant “push back” from many in this area.

When the system went live (meaning the technical solution had been successfully installed, tested, and launched), it was found after a few months that the anticipated outcomes were not being achieved. I was asked to review and assess why this was. It did not take long to discover that the sales teams, who were the key users of the new system, simply did not comply with the new way in which they were required to work, to the point where not only were new system workstations not being used, they were not even being *turned on!*

My investigation (which did not take long!) revealed a critical lack of change management support for the project. While the technical aspects, including the requirements specification, system sourcing, tender process, system selection, project planning, and technical implementation, were carried out effectively and as planned, there was almost no consultation with the business, particularly with end users such as the national sales team. Although some systems training occurred, there was no engagement with users about what the changes meant to them, how their work practices would be affected, or, importantly, what benefits they might gain. There was no motivation to change, no convincing reasons why using the new system would benefit them, and no awareness of the consequences of ignoring it. As a result, the client withheld a significant portion of the \$17 million project budget, and a retrospective

change-management effort had to be launched at additional cost to deliver the project as initially promised.

Change management matters.

Although project managers are expected to be leaders, project management and leadership are two separate skills. Being a successful project manager who consistently delivers successful projects does not necessarily mean one is also a successful leader. Successful project managers build their skills through knowledge of the standard project management framework and experienced application of best practices. Successful leaders are innovative and creative individuals who continuously develop new skills to expand their capabilities. Effective leaders combine leadership skills with project management skills, developing additional leadership abilities to complement their existing expertise. (Kumar, V. S. 2009). This shows that those entrusted with projects, whether large or small, are often not chosen for their leadership skills and experience.

Kumar emphasises that project managers achieve their tasks through their project teams; therefore, their ability to build and lead teams (a key leadership requirement) should be central to their role. While motivating and inspiring, team building, negotiating, communicating, listening, and influencing are essential leadership skills for project managers. However, the success and failure rates of projects worldwide, along with my own experience of working on projects for over 30 years, suggest that these skills are not commonly held by project managers.

While many publications discuss which leadership skills project managers should have and how to apply them, this knowledge often does not translate into practice. Flannes and Levin (2005), on the essential people skills for project managers, provide a checklist and an

explanation of the requirements but offer little guidance on how to select prospective project managers to ensure they possess these traits when roles are scoped, sourced, and filled.

One of the world's leading management consulting firms, PricewaterhouseCoopers, conducted its second global survey on project management maturity in organisations worldwide in 2007 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007). This was a thoroughly researched report, drawing on input from 213 participants, providing valuable insights and data to understand the state of project management globally. However, it is notable that the document almost completely omits any mention of the role and importance of effective leadership in the project management industry.

In reviewing project management and change management, it is important to recognise the role—indeed, the inseparability—of teamwork in these efforts. Teamwork is the collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or complete a task effectively and efficiently. For optimal project outcomes, the leadership team (Project Sponsor, Project Director, Project Manager) needs to actively develop, cultivate, and promote the individuals involved to act and behave as a cohesive team. It has already been established that effective leadership is essential for achieving results; however, it is equally important to have a focused, goal-oriented team. Possessing technical competence, physical resources, and intellectual ability alone will not guarantee a successful project—shaping the project team into an effective, cohesive team is crucial. Building strong teams is not a simple process, but doing so can make the difference between success and failure.

There are many books, publications, and articles on teamwork; Larson, C., and LaFasto, F. (1989) provide practical guidance backed by extensive research on building effective teams and what it takes to achieve superior results. From their research, Larson and LaFasto identified eight characteristics of high-performing teams. They are:

- A clear, elevating goal
- A results - driven structure
- Competent team members
- Unified commitment
- A collaborative climate
- Standards of excellence
- External support and recognition
- Principled leadership

It appears that, based on the results of projects listed in the Sandbox Report of 2015 and my own observations and participation in projects over nearly 35 years, the project managers who have the knowledge or aptitude to instill these characteristics into the teams they lead are the exception rather than the rule.

There has been considerable research on the application of “Traits Theory” of leadership in general management, although very little specifically addresses project management. Dean R. Gehring (2007) published a study in the Project Management Journal that aimed to determine if similar leadership traits are relevant in project management.

The study has four distinct parts that evaluate the application of trait theory of leadership to project management.

- First, a standard of project leadership competencies was established.
- Second, the standard was validated by modern project leadership publications.

- Third, the validated competencies were compared to Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI) personality descriptions to determine which personality types supported these competencies.
- Fourth, the personality types that supported project leadership competencies were validated with further literature study and a questionnaire

A key part of the study was to examine how personality types (as defined and identified by the MBTI tool) serve as critical inputs for effective project managers. The competencies for project managers were grouped into three categories.

- Knowledge
- Performance
- Personal

The study acknowledged the limitations of trait theory in leadership, particularly the level of subjective judgment involved in determining what makes a “good” or “successful” leader, as well as the extensive list of potential traits and the lack of consensus on which ones are most important. (Mullins, L., 1999)

The Mullins study identified six units of competence derived from the Competency Dictionary developed by Spencer (1993). They are:

- Achievement and action
- Helping and human service
- Impact and influence
- Managerial
- Cognitive
- Personal effectiveness

This list is an extra set of traits or skills that might be included in a general leadership traits list like this one.

- A bias for action
- Customer service orientation
- Effective influencer
- Team leadership
- Analytical thinking
- Individual effectiveness and productivity

The results of this study suggest that there is a prescriptive set of leadership traits that, if possessed by a project manager, will improve the chances of project success. However, the outcome seems to depend on the use of a personality-type diagnostic tool, such as MBTI, both in selecting project managers and in performing the project management role. It should be noted that using instruments like the MBTI (which has several versions) is not uncommon, but it is not widely used in selecting project managers. As with all leadership theories, relying on any single approach in isolation is problematic at best.

Change at any level has always been seen as difficult, and successful change depends on leadership. In organisations, change usually happens through projects, but leadership from all levels of the business is needed. As shown in Figure 3 above, a project has its own structure but is also governed by the organisation to which it belongs. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983, pp 125) states that "Change requires leadership," which includes executives like the Project Sponsor, Department Heads, and the CEO. Moss Kanter also says that, "In short, leadership - the existence of people with power to mobilise others and to set constraints-is an important ingredient in making participation work."

Ford, J., Ford, L., & Polin, B. (2021) observe that, “Despite leadership being considered essential to successful organisational change, reviews of empirical research on the subject reveal inconsistencies in the approaches to, and measurements of, both leadership and its impact on change outcomes.” While this might not now seem surprising given the review thus far of subject-matter literature, it reinforces the proposition that leadership of change (ipso facto, projects) remains inconsistent and, therefore, inadequate. The view that leadership is essential to the successful implementation of change is central in the literature on organisational change, and leadership occurs in the context of change. Indeed, the centrality of this view is evidenced in Burke (2008, p. 227), who concludes that even though there is ‘little evidence that scientifically demonstrates the leader’s impact ... we will proceed ... with the assumption that leaders have a significant influence on organisational change’.

Undertaking this review has revealed that leadership has been approached from many theoretical perspectives. The most comprehensive account of leadership I have found is, “The Bass Book of Leadership, (Bass, B. M. 2008),” which, while providing a historical context, also explains the applications, effects, and challenges of the discipline from organisational, cultural, individual, and business perspectives, both in terms of organisational change and in executing routine business activities. One of the main takeaways from this outstanding book is that leadership is a journey - subject to change just like any significant organisational initiative. The book's strength and effectiveness are also enhanced by its contributors and the broad range of leadership and team-related aspects it covers; a detailed review of its content would yield more material than this literature review aims to cover.

The study of some leadership factors in the book is definitely relevant to both project management and change leadership. Chapter 26 (Ibid.), for example, analyses leadership in

groups and teams, a context that applies to all leadership settings. Bass cites Roby (1961), who developed a mathematical model of leadership functions. These functions included:

- Bringing about a congruence of goals among members
- Balancing the group's resources and capabilities with environmental demand
- Providing a group structure that is necessary to focus information effectively on solving the problem
- Making certain that the needed information is available at a decision centre when needed

These are clearly universal leadership functions, essential at the organisational level for line managers but also invaluable for project and change managers; however, the important point is that the functions were not mentioned in the context of project and change management.

While the traits theory has been cited in the literature on project and change management, other theories discussed in Part A have received little attention. van Dierendonck, D. (2011), in his article, "Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis," states that leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve demonstrate servant leadership. While this might seem like a minor point, it prompts reflection on why project managers behave as they do. Most project managers probably focus on results rather than serving the members of their project teams.

Consistent themes from the Part B Literature Review

The reviewed literature provides some interesting insights. While there is a substantial body of knowledge about leadership in general, the body of knowledge decreases when focusing specifically on leadership in project management and change management. The importance

of leading teams is a recurring theme, as well as the ability to have a vision, set goals, and track progress toward them.

Of the publications reviewed for this literature review, relatively little was available specifically on the application of leadership theory to the project or change management field. The studies by Mullins, L. (1999) and Dierendonck, D. (2011) addressed trait theory and servant leadership; however, the review did not uncover studies that attempted to link other leadership theories in the same way. There is a substantial number of references to leadership in organisations, the role of leadership in change, and the application of leadership theory within organisational behavior, but very few on leadership in project management or for project managers. The article, "The Role of Leadership Style in Organisational Change Management: A Literature Review" (Hassan Elsan Mansaray 2019), among the 101 references cited, did not reference the application of leadership in project management, and only three related in some way to leadership in change management. Gerwing, Carlo (2016) discusses extensively the role and skills of a Change Agent (not necessarily a Change Manager in a formal sense), and despite a thorough analysis of change within organisations, it does not address how a change manager within a business, whether in line management or as part of a project, would operate, both operationally, hierarchically, and politically.

Alqatawenh A. S. (2018), in his paper "Transformational Leadership Style and Its Relationship With Change Management," aimed to establish the connection between transformational leadership and change management. Alqatawenh dedicated significant effort to describing transformational leadership and change management and, through empirical research and analysis, concluded that the transformational leadership style was vital to organisational change outcomes. However, the paper did not attempt to explain leadership in either the project or the change management context.

While there are many articles and books on change and project management, the literature review has revealed a disappointing disconnect between these disciplines and the leadership challenges, requirements, and skills needed to achieve the best possible outcomes. This seems to explain, at least in part, why so many projects and change initiatives do not reach their stated goals and objectives.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Aim of the Critique

The aim of this critique is to develop an aspirational Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP) that clearly explains how I plan to continue developing, growing, and improving my leadership skills. The motivation for achieving this goal is to help others through role modelling, training, and coaching, so they can become better, more effective leaders. The foundation for the aspirational PCLP will be built on 50 years of work and leadership experience, case studies that highlight specific leadership lessons, targeted interviews with project management and change management professionals, and job postings for project managers and change practitioners that show the market's knowledge and desire for leadership skills when filling these positions.

It is crucial to realise that this critique is the means by which I can understand, through developing both a current PCLP and an aspirational PCLP, how I can continue to grow and enhance my leadership skills. This is central to the entire process.

My current state PCLP was originally developed in 2019 as part of the DBL coursework. While it was tempting to build on this model early in the critique-writing process, I realised that doing so would be premature and that it was necessary to step through the research process to ensure learning, growth, and understanding before constructing the final Aspirational PCLP.

Background

After leaving the military in 1991, I began a career in management consulting, an industry that primarily delivers work to clients through projects. My initial roles were as a mid-level trainer and facilitator, working on project teams across various industry sectors. I reported directly to the local project manager and indirectly (by dotted line) to a senior change practitioner who was not on the actual project. Since that first project in 1991, I have worked on several hundred projects across Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom; some lasted many months (up to a year), while others were short engagements lasting only a few days or weeks.

From the beginning, it became clear that there was significant variation in how these projects were delivered and in the skills and competence of the project managers. The basic idea of organisational change management was beginning to be officially integrated into projects, although in the early 1990s, there was no formal training or certification in change management; those working in this area were called "working on the people side of things." Over time, the discipline - and the industry that followed - developed and became a standard part of most projects.

After working on numerous projects across various industries for nearly a year, I was offered my first role as a project manager on a multimillion-dollar project in the heavy manufacturing sector. All of my subsequent positions with this company, and most since, have been as a project manager. This experience clarified my observations of the project managers I had worked with and helped me understand the best practices and positive outcomes of effective project managers, as well as the poor practices and sub-optimal results of projects led by less competent leaders. Over 35 years of working as a project manager, change manager, project director, business executive, and management consulting practice leader have revealed a wide disparity in the quality of project and change managers and how directly this impacts delivery outcomes and, ultimately, client satisfaction. Given that Breeze.com (2024) identifies

project management as a \$6.1 billion industry in 2024, and there are over 16.5 million people working as project managers worldwide (Djurovic, A., 2023), the potential scale of the problem created by poor and ineffective project management is significant. My experience and observations lead me to believe that while project management is a multi-skilled profession, leadership plays a crucial role in its success and is often a significant factor in project failures. It is my goal to apply what I learn from this DBL program more broadly and to enhance leadership capabilities within the project management profession, specifically through the development, production, and application of my aspirational PCLP.

Research Approach

In conducting this research, three key elements need to be established as the basis for the methodology. They are:

- The research questions that must be addressed
- The propositions that underpin the research
- The epistemology upon which the research is based

Research questions to be addressed include:

- To what extent is leadership a critical success factor in the delivery of organisational projects?
- Do organisations consider leadership knowledge, experience, and capability as a component requirement of project and change practitioner competencies when recruiting for these roles?

- How can I improve the level of leadership capability of project managers and change practitioners in organisations?

Propositions underpinning the research questions include:

- Are project managers and change managers sufficiently skilled and experienced as *leadership* practitioners to be effective in their roles?
- Do organisations place enough value on leadership skills and experience when hiring people for project and change management roles?
- How can the leadership skills and knowledge of both current and prospective project and change managers be improved to help people in these roles be successful?

Epistemology

The epistemology for this case study research is Constructivism. Ültanır (2012) describes constructivism as, “Constructivism is an epistemology, a learning or meaning-making theory that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learn. Real understanding is constructed only from learners’ prior experiences and background knowledge. It maintains that individuals construct new understandings or knowledge through the interaction between what they already believe and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact. The teacher is a guide, facilitator, and co-explorer who encourages learners to question, challenge, and formulate their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions.” Mogashoa, (2014) elaborates on this by stating that, “People generate knowledge and meaning through the interaction of their experiences and ideas rather than learning, which can be acquired through repetition and imitation.”

What this means in the context of this critique is that my learning is based on several factors, including (but not necessarily limited to) my own personal experiences, the collective knowledge, beliefs, and values that have shaped my approach to my work, and the specific knowledge I have gathered in search of meaning. This knowledge has not been derived from imitation or repetition. A constructivist framework is used in case study research, where the learner or researcher constructs knowledge as they learn, either alone or with others involved, such as in interviews. (Hein 1991).

Research Methodology

The research methodology includes:

- Literature review
- Case studies
- Targeted interviews
- Job advertisements for project and change managers

It will include the following elements:

- The research design
- Data collection methodology
- Candidate selection for the interview population
- How data will be analysed
- Any ethical considerations that might affect in any way the integrity of the research

Research Design

The research will be based on three “pillars”. These will be:

- Case studies taken from my 50-year career in leadership
- Targeted interviews with project and change management professionals.
- Analysis of 50 online job advertisements for project and change managers.

Case studies taken from my 50-year career in leadership, including:

1. Key experiences in my leadership development from my military career
2. Experience in the corporate sector, where my knowledge and experience of project management were developed through mid-level, senior, and executive roles
3. Multiple leadership roles in Toastmasters International, a global not-for-profit organisation

The case studies from these three diverse sectors will provide the evidence and experiences that informed the design of my initial PCLP. For example, one of the core values of my “as is” PCLP is Servant Leadership, as defined by Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). My early formal leadership training took place at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (UK), where I was an Officer Cadet from 1976-77. The motto of the Academy was “Serve to Lead,” so the idea of prioritising the needs of those you are privileged to lead before your own was instilled in me from the age of 19.

The differences in leadership styles and requirements across these three diverse environments are key to my development. The military has traditionally, especially in the 1970s

and 1980s, operated with a more directive model based on rank and seniority; a model similar to those used in industry in past decades, but now viewed by many as outdated due to the increasing importance placed on liaison, diversity, equality, and inclusion. Critics of military leadership, however, often conveniently overlook that decisions made (or not made) by military leaders can lead to serious injury and death both in training and during operations. This consequence is unique within the leadership spectrum, and while the military has historically relied on directive behavior, I still support the core leadership philosophy that the military practices and demands. Today's military leaders are moving toward a more enlightened approach, but in the chaos of battle, the need for immediate reaction and strict adherence to orders can often determine the success or failure of an engagement - and ultimately, the number of casualties. This aspect remains unique to the military environment.

Nazri, Mohammad & Rudi, Mohamad. (2019). Write, "Military leaders, similar to leaders of other organizations, make important judgments, often at critical moments. While a successful Chief Executive Officer may generate billions in company revenue from a business deal, a successful military general influences the future of a nation on the battlefield. However, unlike other leaders, wrong decisions by military leaders could result in the deaths of hundreds, or even thousands of people who are not necessarily combatants but innocents. Mistakes made by military leaders have proven to be more catastrophic compared to those in other fields, as evidenced by world war history and various global security conflicts. Clearly, the successes and failures of military leaders and military leadership have continually served as models and standards for high achievement."

Significant research has been conducted on the types, complexities, and effectiveness of military leadership. As mentioned earlier, due to the very nature of the military's role - to wage war as directed by the government, to seek and destroy enemies, and potentially suffer casualties - understanding military leadership is complex. Blair and Hunt (1986), focusing on studies that aim to understand leadership within the military's unique context, developed a

context-specific approach requiring more detailed knowledge of the military and its challenges. This approach is likely to capture a deeper understanding of what truly constitutes military leadership.

Wong, L., Bliese, P., McGurk, D. (2003), in their comprehensive article, "Military leadership: A context-specific review," state that, "The military leadership literature is stratified into the systems, organisational, and direct levels of leadership with an examination of studies on the critical tasks and individual capabilities required at each level. Additionally, studies on organisational culture and effectiveness at each level are addressed. The article emphasises that the military is undergoing substantial change as it adjusts to the changing nature of war and a fluid world situation."

However, there is no doubt that 16 years of full time military service commencing at 18 years of age, as a private soldier, a junior officer, and finally as a mid-level officer (Major) with direct command of over 100 soldiers shaped my theory and practice of leadership, and provided the foundation, growth and evolution as a leader that has been central to my own experience, and upon which I have built through subsequent career changes.

The case study I will write for this part of my life will highlight the challenges, issues, and lessons learned from holding a leadership role in the army.

After leaving the Army in 1991, I immediately started a career in management consulting by joining a "second-tier" consulting firm that operated in Australia, the United States, New Zealand, and South Africa. The main focus of this company's work was improving productivity, which in 1991 was often a polite way of saying cost-cutting, usually (but not always) leading to staff reductions at the client companies.

My role in this business initially was as a trainer, reporting to a project manager and working across client sites with all levels of leadership, from shop floor supervisors up to and including Board members. The role was necessary to ensure that the management systems the “technical team” was implementing across the client's business were understood and supported by management, who needed to lead the change throughout the organisation. This work involved conducting one-on-one interviews with all leaders and designing, developing, and delivering management development and leadership training sessions. At the same time, I supported the Project Manager and consulting team on all non-technical matters. This was typical of the work required of me, and I provided these services to a variety of clients across multiple industry sectors for most of my first year of employment.

Soon enough, an opportunity arose, and I was appointed to my first role as a project manager, at which point I came to appreciate the challenges and complexities of this position. It is one thing to watch a person act in a role, to learn from it, to appreciate it, and to criticise it from a distance; it is quite another thing to “be the man” and suddenly be the person the team and the client look to, and to have the responsibility and accountability for leading the team and delivering the results. I quickly discovered that the leadership experience I had gained over 16 years in the military was practical, but did not transfer seamlessly to the new environment. Attitudes differed; the values of the individuals in the project team were misaligned, and the expectation that people would “do as you say” was soon revised downward and required a “because” explanation to increase the likelihood of compliance.

This, then, became the template for the next 30 years of my working life, projects, projects, and more projects. Amongst these were several executive management roles in which my knowledge and experience in management consulting were applied to building consulting capability across several national and global companies.

This case study will highlight the differences in how leadership is exercised in the corporate sector where I worked compared to my military experiences.

The final case study will draw on my leadership experience in a not-for-profit organisation (NPO), Toastmasters International, where I held several roles, including a senior role as an Area Director. I received the Distinguished Toastmasters award, which represents the highest level of educational and leadership recognition a member can achieve.

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organisation that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a global network of clubs that meet online and in person. In a supportive community or corporate environment, members prepare and deliver speeches, respond to impromptu questions, and give and receive constructive feedback. Through regular practice, members are empowered to achieve their personal and professional communication goals. Founded in 1924, the organisation is based in Englewood, Colorado, and has approximately 270,000 members in over 14,000 clubs across 150 countries.

Again, the leadership demands in a not-for-profit organisation differ from those in the military and corporate sectors. The members of Toastmasters are all volunteers, and there are almost no consequences for poor performance or bad behavior. Leaders in this space, then, need to demonstrate a level of inclusiveness, empathy, and recognition of performance that goes beyond what is expected in the military or corporate sectors. The case study I deliver for this will reflect these unique challenges.

Limited material specifically addressing leadership in NPOs was found. A paper by Larsson, L., and Storhannus, P. (2008) stated that, "As mentioned earlier, there is little literature that discusses the differences in leadership that occur in non-profit organisations; most research and literature about leadership in organisations has taken place in for-profit organisations. It is argued that leadership in NPOs differs from that in for-profit organisations because their

environments create distinct preconditions for leadership. Given the circumstances that seems to be common in NPOs both in literature and our findings, the most effective and appropriate leadership style in an NPO that lacks clear goals, and where close relationships between employees in different levels of the organisation exist, would be to focus more on the relationship with the employees and coach them, as well as support them in their everyday work.”

The inclusion of the three different environments—military, commercial, and not-for-profit—covers a wide range of leadership experiences that have led me to develop my current PCLP and provide a solid foundation for my ongoing, aspirational PCLP.

Targeted interviews with project and change management professionals.

According to Yin (2018), interviews are one of the most important parts of case study research, and they can especially help by suggesting explanations (i.e., the “hows and whys”) of key events, as well as insights reflecting participants' relativist perspectives.

The interviews conducted for this critique are what Yin (2018) describes as Short Case Study interviews; they were focused and resembled a “guided conversation rather than structured queries.” The interviews lasted about an hour on average, and the questioning was open-ended.

The first challenge in designing these interviews was deciding the sample size. This has become a widely discussed topic in recent published research. Dworkin, S.L (2012) states that, “There are several debates concerning what sample size is the right size for such endeavours. Most scholars argue that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to consider when mulling over sample size decisions in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). Saturation is often defined as the point at which the data collection process no longer yields

new or relevant data. Another way to state this is that conceptual categories in a research project can be considered saturated “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories” (Charmaz,2006, p. 113).

With this in mind, and following specific discussions with the Critique supervisor, it was agreed that 12 interviews would be sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes.

Interviews were held with 12 professionals in project management and change management from a diverse range of organisations. The purpose of these interviews was to:

- Understand if there was a consistent understanding of what leadership as a concept was,
- Understand the level of competency and the accompanying level of leadership knowledge and experience of project and change managers within the organisations of the interviewees,
- Understand the dynamic between project managers and change practitioners,
- Gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of project managers and change practitioners, and
- Elicit feedback on what development/improvements/changes senior managers would like to see in developing the leadership skills of their project managers and change practitioners.

The interview population included:

Position	Industry	Experience
Senior Mgr	Financial Services	25 yrs
Mid-Level Mgr	Financial Services	20 yrs
Mgr	Financial Services	12 yrs
Mid-Level Mgr	Utilities	20 yrs
Snr Mgr	Manufacturing	24 yrs
Consultant	Defence	30 yrs
Project Mgr	Professional services	10 yrs
Snr Project Mgr	Professional services	15 yrs
Snr Consultant	Professional services	25 yrs
Snr Consultant	Professional services	25 yrs
Partner	Professional services	20 yrs
Project Manager	Professional services	15 yrs

Table 1: Targeted Interview Population Summary

The interviewee population above consisted of:

- 6 x interviewees from professional services
- 3 x interviewees from Financial Services
- 1 x interviewee from the utilities sector
- 1 x interviewee from the manufacturing sector
- 1 x interviewee from the Defence sector

The total experience of the interviewees in project management and change management roles is 241 years.

The interviewee's working locations were:

- 9 x Australia (4 of these have professional experience in several countries overseas)
- 3 x United States of America

The interviews were conducted using seven questions. They were:

- What is your interpretation and definition of leadership, generally?
 - Without reference to your current role, what is your take on the quality of leadership, specifically of project managers?
 - I'm interested in your thoughts on the role and application of leadership by project managers, and of change managers.
 - Do project managers and change managers in your experience have adequate or reasonable leadership knowledge and experience to effectively deliver in that part of the role?
 - How do you see the relationship in terms of project delivery and change management between the project managers and the change managers assigned to work with them?
 - What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the project managers and the change managers that work with them?
- Given the importance of project management and the continuing imperative of change in the workplace, what developments/changes/improvements would you like to see in developing leaders in project and change management?

The interviews revealed a wide variety of feedback for each question, highlighting the diversity and complexity of project management and change management across industries. It also

pointed out the inconsistent ways projects are delivered despite the many standard courses and qualifications available in the field.

Two data analysis methods were applied to analyse the interview data. They were:

1. Traditional quantitative data analysis of identifying themes, consistencies, and any outliers. While considering the context in which the feedback was given, the data was analysed for patterns and themes, looking for contradictions and inconsistencies within and between interviews.
2. The second data analysis method used was analysing the consolidated interviews with Leximancer, an AI software that can process multiple interviews, assign them statistical values, and display their relationships as a visual map. Leximancer automatically examines any text to identify high-level concepts, providing key ideas and actionable insights through powerful models, interactive visualisations, and data exports, offering objective analysis without bias. (SoPact University, 2024)

Using these two data analysis methods together will supply the necessary data to inform the research design, which will then help guide the development of my aspirational PCLP.

The survey results are included in Chapter Six of this Critique.

Analysis of job advertisements for project managers and change practitioners.

The purpose of this analysis was to assess how much businesses, when recruiting for project managers and change practitioners, look for and require proven leadership knowledge and experience as a key selection criterion.

The reason this was considered relevant and significant in the broader research design, and as an input into the development of my aspirational PCLP, was that recruiting for these roles without the expectation of leadership knowledge and experience would inform the implementation strategy for future leadership training in the sector. To achieve a meaningful data sample, 50 online job advertisements for project managers and change practitioners were gathered for analysis

The results of this process will determine how much the business values and expects leadership experience in the project and the change resources they are recruiting for. The feedback from this process will also inform research on the effectiveness and efficiency of project managers and change practitioners. This analysis aligns with the leadership interviews, in which participants were asked to consider how much leadership experience influenced their role selection.

The results of the analysis of job advertisements is included in Chapter Seven of this critique.

Data Collection Methodology.

Data collection involves gathering information to gain insights about the research subject. Kabir, (2016) states that, "Before selecting a data collection method, the type of data that is

required for the study should be determined.” Data collected can be either qualitative or quantitative. Both nominal and descriptive non-numerical data, which cannot be represented as numbers, are classified as qualitative data in words or sentences. This type of data addresses 'how and why' questions in a research study and mainly covers feelings, perceptions, and emotions through unstructured methods such as interviews. (Taherdoost, 2021) Given the nature of the data collected for this report, it is primarily qualitative.

For the three data sources, case studies, targeted interviews, and job advertisement search, the following data collection methods were applied:

Case Studies: Case studies offer the opportunity to investigate issues in depth and descriptively. It covers different concepts, ranging from individuals to organisations and sectors, when the number of sites is small. As they develop a real-world context by observing what happens there and interviewing participants, they can help the researcher study the site in detail and conduct deeper explorations (Taherdoost, H., 2021).

The case study approach is especially useful when there is a need to gain a detailed understanding of an issue, event, or phenomenon of interest within its natural, real-life context. As Yin (2018) explains, case study research is the methodology that links theory with practice.

The case studies used for this critique represent snapshots of my “leadership life,” including examples from my 16-year military career, my 30-year corporate career, and my time in the not-for-profit sector. As the cornerstone of my leadership journey, military experience has informed, shaped, and expanded my leadership knowledge, skills, and capabilities. It has served as the foundation for all my subsequent leadership development; although incomplete and sometimes dated, the insights gained from these case studies provide an excellent starting point for exploring other cases.

The case study research method can be defined as: “The core of a case study, which is central among all types, is its aim to shed light on a decision or set of decisions; why they were made, how they were executed, and what outcomes resulted.” (Shramm in Yin 2018, p. 14). Case Study Research includes the following five steps (Yin 2018, p. 27): 1. Developing case study questions 2. Formulating propositions, if any 3. Selecting the case(s) 4. Connecting data to propositions through logic 5. Establishing criteria to interpret the findings

As a leader in the corporate world, you face challenges similar to those in the military in some ways, but in others, they are completely different. To shift my mindset (and therefore my effectiveness) in this new environment, I needed to understand what drives behaviour in business and how leaders must react and respond accordingly. Generally, the “command and control” approach that works well in the military doesn't succeed in business, as leaders have to deal with personal, corporate, and societal expectations in their daily work that aren't present in the same way in the services. Comparing the new requirements with the lessons and experience from my previous career was a significant milestone in my personal growth, broadening my perspective and making me a more effective leader.

It was an eye-opening realisation for me after spending around five years in the corporate world when I understood that clients appreciated my military experience as valuable input to their needs far more than they did when I first started consulting. The client's attitude had often been, “You might have been a successful career soldier and a good military leader, but what do you know about this environment?” However, after demonstrating myself in the fast-paced world of business consulting for about four or five years, clients increasingly recognised my military background as an important part of my value proposition.

