

Leading a Successful Team



For most researchers, career development and advancement is likely to involve greater or lesser degrees of leadership or management responsibility. Some of us actively seek these roles.

Other researchers don't explicitly seek leadership or management, these responsibilities appear "as part of the package" as we become more experienced and grow into roles where mentorship and leading others is a natural part of progression.

Anyone aspiring to leadership inside or outside a research environment should reflect on the roles of leader and manager that are beyond the day to day requirements of "getting the job done" and develop the necessary skills in leadership and management.

During this half day workshop we will consider what leaders and managers do and the skills and qualities they need to develop to succeed beyond their job-specific skills. Participants will raise their self-awareness whilst exploring the skills and development opportunities needed to support them in preparing for future roles.

During the workshop today we will explore:

- Skills & behaviours of effective teams, managers, leaders
- Your own skills, values & qualities
- Different leadership styles
- What helps or hinders motivation
- How you'll apply your insights to your current role.

Trainer: Dr Margaret Collins

© All Rights Reserved

Contact: +44 (0)7720 844 760 ♣ info@TrainingForUniversities.com ♣ <https://TrainingForUniversities.com>

For information about leadership or career coaching visit <https://MargaretCollins.com/coaching>

Do visit and follow me: Facebook.com/DrMargaretCollins and LinkedIn.com/in/DrMargaretCollins



Skills Analysis

What are you good at?

Many people answer by listing their “technical skills”, the things they do on a day-to-day basis to get their job done, design experiments or generate results.

It's not often that people name their “soft skills” or skills in teamwork or leadership even though these are often essential to their success.

People who build successful careers after gaining a PhD, whether they stay inside or move outside of the academic research system, often end up leading and managing, projects and teams.

What are the skills and strengths you need to do this?

We may be able to identify our own strengths but often it is valuable to get assistance.

Some people will overestimate how good they are at something, many, maybe a majority, will underestimate their proficiency. (If we find something “comes naturally to us” it is common to assume others/everybody has the same degree of competence.

We can listen to feedback from friends and colleagues or ask for input from a mentor or a supportive line manager. There are also many commercial questionnaires available, including:

- MBTI
- DISC
- ViaCharacter.org strengths
- StrengthsFinder
- Kahler's 5 Drivers
- John Lee's Motivated Skills
- Edgar Schein's Career Anchors
- The “Big 5”.

None of these models is perfect.
They may give you helpful information or insights.
Always use your “common sense” when
evaluating the results from any test.

What does your image/vision of yourself as a good research leader or manager look like?

Be realistic but hopeful and constructive as you imagine what the next stage on your career journey would be for you. Can you imagine yourself as an effective and inspiring research leader?

If this is the image of your “ideal self”, where is the real you right now?

Where do your current strengths lie?

How do you use your strengths?

How do you want to develop your strengths?

The “Wheels” tools and activities in the pre-course work may help you here...

What are the characteristics of a successful team?

Before we lead, we are part of a team. As leaders we get to recruit/gather/inherit/create teams... Understanding how the best teams are formed and sustained is a vital skill.

What makes a team successful?

There are many answers to this depending on the situation or function of the team, but a general summary may include:

- Clear direction – common, meaningful goals
- Open and honest communication
- Defined roles – trust - can depend on each other
- Collaboration - Contribution
- Mutually accountable – dependable – get things done
- Support risk taking and change
- Diverse - Encourage differences in opinions
- Manage conflict.

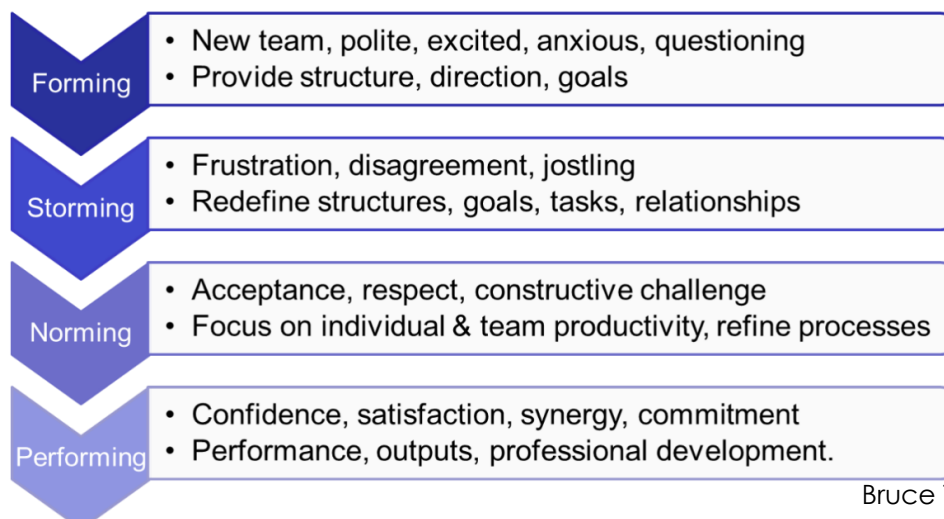
The relative importance or contribution will vary depending on the nature/purpose of the team.

