

# Reconnecting Leaders to Organization Cultures

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The article begins with a challenge to the view that leaders = leadership, suggesting that leadership can be found through patterns of working in which people exert influence on what is happening. Such patterns create difficulties for appointed leaders when they seek to bring about cultural change. The article then explores how leaders can tackle the difficulty of culture change through the use of action learning combined with appreciative inquiry where the latter focuses on conversations to find out what works well in organizations. Ongoing work from examples from two organizations are presented. The first, Company X sought to shift culture in response to the need to re-align strategy to build relationships more directly with consumers. The second, PublicBody, faced funding difficulties and a recent survey of staff opinions and attitudes had revealed a lowering of morale and engagement. In both cases, leaders used conversations with their staff to find examples of 'really good work practice'. Findings were then shared in an action learning group to identify patterns and consider actions for improvement. The process allows leaders to set up further action learning groups to support further conversations which reveal further patterns of what is working.

## Introduction

Many leaders and many organizations have sought to bring about a change or a shift in culture. In response to apparent dramatic changes in markets, technologies and funding regimes, leaders can become concerned that policies and procedures can be changed but unless there are also changes in underpinning values, beliefs and behaviours, the effect can be less than desirable. Researchers on changing organization cultures have known about this discrepancy for years. For example, Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson (2008) point to the tension between what is said, especially by leaders and managers, and what is actually done and experienced in the thoughts and feelings of those who are meant to change.

One of the most important difficulties is evident in the assumptions of leaders themselves. For example, it is relatively easy to fall into a way of thinking that everyone else has the same interest and concerns about the current and future direction of the organization as the leaders. That is, there is mostly unity among the staff. By contrast, it is probably the case that there are different versions about what is happening and what is considered the right or wrong thing to do. Such differences point to a less unified and more fragmented picture of an organization, reflecting the existence of several cultures and multiple values. This variation can make change and culture shift a very difficult problem.

In this article, the intention is to show how leaders can learn to understand the variety of cultures within their organizations. The vehicle to create such understanding is an approach to action learning, which brings more people into a process to progress the desired shift. If leaders participate in the journey, they will begin to bring different cultures closer together. Examples will be drawn from work in two organizations which are seeking to shift cultures.

## The Fog of Leadership

Walk into any organization that is not yours and conduct a simple act of inquiry. For the first five people you encounter, ask them the following question:

Where is leadership?

The author cannot possibly tell you the answers you will get but suspects that, after an initial confusion, you might find a variety of responses ranging from the man or woman 'at the top' to interesting stories about the influence of others in the organization or others who have been in the organization, possibly from the past. What may be surprising is that the responses may provide a challenge to a commonly stated identity, that is:

Leaders = Leadership

This suggests that a very simple view of leadership is to see the people at the top as the leaders. This then makes it relatively easy to attribute the success of organizations and failure to particular individuals. They are heroes when things work and villains when they don't. It also means that stories of success about Jack Welch and Richard Branson can be presented for others to consume. Individual attribution might also work in reverse when there is failure, such as with Enron and the more recent Global Financial Crisis. However, there does seem to be some reticence as well.

Seeing leadership as the leaders has been a pre-occupation of people in organizations, including those in learning and development who are charged with training current and future leaders. The assumption is made that if the key features of what makes a good leader can be found, and this includes the need for a link to successful performance, then the training can be done. This has resulted in a very well developed industry of leadership development suppliers of toolkits and programmes. One of the most well-known and used tools in the toolkit is a framework of competences, sometimes called attributes or behaviours. The frameworks provide a simple argument for assessing, developing and measuring leaders. One does wonder how such frameworks were operating when decisions were made that took organizations into the danger zones of the late 2000s.

When it comes to the most prominent frameworks for leaders, the notion of transformational and charismatic leadership still holds sway. This is in spite of the fact that a very serious and rigorous consideration by van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) of the evidence for transformational leadership and the link to organization performance. They found so many problems both with understanding the idea of charismatic transformation leadership and how to measure and use it, that they suggested 'going back to the drawing board'. So where do you go next?