The case studies from my military experience will show how I learned and grew early in my leadership journey, and how these experiences helped shape my leadership foundation. The chosen case studies illustrate the ongoing growth of my leadership knowledge and skills.

To derive meaning from the case studies, it is important to select appropriate analysis frameworks. In conducting qualitative research of the kind used for this critique, the following analysis frameworks were considered.

1. **Qualitative Content Analysis.** Content analysis is a method used to examine recorded human artifacts such as manuscripts, voice recordings, and journals. It investigates these written, spoken, and visual artifacts without directly collecting data from participants—an approach known as unobtrusive research. In content analysis, both explicit and implicit content are considered. Explicit data is clear and easy to identify, while implicit data requires interpretation and is often subjective
2. Qualitative research, in general and not just content analysis, is often criticised for being too subjective and lacking scientific rigor. This is where reliability (how easily other researchers can replicate a study) and validity (how well the research design fits the topic) come into play.(Rautenbach. E, 2021) Given the nature and specifics of the case studies, it was determined that Qualitative Content Analysis was not an appropriate method for collecting data.
3. **Discourse Analysis.** In its simplest form, discourse is verbal or written communication between people that goes beyond a single sentence. Importantly, discourse is more than just language. The term “language” can encompass all forms of linguistic and symbolic units (including road signs), and language studies can focus on the individual meanings of words. Discourse extends this by examining the overall meanings conveyed by language in context. “Context” here refers to the social, cultural, political, and historical background of the discourse, and it is important to consider this to understand the underlying meanings expressed through language. (Rautenbach. E, 2021) The application of Discourse Analysis was considered unnecessary for effectively analysing the included case studies, as it is the actual content - the “stories”

embedded within the case studies - rather than the social, cultural, political, and historical background of the discourse that is relevant

- 4. Narrative Analysis.** Narrative analysis focuses on listening to stories and examining what they truly mean within the context of the subject matter. (Czarniawska, 2004) states that, “narrative research is a type of qualitative method that is understood from spoken or written texts describing accounts of events which are chronologically connected.” This approach is especially useful for critiquing the type of research being conducted, as the lived experiences described in the narrative are crucial for understanding how my current state PCLP, has developed, and how the construct of my future state PCLP might be designed. Narrative research can be described as a methodology of studying individual lived experiences as a source of knowledge in and of itself that warrants deeper understanding (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). The most common methods used in the narrative process are interviews and conversations (Joyce, 2015)

The two limitations of the Narrative Analysis approach are a small sample size (in this case, 3 case studies) and researcher bias that can affect the results.

Understanding the difference between a narrative and a story is crucial. A story is a specific form of narrative that structures individual experiences by linking cognitive, emotional, and motivational elements to what is being told. Kurtz (2014) proposed that stories consist of three dimensions: form, function, and phenomenon. Therefore, telling a story about oneself involves describing actions, choices, and beliefs that have shaped the person's experiences. Through storytelling, individuals participate in identity construction (Riessman, 2005) and position themselves within social and cultural contexts.

The following Figure describes how narrative analysis, combined with targeted interviews, provides a holistic basis for the qualitative research underpinning this critique:

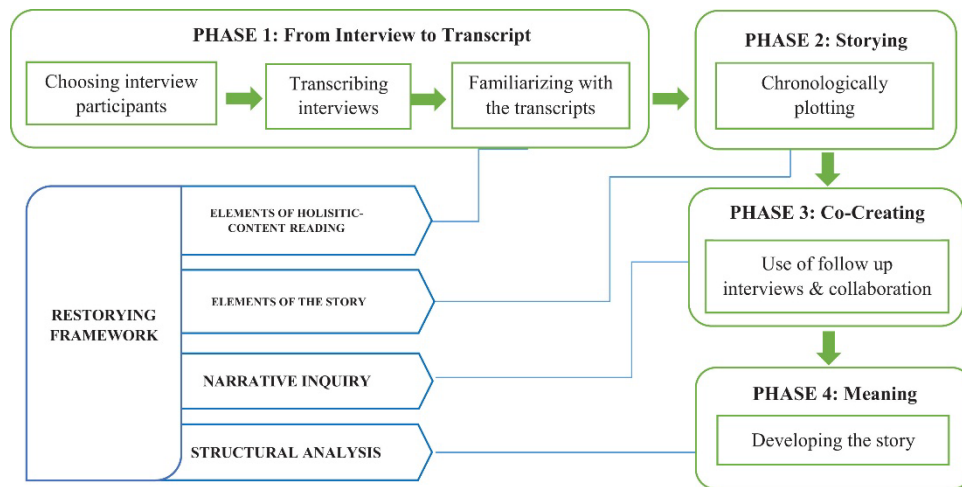


Figure 6: Progression of the story in phases within a multimethod restorying framework. (Nasheeda, A., et al.,2019)

Applying this figure to the critique shows that the described phases closely match the approach used to develop the research model for the critique. Phase 1 involved selecting interviewees, conducting targeted interviews, and transcribing them. Phases 2-4 will be addressed through the previously described case studies, including examples from my military, commercial, and not-for-profit experiences. Phase 4, in particular, will shed light on the meaning I have derived from these experiences and how it contributes to the creation of my aspirational PCLP by exploring different types of quantitative analysis methodologies. Narrative analysis will be the primary method for analysing the targeted interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS OF MY INITIAL PERSONAL CONTINGENT LEADERSHIP PARADIGM (PCLP)

“If there’s an original idea out there, I could use it right now.” – Bob Dylan

At this point, it is important to remind myself of the main reason for pursuing the Doctor of Business Leadership: to continue growing and developing as a leader, and in doing so, to identify, mentor, train, and develop more and better leaders. Period.

The outcome I aim to achieve through this critique is the aspirational PCLP, a dynamic model built on both theoretical understanding and practical experience gained through years of hands-on leadership, formal education, and critical reflection. This model will serve as my leadership “True North,” a well of wisdom I can draw from when necessary to ensure that my decisions, advice, and counsel are as effective and meaningful as possible at the moment. The aspirational PCLP also acts as a personal accountability tool—a “contract” with myself to recognise that what has worked well in the past may not always work now or in the future. It encourages me to revisit my values, standards, and expectations outlined in the PCLP whenever I face difficulties or obstacles.

To articulate my current state of the PCLP, it is essential to understand what a PCLP is, its purpose, and how it develops into a practical model that describes my leadership approach, style, and behavior. Fayed, R., (.2022), describes the PCLP as, “Your personal circumstances driven approach to leadership.” It explains how an individual can define their leadership approach by focusing on three key areas. These areas are described by Fayed (2022) using the equation, $L = P + Q + R$, where:

L = Specification of your Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm

P = Insights drawn from relevant leadership literature

Q = Researched questions to verify assumptions and gaps in the PCLP specification

R = Critical reflection on your leadership experience

Fayed quotes from Johnson A.R (2007), *“...to help local leaders reflect on and improve their practice, it will require grappling holistically with leadership as perceived and practiced in real-life settings to produce conceptual insights grounded in local understandings.”*

Leadership has always been a complex pursuit; over many years, there has been a seemingly never-ending effort to define it, explain it, simplify it, replicate it, and laud it. It is a mysterious challenge, however, one that is extremely difficult to achieve competence in, let alone mastery. The troubled state of our world clearly demands more and better leaders. Sekiguchi, T. and De Cuyper, N. (2023) state that, “Leadership is one of the most popular and practical research topics in applied psychology. This is not surprising, because leadership is key for managing businesses and organisations, and it is the driving force for tackling grand societal challenges.”

The arrival of seismic events in the world during this first quarter of the 21st century—such as (including, but not limited to) globalisation, demographic shifts, mass migration of displaced people due to war and natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, the societal and business impacts of social media, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, and the increasing influence of artificial intelligence—has created, among many other things, a level of complexity in work delivery that leaders have never faced before. Serious students of leadership must now address all those historical challenges, along with these new issues. One could argue that leadership has never been more challenging.

These factors, along with insights from leadership literature, research data, and critical reflection, will shape my aspirational PCLP. The current state PCLP will serve as a key input to the "future state" PCLP. In summary, the PCL paradigm must clearly define:

1. Personal driving core values.
2. The paradigm's theoretical underpinnings.
3. Day-to-day operational and strategic guidelines; and
4. The process for self-sustaining adaptive paradigmatic regeneration. (Australian Graduate School of Leadership, 2016)

My current PCLP was developed from a combination of accumulated leadership knowledge and experience gained over my nearly 50-year leadership career, along with knowledge obtained through the four coursework units completed in the Doctor of Business Leadership program and extensive additional reading on the subject. Specifically, these units greatly expanded my understanding of leadership theory through an in-depth exploration of leadership concepts, an introduction to and explanation of epistemology and ontology, understanding the process and structure of case studies, and learning how to apply critical reasoning to connect my core values to my current PCLP. Developing a leadership theory is not new; formal leadership theories evolved significantly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Theorists such as Fredrick Taylor (Taylor, F 1911) with his groundbreaking treatise on scientific management, Max Weber, Kurt Lewin, and Fiedler (Fiedler, F 1967), along with many other leadership scholars, created numerous theories to explain leadership styles and behaviors.

Alongside these theorists were the ethical theorists who spent centuries trying to explain and understand the dynamics of ethical behavior, the behavioural norms that demonstrate it, and the core values that support it. Since leadership is (or should be!) an ethical pursuit, the link

between leadership and ethics is vital. At a minimum, understanding the main ethical theories and how they apply to real-world situations is essential for grasping how these theories connect to and influence leadership behaviour.

To understand my individual leadership style and behavior, I created a current state Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (PCLP). This model explains how specific leadership theories describe my leadership, what it is based on, and the core values that support it.

To achieve this, several ethical theories have been explored, including:

- Cultural relativism
- Ethical egoism
- Utilitarianism
- Kantianism
- Universalism

Cultural relativism holds that there is no universal standard by which to measure cultures, and that all cultures are equally valid and must be understood on their own terms. All groups, therefore, operate with their own set of ethical norms and values; what may be right for one group may not be right for another. Shaw, W and Barry, V (2016) state that there are no criteria that could be used to judge opposing views.

Egoism, or Ethical Egoism, focuses on the individual and proposes that whatever choices are made are made in the best interests of the individual over the long term. The idea that an act will be morally right if it promotes an individual's long-term interests is at the heart of the theory. Weiss et al (2022) state that "egoism is commonly related to the 'dark side' of human nature, that is, anti-social behavior such as hostility and aggression." Weiss, et al, (2022) also adds

that, “Despite its negative reputation, egoism – the excessive concern for one’s own welfare – can incite prosocial behaviour.”

The theory of Ethical Egoism recognises that the long-term outcome for the individual may outweigh short-term benefits for the organization. This creates a potential ethical dilemma where a person might prioritise personal interests over those of the business.

Proponents of egoism argue that the theory's strength lies in its basis in human nature, asserting that people are inherently selfish and that all actions stem from self-interest.

Ethical utilitarianism is one of the most well-known ethical theories and suggests that actions are morally right or wrong based on their outcomes. The philosophers John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham are early pioneers of this consequentialist approach to ethical behavior. Marseille E, Kahn JG (2014) state that, “Efficiency as quantified and promoted by cost-effectiveness analysis sometimes conflicts with equity and other ethical values, such as the 'rule of rescue' or rights-based ethical values.” Utilitarianism is generally linked to economic efficiency and its resulting outcomes.

Kantianism is the opposing theory to utilitarianism; it is the deontological approach of Immanuel Kant, which is non-consequentialist, suggesting that decision-making should be based on an assessment of what will produce the greatest benefit for the majority affected by the action. The emphasis here is not on the outcome as much as on the intent. Kant’s view is that the only thing that gives an action moral worth is not the outcome achieved, but the motive behind the action.

Universalism is a counter theory to relativism and argues that some norms transcend societies because they are embedded in the framework of every community. Contemporary theorist Sissela Bok (1995) promotes a moral universalist approach, holding that some values

transcend all societies and communities worldwide. While this may be true, some of these fundamental values will be subject to differing interpretations across communities, which reduces the overall validity of the theory.

Understanding the core principles behind these theories helps in applying them to personal leadership practice. As with Situational Leadership, this review of ethical theories shows that relying solely on any one of them is limited and likely unsustainable. Being able to apply the relevant elements of each theory at the right time is a valuable leadership skill. The ethical framework that I believe most consistently reflects my approach is Kantianism. While it's rarely possible to control all outcomes, setting a clear framework and expectations, along with establishing systems and processes, offers the best chance to achieve desired results.

The key takeaways from this reading were that effective leadership and ethics are inseparable and interdependent, and that, at a minimum, having a solid appreciation of the difference between deontological and consequentialist ethical approaches to decision-making is particularly relevant. The evolved PCLP model is now more dynamic and better reflects my leadership style and behaviour. (Self., 2017, DBL Assignment DBL 703

My current PCLP was first developed as part of the DBL 703 Unit of Learning in 2017. It was based on the idea that my leadership style is a dynamic, active model that evolves and responds to the demands of current issues, development, and challenges. The reason for developing this model was that I saw each theory as active "theories in action." A key aspect of the model was the inclusion of the core values underlying each of the four theories. For example, Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, R 1970) is a foundational theory for me because I have always strongly believed in the principle of serving those who follow you. An example of this "theory in action" was instilled in me early on when I was an Officer Cadet at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. There, an officer (leader) must always ensure that his or her subordinates are fed before feeding himself or herself, even if this means (which at times it

did) that there is no food left after the troops have been fed. A privilege of rank! The core values identified for this theory are Integrity, Loyalty, and Trust.

Integrity is crucial because a leader must keep their word and demonstrate consistency in beliefs and decision-making. Losing integrity can be fatal to a leader's credibility. Loyalty, as an obvious value, is vital; failing to show it can ruin trust in the leader among both the team and individuals. Showing trust as a core value is essential, as breakdowns in trust are often irreparable. A common military saying is, "Your loyalty I demand. Your respect I will earn."

After researching ethical theories and applying behavioural norms to core values, the theory of Situational Leadership has been modified. Although still part of the model, it has shifted from being a standalone theory to one that influences and is influenced by other theories, depending on the current situation.

The core values that are the key drivers of my own leadership behaviour are:

- Integrity
- Trust
- Loyalty
- Dedication
- Team orientation
- Bias for action

There is little doubt that this suite of core values was introduced to me by my parents, but developed, refined, and inculcated into me through my military service between the ages of 18 and 32. The definitions of what these values mean to me are:

Integrity - the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.

Loyalty - the quality of being loyal: firm and not changing in your friendship with or support for a person or an organisation, or in your belief in your principles.

Dedicated - believing that something is very important and giving a lot of time and energy to it.

Team-oriented – committed to the performance, welfare, and outcomes of the team.

Trust - to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable.

Bias for action - when there is a choice, you choose action over inaction. The American General, George Patton, said that (in the cut and thrust of battle): “a good solution now is better than a perfect solution in 10 minutes' time”. Reason? The perfect time never comes.

These core values must be transparent and not negotiable to me as a leader, and also (importantly) to the people you lead, and I strive to demonstrate them in all areas of my practice. There are logical links between my core values and my PCLP.

The four leadership theories comprising my leadership paradigm are:

- Principled centred leadership
- Transformational leadership

- Servant leadership, and
- Situational leadership

Each leadership theory is underpinned by the core values listed above.

My Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm (Current State - 2019)

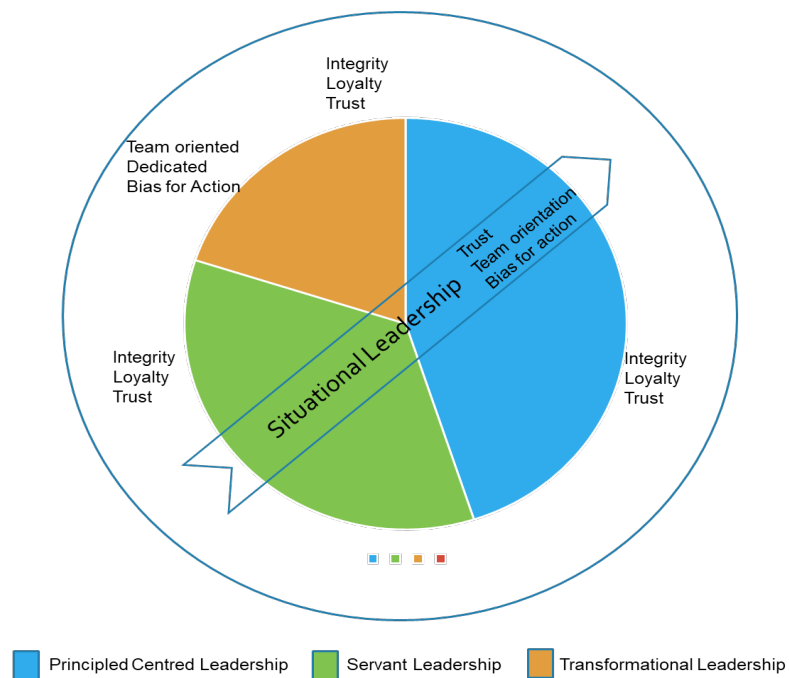


Figure 7: Current State PCLP 2019

The core values listed above relate in whole or in part to the theories, which I regard as “theories-in-action” as described by Argyris, C & Schön, D (1978).

The most important of the adopted theories is Principled-Centred Leadership (Covey, S 1989a). Covey states that there are three interconnected elements at the core of every organisation and its culture: its primary purpose, its desired future, and its core beliefs about itself and others. The source of long-term health and high-quality performance for any organisation is the degree to which management, in unity with its employees and other key stakeholders, shares these elements.

Mission/primary purpose — We refer to mission as long-term, broad, overriding purpose — fundamentally why the organization exists, what it is, and is for.

Vision/desired future — By vision, we mean the organisation's destiny and continuing destination — where it's going, a description of its future self, what it wants to become, and therefore what it needs to do. Although both incorporate certain goals, the mission is concrete, the vision more general.

Core beliefs — We use principles to describe fundamental truths and natural laws that govern human behaviour. We do not create principles, but we can identify, understand, and utilise them. Principles simply exist and are self-evident, universal, unchanging, and timeless — they are external to our organisation and us and operate regardless of our awareness of them. (Covey, S 1989a)

These definitions by Covey articulate the drivers in my leadership paradigm. There is a strong congruence between Principled Centred Leadership and the core values selected to represent and underpin it.

The behavioural norms that would be exhibited demonstrating Principled Centred Leadership would include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- doing everything possible to deliver on what I promise, to “be my word”.
- Show team members that they are trusted, and that their knowledge, skills, and experience are respected
- Demonstrating that I will be loyal to the team and to team members, in situations where there may be a real or perceived conflict

Failure to act in these ways would compromise my own core beliefs and fatally affect my leadership mandate.

The major evolution of the PCLP from its early conception to its final, current form is the shift of situational leadership from a standalone component theory to one that surpasses primary leadership theories and influences each of the other three theories, as well as every event faced by the team. An example of how this might work is Sir Winston Churchill, a leader who was unquestionably highly principled and employed a finely tuned servant leadership approach. Without the Second World War, in general, and the rise of Adolf Hitler specifically, Churchill might well have been remembered by history as the architect of the disastrous Dardanelles campaign in 1915. We now know that Hitler's rise allowed Churchill's exceptional leadership skills to shine. The prevailing circumstances provided the world with a great leader in Winston Churchill.

Transformational leadership involves developing and communicating a vision aimed at creating positive change in individuals or social systems, such as organisations. It also encourages people to transcend their own self-interest for the benefit of the team or organisation. This approach requires enabling growth and development, helping the organisation evolve into a more effective entity than it was previously.

Servant Leadership is the “enabler of the heart” in the three adopted theories. Principled Leadership Theory focuses on my personal standards and expectations of myself; Transformational Theory aims to create positive change for people and the organisation; and Servant Leadership emphasises the care and compassion I have for those I am privileged to lead.

To conclude, my current state PCLP is my “first cut”, a milestone on the journey to my aspirational PCLP. It isn’t possible to amend nothing; this model is the foundation of where I intend to go.

CHAPTER FIVE- PERSONAL LEADERSHIP CASE STUDIES

“All I can do is be me. Whoever that is.” – Bob Dylan

As the first of three elements of research for this critique, three case studies will be presented to inform and illustrate my development as a leader. The case studies will be taken from each of the following three periods of my working life:

- My military career in the British, Australian, and Malaysian armies
- My management consulting and general business executive career, and
- 12 year leadership career in the not-for-profit (Toastmasters International) sector

While each of these sectors—military, corporate, and not-for-profit—shares some similarities in the challenges they present, they also have distinct differences. It is these differences that will showcase diverse “lived experiences” and the ladders of personal growth I have climbed throughout my journey.

Prior to presenting the case studies, it is important to acknowledge the value and applicability of the case study process. The case study method is the most widely used approach in academia for qualitative research (Baskarada, 2014). The case study approach involves an intensive examination of a particular “unit of analysis” (Trochim, 2006). Yin (2018) asserts that the case study research process is a “linear but iterative process” (p. xxii) and provides practical and technical discussions on each of the six elements of case study research: the plan, design, preparation, data collection, analysis, and reporting. In terms of structure, Yin's further explanation of the case study methodology is summarised by the following chart:

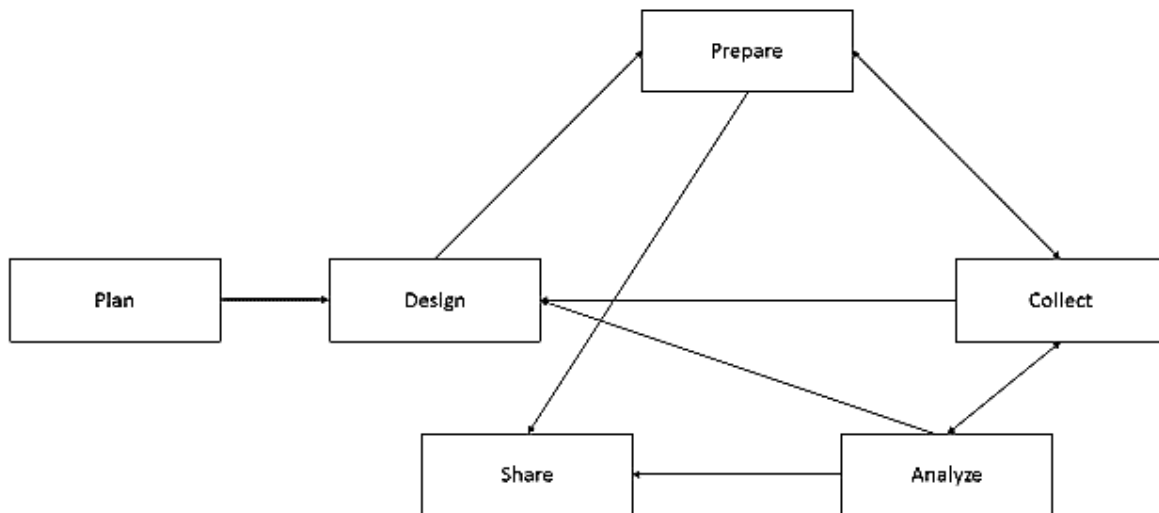


Figure 8: Phases of Case Study Research; Yin R.K.: 2014

To explain the foundations of the current state of PCLP, the following case studies will be presented, each with embedded units of analysis. (Note: I acknowledge that the structure of case study analysis as presented here is influenced by the excellent case study research of Dr Leanne Ward in her Doctor of Business Leadership critique.)

To ensure the efficacy of the research process, the four principles of data collection as defined by Yin (2018) have been applied. These are:

1. Use multiple sources of evidence:

This principle encourages the use of different types of data, such as interviews, documents, and observations, to study the same case. Using multiple sources helps triangulate the data by relying on various sources to verify the same findings, improving the study's credibility and validity.

To achieve this principle, the multiple sources of evidence collected for this critique include:

1. Literature review

2. Case studies (three, one from each phase of my working life)
3. Targeted interviews (12) with project and change management practitioners
4. Job advertisements for project and change managers, looking specifically for a defined role requirement of leadership knowledge and experience

2. Build a case study database:

A case study database serves as a repository for the collected data, organising information from various sources. This structured approach facilitates the analysis and makes the data more manageable and accessible for the research team.

Three case studies have been described where leadership knowledge has been accumulated over a 50-year period from the following working environments:

- 16-year military career
- 34 year corporate career
- 12 year not-for-profit engagement

3. Maintain a chain of evidence

This principle highlights the importance of keeping a clear and complete record of how data was collected and analysed. A strong chain of evidence lets readers follow the researcher's steps and understand the reasoning behind the conclusions drawn from the data, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The accumulated material from the case studies, targeted interviews, and job advertisements has produced a chain of evidence supporting the synthesis of my experience and the content that will inform the design of the aspirational PCLP.

4. Exercise care using electronic sources of evidence:

When using electronic data, such as social media, researchers must exercise extra caution. This emphasises the importance of critically evaluating these sources to confirm their accuracy and reliability before including them in the case study.

Due care has been taken not to utilise or depend on electronic sources of evidence

The case studies will be covered in the following sections:

Case Study 0.0	Formative years pre 1975 – Foundations for Growth
Case Study 1.0	The Military – Command and Control
Case Study 2.0.	Corporate Australia – The Money Talks
Case Study 3.0	Not-for profit – Giving back

Case Study	Case 0: In the beginning.....prior to 1975	Reflection 1 Childhood	Reflection 2 Adolescence
	Case 1.0 We were soldiers, once 1975 - 1991	Reflection 3 Young leader	Summary Lessons
	Case 2.0 The Corporate Jungle 1991-2020	Reflection 5 Challenges	Summary Lessons
	Case 3.0 Toastmasters International 2008 - 2019	Reflection 7 Challenges	Summary Lessons

Figure 9: Case Study Model. (Source: Author) (ack Leanne Ward model, 2020)

Each Case study will contain at least one embedded unit of analysis. In Robert Yin's (2014) framework, embedded case study designs involve analysing multiple subunits or "embedded units" within a single case. This contrasts with holistic case studies, which focus on a single unit of analysis. The embedded design allows for a more granular level of inquiry, potentially revealing nuanced insights about the larger case.

To contextualise the following case studies, a brief summary of my professional life will help demonstrate the significant leadership and business experience I have accumulated.

Professional career summary

Year	Position / Role	Description
1975 - 76	Infantry soldier,	Recruit, Potential Officer Cadre. Basic training for infantry soldiers
1976-77	Officer Cadet, British Army	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. A 14-month applied leadership course to prepare candidates for leadership roles in active, deployed Army units.
1978-80	Platoon Commander, 1 st Bn Queen's Regiment	Command of a 30 man infantry platoon, responsible for all aspects of the platoon members' welfare, while training the team to prepare and fight in combat. The Battalion was deployed in West Germany as part of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) force operating as part of a larger NATO force to deter and combat Russian aggression in Europe. June – October 1978 deployed to Belfast, Northern Ireland as part of Operation Banner, the British Army's commitment to peacekeeping operations which went from 1969 to 2007. Commanded an infantry platoon on

		the streets for the entire period of the Battalion's deployment.
1980-1982	Salesman – Business machines and Real Estate	Professionally sales trained with Nashua Australia in Sydney
1982-1991	Commissioned officer, Australian Army, Royal Australian Regiment	Platoon Commander Training Development Officer Company Second in Command Staff Officer Grade 3 Parachute Jump Instructor Seconded to the Malaysian Army as a specialist adviser Company Commander (100 pax sub-unit) Staff Officer Grade 2 Retired rank of Major
1991-94	Organisational Development Consultant - GPR Management Services Project Manager	Managed the OD function of major consulting projects with ASX 100 clients Project Manager for major consulting interventions with professional project teams
1994-96	Senior Manager – Consulting; Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC)	Project Manager for major consulting interventions with professional project teams
1996-2000	Director – Ernst & Young Business Consulting	As a member of the national leadership team, contributed to developing business plans, strategy,

		business development, client management, and client delivery.
2000 - 03	Director, Business Consulting – William Buck Consulting	With the Practice Partner, I built a new consulting capability to support other existing business divisions. Also contributed to developing business plans, strategy, business development, client management, and client delivery
2003 - 20	Independent contractor/project manager/business adviser	Worked on a multitude of different projects in the PM, OD and leadership development space for global/national/and SME clients in sectors including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aviation • Rail • Heavy/light manufacturing • Banking and Finance • Timber • Health • Transport • Defence • IT/Tech • Government (Federal/State/Local) • Education

2020 - 2025	Defence Industry Adviser (DIA), Office of Defence Industry Support (ODIS)	Working with a unit of the ADF Capability and Sustainment Group (CASG), the role of ODIS is to connect Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with the Defence Industry supply chain. As a DIA, I work with business owners, company Directors, and senior management to advise on how to maximise their business offering to be able to either enter, or to expand current business with Defence. This advice includes Defence intelligence, pure business consulting and leadership development.
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Table 2: Significant Professional Career Roles Summary. (Source: Author)

Case 0.0: “When we were young.” Prior to 1975

Melbourne in 1957 was a gracious city, with wide streets, no skyscrapers, and the epitome of an Anglo-Australian city. General Motors Holden had just released its first model station wagons; the Holden Standard Station Sedan and the Holden Special Station Sedan hit showrooms in March 1957. Prime Minister Robert “Bob” Menzies was in the middle of his lengthy second term. Elvis Presley’s “Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear” was the number one hit single in September that year. Internationally, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, thereby starting what would become known as “the space race.”

By the end of the 1950s, before the chaos of the 1960s, I had been born the third child of a naval officer and an actress. Dad, originally from England, was often ashore trying to find work away from the sea or somewhere in the ocean around the world. Mum lived in Melbourne, which is where they set up our home. When I arrived, I had two siblings; a third, my younger sister, arrived in 1960. We were typically middle-class and lived in a lovely house in the leafy suburb of Canterbury. I don't remember ever really wanting for anything; from my first breath, I just wanted to kick, hit, throw, or bowl a ball. I spent countless hours in the backyard (houses had backyards then), pretending to be great tennis players, cricketers, or Aussie Rules champions. In that backyard, I won so many Wimbledon titles, hitting the tennis ball against the back wall, scored the winning runs in countless Ashes tests on the makeshift wicket on the garden path, and kicked grand final-winning goals for my beloved Carlton between the Hills Hoist and the pine tree.