For the teams I play a part in...

- Who is part of this team?
- What is our purpose?
- What is my role?
- How do I contribute to this team?

How does a research leader support the development of such a team?

A good team might happen “by accident”. A good leader knows how to shape a good team. Typically, new teams go through a series of stages as they grow and evolve:



Bruce Tuckman model

If you are developing your leadership or management skills it is important to reflect on:

- How do good research leaders do these things?
- How would I do these things in that role?
- What exactly are you training your people for? Who are they becoming?



What is leadership?

Take a few minutes to reflect on your thoughts and experiences of leaders and leadership.

1. Leadership is...

2. A good leader...

3. Leaders are expected to...

There are no right or wrong answers here but what you think will be shaped by your education, experience and culture – and your descriptions and expectations may be different to the expectations of others – the people who work for or with you, the people who hire you.

Leadership values

Our values – personal and professional – are things we believe are important – valuable.

They often feel so natural to us that we don't question them. We might feel or expect everyone else to hold similar values and then be surprised when other people behave or react in ways we didn't expect or maybe we can't quite understand.

For example, we might expect leaders to be honest or fair – and have slightly different expectations about what that looks like in practice.

When we think of ourselves as leaders we may feel we are not (yet) old enough, expert enough or certain enough to take the lead – or maybe we are waiting for others to invite us to take the lead?

Perhaps we feel it is disrespectful to disagree with a leader.

What are some of the things you think are important about leadership or you being a leader?



What are the characteristics of a successful research leader?

In years past, a good research leader was simply someone who was good at doing research.

More recent developments have made it all too apparent that in addition to being a good researcher, the most effective research leaders also have skills in leadership and management. They work well with people and contribute to the wider organisational culture within their university, research institute or organisation.

Reflect on your experiences of working with good & poor research leaders.

Can you identify some of the skills, behaviours and attitudes of good (or poor) leaders when working with/leading successful projects?

You might find it helpful to think about these specific questions...

- What do research leaders and managers do/not do?
- What responsibilities do they have?
- What kind of environment do they create?
- How do they make people feel
- What do people think about them?



How do the skills of leader and manager differ?

In addition to research-specific skills, research leaders need to show skills and behaviours in both management and leadership areas. In most organisations there are overlaps between these areas but we can consider the skills and roles to include:

Leading:

- inspiring
- setting direction, especially in times of change
- creating a vision or goal
- motivating people to work
- building and maintaining teamwork
- creating networks and opportunities
- providing an example
- producing a personal output

Managing:

- running the business in 'steady state' conditions
- day-to-day administration
- delegation
- monitoring
- managing conflict
- organising structures and establishing systems
- controlling especially by financial methods

You might find that you are comfortable and competent in both areas or you may have a preference or different aptitude for one over another.

In the majority of cases these are skill sets or behaviours that can be learned with experience and focussed practice.

There are many ways of characterising the personal and professional skills to be an effective and successful research leader. Some possible structures are shown below:

1: Research – Teaching – Professional contribution

Most universities require contributions in three major domains and this can be interpreted differently depending on the organisation.

