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# The leading researcher



Explore and develop your  
leadership potential

## About the authors

**Dr Fiona Denney** has worked in universities for over 15 years as an academic in management studies and as a staff developer. Currently leading researcher training and development at King's College London, Fiona is involved in developing leadership programmes for future research leaders. She is also the Hub Co-ordinator for the Vitae London Hub.

**Dr Jeremy Mead** is founder and Director for Norfolk Light, a business dedicated to excellence in leadership development coaching. He works with organisations across the globe, designing and implementing innovative leadership programmes and coaching people in senior positions. Prior to setting up Norfolk Light, Jeremy worked for Unilever as Vice President for Leadership Development. This followed a career starting in Research and including many operational and strategic leadership roles within the global business environment.

**Paul Toombs** has over 30 years' experience in enabling people to be superior performers. He is a member of Competency International, a research consortium and consultancy formed to foster collaboration on the design and implementation of competency based interventions which produce measurable results for clients. He uses this approach to assess and coach people with their personal and career development. He is a leader for the suite of Vitae Effective Researcher courses.

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Vitae c/o CRAC, 2nd Floor, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX  
T: 01223 448500 [orders@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:orders@vitae.ac.uk)  
F: 01223 311708 [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

Dr Fiona Denney Dr Jeremy Mead Paul Toombs

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## Introduction

### The Leading Researcher

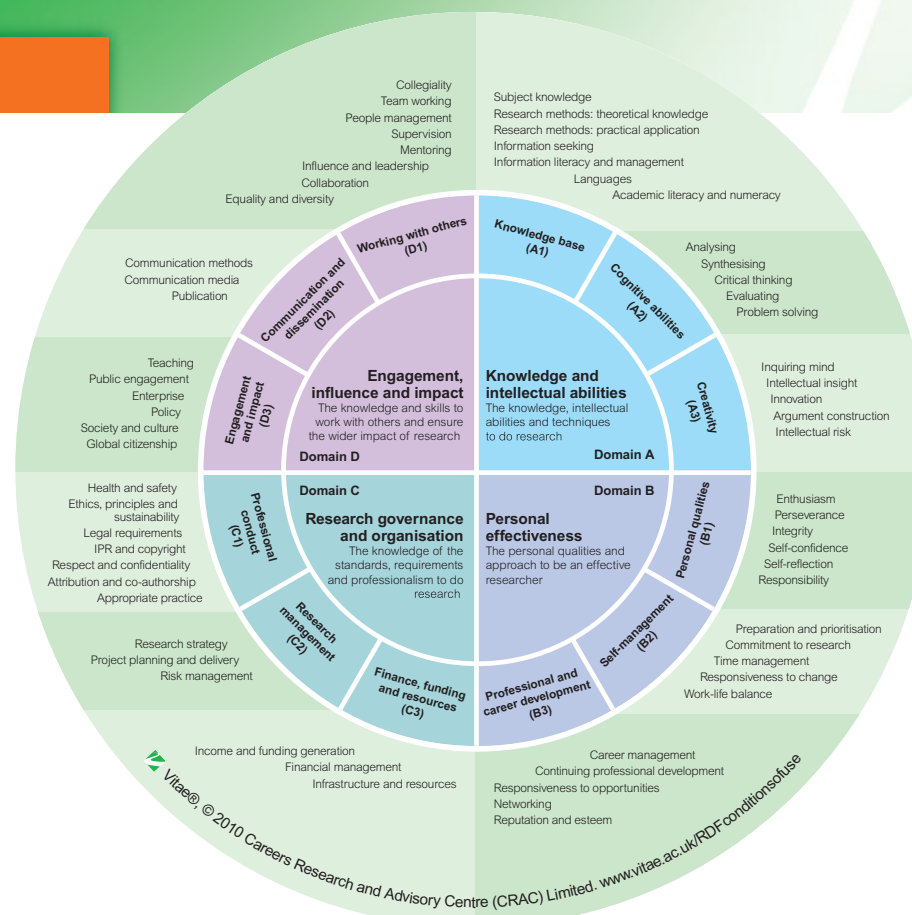
**We all have the opportunity to exhibit leadership: it's needed in all spheres of life, at all levels and in all parts of an organisation. Leaders need first to develop effective self-leadership skills. Only when they have these will they be in a position to influence the behaviour of others. A leader doesn't walk alone but others willingly walk along with him or her.**

It's likely you will already have demonstrated leadership, whether in your day-to-day work as a researcher, on a sports field, in running a seminar series, or through involvement with a voluntary organisation. The examples in this booklet are intended to demonstrate the breadth of opportunity to lead rather than to represent exact situations in your life. Whether or not you are currently in an 'official' leadership role, developing your leadership skills will make a significant contribution to your success in getting things done, forging collaborations and advancing your career.