My other passion was the military, something which I got from my Dad, who served in the Second World War and was in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, and which, even from a ridiculously young age, I read about incessantly. I obsessed over Nicholas Monsarrat's classic novel, "The Cruel Sea", which I first read when I was seven. Back in the mid-60s, there were many TV series and films about the war, and, as we were not quarantined from watching them as children are today, I soon took on the personas of soldiers, sailors, and airmen in my daily play. To the backdrop of the Vietnam war, my parents used to amuse themselves watching me through the back window play by myself in the garden fighting countless battles against the Viet Cong, leopard crawling from the incinerator to the flower bed before lobbing a hand grenade (read tennis ball) into the fence line before standing and rushing the enemy position while delivering devastating bursts of fire from my trusty plastic M1 carbine. Life was good. I was probably always going to be a soldier.

Both my parents were born in 1926, and it was their values and beliefs, shaped by the Depression and the Second World War, that shaped me. Dad used to tell stories of being a

youngster in the Depression in the midlands in the UK; his father (who died when Dad was eight years old) kept rabbits and killed and skinned them to eat and also to sell – this was necessary just to survive. His home in Kidderminster had no electricity or running water; there was no angst about this. It was “just the way it was”, and the family was fortunate to have their own home. When the war started in 1939, Dad was 13; in 1940, he joined the Air Raid Warden teams, which operated searchlights, sirens, and search and rescue for bombing victims. In 1942, he ran away from home, lied about his age, and went to Liverpool, where he enlisted as a cadet midshipman on a merchant ship about to join a North Atlantic convoy. Four nights after sailing, the ship was torpedoed at night by a German submarine; many of his shipmates died; Dad was rescued by a British destroyer. 15 years old – welcome to the war. The following year, now 16 years old and a veteran of many Atlantic battles, he was serving on a hospital ship, the Newfoundland, at the Salerno invasion when his ship was attacked and hit by German bombers. Again, despite multiple casualties, he survived. After being rescued this time by an American destroyer, the Newfoundland had not sunk and was still afloat. The Captain asked for volunteers to go back on board and try to save the ship; Dad put his hand up and returned to the burning vessel, but despite their best efforts, the damage was too severe, and the team was taken off, and the ship was sunk. Gutsy play for a 16 year old/

I did not know the details of these events until much later in life, in fact, until after I joined the Army at 18, and Dad seemed to be able to share with me what had happened in a way that previously he had not. I have reflected often on Dad’s experiences; I now know, having read letters he had written to his mother, just how terrified he was, and how much he wanted to leave it all behind and come home. Given the horrors of what he went through and witnessed, this was not unexpected for a 15-16-year-old. Despite this, he stuck it out and continued serving until the war ended. The lessons I took away from my father’s wartime experiences were:

- His commitment to service; to the country, to the ship, to the crew
- What real resilience was, and how important it was not to quit when all seemed too much to handle
- Courage to face real danger, and not shirk the challenge
- The humility to confess he was scared, and that he missed his mother and their home
- The compassion for his colleagues who were in danger, and the selfless way in which he attempted to help them, not always successfully
- The way in which a member of the team with no formal rank or position was able to exercise leadership in crisis situations

It was these values and behaviours that I carried into my own military service when I joined the Army in 1975.

Aside from the experiences above that stemmed from Dad's wartime experiences, he also imparted other values and behaviours to me. He was always well-dressed, with clothes well ironed, creases sharp in his trousers, shoes not just clean but shining; he shaved every day, and his hair was always brushed and tidy. In short, he took pride in his appearance. The image of him sitting on the back doorstep, polishing shoes while smoking a cigarette and drinking a cup of tea, has never left me.

Dad was highly social and could strike up a conversation with a stranger from most backgrounds. While this was a "nice to have" trait, it constantly reinforced for me that being able to communicate effectively was a must-have characteristic for getting on in life, one that I have embraced and worked on throughout my life.

The other things Dad emphasised to us, especially my brother and me, were to respect and treat women well - behaviour that my mother strongly reinforced - and to respect authority. Maybe I was a little slow to understand the latter, particularly with members of the school staff. Still, I realised early on that without rules and the rule of law, families, communities, and nations could descend into chaos and even fall apart.

My mother...well, here was a force of nature. Trained from the age of three as a dancer, singer, and actress, she was married at 24. While pursuing her thespian goals, she also worked full-time in public relations and training, definitely not a “stay-at-home mum!” Due to her stage training, she was extremely well-spoken and was often mistaken for British, which, as a proud Australian, she vigorously pushed back against. Again, here was a life lesson: speaking well, clearly, and articulately was not simply desirable but a life skill, a differentiator. If my siblings or I mumbled or used poor English, we would be instantly picked up and corrected. The value of this only became apparent years later. Clarity of communication is key.

My mom was very strict about everyday manners and behaviours that people observe and judge you on. She often said her job was to prepare us to become self-sufficient adults who could handle the real world when the time came. So, I was taught to open doors for women, respect older people, use a knife and fork properly, avoid wasting food, look the person I was speaking to in the eye, stand up straight with shoulders back—the list went on, and I was constantly reminded. Each of these might seem small on its own, but together they help shape the person I become. Only as I grew into adulthood did I realise these weren't just lessons in life; they were skills that would help me survive and succeed. I can't count how many times, after I'd gotten into the driver's seat to take my mum somewhere, I'd look over and see her standing by the passenger door, waiting for me to open it for her. Perhaps I was a slow learner!

Both parents were hard workers, sometimes to a fault, and their industry and commitment to work instilled in all of us a strong work ethic: you don't get what you deserve; you get what you earn. A day off school was a rarity; if there was one, there was little doubt that you were sick.

Mum and Dad divorced after 25 years of marriage, Dad remarried, Mum never did. Even before they separated, Mum did much of the heavy lifting at home as Dad was often away at sea, and having had three of my own children, I marvel even today at the way she managed four virtually alone. But what I know is that she focused on what needed to be done and what was required to achieve it. In 1973, Mum made the huge decision to move to the UK where she had never been but had always wanted to go. Alone, with only (I later learned) £150, she set off for London to make a fresh start, with my 18-year-old brother, my 13-year-old sister, and me. We arrived in a freezing London in April 1973 and stayed for a few days in the centre of town. Within three weeks, Mum had found us a home, schools for my sister and me, a job for herself, and somehow purchased a car. How any person, new to a country with three children and virtually no resources, managed to do this still to this day defies logic. At the time, I had an inkling of the challenges she was confronted by, but 15-year-old boys are genetically selfish, and my primary concern was me, so it wasn't until a level of maturity set in some time later that I had the chance to reflect on what she had done and the sacrifices she made for us. In our first apartment, for example, my sister and I had our own bedrooms, Mum slept on the fold-out couch in the sitting room. This was servant leadership in action before I had ever heard of it. I never once heard her complain about her situation; she just worked her guts out, pushed and guided us, and loved us unconditionally.

Apart from my parents, I was fortunate that school had a positive impact on my development. I was lucky to have attended both private and public schools in Australia and the UK; this, I believe, gave me great insight at a young age into the different strata of society in both countries, and what it meant to be successful in both. In England, my first school at 15 years

old was a comprehensive school, essentially a public school. The second school I attended in the UK was a private school (Called in the UK a “public” school). At the first school, Ravensbourne in Bromley, Kent. I played cricket and learned to use my fists to defend myself. It was a tough initiation to UK education. At the second school, The King’s School Canterbury, I played a lot of cricket and discovered the joy of learning. Academically, it was a metamorphosis for me, like a butterfly that crawled out of the cocoon of ignorance and flew off to discover the world of knowledge, inquiry, and learning. Through this, teachers such as Max Greber in Grade 5 and Gerald Hattie in Year 11 contributed significantly to my curiosity about the world and my passion for lifelong learning. In becoming the person I am today, these people and these schools are foundational pillars.

My parents, my teachers, my schools: these were the sources of my persona and character, my values and beliefs, and the behaviours that have shaped me as a person, as a soldier, and as a leader. It is pertinent here to acknowledge the power and value of reflection as a learning tool; without it, the value of these lived experiences would be essentially lost. Rolfe *et al.* (2011) define reflection as, “.... a process of thinking, feeling, imagining, and learning by considering what has happened in the past, what might have happened if things had been done differently, what is currently happening, and what could happen in the future.” It is critical to remember and acknowledge not only that they happened, but how each event and each person has contributed to weaving the tapestry that my life has become, and the things I have been able to achieve in the process.

Reflection on Case 0.0: When We Were Young

I look back now at those early years and reflect on the lessons that they gave me

In my early years, my parents, teachers, and schools instilled in me a number of values that were fundamental to my growth and development. Most of them I didn't understand or appreciate until years later; a few I grasped immediately through making mistakes. In no particular order, but all with significant levels of importance and applicability, these are the lessons I gathered by the time I left school:

Work hard, nobody owes you a living.

Life can be tough, just get on with it.

Service is a commitment, but it is also a privilege.

Pain is temporary; quitting is forever.

Humility. Socrates taught that being humble about one's own views was a necessary step in searching for truth— perhaps the most essential one. That was and perhaps still is a revolutionary view, because it forces us to challenge preconceived ideas about what we believe, what we worship, and where we tap into meaning.

Leadership is not about rank or titles. It is about taking responsibility and accountability for the performance of the team and for the individuals within it.

Bullshit baffles brains – presentation is very important. Although we are told, “Don’t judge a book by its cover”, people do. One doesn’t get a second chance to make a first impression; look the part from the outset.

Everyone has a story; learn to listen hard. God gave everyone two ears and one mouth; there was a reason for that.

Effective communication is key. In the 1967 movie, Cool Hand Luke, the Captain, played by Strother Martin, famously said, “What we have here is a failure to communicate.” Successful people communicate well. The reverse applies.

Treat people with respect, and as you would have them treat you.

Be determined to achieve goals; don’t be distracted or diverted by failure or obstacles.

Stand up for yourself; the worst person you can lose respect for is yourself.

Lifelong learning is what successful people commit to. Henry Ford said, “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”

This then was my early years, from zero to around 15, the period when pedagogical experts say these are the years that set the pattern for the life that follows. It is clear that childhood affects our adulthood; our early experiences shape our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world. Therefore, we learn rules to protect our self-belief as it may make us vulnerable. (Chrysalis Courses, 2019)

Case 0.1 The mid - late teens

From 14 to 17, my life was consumed by two things: playing cricket and listening to Bob Dylan. Amid the confusion of adolescence, my parents' divorce, moving across the world, and starting at a new school with a foreign culture and a completely different curriculum and system, these two things remained constant. What I didn't do during this time was communicate effectively with my mother, or with anyone else, really; I eventually realised this caused her great difficulty and sadness. I happened to be a pretty good cricketer and quickly adapted to the English system, and by my second year, I was selected for Kent in the junior county competition. Visions of a professional career floated around for some time. It took me a while to realize that I was good... but not that good.

And Bob Dylan, what can I say? Introduced to the troubadour at the age of 14 by my brother, there was something in the music, in the lyrics, in the man that just resonated with me from the outset and has continued unabated to the present day. Dylan, for me, was a seer, a confidant, a poet, and a genius wordsmith whose songs found a way into my psyche, and particularly in those turbulent, difficult adolescent years, provided me with a retreat to which I was increasingly drawn when the world around me made no sense. Interestingly, of the many things that Dylan has been described as over the years (good and bad), seldom has he been labelled as a leader, and here, surprisingly, is a leadership lesson. While Dylan did not seek to be a leader, he really just wanted to write music and sing songs. For over 60 years, he has been the roadmap for contemporary music. Before Dylan, the average duration of the popular song was 2 ½ - 3 minutes, with "cheesy" lyrics that did little more than rhyme. In the early 1960s, Bob was writing songs that grew from standard length to epic song-poems, such as *Desolation Row* (1965) and *Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands* (1966), both of which ran for over 11 minutes. The scope of his lyrics took songwriting globally to places it had never been before, introducing a breadth of expression and lyrical freedom that his contemporaries had not previously understood or practiced. He knocked the door down to the limits of songwriting

as it was, and a storm of musicians piled on through. Music was never the same again. As Bruce Springsteen said when he inducted Dylan into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, “The way that Elvis freed your body, Bob freed your mind.” (Springsteen, B. 1988).

Dylan was a reluctant and unelected leader of the 1960s protest movement. He wrote songs about the white oppression of African Americans, performed on the same stage as Martin Luther King when he delivered his historic “I have a dream” speech in Washington in 1963, and bravely used his music to poke fun at the rampant McCarthyism of the era. He also sang about his generation’s fears of nuclear Armageddon. He did all this with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica, but eventually decided he needed to expand his musical horizons. In 1965, at the Newport Folk Festival, he strapped on an electric guitar and stepped out to perform three high-energy rock songs that sharply contrasted with the style of the movement some believed he was leading. The reaction was seismic; likely, there have never been 15 more consequential minutes in music history before or since. While traditionalists howled, the industry followed Dylan’s lead as he created an entirely new genre of music, inspiring bands like The Byrds, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and The Band (to name just a few) to produce music that might never have emerged if Dylan hadn’t had the courage to break free from the narrow boundaries he thought constrained him.

In 1969, this extraordinary performer again changed tack; he recorded a country music album, “Nashville Skyline”, which is not what mainstream rock singers did. Again, his move gave tacit permission for others to follow, and soon after, a number of these mainstream rockers followed Dylan to Nashville to add country music to their repertoire

Enough about Bob; suffice to say, his leadership in the industry continued, a role he never said he wanted, and a role he never once acknowledged. Through my mid to late teens, Dylan accompanied me everywhere. He awakened in me a social conscience and a love of music I

have never lost, and later I came to understand and appreciate the leader that he was. He has never sought leadership, but a leader he is.

Through all this, I gave Mum a really hard time. Early drinking led to some "social disobedience," and my school experience was about learning to survive in a very aggressive environment. (Why did Mick Wordly decide to bring ten of his friends onto the soccer field that lunchtime and beat the living daylights out of me?) I also struggled to catch up with the academic program, which was very different from what I had left behind in Australia. Thankfully, I had a mentor in middle school, Peter Fox-Smith. This remarkable teacher was the only person I felt truly understood me during that time; he took me under his wing and guided me through my time at Ravensbourne. It didn't hurt that he was also the cricket coach, and I was a key player on the team. I excelled in English and History, did okay in Geography, but struggled badly in Maths and Science, which I had no interest in and, it seemed, no ability. Without Peter's calmness, courage, and leadership, I believe my life would have fallen into a dark, difficult place that might have been hard to escape from. I needed to "tough it out," and I did, but without Peter having my back, it would have been touch and go.

In early 1975, my mother told me I would transfer to The King's School in Canterbury, the oldest public (UK private) school in England, located within the walls of Canterbury Cathedral. This cathedral was the site where the so-called "troublesome priest" Thomas Becket was assassinated at the behest of King Henry II in 1170. That's where I found myself in 1974, transitioning from adolescence into young adulthood. Freed from the need to stay alert for survival and surrounded by incredible history and the stunning beauty of the school, the town, and the cathedral, I thrived in an environment of learning, growth, and support. I was a boarder at King's for the first time in my life away from my family home, and I loved it. Reading Chaucer brought me joy, studying the British Constitution opened my eyes, and sparked a lifelong interest in politics. My history classes, especially with my teacher Gerald Hattie, made me feel

as if he had lived through the court of Louis XIV, the Sun King, or stood with Henry V at Agincourt. To this day, I still wonder how my mother managed to get me into such an expensive and selective school. Students' names were often registered at birth; I was accepted with very little notice, even though we weren't exactly flush with cash. I was told that my cricket skills played a role in my acceptance—I was in the First XI from the start and also played rugby and squash for the school. I've always been grateful to my mother; King's was just another addition to the list of things I knew I could never fully repay. No matter the reasons or ways I got in, I look back at that time as a pivotal moment in my life and growth—a time when I first consciously looked beyond myself, rather than being absorbed in my own issues, which is probably typical for teenagers. I can say that this was when I not only observed and experienced things but also began to process and seek to understand them.

Despite my love for Kings and the amazing experience and growth it gave me, I became restless. The transition from Australia to the UK presented academic issues that were never fully resolved. Because of the differing academic years between the two countries, I was older than my peers. I recall clearly sitting in my study one Saturday reading *The Observer* (a broadsheet newspaper), and I turned the page to reveal a full-page ad that read simply, "SO, YOU WANT TO BE AN ARMY OFFICER." I read that ad about a dozen times, sat back and thought for a few minutes, then got up and went to the communal public phone, which was the college's way of communicating with the outside world. I rang Mum, and when she answered, I took a deep breath and said, "Mum, I'm going to join the Army." There was a long silence from the other end. Eventually, she replied, "Well, if that's what you want to do, we'd better work out what's required." I still had a year to go before I could complete school, but no one knows a son like a mother, and she knew that if I had made up my mind, support, not resistance, was the best response. The "Troubles" in Northern Ireland were at their peak, and Mum knew the potential implications of my decision. And so, at the end of the academic year in July 1975, I left school and went to London to enlist in the British Army. I was two months shy of my 18th birthday.

My adult life was about to begin

Reflection on Case 0.1 The mid - late teens

Building on my early-life leadership lessons, this period in my late teens contributed significantly to my understanding of leadership and to how it became embedded in my thinking, behaviour and character.

The lessons from this case include:

A leader must have courage and belief in her/his convictions. Cheryl Robinson (2024) states that, "Being courageous means navigating through uncertainty with confidence and making decisions that might not be popular but are necessary. It involves standing up for what is right, even when it is challenging, and encouraging others to voice their ideas and concerns. These types of leaders advocate for change, are transparent about the challenges ahead and inspire their teams to strive for excellence despite the odds.)

Humility as a leader – there is no need to blow your own trumpet. While this was identified in the first group of lessons from the early years, it seems to be a recurring theme, and should not be understated.

Need for resilience – things won't always go your way. The need for resilient leadership has become not just important but integral to the success and sustainability of organisations. The key characteristics of resilience are described in the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) 2024 article, "Resilience in Leadership: Thrive in Times of Change" as:

- Adaptability
- Emotional Intelligence
- Decision making under pressure

To these I would add being able to get up after being knocked down – again and again. And again, and again.

You can't do it alone. No person is an island, and while not unheard of, significant success is seldom achieved by oneself. When I look back at this period, I see that my mother, my first middle school teacher, the teachers and House staff at Kings, my cricket coach, and Bob Dylan all contributed materially to the growth and development I experienced. I could not have done it without them.

Case 1.0 Leadership in the Army – "We were soldiers, once" 1975 - 1991

Background

I joined the British Army in October 1975 as an infantry soldier. While my goal was to become a commissioned officer, I was given the chance to enlist as a private soldier, complete basic training, and then be selected to attend a Potential Officer cadre, a four-week program designed specifically to prepare participants for the demanding three-day officer selection board conducted at Westbury in Somerset. This turned out to be a good decision, as experience later showed me that having served as a private soldier greatly helped me, as an

officer, understand the soldiers I was later privileged to command. The private soldier truly is the salt of the earth.

Over a sixteen-year military leadership career serving in the British, Australian, and Malaysian armies, and alongside numerous other countries worldwide, I have had many unique and meaningful leadership experiences that cannot be listed or explained in this critique. It became necessary to identify one situation emblematic of my role as a junior commander and carrying significant and enduring leadership lessons. My training to be an officer was conducted at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, an intensive applied leadership course of fourteen months where cadets are taught military history, battlefield tactics, skill-at-arms, drill, military law, leadership and ethics among other crucial life skills such as how to dress yourself, how to iron clothes, how to write letters and administrative and operational papers, and how to conduct yourself like an officer and a gentleman. This is all true! The course, especially the first seven months, was incredibly intense and physically and mentally demanding, and included tough physical training, weapons training, battlefield command exercises, classroom lectures, and parade drill. The days were long and the pressure high; failure to come up to the required (high) standard would result in warnings, “back squadding” to the next course (so regress in training by four months), or, in the worst scenario, failure and marching out of the course and the army. As the success rate for entry into the Academy was (and still is) around 15%, this constant assessment ensured that the high standards that had always applied to commissioned officers were maintained throughout each course. For most of my colleagues and me, failure was not an option, so you did what needed to be done, you took the harsh discipline administered by the staff, you stuck with your mates, and you laughed at the hardship. The reward was getting to wear ceremonial dress at the famous Sandhurst commissioning ceremony, the Sovereign’s Parade, where you marched onto the parade square as an officer cadet in front of a very large audience, including family, and marched off

about an hour later as an officer in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. It was a life-changing experience.

After completing the Sandhurst program, I travelled to Warminster in the West Country to attend the Infantry Battle School with all the other would-be infantry officers. There, I undertook a three-month specialist Platoon Commander Battle Course, which built upon the training we received at Sandhurst to prepare us as thoroughly as possible for commanding soldiers in combat—the core of our duties. Six weeks of specialist weapons training, followed by another six weeks of intense sub-unit infantry tactics on the cold, wind-swept ranges of Salisbury Plain, challenged us and tested every aspect of our knowledge and character. During this time, it was clear the staff's focus shifted: at Sandhurst, they prepared us to be officers; at Warminster, they prepared us for war. An ever-present sense of urgency permeated these three months, emphasising that no moment could be wasted, and it wasn't.

Finally, with no other courses left to complete, and after more than two years of preparation, I marched into the 1st Battalion Queen's Regiment in Werl, West Germany, as a platoon commander in a mechanised infantry battalion that was part of the NATO force during the Cold War. A pile of training but no real experience, I was introduced to my Platoon Sergeant, my second in command - a senior non-commissioned officer with over 12 years of experience in the ranks and a veteran of five tours in Northern Ireland and the Cold War environment. It felt somewhat anachronistic when we met; he stood at attention and saluted me, saying, "Welcome to B Company, sir." He had all this knowledge and experience, the confidence of the soldiers, and he called me, this 20-year-old newcomer, "Sir." That was just how things worked. In the military, as in most jobs, training is valuable and necessary, but experience comes first. After a brief chat, he took me to the barracks and introduced me to the thirty soldiers I was to command—some as young or even younger than I was, others several years older. They all stood when I entered and looked at me with what seemed to be a mix of

resignation and cynicism. Even then, I was acutely aware that the decisions I would make over time could be the difference between these young men living or dying. The bond that quickly develops in such situations becomes something quite special—something difficult, if not impossible, for those who haven't shared the experience to truly understand. Seeing these soldiers as they assessed me during those first moments, I was reminded of the saying, “Your loyalty I demand. Your respect I will earn.” As the senior member of the platoon, the “system” required them to follow me, but nothing but my own performance as a soldier and leader could earn their respect or trust - that I would work for them and the team. This doesn't happen overnight, and for many months, I struggled with self-doubt while striving to become the leader I desperately wanted to be. I was surrounded by great, proven leaders in the battalion—the Commanding Officer, my Company Commander, the D Company Commander, and others—men who modelled how to lead and showed that leadership isn't a destination but a journey.

Time passed quickly, as it does when the pace is hot; in Germany, we faced a very real threat from the East, and while we worked hard, we also played hard – life was good. In February 1978, the battalion was taken “out of role” from the Rhine Army and went into intense training to prepare for operations in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The British Army had been involved in operations in Northern Ireland in a peacekeeping role between the Catholic and Protestant sides since 1969. While officially “peacekeeping,” the British Army suffered over 1,400 deaths in the province between 1969 and 2007, with the majority of these attacks carried out by (mostly) Catholic paramilitary forces. The peak years of conflict-related deaths were between 1971 and 1976, with over 100 deaths each year, including 1972, which saw over 450 deaths. The Warrenpoint Ambush in 1979 was the deadliest attack on British security forces, resulting in 18 deaths.

This was the environment I was to lead my platoon into during the summer of 1978. Our training in Germany was intense but comprehensive, and when we arrived in early June, we

felt prepared and eager for the challenge. As the platoon commander, I made decisions about every aspect of those 30 soldiers' lives for the next five months—when they slept, ate, took their five-day leave, and when they went outside the relative safety of the Company compound onto the streets of Belfast. We were stationed in the tough Republican area of Andersontown, an IRA stronghold, home to a police station that we spent two days at every eight days, which had the dubious reputation at the time of being “the most bombed and shot-at police station in the world.”

For the most part, we operated entirely within our own Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR), which covered the Andersonstown area. However, on occasions, when situations in other parts of the city required it, we might be deployed outside our TAOR. This could be challenging, as we had quickly learned the geography, population, and dangers in our own “patch.” Moving outside it on short notice with little local knowledge demanded a creative approach - especially since these roles were usually due to high security concerns and involved operating under the command of different units.

This is exactly what my platoon was assigned to do one day; we were on “Brigade reserve,” a standby force for any short-term emergency within about a three-hour radius of our base. There was a large Protestant march near downtown Belfast; these marches often drew a hostile (read “violent”) response from the IRA, so extra forces were sent in as a precaution. We were tasked with entering a Protestant area that had a border with the nearby Catholic Divis Flats, a very dangerous location based on many shootings and bombings since the Troubles began. Our role was to patrol the area, maintain a presence, and prevent any escalation if it occurred. At this point in our tour, we had been “in country” for about six weeks and had started to operate effectively within our teams, but more importantly, within the TAOR that we had come to understand.

It is salient here to briefly explain how a platoon of 30 men operated on the streets of Northern Ireland during this period, and how it differed from its role in our Cold War in Germany.

A rifle platoon usually had 30 soldiers. It was divided into three "sections" of nine men each, with a Section Commander who was a corporal, a machine gun group of two, and six "riflemen." The Platoon headquarters included the Platoon Commander, a Lieutenant, a Platoon Sergeant as the second-in-command, and a radio operator. The section was the smallest fighting unit on the ground, and the Platoon Commander's role was to direct the three sections as needed to accomplish the platoon's mission. In general war, these men were responsible for fulfilling the infantry role, which was, "to engage the enemy on the ground, in day or night, in any weather, and to kill or capture him." It sounds dramatic; for those who have ever had to do it, the reality was many times worse.

When the battalion shifted roles to undertake operations in Northern Ireland, which, despite the deaths of over 1,400 British soldiers over the 29 years of the conflict, was officially a "peacekeeping operation," the role and structure of the platoon were changed. Instead of 9-man sections, the troops were organised into 4-man "bricks" that could be deployed either mobile in Land Rovers or on foot, with a minimum of two bricks usually making up a patrol. Each brick was led by either a corporal or a lance corporal, although as the platoon commander, I often stood a brick commander down and took his troops out, as did the platoon sergeant. This was a way to rest the NCOs while ensuring that the leaders gained experience on the streets with the soldiers. Typically, a deployed patrol consisted of two or three bricks and was commanded by the senior NCO for the duration. Patrols could last anywhere from two to six hours.

This is where the situation driving this case study begins. When we were deployed on the Brigade reserve task, once we arrived at the Brigade location in the city, I had about an hour

to receive my orders, do a map reconnaissance of the area we were to patrol, decide how we as a platoon would conduct the operation, and issue orders to the troops before moving out. At twenty years old and only a few months out of the Academy, the phrase “the loneliness of command” definitely came to mind. This was an extremely dangerous area, and I felt the weight of responsibility on my shoulders. While I was planning my approach, one of my section commanders - let’s call him CPL Keller - came to see what lay ahead. CPL Keller was 28 years old and on his sixth tour of the province; in recent years, he had completed two four-month tours of the area we were about to patrol. He was an exceptional NCO, a proven leader, and I had great respect for him – he taught me a lot. Together, we studied the map, and he pointed out this spot, then that one, danger points, prominent landmarks, and potential routes. As we discussed, I devised an unusual plan: although I was the Platoon Commander and it was my role to lead, I recognised that, given CPL Keller’s extensive knowledge of the area, it would be irresponsible not to leverage that. Therefore, I decided that while I would remain in command of the patrol, CPL Keller would lead the patrol during its movement through the streets. To omit this from my assessment would have increased our risk; I would have had to stop and consult the map frequently, and in Belfast in 1978, a British Army patrol pausing longer than necessary could have given nimble IRA snipers an opportunity to strike. I wasn't going to let that happen. CPL Keller knew those streets intimately—the corners, the long straightaways, the high ground, the cut-throughs—his leadership and knowledge would greatly benefit the patrol and our mission. We had agreed on a course of action should we come into contact—full command and response would revert to me, but until then, he would lead the way.

For the rest of the day, over two long patrols, we executed our mission using this somewhat irregular command arrangement. While there had been moments of tension and uncertainty, no major action developed. We worked well, efficiently, and at the end of the day, we returned to our home base having done the job we were asked to do.

What then were the leadership lessons I derived from this day, nearly 50 years ago, that still apply and are as relevant today as they were back then?

Reflection on Case 1.0 Leadership in the Army

We were trained to lead. Leadership is not an accident; it results from deliberate, specific, and conscious planning combined with relevant experience. We were prepared to be leaders; identified with leadership potential early on, and then this potential was developed and refined. This process occurs at all levels in the military, in the officer corps, and among the enlisted ranks. A private soldier showing leadership potential is identified early in their career, often within the first 12 months of service. However, this potential must be nurtured and shaped, much like a sculptor carving a statue from stone. A private soldier with potential is not simply promoted; over one, two, or even three years, they will attend at least two six-week courses to enhance their knowledge and skills, adding to their growing experience. Completing these courses does not guarantee automatic promotion; it merely makes the individual eligible for promotion, which occurs only when there is a specific recommendation and a vacancy. Leadership is not achieved merely through good attendance—a mistake that the corporate and public sectors repeatedly make to their detriment.

The second lesson from this case is summed up by the classic Clint Eastwood, “Dirty Harry” quote; “A man’s got to know his limitations.” How true this is. In this case, I was concerned about my own lack of knowledge about the ground we were to operate on. I knew that this could have had a material effect on the success or failure of our mission. As a leader, my overriding concern was the welfare of my men, and I was prepared to do whatever was needed to ensure this. In this situation, I was fortunate to have a resource in CPL Keller, and I was prepared to cede a degree of my leadership responsibilities to him to achieve the team's mission. While an appropriate situation might have subsequently adopted this strategy again, I have never repeated it; it remains a unique experience, but a wonderful lesson.

