Leadership development

Our purpose is achieving real and sustainable transformation by helping councils to ‘change from within’. As part of this philosophy of helping councils to drive change themselves, development programmes form an integral part of what RedQuadrant does.

Our team consists of recognised experts in transformational change, with a track record of delivering projects, training, coaching, workshops and mentoring for a range of public sector clients, as well as direct leadership within public sector organisations.

Our leadership development helps participants grasp the essence of customer-driven systems thinking. We use an action learning style to provide the knowledge and tools necessary to apply this approach in practice.

Our approach is evidence-based and focused. We know that there are real, measurable benefits from leadership development, and we also know that classical leadership development is not effective. Therefore, we don’t do ‘classical’ training and leadership development. Our programmes are either experientially oriented (through simulations) or are action learning oriented in ‘live’ environments. Instead of fixed programmes, that are rolled-out, we take our own adaptive leadership medicine and ensure that the actions and learning are customised for each particular situation and for the people who are learning – and we learn and develop the course to meet changing needs as we go along...

Why Quadrant Orange?

We believe that there are three critical aspects to effective leadership development in the public sector:

- **Beliefs and thinking** – the result of this is an approach that grows adaptive leadership with the aim of delivering transformational change. Our initiatives explicitly and implicitly help participants with whole and complex systems thinking, without an over-academic focus. We’re interested in making ‘systems doing’ a reality, and showing that these approaches, which might sound intimidating, are a real possibility for many public service managers. We are selective in working with clients who do not expect template traditional projects, but do expect real and sustainable outcomes.

Most programmes for executive leadership tend to see the organisation in a mechanistic way – a ‘processing machine’, and at best have simplistic organisational models. We believe that these approaches are not sufficient anymore (if they ever were). Most organisations, and certainly local government, need to make real transformational changes, and therefore need to deal with complex and apparently intractable problems. In other words, from a Demos publication:

‘In these complex circumstances, people and organisations have to become adaptive ... public services should be understood as complex adaptive systems and not according to the mechanistic models that have traditionally dominated government thinking. Paul Plsek likens this difference to that between throwing a stone and throwing a live bird. The trajectory of the stone can be calculated precisely using the laws of physics. The trajectory of the bird is far less
predictable. The question is whether policy-makers can embrace this shift in perspective, and redefine their role as supporters of adaptive processes of change. They need to stop pretending they are throwing stones, and acknowledge that the management of public services is far more akin to throwing birds.’


It is worth noting that a collaborator on ‘the adapative state’, Charles Leadbeater, commented that ‘if you have been well trained by certain consulting organisations, you know how to make the bird behave like the rock – you strap the bird to a rock and then throw it. However, this predictability comes at the cost of the bird losing certain bird-like properties; most importantly, life’.

- A thorough and deeply felt understanding of the ‘wicked problems’ in local government. We are not a training company nor a leadership development company per se. Dealing with leadership challenges in local government is what we do on a daily basis. Our business is to helping local government with a variety of initiatives, interventions and support to tackle the significant complex challenges. The methods and tools for achieve this support are important in that they must be useful and applicable to the situation and individual(s) involved.

Here are some of examples of work that our leadership development team are also delivering at the same time:

- Facilitating the formation and focus of a ‘Tri-Borough’ (Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham and RB of Kensington and Chelsea) Community Budgets team, with various stakeholders including secondees from most central Government departments, all three councils and many partner organisations;

- Supporting a council in a radical transformation and mobilising the wider organisation and stakeholders towards a pure commissioning organisation – some of the tools used are scenario planning and ‘breaking the shell’;

- Co-designing and facilitating a ‘Small Business Accelerator programme’ for the London borough of Newham, in which council services spin-off into independent small businesses;

- Supporting London Councils in a programme where (initially) five boroughs go through a Rapid Improvement Event (an agile rapid experimentation method) to start to resolve homelessness problems;

- Working with the London Borough of Hillingdon and partners to change its Children’s Services purpose and model from dealing with the acute, to an early intervention and prevention model. As most local authorities in the country are becoming aware because of increasing needs and decreasing budgets, in a few years’ time there will be only half of the
budget available per case. The window of time for minimising demand to avoid much more expensive statutory support is closing rapidly

- Ultimately it’s about people who can work in this way, and we have a team that is capable of doing that.

We offer a top team of people who are passionate about public sector service transformation and who have a proven ability to transfer their capabilities and experience into highly relevant (and fun!) learning initiatives. We are not trainers, but facilitators and coaches who understand the coalface of dealing with adaptive challenges. Instead of simply the theory, we bring our own experience to the table.