One of the first moves suggested is to break the equation of leaders = leadership. There are leaders who are appointed to key positions of responsibility and are accountable for the working of an organization. But here's the rub — leaders may have a duty to lead but leadership may not be entirely in their control. Indeed in any organization, even in small organizations, there are a variety of ways in which people exert influence on what is happening, mostly as expected but not always. If you use a little imagination, it will not take you too long to realize that throughout any organization, it is necessary for people to join together to get things done. They do this in twos and threes, but also in groups and teams and these dependencies are essential. Over time, patterns of working are formed and re-formed, stories are shared on what to do and norms and

values are set to guide behaviour — for good or ill. Further, this process provides the foundation and materials for what have been called communities of practice as originally explained by Lave and Wenger (1991).

Considering the patterns in terms of leadership, where influence is working between people, because this process works locally on the basis of what works, what is right and what is valued, leadership at this level may or may not align with what others may determine as the organization's purpose, direction and values. In addition, because there is likely to be a large collection of different communities, each with valued ways of behaving and working, it becomes very difficult for those appointed as leaders to achieve declared outcomes. Instead, they are likely to face what might be better understood as an organization fog, shown in Figure 1.

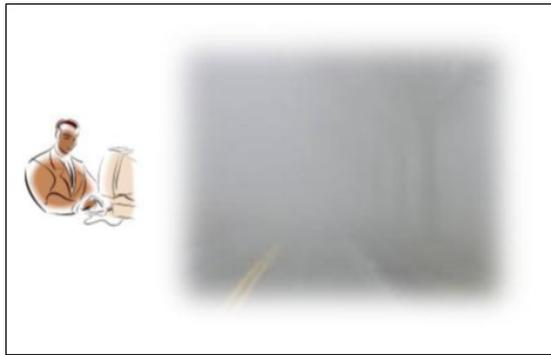


Figure 1: Organization as Fog

Even if you only partly accept the accuracy of this image, it does provide some understanding of the difficulties appointed leaders face when they seek to change culture. However hard leaders work to find clarity, through reports, figures and even face-to-face contact, most of the time they can only gain a partial view of what is happening. The fog will soon reform.

How leaders can work their way into the fog and tackle the difficult task of shifting culture will now be considered. However, it must be stressed that the arguments pursued here are premised on the basis of embracing the idea of leadership within everyday working with multiple communities of practice. A form of action learning provides the vehicle to do this

## **Action Learning for Problems and Appreciation**

Most people involved in the field of practice called action learning would regard the work of Reg Revans (1983) as foundational, setting the standard for others. While there have been many variations on the basic ideas of Revans, after all he began his work in the 1950s, the classical approach to action learning involves problems that cannot be easily solved. Revans distinguished between puzzles which had an answer and intractable problems which have no clear answers and possibly none at all. For the latter, the best that can be done is to work with a group of peers or 'comrades in adversity' as Revans called them, and through a process of questions to challenge and support the person with a problem, an action can be found to try out, see what happens and, most importantly, learn from this process.

Problems and learning have been central to action learning for many years and many people have benefitted from this. However, all problems if they are real, are related to and connected to a context consisting of a wide range of factors that will affect what action is taken. But not all factors can be identified quickly and taken into consideration. This affects how those in an action learning process can structure problems. For leaders, how problems are understood becomes crucial to their actions as leaders, according to Keith Grint (2005) but when problems are unstructured, they are more difficult to state; this is mainly because of difficulties in understanding the current situation, or setting out what is a better situation or how to find the way to move from one situation to another. Because people generally try to avoid lack of clarity or have a low tolerance for ambiguity (or fog), there is a tendency to define problems, means and solutions based on prejudices and past experiences. Thus, the problem of culture shift might fall into the category as a clear move from one situation to another, as though everyone agreed with a solution. For example, if senior leaders declare that they want a culture that gives greater attention to and the valuing of customers, they might set this out as a path or roadmap to achieve this. However, such images, however clear, are likely to avoid the difficulties that might prevent progress, such as the priorities for action within different departments, the values and norms that are held by staff, the stories told about customers and others within everyday practice and so on.