At the risk of repetition, the lesson of humility arises again. The charismatic or bombastic leader may lack the emotional intelligence to realise that the action I took here could actually be beneficial. I have worked with many leaders who wouldn't in a million years consider letting a "junior" run the show because it might make them look "weak" or even incompetent. To do this, I had to let the troops see that I didn't have all the answers, but the team did. I believed that utilising the available resources, in this case CPL Keller, the team would achieve a better outcome. I later learned that the troops recognised that I saw my own limitations, which was important because they saw them too and understood that the action I took to address them was in their best interest. That day, I grew as a leader, and we all grew as a team.

The fourth takeaway from this case for me is that leadership is not a straight-line activity. It has bends and dead ends, twists and turns. In leadership, one plus one does not always equal two; unknown factors can come from left field and disrupt even the best-laid plans. So true is the statement, "The best laid plans seldom survive the first shot of battle." The leader must make a plan, but must also be able to adjust and adapt it to fit the evolving situation. This requires flexibility, creativity, innovation, and more often than not, courage. Nelson Mandela said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it."

This case study also prompted me to reflect not only on my own leadership but also on the leadership of others and how that influenced my development. At such an early stage of growth (20 years old might seem old when you're 20, but actually it isn't), I was both consciously and unconsciously observing, learning, and absorbing how other leaders handled their responsibilities. The most significant influence during this time in Northern Ireland was my Company Commander, whom I previously mentioned in Abstract #2 early in this critique. This man was, and remains, the greatest single influence on my development as a leader; his ability to connect with all levels, to foster confidence within the entire team, to make individuals feel valued and capable, to genuinely care for what he was responsible for by sharing in their successes and helping them learn from areas where improvement was needed, all while being

dynamic, decisive, and confident in his own leadership, truly distinguished him. Any student of leadership would be inspired by him and could learn from his actions and behaviours how to lead. Nearly forty years after leaving the unit, I reached out to Paddy to let him know what a profound impact he had on my life, both personally and professionally, and how everything I have since achieved and become is, in part, owed to him. Paddy not only demonstrated how to lead but also knew how to listen to those around him; he understood that he didn't have all the answers and that he could continue to grow and learn as a leader.

Another priceless trait Paddy demonstrated was his ability to administer discipline. When this happened, it could be brutal, but the recipient was clearly left in no doubt about what he should have done. The communication was usually delivered in a way that both educated and admonished. Once this was done, the relationship continued: he never bore a grudge, and as long as the "offender" learned from his mistake, the incident quickly faded. The exception to this was when the error or poor behaviour was repeated; woe betide the subordinate who failed to learn. Paddy was unafraid to have those "difficult" conversations.

The other leader from this case who positively influenced me was CPL Keller. He was a career soldier, a non-commissioned officer, a subordinate in rank, but a man I recognised as a seasoned leader who had earned the respect of everyone privileged to work with him. Brian was short in stature but full of personality and influence, always positive, quick-witted, and sharp-minded. I watched closely to understand how and why his soldiers responded to him, how they followed his instructions without question, and usually to the letter. First of all, he was an excellent soldier, physically tough and technically skilled; the soldiers knew he wouldn't ask them to do anything he couldn't do himself. He had walked the same path they were on, so he understood what worried them, what upset them, and what motivated them. Brian was almost annoyingly optimistic — even in the darkest times, he was always smiling, joking, and cajoling; it was hard to dampen his spirit. Most importantly, he cared deeply for his men, and

they all knew it. As John C. Maxwell (2013) said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

The leadership of Paddy Panton and Brian Keller gave me a priceless and lasting model, one that was effective for me not just as a young officer in 1978 but also shaped my leadership style and approach in the years and careers that followed.

It is interesting to reflect on how these leaders influenced my own leadership development over time. Undoubtedly, there is a subconscious absorption of knowledge and experience at specific moments as one progresses through the leadership journey; you see, hear, or read something that gets internalised but isn't fully processed. Over time, this crystallises into a more concrete concept through reflection, which can then be added to the conscious store of knowledge. To put this in the context of this case, I have asked myself how Major Paddy Panton's and Cpl Brian Keller's actions and behavior affected me at the time (subconsciously), and how these lessons later contributed to my leadership "kit bag."

As a young leader in Northern Ireland in 1978, I had learned a lot through my training and experience up to that point, which enabled me to operate effectively. I was commanding 30 soldiers in a hostile environment, and the team was performing well. However, I was aware that I was still growing and evolving as a leader and was eager to learn additional tools to improve my skills. The actions of Paddy Panton and Brian Keller influenced me at the time in the following ways: 1. When briefing me to take the platoon on a task to the city centre, I left Paddy's orders feeling that he believed I was capable, which was somewhat at odds with the "imposter syndrome" that young or new leaders often experience.

2. The manner in which Paddy conducted himself was the epitome of a confident leader; his knowledge of the situation, of the technical requirements needed to solve the issue, and the confidence he had in his team to get the job done.

3. After he had briefed me, Paddy took time to question me on my understanding of the issue, what I felt needed to be done to achieve it, and what support I might have needed. By doing this, I came away feeling confident that I was well-equipped to get the job done

4. In Brian's case, the first learning was that his preparedness to take a greater responsibility was key to making my plan work

5. The second takeaway at the time was the way he helped "sell" the operational plan to the troops, who were all anxious about what was a potentially dangerous mission.

6. The final point with Brian from this case was the way he demonstrated confidence to me in my plan; coming from a soldier with far more experience than I had gave me confidence in my own decision-making ability – a key for any leader.

These "on-the-job" lessons became embedded into my own leadership DNA, to the point that reflecting over these experiences years later had tangibly and consciously added to my leadership skills in the following ways :

1. Have faith in your subordinates; don't necessarily tell them *what* to do, but let them know what *needs* to be done, and they will usually come up with the solution themselves. This goes to the heart of the John C Maxwell philosophy that promotes the idea that the most evolved leaders, those that achieve Level Five, "Pinnacle Leadership," are those that create other leaders, in that they are so influential that they inspire and develop other leaders who can, in turn, build more leaders. (Maxwell, 2013)

2. To be an effective leader, one must genuinely be effective, not just appear to be. What does this mean? It means that the leader must be technically proficient, ideally better than the team members when possible. It also means ensuring that the team is properly trained so that any mission assigned to them can be successfully accomplished. Additionally, it involves training your subordinates to a level where you are not only confident that they can complete the task but also confident in their abilities.

3. By questioning a subordinate after assigning them a task about how they plan to accomplish it, the leader gains confidence that the task will be completed. More importantly, it gives the subordinate a chance to share their ideas and plans. Too often, people are given tasks they are unsure how to execute, and without this key step, they leave uncertain about whether their plans are correct. Therefore, a simple question from the leader after giving instructions, such as, "So, there we are, do you have any clarifying questions? What do you reckon might be the best way of attacking this?" allows the subordinate to consider options and share their thoughts. If they are on the right track, the leader can respond with, "Sounds good, off you go." If their response falls short, the leader can suggest some modifications and have the subordinate accept them. Either way, the junior person will leave with confidence that their plan is aligned, meets the boss's expectations, and that the leader knows what to expect.

4. There is usually always someone above you in the structure; at some point, that person may not be available, and the competent leader must always be prepared to "step up" and take greater responsibility than their current level of leadership demands.

5. Leaders don't always have the answers or the influence. It's important to understand that in a successful team, all members can contribute to decision-making and may have a level of influence that, especially, a new leader might lack. Effective leaders recognise and utilise the strengths within their team to achieve the best results.

6. Leaders don't need to have the confidence of their subordinates, but it greatly helps. If a leader creates a plan and their direct reports buy into it and show support, then the confidence in the plan is likely to be shared by the entire team. When you're about to send your people into harm's way, this can make all the difference.

These tangible lessons derive specifically from the unconscious learnings of nearly 50 years ago.

Summary Lessons for Case Study 1.0 Leadership in the Army

Train leaders to lead. Leadership is not an accident

Understand your own limitations

Humility is a strength, not a weakness

Leadership is not a straight-line activity

Listen, learn, and continue to grow

Understand how to administer discipline where it is required

Be a role model; achieve technical proficiency as a minimum, and technical excellence preferably.

(Genuinely) care for those you lead

Believe in and use the team's knowledge and experience.

Commit to constant and never-ending growth as a leader.

Case 2.0 Leadership in the Corporate Sector “The Corporate Jungle” 1991 - 2020

Over a nearly 35-year corporate career across Australia and internationally, including varying roles as a consultant, project manager, change manager, and line executive, I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of corporate and team leadership performance. This is true of all the industry sectors that I have worked in, which include (but are not limited to):

- Banking and finance
- Timber
- Heavy manufacturing
- Light manufacturing
- Technology
- Aviation
- Federal, State and Local Government

- Transportation, including rail
- Mining
- Health
- Telecommunications
- Defence
- Engineering
- Professional services (consulting)

Within these sectors, I have worked at all organisational levels—from the shop floor, through first-line supervisors, middle management, the C-suite, and Board level. My work, especially as a management consultant, often involved working directly with leaders at all these levels—observing, coaching, and advising them as needed. Through this experience, I have adopted the John C. Maxwell statement that, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” (Maxwell, J., 2024). For over three decades, I have worked with, observed, learned from, and been appalled by various leadership behaviors. Over this time, I can objectively conclude that the performance, culture, and effectiveness of any team or company—regardless of size—are significantly influenced by its leadership.

In 2008, while working in Sydney, I was appointed Program Manager of a team of eight consultants within what was then NSW State Rail. This small team included four external consultants, four internal team members from within the organisation, and me. I reported to a Program Director, who reported directly to the Executive Committee.

The Project

At the time of the project, NSW Rail operated 18 divisions, including Metropolitan Service, Country Service, Maintenance, XPT, and Commercial, each with its own dedicated Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) team. This structure, which dated back many years,

reflected a “fiefdom” mindset among management, where it was considered essential to have the service within each division. It was strongly protected by Divisional Managers. During a period when the industry was increasingly adopting the shared services model, the company's Executive Management agreed to centralise all OHS resources in a single unit and to provide services to the operational divisions as needed. From the start, there was a range of resistance to this plan, from managers saying, “over my dead body!” to others who said, “I don't hate the idea, but I'll need convincing.”

To successfully deliver on this challenging project required a clear project plan underpinned by a powerful change management strategy. The project team structure was:

2008 NSW State Rail OHS Project Structure

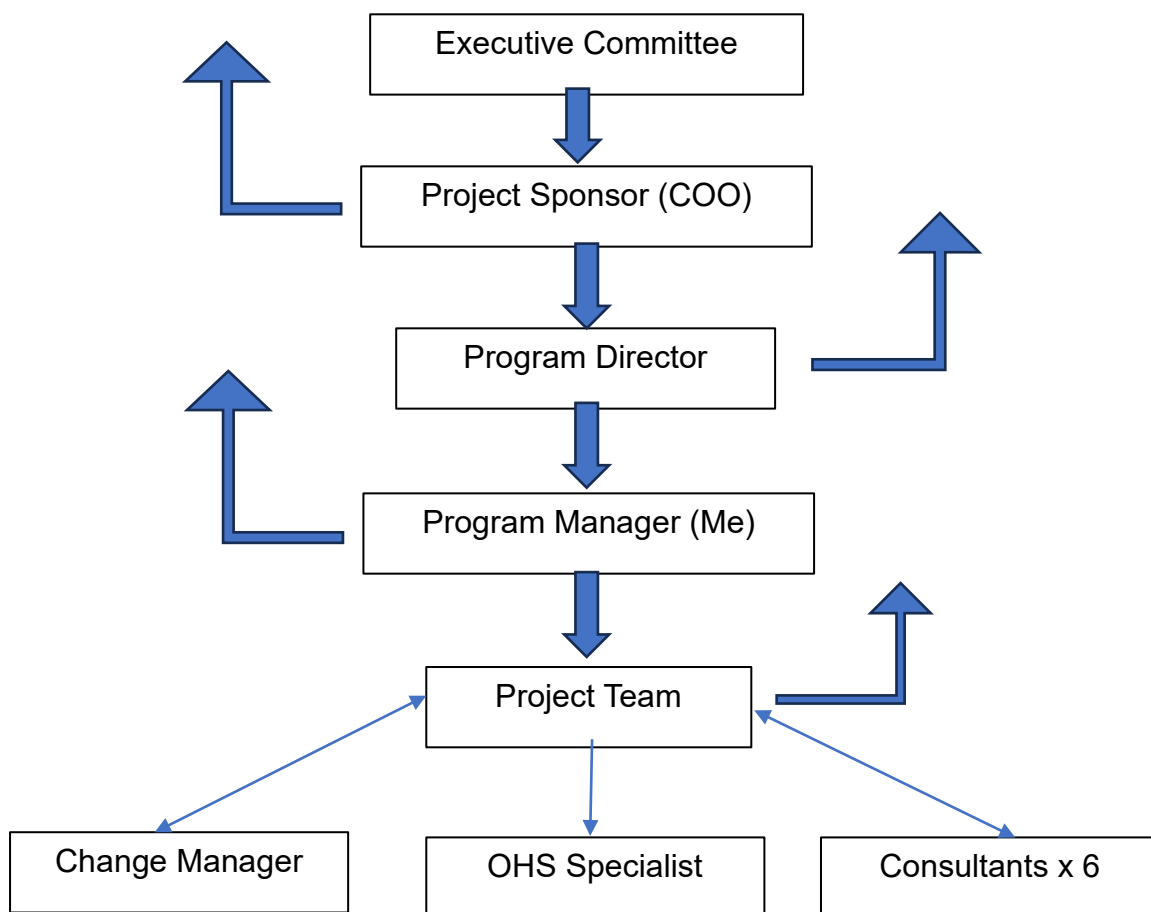


Figure 10: 2008 NSW State Rail OHS Project Structure

From a timeline perspective, the project had its first meeting in late July 2008, and Phase One delivery - the design of the new structure provided to the Executive for review—was scheduled for the end of November. Phase Two, Implementation, was scheduled to begin in January 2009 and be completed by June 2009.

The Executive Team recently engaged external consulting organisations to provide services to the business. In a heavily unionised environment, there was strong resistance to external intervention. When forming the project team, it was acknowledged that the business lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the requirements. As a result, a hybrid team of four internal members and four external consultants was assembled.

The Project Director was Angela Davis, an experienced and well-regarded external consultant. From the outset of the project, she had been supportive and very professional in her approach. The project team consisted of eight consultants, four recruited internally from State Rail, and four recruited externally. The internal consultants were:

- Rebekah Jennitt
- Blake Johnson
- Sue Davis
- Peter Barlow

The external consultants were:

- Terry Chadwick
- Celeste Jones
- Philippa Mirrin
- Andrew Hunter¹

Among the internal consultants, Rebekah Jennit (Bec) was the most experienced; she had been with State Rail for over 10 years and had held several roles across the organisation, including working with multiple Divisional Managers and their staff on WHS matters. Bec was a strong character with an impressive resume and substantial experience; when I first met her, we connected well, and I believed she would be a valuable addition to the project team. It should be noted that since Bec was an internal hire, I had no role in her selection for the team. The four internal consultants were chosen through an internal HR process and had essentially been “transferred” to the project.

The change manager for the project was Andrew Hunter; as mentioned, this role was crucial to the success of the project, which not only required organisational restructure, process mapping, and redesign, but also dealing with entrenched resistance to change would be essential. This was Andrew’s first major project as the sole change manager, and it was quickly apparent to me that he would need support through coaching and mentoring to be successful, a task I took on myself.

As the program manager responsible for designing the project plan and executing key deliverables, I collaborated closely with the Program Director, the project sponsor, the executive team, the project team, and numerous client stakeholders. The key project deliverables were:

¹ Names have been changed

- Design a project plan that defines deliverables, scope, resourcing, budget, and risk management to deliver to State Rail NSW a shared services model to consolidate all WHS resources from the 18 operational divisions into a WHS entity, and to then deliver WHS services to the business from this new entity.
- Facilitate the delivery of this plan within agreed time and budget parameters.

The project team members were a diverse group, all experienced, and the expectation was that they, individually and as a team, would be capable of delivering. As the project began, the Program Director and I dedicated significant time to “building the team”; this involved:

- having regular scheduled meetings to discuss the project plan, the client, and the challenges that we were all facing collectively and individually. These meetings included a, “today the plan is....”, meeting, and a weekly project review meeting.
- having a team function off-site every fortnight, this might just be drinks, a dinner, or an activity
- conducting a personality profiling exercise where each team member could understand his/her personality drivers and then have the opportunity to share this with the others so that all members of the team had an understanding of the strengths and areas for growth of each person, and how this knowledge might be used to build cohesion, understanding and expectations of each other, and how we as a team could use this information to maximise our effectiveness.

- All team members were reminded of and were aware of my availability to meet with them at any time to discuss ideas, issues, or problems that they were experiencing, either on a personal or a project level.

The implementation of the project was initially challenging; the main obstacle was the stubbornness and even outright hostility of some Divisional Managers and key union representatives. They viewed the project as nothing more than a "cost reduction toe cutting exercise." This mindset sometimes restricted access to essential personnel and, consequently, the information needed to carry out the project. An 'us versus them' atmosphere developed between some client staff and the project team, which occasionally resulted in open hostility, making some team members feel unsafe. This put my role as Project Manager under significant pressure, as I was responsible not only for delivering the project but also for the team's health and well-being. One immediate action I took was to schedule client meetings with team members that would typically occur without my presence, ensuring they were not subjected to unwarranted pressure from antagonistic client representatives. I felt it was necessary to do this for most of the team, especially those with little experience in challenging and hostile client environments. Whenever I accompanied a team member to a meeting, I discussed the details beforehand and explicitly asked if they wanted me to join. Initially, most team members were comfortable with my presence.

This process was started early in the project, and my plan was to share the meetings, coaching, and mentoring with each team member so that they would develop the skills and confidence to run these meetings on their own. It soon became clear that one team member never asked for my help; at first, I was okay with this because Bec, the consultant, seemed to handle the situation better than the rest of the team. However, the first red flag appeared during an executive review, when the CEO asked why the project was facing so much resistance and why I seemed to be "strong-arming" some of the divisional managers into accepting my approach to running the project. This surprised me and was clearly not true.

After the meeting, the program director pulled me aside and asked why I was treating team members differently and showing favouritism toward some.

My reaction to these allegations was one of disbelief and deep disappointment, especially since I had no idea where they had originated. It was clear there was a campaign to undermine me, and I was confident the accusations had no basis. After some investigation, it soon became apparent where the problem stemmed from. I was embarrassingly unaware of the situation when the truth was revealed. I had been working long hours, as project managers often do, to ensure that tasks I could influence were completed—this included monitoring and refining the project plan, managing the budget, meeting tight reporting deadlines, managing client expectations both in the divisions and at the executive level, working closely with the change manager to ensure the change plan was effective and aligned with project goals, and leading the team. What I failed to realise was that I was being actively undermined by a team member.

It is necessary here to provide context to the situation as it had evolved to this point.

In the weeks before I realised what was happening, I attended several meetings with key clients where I sensed their attitudes toward me and the project had changed; some were less interested in working toward the project goals than before, and one, a particularly influential Divisional Manager, became openly hostile to me, whereas he had previously been willing to listen and engage in reasonable conversations.

Given the change in the atmosphere, I began to seek to understand what was happening, as the project overall and my leadership role in particular were now at a higher level of risk. A meeting with an HR person who was on the selection panel for the internal consultants told me that Bec had applied for the Project Manager position and, at one point, had been led to believe she was likely to get it. When it was announced that the position would go to an

external candidate (me), Bec appealed the decision and made her dissatisfaction with the outcome clear. The appeal went to the Executive team, which denied it, and Bec was offered a position on the team as a consultant or a return to her previous role. She chose the former (which did involve a salary increase for additional duties).

Further investigation indicated that Bec had a long-standing work relationship with several key Divisional Managers, including the one who had been particularly antagonistic toward the project. Additionally, it became clear that Bec had formed an “interesting” working relationship with the Program Director, Angela Davis; it was not necessarily part of a typical day for Bec to meet with Angela, but they were known to catch up fairly regularly. The final “brick in the wall” for me was when I realised that Bec had been influencing other members of the project team in ways that were not helpful to me.

While calling this a “crisis of leadership” may sound like an overstatement, at the time, this is how it felt to me. I was highly invested in this project; the role was one I had worked hard to secure, and it was important to me that I succeeded, as it would establish my credentials for better jobs in the future as I continued climbing the “greasy pole.” The reality that I was being undermined in such a calculated and damaging way was a real shock and a blow to my confidence. I knew I needed to respond, but I did not want to do so impulsively, so I decided to take a long weekend to process the situation and craft a response.

This leads me to the first lesson I learned from this case study. Leaders don’t always get it right, and even when they do, some people, for various reasons, want to undermine them. In Case Study # 1, the following factors affected the outcome.

- None of the decisions I made proved to be wrong

- I was surrounded by experienced leaders who all had a keen interest in my success, because it materially impacted their success
- I was not being undermined
- My soldiers were loyal to me (admittedly, this was an assumption, but one that proved accurate)
- The entire team was focused on achieving the mission

In the Case # 2 situation, there were several factors that acted counter to Case # 1, namely:

- Because I was the leader, I had assumed that the team would support me. (refer to the US Ranger quote, “Never assume nothin”)
- The group around me had virtually no leadership experience that I could lean on
- The Project Director, Angela, did have some valid leadership experience. Still, I did not realise that while I was trying to develop a working relationship with her (trust, respect, confidence, etc.), Bec was initially ingratiating herself with Angela and subsequently undermining me with her. While Angela did continue to work with me, it became evident that the input from Bec had created some doubts in her mind about my capability and suitability for the role
- The group, while it was evolving as a functioning team, did seem focused on the project's success; however, as time passed and as the actions of Bec started to affect team members, the team became splintered, and self-interest began to overtake project goals

These developments had a profound impact on me, both personally and professionally. It was the first time I faced a direct challenge in a leadership role, and as the team's operational performance began to decline—initially only evident to me, and then to other stakeholders—I experienced a crisis of confidence, with doubts about my own abilities starting to develop. In

response, I took a three-day step back from the project to reflect on what had happened and consider how to handle it. The issues I needed to address were:

- How should I process the behaviour of Bec?
- What strategy should I adopt with the Program Director, Angela?
- Given the events that had happened, what steps could I take that would restore confidence in my leadership with the Project Sponsor and the Executive team.?
- What actions should I take to refocus the project team on the project deliverables and not be sidetracked by the campaign to undermine me?
- What actions will be needed to assist the change manager to bring the client group along to work towards the organisation's goal to deliver the WHS work through a shared services model?
- Critically, what changes in my behaviour, attitude and actions must I make to enable the issues above to be successfully dealt with?

Away from the work environment, I took time to reflect on the events that led to the situation and to search for solutions to the issue I identified. I resolved to be as critical of my own performance and behaviors as I intended to be with the other people who were contributing to the problem. In my review, I planned to assess the behaviours of each individual and to also scrutinise the team dynamics at play. I began with the toughest review... myself.

I joined the project as an external consultant selected from a large pool of applicants; it was a highly competitive position to secure, and I underwent three interviews and a psychological assessment before becoming one of two finalists to meet with the CEO, the Project Sponsor, and the Project Director. Although I had no direct rail experience, I was told that my extensive project and change management background, substantial shared services knowledge, and strong leadership skills were the key factors that secured me the role. Reflecting on this, I

reminded myself that regardless of the issues that emerged in recent weeks, I should focus on the positives I contributed to the project, and even if I am part of the problem, I am unlikely to be the entire problem.

The first thing I recognised was that I had been intensely focused on the project deliverables and understanding the organisation overall, especially the client base. While participating in scheduled meetings with the project team, I realised I hadn't spent enough time truly getting to know and understand each team member. Although I was building relationships with the clients and the executive team, I neglected those who would ultimately deliver the success we all wanted - the team. If I had done this, the problems I faced might not have arisen, or they might have been much less severe. As John C. Maxwell says, "People will buy into the leader before they buy into the plan." (Maxwell, J., 2013)

I came to realise that the issues I had identified with Bec were not rooted in my actions, even though I had increasingly taken her undermining of my leadership personally. If I had been more emotionally intelligent at the time, I would have understood that she was upset about not being successful in her application for the Program Manager role, and that if I had engaged with her and listened, I might have understood her disappointment and motivations and worked with her more positively. Instead of giving her the validation she needed, my lack of recognition fuelled her unhappiness and the subsequent conflict. I decided to reach out to Bec and try to build a path toward reconciliation. Despite the problems she had caused, Bec could be a valuable team member because of her inside knowledge of the business and her relationships with many key clients.

The next person I needed to connect with was Angela, the Program Director. Our relationship as Program Director and Program Manager was a crucial part of the project's structure, and it was in both our best interests to make it work. In the short time we had worked together, we had established a good relationship, and since she had been one of the three members of the

final selection interview, Angela had a vested interest in my success. Although she had expressed some concerns about recent events, I felt she valued my contribution, and her concerns were more about how the apparent frictions could affect the project than about my performance. I planned to schedule a meeting with Angela to work through these issues when I returned.

The relationship with the Change Manager, Andrew Hunter, was also affected by the negative campaign that Bec had been running. Although he was an external consultant, it seems he was influenced, at least to some extent, by Bec. His role was specific and central to the project team's work, and he was mature enough to recognise that his limited experience required my support. He needed support and recognition to effectively deliver the change plan I had him develop. In the early stages of the project, he showed sound judgment and good communication skills in his interactions with the client. I realized I needed to work more closely with him and show my confidence in him to help him stay focused on his role instead of the "noise" that was beginning to distract him. I also committed to having a meeting with him the following week to clarify my expectations and my commitment to supporting him in any way I could to ensure his success.

Regarding the rest of the project team, although Bec had tried to influence them, the evidence I observed showed that there was minimal damage and that dealing with the issue through a mix of one-on-one meetings and the usual communication channels we had set up was the best approach.

As far as the Project Sponsor and the Executive team were concerned, I believed that although some questions had been raised regarding how the project was being executed, particularly through my leadership, I decided that at the relatively early stage the project was at, this concern was natural (in fact, desirable) because there was a lot riding on business performance outcomes and the personal reputations of the leadership team who had initiated

and approved the project. My pathway to the Executive team was through the Program Director and the Program Sponsor, and I committed to increasing communication with these two to build and strengthen those relationships.

Finally, the clients - especially those who were openly or subtly resisting change - were the core of the project. These were the people doing the work and whose environment would change once implementation took place. It's easy for an external consultant to look down on these individuals, but the truth was that, overall, they were doing their best. The structure they had in place for years worked, and there were no ironclad guarantees that their lives and businesses would improve as a result of the change. As a group, we needed to understand this reality, and it was our job to develop a plan that promised a better future for them and their staff. To fulfill this promise, I realised that the project team had to be unified, focused, and committed to the plan and to each other before we could meet the project's requirements.

Accordingly, I decided that all the meetings described above would take place during the first three days of the following week. While I was not naive enough to think I could achieve an immediate 180-degree turnaround in Bec's behavior, I did develop a plan to address her behavior that involved consultation, inclusion, and openness. At the same time, I made her aware that her undermining behaviors and actions were unacceptable and needed to stop immediately. Although I did not explicitly threaten her, meeting with her privately and then with the Program Director—who would reinforce my message—was intended to let her know that continuing her behavior could lead to consequences, which I wanted to avoid.

I returned to the project the following Monday and launched the actions I had planned. All the meetings I scheduled were held: the first with Bec, the second with Bec and Angela, the third with Andrew, and the final was the scheduled weekly team meeting, where the project plan was reviewed, discussed, and reaffirmed. I felt that we had virtually “relaunched” the project

after five weeks, and the team's atmosphere and attitude were extremely positive. The following week, I met with each Divisional Manager alongside either Andrew or Bec; I believed that involving her more in a leadership role would boost her self-esteem, reduce her negativity and destructiveness, and allow her to leverage her undeniable talents.

What happened?

All the actions described above were carried out, including the one-on-one meeting with Bec and the joint meeting with her and Program Director Angela. These actions appeared to have the intended effect, and for a short time, the project was progressing as planned, and the Phase One objectives were on schedule. However, about six weeks after these interventions, I was informed by a Divisional Manager that Bec had been actively undermining me (again) as well as other team members, including the Program Director and the Change Manager. Since every incident involving Bec's behavior was carefully documented and because she was both a project member and a State Rail NSW employee, the issue was escalated to the corporate HR department for resolution. A series of interviews resulted in her being given the option to leave the project and return to her previous role, or to resign from the organisation. She chose to leave.

The design of the shared services WHS Division of NSW State Rail and its accompanying implementation plan were completed on time at the end of 2008 and presented to the Executive Committee for approval and authorisation to proceed. The proposal, along with the implementation plan and the necessary budget, was approved by the Executive Committee.

Reflection on Case 2.0 The Corporate Jungle 1991-202

Many military personnel believe that when they leave uniformed service, the corporate sector will eagerly seek their skills, and their extensive experience will transfer smoothly. They assume that all that experience—working with people, navigating life-and-death situations, maintaining high, non-negotiable standards, and possessing a broad leadership portfolio—would make a retired soldier, sailor, or aviator a highly desirable candidate for civilian roles. However, it is a shock to realise that, for the most part, this is not the case. The large number of servicemen and women who struggle to find meaningful employment after discharge proves this point.

Having said that, when I left the army in 1990 as a Major, I swore I wouldn't take the first opportunity that came along. But I did. Recognising that I was starting a new career at age 32, I knew I needed a role that would teach me what I didn't know and 'fast-track' my knowledge and experience. This would enable me to catch up with my peers, who had been gaining experience for over ten years. Joining a management consultancy seemed like the right path to achieve these goals—an industry exposing me to different industries, cultures, geographies, environments, and challenges that working in a corporate setting wouldn't provide. Two days after starting in this role (five days after leaving the army!), I was working at a major bank in Canberra for a month. That was followed by a three-month stint at a timber mill in South Australia, then five months working in an insulation factory in Melbourne. This pattern became the template for my work life over the next 30 years—project to project, each requiring a new approach, facing different challenges, and navigating pitfalls I hadn't encountered before. In my first year, I was promoted three times, and I went from a standing start to project-managing a team of consultants on a multimillion-dollar productivity improvement project at a BHP mineral-refining plant in Tasmania.

