

## Have You Ticked The ‘Leadership’ Box ?

Leadership development is an important part of any individual’s professional development if they’re to make any moves up the corporate ladder – or indeed to be successful in their working life, if that work involves any interaction with others in the course of carrying out their duties.

Of course, there would be some occupations where leadership behaviours are not required or at least would not be of any overall help to achieving the outcomes required.

The role of the lighthouse keeper is diminishing with the modernisation of lighthouses So that’s one less occupation requiring leadership skills. There must be others ....somewhere.

So leadership IS important. Organisationally there is a desperate need – globally – for effective leadership. And at all levels of the organization.

In the Middle East, that when it comes to leadership development there is often a feeling by individuals that they have ‘ticked that box’. I suspect this is far from being a condition which is confined solely to this region,

It’s a bit like visiting the great pyramids in Cairo. Or the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Or the holiday in Thailand. Yes, I’ve ticked that box !

“I’m a leader, I’ve done the course.” And I’ve read a book or two.” “I have 7 line managers who report to me – of course I’m a leader.”

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in their acclaimed book ‘The Leadership Challenge’ make a very clear case for ‘exemplary leadership’. In the underlying leadership framework they set out the Fundamentals of Leadership.

One of those Fundamentals, is that Leadership is an **ongoing process**. “Yes, I showed leadership last week, now I’m getting on with my work” seems to be the view of many managers but leadership – or poor leadership – leaves clues in all they do. You can’t ‘do it’ and move on, it’s never a ‘one-off’ or occasional experience Leaders are dealing with - leading - others all the time. Leadership development, therefore, is on ongoing process.

The leadership Fundamentals also state that **the best leaders are the best learners**. The best leaders are learning from whatever sources are available to them: from experience with others – assessing what worked and why or why not – by being a part of coaching process for themselves and coaching others, by attending training programs and of course reading books and articles on leadership.

One other important Fundamental of leadership in The Leadership Challenge is that leadership requires **deliberate practice**. So what did the best tennis players do to achieve world-class status ? They hit the ball again and again, against a wall if there was no-one to hit it to. For hours and hours on end. They practiced. And then at the

top of their game – practice, practice. The same with football, golf, and of course Formula 1 racing. Practice, practice.

‘The Leadership Challenge’ was first published over 30 years ago. The fundamentals of leadership along with the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership have been supported by 35 years of evidence-based research. This on-going research continues to validate the approach to leadership which the authors first identified in the 1980’s.

Those who have ‘ticked the leadership box’ are trivializing the importance of leadership.

Would any organization today accept the credentials of an accountant who ‘did a course 15 years ago’. Unlikely.

On-going professional development and upgrading of skills is commonplace, if not compulsory, for many in business today. But what about on-going development for the most important function of organizations, leadership ?

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