

'The 7 Steps To Greatness'

Businesses reflect their leaders. Teams do likewise.

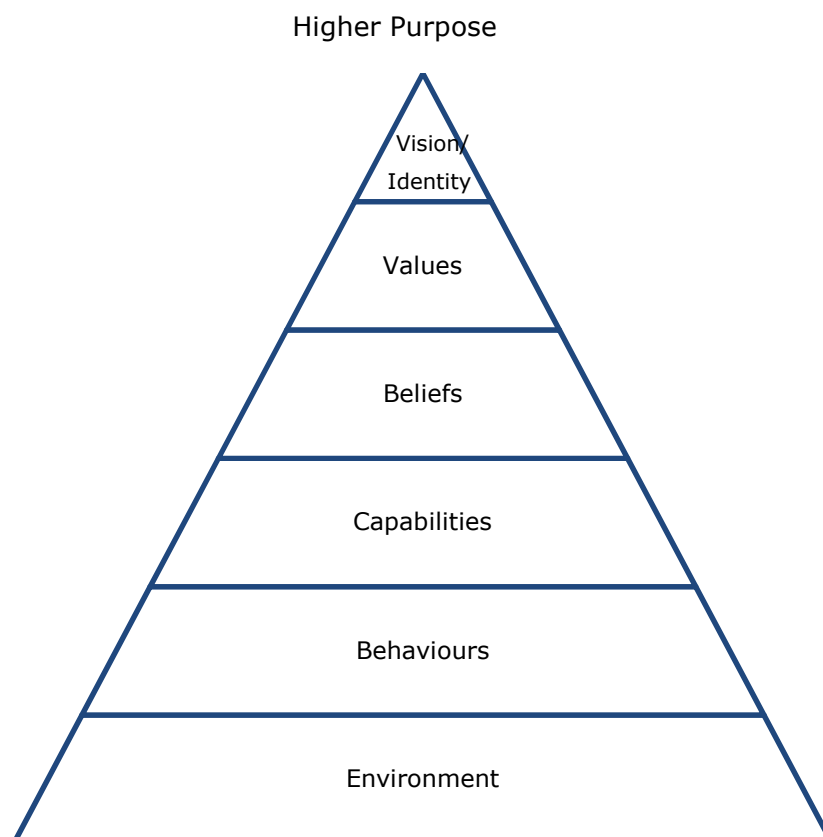
In my last article I gave you the opportunity to develop your thinking in relationship to your leadership brand. How did it go? What did you discover? How easy/challenging did you find it? And if you didn't do the exercise, consider doing it now; if, that is, you're interested in improving the results you are getting as a leader.

I made the point last time that you don't have to be in a formal position of leadership to participate in and get something from these exercises, so no excuses for thinking this doesn't apply to you!

This time around I want to give you a whole lot more to think about and some very practical and valuable tasks to take away. You see, I'm not particularly interested in writing articles about leadership theory. I'm much more interested in giving people stuff (great word, 'stuff') that they can use to become the best they can be, whether that's a parent, a salesperson, a business presenter or a leader. Just so you know.

So here's a great framework for you and one of the things that makes it great is the fact that you can use it in the context of an organisation, a team or an individual. Bear that in mind while I take you through it and I'll point out its various applications as we go.

'7 Steps To Greatness' or 'The 7 Levels Of Leadership Influence'



Overview:

As you consider these steps or levels I want you to be aware of the fact that this framework provides you with a very powerful way of checking alignment or congruence in an organisation, team or individual.

Each level above is more abstract and more powerful than those below and has a greater degree of impact on those below. A change at an upper level will cascade and permeate through those below it. A change at a lower level may influence those above and it may not. Lower level changes are definitely not as powerful as higher level changes.

I'll add more to this once you've had a chance to familiarise yourself with the framework.

In the meantime use the questions I've asked below as a way of working towards greatness.

Higher Purpose:

At the very top of this framework is the level of *mission* which represents the wider purpose as an organisation or individual. For some, this is a sort of spirituality or wider reason for life. It is at this level that organisational and personal mission statements are expressed. A mission statement is an expression of the reason for the organisation's existence.

Question for you:

- Do you/your team/your organisation have absolute clarity of purpose?
- If your answer is 'No' then that's your starting point. Find the answer.

Vision/Identity:

This level represents **Vision** when seen from an organisational perspective and **Identity** when related to an individual.

Vision

All highly successful organisations have a clear vision – a statement of direction with descriptive evidence of the criteria by which they will judge their arrival. Look at **Henry Ford's** vision; it tells you all you need to know:

"We will build a motor car for the great multitude... it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces..."

When I'm through, everybody will be able to afford one and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted (and we will) give a large number of men employment at good wages."

And here are some of the hallmarks of a compelling vision:

<p>1. A dynamic story – not merely a 'snapshot' image</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive to the organisation's history and needs • Grounded in market facts, insights and foresight • Offering a better tomorrow
<p>2. 'Impressionistically complete' – not an encyclopaedia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on specific changes needed • Highlighting the priorities and inclusive of the steps required • Linkable to measurable goals
<p>3. Laden with meaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing meaning to people's (work)

	lives, stimulating them to fulfil their potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appealing to higher values
4. Memorable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novel in reframing or providing perspective • Can be summarised in a short tag-line

Questions for you:

- Does your organisation/team have a vision of the future that is compelling and easy to summarise?
- If I were to visit your organisation and ask your team to tell me the vision for the future, what would they say?

