

# THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO **MANAGING PEOPLE**

HOW TO USE SOFT SKILLS TO GET HARD RESULTS



MIKE BRENT AND FIONA ELSA DENT



PUBLISHING  
FINANCIAL TIMES

# The Leader's Guide to Managing People

How to use soft skills to get  
hard results

Mike Brent and Fiona Elsa Dent

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Harlow CM20 2JE  
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Tel: +44 (0)1279 623623  
Web: www.pearson.com/uk

First published 2014 (print and electronic)

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ISBN: 978-0-273-77945-2 (print)

978-0-273-78037-3 (PDF)

978-0-273-78036-6 (ePub)

978-1-292-00744-1 (eText)

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for the print edition is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Brent, Mike.

The leader's guide to managing people : how to use soft skills to get hard results / Mike Brent and Fiona Elsa Dent.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-273-77945-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Leadership. 2. Personnel management. 3. Communication in management. 4. Interpersonal relations. 5. Teams in the workplace--Management. I. Dent, Fiona Elsa. II. Title.

HD57.7.B74824 2014

658.3--dc23

2013036642

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

17 16 15 14 13

Print edition typeset in 9pt Melior by 3

Print edition printed and bound in Great Britain by Ashford Colour Press Ltd., Gosport, Hampshire

NOTE THAT ANY PAGE CROSS REFERENCES REFER TO THE PRINT EDITION

Dedicated to our parents,  
Stephen and Angela Brent,  
Ena and Gordon Campbell

# About the authors

**Mike Brent is a Client and Programme Director at Ashridge Business School.** He specialises in leadership, team building, influencing, coaching, cross-cultural management, leading change and personal development. His interests include how to foster self-awareness and creativity, and how to challenge effectively.

Mike has worked as a management trainer and consultant with many international companies, such as GE, HP, Ericsson, France Telecom, ICI, Volvo and Bang and Olufsen, and has a particular interest in working with management teams. He has extensive international experience, having run seminars worldwide, including in Japan, China, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the US, Canada and South America.

Mike has published a number of articles and two books on influencing, coaching and leadership, including the book, *Influencing – Skills and Techniques for Business Success*, with Fiona Dent.

**Fiona Dent is an independent trainer, coach and Associate Faculty at Ashridge.** Her previous experience was as Director of Executive Education at Ashridge where she was involved in setting the strategic direction of the organisation with a particular focus on human resources. She also managed programmes, client relationships and delivered management development solutions in the leading people area.

## About the authors

Fiona has worked with a range of organisations and clients on a national and international basis, and teaches and consults across a broad spectrum of leadership, personal, interpersonal and relationship skills.

Fiona has written seven books and she continues to write and research in the areas of influence, relationship management and women in business. For more information about Fiona, see her website: [www.feddevelopment.co.uk](http://www.feddevelopment.co.uk).

Mike and Fiona are authors of the bestselling FT Publishing title, *The Leader's Guide to Influence*.

# Acknowledgements

In particular we would like to express our appreciation to those people who actively contributed to our reflections, especially the many managers and leaders we work with, and who shared their experiences with us.

Thanks also to the following people: Nigel Melville, Greg Searle, Andrew Ktoris, Evan George and his colleagues at Brief, Mark McKergow, Jenny Clarke, Paul Z. Jackson, Professor Shelly Gable, Masesi Malongete, Jean Pierre Loiseau, Guy Mansfield, Davide Dardanella, Charlotte Sills, Kate McCourt and Sarah Qing Tian.

Additionally we would like to thank our Ashridge colleagues for their help and support, especially Viki Holton, Sharon West, Alex Davda, Kerrie Fleming and Phil Anderson for their practical support.

Finally, we would like to thank our editor at Pearson, Nicole Eggleton.

## **Publisher's acknowledgements**

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### **Figures**

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## Acknowledgements

*Development*, Vol. 15, pp. 163–175 (Critchley, B. and Casey D. 1984); Figures 7.2 and 7.3 from Tuckman, Bruce W., 'Developmental sequence in small groups', *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, pp. 384–399, American Psychological Association, adapted with permission; Figure 7.4 The Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel is a registered trademark. Reproduced by kind permission of TMS Development International Ltd, 2013 [www.tmsdi.com](http://www.tmsdi.com); Figure 14.1, Professor Shelly Gable, University of California.