I didn't have much time for reflection while I was with this company, but looking back, I realise that much of my success was due to my ability to relate to people and listen carefully. While I learned the technical aspects of the business, it seemed to me that in those first years, those periods of "invaluable" military service weren't really appreciated by the clients; what they valued was how I could help improve their business. I found that the more I practiced, the more business experience I gained, and the better I could help clients achieve better results, the more they recognised the value of my military background.

While I made many mistakes (and tried to learn from each one), by the time I was chosen to manage the State Rail NSW project, I was fortunate not to have experienced any truly devastating failures that threatened my career or confidence. My ability to listen and what I believed were my strong interpersonal skills had always helped me smooth over conflicts, but the State Rail NSW project truly left me stranded and struggling at an alarming pace. Of course, I had encountered people who were contrary, difficult, incompetent, or threatening, but this project put me in a position I had never been in before: facing uncertain outcomes, a direct threat to my role, and a severe blow to my self-confidence. My failure to initially recognise the evolving situation and my subsequent inability to resolve it made me doubt my abilities and skills. A sense of imposter syndrome began to take over me even before I knew what imposter syndrome was.

My first takeaway from this case is that leaders cannot wait 30 years to reflect on a situation. A crucial skill of leadership is the ability to reflect in real time—by assessing what happened, what went wrong, what went right, how things could have been improved, and what changes to my own performance would have led to a better outcome. I learned this lesson in 2008, but I truly only understood it after many years of practice. A leader must make time to reflect just as they make time to plan, check, interact, and do all those other things leaders do. I recall an old boss once said to me, "I ask my personal assistant to schedule time in my calendar for me

to stare out the window. If I didn't do that, I would never get around to thinking about those things that are really important." It is sound advice.

The second key lesson from this case is that no leader is an island. We all need help, advice, counselling, someone you can talk to and "bounce things off" when things aren't going as planned. During the case study project, I failed in this because it was the first time I had truly faced challenges, been undermined, and seen the project itself at risk. In seeking a solution, I withdrew into myself and didn't ask for external help. I did try to speak with the Program Director, Angela, but in my defence, I didn't tell her the full story or seek her advice about my own performance and self-doubts. Instead, I only tried to address the harmful behaviours of Bec and, to a lesser extent, the change manager, Andrew. They were only part of the problem; I now realise that I was also part of the problem.

Throughout my entire corporate career, I have made a point of asking leaders at all levels, "What keeps you awake at night?" I find this question valuable because it encourages respondents to reflect on their jobs and what truly matters. In a world where processes and technology are always important, constantly evolving, and becoming more complex, it is perhaps not surprising that the overwhelming answer to this question is, "My people." Regardless of technological or process improvements, and even today, the ability to work effectively with all stakeholders, including yourself, remains the key success factor. A recent example of this is the September 2025 Optus telecommunication outage, which resulted in the deaths of at least three citizens who were unable to access the Triple Zero emergency system, despite the company having advanced computer systems supported by streamlined business processes. Initial reports in The Age attributed the tragedy to individuals' failure to fulfill their essential job requirements.

A third lesson from this case emphasizes the importance of sound recruiting practices and, whenever possible, the leader's active involvement in the process. In this instance, I was

assigned the team I was to lead without any input into its composition. If a leader is to be held responsible for the team's performance, it is essential (where possible) to be part of selecting that team. Although it's acknowledged that Bec might have been chosen if I had been part of the selection panel, I could be held accountable for her future non-performance if I had been. While it's not always feasible for a leader to choose their team, doing so is a much preferred option.

Finally, the leader needs to constantly think as a leader. This might sound obvious, but reflection from this case showed me that I had subjugated my leadership responsibilities to the tangible aspects of the project plan, budget, client relationship, reporting requirements, and deliverables. These will always be essential, but allowing myself to focus on them at the expense of leading the team was a key contributor to the negative scenario that developed early in the project. A leader must actively connect with each team member, understand what motivates and upsets them, know what they are doing, and intervene appropriately when performance falls short. This is not a one-time effort; the leader must be relentless about it. Leadership is neither easy nor simple; if it were, many more people would be great leaders than currently are, and the level of mediocrity in leadership shows that this is not the case.

The reflections on this case raised several interesting issues for me. For example, as an army officer, I had pride in my ability to get to know my soldiers, understanding what motivated them and what might cause resistance. Recognising a person's drivers can be crucial when asking or instructing them, as it influences their likelihood of compliance. This was my first significant role as an independent contractor, and I now realise I relied on my leadership and project management experience as a guarantee of success. Looking at this case, it became clear that I had not taken the time or made the necessary effort to get to know my project team on the same level; I believe I could have recognised the Bec problem earlier if I had. I now see why I might have failed here. Reasons for this include (but may not be limited to):

1. I believed that my leadership knowledge and experience would carry me through the challenges of the project.
2. I allowed myself to focus on the metrics of the project (plan, budget, deliverables, etc) and did not attend to the needs of the team.
3. I erroneously assumed the team that I had been given to lead was all up to the professional standard that was required.
4. In focusing on the metrics of the project, I failed to recognise the warning signs of the problems that were developing.

During this case, my failure to recognise and apply these lessons contributed to what happened. Taking time to reflect deliberately on the situation and what needed to be done helped correct what had been going wrong. However, I now believe that a much better, more lasting outcome could have been achieved if I had the emotional intelligence and experience to act differently in light of the lessons above.

As my leadership journey has progressed over the past 17 years since this case study, I have ensured that its lessons are now fundamental to my leadership approach. There are always experiences we would never choose to go through; I wish my failures in the State Rail NSW project had not happened. However, I can confidently say that having made those mistakes, I have learned from them and grown into a better, more effective leader.

The lessons for me from this case illustrated that my current state PCLP was thoroughly incomplete; the basics of the model were there, but the inputs that will make my aspirational PCLP a dynamic, living model enabling my leadership capability to continue to grow and evolve in a manner that will effectively respond to new situations need to be addressed.

Summary Lessons for Case Study 2.0 The Corporate Jungle 1991 - 2020

No leader can operate in a vacuum. He/she needs the input and assistance of others to be successful

Key deliverables are not the only measure of success. Helping the team to grow and develop, and to become leaders themselves, will always be a marker of success.

Leadership is omnidirectional; at its best, it operates upwards, downwards, and sideways.

Where possible, choose your own team. Taking over an existing team or being given a new team you did not help select is suboptimal.

The leadership style and methods that had served me so well over a 16-year military career were only partially valid and successful in the new environment; adaptation and appreciating the differing needs of individuals and their drivers, and understanding the expectations and needs of the team were crucial to leadership success.

Case 3.0 The Not-for-Profit Sector Toastmasters International 2009 -2019

I joined Toastmasters International (Toastmasters) in Brisbane in 2008. I have always enjoyed public speaking, “taking the stage,” and have also been drawn to organisations with structured frameworks, such as sporting clubs and the military. Joining Toastmasters seemed like a perfect way to meet people in a new city while developing the speaking skills I already possessed.

Toastmasters is a global not-for-profit (NFP) organisation founded in the United States in 1924 to develop members' ability to speak confidently in public. The growth and development of leadership skills was later added to the organisation's core mission. Today, Toastmasters operates in over 120 countries, has nearly 14,000 clubs, and over 240,000 members. It remains a vital and egalitarian organisation that supports its members' personal growth aspirations worldwide.

For newcomers to Toastmasters, the focus is squarely on public speaking as they follow a structured growth path with many milestones in delivering both prepared and impromptu speeches. Like most member organisations, Toastmasters experiences attrition; typically, about 25% of members leave within the first 12 months, and 50% after two years. For those who stay, while public speaking remains central, developing leadership skills becomes an increasingly important part of their growth, as members start taking on formal leadership roles such as committee members, organisers, and eventually area and district leaders. The highest award in Toastmasters is the “Distinguished Toastmaster” (DTM), a recognition that usually takes at least 5 years to earn, though there are rare cases where it has been achieved earlier. Earning a DTM requires members to complete numerous tasks and projects in both public speaking and leadership tracks. Less than 2% of all TM members reach the DTM level.

My Toastmasters journey began when I joined the Jubilee Toastmasters club in 2008 in Brisbane. I immediately found a group of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, united by the simple goal of becoming better speakers. During a two-hour, biweekly meeting, we delivered speeches, watched each other do the same, evaluated one another, and welcomed constructive criticism as part of our growth process. Besides the joy of meeting new people, participating in the club undoubtedly boosted my confidence and improved my speaking skills, while also allowing me to help others achieve the same.

After six months with the Jubilee club, I moved to Sydney, where I joined two clubs: a city-based club, City Tattersalls, and a suburban club, Killara. I did this to gain more exposure to the Toastmasters program and accelerate my progress through it. I found that while clubs all follow the same (global) mandated meeting protocols, their approaches and cultures can vary significantly. Observation and reflection showed me that these differences are mainly driven by leadership. Clubs with dynamic, committed, and involved leaders tend to perform better and last longer than those with poor leadership. After six months with these Sydney clubs and the completion of Phase One of the State Rail NSW project, I decided to return to Melbourne for personal reasons.

Upon returning to Melbourne, I joined Kew Toastmasters for a year before moving to the Ivanhoe Club, where I spent four years as a member. Ivanhoe was the club where I transitioned from the public speaking track to leadership roles, starting as Sergeant-at-Arms, then Treasurer, and, at the end of my third year, I was elected by the members to be the Club President. Each of these roles lasted one year. After my year as President, I was asked by the Victorian Executive to apply for the role of Area Director, which I did, and I successfully fulfilled that role over the next 12 months. This position involved coaching, guiding, and assisting seven individual clubs, their leadership teams, and members as needed. It was an extremely demanding but very rewarding role; demanding because of the considerable time and effort required, but rewarding because I was able to add value to the clubs and their

members. For example, when a club was experiencing a significant drop in membership that threatened its continued operation, I worked with the Executive—primarily the President and Vice President of Membership—for six months. As a result, the club doubled its membership, and its attrition rate dropped significantly.

During this time, a colleague suggested we start a new club in the CBD, which we did. In 2017, the Flinders Lane Toastmasters Club was launched, and I served as the founding Vice President. This challenging task was the final step I needed to complete my DTM award. After two years with Flinders Lane Toastmasters, and to manage the increasing membership, I decided to split the club and establish a sister club, Flinders Lane Flyers, where I was the founding President. I spent two years at the Flyers club before reluctantly but necessarily leaving Toastmasters due to personal and work-related issues.

These experiences taught me a lot not only about public speaking but also about leading teams that weren't motivated by military service, as in the army, or by money, as in the corporate world. Instead, they were motivated by a desire to improve, the hope of personal growth, and the belief that serving and helping others do the same was a worthwhile pursuit. This gave me a new perspective on leadership: how to lead people who don't have to follow your orders, whose performance doesn't simply result in promotion or dismissal but in personal development, and who show up rain, hail, and shine every fortnight just to better themselves and help others do the same. It certainly required me to rethink my ideas and leadership model to meet expectations and behaviors I hadn't encountered before.

Before discussing the actual case study, it is important to recognise that Toastmasters has always been a "straight" organisation. I do not mean exclusive of others; in fact, Toastmasters embraced and celebrated diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) years before these concepts became widespread and formalised by communities worldwide. "Straight" in this context refers to the content of the material and the style of delivery, where politicisation, sexualisation, and

racially or religiously inspired content were not only frowned upon but also prohibited. Any member who crossed this line was strongly counselled about the transgression, usually by the Club President. More serious violations could be escalated beyond the club to Area or Divisional leadership. Having listened to thousands of speeches over my 11 years in Toastmasters, I can recall only a handful of times when this was necessary.

The challenge....

The case focuses on Annabelle, a new member at the Ivanhoe Toastmasters Club who recently relocated to Melbourne from overseas and wanted to meet new people while enhancing her public speaking skills. She was initially a popular and active member, always ready to volunteer for speeches and assist with non-club activities, such as serving as an administrator for competitions. The first signs of inappropriate behavior appeared when Annabelle delivered a speech that was highly sexualised and included some quite explicit body language. The speech caused significant discomfort among the members, and at its conclusion, her evaluator, while praising certain aspects of her speech, also offered constructive criticism on its content and delivery. Annabelle did not respond well to this objective feedback and challenged the evaluator during the meeting, which went against Toastmasters' rules and protocols. The meeting ended abruptly, and Annabelle left immediately.

Two meetings later, Annabelle was again scheduled to deliver a speech and chose a topic titled "Being bullied by the system." She then proceeded to criticise the club, me, her assessor from the last meeting, and the members who she claimed, "did not stand up for her." There was widespread shock and some confusion in the room as this unfolded, especially since Annabelle's speech scored quite well according to the rubric used at the time; her delivery was well-paced and clear, her audience engagement was very good, and the speech followed a

logical and easily understood structure. The speech assessor, who was relatively new to the club herself and reluctant to be controversial, gave her a positive review.

This behaviour caused some concern among members, some of whom filed formal complaints to the committee through me, the current President. What was not immediately clear was that two club members, including Mateo, a very experienced and influential long-serving member, had reached out to support Annabelle, thereby creating a division within the club. Mateo had offered to coach Annabelle, which seemed to validate her poor behavior.

Shortly after these incidents, the club held its annual election for the executive team; Annabelle nominated herself for Vice President of Membership (VPM), and Mateo seconded her nomination. Despite the committee's initial reluctance to have Annabelle join as a member, the nomination was approved, and she became the club's VPM, responsible for all aspects of membership management, recruitment, and retention. Following the elections, all committee members attended a Divisional Club Officer Training (COT) day to help new members understand their roles and responsibilities. COT is attended by club committee members from across Melbourne. All Ivanhoe committee members, including myself as President and Annabelle as VPM, attended.

The week following the training, I received three separate phone calls from attendees of the COT; all informed me that they had been told face-to-face or had overheard Annabelle telling people that she had "saved the club" on several occasions, and that the current committee at Ivanhoe was incompetent and ineffectual. She had also made personal attacks on individual members of the club and the committee, including me.

The above examples provide an incomplete snapshot of Annabelle's behavior since she joined the club. She wanted to give an "Educational" speech to the club, which was a significant milestone in her development. However, a specially convened committee meeting voted to

prevent her from delivering the speech until her recent behaviour issues were addressed. She apologised and committed to changing her behaviour.

However, what began as a relatively minor issue had escalated to the point that a schism within the membership, led by Mateo, threatened to derail a formerly successful and harmonious club. For this case study, a detailed description of additional problems has not been included; suffice it to say that the few examples of incidents presented here account for less than half of the total issues Annabelle caused.

As President, I had been communicating with key members of the committee about Annabelle-related developments and was working to resolve the situation in one of several possible ways. My preference was to be able to keep Annabelle after she had apologised formally to the committee, to have her agree to moderate her behaviour in a way that met Club guidelines, and to get Mateo to accept this and to “buy in” again to the club he had devoted so much time and effort to. I was committed to an “inclusive” approach to maintain the harmony that had always characterised the club.

If these outcomes were not achievable, I decided to ask Annabelle to resign from her committee role and the club. I believed strongly that ongoing disruption and undermining of the club and its members would eventually (probably sooner) cause lasting damage, including loss of membership, reputational harm, and, in the worst case, possible closure of the club.

I arranged a meeting with Annabelle, the Vice President of Education, Jenny, and the Immediate Past President, James. I brought a significant number of emails, personal statements from members, and copies of the Toastmasters International Guidelines for Behaviour to support the committee's position. From the start, the meeting did not go well; despite my low-key, conciliatory approach, Annabelle's demeanour was combative and truculent. While she acknowledged that she had made some diminishing comments about the

club and me to people at the Club Officer Training, she refused to apologise or to commit to a softer approach in her speeches, conduct, and communication with the club. We discussed the lengthy letter I had written to her (with input from the rest of the Executive Committee), which outlined the entire issue and the allegations of her poor behaviour resulting in a written warning. She again admitted that some of her comments were true but did not concede any of the other points, even when confronted with statements from others supporting those points. Annabelle eventually said she had written a resignation letter to the committee just before the meeting and would send it afterward. While this was somewhat surprising, I accepted her verbal resignation, after which she left the meeting.

The only “loose end” to be resolved was Mateo’s, the long-standing and highly valued club member who, for some reason, had chosen to side with Annabelle throughout the entire saga. He believed that, by doing so, he had been wrongly accused of poor, unethical behavior, and as a result, he could not remain in the club and decided to resign. While this was disappointing, it also brought the series of events to an end, allowing the club to regroup and move forward, which it did. The nature of Toastmasters is that people come and go—some after a short time, others after much more extended periods. Losing a stalwart is always disappointing, but it happens, and clubs continue to move on.

Reflection on Case 3.0 The Not-for-Profit Sector Toastmasters International 2009-2019

The choice to include a case study involving the not-for-profit sector was deliberate; I believed that the leadership demands, experience, and actions in that sector differ in many respects from those in the military and corporate sectors. Reflecting on this case and then developing it highlighted its value for leadership development. My entire leadership approach until I took on roles at Toastmasters was primarily based on my military experience, supplemented and expanded by the variations introduced by the corporate sector. What this experience taught me is that, although the core principles of leadership—such as engagement, listening,

empathy, decision-making, and action orientation—remain constant, their application must be tailored to suit different environments and the people within them. The foundational beliefs underlying the three cases differ significantly. In the military, the level of training for all ranks is extensive and highly specific; the ability to respond to an order immediately and without question can be a matter of life and death and may determine success. This vastly differs from the corporate world; for most in the military, work is more than just a job - it's a vocation, or even a calling - whereas in business, work is mainly about "having a job" or "building a career," often lacking the passion seen in environments like the military, medicine, or emergency services. While transformational leadership is a common goal in the corporate sector, a transactional approach is often used, with monetary or other tangible incentives serving as a means of motivating performance.

Compared to these models, the NFP sector presents unique challenges: most participants are "givers" by nature, people who desire something better for others and themselves, and this "better" is rarely money or career advancement. The sector has traditionally been made up of practitioners who are volunteers or relatively low-paid (compared to their corporate counterparts); more often than not, their intrinsic motivation comes from within and does not respond easily to traditional leadership styles or external incentives. It takes time to realise that leading people in the NFP sector requires some of the knowledge and skills found in other sectors, but it absolutely demands a different leadership mindset and a more creative application of leadership tools.

This has been extremely valuable in shaping my evolving aspirational PCLP. From the basic inputs of my current PCLP, which includes various leadership theories such as transformational, principled, and servant leadership with situational leadership layered on top, it is becoming clear that a more holistic model is emerging. While still incorporating these elements, it will also need to include a dynamic component that considers different environments and follower types.

Summary Lessons for Case 3.0 The Not-for-Profit Sector Toastmasters International 2009-2019

Occasionally, some people are just toxic; thankfully, this is not the norm, but when they appear, leaders need to act. McGregor (1960) espoused the Theory X and Theory Y assumptions; Theory X assumes that employees are inherently lazy and must be closely controlled and threatened to work effectively. Theory Y assumes employees are motivated, creative, and capable of exercising self-direction and self-control when committed to organisational goals. Toxic workers fall into the Theory X group and sometimes are simply unable to become productive and meaningful members of a team. Recognising this is not failure; in fact, recognising these people and acting on them is beneficial to the team and is good leadership. This case taught (reminded) me that there is an erroneous assumption that all people can change, grow, and learn to behave differently to become productive, if not valuable, members of a team. This statement should read, “....**most** people can change, can grow.....” Leadership can be hard, and the leader needs to identify these people at the earliest possible time and take action. Altruism is all very well, but one person can bring down a team, and identifying and removing him/her at the earliest opportunity will be a positive outcome.

I have always had confidence in my leadership abilities, but, as I have stated, this case created doubts in my mind about my own ability and judgment. It forced me to look outside of myself, to seek confirmation, validation, and assistance from a few key people whom I trusted. It reminded me that while leaders need to be confident in themselves, there will always be a need to build relationships, as even the best leaders cannot stand alone. It is said that leadership is a lonely business. It is, but this does not preclude the leader from forming relationships with “trusted Lieutenants” who can serve as sounding boards for plans and actions. Ultimately, as the sign on President Harry S. Truman’s desk said, “The buck stops

here.” It does, but this does not mean every decision and thought must be made in total isolation. For me to reach out to others, effectively subordinates in this case, I needed to have confidence in their judgment, belief in myself to know that this was a necessary step, and the humility to acknowledge that I didn’t have all the answers. Reflection on this case has shown me that one leadership style will not solve all the challenges that will arise, and that I needed to broaden my skill set and approach to deal with Annabelle. Again, these factors demonstrated to me that my current state PCLP was not fit for purpose, but that, through these three cases, the learnings will provide important inclusions in my aspirational PCLP.

This case showed me that even though I had accumulated considerable hands-on leadership experience, I would never (no one ever will!) have all the answers to all the problems. Sometimes solving a problem will involve reaching out to a mentor, a colleague, or someone who can provide a willing ear and objective feedback. Where this is not possible, I understand the value of reflection, being courageous, and being prepared to fail. This can be a brutal reality, but one I am confident will inform my aspirational PCLP, enabling it to provide the growth, flexibility, and insight I seek to continue becoming a better and more effective leader and to help others achieve the same. The case also reinforced for me that leadership is not just words, actions, and influence; in particular, the actions I took to clearly document every step in the case were a contributing factor to the eventual outcome, and one that cannot be overstated. While leadership can often be an instinctive and natural condition, the need for clear process, documentation, and structure is an important adjunct to leadership skills. In this case, if I had not engaged the Executive Committee early in the events, communicated an objective account of what had occurred to them, sought their counsel and input, and diligently documented each event, the likelihood of having Annabelle see that she had little option but to resign would have been far less likely. When she was confronted by the significant body of evidence that spoke to her behaviours and actions, she realised that she had little option but to resign

CHAPTER SIX – TARGETED INTERVIEWS

“The questions don’t do the damage. Only the answers do.” – Sam Donaldson

Author’s note: The following interview records are summaries. The transcripts and full interview write-ups are included in the Supporting Portfolio for review. The original audio recordings of the interviews, from which the transcripts and summaries are derived, are available upon request.

The case studies provided valuable opportunities for reflection and learning. They confirmed that while my current state PCLP describes the inputs to my leadership style and capability, it doesn’t address the additional actions needed to evolve the model toward one that supports ongoing sustainability and growth, which aligns with my aspirational PCLP. These case studies offered useful insights, even as a snapshot, into my leadership development over a 50-year career across three very different environments. Reflecting on these cases revealed many lessons for me as a leader — what I did (and still do) well, what I didn’t do well, and, importantly, highlighted areas of knowledge I had not yet embraced.

It is appropriate at this point to remind myself that this critique, while ultimately contributing to the development of my aspirational PCLP, draws on my knowledge and experience in project and change management as the context for the paper. The goal is to influence and elevate the leadership of project and change managers, resulting in better and more consistent project outcomes.

Why Project Management and Change Management?

While some projects perform flawlessly and achieve all their goals within the established performance limits, I have worked on projects across various industries for over 35 years and have seen many that fail to reach their intended targets, go over budget, and take longer than planned. Often, projects labelled as “successful” are “re-scoped.” For example, a project initially aimed at delivering outcomes A, B, and C might have been allocated a \$2 million budget, 12 months, and a team of six people. After a review at the six-month point, it becomes clear that the project is behind schedule, over budget, and already has ten people working on it, making the original delivery impossible. Usually, the executive team meets to address this, confirms the project’s importance, and, after opting to continue, re-scope it—raising the budget to \$4.2 million, extending the timeline to two years, and increasing the team to 15 members. At this stage, it’s also likely that the project manager will be replaced. Additionally, they might decide that Objective C is less critical than the other two objectives and remove it from the scope. If this project proceeds with these new parameters, the original plan - agreed upon and signed off - is not truly delivered. However, when the remaining objectives are completed after two years, the business might declare the project a success, even though it technically was not.

There are several factors contributing to this situation that I will not discuss here. However, a key element in this hypothetical (but very real) scenario is that many projects start as an idea inside a senior executive's mind. He or she may have a great business idea but might not know how to turn it into reality, including how much it would cost, how long it would take, or what resources might be needed. In cases like this, the project begins without the necessary support to succeed; often, there is no business case, feasibility assessment, or scenario planning. The project is likely to fail before it even starts. My experience shows that projects rarely fail midway or at the end; they tend to fail right at the start. This bleak outlook is based

on my own experience working on hundreds of projects over 35 years. To support this personal view, however, the following statistics offer meaningful insight.

- Only 48% of projects globally are considered successful (Project Management Institute, November 2024)
- 55% of project managers cite budget overruns as a reason for project failure. (Teamstage, 2024)
- 70% of all projects fail (Teamstage, 2024)
- 42% of all companies do not understand the need or importance of project management (Teamstage, 2024)
- 75% of respondents in the IT industry lack confidence in project success (Teamstage, 2024)
- 68% of projects do not have an effective project sponsor (Teamstage, 2024)
- 16% of IT projects have 200% cost overrun and 70% schedule overrun, Boston Consulting Group (2024)

Industry considers project management the key to effective, lasting organisational change. While successful projects have a positive impact, extensive evidence shows that many aspects of projects, and consequently project and change management, are ineffective and cause significant damage to organisations through mismanagement and poor implementation.

Three questions have been posed as the foundation for this. They are:

- To what extent is leadership a critical success factor in the delivery of organisational projects?

- Do organisations consider leadership knowledge, experience, and capability as a component requirement of project and change practitioner competencies when recruiting for these roles?
- How can I improve the level of leadership capability of project managers and change practitioners in organisations?

As a practitioner, I have contemplated these questions over the years and drawn my own conclusions. However, to gain objective input that could support or challenge my findings, I collected insights from 12 current project managers and change managers at various levels through structured, targeted interviews. As described in the Research Design, all 12 interviewees were practicing project or change managers from different industries. Eight participants were based in Australia, three in the United States, and one in Japan.

In selecting the interview participants, I aimed to choose practitioners with experience in project and/or change management, representing different levels of organisational management. They came from various industries and brought diverse work and life experiences to the inquiry. Half of the interviewees I knew and had worked with previously, while the other six were people I had been referred to. Of those six, I had not worked with any for at least ten years.

Designing the interview format required consideration of the three levels of interview structure, as described by Salmons (2010): structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. These are described by Salmon as:

Structured interviews typically involve asking the same set of questions in the same order to every participant. These questions may be closed-ended, limited-response, or open-ended, designed to gather brief narrative answers. Respondents are not able to redirect questions or

expand on their responses. To prepare, the researcher pre-determines the exact wording of all questions. The interviewer maintains a neutral role; however, interviewees are often given some flexibility to elaborate on their responses or explore topics beyond the prepared questions.

Semi-structured interviews merge the planned questions of a structured approach with the spontaneity and flexibility of an unstructured interview. The researcher prepares questions or discussion topics in advance and develops follow-up questions during the interview.

Unstructured interviews gather data through a conversation between the researcher and the participant.

The interview method used was semi-structured, in which the same open-ended questions were asked in the same order, with varied follow-up questions and probes. This approach helped me stay consistent with the line of inquiry while also allowing flexibility to explore and "drill down" into specific responses as needed.

The Salmons model is shown here:

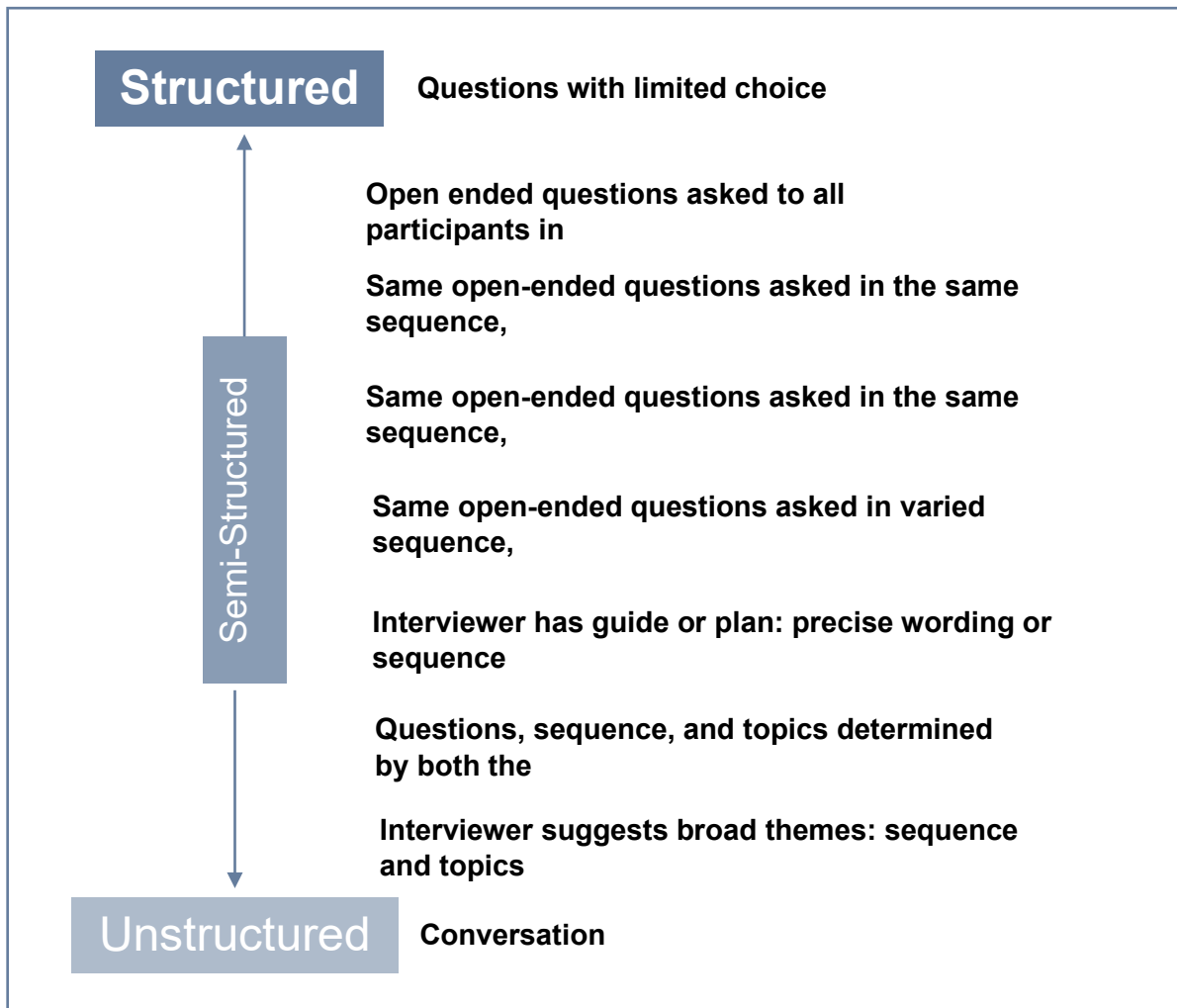


Figure 11: Levels of Interview Structure (Salmons, 2010)

In conducting and reviewing the interviews, I had to be cognisant of several factors. These included:

- A need to ensure that I did not introduce any unconscious bias into my consideration, especially regarding those I had previously worked with.
- As an experienced project and change management practitioner, I needed to recognise that my own experiences could influence my questions and judgment, so I had to maintain a high level of objectivity.