2: According to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) (see <https://vitae.ac.uk>) successful researchers develop skills in four domains:

- Domain A: Knowledge & intellectual abilities
- Domain B: Personal effectiveness
- Domain C: Research governance & organisation
- Domain D: Engagement, influence & impact

3: Within a management context, expertise is needed in 4 domains:

- Personal Effectiveness (management of time/stress/priorities, communication, negotiating)
- Professional Skills (research, possibly teaching and clinical skills)
- Management Skills:
 - of work (project, co-ordination, supervision, delegation, budgeting)
 - people (team-building, motivation, developing, conflict-management)
- Organisational Awareness (internal and external - trends, opportunities)

Whichever structure you use, the Domain A or Professional Skills areas are not the subject of this workshop although it is important to realise that you need to continually develop and reappraise these skills throughout your career.

As a new leader, you want to build a successful, high-performing team. That means recognising potential, making good decisions and supporting people to thrive. But unconscious bias can quietly get in the way.

Unconscious (or implicit) bias refers to the automatic assumptions we make about others based on things like gender, race, age, background or even height - without realising we're doing it. Unconscious bias is learned and often shapes our behaviour without us realising.

These snap judgments help our brains make quick decisions and are shaped by the stereotypes we've absorbed from society, education, media and past experience.

Bias isn't always about prejudice. It's often about patterns. For example, studies have shown that when orchestras started using *blind auditions* - hiding the identity of the musician behind a screen - more women were selected. The musicians hadn't changed but removing visual cues helped reduce bias in how talent was judged.

In STEM, similar biases influence our decisions. A CV presented with a "male name" is evaluated more highly than the identical CV when presented with a female name.

Often there are biases about who we see as a "natural leader", who we trust with new responsibilities or whose voice we hear in meetings. These biases can show up in recruitment, performance reviews, authorship discussions and collaborations - often without bad intentions but creating poor outcomes.

For example:

- Men are often stereotyped as assertive, rational and leadership-ready.
- Women may be seen as supportive, emotional, or "less committed" (especially if they have caring responsibilities).
- People who don't fit traditional expectations for their gender, ethnicity or communication style may be underestimated or overlooked.

In truth we often **know** these stereotypes are not true but they unconsciously affect our decisions and our choices unless we make a conscious effort to eliminate bias, personally and in our organisations.

This unconscious knowledge can also affect how we feel about ourselves and our roles, whether we are "playing according to type" or doing something which is somehow different from what is expected by ourselves, our families, colleagues or society.

As a leader, this matters. Bias affects who gets opportunities, who feels included and how teams perform. But awareness gives us a chance to interrupt those patterns through better decision-making, fairer processes and more conscious leadership.

Pause and Reflect

- When you think of a "strong researcher" or a "natural leader" — what traits come to mind? Who fits that image in your team?
- Where might your decisions be shaped by assumptions about potential or motivation rather than actual evidence?

How do we “do” management/leadership?

There are as many leadership or supervisory styles as there are leaders/supervisors. Most of us have learned skills from our experience of being supervised or managed, observations of peers and practical experience of informal supervising earlier in our careers.

Other models or theoretical frameworks for management and supervision may enrich our experience of management, leadership and supervision and may help aspiring leaders/supervisors to understand and adapt their own styles to become a more effective leader.

The four leadership styles we look at here are:

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership, where leader has absolute power over his or her employees or team. Team members have little opportunity for making suggestions, even if these would be in the team or organization's interest.

Most people tend to resent being treated like this. Because of this, autocratic leadership usually leads to high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover. For some jobs, the style can remain effective where the advantages of control outweigh the disadvantages.

Laissez-faire Leadership

This French phrase means “leave it be” and is used to describe a leader who leaves his or her staff/students to get on with their work. It can be effective if the leader monitors what is being achieved and communicates this back to his or her team regularly. Most often, laissez-faire leadership works for teams in which the individuals are very experienced and skilled self-starters.

Unfortunately, it can also refer to situations where managers don't exert sufficient control.

Democratic Leadership or Participative Leadership

Although a democratic leader will make the final decision, he or she invites other members of the team to contribute to the decision-making process. This not only increases job satisfaction by involving employees or team members in what's going on, but it also helps to develop other people's skills. Employees and team members feel more control of their own destiny and so are motivated to work hard by more than just a financial reward.

As participation takes time, this approach can lead to things happening more slowly, but often the end result is better. The approach can be most suitable where team working is essential, and quality is more important than speed or productivity.