This booklet is an introduction to leadership and you may wish to explore the topic further and apply your learning as part of your continuing professional development. Learning will need to be tailored to the specific circumstances you encounter on your journey as a leader.

You will notice that throughout, we have referenced the Vitae Researcher Development Framework ([www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)). The Framework is specific to researchers and has been designed as an inspirational guide to personal development and to help you to make the most of your strengths. You might use it to audit your knowledge and attributes, to make an action plan for development, to structure conversations with your supervisor or line manager or to articulate evidence of the transferability of your skills when seeking employment.

**To get the best out of this booklet we want you to go beyond reading the text and doing the activities we hope you will go out and practise leadership in your daily life.**



### Before you turn this page...

**This booklet is a practical guide which you can use at an individual level. To help you to get the most out of it, take a little time first to set a personal context for yourself and your development as a leader. Jot down your thoughts.**

Think of those people – at all levels and in all walks of life – who you know personally and respect for their skills as leaders. What do you admire about them?

Note down what you think makes a strong leader – think of people who lead in several different contexts.

Of the skills and attributes that you associate with these strong leaders, which do you also have? Which would you like to develop?

**“ Leadership is about challenge. The challenge of getting the best out of yourself and the people around you. Challenging yourself and others to do what is right and not just what is easy. The challenge of influencing when you have no power. The challenge of sharing your passion and values with other people, and hoping they will follow. ”**

Dr Steve Hutchinson, Hutchinson Training and Development Ltd

# Leading through values

## How to be an authentic leader

You don't need to be aware of your values to be able to lead in any of the areas outlined in this booklet. You can plan and deliver a strategy, lead in meetings, get results and manage a crisis all without understanding your own values and those of others. You will not, however, be leading at your best. Your leadership will essentially be an empty shell and, without meaning, it will not inspire or carry along anyone else. When you understand and lead from your values, you lead with authenticity. Authentic leaders are able to inspire high levels of performance in others because they make performance meaningful (Why should anyone be led by you? Jones and Goffee, Harvard Business School Press, 2006).

### Resonant Leadership

(from Primal leadership: learning to lead with emotional intelligence. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

“The best leaders are not only highly motivated themselves, but somehow are able to radiate that positivity, igniting and mobilising positive attitudes in those around them.

For leaders, the first step has nothing to do with leading others; step one poses the challenge of knowing oneself. That includes connecting with the deep values that guide us, imbuing our actions with meaning.”

## Activity

### Consider the following list of values

- 1 Choose the ten values which are most important to you as guides for how to behave or as components of a valued way of life. Feel free to add any values of your own to the list
- 2 Make a choice to let go of one (you might want to imagine a reward for doing this)
- 3 Now choose to let go of another (imagine a penalty if you don't)
- 4 Continue until you have just 2 or 3 values left.

This is a way to identify your core values and, once this is done, you need to act on them. If you act from your values you will be a more coherent and powerful leader. The values you choose may, to an extent, depend on the area of life you're considering, for example working as an employee, starting your own business, family life etc. Try rethinking your choices for several different contexts and compare.



## What I value most...

Achievement	Growth	Quality of work
Advancement and promotion	Helping others	Quality relationships
Adventure	Helping society	Recognition and respect
Affection, love and caring	Honesty	Religion
Arts	Independence	Reputation
Challenges	Influencing others	Responsibility and accountability
Change and variety	Inner harmony	Security
Close relationships	Innovation	Self-respect
Community	Integrity	Serenity
Competence	Intellectual status	Sophistication
Competition	Knowledge	Stability
Cooperation	Leading	Status
Creativity	Location	Time freedom
Decisiveness	Loyalty	Truth
Democracy	Meaningful work	Wisdom
Ecological awareness	Merit	Work under pressure
Economic security	Money	Working with others
Effectiveness	Nature	Working alone
Efficiency	Openness and honesty	...
Tranquillity	Order	...
Ethical practice	Personal development	...
Excellence	Physical challenge	...
Excitement	Pleasure	...
Fame	Power and authority	...
Family	Privacy	...
Financial gain	Public service	...
Friendships	Purity	...