What should now be clear is the difficulty of identifying all the relevant factors that need to be considered by leaders in seeking to change or shift culture. In terms of a problem that might be considered in action learning, culture change is very unstructured, making any move difficult and any effort made is likely to encounter a range of differing meanings and definitions of what is going on. One important manifestation may arise if culture change is expressed in terms of a problem. Leaders and those they involve may soon find that their interests are stymied by the response or lack of response from others, who might be termed as resisters, traditionalists or other negative categorizations. The danger is with what is normally considered as problem/solution reasoning which avoids possible dilemmas and consideration of others who have valued views of the situation. As 'resistance' is met and continues to persist, leaders might seek to impose more controls and tackle what they believe is wrong and unhealthy in their organizations. As they do so, new cures are found and applied but as these also fail, the result is a culture of deficit and negativity that is counter to what is desired. There is a real possibility that problem/solution approaches to change, despite positive intentions, might have little impact or worse, a negative effect, even if short-term evidence shows otherwise. Leaders who believe that their solutions correct in the face of other ideas are also avoiding the variety of different interpretations held by different communities, each with their own versions of what is right and good to do. The big question for leaders is how can they understand what is valued in the communities within organizations and which can provide an important impetus to shifting culture whilst also preserving what is best in the current culture?

One response is to move action learning away from problems and deficit towards what is valued and working. This makes use of key ideas drawn from a process called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which works with conversations to find out what works well in an organization and how. Based on a process developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), it becomes possible through conversations to discover valuable knowledge which can be shared to stimulate learning but also lead to changes which are more acceptable because they come from the practices of what is already working and valued.

Central to AI is a conversation between at least two people where, in an effort to find out what is working and what is valued, a picture is developed which captures the meaning containing the strengths and virtues of what works. When a leader takes this positive orientation, they become both an inquirer through the gathering of data but also active in appreciating how people work. This can engender a positive momentum that elevates what is good and right.

AI can be understood and used quite flexibly, with no rules on times for stages. There is, however, guidance on the implementation of AI in the form of a cycle composed of four stages or phases. The cycle, shown as Figure 2, is a useful contrast to the traditional problem solving cycle. At the Discovery phase, the concern is to find out what is working well by having conversations with those who know what is working well. This highlights two key points about AI, which make it valuable in a culture shift process, especially if appointed leaders are participants. Firstly, through conversations, data is gathered by allowing others to tell stories of good practice. Stories are a well understood medium for the sharing of good ways of working in communities of practices and cover key events, characters involved, overall purpose and, crucially, what is valued (Weick 2012).

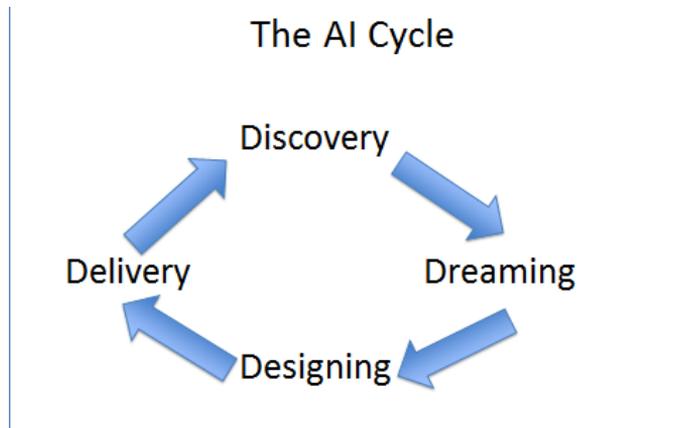


Figure 2: The AI Cycle  
Source: Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000: 614

AI is a conversational activity in which at least two people join in. Leaders, if they wish to participate in such conversations must appreciate what is presented and respond accordingly. The stories must be treated as truthful and valued. This allows the second point to emerge: the stories can be collected and analysed for patterns and themes but based on real examples of practice. These can then be used to work out new possibilities for action and change in the Dreaming and Design phases. Whatever actions are considered need to be grounded in what is working and this makes whatever is agreed more feasible because it is not imposed from the outside; the actions and change are based on what is already happening inside the organization. However, whatever is designed must be delivered and this involves action by others. Again, conversations play a crucial part in this and as actions are taken, further understanding is gained and new phases of the AI cycle can begin. What is very important is that if leaders are part of this process, and they remain appreciative, they will learn about life in their organizations but will also be seen as promoters of positive actions because they have listened and appreciated. What now follows are examples from two organizations.