Our understanding of the target audience and their needs

Every individual is different, but we see some clear common characteristics that are relevant to senior leaders in the public sector:

1) Caring about public services, they do want to remove waste at the same time avoiding the value destruction that often comes with ‘slash and burn’

These senior leaders have had to make tough decisions about service provision, and have already delivered savings in a typical, admirable, public service style – getting on with the job... But they realise that a focus on cuts will significantly impact service delivery. With diminishing budgets, they realise that there is a pull to resorting to a slash and burn approach, by salami slicing budgets to such an extent that effective service delivery is no longer possible. This is something they passionately want to avoid; they deeply care about public service delivery and want to find other ways to making the savings. They recognise that this often means working with the wider (complex) system to remove some of the root causes of waste.

2) As leaders they have the courage to say: ‘I don’t have all the answers’

While finding ways to avoid cutting their services down towards a state of collapse, they recognise that there isn’t a magic wand solution, not from themselves as leaders, nor from academics, nor from consultants. An off-the-shelf solution that can be ‘plugged and played’ is occasionally feasible, but for the biggest problems that really make a difference there isn’t a single solution – these are far too complex. These leaders often exhibit humility (‘I don’t have an answer to these complex problems’), but are not defeatist about it. On the contrary, they have a grit and determination to work through the challenges with the wider system of stakeholders.

3) These leaders are highly educated and experienced

This group does not start from scratch in terms of leadership and change concepts. Instead, they are highly educated, through formal education, programmes within the organisations they have worked or self-study. This means that they are keen to engage as a learning partner.
instead of just a participant. Their expectation is that of a co-learning relationship, not only with the people running the programme, but also with the other delegates.

Programme design principles

These three characteristics of leaders in the public sector and their needs as described above mean, as we interpret it, something significantly different from a classical leadership programme. How? The emphasis is on the design principles of ‘co-design’ and ‘learning by doing’.

Co-design

- We should not provide in either content or style of delivery a top-down ‘I have the answers’ type of programme. The more complex things are (dealing with wicked problems), the less ‘traditional’ leadership we need. Instead, the programme should provide a framework that stimulates, and in which ideas, experimentation and learning can emerge. This is why the co-design of such a programme is essential. In other words, it would be rather bizarre and counter-productive if we did not provide a transformational leadership programme in a transformational leadership style.

Learning by doing

- Senior leaders have had enough slides and classroom teaching. Their need is more practical; to gain support to work through real wicked challenges and, by doing this, learn and hone their skills in tackling complex challenges. This doesn’t mean that we do not provide appropriate frameworks and theory. We do. But the emphasis is on ‘the doing’ through simulations and real practice which is then embedded in the theory. We follow the belief that ‘It is easier to act your way in a new way of thinking than to think yourself into a new way of acting’ (Richard Pascale). This focus on practical actions and learning also has other benefits; working on real problems is more stimulating, and can result in direct benefits for the councils as well as minimises the impact of taking delegates away from their (busy) work.

Putting people first – working as a team

- We trust the intelligence of the leaders in the system to come up with the best way forward, rather than arriving with pre-cooked solutions. This also means that we get alongside the delegates to really feel their world, not just advise or observe from the outside.
Our team

**Rick Torseth** is our leadership development programme director. Rick is a leadership consultant working mostly in the UK and the US and is focused on developing leaders and their capacity to handle wicked problems and social change in global organisations, the public sector and charities. Rick has consulted and coached leaders since 1991 and his experience has taught him that in a changing world, a leader’s capacity to impact the mission is dependent on having a development strategy that increases self-knowledge, the competency to handle complex problems and build an adaptive organization. He has designed and led leadership programmes in both the private and public sector. Most of his current work is for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Rick’s early work was with teams inside the controller division of AT&T. Since 1997, Rick is focused on leadership development, coaching and consulting with an emphasis on dealing with wicked problems and the challenges of social change within organizations. He uses the *Adaptive Leadership* frameworks developed by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky, supported by Action Learning and Edgar Schein’s model for leading culture change. Rick completed his dissertation for a MSc. from HEC Paris & University of Oxford in 2008. His dissertation researched how organisations can develop *Adaptive Leadership* capacity when restricted by the constraints of time and limited resources.

**Peter Cooper** is co-founder and Managing Director of Advanced Dynamics. His background of twenty years in mining and smelting gave him wide-ranging and diverse business expertise, and creating an interest in leadership and the organisational arrangements required for sustainable performance.

He founded Advanced Dynamics twenty years ago to apply a systemic approach to building the capability of organisations to achieve their long-term goals. He has worked with the public, private, and voluntary sectors in Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica, and around the world.

In the public sector, Peter’s has focused on helping organisations to build senior management capability to tackle systemic issues in their organisations and in their communities. He has coached and supported chief executives to tackle the challenge of improving whole organisation performance. He has worked across housing, conservation, economic development, social services, labour relations, foreign affairs, child protection and agriculture. This has led to a deep interest in the ways that the public sector is seeking to reform itself to be able to respond to increasingly complex global challenges.