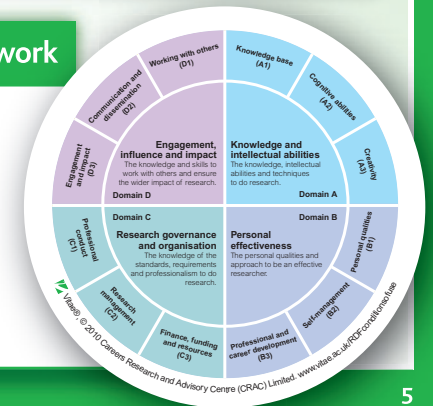
## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Reflect on descriptors from sub-domain B1 of the Researcher Development Framework (personal qualities). See page 3.

Thinking about your own values, how might these translate into strengths as a leader and how might others see you?

For example, enthusiastic, persevering, acting from integrity?





# Leading strategically

## How to create the future

“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. Which road do I take? she asked. Where do you want to go? was his response. I don't know, Alice answered. Then, said the cat, it doesn't matter.”

Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll

In Stephen Covey's book 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' (Simon and Schuster Ltd, 1989), habit 2 is stated as 'start with the end in mind'. Covey explains that to 'Begin with the End in Mind means to begin each day, task, or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination, and then continue by flexing your proactive muscles to make things happen.'

Most organisations have a mission, which is an expression of where they want to be in a few years time. A strategy is the chosen route to deliver this. Strategy comes from a clear understanding of the context and strategic leadership is about making decisions.

Setting strategic direction is an important step for a leader in any situation, but one which will benefit from the involvement of all those who work towards achieving that strategy. Involving the whole team enables a leader to benefit from a wide range of ideas and experience and to ensure that team members are well placed to succeed because they feel informed, involved and empowered.

When you are not in an official leadership role, recognising the strategic context within which you are working is an important starting point for leading from within a team and for successful self-leadership. It's worth finding out about the mission and strategies set in place by leaders in your institution or by your sponsor. Even though you may be indirectly involved in reaching the goals set out in the mission, developing your awareness will support good self-leadership and success. For example, researchers applying for grant funding need to be aware of the overall strategic direction in their research field, of the government, of potential sponsors and of their university and department. They should ensure that

their funding application is aligned with all of these if it is to be successful.

Consider whether you are embracing self-leadership by taking a strategic approach in areas of your life such as your research and your career.

### Speaking from experience...

In the following situation, the leader talks about having come into her role several years ago and growing the team from scratch. She developed her own mission and strategy at that time and later realised with the influence of other team members that the future strategic direction needed to be something that the team developed together and took ownership for. She describes how she led this...

"I find it exceedingly difficult to do the big picture, long term strategic planning when I'm in the office with all the usual day-to-day operational management going on around me. I think it's essential to go off site and spend a complete day in order to focus on the important strategic decisions that have to be made in order for our service to stay fresh and competitive. I'm in the position now where I originated the service we provide from scratch and then progressively hired my team as we expanded. I recently realised that it was time to move away from 'my' vision and 'my' strategy and to refresh this and give ownership of it to the team. We took a day, off site, and as a team reviewed what we could do differently and better, and what opportunities and challenges we now have in the current environment. The team got really excited about thinking in a way that made anything seem possible and generated an excellent long-term plan.

I don't think we would have come up with that if we'd had a regular meeting in the office."

## Tools for strategy development

A couple of tools used frequently in strategy development are **PEST** (Political, Environmental, Social and Technological factors and how these influence strategic choices) and **SWOT** (Strengths and Weaknesses of an organisation or approach and the Opportunities and Threats it faces in its environment). Systematic approaches for scenario planning (e.g. to consider several possible futures) can also be useful in evaluating the interaction between strategic approach and a changing environment.

### Activities

Evaluate your approach to your own career development using one or more of the strategic tools outlined above. Think of it as a project and expect benefits to your long-term wellbeing.

OR

Evaluate the vision and strategy of an organisation of your choice (you might want to look at examples from academia, the public sector, social enterprise and the private sector). Many organisations publish their vision and strategy online.