## Culture Shift by Positive Action Learning (PAL)

To consider how action learning can work with AI this article draws on work completed with two organizations where leaders were seeking a culture shift. The first is a UK-based but US-owned design and production company which will be referred to as Company X. The second is a large public sector organization which will be referred to as PublicBody. Both organizations are located in the North of England and are considered important to local employment. Company X employs 2200 staff and PublicBody employs 8500.

For Company X, the leaders came to realize in 2012 that following some dramatic loss of sales and key contracts, there was a need to re-align strategy to build relationships more directly with consumers by increasing brand awareness. This was a striking difference to the previous 30 years where brand awareness rested principally with retailers such as large supermarkets and smaller independent shops who sold Company X's products to consumers, who usually did not know the source of the product. It was soon recognized that the re-direction of the organization would also require a shift in culture, even as staff were being made redundant. The project initiated sought to build a culture of engagement to enable change agility.

The project's objectives were set to:

1. Share best practice across the organization through building effective networks.
2. Re-energize communication processes.
3. Reinforce a culture of leadership at all levels to create a non-hierarchical "power base".

For PublicBody, the challenges faced were the same as many others operating in the public sector in the UK, relying mostly on central funding. There were statutory targets but as funding cuts began to take effect, there were shrinking resources with which to achieve the targets. A recent survey of staff opinions and attitudes had revealed a lowering of morale and engagement. This was, however, consistent with what had been happening in other public sector organizations in the UK. PublicBody's declared purpose stated:

- Put our communities first, responding to your needs and concerns.
- Treat you with care, compassion, humility and respect.
- Work with our communities and partners to solve local problems.
- Do what we say we will and keep you informed.

In both organizations, based on the recognition of the need for culture shift, an approach was developed that combined action learning with appreciative inquiry (AI). Since the plan involved using what was working in each organization as a way for leaders to discover and articulate what was a desired and feasible culture move, leading to action based on good practice, this approach was called Positive Action Learning or PAL. This felt particularly right for such a process and related comfortably with Revans' notion of action learning participants as 'comrades'. In each organization the process began with PAL groups of leaders. There were five in the group in Company X and seven in PublicBody. At the first meeting of each group, both action learning and AI were introduced. However, in order to provide a baseline for improvement for each group, problem identification was taken as a way of setting the current state of the culture.

The question was posed: What were the key cultural problems and challenges?

A simple process was used based on a method called the nominal group technique where each person in each group could identify their view of the problems in response to the question posed. These could then be gathered and displayed through a round-robin process, allowing avoidance of duplication. Based on what was now in view, the participants could then specify the key dimensions for improvement. In each case, a set of dimensions were established which could be scored on the basis of 0 = starting baseline, 10 = fulfilment of improvement.

In Company X, the dimensions agreed are given in Table 1.

<b>Company X Agreed Dimensions</b>	
•	We have a 1 year strategy focused on delivery: we don't see a year 2 and 3 plan.
•	There is a lack of ongoing communication: update/ where are we winning.
•	Politics influences the strategy delivery and we aren't waking the talk.
•	Lack of clear visibility of the leadership team (walking the talk, being aligned, listening and being seen together).
•	Lack of a clear detailed vision/plan for year 1/2/3 with outcomes, actions and timings.
•	Lack of engagement of all to really believe in the future.
•	We don't have a common understanding of what the true issues are.
•	There is no honest and open regular update on business performance with sufficient detail for people to take action.
•	We aren't energizing people around what they can/ need to do.

Table 1: Company X Agreed Dimensions

In PublicBody, the Leaders were responding to a culture audit of the organization which had sought to assess current and future cultures against purpose, vision and values using a web based survey. The survey had been completed by 2390 staff. In addition, there had been four focus groups with 36 staff from across all grades.

Using their understanding from the audit report, the following dimensions were set. The leaders were able to specify not just the baseline positions at 0, but also a more desirable position at 10. Using their understanding from the audit report eight dimensions were established (Table 2).