Bureaucratic Leadership

This describes managers who work “by the book.” They follow rules rigorously, and ensure that their people follow procedures precisely. This is an appropriate leadership style for work involving serious safety risks (such as working with machinery, with toxic substances, or at dangerous heights) or where large sums of money are involved. Bureaucratic leadership is also useful in organizations where employees do routine tasks (as in manufacturing).

The downside of this leadership style is that it's ineffective in teams and organizations that rely on flexibility, creativity, or innovation. It may arise when a supervisor is managing students and projects that are to some degree outside of their experience or expertise. This can cause risks or result in “blind spots” or can cause resentment when team members don't receive appropriate advice/guidance.

Which of these styles comes more naturally to you?

How do you intentionally/consciously use the styles with different people or at different times?

Motivation: David Rock has published on the SCARF model.

We all want people in our teams to be highly motivated. They often want leaders who will motivate them. But practically, what does that mean in terms of our leadership behaviours?

David Rock studies the neuroscience of optimal performance and the effects of stress. He and Daniel Pink, describe that, "carrot and stick" approaches to motivation are rarely appropriate in environments where intelligence and expertise really matter.

However, we are highly motivated to avoid situations of social pain or discomfort. This avoidance behaviour can reduce risk-taking and stifle creativity, again, very significant in environments where intelligence and expertise matter.

The elements recognised as vital for healthy performance are:

- **Status** – appropriate recognition of our contribution or place in the group?
- **Certainty** – do we know what is expected. is there stability in our environment?
- **Autonomy** – do we have appropriate independence or choice?
- **Relationships** – do we feel part of a team, free from bullying or coercion?
- **Fairness** – do we experience a just distribution of effort and resource?

When these elements are present, performance and motivation are high.

When people lack these elements, their experience of stress increases and their performance and job satisfaction decreases...

(See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeJSXfXep4M>
http://web.archive.org/web/20100705024057/http://www.your-brain-at-work.com/files/NLJ_SCARFUS.pdf)

With a little bit of thoughtful preparation a skilled leader can build these elements into day to day behaviours and genuinely increase the sense of motivation of the people in their teams – people want to work for this leader!

Can you recall or imagine three different, specific examples of positive and negative motivators for each domain within the SCARF context?

For example:

- What are three ways you can increase/decrease someone's sense of status?
- What are three ways you can increase/decrease someone's sense of certainty?
- What are three ways you can increase/decrease someone's sense of autonomy?
- What are three ways you can increase/decrease someone's sense of relationship?
- What are three ways you can increase/decrease someone's sense of fairness?



Reflective Worksheet - The SOAR Analysis

For each area think about your own skills.

Identify your strengths, any gaps you feel you have and opportunities to develop:

Strengths What attributes of a manager/leader do I have? What skills have I already got? What specialist knowledge do I have? What do other people see as my strengths?	Aspirations What vision or hopes do I have for my career? What skills do I want to learn? What knowledge do I need? Where can I improve?
Opportunities What strengths can I exploit? What are good opportunities here/now? What are good opportunities outside? What feedback have I had about my skills? What has stopped me applying for management jobs until now?	Results What have I already achieved? What am I most proud of? What makes me different? What obstacles have I overcome?

Now complete your own SOAR:

In planning for the year ahead, what is your vision for personal or professional development?

If you had a plan for growth, what would you want?

Strengths	Aspirations
Opportunities	Results



What have I learned from today?

During the workshop today we explored:

- Skills & behaviours of effective teams, managers, leaders
- Your own skills, values & qualities
- Different leadership styles
- What helps or hinders motivation
- How you'll apply your insights to your current role.

Some resources include:

Quiet Leadership: Six Steps to Transforming Performance at Work by David Rock (2009)

What Got You Here, Won't Get You There: Marshall Goldsmith (2010)

Centered Leadership: Leading with Purpose, Clarity and Impact by Joanna Barsh & Johanne Lavoie (2014)

Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader by Herminia Ibarra (2015)

How Women Rise: Break the 12 Habits Holding You Back: Sally Helgesen & Marshall Goldsmith (2019)

Even Tougher Than Herding Cats: Advice for your management journey by Ger Mulcahy (2020)

How Confidence Works: The New Science of Self-belief: Ian Robertson (2021)

The content and all materials provided remain the property of Dr Margaret Collins/
Training for Universities and can only be used by people who participated in workshops,
for their own personal use.

They cannot be reproduced, copied or shared without written permission.