

Leading Beyond Authority

People who lead beyond their authority can produce change beyond their direct circle of control.

Traditionally, many leaders learn to lead by rising through their organisations and earning the authority to lead.

But the world is changing: and leaders must change with it. As organisations develop increasingly complex internal structures and external relationships - working across cultures, borders and boundaries - the leader's ability to lead both across and outside their organisation becomes ever more important.

So how do leaders learn to lead now? When they have succeeded within their own world - yet find themselves surrounded by a host of new and unfamiliar faces, audiences and challenges? When they do not feel they have the legitimacy to lead anything or anyone outside the authority they believe has been prescribed for them?

This situation requires a different kind of leadership. A different set of perceptions, skills and talents. And further leadership development, which encourages broader vision and the ability to operate across diverse worlds right from the outset.

Very soon, the ability to lead a network will become as important as the ability to lead an organisation. We must develop leaders who can lead beyond their authority just as effectively as they can within it. Leaders who can effect change - even when they can't instruct or inspire trust in familiar ways. Leaders who can sustain broader perspectives - and who are confident in making connections between quite different groups of people and reconciling different worlds.

These are leaders who are better able to:

- **See context**

- expect complexity and produce clarity
- anticipate interconnectivity and find common ground
- develop diverse networks which help them see angles and opportunities
- spot talent in all worlds, not just their own

- **Adapt fast in new surroundings**

- step forward rather than backwards when faced with the unfamiliar
- be open to challenge, listen hard and ask questions
- cope with confrontation, resist judging too quickly and avoid assuming theirs is the only way
- inspire trust among people who are very different from them
- learn to speak other people's languages, not just their own

- **Produce change wherever they are**

- understand how power works in different worlds: find out where real power is and spot relationships between players
- influence others in different worlds: take things forward without simply seeking consensus
- draw out the creativity and innovation that diverse teams offer
- inspire in all worlds, not just their own.