

Making managers better leaders

By giving leadership a campaigning twist

A chief executive vacancy for a national charity recently caught my eye; intriguingly there was a jarring contrast between the advert and the information pack. The advert spoke about looking for an inspiring leader; yet the person specification only mentioned the importance of certain management competencies. It was clear that, despite the lofty leadership rhetoric, they were going to recruit a manager.

As the voluntary sector has become ever more professional, with an increased and proper focus on the importance of management skills, such as human resources, budgeting, and strategic planning, it is so important not to lose sight of the essential elements for an effective leader in the voluntary sector.

One consequence of this increased management focus is that voluntary sector leaders can be highly competent managers, but can then struggle to inspire their staff and supporters, let alone the wider public. We don't need just need effective managers; we also need effective leaders.

When I was on what is now the NHS management training scheme, one of the perennial discussions that we were encouraged to have as trainee managers was what the difference between being a manager and a leader.

More recently, and within the context of the voluntary sector, I was interested in the distinction drawn between these two different roles in [an article by NCVO](#). It draws out the contrasts between the two approaches: planning versus vision; improving today versus shaping tomorrow; doing versus being; and head versus heart.

Now, as an experienced campaigner and a teacher of campaigning skills both in the UK and internationally over the past two decades, I have become increasingly interested in the potential of **campaigning skills to give a twist to leadership** and help leaders in the voluntary sector to move beyond being managers to real leaders.

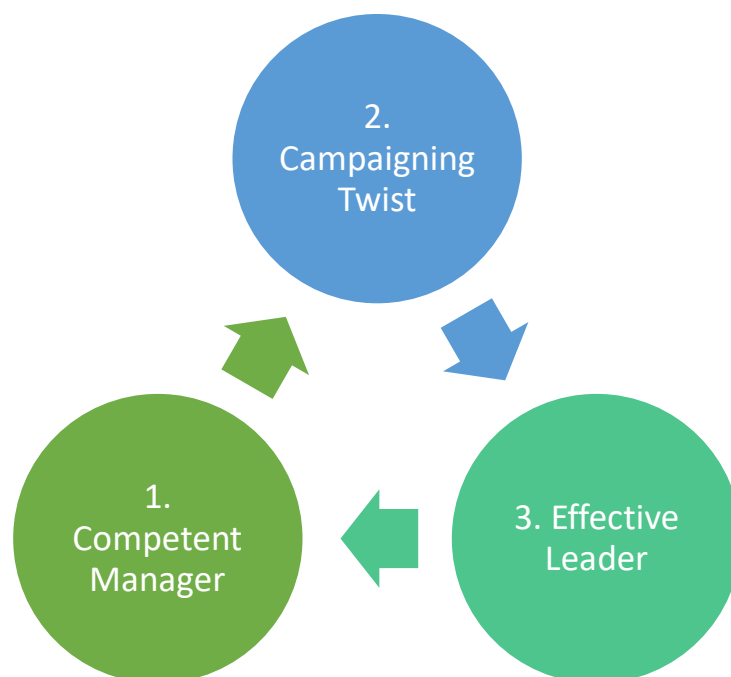
But I feel it is vital to draw an important distinction: I am not saying that all leaders should be campaigners, but rather that **all leaders can be more effective in their roles by understanding and deploying certain campaigning skills**. As a manager, it is this twist to their approach to leadership by using these campaigning skills, which can help them to become more of an outstanding and visionary leader.

The disciplines of management, leadership and campaigning can be seen separately, but it is when you explore their inter-relationship and potential synergy that real leadership can emerge.

We do need both managers and leaders in the voluntary sector, but it is when they are given a campaigning twist that we see real leadership.

Making managers better leaders by adding a campaigning twist

A competent manager (stage 1) can benefit from a boost of campaigning skills (stage 2) to make them a more effective leader (stage 3), and so the cycle continues re-enforcing the need for all these elements for effective leadership.



My experience as a leader, manager and campaigner is that a manager will become more effective and more of a leader, and not just a manager, by embracing the following skills – **the campaigning twist for leadership**:

Skill	Description
Valuing the central importance of your collective mission	<i>Linking all activity to the collective mission and how it will help to achieve the mission</i>
Conveying the purpose of your organisation	<i>Your elevator pitch of problem and solution – why do you do what you do?</i>
Living your shared values	<i>Not just using them as words but living them every day and communicating what you are doing</i>
Telling a compelling story	<i>Being able to say clearly: where have we come from, where are we now, and where are we going</i>
Being able to describe what success looks like	<i>What does the world actually look like when you have achieved your goal – how does it look and feel different?</i>
Being curious and seeking to understand where power is and should be	<i>Understanding the real power dynamics, inviting challenge and explicitly setting out where power should be</i>
Valuing the richness of lived experience	<i>Showing the equal importance of lived experience alongside professional knowledge and skills</i>
Being interested in and able to respond to opposition messages	<i>Being open to the arguments against your position, and using this opposition to strengthen the effectiveness of your own messages</i>

Building new and surprising allies	<i>Being open to building new allies especially when they are not just the usual suspects to build broader support in civil society for the change you want to see</i>
Building a learning culture	<i>Encouraging people to try things, embracing failure and not penalising it, but seeking always to learn and to be stronger as a result</i>

I am currently working to develop this concept. If these ideas have struck any interest in you, and you would like to explore them more and how they might be able to help you in your work, do please get in touch with me.

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