**Ben Taylor** is an experienced organisational development practitioner whose approach is based on systems thinking to solve complex problems within organisations and in their wider environment. He started his career in a local authority’s Housing Advice Centre; he is focussed on practical applications. He is an internationally recognised ‘systems thinker’ and facilitator. Expertise includes:

- Taking strategic change from visioning through to organisational transformation
- Customer value and customer focus - changing structures, processes and management thinking to deliver more efficient services designed to meet customer purpose, using Lean and Six Sigma as appropriate
- Organisation development, facilitation, action learning, training, skills transfer
- Communications and reputation, stakeholder engagement, brand alignment
Lorna Smalley is an experienced local government transformation, efficiency and organisational development practitioner. Particular areas of expertise include:

- Organisation development and design, facilitation, action learning, training, skills transfer, coaching & mentoring
- Communications, stakeholder engagement
- Project and programme management

Lorna has delivered various interventions, from coaching of directors, including chief exec, to working with service managers to enable them to impact the desired changes.

Deborah Jones has over 15 years’ experience of leading innovation & change projects and launching new products and businesses to market. With solid research, strategy development, project management and business case development skills to deliver superior products and services to market. She has led change from an in-house position and also acted as a consultant for many companies & institutions in both the UK and mainland Europe.

Deborah has designed and delivered leadership development programmes for senior executives as well as high potentials, to improve their leadership, communication and coaching skills. She has also developed and delivered training programmes to develop client engagement skills and is qualified as a leadership coach through ‘Results Coaching Systems’ which is backed by neuroscientific research and action learning theory, as well as psychology and systems theory. It is solutions focussed and is designed with the brain in mind, to encourage real improvements in thinking and performance. Recent consulting projects have included working with Local Authorities in the UK to help them deliver and navigate current transformational challenges, such as delivering cost savings through shared services or outsourcing services to commercial companies. She has helped leaders and employees deliver new business cases, business processes, organisational structures and the cultural change required to support them as they take on the changes necessary to adapt and survive over the next decade in the public sector.

Dennis Vergne is transformation expert specialised in organisationa l change management with a passion for enabling sustainable change and savings within public sector organisations. Originally from the Netherlands, Dennis has been working with UK local authorities since 2004. His credibility in the public sector is recognised; based on his experience, research and programme design and delivery. Particular areas of expertise:

- Organisational change
- Business process improvement
- Leadership development programmes

He has among others done research written up in a dissertation on the application of transformational change versus technical change intervention and their success in twelve local authority large change programmes.

Sue Pritchard is a highly experienced consultant, researcher and writer, with 25 year track record in leadership and ‘whole systems’ development, action learning and research. Sue brings a deep appreciation of the real leadership and system dynamics in complex organisations, gained through her consulting practice in public, not for profit and private sector settings, her research and through her own Board level public appointments Sue designs and delivers processes to help improve clients’ performance and assist them in implementing change in complex social systems through:
Engaging and involving everyone with a stake in improvement
Mobilizing and developing distributed leadership in organisations, partnerships and communities
Supporting people’s resilience and perseverance for sustainable change

Sue was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Revans Institute for Action Learning and Research from 1998-2004, where she worked on ‘leadership and learning in partnerships’. A founding member on the Editorial Board of the international Taylor and Francis journal, ‘Action Learning; Research & Practice’, Sue organises the biennial International Action Learning Conference, giving her a good insight into global trends in leadership.

Steve Nicklen is an experienced one-to-one and team coach and leadership and organisational development consultant. Steve was one of the co-authors of the Local Government Leadership Centre’s report on the Total Place Pilot Programmes, ‘A Practitioners’ Guide’, within which he wrote a number of pieces, including one on transformational leadership (page 88; the guide is available on the LGA’s website). He is also one of the co-authors on a book commissioned by Gower on ‘Complex Programme Management’. Within this book, due to be published some time next year, he is the author of the chapter on leadership.

In recent years, Steve has lead several projects involving developing transformational leadership across whole systems (i.e. within the relevant areas, local authorities, NHS bodies, police, charities and other NFP and private sector organisations).

Stephen Moss has over 25 years consulting experience working with clients across a range of sectors on strategic change, leadership and performance improvement projects. As an organisation development specialist he brings a focus on business outcomes, a strong background in applied psychology and experience of working on both strategy and nitty-gritty operations. Stephen has worked with large consulting firms such as PA Consulting Group, Deloitte and Logica IT services and has a very strong and pragmatic grasp of the human and systemic implications of technology and operating model design and change, service design and improvement, complex transitions and transformation.

He has significant experience working in the public sector in local authorities, central government and health on organisational reviews and change, service improvement and leadership programmes. This included 10+ years working in the social care field as practitioner and manager of services prior to moving into consulting work. He is currently interested in how people work together across organisation boundaries in these times of complex change and continuing uncertainty.

Contact us
Ben Taylor ben.taylor@redquadrant.com 07931317230

www.redquadrant.com