

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (STAGE 3)

PUTTING HR INTO PERFORMANCE¹ (< 3 HOURS)

Introduction:

Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD) are important professional dimensions of a modern municipality. Too often, recruitment is based on connections rather than merit; it may be very difficult to fire staff, whatever their degree of incompetence.

Yet staff are the main asset of a municipality; they make the difference between excellent and mediocre performance. The way staff are used to deliver their municipality's strategies makes the difference between success and failure, between wasted public funding and good public value.

This is not just a matter of training managers to manage their staff more effectively; nor can good HRM and HRD be delivered only by giving more responsibility to a professional HR officer. Both these elements, however, are important.

Just as important is the way the Mayor and Directors develop the municipality into a modern organisation; the way in which they harness the energies and expertise of staff to deliver high levels of performance. This is a matter of leadership.

Objectives:

1. Become aware of the current ways in which municipalities make use of their staff.
2. Understand the role of staff in delivering good performance.
3. Understand the leadership factors necessary to harness the energies and expertise of staff.

Schedule

Session 1: Understand the characteristics of successful initiatives (1 hour).

Session 2: Understand the significance of **clear purpose, team-working, flexibility** in staff performance (1 hour).

Session 3: Understand key leadership practices to improve staff performance (1.5 hours).

¹ This section has been inspired by Strategic Speed by Davis, Frechette and Boswell.

SESSION 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES (1 hour)

Earlier management initiatives sought to get organisations to work more efficiently by focusing especially on techniques for improving processes (eg 'management by objectives'). The forgotten element was HR – the approach to staff who can deliver the best or worst of performance, whatever the management techniques being used.

Modern work depends more than ever before on judgement, collaboration, innovation and learning, rather than just obeying orders.

Only people innovate

Assignment

In buzz groups, examine the table below; identify 4-5 characteristics that could be found in your own municipality.

- What encourages this characteristic in your municipality?
- What impedes this characteristic in your municipality?
- What is the consequence of this characteristic in your municipality?

Be prepared for a facilitated discussion.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES IN MORE AND LESS EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONS

	More effective organisations	Less effective organisations
1	Leadership closely aligned and committed	Initiatives succeed despite lack of unanimous senior support
2	Staff flexible about switching responsibilities	Staff remain focused on own responsibilities to get things done
3	Staff comfortable about discussing problems and disagreements	Staff keep information to themselves as best way to get ahead
4	Despite workload, operational teams find time to review progress	There is no time for reflection among teams
5	Teams capture and communicate lessons learned	After initiative, teams move on without debrief
6	Organisation focuses on ability to explore new methods / technologies	Organisation focuses on ability to improve quality and lower costs
7	Organisation creates innovative products / services	Organisation fine-tunes existing products to keep customers happy
8	Main systems work coherently to support overall objectives	Staff often work at cross-purposes because main systems give competing objectives
9	Leadership puts forward creative / innovative ideas	Leadership puts forward tried and tested ideas
10	Experienced staff get training for new initiatives	There is no time for training staff for new initiatives

SESSION 2: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CLEAR PURPOSE, TEAM-WORKING, FLEXIBILITY (1 hour)

Introduction

The characteristics in the previous list could be categorised by **Clear Purpose, Team-working, Flexibility**. These are important qualities for all staff if their organisation is to deliver better performance. They help them to answer fundamental questions:

Clear purpose: *Do I know where we are going and why?*

Team-working: *Am I committed to working with the team to get there?*

Flexibility: *Am I willing to try different ways to get there?*

When clear purpose, team-working and flexibility come together throughout the staff, they deliver better performance; they add value to local government. It implies awareness. Each member of staff should then be able to answer critical performance questions:

- ✓ What external conditions do we face?
- ✓ What are our own internal capabilities?
- ✓ What should we do and how?

Collaboration, not competition, is the driver of unity

This awareness will enable them to resolve mixed messages, remain focused on priorities, harness resources, eliminate duplication, understand the environment necessary for success, and share a sense of direction.

Assignment 1

In groups of 4 persons, identify which characteristics in the earlier list can be categorised under Clear purpose, Team-working and Flexibility; list them in the template below. Compare your list with the completed template at the end of the document. List the symptoms or evidence that you would expect to find in an organisation where these characteristics were strong. Be prepared to discuss.