During the interviews, I shared my belief, based on over 30 years of experience in the field, that there is a lack of quality in the standard of leadership within the project management and change management professions. I thought this failure was widespread across all industries, and I conducted these interviews to test my opinion. I should note that while I do believe there is a significant leadership failure in this area, I recognise that many highly capable and effective leaders exist in these fields, but they are in the minority.

The interview approach involved conducting a semi-structured session where seven prepared questions were asked of each participant. Each question aimed to explore a specific area of inquiry and promote open discussion that added value. After the interviews, each was transcribed and manually reviewed.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The questions posed to the interviewees were:

1. What is your general interpretation and definition of leadership?
2. Apart from your current role, what is your opinion on the quality of leadership, specifically among project managers?
3. I'm interested in your thoughts on how project managers and change managers demonstrate leadership and apply it.
4. Do project managers and change managers in your experience have adequate or reasonable leadership knowledge and experience to effectively perform that part of the role?

5. How do you view the relationship between project delivery and change management involving the project managers and change managers assigned to collaborate?
6. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the project managers and the change managers who work with them?
7. Given the importance of project management and the ongoing need for change in the workplace, what developments, changes, or improvements would you like to see in developing leaders in project and change management?

The interviews were initially analysed to understand why the interviewees held their thoughts and opinions. Statements were often examined further through additional questions and discussion to understand their original meaning better, ensuring points were not just accepted at face value.

After manually reviewing the interviews and identifying content themes and recurring opinions, the interviews were analysed using the powerful AI text analysis tool Leximancer. Leximancer processes the full content of all 12 interviews, assigns them a statistical value, and displays their relationships as a visual map, thereby automating thematic analysis. The system automatically analyses any text to identify high-level concepts, providing key ideas and actionable insights through advanced models, interactive visualisations, and data exports. It offers unbiased thematic and sentiment analysis.

Leximancer is based on the idea that text is more than just a series of words; it tells a story. Ideas, concepts, and relationships are woven into the words. It quickly and effectively identifies the key concepts needed to understand what the text truly conveys and to enhance thematic analysis. (Leximancer.com)SD

The value of using Leximancer to analyse the interviews is that it provides an objective review that supports and reinforces the findings from the manual review.

The interview population is listed here; as per the Ethics Statement agreed to by the participants, all names have been removed and replaced by pseudonyms.

The Interview Population

1. SD – Senior Change Manager, Major Insurance company
2. DA – Project and Change Management Practice lead, Major Insurance company
3. MDS – Change Manager, Major Insurance company
4. DAS – Communications Lead, Global IT Company– United States
5. DS – Director/Program Manager and Change Agent, International work cover company
6. LH – Technology Transformation Delivery and Program Manager
7. LR – Consultant, United States Management Consulting firm
8. PS – Project Director, Australian Public Service
9. LG – Director, International Management Consulting firm
10. MM - Director, International Management Consulting firm
11. YT – Transformation and Project Delivery Specialist
12. RK – Partner, International Management Consulting firm

Together, the interview group has 274 years of experience as project and change managers.

Summary Results of Interviews

All 12 interviews were reviewed, annotated, reflected upon, reread, and then summarised. Key points from each interview were highlighted, and a search for consistent themes and

feedback from each question was conducted to represent the opinions of both individual participants and the group. It was important to consider each interview both separately and as part of an overall interpretation of the group feedback.

Each interview is summarised by the interviewer to show the individual's views on each question; a separate summary based on Leximancer software analysis then follows. Combining these two analysis methods provides a more comprehensive view of the interview results than using a single method and helps verify the findings.

Interview One – SD – Senior Change Manager, Major Insurance company

Summary

SD appeared to lack a clear understanding of leadership within her own practice and in relation to the project managers or change managers she collaborated with. Her view of leadership, both as a concept and as a practice, showed some awareness, and I believe she understood what distinguishes a good leader from a poor one.

Her experience with projects and change management showed that the leadership standards of project and change managers were generally adequate, though they ranged from excellent to mediocre. SD believed that project and change managers usually possess the necessary knowledge and experience for their roles, with practical experience prioritised over formal qualifications. This view is shaped by her recent work on an internal consulting team, where team member selection was carefully managed.

The relationship between project managers and change managers was viewed as essential, and SD believed there could be potential issues in how they collaborated. Although she hadn't

seen many instances where the change manager reported to the PM, she acknowledged that it did happen.

Regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the project and the change managers, SD was unable to express her opinions clearly; she seemed to view both groups positively, but also acknowledged that some members barely met standards. This contradiction appeared to persist throughout the entire interview. SD believed there was room to improve leadership standards in both groups, but could not specify how. When asked, SD agreed that some form of structured (formal) leadership training might be worth considering.

A final point discussed in this interview was that the application and development of Agile project methodology, which is becoming more widespread worldwide, has changed the way projects are managed and possibly how project managers lead their teams. Agile project management is an iterative and flexible approach that breaks down large projects into smaller, manageable tasks completed in short cycles called sprints. It is worth noting that, although some interview participants have experience with Agile methodology, including Agile in this study remains important.

Interview Two – DA – Project and Change Management Practice lead, Major Insurance company

Summary

DA had a clear grasp of leadership, including its definition and its impact on project delivery. As a change practice leader, DA leveraged her extensive experience and knowledge in her role and her team's work. She is not only a practitioner but also a thoughtful thinker, committed to continually deepening her understanding of her work, both overall and specifically in leadership.

Regarding the capabilities of project managers, DA concluded that overall leadership within the group varied, with some competence present among a mostly ineffective team. Additionally, the increasing number of younger project managers was reducing the group's overall capability. The fact that project leaders rarely see their projects fully completed highlights that they, as a group, are not focused on the "big picture." Focusing on scope, budget, resource use, deliverables, and the many artifacts that support them often causes them to overlook the importance of leadership and to interact effectively with the people they manage.

DA also believed that project managers' leadership skills often fall short of the accepted standards. While acknowledging the importance of formal project management training, DA pointed out the limitations (though necessary) of having formal qualifications. She said, "If you walk into a PM role with only qualifications and no experience, you have a disaster waiting to happen."

DA stated that she believed most of her change team had good-to-excellent leadership skills, but that the project managers they worked with generally lacked them. It is worth noting that DA's belief is that the leadership skills of executives above the project level are often below standard, which has a detrimental effect on projects.

DA made a strong statement: "Projects can be completed without change managers, but organisational transformation cannot happen without change leaders," and noted that project performance improves when there is an effective relationship between project and change managers.

Finally, although unable to specify what an intervention might look like, DA strongly believes there is a real need to better equip project managers with additional leadership training and development.

Interview Three – MDS – Change Manager, Major Insurance Company

MDS Summary

MDS was unable to clearly define leadership; while he demonstrated some understanding of what leaders do, he couldn't articulate leadership as a concept. This falls short of explaining what leadership truly entails. In an environment where change managers are expected to provide leadership and help others become better leaders, this is concerning. The entire interview increasingly seemed to be a way for MDS to express his poor tolerance for his project manager peers.

For most of the questions, MDS did not answer them directly; instead, he launched into a self-congratulatory rant about what he could do well and what project managers could not.

This manner of unsubstantiated, almost stream-of-consciousness talk indicated to me that, while MDS had some ideas and theories about leadership in his workplace, his response was emotional, almost visceral, and lacked coherence or substance. Since MDS was well established in a role that required leadership of himself and the ability to lead and influence others, especially his clients, the project managers, this feedback was very interesting and somewhat disappointing to me.

The responses MDS gave during the interview showed a sense of rivalry between him and the project managers he worked with. They also implied that, at some point, there may have been a problematic project involving MDS and a project manager who didn't turn out well. After

some thought, I decided not to pursue this line of questioning further because I believed it could distract from the interview's main focus and lead to unrelated topics.

The response to the question about the strengths and weaknesses of project and change managers again showed that MDS's understanding was reflected in a knee-jerk reaction rather than in a logical, carefully developed position on a subject essential to his role.

As the third team member from the same company to be interviewed, all within the same team, this interview was disappointing because MDS seemed unable to consider and respond to the questions in an informed and objective way. His answers were mostly driven by personal opinions and a personal "axe to grind" against the project managers he worked with, along with the impression that he saw himself as much more intelligent and capable than they were.

Interview Four – DAS – Change Manager, Major Technology Company USA

DAS Summary

DAS has extensive and valuable experience with projects and change management, and her interview reflected this. Her answers consistently showed a clear understanding of project management and change management, including the leadership challenges and issues involved.

There was a consistent sense throughout the interview that DAS was frustrated not only with poor leadership at the project level but also with the lack of guidance from executives. This theme has increasingly emerged as a key issue and should be seen as an important factor in project and project management performance. The quality of leadership by senior business executives who are not directly involved in daily project execution but influence project delivery

remains outside the scope of this critique, yet it should be acknowledged as a factor affecting project management and change management performance.

Similarly, DAS highlighted the possibility—based on her experience and the reality—that the expense of hiring properly experienced and qualified project managers with proven leadership skills might be a cost many businesses are unwilling to bear.

Finally, DAS has again emphasised the importance of having change managers with some life experience to complement their project skills. It is clear that many change managers are relatively young and lack sufficient life experience alongside their formal qualifications. MDS also raised this point in his interview. Managing this effectively is challenging, and there may be highly capable change managers who lack experience either because of their age or limited time in the role. Although this issue falls outside the scope of this critique and won't be examined in detail, it should be considered for future assessment.

Interview Five– DS – Director – Application Support, Major Financial Services

Company, USA

DS Summary

DS's responses in this interview show that she is an experienced, hands-on project and change professional who has delivered projects but hasn't reflected enough on her practice to make her work clear and well-structured. Regarding her understanding of the issues discussed, DS had some difficulty explaining the concepts underlying her practice. Yet, she was clear and decisive when responding to my questions about working with project and change managers and about taking the necessary steps to complete the work.

Her responses highlighted the wide range of project and change management skills among the workforce, as well as the frustrations managers face when dealing with these differences. While this may not apply to every project, more interviewees are indicating that the quality of project management varies greatly, with most feedback leaning toward the lower end.

Adding to DS's frustrations with the significant skill gap at the project level was her irritation with senior management and their lack of understanding and appreciation of what change management is and what it can accomplish.

The question must be asked: why does this variation in capability exist across projects? The template for role descriptions for both project and change managers has remained fairly consistent over many years; technological advancements have been incorporated, but the expectations for these roles have stayed fairly steady, at least over the 35 years of my own experience. While solving this issue is outside the scope of this critique, addressing it will be included as part of my aspirational PCLP.

Interview Six– LH – Contract Project Manager – Technical IT Implementation Projects

LH Summary

LH's responses in this interview reflect a practitioner with extensive experience gained over many years working on projects both as a team member and as a project manager. His primary focus is on operational delivery. Despite his broad involvement in projects, he shows a lack of strategic thinking and lacks a deep understanding of leadership issues beyond daily project implementation. Many of his responses were rambling diatribes that almost always failed to answer the question satisfactorily. This suggests that, despite LH's wide-ranging project experience, he did not appear to view leadership objectively or consider it part of his project management approach.

LH repeatedly demonstrated his experience, knowledge, and effectiveness as a project manager, but he did not show a deep understanding or leadership potential. His ideas about leadership mainly focus on the project team's ability to deliver the desired results for the client and to gain support from senior management to achieve this. While some parts of the interview were valuable, especially regarding Agile and senior management involvement, overall it was disappointing, given the experience of someone who suggested a more meaningful contribution.

The interview offered some insight into LH's perspective on leadership issues in projects at an operational level, but it didn't significantly expand my exploration of leadership behavior by project and change managers. It didn't introduce new information or material that could add value or potential input to my aspirational PCLP.

Interview Seven– LR – Change Consultant – United States Management Consulting firm

LR Summary

LR is a project manager with some, but not extensive, experience—certainly compared to many other interviewees. Her responses expressed deep frustrations with the leadership abilities of those she worked with and generally reported to. While LR held strong opinions on several issues discussed, she also found it difficult to answer other questions clearly.

One of her most interesting observations about project manager behaviour was the fear among staff stemming from ineffective leadership and the cascading consequences that

followed. This was not only concerning for LR and her colleagues but also created additional unnecessary stress, contributing to what she described as “burnt out.”

LR’s account of the poor leadership behaviour by project managers was an excellent description of the negative impact it can have on project staff.

While LR was not able to significantly contribute to the factors surrounding change manager leadership, she was, however, very clear in her understanding of the dynamic between project and change managers.

LR did not have a clear idea about how project and change managers can be better prepared for their roles.

My main takeaway from this interview for my PCLP input is that I should consider not only the behaviours and competencies of the project and change managers, but also the people working for them, in the final model.

Interview Eight– PS – Project Director, Australian Public Service

PS Summary

PS articulated leadership requirements more clearly than other interviewees. He was specific about what was expected of leaders, and his extensive project experience enabled him to answer questions with practical clarity.

While PS offered valuable feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of project managers, it was interesting that he had relatively little experience working with change managers; this is

likely due to the limited use of them in Defence projects, possibly even an institutional lack of understanding of the need for change practitioners.

PS had observed many project managers who “just didn’t get it,” and who were motivated by the need to check boxes to meet requirements. This matches feedback from several other interviews. He was clear that project success depends on addressing people issues and that project managers often lack the ability to interact effectively with stakeholders.

Overall, PS showed a solid practical knowledge and understanding of leadership challenges in project management.

Regarding lessons learned from the interview, nothing stood out as significantly different from the other interviews, except to confirm what had already been established. If there was one key takeaway, it was that there truly is no substitute for experience.

Interview Nine– LG – Director, International Management Consulting firm

LG Summary

LG’s responses in this interview reflected a seasoned project practitioner with extensive experience as both a team member and a project manager and director. Her definition of leadership was clear and unequivocal. She demonstrated herself to be a leader, thinker, and developed her own leadership style.

LG’s daily insights into the project process demonstrated how her experience and reflection on practice have fostered her growth and leadership skills. This ability is essential for ongoing personal development and will be valuable to include in my aspirational PCLP. Her interview covered topics that others did not mention. LG shows a deeper level of leadership behavior

and knowledge than others, offering valuable insights into leadership in project-based consulting.

This also provides valuable insight into how women perceive the workforce overall and specific projects. Including this in my PCLP is essential.

Interview Ten– MM – Director, International Management Consulting firm

MM Summary

MM provided mixed feedback during the interview. While she demonstrated a solid understanding and appreciation of leadership, her responses also included 'management speak' with high-level comments and corporate catchphrases. Early in the interview, MM seemed to view leadership as less essential to project success, focusing more on procedural aspects of project management. Her responses sometimes appeared evasive, as if she were hesitant or unable to answer certain questions directly.

MM opined that she did not consider investing in leadership training or development a particularly high priority for project managers.

The interview with MM again revealed that opinions and attitudes towards leadership training and development for project and change managers differ greatly. Although MM has extensive experience in project management and is a senior leader involved in selecting, training, and guiding project teams, it did not appear that MM had reflected on what might be necessary to enhance leadership skills in project and change management.

Interview Eleven– YT – Transformation and Project Delivery Specialist

YT Summary

Throughout the interview, YT consistently demonstrated her extensive experience in project management. She was confident, direct, and perceptive in her answers, and she could diverge from the question asked to explore other valuable topics. Her statement, 'The expectation of project managers is to drive and to lead; it's not always possible to do both,' was insightful and showed her empathy and understanding of the role. YT's view of leadership was clear, while also showing an empathetic (and, paradoxically, critical) appreciation of the leadership qualities of project managers.

YT strongly believed that recruiting project managers often did not prioritise candidates with leadership skills; instead, they mainly looked for proven ability to develop a project plan, create a budget, identify resource needs, meet deadlines and milestones, and ultimately deliver the project's goals and objectives. The pressure to accomplish these tasks often conflicted with the actual process of leading the team and everything it involves. Conversely, those who practice change management tend to understand and apply soft leadership skills that many project managers lack.

Project managers focus on delivering projects rather than business outcomes. I believe that's why, when a project manager is hired, they are responsible for delivering the project itself, not the specific outcome the project aims to support.

YT believes that project managers do not understand or appreciate the work that change practitioners do on projects. She thinks the project manager views change management as an intangible activity and often treats it as work others can handle. They don't recognise the

need for a specialised person to manage change, leading to a lack of professional respect for the change manager role.

YT believes that project managers often overlook the benefits of what the change manager does. They assume that as long as they deliver the project, the business's adoption and use are not necessarily their concern. 'I've delivered it on time—now you implement it,' but if no one is using it, they don't see it as their responsibility. They fail to recognise that the success of their project depends on business adoption and usage.

The interview concluded with YT stating that developing leadership skills for project managers is necessary and valuable when it happens; however, she was also clear that this type of training is the exception rather than the rule. The same was true for change managers, but this group was usually better equipped and capable of acting as leaders.

Interview Twelve– RK –Partner, Global consulting company, Mining & Metals, Supply Chain Sustainability, Agriculture

RK Summary

The interview with RK was somewhat paradoxical; being chosen as a partner at a Big Four consulting firm typically requires not only consistent high performance over many years but also recognition of leadership abilities. By the time he or she is made a partner, leadership qualities must go beyond mere potential. Given this, RK's responses were high-level in his interpretation of leadership and his expectations for project managers, while seeming clear to him, were less than clear to an objective observer. His responses generally lacked depth. RK's definition of leadership was overly broad and did not effectively capture it.

In describing his project managers' leadership abilities, RK said, "They're not necessarily leaders; they're project managers." It seems that although the firm highly values and promotes leadership to clients, this implies that project managers (and change managers) who deliver project results do not have to be leaders to succeed. RK clarified that his role depends on the project managers to handle scope, budget, deliverables, and activities according to the plan, while he works closely with them and intervenes if any areas start to veer off course. It was not clarified how closely RK believes he needs to supervise the project. From a leadership development standpoint, the concern is whether this amounts to micromanagement, which might depend somewhat on the project manager's understanding of when it's necessary to involve the partner.

According to RK's observations, the project managers who worked under him were highly effective but not necessarily seen as leaders. There was little discussion about soft skills, such as negotiation, conflict resolution, leadership, communication, problem-solving, empathy, emotional intelligence, or critical thinking, although his responses suggested an underlying expectation of these qualities. However, these skills were never explicitly addressed.

It was interesting that while project managers RK mentioned operated at a high level, RK did not place much importance on holding any formal project management qualifications, explicitly stating that, "I definitely would not be hiring someone purely because they've done a Prince2 course." Although the qualification itself had limited practical value, RK believed there were more important qualities for his project managers than just formal credentials. This also reflects his limited responses regarding the strengths and weaknesses of project and change managers. His answer boiled down to either "The ability to engage" or "A level of arrogance if the arrogance materialises in them thinking they know it all and they can just go about doing things without talking to other people and communicating effectively." I have no doubt that RK is a strong performer as a partner, but his feedback shows a lack of clarity about what leadership truly involves and how effective or poor leadership can impact the projects he

oversees. For a senior member of the firm, it also indicates a limited ability to reflect on practice.

RK explained that there was extensive training, particularly in leadership development for senior staff; however, he was unable to identify any developmental interventions to improve the leadership skills of project and change managers.

Leximancer Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the transcripts of all interviews were sent to Leximancer for processing with AI software to identify trends, patterns, and irregularities. Leximancer produced several reports in two formats: one summarising the interview results visually (graphically), and another providing a written summary of the interviews. The results from both are complementary; they are simply presented in different formats.

The concept maps can be challenging to understand at first. A description to assist comprehension of the maps is provided here.

Concepts (Nodes): The small dots on the map are your concepts. Each one represents a key idea that Leximancer has automatically identified in the text. Their position is based on co-occurrence. So, if two concepts appear close together, it means they frequently showed up in the same context within your data.

Themes (Bubbles): These are the larger coloured bubbles that group together related concepts. Leximancer clusters these concepts into broader themes to help you see the major patterns in your dataset. The heat-coded colours indicate relevance: warmer colours represent the most significant and frequently occurring themes, while cooler colours represent less dominant themes.

Themes are hierarchical, meaning they contain a range of related concepts. So even within a single bubble, there might be sub-patterns worth exploring, or a connection between themes would also be of interest.

The Leximancer heat maps, as derived from the interview transcripts are:

Role of leadership

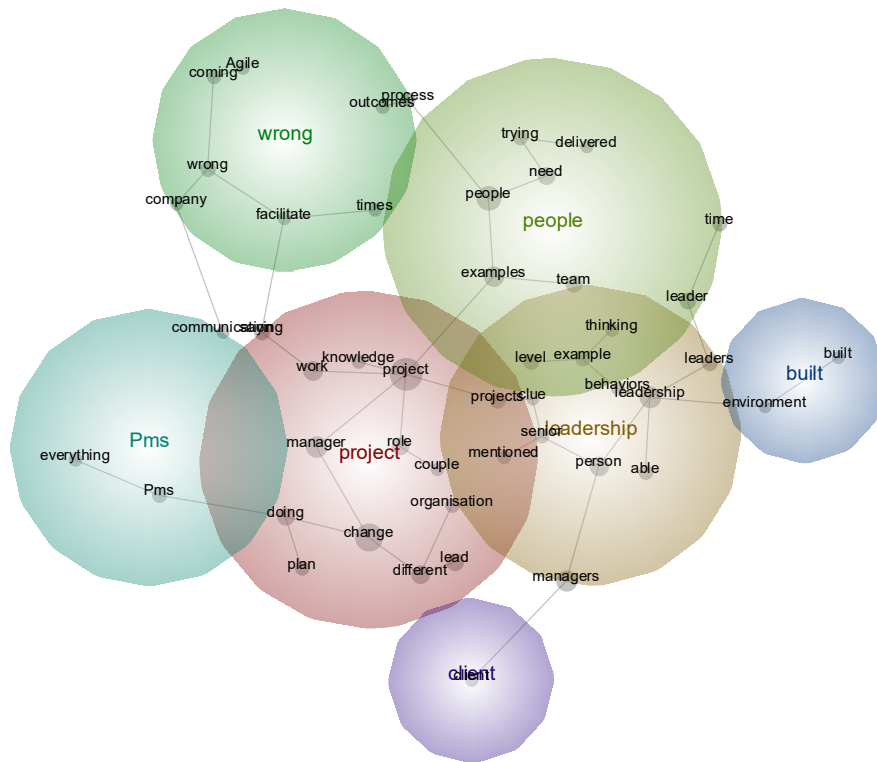


Figure 12: Leximancer Heat Map – Role of Leadership

Change readiness

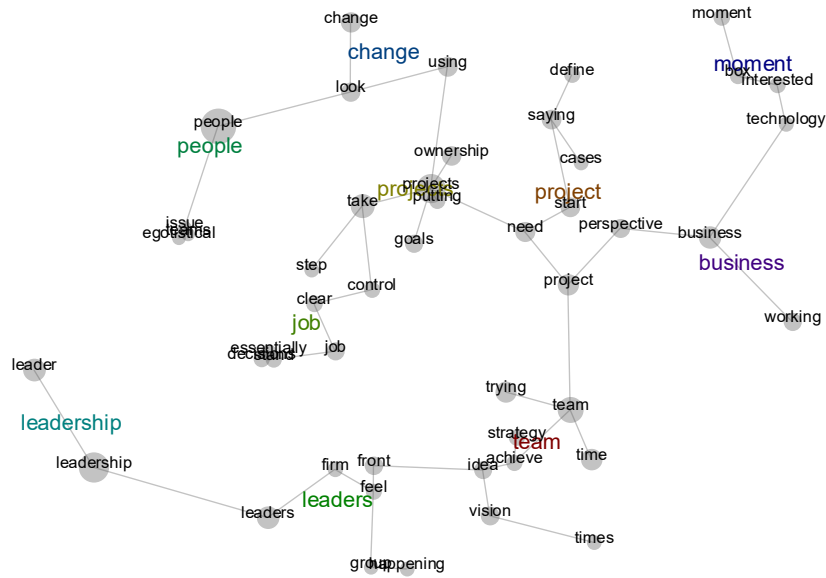


Figure 13: Leximancer Heat Map – Change Readiness

Definition of Leadership

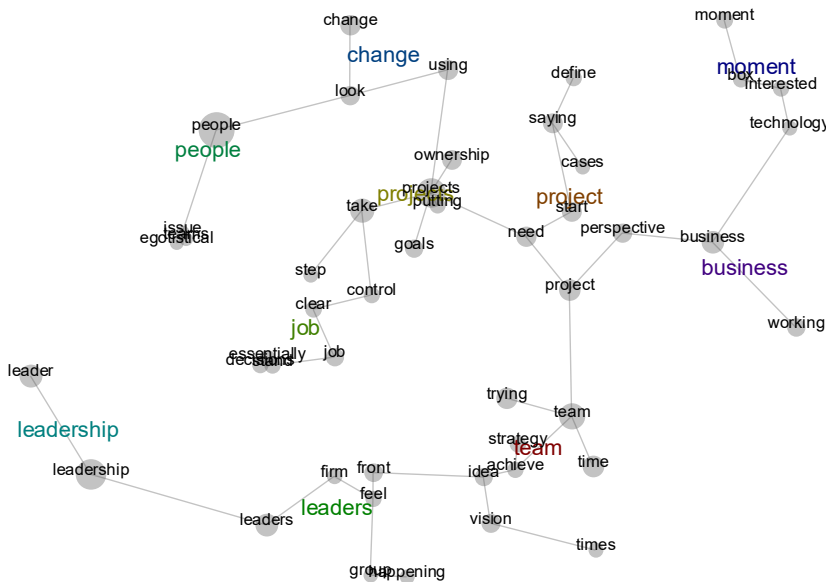


Figure 14: Leximancer Heat Map – Definition of Leadership

Leadership Knowledge

Strengths and Weaknesses of Project and Change Managers

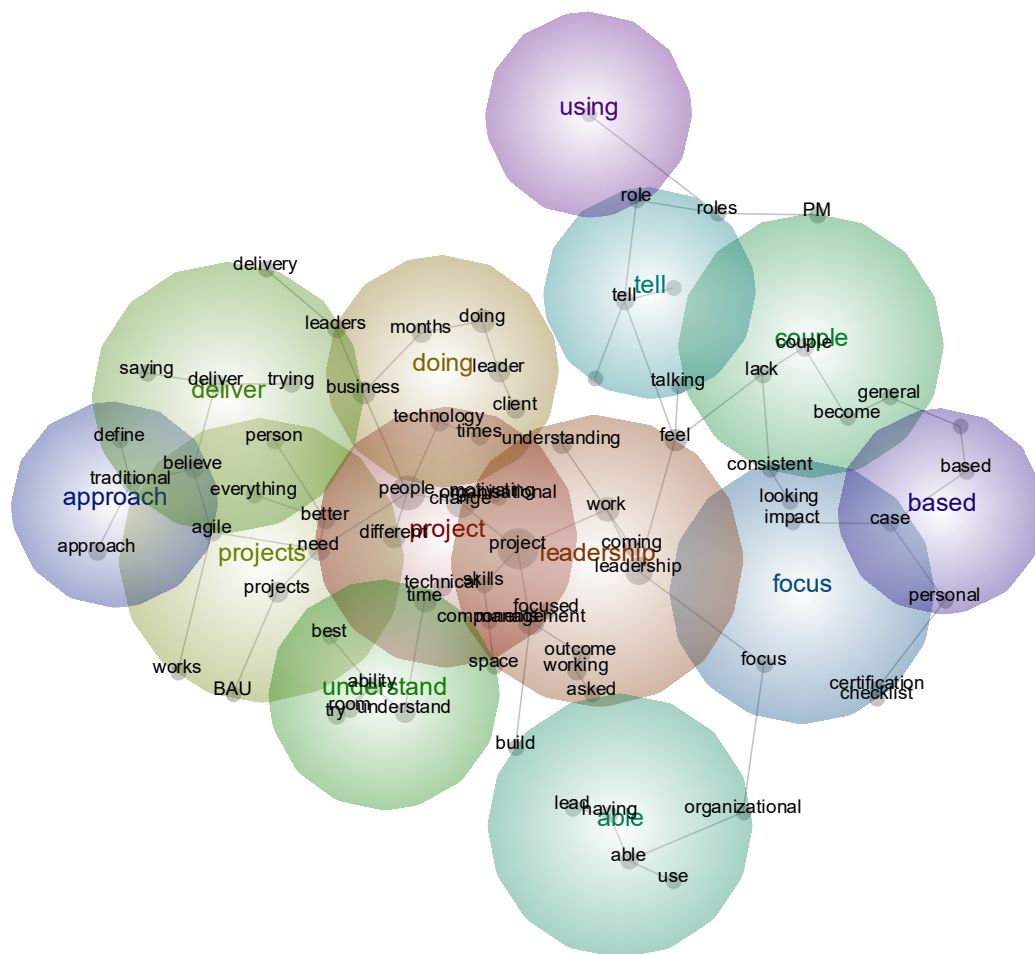


Figure 18: Leximancer Heat Map - Strengths and Weaknesses of Project and Change Managers

Once the software generates these maps based on the key ideas that Leximancer has automatically identified through co-occurrences, the larger coloured bubbles, called themes, group related concepts together. These broader themes help reveal the major patterns in your dataset. Themes are hierarchical, meaning they include a range of related concepts, so even within a single bubble, there may be sub-patterns worth exploring, or connections between themes could also be interesting.