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# Introduction

*Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.*

Jack Welch


Leading people is a social skill. We believe that the key to effective people leadership in organisations is to move the focus away from the logical, impersonal and unemotional approaches that many organisations encourage and managers practise, and get back to the basic human dimensions of relationship and cooperation.

We see leaders as enablers of people, as skilled at reading and understanding others, able to tune into their people's inner thoughts and motivations, and to use these skills both to enable effective performance in the workplace and to increase the satisfaction and pleasure that employees find in their job. Social anthropologist Michael Tomasello says we are all social and emotional creatures. As such we need to be able to leverage these social and emotional aspects to ensure both job satisfaction and performance.

In the past, the focus of management has been on the individual, but we forget that companies are above all relational entities. We therefore feel it is essential for managers to improve their relational and psychological skills in order to become the most effective managers and leaders they can be.

This book is clearly advocating that to lead people effectively, managers must become like psychologists and be able to go beyond the obvious and external and delve into the internal motivations and thoughts of their people. We will not focus on quantitative tools and techniques, but on aspects such as the emotional self-control of the manager, their ability to tune into and understand their people's thoughts and motivations, their ability to empathise, understand and, crucially, help their people learn and develop so they can achieve their full potential.

Does this sound too wishy-washy? Too unrealistic? Let's look, then, at what's happening at the UK's biggest supermarket chain, Tesco. This retailer, although still generating healthy profits worldwide, has been seen to have 'dropped the ball' in its UK operation. Chief executive officer (CEO) Philip Clarke has been making some interesting statements recently and has gone on record saying he will put the heart and soul back into Tesco. Heart and soul: since when did one of the FTSE 100 bosses start talking about heart and soul? So how will he put the heart and soul back into Tesco? In a recent article in the *Sunday Times* he said: 'Workers will be encouraged to be more friendly.'



### To lead people effectively, managers must become like psychologists

It seems that Mr Clarke has understood that we are indeed a relational species and that Tesco customers want empathy and friendliness as well as low prices.

The late Peter Drucker, one of the world's leading thinkers and writers on management, said that management is about human beings and that its task is to make people capable of joint performance and to make their strengths effective and their weaknesses irrelevant.

So the journey in this book will be a relational and emotional one. We will look at how we can improve your people skills at work and how improving them will make you a much more effective leader of people.

## The people leadership model

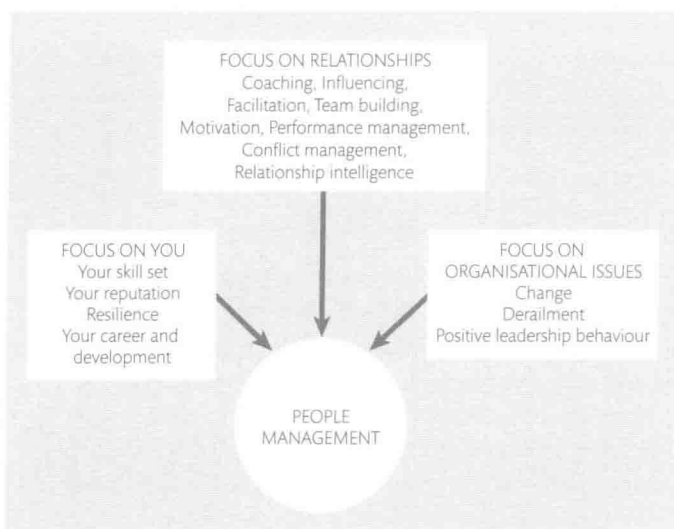
Leading and managing people is a complex and challenging process. Getting it right all the time is pretty well impossible. However, we believe that there are certain skills and principles you can adhere to that will help you to be more effective. Good people leadership is more than simply knowing the skills; it's really all about your ability to act appropriately and to adapt your approach to suit the different people and situations you find yourself in.

Good people leadership is more than simply knowing the skills

In our experience of working with thousands of leaders and managers in our roles as management developers and consultants, we have identified the following set of best-practice principles and we have written this book around these. The structure focuses on a range of skills, capabilities and general issues that you have to be aware of in order to be effective as a leader and manager of people in the 21st century.