Using the list of 4 hallmarks above, conduct an appraisal of the current state of your organisation or team. Where people are less than clear, you know you have work to do!

Identity

Your role and sense of self are held at this level. People will use 'I am' statements when communicating at this level. So, if you are happy to say, 'I am a leader' I have a question for you:

What is your vision of leadership? How clear are you of the leader you want to become? (For those of you who have already completed the Leadership brand exercise, this is a simple continuation of this.)

If you are not yet happy to say, 'I am a leader', then my question is:

How can you become one; who can you learn from and what other support do you need to get you there?

Values:

Values are what motivate us. They are those things that we move toward or away from. They are what we are prepared to give energy, time and resources to achieve or avoid.

They form the basis of all decision making and our post-event evaluation of those decisions. They are the mechanism by which we evaluate others' behaviour and are experienced as feelings. They are of huge importance to us, although many of them are held outside of our conscious awareness.

Many organisations have a list of values to which they subscribe. Less, in my experience, actually operate in complete alignment with their stated values.

Questions for your organisation:

- Does your organisation have a statement of values?
- Does it operate in accordance with these?
- Are your team clear of these values and do they use them as the basis for all business decisions?

You know what to do if the answer to any of these questions is 'No'.

Questions for you as a leader:

- What are your values as a leader?

- How clearly have you communicated these to your team?
- How do you respond if a member of your team acts in contravention to one of your values?

Beliefs:

Beliefs are the fabric that holds our world together. We are constantly searching for evidence that our beliefs are true and will even go as far as to delete evidence that contradicts the validity of a belief that we hold. And yet our beliefs are subject to change over time.

Some beliefs that we hold are useful and empowering, some are less useful and limit us and our ability to change.

Organisations also function to sets of beliefs that are either unconsciously held and have become part of the way in which they operate or are stated publicly and rigorously reinforced at every opportunity.

Questions for your organisation:

- What beliefs does your organisation hold about business, people, customers and other stakeholders?
- How clear are your team of these?
- How does your organisation go about the task of reinforcing these beliefs?

Questions for you as a leader:

- What beliefs do you hold that prevent you being the best Leader you can be?
- What beliefs do you hold about people and which of these help you and which hinder you as a leader?
- What beliefs would most help you to become the leader you want to be?

Capabilities:

Capabilities refer to the knowledge and skill that you and the people in your organisation have. These can encompass the technical skills required to do the job as well as the personal skills and attributes that allow you to interact effectively with the people in your life.

Questions for your organisation:

- How well equipped are your team to do the things they need to do to the best of their ability?
- What can you do to ensure that your organisation maximises the talents of your most able people?
- What provision do you make to train and develop your people in order to build the knowledge, skill and effectiveness of your organisation?

Question for you:

- What is your 'natural advantage' and how can you use this better?
- What one skill, if you had it, would have the greatest impact on you as a Leader?
- How can you get that skill?

Behaviours:

These are the actions that you and your people take on a day to day basis in the business. They are to do with the way in which you interact with anyone with whom you have contact.

Questions for your organisation:

- How clear are your people of what is expected of them in terms of their day to day behaviour?
- How do you evaluate and recognise behaviour that is likely to enhance your organisation's standing?

Questions for you as a leader:

- When everyone is behaving in the way that you would want, what will be happening?
- How does your behaviour as a leader reflect the behaviour that you want from your people?
- What behaviours on your part will best help you to become the leader you want to be?

Environment:

The environment, as the name suggests, focuses our attention on the nature of our physical surroundings; the workplace, working conditions, the market we operate in, the customers we service.

Questions for your organisation:

- Are you operating in the right environment?
- Does the environment you have created support your people's ability to operate according to the values and beliefs that you hold?

Questions for you as a leader:

- What environment have you created around you?
- What elements of that environment could be changed to produce one that more effectively mirrored your values and beliefs and your identity as a leader?

Summary:

I'm hoping that you can see the value of this framework as a way of evaluating the alignment within your organisation, your team and yourself. It is very easy to identify in any organisation or team when there is alignment and equally easy when there is mis-alignment.

The main pressure points to examine are:

- Does the vision mean anything to the people and are they motivated by it?
- Do the values have substance and meaning and are people familiar with them?
- Are the values words on a piece of paper or are they the life blood of the organisation?
- Are the beliefs of the senior people in the organisation in line with the values?
- Do they operate in line with those beliefs?
- Do the people have the capabilities to operate in accordance with the values and beliefs?
- Does everyone in the organisation behave on a day to day basis in a way that is in alignment with the values and beliefs?
- Does the environment reflect the values and beliefs of the organisation?

Good leaders ensure attention is paid to every level in this framework. To bring about the world that you want others to subscribe to, you need alignment through all the levels. The most powerful impact will be felt by things being right at the top but that is no excuse to neglect the bottom.

If you are going to be serious about becoming the best organisation and leader you can be, you have plenty to occupy you before we meet again!

Tim Fearon

Extraordinary Coaching Company