How would you suggest that their strategy should change in the light of changes to their environment, such as:

- A cut in funding or revenue of 40%
- An outside ban on air travel for an indefinite period
- Emerging incentives to work with overseas colleagues or to tap into overseas markets

### Tips for leading strategically

Successful leaders will:

- Take an appropriate amount of time out to consider long-term goals and to develop a strategy, whatever the project
- Involve the team around them in strategic thinking and planning
- Encourage open communication
- Make sure that everyone understands their role in following the strategy
- Communicate the strategy to all interested parties
- Make sure that the strategy translates into action and results!

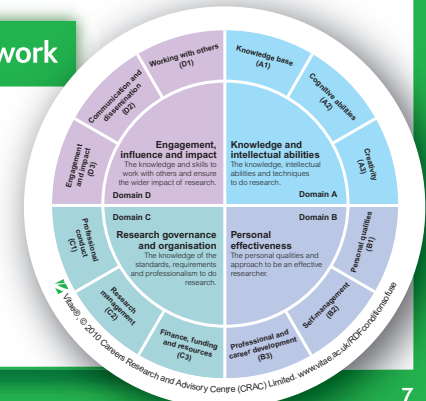
## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Consider the descriptors for sub-domain A3 (creativity). See page 3.

Which are most relevant to leading strategically?

Do you know how to develop these behaviours and attributes in yourself and in others?



# Leading by getting results

“ Leadership at one time meant muscles but today it means getting along with people. ”

Indira Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister 1966-77 & 1980-84

## Task, team and individual

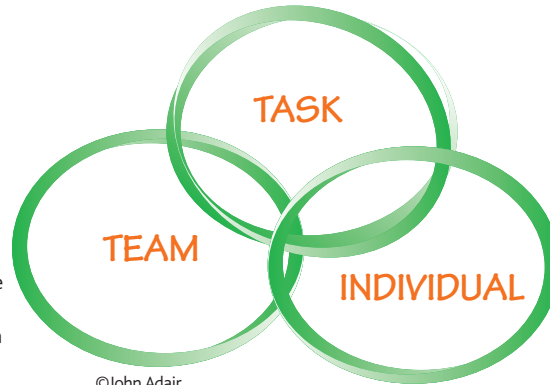
Whatever you want to achieve, whether to complete a research project, build an extension to your house, or change career, leadership is about more than setting objectives and a strategy. You also need to be an effective leader of your team in action. Whether your team reports to you in your official leadership capacity, you are working as part of the team or you simply need input from a loose team of others to get something done, practising good leadership skills will help you to move closer to your goals.

### Action Centred Leadership

High-performing groups recognise the needs of team, task and individual, as illustrated by the Action Centered Leadership model from John Adair, a well-known leadership theorist. The model proposes that delivering the best possible outcomes over time requires the effective leader to create and maintain a balanced focus on all three areas.

This is sometimes referred to as the "helicopter" approach which requires the leader to "hover" above a situation to get the bigger picture perspective and then to focus in on any particular area that requires attention. This may involve resolving issues in one domain to the exclusion of others. This however will be a temporary state of affairs. Over time the effective leader will be clear about the need for balancing these three aspects.

- Can you think of examples of good leadership of team, task and individual?
- How is this balance maintained in your group/department/institution?
- What motivates you/others as individuals?



©John Adair

“ These three areas of need influence one another for better or worse. [For example] achievement in terms of a common aim tends to build a sense of group identity...Good internal communications and a developed team spirit based upon past successes make a group much more likely to do well in its task area...[and] an individual whose needs are recognised and who feels that he or she can make a characteristic and worthwhile contribution both to the task and the group will tend to produce good fruits in both these areas. ”

Leadership and Motivation. Adair, Kogan Page, 2006.

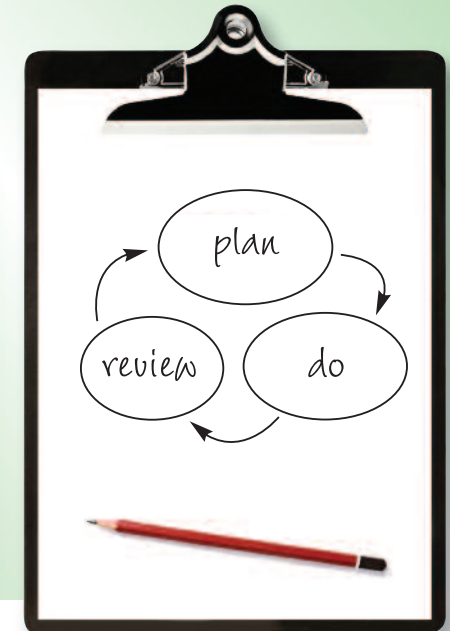


## Activity

Whilst managing task, team and individual is a very simple concept, it is difficult to put into action successfully. Have a go, using the following 6-stage process to guide you.