This graphical display is mirrored in the narrative report that Leximancer provides, and is included here:

Author's Note: The following report contains only the Overall insights from the Leximancer report. The complete report can be found in the Supporting Portfolio to this Critique.

Leximancer Summary Report

Q1. Summary of Findings:

“What is your interpretation and definition of leadership, generally?”

The interview responses reveal a rich and varied conceptualisation of leadership, with five prominent themes emerging: They are:

1. Leadership is People Centred
2. Influence over Authority
3. Vision and Adaptability
4. Leadership as Example and Integrity
5. Leadership in the Context of Projects and Change

Overall Insight:

Participants reject one-size-fits-all definitions in favour of a nuanced, humanistic view of leadership. The focus is on support, influence, vision, adaptability, and personal integrity. Leadership is defined not by titles but by actions and relationships - especially how one fosters an environment where others can succeed.

This analysis could help shape leadership development programs that centre not just on strategic execution but also on *emotional intelligence, coaching, and adaptive thinking*.

Q2. Summary of Findings:

“Without reference just to your current role, what is your take on the quality of leadership, specifically of project managers?”

This question prompted candid reflections that reveal a complex and often critical view of project management leadership. Overall, the sentiment is mixed to negative, with clear distinctions drawn between *technical competence* and *leadership capability*. Several common themes emerge:

1. Leadership and Technical Skills Are Often Misaligned
2. Leadership Capability is Rarely Prioritised or Developed
3. Transactional Over Transformational Leadership
4. Inconsistent Role Understanding and Execution
5. Successful Project Managers Balance People and Process
6. Agile and Iterative Approaches Invite Better Leadership – But Not Always

Overall Insight:

While participants recognised examples of outstanding project managers, most highlighted systemic issues with leadership quality in the role. The most effective project managers were described not as checklist-focused executors, but as integrators — those who can manage risk and deliverables while building trust, guiding change, and linking technical outcomes to real-world needs.

This underscores a key takeaway: Leadership in project management needs to be explicitly defined, developed, and valued — not just assumed.

Q3. Summary of Findings:

“I’m interested in your thoughts on the role and application of leadership by project managers, and of change managers.”

This question prompted some of the most nuanced reflections across the transcripts. Participants highlighted the inconsistent understanding and implementation of leadership by both project managers (PMs) and change managers (CMs). The responses show not only differing practices but also significant cultural and structural gaps in how leadership is practiced and expected. The main themes from this question were:

1. Leadership is Frequently Misunderstood or Absent
2. Role Clarity is Lacking, Especially in Change Management
3. Leadership is Context-Dependent, But Often Underdeveloped
4. Project Managers as Drivers vs Facilitators
5. Trust, Communication, and Relationship-Building Matter
6. Agile Methods Can Enhance Leadership — If Understood

Overall Insight:

Leadership among project and change managers varies greatly and is often underdeveloped. The most effective leaders do not depend on process or title — they adapt, empower, and connect. However, structural issues, unclear roles, and an overfocus on delivery metrics often hinder meaningful leadership. Importantly, when leadership fails, it becomes obvious and discouraging. When it succeeds, it lifts the team and transforms results — even in difficult projects.

This strongly suggests the need for:

- Clearer leadership expectations in both roles
- Training focused on emotional intelligence and influence
- Better alignment between PMs and CMs, and between leadership rhetoric and delivery behaviour

Q4. Summary of Findings:

“Do project managers and change managers in your experience have adequate or reasonable leadership knowledge and experience to effectively deliver in that part of the role?”

This question prompted clear and often critical responses. The overwhelming consensus was: “Not consistently.” While a few exceptional individuals were acknowledged, most respondents noted that leadership capability — particularly *applied leadership* — is lacking or underdeveloped in both PM and CM roles. Emerging themes from this question were:

1. Leadership is Assumed, Not Developed
2. Project Managers Often Lean on Control, Not Leadership
3. Change Managers Are Mixed — Some Excel, Many Don't Lead
4. Emotional Intelligence is the Differentiator
5. Culture of Silence and Tolerance of Poor Leadership
6. Expectations Are Often Unclear or Unspoken

Overall Insight:

Leadership capability is patchy at best among project and change managers. While some professionals naturally step into leadership, many are operating without guidance, training, or

accountability in this domain. The problem is structural as much as personal — leadership is often *implied* rather than *enabled*.

To improve outcomes, organisations need to:

- Explicitly define and assess leadership as part of the role
- Offer structured development in emotional intelligence and adaptive leadership
- Hold leaders accountable for *how* they lead — not just *what* they deliver

Q5. Summary of Findings

“How do you see the relationship in terms of project delivery and change management between the project managers and the change managers assigned to work with them?”

The interview data reveal a complex and often strained relationship between project managers (PMs) and change managers (CMs), shaped by power dynamics, misunderstandings of role boundaries, and a general undervaluing of change management. Themes from this question include:

1. Lack of Mutual Understanding & Respect
2. Parallel but Disconnected Functions
3. Organisational Culture & Education Gaps
4. Inequity in Accountability & Visibility
5. Emotional Labour and Soft Skills
6. Training and Resource Challenges
7. Structural Barriers and Role Confusion

Notable Quotes (Paraphrased for Clarity)

- “The first thing to get cut is usually change.”
- “I’m not credited with success, but also not blamed for failure — I just don’t get a seat at the table.”
- “PMs want to control change but don’t understand it.”
- “We’re partners, or we fail.”

Implications

This analysis indicates that although there is a theoretical acknowledgment of the importance of collaboration between project and change managers, this relationship is often hindered by cultural, structural, and interpersonal obstacles. Improving education on role clarity, formalising the role of change within governance, and increasing executive sponsorship could greatly enhance the delivery of results.

Q6. Summary of Findings

“What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the project managers and the change managers that work with them?”

This question generated an unusually rich and multi-layered set of reflections. The responses reveal a candid view of both roles as filled with potential but often undermined by mindset, misalignment, and missed opportunities. Participants highlighted strengths when individuals show humility, adaptability, and collaboration — and weaknesses when people rely too heavily on frameworks, hierarchy, or personality. Themes from this question were:

Strengths of Project Managers (PMs)

1. Execution and Structure
2. Situational Awareness and Soft Skills (When Present)
3. Ownership and Drive

Weaknesses of Project Managers

1. Overemphasis on Tools and Delivery
2. Leadership Blind Spots
3. Role Confusion and Overreach

Strengths of Change Managers (CMs)

1. Human-Centred Focus
2. Systems Thinking and Integration
3. Listening and Influence

Weaknesses of Change Managers

1. Over-reliance on artifacts
2. Role arrogance or Insecurity
3. Underdeveloped change literacy

Shared Observations Across Roles

1. Mindset Is the Great Divider
2. Trust and Respect Are Non-Negotiables
3. People Over Process, Always

Overall Insight

This analysis highlights a fundamental truth: methodologies don't produce results — people do. The strongest aspect of Project Managers and Change Managers isn't their tools but how they lead, collaborate, and connect. Their biggest weakness? Working in silos, just checking boxes, or losing sight of the humans behind the project.

Q7. Summary of Findings:

“Given the importance of project management and the continuing imperative of change in the workplace, what developments/changes/improvements would you like to see in developing leaders in the project and change management?”

Leximancer identified five dominant themes across this dataset: leaders, project, change, training, and organisations. These reveal a clear appetite for **structural reform, mindset shifts, and more human-centred leadership development**. The participants do not just want more training — they want more meaningful development that reflects the real demands of modern workplaces. Dominant themes from Q7 were:

1. Leaders: It's Time to Rethink What Leadership Means
2. Project: Develop Leaders Beyond the Gantt Chart
3. Change: Shift Change Management from Output to Outcome
4. Training: Move from Courses to Capability
5. Organisations: Build the Environment, Not Just the Individual

Overall Insight:

Participants are not asking for more leadership content — they are asking for **better leadership conditions**. This includes deeper development, earlier exposure, stronger cross-role alignment, and cultural permission to lead in adaptive, human-centred ways. It's a shift from teaching *what leadership is* to helping people *become the kind of leaders their work actually requires*.

In other words, the future of project and change leadership isn't more frameworks — it's more **honest, relational, and context-aware humans** driving the work forward.

Targeted Interviews Conclusion

As one of the three parts of the research plan (Case Studies, Targeted Interviews, and Job Advertisement Analysis), the interviews offered valuable insights into many aspects of leadership in project and change management. The presentation of results from the traditional review process and the Leximancer analysis confirmed and reinforced the findings from the “manual” review.

Of the 12 interviewees, five clearly defined leadership beyond superficial phrases or vague “management speak” descriptions of how they lead or their leadership roles. The inability of

most people to accurately define leadership highlighted a lack of reflective practice among many and, in some cases, an outright absence of leadership experience. Those who claim to be leaders but do not actively seek knowledge about leadership lack a fundamental foundation for effective practice. This does not necessarily mean that those who do not think critically or reflect cannot be effective leaders, but they are likely less capable of adapting when needed and have limited potential for growth as leaders. Price-Dowd (2010) states, "The danger here is trying to be the most popular leader and everyone's favourite, rather than developing an authentic repertoire of skills." Blanchard (1997) echoes this, stating that 54% of leaders apply only one preferred leadership style regardless of the situation. The near-complete lack of agreement on what leadership truly is among a group of 12 "leaders" indicates that training, development, and recruitment for leadership are inconsistent, and, as a result, leadership positions will remain flawed, harming everyone involved.

The leadership qualities of project managers were considered poor, sometimes even non-existent. While three interviewees thought their project managers did a good job, nearly all agreed that the role was mainly held by process-focused individuals who prioritized managing scope, budget, resources, plans, and deliverables over addressing the team's needs. It was noted that project managers are "transactional rather than transformational." Although it is understood that a project manager's main duty is to deliver their project, the persistent lack of leadership skills remains a concern.

The leadership of change managers was rated higher than that of project managers, although comments like "Some change managers just tick boxes; stakeholder list, comms plan, change logs, impact assessment, for example," and "The good ones coach teams through change - that's leadership," are contradictory. They show the range of leadership skills that the group observed in change managers.

Feedback on the question about the relationship between project managers and change managers revealed that this partnership rarely functions well, and the strengths of both are often diminished by project managers' attitudes. A common theme was the lack of mutual understanding and respect between the two groups, primarily seen as originating from the project managers. Change managers received much higher ratings from the group in areas such as emotional intelligence, soft skills, and understanding, and were generally regarded as having greater leadership ability.

The final question during the interviews was whether the group sees a need for leadership development and training for project managers and change managers. The group overwhelmingly supported some form of leadership intervention, believing it would positively impact the systemic mediocre outcomes that projects deliver. There was no discussion about what specific form any training or development programs might take. The feedback indicated that the business had invested heavily in project training and process tools but not in the people who manage them.

It is important to understand both the "manual" review of the interviews and the Leximancer AI review. First, the responses to the 7 questions posed to the 12 interviewees were presented, reviewed, and summarised on pages 168-183 of the submitted critique. The summary identified both consistencies and inconsistencies in the responses and presented conclusions for each outcome, by question. Having concluded this analysis, the results of the interviews, as interrogated by Leximancer, were presented.

The Leximancer report consisted of two parts: a graphical presentation of the interview data, using Heat Maps to represent the concepts and themes the software had extracted, followed by a Summary Report that provided a Summary of Findings and Overall Insights for each of the seven questions. This Summary Report greatly enhanced the interpretation of the manual

analysis, and the Overall Findings in the Leximancer report confirmed and validated the manual interpretation of the interviews.

The combined feedback from interview reviews and the Leximancer AI analysis confirms my belief that deficiencies in leadership ability on projects, along with the need for structured training and development for both project managers and change managers, are essential across all industry sectors today. This information will be valuable for my future state PCLP, especially as a foundation for creating corporate interventions to address leadership stress and systemic, institutional project failures.

CHAPTER SEVEN – JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

“I know half the money I spend on advertising is wasted, but I can never find out which half.”

- John Wanamaker

Author's note: Fifty job advertisements were reviewed to assess the explicit level of leadership requirement for each role. As the analysis revealed a clear trend, forty of these were examined in detail and included in the summary. Two sample advertisements are provided in this chapter of the critique; all fifty advertisements are included in the Supporting Portfolio for review if needed.

To add more context to the case studies and address some of the feedback received, it was decided that reviewing job advertisements for project and change managers would help determine whether companies are actively and intentionally considering leadership capabilities when recruiting for these roles. While there may be several reasons for deficiencies in leadership skills within project and change management roles, a failure to identify and specify the right skills during recruitment could be a significant factor.

Methodology

Fifty online job listings for project managers and change-related roles were randomly chosen from two recruitment websites, Seek and Indeed. Each listing was examined for details on leadership ability and experience, and three questions were asked for each listing. They were:

1. Is leadership in any context actually mentioned in the advertisement?

2. If leadership is mentioned, is it a passing reference only, or is the leadership specification included with information detailing what the recruiter is looking for in some degree of detail?
3. If there is a detailed explanation of the leadership specification, does the advertisement clearly describe the required level of leadership knowledge, skills, and experience?

Examples of Job Advertisements

Example 1.

Project Manager - System Implementation

Parramatta, Sydney NSW

Government - State (Government & Defence)

Contract/Temp

@) \$950 – 1000 per

day + Super

Posted 7d ago

ABC Recruitment are excited to be partnering with a NSW Government Department to bring onboard an exception technical Project Manager for a system-based project.

Do you have extensive project experience with the ability to analyse risk, work with multiple workstreams and thrive when working as part of a tightly-knit team?

What's in it for me?

- **Duration:** Until 30th June 2025, with high likelihood of extension. Seeking candidates who have longer term availability!
- **Start Date:** Commencing mid-February (Preferred start date - 17th February).
- **Leadership:** Work closely with the Program Lead, with the access to give your input and implement strategy.
- **Day Rate:** Competitive rate of \$950 - \$1000 per day+ Super.
- **Location:** Parramatta office, closely located to public transport.
- **Team:** Working in a team of 5 experienced project-focused professionals, with open communication and a focus on collaboration.
- **Flexibility:** Hybrid flexibility, 2-3 days in office per week.
- **Working Hours:** Monday - Friday, full-time hours.

The Role:

- Responsible for implementing your project management skills to ensure vendors and internal technical teams are coordinated to work to project deadlines.
- Acting as a key point of contact for all involved stakeholders to connect different teams and government agencies.
- Preparing project plans and schedules as well as delivering required reporting.
- Continuous monitoring of risk and implementing new strategies to have contingency plans in place.
- Provide expert advice to stakeholders to manage project issues and make recommendations around budget, deadlines, and objectives.
- Support the Program Lead to ensure all relevant materials are coordinated to assist with efficient decision making.
- Manage complex and sensitive negotiations with a variety of diverse stakeholders.

About you!

- Experience working on 2-3 system implementation-focused projects, NSW Government experience is also advantageous, but not essential.
- Ability to assess risk and put contingency plans in place to ensure smooth project running.
- Advanced stakeholder management skills, both verbal and written, to manage multiple workstreams.
- Problem-solving skills.
- Must be able to commit to the full duration of the assignment.

In reviewing this job advertisement for a Project Manager – System Implementation, it is clear that there is no mention of a requirement for leadership by the applicant.

Example 2

PMO Manager (Organisational Transformation)

North Ryde, Sydney NSW

Management & Change Consulting (Consulting & Strategy)

Full time

2d ago

Oversee the Project Management Office (PMO) function responsible for the delivery of a multi-stream organisational business transformation program

Attractive package negotiable, 2-year fixed term contract

We are seeking an experienced PMO Manager (Organisational Transformation) to provide governance, assurance and delivery for initiatives related to workforce and business transformation and supporting organisational change to achieve operational efficiency and service excellence.

The Role

As the PMO Manager (Organisational Transformation), you will oversee the delivery of complex initiatives focused on driving efficient and effective service delivery across the University. Working closely with Program Managers and senior leaders, you will ensure the program's success by establishing robust standards, assurance, and associated controls. Your leadership will directly support the university's strategic goals by ensuring initiatives are delivered on time, within budget, and benefit. Specifically, this position will be responsible for:

- Provide PMO capability to the overall organisational planning and business transformation program streams, work packages and associated teams.
- Manage budgets and resources across the program.

- Maintain program-wide schedules, drive interdependency management and risk mitigation.
- Facilitate strategy to execution processes, business case preparation, and benefits realisation.
- Deliver comprehensive reporting and data analysis to inform decision-making.
- Foster collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

About you

You will be an experienced program and change leader, with the ability to apply robust and agile project management methodology to multiple simultaneous initiatives across the program. Your pragmatism, efficiency, forward planning, risk management and reporting skills will build trust, transparency and confidence across the program team. In addition, you will have:

- Relevant qualifications in organisational transformation/or change management, or equivalent experience in a PMO leadership role within a large, complex organisation.
- Proven ability to manage projects and portfolios using advanced methodologies, tools, and techniques in organisational transformation
- Strong data analysis and reporting capabilities to support decision-making.
- Adept at identifying and resolving risks, with a solutions-oriented approach.
- Strong stakeholder engagement and management skills, and the ability to galvanise support and commitment to ensure effective and efficient project delivery.
- Demonstrated ability to deliver projects within budget, aligned with strategic outcomes.
- Exceptional presentation and verbal skills, with the ability to engage stakeholders across all levels.

Desired Skills:

- Knowledge of the higher education sector.
- Familiarity with design thinking and change management practices.

Why Join Us?

We are bold, distinctive, and transformative. This is your opportunity to contribute to a transformational program of works that will support meaningful innovation in operational execution and excellence across the

University. We offer a collaborative environment, professional growth opportunities, and the chance to make a real difference in the delivery of the University's strategic objectives.

This position requires qualification and criminal history checks.

Applications Close: 16th February 2025

In reviewing this advertisement, it is clear that there is a defined requirement for leadership knowledge and experience.

The number of job advertisements, by functional group, was for the following roles:

- Change Manager/Lead/Officer - 17
- Project Manager - 23
- Technical Project Manager - 1

Results

The results of the job advertisement review were:

Is Leadership explicitly mentioned in the advertisement?		If leadership is mentioned, is it a passing reference with no supporting detail, or is it described in more detail?		If the reference is detailed, does it clearly express the leadership knowledge, skills, and experience the organisation needs	
Yes	No	In Passing	In Detail	Yes	No
20	20	11	9	9	

Table 3: Summary of Job Advertisements

In those advertisements where leadership was only briefly mentioned (55%), it is likely that job applicants will need to highlight their leadership credentials during the hiring process. However, the lack of a clear understanding of what the recruiter is looking for in this area

means the outcome probably depends on luck, and choosing effective leaders is more likely to be a matter of chance than a result of a careful search for specific skills.

Only 9 (22.5%) of the reviewed advertisements provided a detailed, specific list of leadership criteria the recruiter was seeking. The recruiting website, Indeed.com, in its 2023 Employer Guide article, “The Top 50 Project Management Skills to look for When Hiring”, rated the following top five skills employers were looking for in hiring Project Managers:

Project Management was included in 65.04% of project management job postings

Communication skills were included in 53.38% of project management job postings

Microsoft Office was included in 29.22% of project management job postings

Microsoft Excel was included in 35.59% of project management job postings

Leadership is included in 24.32% of project management job postings.

In describing leadership in the project management context, the Indeed.com article stated, “Leadership is crucial for project managers because it enables them to guide teams, make strategic decisions, and ensure project goals are met. Strong leadership fosters clear communication, motivation, and problem-solving, helping teams stay focused and work collaboratively, even under pressure or when challenges arise.” (Indeed.com 2023)

The results of this recent and independent study support the data included in the review of job advertisements (22.5% in the critique review, 24.32% Indeed.com)

The evaluation of project performance related to the leadership abilities of the project and change managers chosen for their roles is outside the scope of this critique. However, qualitative evidence, along with my own observations and participation in projects over nearly 35 years, suggests that projects where leadership roles are carefully selected based on

specific leadership capability criteria are more likely to perform at a higher standard than those with less diligent recruiting.

Ahmed, R., and Anantatmula, V. (2017), in their research paper, "Empirical Study of Project Managers' Leadership Competence and Project Performance," aimed to link project performance with project management skills. This article supports my argument that poor leadership ability in projects is a probable cause of unsuccessful project outcomes. The article states that, "Past studies focused on analysing and recognizing project manager leadership competencies, (Berg, Karlsen, and Sarkis, 2016) and identified lack of leadership competence as the reason for many project failures."

Ahmed, R., and Anantatmula, V. (2017) identified five Project Manager Leadership Competencies, soft skills that directly contribute to project performance. The correlation between Project Manager leadership competencies and project performance is shown in the following Figure:

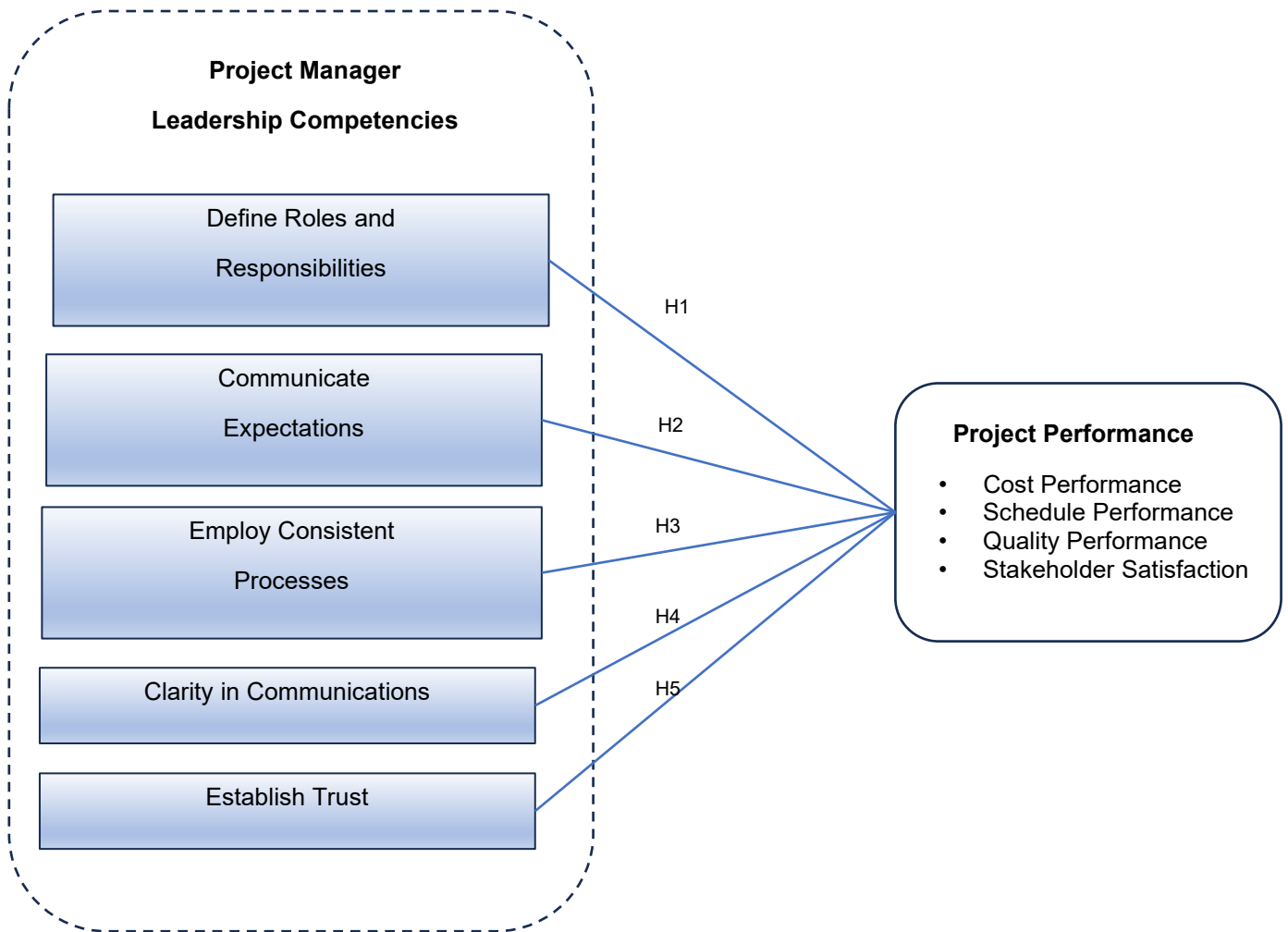


Figure 19: Leadership Competence and Project Performance Model (Ahmed, R., and Anantatmula, V. 2017)

The Leadership Competencies are described as:

- Define Roles and Responsibilities. Ensuring that the right person, in the right place, at the right time, can improve project performance
- Communicate Expectations. Communicating expectations emphasises the responsibilities of team members and stakeholders in terms of desired work ethics, deliverables, and work performance
- Employ Consistent Processes. Rad and Anantatmula, (2010) identify three factors — competent people, project teams, and project-friendly organisations — that promote

consistent practices and processes essential for achieving sophistication in managing complex projects

- Clarity in Communication. Clarity of communication is focused on getting the message across to the receiver such that it is received as intended
- Establish Trust. Trust is an important influencing factor in project performance, enabling effective collaboration and efficient problem-solving throughout a project.

The purpose of describing these competencies as inputs to project performance is to show that organisations that fail to identify these factors when recruiting project managers and change managers risk embedding potential project failure from the start.

Conclusion

The results clearly indicate that when hiring for project and change management roles, job ads explicitly seek leadership skills only half the time. If this trend was to persist across hundreds or potentially thousands of listings, there is a significant risk that projects will fail, either entirely or partially, due to weak or ineffective leadership, which can lead to cost overruns, resource churn, and low productivity.

CHAPTER EIGHT – PERSONAL CONTINGENT LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

“If I lived my life by what others were thinkin’, the heart inside me would have died.”

– Bob Dylan

Initial PCLP – Developed 2019

The initial stages of the Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL) program require candidates to develop a Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm. Fayad, R. (2022) defines the PCLP as “the evolving personal leadership approach that guides the processes that convert selected inputs into leadership. Behaviour utilising relevant capabilities to pursue desired outcomes given your core values, leadership persona, and evolving context.”

The initial, or current state PCLP I developed was an assessment of my leadership style and ability without the benefits of the DBL journey that followed. It was an “uninformed model” based largely on my subjective assessment of how I perceived my performance as a leader. The literature review, research methodology, research including case studies, targeted interviews, and job advertisement analysis that were all conducted as part of the DBL program have provided me with a much more informed and objective understanding of not only how I am as a leader but also, given where I am now in my career, a new knowledge base that has enabled me to shape an aspirational PCLP. This will describe how I will function as a leader now and into the future, and serve as a methodology that can continue to evolve and develop as new challenges, technologies, environments, and generational differences suggest that what works today may not work tomorrow. Leadership, like everything else in today’s world, needs to continually respond to changing expectations. The aspirational PCLP must recognise the dynamic and reciprocal interplay between:

- Leadership cognition (A set of learned leadership experiences)
- Behaviour (responses to stimuli in pursuit of outcomes, and
- Context (immediate and macro relevant external ecosystems)

(Fayed, R, 2022)

Initial PCLP

The initial (“As is”) PCLP that I developed as part of the DBL program in 2019 was described by the following diagram:

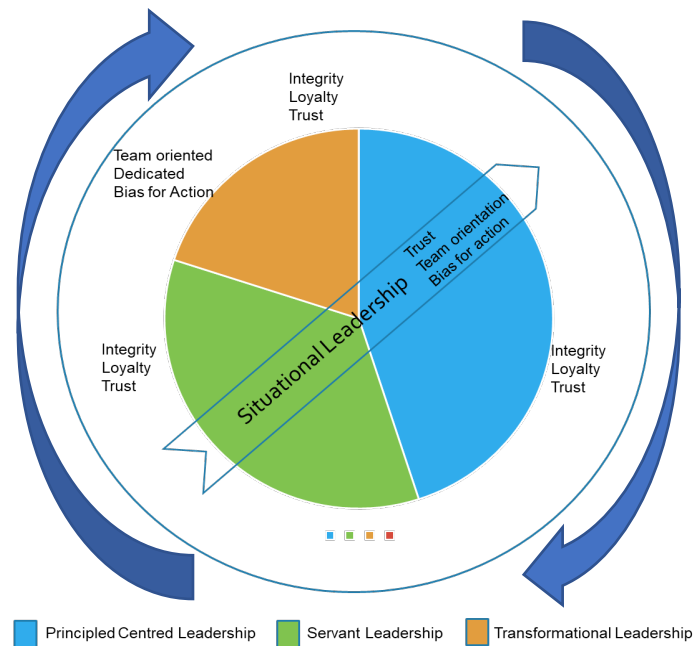


Figure 20: Initial PCLP 2019

There have been many, but probably four key experiences that led to my current situation with PCLP in 2019. They are:

1. Influenced by my father’s experience as a naval commander and observing the direct results of his leadership style, which was born in the crucible of war and shaped

by the social norms of the 1950s–1970s. His leadership, although rooted in the military's hierarchical and structured nature, was inclusive and showed consideration for his followers—a trait perhaps less common than common at the time

2. The leadership of my mother. Her strength, courage, and determination to bring up four children, for many years on her own, and to ensure that we had the best possible start in life, even at her own expense, are a debt my siblings and I owe that can never be repaid.