We have categorised these into three key areas (see Figure 1):

- Focus on you – self-awareness, self-belief and self-confidence are all important for success as a leader of people. We have identified a range of areas that we believe contributes to greater self-awareness and leads to self-belief and confidence.



**FIGURE 1** Best-practice principles for leading and managing people

- Focus on relationships – leading and managing people is largely about your reputation and attitudes and how you deploy your behaviour, skills and abilities when working with others. With this in mind we have identified a range of competences and capabilities, which should be part of any leader's repertoire and will contribute to your success as a leader.
- Focus on organisational issues – these areas concern how to lead change, avoid derailment and use positive psychology to improve results in your business area.

A brief description of these areas follows, together with a short self-reflection exercise to help you get started on the process of raising your self-awareness and planning where you may have to focus your development.

## Focus on you

- Your skill set – being fully aware of your strengths, weaknesses and development needs.
- Your reputation – how others perceive you.
- Resilience – your ability to deal with adversity and bounce back.
- Your career development – having a clear sense of your personal goals and plans.

## Focus on your people

- Coaching – developing others to help them reach their full potential.
- Influencing – influencing others to gain commitment and agreement to ideas and action.
- Facilitation – acting as an enabler, involving others to ensure good-quality dialogue and outcomes.
- Team building – developing and working with others to get things done for the benefit of the business.
- Motivation – creating a positive environment to get the best out of others.
- Performance management – setting goals and objectives for others and giving timely feedback.
- Conflict management – dealing effectively with interpersonal tensions.
- Relationship intelligence – managing and understanding your behaviour and emotions when working with others.

## Focus on your business

- Change – understanding the need for, implications of and process of change.
- Derailment – awareness of the barriers, challenges and career derailers that could knock you off track.
- Positive leadership behaviour – using relational, appreciative and solution-focused approaches to lead others.

You might find it useful to complete the following self-reflection quiz, which will enable you to analyse your knowledge or skill level, your degree of self-awareness and your development needs in the main areas covered in this book. If you want to get even more valuable feedback you might like to ask others – your boss and colleagues – to rate you against these criteria as well. (Please feel free to photocopy this quiz should you wish to get feedback from others.)

Using a scale of 1–7, try rating yourself in relation to each of the main people leadership areas: 1 = a low level of skill, 4 = a satisfactory skill level and 7 = you are highly skilled in this area. Then indicate development need in relation to your current role and future development.

## Self-reflection quiz

People management self-reflection quiz		
People leadership areas	Skill/knowledge level 1-----4-----7	Development need: Low/Med/High
<b>Your skill set</b> – being fully aware of your strengths, weaknesses and development needs		
Your reputation – how others perceive you		
Resilience – your ability to deal with adversity and bounce back		
Your career development – having a clear sense of your personal goals and plans		
Coaching – developing others to help them reach their full potential		
Influencing – influencing others to gain commitment and agreement to ideas and action		
Facilitation – acting as an enabler, involving others to ensure good-quality dialogue and outcomes		
Team building – developing and working with others to get things done for the benefit of the business		

People leadership areas	Skill/knowledge level 1-----4-----7	Development need: Low/Med/High
Motivation – creating a positive environment to get the best out of others		
Performance management – setting goals and objectives for others and giving timely feedback		
Conflict management – dealing effectively with interpersonal tensions		
Relationship intelligence – managing and understanding behaviour and emotions when working with others		
Change – understanding the need for and implications of change and delivering successful outcomes		
Derailment – awareness of the barriers, challenges and career derailers that could knock you off track		
Positive leadership behaviour – using relational, appreciative and solution-focused processes to lead others		

#### NOTES

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The remainder of this book will focus on each of the areas described above and will share best-practice ideas, tips and techniques together with practical work to help you develop your skill and capability as a leader.

This book can be read either in a conventional way, from beginning to end, or by dipping in and out, reading the sections that are of most interest and use to you. You will find that we have incorporated several quizzes, inventories and exercises into the various chapters. These are intended as a way of encouraging you to reflect, learn and create action plans for further development.