Think of something that you need to get done in the next one to three months. This can be at home or at work, needs to be reasonably complex and involve input from yourself and others.

- 1 First, meet with your team to agree what success means: what will it look like when you have finished?
- 2 Generate a list of the tasks that need to be completed and write each one on a separate sticky note
- 3 Arrange the sticky notes in the order that tasks need to be accomplished
- 4 Encourage individuals to take ownership of specific tasks, taking into account their skills and preferences
- 5 Include regular group review meetings and individual one-to-one meetings in order to balance all three of Adair's circles
- 6 Plan in time, once you have achieved your goal, to gather feedback and to reflect on your own performance in the role of leader

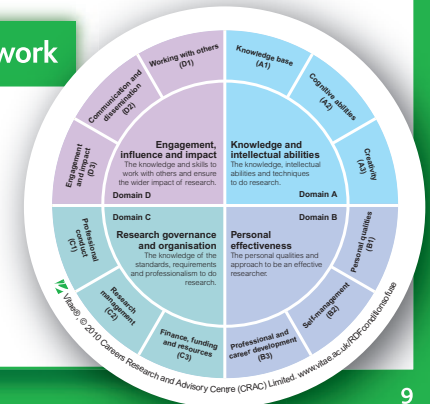


## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Influence and leadership is a descriptor from sub-domain D1 (working with others). See page 3.

Think of a situation when you felt empowered by the leader of your team. How did that influence your behaviour?





# Leading in meetings

## How to influence from any position

We've all sat in meetings that don't seem to be achieving much. Successful meetings usually have defined outcomes and agreed processes. They may look very different in terms of formality – you may attend meetings which range from one-to-one supervisory meetings, through to research group meetings or university-level meetings. Even if you are not formally responsible for leading or chairing the meeting, you still have the opportunity to exert significant influence. Each person present has a responsibility to make the most of the meetings they attend. As well as influencing outcomes by always being prepared to contribute your views, you can lead by promoting positivity in discussions and by helping to keep them on track. Be ready to propose achievable actions that help to meet the meeting's objectives and that can be agreed by everybody involved. Go prepared: even a little thought or research in advance of the meeting will put you in a better position to lead from within the group.

- Adair purports that the most successful leaders balance their attention across task, individual and team (see 'Leading by getting results'). In meetings, the most efficient and effective leaders make interventions which simultaneously move the task forward, build the team and involve each individual to best effect. If any one of these aspects is neglected then a successful outcome is less likely.

- In thinking about how you can lead from within a group, consider how what you say and do will affect the task, the team and other team members.

“Unless a variety of opinions are laid before us, we have no opportunity of selection, but are bound of necessity to adopt the particular view which may have been brought forward.”

Herodotus, Fifth century BC



## Activity

This list includes many of the THINGS that characterise good leadership in meetings – whether by the official leader or chair or by other participants.

Observe or think back to the behaviour of those participating in any meetings you attend.

How did they do? How did you do?

### Did the chair or leader:

- Present a clear agenda?
- State/obtain agreement to the objectives of the meeting?
- Keep discussions in line with meeting objectives?
- Keep to time?
- Note decisions made?
- Keep the energy level high?
- Summarise at regular intervals?
- Ensure that each participant had opportunities to make their point?

### Did participants:

- Come well prepared and with new ideas?
- Take opportunities to contribute to discussions?
- Give others the chance to contribute their views?
- Ensure discussions remained positive?
- Agree realistic actions?

### What can you do to improve the way you lead in meetings?

- What do you already do that is effective?
- What do you want to focus on developing over the next few months?
- What difference would it make to you and others around you?

### Your actions

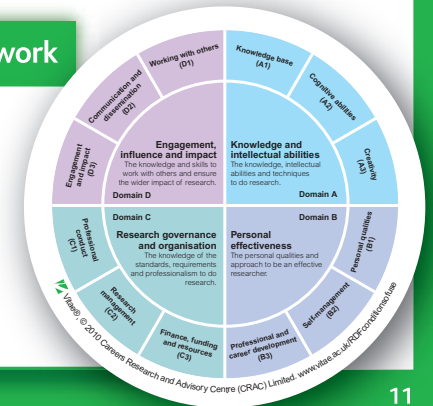
Jot down two or three actions, seal them in an envelope and make a note in your diary or calendar to look at them again after three or six months.

## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Responsibility is a descriptor from sub-domain B1 (personal qualities). See page 3.

Do you always/sometimes/never take responsibility for positive outcomes from meetings? How could you take a more pro-active approach?



# Leading virtually

## Teams aren't what they used to be

**Virtual teams are teams of people who primarily interact electronically and who may meet face to face occasionally.**

You may find yourself working on a research project which spans several institutions, disciplines and possibly even continents, or you may find yourself in a situation where either you or your supervisor is working abroad for a length of time. In order to be an effective leader it is therefore essential to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by working in virtual teams.

In essence, working in any team, whether face-to-face or from a distance, presents the challenge for the leader of how to obtain the commitment, accountability and trust of each individual member. Virtual teams may find that these issues can be more difficult as communication problems can get in the way. The key here is around managing this human element and ensuring that everyone's needs for inclusion, control and openness are met. In virtual teams it can be more difficult to tell when people are becoming less engaged. An effective leader will therefore be extra vigilant.



This is an interpretation of the framework developed by Will Schutz, a psychologist and writer in the fields of human relations and organisational development. It demonstrates how impact can be harnessed by recognising the importance of people's feelings. As the diagram shows, there is a direct link between meeting people's needs for inclusion and their commitment to the team's purpose. This comes from a sense of significance. Similarly, meeting people's needs for control allows them to take responsibility and they welcome being held to account. Finally, trust and loyalty are gained through meeting people's needs for openness – giving them a sense that they are valued and cared for. Meeting people's needs in this way will lead to higher performance.

### Tips for leading virtual teams

- Spend time with individual team members apart from the group
- Use a range of technologies to suit different preferences
- Include team-building time
- Expect and allow for cultural differences
- Pay extra attention to good meeting and project management
- Send and read material well ahead of virtual meetings

## Activity

The following activity explores how this can translate to leading virtual teams and working with people from a distance.

Think about any virtual groups or teams in which you are involved. For example multi-national collaborative research groups, member societies corresponding electronically or friends/colleagues linked through online social networks. Below is a list of common issues for virtual teams. What action would you take as a leader within the group to address each one? You may find it helpful to discuss this with someone you know who may have additional relevant experience. Can you think of additional issues?

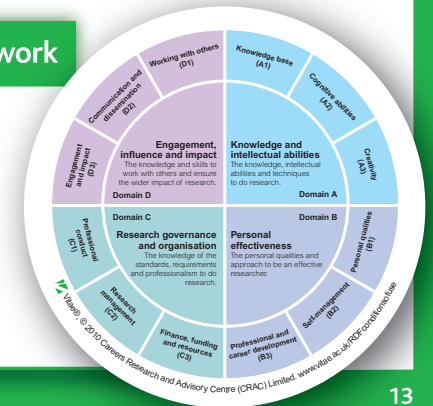
Challenge	Leadership Action
Language differences	
Unacknowledged misunderstandings	
Cultural differences	
Team members in different time zones	
Hidden distractions	
Unable to read body language and facial expressions	
Not knowing when someone wants to speak	

## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Using a range of communication methods – sub-domain D2 (communication and dissemination) – may help you to success in leading a virtual team. See page 3.

How will you know which methods are effective?



# Leading multiple projects

## How to remain connected and objective

Leadership requires an ability to remain at a connected and objective level rather than engaging in the direct day-to-day operation of multiple projects or tasks. It's about ensuring that members of your team are empowered and engaged in delivering clearly defined and agreed results whilst maintaining an overview of the situation.

Leading multiple projects is not something that is confined to the workplace. As the activity illustrates, it's about much more than doing several things at the same time: it's an essential skill that every effective leader needs to master.

### Activity

Imagine... that it's Friday morning and you've just arrived at work. Along with a colleague from another institution, you're organising a regional postgraduate conference that's taking place on Tuesday. Your supervisor worried it would take you away from your research, but you felt it would help to develop your organisational skills and would look good on your CV. This is important to you as although you enjoy research you're not sure you want to follow an academic career.

Most of the work for the conference is done and the papers are printed; you plan to spend a couple of hours this afternoon putting them into folders for the participants. On Monday you are due to travel to the venue to make last minute checks.