3. My experience as a military officer for over 15 years has exposed me to leadership challenges rarely encountered in civilian life. At age 20, the responsibility of making life-and-death decisions required highly trained leadership. At the same time, relating to and sharing the hardships my soldiers faced fostered an early, enduring concern for balancing their welfare with the need to achieve my objectives.

I have led numerous departments and business units over a 27-year career, and in doing so, I have often had to adapt my leadership style to fit the demands of specific situations. The way I have attained leadership roles is also instructive: I have been “parachuted” into a few roles I did not want, or that were not suitable, and, in most cases, I have earned leadership positions through merit-based appointments.

4. Throughout my consulting career, I have worked with many leaders and coached them to achieve better results for themselves, their followers, and their organisations. Observing and learning from leaders as they succeed or stumble has been a valuable educational experience for me and has fuelled my ongoing fascination with leadership.

My PCLP in 2019 is a mix of over 40 years of real-world experience, recognising the need to develop leadership styles, adapted from theory, that enable me to lead effectively.

The leadership styles that underpinned my 2019 PCLP included (but may not be limited to):

1. Principled-Centred Leadership. In “A Break with the Past” (Covey, 1991), Stephen Covey emphasises the importance of a strong set of guiding principles for improving leadership effectiveness. Larson and LaFasto (1989) found that the most notable trait of effective leaders was their ability to establish and adhere to guiding principles. “These principles represented day-to-day performance standards. They represented what all team members, including the team leader, should expect from one another on a day-to-day basis.” pp 123

2. Transformational Leadership. The concept of Transformational Leadership has evolved significantly over the past forty years. It marks a vital progression from the transactional leadership style that characterised earlier leadership practices, which still persists in many areas today. Bennis and Nanus (1985) described transformational leadership as, “the new leader...is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change. We refer to this as “transformative leadership”. In today’s environment, effective leaders must embrace this as a fundamental principle, especially when confronting the modern challenge of managing and leading change. Transformational leaders...are those who motivate and inspire followers to achieve remarkable results and, in the process, develop their own leadership abilities. They assist followers in growing and evolving into leaders by addressing individual needs, empowering them, and aligning the goals of the followers, the leader, the team, and the larger organisation.

Transformational leadership is a style in which leaders inspire and motivate their teams by creating a clear vision, encouraging innovation, and fostering personal growth. They build trust and enthusiasm, helping people exceed their own expectations and achieve big, positive changes together. Transformational leadership inspires positive changes in those led and is invested in the success of every single member involved in the process. It is a leadership model that depends on inspiring a team to achieve overall success. By boosting a team's morale and confidence, the team can then align itself with a shared vision or common purpose. However, this purpose must be established early on to be effective. When applied correctly, transformational leadership can take a struggling or stagnant team and turn it into a productive, dynamic group.

3. Situational Leadership. Despite popular (or ideal?) leadership theories, real-world experience shows that effective leaders must adapt their style to handle new and possibly unexpected situations. An inclusive and transformational leader who prefers to consult broadly might need to act decisively when an immediate decision is required. In such cases, it is the leader's responsibility to change their style, not the followers'. Situational leadership is an adaptable approach that should incorporate other styles within the PCLP whenever possible, without compromising the most effective and efficient resolution of the immediate challenge.

4. Servant Leadership. The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where I trained to be an army officer, has the motto "Serve To Lead." It reflects a core value I believe in, and that is central to my leadership style. The main idea of this model is that the leader shifts the focus of leadership from the organisation to the follower. In many ways, servant leadership is both a philosophy and a practice in action." (Gregory Stone et al, 2004). Servant Leadership. Greenleaf, R. (1970) stated that, "The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different

from one who is a leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual drive for power or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them, there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? "

This concept of Servant Leadership is one leg of the four core leadership theories that form my PCLP. My leadership philosophy is that I am privileged to lead, fortunate to have others who want to follow me, and, in return, I must help (serve) them in whatever way is possible and practicable. Not only must I create an environment where they can effectively contribute to team goals, but they must also have the opportunity to grow as people and, ultimately, as leaders.

My Personal Contingent Leadership Paradigm from 2019 reflects a leadership journey marked by many mistakes and significant successes. The main goal is to understand the mistakes, learn from them, and grow, while also recognising what went well and why.

While reviewing this early PCLP and reflecting on the journey of self-discovery prompted by the DBL research critique, I realise that the model, as it was, had a solid foundation but lacked depth and critical thinking, and was possibly (probably?) even naive. Critical thinking is the ability to objectively analyse information, evaluate evidence, and form a rational judgment. It involves questioning assumptions, identifying biases, and applying logic to reach well-reasoned conclusions. This skill is essential for problem-solving and making informed decisions.

The insights gained from the research have broadened my understanding of this PCLP and highlighted the need to include additional factors in the model. This will reinforce the design's core qualities while acknowledging its weaknesses and gaps, which are crucial to progressing toward the desired aspirational PCLP. Hopefully, it will also help me become a better and more consistent leader.

Factors deriving from Critique Research that will be incorporated into the Aspirational PCLP

The current state, 2019, PCLP was developed with limited knowledge and awareness of what is needed for an effective personal leadership model. The research identified several factors that should be included in an updated model. These include (but are not limited to):

- Continuous and active reflection on practice is vital. Reflective practice involves the ability to review one's actions to promote ongoing learning. (Schon, D., 1983) It offers a chance to analyse what went wrong, and consider what (if anything) can be done to improve, as well as recognising successful actions worth repeating. This process exemplifies reflective practice—the act of thinking about experiences to learn from them for future growth. I am committed to making reflection a regular part of my daily work routine.
- Keeping a regular journal is a highly effective way to support my reflection practices. Inam, H. (2017) writes that a leadership journal is an invaluable tool for leaders at all levels. She states that journaling increases self-awareness, which is a key part of emotional intelligence—the ability to understand and manage yourself and others. Journaling also greatly helps in managing stress, an emotion all leaders will encounter at some point. Being able to pause at the end of each day—ideally—to gather your thoughts about what happened and then write them down

helps bring perspective to what occurred, how you, as a leader, responded, and how you might have acted differently. This process is a very cathartic and valuable activity. Whenever I take on a leadership role, I commit to journaling at the end of each workday to boost my self-awareness.

- As a leader, as well as a leadership practitioner, coach, and mentor, I have spent many years emphasising the importance and necessity of staying current with evolving issues and techniques. I believe it's essential to read, watch, and listen to developments in current leadership. Questions I often ask include: "When did you last read a book on leadership?" "When did you last listen to a leadership podcast?", and "When did you last attend a leadership course or seminar?" These questions I pose to senior clients and aspiring leaders I have worked with over the years. Too often, the answer is no; many in leadership roles feel they have "made it" and do not see the need for ongoing learning and professional development. While I have always striven to read, listen to, and watch to support my leadership growth, I admit that I have allowed this aspect of my professional development to fall behind. As a commitment to my future PCLP, I commit to reading four books on leadership, listening to 10 relevant podcasts, and attending at least one leadership-related conference or seminar every 12 months.

- In 1624, John Donne wrote, "No man is an island." In the context of leadership growth and development, this old saying is very pertinent. It is no secret that many successful people have a mentor; among them are Bill Gates, Stephen Spielberg, Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Richard Branson, Mark Zuckerberg, and Serena Williams. Why use a mentor? There are many reasons, some of which are:
 - To learn from their experience.
 - To obtain constructive criticism

- Accelerate personal growth
- Receive encouragement
- Get help with goal setting
- To see a different perspective
- To be accountable

To ensure that I continue to be accountable to someone other than myself, and to seek growth and support in my ongoing leadership journey, I will identify and seek to engage a suitable mentor whom I will plan to meet with frequently throughout the year (the frequency is to be decided; minimum quarterly, and monthly meetings will be the default plan. It is also essential that the mentor understand that if a meeting is required outside this planning cycle due to an immediate need, he/she will be available for consultation.

- The final requirement for my aspirational PCLP is to ensure that actions and decisions taken as a leader align with ethical standards. This can be a subjective and challenging metric to adopt and adhere to. According to the Macquarie Dictionary Online (2025), "ethics" is defined as a "system of moral principles, by which human actions and proposals may be judged good or bad or right or wrong." It also refers to the rules or standards that govern conduct, which can be established by professional organisations or judged by the broader community. These standards include:

- System of moral principles: A set of principles or standards that determine whether actions are good or bad, or right or wrong.
- Guiding rules for conduct: The rules or standards that govern how a person or group behaves.

- Basis for judgment: These principles and standards are used to judge and be accountable for actions.

Ethics involves questioning, discovering, and defending our values, principles, and purpose. It's about understanding who we are and staying true to that despite temptations, challenges, and uncertainty. As a key part of my future state PCLP, I commit to taking an ethical approach to my leadership and to the training, coaching, and development of the future leaders I hope to work with.

In summary, the initial "current state" PCLP, developed in 2019, has evolved from research into my aspirational PCLP. It is essential to understand that the aspirational PCLP is a "living" document, an aide-mémoire for my leadership that will provide a template for decisions and actions I take or intend to take. Where doubt exists, it will provide a source of reflection to ensure that I take into account those factors I consider central to my continuing to serve as an effective, ethical leader.

The Aspirational PCLP is graphically described in the following figure:

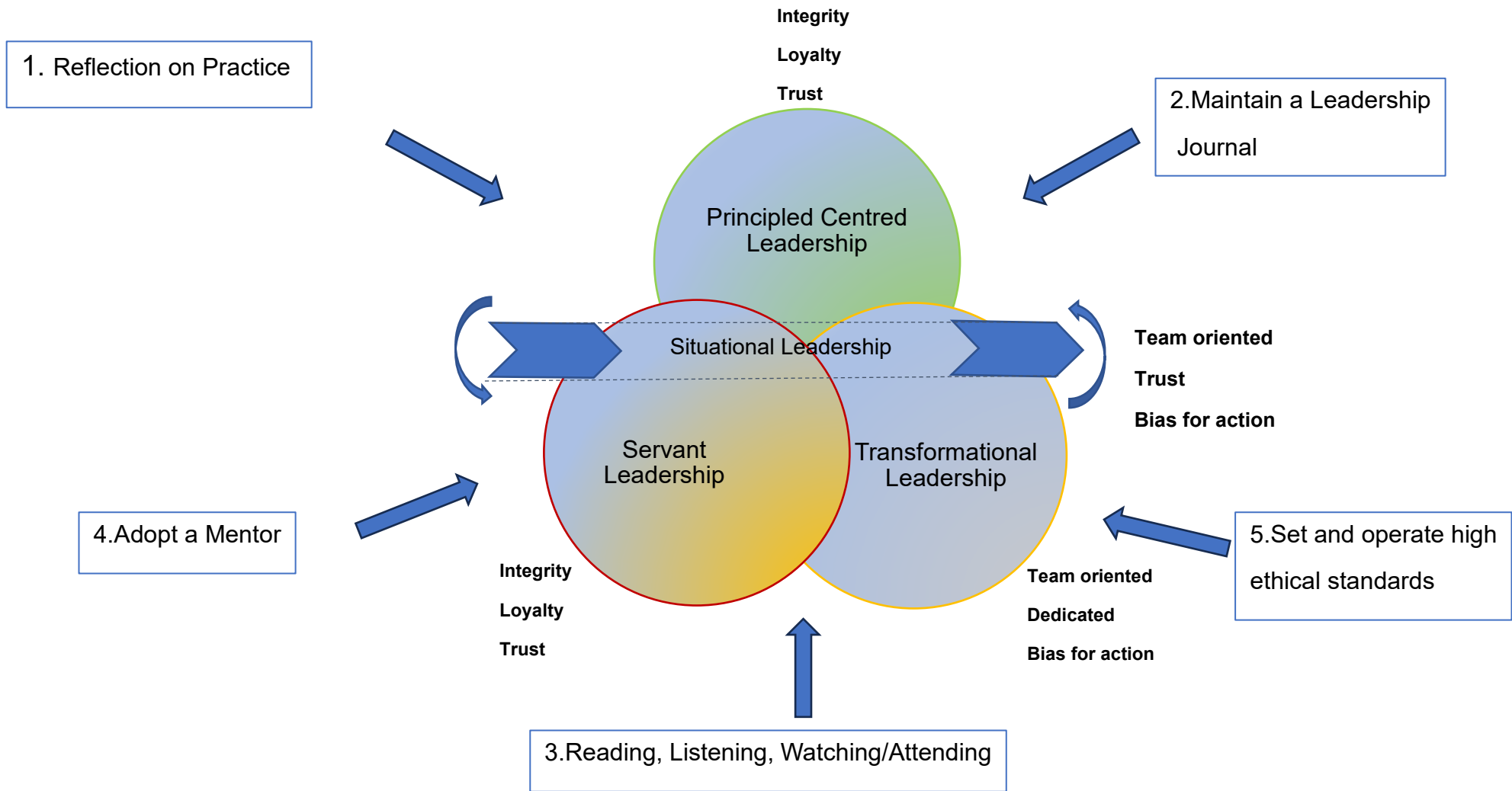


Figure 21: Aspirational PCLP 2025

CHAPTER NINE – LEADERSHIP PRACTICE GUIDELINES

"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality." —Warren Bennis

This critique covers fifty years of my adult life, starting as an 18-year-old recruit in the British Army. It includes a 16-year military career in the UK and Australia, followed by a 35-year career as a management consultant, project manager, and business executive. Currently, I work full-time as a contractor for the Department of Defence, within a division dedicated to connecting Australian small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) with the Defence supply chain. My role involves advising stakeholders across the entire Defence supply chain, including the Department of Defence, prime contractors, and SMEs. I help SMEs by advising business owners and senior executives on the steps needed to make their businesses competitive in the Defence industry. My advice covers strategic planning, business development, workforce management and planning, operations management, and Defence sector intelligence.

This role is essentially leadership disguised as an advisory position. Mostly, business owners and executives turn to me for guidance on decision-making, identifying the actions needed to advance their company's interests, facilitating planning, and executing operational strategies. Several times, I've been approached about joining some of these companies in either an executive or advisory capacity. I haven't accepted any of these offers because, as a government entity, my group is bound by strict probity rules. Going beyond the scope of my current role while still under contract would violate these rules. At this time, I have no plans to leave this role; accepting an offer is not part of my current personal goals, although this could change in the future.

Since 2020, I have been a qualified leadership facilitator with the John Maxwell Team, a global leadership organisation of over 50,000 facilitators and coaches. As a member of this team, I conduct leadership training outside my contractual obligations, both in my full-time role and in my side hustle. Eventually, perhaps not too far off, I plan to transition to coaching and mentoring full-time; it's been my long-standing desire. Bob Dylan describes destiny as, "... a feeling you have that you know something about yourself nobody else does. The picture you have in your own mind of what you're about WILL COME TRUE. It's a kind of a thing you have to keep to your own self, because it's a fragile feeling, and if you put it out there, then someone will kill it." I believe my destiny is to train leaders. Having a model to continually grow and develop as a leader is important, but what matters more is helping future leaders understand themselves and how they will grow. The PCLP is a powerful tool I plan to pass on to achieve this.

This critique has prompted me to reflect on my leadership practice over the past fifty years. The following are the Leadership Practice Guidelines that I now consistently follow as a leader, coach, and mentor.

Leadership Practice #1: Commit to the Aspirational PCLP as my "leadership operating model".

The main goal of the entire DBL program is to develop an aspirational PCLP. It would be unwise and somewhat dishonest to create this and then fail to incorporate it into my practice. It serves as a strong reminder of how my leadership can stay relevant, effective, and current. The PCLP will not become a document sitting on a shelf, gathering dust, unread, and forgotten. It has already become an essential reference for my daily leadership actions and decision-making, which I am committed to making a core part of my business behavior. The PCLP is my moral compass.

Research has identified several actions related to the PCLP. These actions are supported by the PCLP but are not explicitly included in it. They are outlined in the following leadership guidelines.

Leadership Practice #2: Work actively to create and promote teamwork.

The feedback from the 12 case studies showed that project managers struggled to develop effective teams and maintain team-oriented behaviour throughout the project lifecycle. The solution to this, contrary to much management and leadership theory and commentary, is neither simple nor straightforward. Larson, C., and LaFasto, F. (1989) identify the following characteristics of effective teams.

1. A clear, elevating goal
2. Results-driven structure
3. Competent team members
4. Unified commitment
5. Collaborative climate
6. Standards of excellence
7. External support and recognition
8. Principled leadership

Although this list may not be entirely comprehensive, the extensive research conducted by the authors gives it considerable value. It makes it a useful starting point for any leader aiming to develop a team and enhance performance. Many other published traits of effective teams can also be effective when applied correctly. The ability to build and lead effective teams is essential to leadership.

Leadership Practice #3: Seek diversity in project team composition.

In today's business environment, it is crucial to ensure that all teams, especially project teams, comprise a diverse range of members, including different ages, genders, ethnicities, and skill sets. Van Knippenberg, D., et al. (2020) state, "the business case for diversity holds that diversity leads to synergy; that is, having multiple perspectives results in performance benefits, such as improvements in decision-making, problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. Research on diversity in teams has documented conditions under which it leads to improved performance. Current diversity management practices in organisations, however, focus more on preventing the negative effects that can follow from diversity (such as discrimination and lack of inclusion) than on how to gain the performance benefits that diversity can afford."

The authors reference recent reviews of team diversity and diversity management literature to propose strategies that are likely to foster synergy from diversity. They conclude that diversity management practices must include actions explicitly aimed at encouraging teams to integrate diverse information and perspectives. Additionally, such practices are most likely to improve performance when implemented as part of a set of diversity management strategies, rather than as standalone initiatives, and when formal human resources diversity practices are complemented by informal leadership actions supporting diversity, along with formal accountability systems to monitor whether practices are carried out as intended.

My experience in projects spanning over 35 years shows that diversity offers different perspectives; women often see and approach problems differently than men. The same is true for team members of varying ages: a team of 25- to 35-year-olds may lack the life and work experience that older members bring, but they also can provide energy and a bias toward action that older members might lack. When building any team, the value of having a diverse group cannot be overstated.

Leadership Practice # 4: Team leadership must encompass respect, compassion, and empathy.

Leadership is a verb; it is an active process. Many (mostly poor) leaders see it as a noun, a title, a destination, and they believe that once they have it, they have arrived. My leadership approach is based on Servant Leadership, recognising that I cannot achieve my goals without my team's support and effort. I must create an environment where they know they will be supported, where mistakes are seen as opportunities to grow, and where success is celebrated. As a servant leader, I understand that all members bring strengths to the team; it is my role to identify, understand, and leverage these strengths for the team's benefit and the achievement of our goals.

To achieve this, I need to get to know each team member and actively build respect for their contributions to the team. Respect isn't automatic; it must be earned, and my approach is to give everyone the chance to earn it. Developing mutual respect strengthens relationships, improves personal well-being, and boosts productivity by fostering trust, safety, and positive communication. It leads to greater happiness, confidence, and a sense of belonging, while also encouraging better conflict resolution and a more positive, cooperative environment.

Getting to know each team member personally is also important. This doesn't mean I need to become friends with them; in fact, that's not always ideal. However, if I, as a project manager, know that a team member has a partner and two children, a dog (a Labrador, of course), loves windsurfing in summer and skiing in winter, and supports a specific football team, I have a foundation for ongoing, non-work related conversations. These help me understand the person, what motivates her, and how she might respond in certain situations, while also allowing her to get to know me and build mutual respect and trust. When times are tough, and the team needs to come together and go the extra mile, this can be invaluable.

Some people in leadership roles believe that showing compassion is a sign of weakness. I disagree with this. John C. Maxwell says, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." I agree with this. If a team member calls in and asks for the day off because his daughter is ill and needs to go to the doctor, even though there's an inevitable and understandable tension due to the need to cover his absence, an initial response of, "Is she going to be OK? Call me again if you need extra time," will build more loyalty and commitment than you might expect. And, importantly, you don't do it for that reason; you do it because you truly care.

The Macquarie Dictionary (2025) defines empathy as "the capacity to understand and enter into another person's feelings and emotions or to experience something from the other person's point of view. It is the ability to imaginatively put oneself in someone else's position to understand their experiences, feelings, and thoughts." The empathetic leader can walk in the shoes of those he/she leads. Having started working on projects as a team member in 1990, I have experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly side of the business. I have enjoyed dynamic projects with great clients and worked with those who wanted nothing to do with my team or me. I have worked with excellent people, a few great project managers, but have been cursed at times by incompetent fools masquerading as leaders. I have worked consistent 10-hour days, but in extreme situations have pulled numerous 24-hour shifts when outcomes were not negotiable. I have been in physical danger on several jobs, both from the environment and also from angry and aggressive clients. I had done all this before I took on my first management role, when the team looked to me for leadership. One thing I could honestly say to them was, "I know what you are all going through, and I will never ask you to do something that I am not prepared to do myself or have not done so in the past." As their new leader (having previously been their peer), I knew that my previous experience counted for nothing and that I had to earn their respect from scratch. I found that my ability to empathise with them was a priceless starting point, without which my task would have been much more difficult and taken much longer.

The four Leadership Practice Guidelines above outline the key practices embedded in my leadership style, informed by research conducted throughout this program, particularly through this critique. They serve as macro-level guidelines and do not aim to cover more detailed activities such as daily interactions with those I lead, including daily briefings, ongoing staff involvement, leading with courage, passion, and energy, or making the workplace as enjoyable as possible. I believe I have always practiced these principles and will continue to do so in my pursuit of the best outcomes achievable through a principle-centred, servant leadership style.

CHAPTER TEN – CONCLUDING REMARKS; CONTRIBUTION TO LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

This chapter concludes this leadership critique. It will restate my purpose for undertaking this program, identify its limitations, and outline potential opportunities for future research to enhance the outcomes presented.

Why I undertook the Doctor of Business Leadership program.

At 60 years old, after two careers totalling over 40 years of experience, I realised that the consulting industry I had been part of for more than 25 years was beginning to leave me behind. I acknowledged that I needed to “reset my sail” and prepare for the next chapter (possibly the final chapter) of my working life. My first consideration was that I have always been passionate about leadership, coaching, and helping others. Throughout my life, I have been a cricket coach, a squash coach, a skydiving instructor, a military instructor in various disciplines, an accomplished public speaker, a public speaking coach, a teacher, a business leader, and a mentor. I’ve always loved helping others become the best possible versions of themselves. I knew that, in some form or another, my next step was to help develop the next generation of leaders. After much soul-searching and diligent research, I discovered the DBL program. Following a successful application, I began the course in 2017. I chose the DBL program because it offered both a theoretical foundation through formal coursework and practical research application through critique, which I believed would provide the formal training to complement my lifelong experiences and serve as a springboard into my next phase of life.

Choosing project and change management as my focus for critique was simple; I have been involved in the consulting industry since leaving the Army in 1990. For the past 25 years,

projects have been central to my professional life. Mostly, projects excited and challenged me; each new project taught me something new and reminded me of how little I truly knew. However, projects also frustrated, annoyed, and sometimes enraged me when I saw the level of incompetence, lack of knowledge, and the disdain for the people involved by many in leadership roles. In industry, projects are the engine of change, and over time, the extent of project failure became apparent. The actions of many “leaders” contributed to this significant failure, and the costs to individuals, organisations, and communities proved enormous. I resolved that even if I could make a small, positive impact—if I could help others become better, more effective leaders—then this was a legacy I wanted to pursue.

Limitations of this research

There are several limitations to this critique. They include:

- The word count of this critique limited the amount of detail and content that could have been included; at the same time, there are lines of inquiry that might have been pursued but were not for the same reason.
- The decision to limit the targeted interviews to 12 was a joint decision with my academic supervisor; however, increasing this number might have improved the results. The sample size of 12 participants, drawn from my own network of project professionals, restricts the generalisability of the findings that could have been obtained from a broader population. Future studies could explore a more diverse sample across multiple institutions to improve the generalisability of the results.
- In writing this critique, I recognise my own limitations in conducting the research effectively and efficiently. Although I have completed several formal courses of study, I have never considered myself “an academic” and have never attempted to produce a

paper of this length and complexity. The writing of this critique has taught me, and forced me, to expand my horizons and belief in what I thought was possible. My journey has been (until the last 18 months) intermittent, and I have allowed life to interfere with my efforts significantly; at one point, I formally withdrew from the program for nearly two years. I can honestly say that without the belief in me by the Head of the AGSL and the support and guidance of my supervisor, I would not have completed this program. The dream would have been lost.

- The research is based on my personal experience. With more time and resources, input from other professionals in the field could have expanded the study and possibly added more depth, context, and integrity to the outcomes I have reached.

Future Research Opportunities

This critique has been developed over several years and is primarily based on my leadership experience in the military, project-based organisations, and the not-for-profit sector. Therefore, there are areas of interest that were not included but should ideally be explored in future research. This includes (but is not limited to)

- The adoption of Agile project management techniques and their impacts on projects and leadership as a result. Agile is a project approach that was introduced in the United States in 2001; its growth in that country was slow during the following decade, while it also began to be adopted in other nations. Since around 2010, Agile has been increasingly adopted in Australia and is now the foundation for many projects across various industries. Some of the practitioners interviewed for the research had Agile experience, and future research should include practitioners with Agile experience.

- The COVID-19 pandemic created a completely new work environment that the developed world is unlikely to change. Entire countries adopted remote-work policies that not only transformed how organisations operate but also introduced a new level of leadership that this critique has not addressed. Future research on leadership in the project domain should consider this.
- The growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has already significantly impacted all parts of society, and as the technology advances, it will likely cause a major disruption to work in general and pose new challenges for leadership in particular. AI was not mentioned in this critique; this should be addressed in future research.

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the contributions of this Leadership Critique in terms of its leadership practices and the limitations of this research. It is recognised that there are significant opportunities for further research that could add value to this complex area.

EPILOGUE

Tully, Far North Queensland 1987

It had been a tough three weeks, but frankly, bloody great training.

It began in Sydney at RAAF Richmond. We had arrived there from Holsworthy Barracks at midnight; it was cold, just above zero degrees. In the foggy darkness, we clambered off the trucks, formed up in the hangar, and began the two-hour preparation for the flight. Equipment checks, orders, drinking hot coffee, and eating stale sandwiches while we mingled and tried to fight off tiredness and manage the anticipation. This was not a normal way to begin three weeks of jungle training in North Queensland, but as paratroopers, much of what we did fell into the “not normal” bracket. Eventually, the para parade was called. We drew our main and reserve parachutes and moved back to where our equipment was laid out in three long rows. Each soldier’s equipment averaged nearly 30kg; those “lucky” enough to have machine guns or radios carried more. It was not unusual for a soldier to exit the aircraft at 120 knots carrying close to his own weight in equipment.

Eventually, it was time to emplane, and through the fog on the tarmac and the roar of eight C130 Hercules engines, the ghostly figures of C Company 3RAR staggered into the cavernous opening of the aircraft, stacked the equipment in the centre of the floor, and found the tiny portion of seating where each man was to sit for the next five hours. We took off into the night and tried to rest as the aircrew did what they do and flew us to our destination, King Ranch, 25kms south of Tully.

After what seemed an eternity but was only slightly more than four hours, we were called to get ready. As we had rehearsed so many times, we each retrieved our equipment and began

to fit it, a physically challenging exercise that soon had the inside of each aircraft filled with the smell of sweat mixed with the vomit on the floor of those whose stomachs were reacting the reality that we would soon be jumping, or else to the violent contortions of the aircraft as the pilots were now flying “tac” meaning that they had dropped down to nearly ground level in a manoeuvre designed to evade radar. After all the pre-jump checks, we stood up and “hooked on,” ensuring that the static lines that would open our parachutes when we exited were securely connected to the internal cable that ran the length of the plane. The side doors of the huge C130 were opened by the aircrew, and the rush of fresh air combined with aviation fuel exhaust surged into our nostrils. I was at the head of the line, and I took a moment to look down at these young soldiers as they prepared to jump. The 60 faces looked back at me with a mixture of excitement, fear, anticipation, determination, and most importantly, trust. No one would ever do this kind of thing if they didn’t trust their training, trust their equipment, and trust the leaders who made them do it. In this case, I was the boss, leading these 90 soldiers in the two aircraft on this taxing exercise. The trauma and the emotional and physical exertion of this parachute operation were just the beginning of the three-week exercise, which was sure to push us all even further. The jumpmaster called “ONE MINUTE”, we did the final checks of our own equipment and that of the man in front, and closed up, desperate now to just get through that door and out into the fresh air. “RED ON, THIRTY SECONDS” was the call, and then, “GREEN ON, GO!” Like lemmings, we propelled ourselves to the door and out into the blessed fresh air, hitting the slipstream at 120 knots, looked up to check for a correctly deployed ‘chute, and then went through the drills to prepare for the landing. In those few seconds under the canopy, we all felt the nearly 30-degree heat and humidity, and looked down to see the drop zone covered in water from a torrential downpour a few hours earlier. The landing was just the beginning of what lay in store; we dragged ourselves out of the sodden fields, recovered, put on our equipment, and set off on the 25km route march to the Jungle Warfare School. For the paratrooper, the descent was just one way to get to the battlefield; our real work started once we landed.

Three weeks later, the jump was a distant memory. After intense training in the tropical heat involving 24/7 tactical operations, forced marches, assault courses, weapons training, live firing, and being wet pretty much the whole time from the incessant Queensland rain, we sat quietly waiting for our buses to take us to Townsville to fly home. I took the chance to speak to the troops before we left, as I knew once we were travelling, sleep would be their companion.

I kept it short and gave them feedback from the Jungle Warfare School staff on the exemplary effort and performance they had put in from day one. Every one of them had done themselves, the company, and the battalion proud. Personally, I was bursting with pride; these were my lads, we had trained together, hurt together, laughed together, and succeeded together. We were a fantastic team; everyone had each other's backs.

My final words were, "Great effort, troops. I couldn't have asked any more from any one of you. We did this together. Let's go home. We're done here."

Mark Cowan-Aston

Melbourne, Australia

December 2025

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