



Professional Leadership

It is a truth universally acknowledged that most professionals are employed and achieve success primarily for their technical expertise. This can make leadership and other skills a "nice to have" rather than essential. If it occurs at all, leadership development can happen only by accident. As a result, sadly, some firms get the leaders they deserve...

"The process of influencing others to achieve their and the firm's goals successfully"

If this is an accurate definition of leadership, then it is a skill required not just at partner or director level, but for anyone in an influencing position or role throughout your firm - including you? Here are three tips that focus on simple, practical issues that leaders at all levels must address to be a more positive influence. Of course, we all know that leadership is about many (other) things, don't we?

Do what made Alexander great

Now we are not suggesting that warfare is an exact model for professional services! The point is though that Alexander the Great inspired the fiercest devotion in his soldiers (and achieved the unachievable as a result) by sharing some of the burden and privations of his armies personally, **especially when things got tight**.

We contrast this with numerous war stories that we have listened to of senior personnel in professional firms regularly leaving the long hour, tough deadline assignments entirely to junior staff - all of whom were suitably inspired as a result. Not.

You are in a goldfish in a bowl..

Interviewing staff at all levels in a major firm a few years ago, we were struck by how many negative myths were created and perpetuated by the day-to-day (mis)behaviours of certain leadership figures; sometimes for only trivial (to them) but important things (to others).

These leaders seemed blissfully unaware of what they were doing and its impact on the people that they were supposed to be influencing positively. Remember that as a leader in any context, you are being watched all the time. You are a bit like a goldfish. Except that some people observing you closely will take their lead directly from how you (mis)behave.

Adapt or stay frozen with CJ

It is a common myth (perhaps attachable to stories about historical figures like Alexander the Great) that there is one right way to lead. There isn't. Good leaders adapt their way of influencing others according to the relative **ability** and **willingness** or **motivation** of those they seek to influence.

Less effective others stick rigidly with their preferred style, the style "that got them where they are today". We call this the CJ Syndrome (cf. The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin).

Don't be CJ.