You have a scheduled meeting with your supervisor 30 minutes from now – organised weeks ago. You hope to persuade him to find extra funds to support a new research avenue. Your plan had been to spend the rest of the morning clearing your email backlog and to leave early to work from home on a paper you're co-authoring. However, your Dad left you a message last night to say that he's passing on the way to a wedding and would like to stay at yours tonight. He's had a bit of a rough time lately. Of course the spare room's a tip and the fridge is bare.

One of the keynote speakers for Tuesday calls to say that she's broken her leg and won't be able to make it. You must consider whether to rearrange the programme, to try to find a last minute replacement or to step in yourself.



**What do you prioritise?**  
**What could possibly be taken on by someone else?**  
**What factors were behind your choices?**

Notice that leading on multiple projects includes making some tough decisions and having a very clear idea about what needs to be achieved, when and by whom. Clarity of information, resources, abilities of staff and required outcomes are all essential. While you're in the midst, it is important to check back in with your values, vision and strategy and to prioritise tasks according to their role in achieving your aims. As you work towards achieving your goals it is also important not to neglect team and individual, so don't forget Adair's Circles!

## A tool for when you are leading on multiple projects

A project leader has to consider both tasks and people. A simple mnemonic to help us to ensure all bases are covered is TOIDPAR.

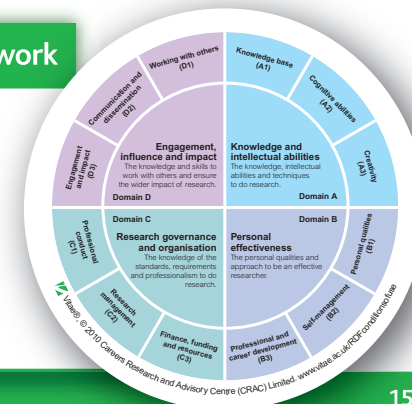
- T** **Tune in**  
Ensure all team members are focused on the project
- O** **Objectives**  
Check objectives against the agreed vision and strategy. Check understanding of the project objectives by all group members
- I** **Information and ideas**  
Identify known facts and factors. Generate and record ideas – use quiet thinking time, brainstorming and discussion
- D** **Decisions**  
Assess all options and make decisions based on strategic criteria
- P** **Plan**  
Delegate tasks according to expertise and allocate resources. Set interim targets if individual tasks are long or complex
- A** **Actions**  
Only now, complete the tasks. Some in the team may feel uncomfortable with not being released into action immediately. Remind them that the drive to get busy can mean missing vital elements in the process which may have a detrimental effect. Remember to pay attention to team and individual needs
- R** **Review**  
Review needs to be part of the continuous process. How successful are members of the team (including leadership) in completing tasks and meeting objectives? What needs to change?

## Use the Researcher Development Framework

### For example...

Explore the descriptors for sub-domain C2 (Research management). See page 3.

For each of the areas in which you take a leading role, do you have an overview of strategy, planning, delivery and risks?





# Leading in crisis

“ If you can keep your head while all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you....”

(If, Rudyard Kipling)

## Speaking from experience...

A colleague recalls this crisis from her days as a post-doctoral researcher:

"I was in the middle of an experiment in my molecular biology lab and the alarm for the -80° freezer started to beep and its temperature to climb. The freezer contained many precious samples and cell lines belonging to everybody in the lab. It was not the first time that this freezer had broken down and my co-workers started complaining. I decided that it was more important to save the contents than to complete my experiment or to stand around discussing the unfairness of uncooperative technology. I phoned other labs in the building, explaining the situation and finding out where there was space to store some extra samples. I asked one of my colleagues to find dry ice to transport the samples safely and organised everyone to make sure that their samples were clearly labelled and boxed up. Everyone responded well to this positive approach and we took the opportunity to clear out some particularly old stuff.

Once the samples were safe and an engineer had been called, I put together a proposal for a new -80° freezer, suggesting that we keep the old one as

emergency back up. I asked all users to estimate the worth of their samples in order to make a strong financial case."