	<b>0</b>	<b>v</b>	<b>10</b>
Engagement	Top down, not engaged		Full and two-way engagement
Trust	Low, lack of explanation Not knowing why		High, belief, knowing why
Confidence	Low challenge, blame culture		High challenge, low blame
Review and feedback	Top down, own agenda, narrow promotion criteria		Multi-sourced, developmental
Leadership	Disconnected, words not enacted. Poor role modelling		Reconnected, good role modelling. Doing and saying synchronized
Decision-making	Pushed upward, low discretion		High discretion
Silo-working	Low integration, competing districts		High integration. Collaboration
Change	Mixed messages, top down		Clarity, joint meaning

Table 2: PublicBody, Baseline Positions and More Desirable Positions.

Setting baselines was an important process for both groups since it allowed a vision of what progress might mean. The intention was not to set up another survey process since both organizations had endured several surveys and a degree of cynicism among the leaders and the staff was starting to emerge. Too often in the past, surveys had not resulted in sustainable actions and change. Leaders had assumed too readily that top-down change would feed through to everyone else. However, such changes were usually lost ‘in the fog’. However in the context of an action learning process combined with AI, the indicators could provide a focus for the projects and, as others were engaged within each organization, some sense that shift might be occurring.

Once these indicators were established, the research moved away from the problems and deficiencies of the present. It was easily recognized that all the dimensions had long historical roots and how various attempts to address some of these had been partial and mostly failing. AI was introduced and this involved a simple process to work with conversations that appreciated what was working in their organizations. As a first step, the leaders could identify examples from their own experience of what was called ‘really good work practice’ or rgwp. They were asked to write responses to the following:

1. Identify an example known to you of a really good work practice (rgwp).
2. What happened that made it rgwp? – write a sentence.
3. How did the rgwp happen and why? – write a paragraph.
4. What are the implications of this rgwp for others? – bullet point.

The leaders were made aware of the process by allowing them to work in pairs to practice the appreciative interview, using the same questions to guide them. Leaders began to understand how AI worked and the value of conversations. There was a quick response to indicate empowerment and interest, and how change could be enabled. This allowed the task of finding others in each organization to interview to be set. This was called unfamiliar appreciation in unfamiliar settings since there was a preference to find others who they did not normally talk to.

## Company X

In Company X, the group held interviews throughout the organization, keeping a record of what was working and how learning from each process could be applied. At the first review meeting, findings were shared and a list of the key words was compiled, shown in Table 3.

Key Words		
• Dynamic	• Engagement	• Collaborative
• Resilience to change	• Environment/ culture: attractive	• Visibility
• Talent retention	• Simple and less complex	• Ownership
• Charismatic leadership team	• Work life balance	• Protected from reality vs change agile
• Alignment: all working to the same goal	• Cross functional working	• Flexibility
• Clear communication: team days	• Pride in achievements	• Knowledge sharing

• Celebrate success: recognition	• Enthusiasm	• Embracing learning from mistakes
• Showing commitment: saying it and doing it	• Influence to business	• Empowered to make things better as part of your job
• Credibility	• Perceived value	• Honesty: no hidden agendas
	• Proactive	
	• Empathy	
	• Positive influencers	
	• Mutual respect: boss to team; team peers	

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Table 3: Key Words from the Appreciative Interviews (Company X)

The ideas for how learning could be applied in other parts of the business included:

1. Share knowledge.
2. Swap logistics people into manufacturing.
3. Build a culture of networking: e.g. cross functional workshops: share specialist skill sets.
4. Practice empowerment: allow different decisions to be made and adopt a true coaching culture.
5. Learn from other businesses / areas.
6. Consistency in communication messages.
  - How are we performing and what can I do?
  - Acting on decisions quickly.
7. Celebrate success and recognize people: little treats and thank yous / individuals and teams.
8. Honesty: tell it how it is and enable individuals to rise to the challenges.
9. Simplify: give it a go. Break the process to ensure lean / speed. Be less of a perfectionist culture.
10. Alignment and detail: clear accountability from the exec down.

