

LASTING LEADERSHIP



A four-session masterclass programme to support leaders and organisations develop sustainable leadership capacity.



Masterclass Three: 24 September 2020

Lateral leadership: Devolving decision-making and building leadership capacity across the team.

Hyperlinks to useful resources shared in the Masterclass:

- [Lasting Leadership Guide](#)
- [Session One Notes](#)
- [Session Two Notes](#)
- [Contracting worksheet](#)
- [Devolved leadership worksheet](#)
- [Situational leadership cascade](#)
- [Playing the long game](#), Wren & Greyhound
- ['The nature of adaptive leadership'](#) Ronald Heifetz
- ['Greatness'](#), David Marquet
- [Succession Planning Guide](#)
- [Knowledge Management Guide](#)
- [Masterclass four: Next Generation/Equalities bookings](#)

Lateral leadership: the challenge

- Organisations should avoid over-reliance on one leader.
- One person alone can't deliver the organisation's strategy, but strategies are often seen as 'belonging' to the CEO and senior team.

A poll in today's session showed that 67% of Masterclass participants felt that responding to CV-19 had led to an increase in devolved decision-making in their organisations. Some people mentioned that there has been a mixed picture in their organisation – with some areas of work being more devolved and others becoming more directive. Or some people feeling more able to step up than others. It was noted that if devolved decision-making was already partly in place, this has been strengthened by the current situation.

Practice sharing: Devolved leadership in your organisation

Examples of devolved leadership:

- Delegating leadership to working groups. This led to: building on people's strengths and allowing them to shine; generating new ideas and directions for areas of work; encouraging cross-team working and breaking down silos; building people's confidence in their own leadership skills.
- CV-19 has encouraged some leaders to get more input from their teams. This has built extra confidence and trust across the whole team.
- Testing out approaches to coaching rather than 'problem solving' and 'telling'. Not always easy but letting go gets easier with practice!
- Devolving pieces of work but having clear boundaries and outcomes – and organising regular check-ins along the way.
- Team members agreeing to step up – and others in the team supporting them to undertake new responsibilities. This has really helped see themselves as part of the decision-making process.
- Giving the organisational outcomes 'back' to the team to check they are still fit for purpose. They realised they are the experts! And we got better outcomes and indicators in our evaluation plan as a result.

Challenges in devolving leadership - and what helps:

- 👉 It can be hard to let people do things in their own way. Try to let go of perfectionism – and understand that my way is not the only way!
- 👉 Some things are more challenging to devolve than others. For example, devolving 'ownership' of key relationships with stakeholders. This requires opportunities to shadow and lead on particular partnerships or relationships.
- 👉 The paradox of letting go of some of our power – we still want to hold on to it, even when we want to let go!
- 👉 Being able to get and give feedback in a constructive way – and move on afterwards.
- 👉 Sharing responsibility for holding each other to account – leaders need to be accountable to others too.
- 👉 Showing real trust in people and *demonstrating* that they have your backing.
- 👉 Sharing your vision – and being open to others' ideas. You can't be a 'lone wolf' – you have to share your vision if you want other people to take ownership.
- 👉 CV-19 makes it challenging as people sometimes want to be directed – and sometimes we need to be directive due to the circumstances. But it helps to be clear when things are already decided and when we are looking for devolved decision-making and ideas.
- 👉 CV-19 has meant some trustees are feeling more nervous and risk averse and getting more involved in operational decisions. It helps to remember the distinction between operational and governance responsibilities.

Lateral leadership requires technical and adaptive responses:

Technical responses are best suited to situations that have a straightforward answer to a question or challenge e.g. 'what's our process for commissioning pieces of devolved work?' or 'how do we share specific knowledge?'. **Responses can include:** commissioning documents, knowledge management plans, practice guides.

Adaptive responses are best suited to situations that are more complex, messy and/or uncertain – when there is no straightforward answer and we need to explore and adapt to find ways to respond. **Responses can include:** identifying ways to build leadership capacity across the team; setting up learning and improvement groups to take the lead on areas of strategic priority; *embedding* plans (knowledge management, etc) into your existing organisational processes; sharing 'know-how' across the team e.g. shadowing and cross-team working; bringing 'how to' guides to life, so they don't gather dust on the shelf!

Practice sharing: developing leadership across your organisation

Strategic plans and outcomes

- 👉 Chunk down strategic areas for development and consider how different working groups could be involved in taking ownership of these areas of work.
- 👉 Involve people from all levels (staff and trustees) to look at specific elements of organisational development e.g. HR / marketing / recovery from CV-19.
- 👉 Involve the team in the development of the strategic plan and come up with *their* vision for the organisation. Doing this led to some great ideas that the management team and board wouldn't have thought of. And the team were delighted to see that what they had suggested was included in our strategy.
- 👉 Explore the strategic plan across the team so people can see where they fit and how they contribute to our aims and outcomes.
- 👉 Take time to explore the value of monitoring reports to help everyone better understand where and how their work contributes to the strategic outcomes.



Organisational values

- 👉 Involve everyone in the team in the creation of organisational values. This gives everyone ownership and belief in these values.
- 👉 Use organisational values to consider how we approach all areas of our work by translating these into practice principles.
- 👉 Our organisational values can also help shape how we work together as a team. For example, if we value empowerment, how can we use this to develop devolved leadership across our team?

Reflective practice and 'unlearning'

- 👉 Remember that we probably need to change our own management/leadership style too! It's not just about the team.
- 👉 If we change the way we work with each other this will often require a process of 'unlearning'. It will take time to communicate why devolved leadership is important, and work out what this looks like in practice.
- 👉 Create and protect time and space in meetings to connect with each other, and with our meaning.
- 👉 Have a different focus for different meetings e.g. deal with operational discussions in one and protect space in another for reflective practice discussions.



Pace of change and development

- 👉 Bring the whole team along in any change management journey. And remember that different people will need different levels of support.
- 👉 Not everyone feels confident taking the lead. Sometimes pairing people up to lead a piece of work can help build confidence.
- 👉 During organisational change do you lead from the front, are you the domestique, or are you bringing up the rear in the support vehicle?
- 👉 Pace the rate of change in the organisation. Too much change, too quickly can be like stretching an elastic band. You don't want to stretch it so much it snaps.
- 👉 Remember the value of people who may be initially resistant and slow down the pace of change. This can be useful too – and we need to remember everyone is important to the journey.
- 👉 And if our organisation grows, we need to be mindful that we continue to work across the team, so we don't create silos.

There are more ideas and examples of good practice in the Lasting Leadership Guide.

The Lateral Leadership self-assessment in the Lasting Leadership Guide can help with prioritising next steps.

Next steps:

This is the third of a four-session Masterclass Programme. The fourth and final Masterclass will focus on the following sustainable leadership capabilities:

- 👉 **Masterclass 4: Attracting the next generation of leaders & supporting equality and diversity** (13 Oct). Click [here](#) to book your place.

If you have any questions please contact Jen Curran Jennifer@wrenandgreyhound.co.uk or visit www.TheLastingDifference.com where you'll find more information and resources.