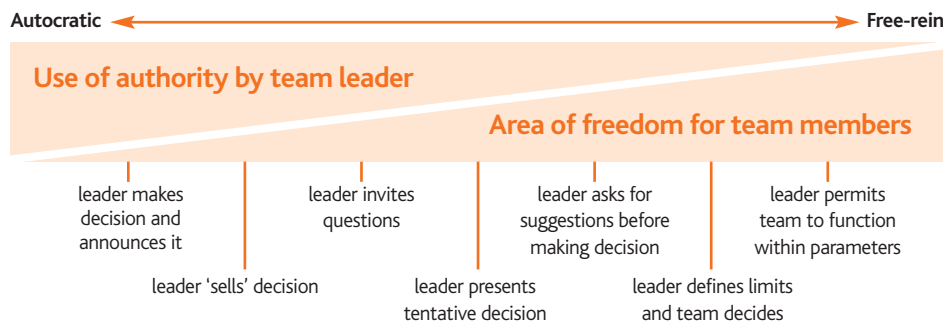
In a crisis, a leader must be prepared to make swift and sometimes tough decisions. As well as managing the immediate situation, a good leader considers possible effects of the crisis going forward and plans accordingly. Leadership in a crisis is also about mobilising other people and taking them along with you.

Your leadership style will need to flex according to the situation in which you find yourself. Effective leaders are able to make considered decisions about which style of leadership is most appropriate for the situation they are in.

The continuum model below, developed by Tannenbaum and Schmidt, shows the relationship between the level of freedom a leader chooses to give to their team and the level of authority used by the leader.

In a crisis, although the tendency might be to take an authoritative approach, you may need to use the full extent of the continuum as the needs of the situation and the people involved change.

## Styles of leadership behaviour (Tannenbaum & Schmidt)



## Activity

Having a clear idea of your own strengths and weaknesses will help you to lead effectively in times of crisis.

The following list includes some attributes that would help someone to be a good leader in times of crisis.

**1** Select the three attributes which are strongest in you

**2** Select the three attributes which are weakest in you

- Staying calm
- Awareness of strengths and limitations
  - Self
  - Others
- Gathering information
- Flexibility
- Self-confidence
- Analytical
- Persuasiveness
- Self-directed
- Sensitivity to others
- Clear direction
- Evaluation of alternative courses of action
- Option generation
- Self control
- Appropriate communication
- Leadership presence (ability to go large and be directive)
- Focused on future.

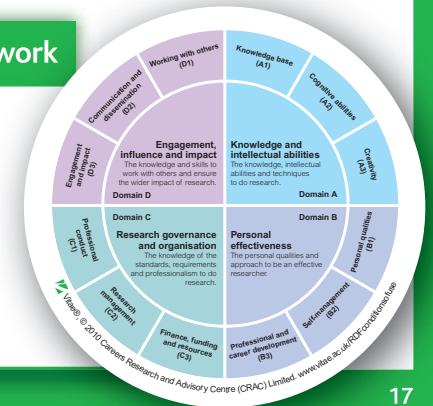
It is unlikely that any one individual will be strong in all of these areas. The point of this exercise is to think about what you will do naturally and what you will need to pay attention to.

## Use the Researcher Development Framework

For example...

Check the descriptors for each sub-domain. See page 3.

Can you identify something from each that could help you to lead in a crisis? Use the framework to take a deeper look at your potential to develop as a leader in crisis.



# Leadership and you

## How to remain connected and objective

Draw a mindmap like the one below and note down your thoughts or reflections on who you are as a leader, based on what you have learnt from working through this booklet. What do you already do and what are your strengths? Which are your areas for development? What are you going to do to build on those strengths and to become a significantly more impactful leader?



## Developing your leadership skills

- Seek opportunities to take on leadership roles in and out of your workplace
- Take responsibility for your contribution when working with others
- Decide what you want to develop and engage mentors to help you
- Identify your strengths and have a go at mentoring others in those areas
- Find ways to bring your values to life through your actions
- Get feedback from a variety of trusted sources
- Take the first step today



## A lens on the Researcher Development Framework

A leadership lens on the Researcher Development Framework focuses on the knowledge, behaviours and attributes that you develop as a researcher and how these can be acquired through or used in leadership opportunities. The lens illustrates how leadership potential can be developed within and beyond academia. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdflenses](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdflenses).

## Suggested reading

There are many good books on leadership. We have selected a few favourites:

- The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization by Peter M Senge (2006)
- Becoming a Resonant Leader: Develop Your Emotional Intelligence, Renew Your Relationships, Sustain Your Effectiveness by Annie McKee, Richard Boyatzis, Francis E Johnston (2008)
- The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life by Rosamund Zander, Ben Zander (2000)
- Action Centred Leadership by John Adair (1979)
- The Human Element: Productivity, Self-Esteem and the Bottom line by Will Schutz (1994)
- The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen J Covey (2004)