The above was based on each person conducting three interviews but in doing this, the Leaders experienced a process of engagement with staff. They discovered a number of ‘first times’:

- Those interviewed often felt that no one had taken any interest in what they were doing and what was valued.
- Gaining ‘confidence’ and feeling ‘empowered’ were consistent findings.

At end of the first review, the leaders considered the AI cycle and how they moved from discovery to dreaming and then design. A question was posed:

How do we start to build a network of positive influencers within Company X using the AI approach?

The dreaming became a design through the articulation of a project plan involving the spreading of the PAL process to others with each Leader facilitating a PAL group. This would create a network of PAL groups. The idea was to replicate the experience of the Leader group, now called the Champion Group. This would mean more people in the organization who were paying

attention to what was working and more people feeling appreciated for telling their stories. The data collected would also reveal what was being valued within communities of practice which the Leaders now had some access to. One of the most common stories was the presence of ‘Inspirational leadership at all levels’.

The Leaders found 20 others who were invited to learning about PAL, using the same process as their own. It was made clear that joining the project was voluntary but all 20 were happy to participate and formed into five PAL groups, each facilitated by a Leader. Three weeks later a review was held and stories were reported. In addition, the Leaders were also building appreciation into practice. One story related to a meeting where, without prompting, a Leader had been able to focus on positive practice and what was working, which created a good atmosphere among those present. At a meeting of the senior management team, the CEO reported his interest in the importance of positive stories and that they “do not see enough of the good often enough”.

Progress could also be assessed against the baseline dimensions. The sample is far from representative (24), but indicated a sense of confidence among the PAL groups, as shown in Table 4.

We have a 1 year strategy focused on AOP delivery: we don't see a year 2 and 3 plan.	5.8
There is a lack of ongoing communication: update/ where are we winning.	5.6
Politics influences the strategy delivery and we aren't waking the talk.	5.4
Lack of clear visibility of the leadership team (walking the talk, being aligned, listening and being seen together).	4
Lack of a clear detailed vision/plan for year 1/2/3 with outcomes , actions and timings.	4
Lack of engagement of all to really believe in the future.	5.6
We don't have a common understanding of what the true issues are.	5
There is no honest and open regular update on business performance with sufficient detail for people to take action.	5.4
We aren't energizing people around what they can/ need to do.	4.6

Table 4: Movement Against the Baseline (Company X)

By the time of the third review with the champion group, a process for recording interview results was in place and all groups were now engaged with several examples of what was working. Participants were feeling the sense of empowerment as they held interviews and were also learning the importance holding such conversations ‘outside the silos’. Importantly, there was a feeling that ‘the ship was steady, with light at the end of the tunnel’, although a continuing tension between cynicism and credibility remained.

## PublicBody

In PublicBody, the seven Leaders went through the same process to learn the key features of AI and the skills of appreciative interviewing. A process of recording data for at least three interviews per person was agreed. It was also agreed to focus on the first items of concern that was revealed by the culture audit – engagement and trust. In particular, using the positive parts

of the dimensions, the Leaders sought work practices where these were enacted.

At the first review, each Leader was able to share findings. Once again, there was a sense that positive conversations had provided energy and satisfaction to others in the organization. There were many examples of good practice relating to engagement and trust. The data was collected with a focus on the actions and behaviour that were contained in the interviews. These were then used to form six themes as shown in Table 5.

<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispel myths.</li> <li>• Provide clarity.</li> <li>• Avoid rumours.</li> <li>• Show awareness of issues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consult and Listen</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate meetings.</li> <li>• Ask why.</li> <li>• Consider multiple voices and perspectives.</li> <li>• Show empathy.</li> <li>• Show engagement meaningfully.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal partner working.</li> <li>• Non-hierarchic working.</li> <li>• Gain willingness of all partners.</li> <li>• Show humility.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review and Challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show honesty.</li> <li>• Create opportunities.</li> <li>• Support confidence to challenge.</li> <li>• Reduce barriers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reward and Recognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday and ongoing.</li> <li>• Transparent.</li> <li>• Consistency.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideas and Innovation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take responsibility.</li> <li>• Reduce blame.</li> <li>• Show support and trust.</li> </ul>

Table 5: Themes for Engagement and Trust (Public Body)

The process was repeated for the issue of confidence and decision-making, resulting in further elucidation of themes based on actions and behaviours. It was soon recognized that the theme of communication was central to culture shift. In particular, there was a recognition of the failure of leaders and others in PublicBody to understand the complexity and sophistication of communication. This tended to mean an over-reliance on e-mail and top-down messages. Using the findings from AI, the Leaders agreed to the development of a Communications Workshop to be undertaken by Division Leadership Teams in the six divisions of the organizations.

