



*Ian Thomson, a partner in Thomson Orchard Partnership, is a very experienced business consultant, having spent over 20 years with one of the major management consultancies and more than 15 years in self employment. He specialises in the development and implementation of business and marketing strategies. His clients are drawn from a wide range of manufacturing and service industries.*

In our last paper we suggested that the key drivers of organisational performance are Leadership, Customer Focus, Employee Engagement and Innovation, and gave a brief introduction to each of these four topics. In our strategic development work with organisations of all sizes, we focus on these four drivers and have found the most important to be Leadership.

There are many, many books written on this subject, so let's keep our observations and experiences as practical and brief as possible.

### Effective leadership is about...

Effective leadership is about getting results by taking appropriate actions:

**To achieve the task** - defining the task, making the plan, allocating work and resources, controlling quality, assessing performance against the plan and adjusting the plan as necessary.

**To build the team** - setting standards, maintaining discipline, building team spirit, motivating and giving the group a sense of purpose, encouraging communication within the group and training the group.

**To develop the individuals** - encouraging and motivating individuals, recognising and rewarding achievement, using the individual's abilities and talents fully, training the individual and dealing with personal problem.

Gaining the right balance between these three elements is the secret of good leadership. The skilful leader is able to adjust the emphasis given to each element to meet the needs of the task, the team and the individuals or to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

### Put another way, effective leadership is about:

- Serving the organisation and the people within it
- Creating the conditions for others to succeed
- Helping people to achieve a shared vision, not telling people what to do
- Involving people, encouraging and motivating them, gaining their commitment and helping them to use their talents fully
- Inspiring people with infectious enthusiasm, showing a strong sense of direction
- Giving your people the credit for your achievements and successes, accepting responsibility for any failings your people make
- Taking time to listen and really understand
- Demonstrating integrity at all times

- Making things happen, being decisive
- Being visible, "walking about".

### The benefits of good leadership

- Appropriate, ambitious strategies and plans are understood by all
- Better business results – growth, profitability
- More motivated, committed, engaged, enthusiastic (even passionate) employees – fewer "people" problems
- More confident people
- Change is managed more effectively
- Improved employee performance
- Increased competitive advantage
- Future leaders are identified and developed
- Broader skills and competences
- Greater loyalty and retention of staff
- Better customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention
- Smoother running of the organisation.

### A checklist of actions to improve leadership

- Ensure you have a robust strategic plan that is communicated to everyone
- Involve staff at all levels in the development of the strategy and in other projects and decision making
- Increase the effectiveness of communications
- Formulate a policy/plan for the development of leaders at all levels
- Give priority to leadership potential in selection procedures
- Send leaders and potential leaders on 'human skills' training courses, eg communication, leadership, public speaking, presentation, interviewing, creative thinking
- Plan careers to give appropriate experience
- Develop the organisation structure to favour the exercise of leadership
- Introduce individual leadership self-development.

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For more information or an informal discussion, please contact:

Ian Thomson Tel: 01937 849167  
Email: [ian@topconsulting.co.uk](mailto:ian@topconsulting.co.uk)

Janice Orchard Tel: 0161 439 5862  
Email: [janice@topconsulting.co.uk](mailto:janice@topconsulting.co.uk)