List the characteristics leading to:

	CHARACTERISTICS	SYMPTOMS
CLEAR PURPOSE		
TEAM-WORKING		
FLEXIBILITY		

Assignment 2

There are different patterns of clear purpose, team-working, flexibility in any organisation:

	Clear purpose	Team-working	Flexibility
'It is not my problem'	High	Low	Average
'Be everything to everyone'	Low	Low	Average/High
'Be nice to people'	Low	Average/High	Low
'Carry on regardless'	High	High	Low

In groups of 4, consider the table above in relation to a typical municipality. Set out the strengths and weaknesses of each pattern. Be prepared to discuss.

Assignment 3

How good is your municipality in clear purpose, team-working and flexibility? Use the table below to assess how well the leadership promotes clear purpose, team-working and flexibility among the staff in pursuit of better performance.

In buzz groups, score one of your municipalities against the following criteria. Be prepared to provide feedback and discuss the evidence you have for your score.

LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT: EXTENT OF CLEAR PURPOSE, TEAM-WORKING, FLEXIBILITY

Clear purpose		
1	Staff have a shared understanding of strategy at detailed level	1 2 3 4 5
2	Staff focus their efforts on the critical priorities	1 2 3 4 5
3	Strategy is translated into concrete, achievable goals	1 2 3 4 5
Team-working		
4	We have commitment at all levels to the success of the strategy	1 2 3 4 5
5	We assign capable, dedicated staff to strategic initiatives	1 2 3 4 5
6	The spirit of teamwork and cross-boundary cooperation is evident throughout the organisation	1 2 3 4 5
Flexibility		
7	Staff stay open and flexible in the way goals are met	1 2 3 4 5
8	Staff maintain a bias for action while adjusting for circumstances as needed	1 2 3 4 5
9	Staff capture and communicate what they learn from their work	1 2 3 4 5

1 = low; 5 = high

SESSION 3: KEY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO IMPROVE STAFF PERFORMANCE (1.5 Hours)

Introduction

There are 4 leadership practices that experience suggests play a critical role in making best use of staff and maximising their contribution to municipal performance.

- 1. Driving strategies**
- 2. Supporting initiatives**
- 3. Managing climate**
- 4. Making use of experience**

The table below identifies ways in which these practices can strengthen HR factors.

HOW LEADERSHIP PRACTICES STRENGTHEN HR FACTORS

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES	CLEAR PURPOSE	TEAM-WORKING	FLEXIBILITY
1. Driving strategies	Ensuring staff understand strategic direction and their role in supporting it	Emphasising importance of each person's buy-in and contribution	Increasing staff awareness of external and internal conditions and their implications for strategic decisions
2. Supporting initiatives	Defining specific objectives, roles, action plans	Ensuring all staff know exactly how their job and behaviour contribute to the success of the municipality	Keeping hands on the 'steering wheel' so adjustments can be made as necessary
3. Managing climate	Giving opportunities for open dialogue about goals and objectives	Setting stage for cross-municipality collaboration and teamwork	Encouraging ownership, flexibility and confidence in making decisions and pursuing objectives
4. Making use of experience	Allowing time to formulate and discuss goals and reflect on progress towards meeting them	Expecting each staff member to have a perspective, offer insights and contribute to team learning	Enabling staff to learn from experience and best practice, applying lessons quickly to emerging problems

Assignment

Divide into 4 groups, each group to tackle one of the following assessment exercises.

Group 1: Driving strategies

Staff work in their teams to deliver components of the municipality's strategies. Driving strategies is a key leadership practice that will strengthen the contribution of staff to municipal performance.

- This increases **clear purpose** through a growing awareness of the components of the strategy.
- This increases **team-working** by ensuring that teams are aligned within an overall goal and alert to both the external environment and internal capacity.
- This increases **flexibility** by helping others to buy into the strategy and making all staff aware of the wider goals.

Staff need to know where they are going and be motivated to go there.

Task

Reflect on the way your own municipal leadership typically drives the key strategies. Complete the leadership assessment exercise below (imagining that you represent the leadership) by scoring one of your own municipalities against the given criteria. Be prepared to provide feedback and discuss the evidence you have for your score.

LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT – DRIVING STRATEGIES

1. I make sure our strategy responds to the 5 questions: Who? What? When? How? Where?	1 2 3 4 5
2. I make sure staff are clear about the reasons for our priorities and for any changes.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I invite discussion on the case for change in order to build commitment.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I introduce new strategies in a way that is personal, so that staff now how they are affected.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I identify and remove impediments to staff making the necessary changes in their work and behaviour.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I involve the staff in creating the plan rather than doing it myself.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I use the same care in selecting operational teams for specific initiatives as I do in hiring new staff.	1 2 3 4 5

1 = low; 5 = high

Add ratings and divide by 7. Score: <3 – development needed; >4 – strong

Group 2: Supporting initiatives

Supporting initiatives is a key leadership practice that will strengthen the contribution of staff to municipal performance.

- This increases **clear purpose** by identifying and structuring the initiative in a way that drives the overall strategy forward.
- This increases **team-working** by assigning the right staff to an initiative (not just those available) and building up capable, dedicated teams.
- This increases **flexibility** by actively supporting and coaching teams, holding them accountable and assessing / mitigating any risks.

Any municipality will be taking initiatives alongside the routine work for a number of reasons: to improve services, to reach out to a wider group of citizens, to support local businesses in a new way.

Leadership creates the right environment

It is important that such initiatives are successful because they can bring credit and visibility to the municipality, influence the way things are done or open up new ways of thinking. Staff working on such initiatives need the support of the leadership to help deliver success.

To give effective leadership, there are several critical success factors, each of which gives rise to a strategic approach.

HOW GOOD LEADERSHIP CAN DRIVE INITIATIVES

	CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	LEADERSHIP APPROACH
1	Team capability	Deploy strong team
2	On-going adjustment	Create robust coordinating and progress review mechanism
3	Behavioural change	Make required changes clear and real
4	Work effort	Acknowledge and manage work pressures; praise excellent performance
5	Change management	Keep things simple and consistent; keep staff informed and seek their input
6	Leadership involvement	Ensure leadership visibility; promote sense of direction and consensus
7	Staff support	Cultivate staff participation; delegate responsibility and authority; provide a supportive environment

Task

Reflect on the way your own municipal leadership typically supports initiatives. Complete the leadership assessment exercise below (imagining that you represent the leadership) by scoring one of your own municipalities against the given criteria. Be prepared to provide feedback and discuss the evidence you have for your score.

LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT – SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

1. I stay involved in driving initiatives forward, not just announcing and moving on.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I communicate a vivid picture of specific changes staff need to make.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I treat strategic initiatives like projects, with team leaders, teams, objectives, budgets etc.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I ensure project teams devote a good proportion of their time to any initiative.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I identify and remove impediments to staff needing to make the necessary behavioural changes.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I involve the whole operational team in creating the plan rather than do it myself.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I use the same care in selecting operational team members for an initiative as in hiring new staff.	1 2 3 4 5

1 = low; 5 = high

Add ratings and divide by 7. Score: <3 – development needed; >4 – strong

Group 3: Managing the climate

Managing the climate is a key leadership practice that will strengthen the contribution of staff to municipal performance.

- It increases **clear purpose** by creating opportunities for dialogue.
- It increases **team-working** by setting the stage for collaboration.
- It increases **flexibility** by encouraging confidence.

The right climate makes it safe to give and receive honest feedback on progress

The climate of a municipality is very tangible. Staff and citizens can easily see it. Climate is about such questions as: How willing are staff ready to respond to queries? How quickly do they respond to problems that arise? How well do they

listen to the views of service users? How much pride do they have in working for the municipality? How much are they willing to cooperate with each other?

Experience suggests that a good climate can make a **30% difference** to performance. It affects staff motivation as much as the municipality's reputation. All managers have a key role to play in promoting a good climate.

DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE

1	Clarity	<i>Workplace is structured and well ordered; there is a sense of direction</i>
2	Standards	<i>Priority for excellence; pressure to improve</i>
3	Commitment	<i>Dedication to achieving goals and to making the municipality successful</i>
4	Responsibility	<i>Sense of personal responsibility and accountability</i>
5	Recognition	<i>Sense of good work that delivers performance excellence being acknowledged</i>
6	Teamwork	<i>Sense of belonging to a good organisation: cohesion, mutual support, trust, pride, cooperation</i>

All climate dimensions are important but in some organisations greater emphasis is put on specific ones (eg the military tends to be high on clarity). Think of your own team in which you work; you might like to carry out an informal survey leading to an action plan, in consultation with the appropriate managers. It can be designed in the light of the following questions:

- What do the team members think of the climate?
- How far do managers use practices that support a good climate?
- How would you rate the team members in terms of motivation, performance and effort?

Task

Reflect on the way the leadership in your own municipalities typically manages the climate within the organisation. Complete the leadership assessment exercise below (imagining that you represent the leadership) by scoring one of your own municipalities against the given criteria. Be prepared to provide feedback and discuss the evidence you have for your score.

LEADERSHP ASSESSMENT: MANAGING CLIMATE

1. I focus not just on data but on climate dimensions.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I conduct regular climate checks to ensure a supportive environment.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I have defined the kind of climate that best supports our objectives.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I have informal discussions on climate with managers and peers.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I seek to learn how staff view my management practices.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I have objectives and action plans for improving the climate.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I convey the importance of climate to the wider leadership and explain how it drives performance.	1 2 3 4 5

1 = low; 5 = high

Add ratings and divide by 7. Score: <3 – development needed; >4 – strong

Group 4: Making use of experience

Making use of experience is a key leadership practice that will strengthen the contribution of staff to municipal performance.

- It increases **clear purpose** by giving time to discuss objectives and reflect on progress.
- It increases **team-working** by expecting each member of staff to have a view, offer insights and contribute to team learning.
- It increases **flexibility** by facilitating learning and applying lessons to emerging problems.

Learning from experience is the most effective way of learning. That is why modern training focuses on inter-active techniques – to draw out and build on the experience of trainees. In fact, 70%-90% of workplace learning happens on the job. Primary responsibility for harnessing experience lies with oneself – reflecting the importance of examining one's own experience; we can also learn from the experience of colleagues; managers can help teams learn from their collective experience (eg of working on a project).

Like green energy, if experience is not harnessed, it passes us by

But for staff to learn from experience and for the leadership to harness experience, other factors are necessary. There must be good communications – both vertical

and horizontal, formal and informal; staff must have strategic awareness, so that they know where experience can be best used; they must be open to dialogue and not be afraid of taking initiatives. If staff know in advance that their work will be reviewed, they will want to impress. Where experience is limited, pilots can play a role.

Task

Reflect on the way the leadership in your own municipalities typically cultivates experience. Complete the leadership assessment exercise below (imagining that you represent the leadership) by scoring one of your own municipalities against the given criteria. Be prepared to provide feedback and discuss the evidence you have for your score.

LEADERSHP ASSESSMENT: MAKING USE OF EXPERIENCE

1. I foster staff growth by challenging and supporting them in their learning.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I give staff a chance to practise the behaviour changes they need to make.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I seek to turn pressure, feedback, conflict into facilitated learning.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I have established ways of reflecting regularly.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I have instituted practices like post-action reviews to foster team reflection.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I treat projects as opportunities to experiment and learn.	1 2 3 4 5
7. I help to capture and share learning during projects rather than waiting till the end.	1 2 3 4 5

1 = low; 5 = high

Add ratings and divide by 7. Score: <3 – development needed; >4 – strong

ANNEX**Completed template**

CLEAR PURPOSE	• Leaders aligned and committed • Time to review progress • Teams capture and communicate lessons • Staff get training Symptoms: • 2-way communication – vertical and horizontal - rather than announcements and repetition • Attention not just about destination but also on navigating the road • Vision widely shared
TEAM-WORKING	• Leadership aligned and committed • Staff ready to switch responsibilities to make things easier for each other • Staff talk about problems and disagreements • Management systems coherent and support overall objectives Symptoms: • Sense of unity reaching out to all stakeholders • Cross-boundary cooperation • Staff aware of leadership's priorities
FLEXIBILITY	• Flexibility in switching responsibilities to manage changing circumstances and new challenges • New ideas, technologies and methods explored • Innovative approaches introduced • Staff get training Symptoms: • Wider awareness • Strong sense of purpose • High degree of teamwork • Readiness to adapt in pursuit of goals