After three cycles, the Leaders were ready to form PAL groups in each division with at least four other members for each group. This would allow Division Leaders' Teams to learn about good practices in the localized cultures of their division. For example, using the issue of leadership as a starting point, the findings in one division revealed the key actions and behaviours, shown as Table 6.

<p><b>Responsiveness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows awareness of needs.</li> <li>• Realizing the requirement.</li> <li>• Acting.</li> <li>• Reviewing the impact.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recognition of Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide suitability for task.</li> <li>• Appreciate skills.</li> <li>• Deploy.</li> <li>• Review knowledge gained.</li> <li>• Energize others.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show confidence in ability.</li> <li>• Delegate authority.</li> <li>• Review results.</li> <li>• Recognize achievement.</li> <li>• Give credit.</li> </ul>
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<b>Managing Ambiguity</b>	<b>Gaining Commitment for Unity</b>	<b>The Front Officer as Leader</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of problem.</li> <li>• Open to differences in perception.</li> <li>• Create space for differences.</li> <li>• ‘Iron out’ differences.</li> <li>• Clarify agreed positions.</li> <li>• Articulate shared understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show sensitivity to concerns.</li> <li>• Perspective taking.</li> <li>• Explaining reasons.</li> <li>• Recognition of sacrifices.</li> <li>• Staying in touch.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant authority.</li> <li>• Trust to act.</li> <li>• Data gathering and interpretation.</li> <li>• See the patterns.</li> <li>• See the bigger picture and the detail.</li> <li>• Access resources.</li> <li>• Find, organize and coordinate interested parties.</li> <li>• Measure results, impact and follow up.</li> </ul>

Table 6: Themes for Leadership in One Division (Public Body)

In addition to showing key themes for leaders, the findings also revealed, perhaps for the first time, the importance of leaders at a local level, who had to work interdependently with service users and other agencies. Similar patterns were shown in the findings from other divisions, each providing important indicators for good practice and in so doing ‘feeding’ the culture shift. The words had to become deeds.

The ongoing monitoring of progress against the baseline indicators was starting to show some movement (Table 7), although the sample size (31) was not yet representative.

1. Engagement	4.3
2. Trust	4.0
3. Confidence	3.5
4. Review and Feedback	3.8
5. Leadership	4.4
6. Decision-Making	3.8
7. Silo-Working	3.6
8. Change	4.1

Table 7: Movement Against the Baseline (PublicBody)

The evidence of shift is still emerging in PublicBody, but what is heartening, even at a time of continuing budget cuts, is that some of the leaders were seeing life in the fog, and appreciating the good work being completed, from which key lessons were being developed for the whole organization. As well as the roll out to Division Leaders, there were now plans for an extension of PAL more broadly to managers and a use of the knowledge gained to provide stories of good practice which could be introduced at appropriate moments. Culture shift could be enacted in the very processes of organizing.

## Summary

As argued at the start of this article, culture change is fraught with difficulty, not least as a result of the failure of those who are appointed as leaders to become disconnected from the everyday working of life in communities of practice. Further, there is a tendency for leaders to seek to set

out for others, in the fog, a portrayal of what is desirable but not enacted. Leaders have to start from the position of not knowing their organizations but wanting to find out. Instead of construing their ignorance and the failure of change and culture shift as a problem, they can instead work from the assumption that for most of time, most of the workforce in any organization is seeking to do things that are right, good and valued. It is the task of leaders to appreciate the value attached by communities to what they do. This article has shown how in two organizations, leaders have tried, and are continuing to try, to do this.

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