2014 – The Connectwell Manifesto

15 Months ago I went on record and shared my definition of Leadership as I addressed a room full of IT Directors from the charitable sector. In the keynote I said it was about relationships, results, followership, and the creation of meaning and purpose.

With the benefit of reflecting on our work in 2013, and the privilege of talking to our clients and professionals about their challenges and aspirations, I see no reason to revise my definition.

Instead I offer 5 themes as part of our manifesto for

leadership & sustainable development. Consider these as you embark on a new year in 2014. They are born directly out of our consulting practice and work over the last 15 months. We have also gone a bit deeper as a footnote and included key insights (problem statements) we have seen repeatedly in our work.

1. Ownership: taking ownership and being accountable for outcomes that change the game is key. The best organisations have leaders who understand this and take personal responsibility, but also know how to share accountability and ownership at a team level. Taking ownership will usually encourage others to rally and get behind you to support, but requires a statement of intent about the future, and a degree of faith in the unknown.

2. Citizenship: being a good corporate citizen is underrated. It is important to consider others, especially where you have more than a few degrees of separation. The more broadly you consider the impact of your actions and decisions, the more positive and lasting the results tend to be. Citizenship also considers longer term outcomes, increasing sustainability and reducing risk.

3. Bravery: being honest and direct whilst remaining respectful is key to organisational success. Although they may not win popularity contests at the time, 'calling it' and challenging activity or projects are vital. Initiatives often have their own momentum or life force after a while; even

if they look like they will fail it takes someone to make the statement, or at least ask the right question.

4. Objectivity: staying objective, especially around colleagues you are very familiar with, is a sign of true organisational health. Where this exists, it encourages a learning organisation where people continue to grow, innovation is more likely and risk is reduced. Providing timely feedback and challenge is relatively straight forward if practiced often and is the norm in the culture.

5. Humility: people who show humility tend to have a more balanced approach to life and foster strong relationships at work. By showing yourself (including a little of your vulnerable side), you will often get the support you need from others to succeed. This leads to feelings of resourcefulness and never having to be 'stuck' for too long with a challenge that cannot be solved. As behaviour breeds behaviour, you will also encourage the same in others and are likely to see more authenticity in colleagues

Connectwell
Relationships that work

Rather than being generic, these 5 themes are born from the very real and tangible evidence base of our client work. In order to protect our clients' confidentiality, we have simply wrapped these insights into more generic statements which still make the point!

Problem Statements:

1. **Using 'Rock Star' Consultants**: They come in a variety of forms – Executive Coaches, Psychologists, Ex CEOs. What they all share are oversized Egos, or a loss of perspective on why they do what they do. Their clients often become dependent on them and loose authority, which can lead to collusion, blind spots and an inability for the organisation to grow or develop in its own right!

2. **Achieving at the Expense of Others**: All too often managers / executives will drive a business or to monetary outcome with little or no regard for the human cost or consequences. At worst, this is a series of conscious decisions or behaviours that do not support collective goals. Often based on power and status and the ability to 'get away with it', it can leave and organisation paralysed by fear, overall poor performance and a lack of collaborative working.

3. **Keeping it on Life Support**: We continue to see projects, initiatives and other significant undertakings being left to slowly drift or die without anyone calling time. Rather than killing initiatives for the right reasons or breathing life back into them, managers turn a blind eye particularly if it is not in their direct line of sight or coming out of their budget. Most workforces are pretty switched on and see this, leading to low morale, game playing and initiative overload.

4. **Blind Faith & Loyalty**: One of the hardest things is to manage people; to keep it professional and objective whilst being a great leader that inspires trust and confidence. We see people getting far too close to one another, creating risks where working relationships no longer have healthy challenge or feedback mechanisms. Ultimately this leads to dangerous blind spots, and resentment from others outside of those relationships.

5. **Turning a Blind Eye**: Organisational life has its fair share of challenges and difficulties. Many people actively avoid situations, people and challenges, due to feeling personally helpless or lacking the confidence / resources to do anything about the issue. What they fail to do is ask for the appropriate help. This in turn can be down to the fact that showing any kind of vulnerability is still seen as too dangerous in many organisational cultures.

Our manifesto champions the idea that all managers and leaders deserve the right to contribute towards sustainable development of their businesses, their people and of course themselves. Our intention in sharing this paper is that it is of practical use as you embark on your 2014 ambitions. With your support we will continue to create the right conditions and professional support to make that happen!

Written by

Steve Bernard – Connectwell Founder

January 2014

Connectwell
Relationships that work