

Experts Corner

It's all change at Westminster at the moment, with David Cameron now installed as Conservative party boss, Sir Menzies Campbell taking over the reins at the Lib Dem party, and the possibility of a new Prime Minister sooner rather than later - if you are to believe some of the columnists. So with leadership on the national agenda, we have invited two Hyde clients to share their tips.

New Leadership - What Gordon, David and Ming need to know!

by Liz Marks

One of the new party leaders' most immediate tasks should be to find a fast and easy way to navigate their first 100 days in the job. In the business world, the importance of this crucial period is well researched and documented.

In my work as a leadership coach, I've seen new managers or partners either shore up their successes or seal their fate with their approach to the first 100 or so days in the job. Here are some tried and tested ways for making the most of this career-critical period.

1. Plan ahead: Look ahead to the first three, six and twelve months of your appointment and actively plan your approaches. What are your aims and milestones for performance? How will you influence your stakeholders?

2. Use the honeymoon period: People often feel at a loose end in the first few days when it's actually the best opportunity to do the research and start setting up the conditions for success. It's also a critical time to bond with your colleagues, clients and other key contacts.

3. First impressions matter and are difficult to change. Really getting to know the key people is time well spent. Problems are often associated with a lack of relationship building and poor listening in the early days.

4. Be crystal clear: A major cause of stress is ambiguity and a lack of clarity around your role and purpose. What can you do to ensure that you are clear on your performance indicators, priorities and objectives?

5. Do your deals: What are the ground rules of your engagement for you and your new team/



bosses? What can you do for them and just as importantly what do you need from them? The informal expectations can be just as important as the formal ones. How you handle the chat by the coffee machine is just as important as the more formal meetings you're having.

6. Deal with conflict: How you deal with conflict and conflicting demands or agendas is key. Any change to a team or the status of a member is almost certain to trigger some power broking, no matter how lively or subtle.

7. Knowing me knowing you: Who are the official and unofficial leaders and opinion formers as well as your key clients, suppliers and partners? Who will back your success and where possible give you feedback in the early days so you can tailor and amend your approaches if needs be?

8. How do you fit in? Look around and take a moment to spot how things are done in your new organisation. To take a fun example, I met one

executive who automatically donned his trusty dark suit and tie combo in his new job in a fun and funky 'smart-casual' style company - a new kind of statement dressing! Are you being recruited for your difference, or expected to fit in?

9. Be self-aware: You may already have your own unconscious tried and tested formulas in place. It's a good time to be aware of what's worked well in the past and apply advisedly in a new role.

10. Be a performer: Remember to focus on demonstrating your performance - maybe secure some quick easy wins in the first few weeks. When you remember to include all of the above you'll be well on your way!

Liz Marks is an experienced international leadership and management coach and facilitator, whose clients range from FTSE 100 companies to SMEs. Liz is the founder of Accomplish Limited www.accomplishonline.co.uk

Are we born leaders or can we be groomed? by Dr Clifford J Ferguson

Considerable research proves that the best-led firms tend to make more money, attract and keep the brightest people and seem to enjoy themselves more. They are also less susceptible to peaks and troughs in the economy and are able to build a client base that is incredibly loyal.

Creating leaders

Just as technical skills can be developed and fine-tuned, so, we believe, can leadership. We also firmly believe that good leaders aren't born - but they can be made.

What, then, makes a good leader?

Our research shows that those professionals who help achieve business goals most effectively exhibit three types of expertise:

1. Business development expertise - winning and retaining business
2. Technical expertise
3. Business management expertise - customer service delivery, coaching and motivating staff

Leadership characteristics: In addition to expertise, there are identifiable qualities which good leaders display which can be developed in professionals through experience, training, coaching or mentoring. Feedback from thousands of staff about what they want from their leaders has enabled us to define five leadership characteristics:

Management: This is fundamental to administering a successful business. It involves schedules, disciplines, checklists and rules that define and monitor performance. Good leaders do not shirk the responsibilities of annually appraising their people and are firm in the application of performance standards.

Direction: Giving direction requires vision so that everyone is enthusiastically singing from the same hymn sheet.

Inspiration: The ability to encourage a personal desire to help achieve the firm's objectives from team members is vital. It's about the careful

use of words to motivate and inspire. Contrary to some views, leaders do not need to be charismatic to inspire but do, however, need excellent interpersonal skills to engage members of their team.

Leading by example: This may be an old cliché but it is fundamental to developing the right behaviours. When the actions of any leader are in conflict with how they demand others should behave, individuals will undoubtedly follow the leader's actions and not their words. For example, if a manager demands punctuality at the start of meetings but continually turns up late, the team soon learns that it's ok to be late.

Team building: All the good leaders we meet seem to think 'team first', realising that their vision can only be achieved through the synergy created in a high performance team. That doesn't just mean bringing in the right technical skills, it also requires the right blend of personalities

- for example, thinkers, doers, strategists and pragmatists.

Conclusion: We have worked with quiet, determined leaders as well as the more charismatic. There can be no doubt that all those we have interviewed had common themes to their leadership principles. They all have the ability to inspire their people through their vision and a belief in the firm. They influence rather than demand and can be trusted to get on with the job. Above all they have gained the support of their colleagues and have proved false the old adage that leaders are born. Quite simply, they can be created.

Cliff Ferguson specialises in helping professional service firms with their business development and leadership to enable them to win and retain clients. Cliff is the founder of Rainmakers www.rainmakers.uk.com.

