

Reflective review of personal leadership successes and personal challenges.

MSC POLICING (OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP)
LEADERSHIP AND THE INDIVIDUAL

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Introduction

This paper will consider Leadership in the context of the individual and teams. I will consider my leadership journey, my style, influences, motivators, and challenges I have faced as a leader. I will also consider learning theory as to how I lead others and develop personally.

I will draw upon those leaders that have influenced me and those I have modelled in my behaviours. *why?*

Leadership within public service has multiple facets and as a police officer of 20 years' service I recognise the need to be adaptive in the way I lead and am led. That said I continue to learn from experiences.

Leadership is interpreted in a multitude of ways; it is a subject of much debate research and theory.

Roe (2020) explores theories of power in leadership. Within policing due to the clearly defined hierarchical rank structure leadership, is sometimes perceived as defined only by rank. This is defined, as position, or legitimate power and Roe draws upon the study by John French and Bertram Raven (1959), where they concluded an individual's power came from one of five sources.

This paper will explore other power types that resonate with myself through my leadership journey and the impact they have had.

Leadership exists at all levels of the organisation. Haberfield (2006 quoted in Walsh and Vito, p.60) defines police leadership as "the ability to make a split-second decision and take control of a potentially high voltage situation on the

why this for style you?

streets." As a transformational leader it is important to me that all my team have a strong sense of leadership.

Walsh and Vito (2019, p.61) define four styles of leadership. Directive, supportive, participatory and achievement orientated. I will consider these and how I see them as interchangeable.

The majority of my policing has been within Criminal Investigation (CID) within Carmarthenshire Local Policing Area (LPA). I have worked within relatively small close-knit teams where there was a familiarity and shared vision.

On promotion to Chief Inspector in 2019, I moved to Pembrokeshire LPA. At this time, I was comfortable with my leadership style, confident in my values and knew that I was recognised as a leader who valued and cared about my team's wellbeing and development. I also had a reputation as someone who got things done, could drive performance and make change and improvement.

In this paper I will utilise the Gibbs reflective cycle to highlight a challenge I faced as a leader during this transition to Chief Inspector in a new geographical area and into uniform policing. This cycle developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988 gives structure to reflecting and learning from experiences, I will use this framework to examine my experience demonstrating the six stages, specifically what happened, my feelings and the feelings of others, an evaluation of the situation, analysis, conclusion and action planning.

During the analysis I will draw upon theories of leadership, power, motivation factors and learning styles.

The situation I have chosen to describe was one of great learning for me. I have drawn upon this experience many times since and it has shaped me as a leader.

What happened

Within a short period of taking up the new post, I identified some performance issues regarding the submission of files. This was predominantly with a couple of the sergeant team. I was keen to resolve this and decided to provide the Sergeant team with a development week each, with protected duty time. This was intended to be a week where they would have protected time to seek continuous professional development. This would be tailored to their own development needs and interests. I wanted them to seek out and decide what that would be, as I recognised, they would all have different needs. I specified however that during the week I wanted them to have some time within the Investigation Support Unit (ISU) to discuss the file issues and share learning.

I emailed the sergeants and their inspectors outlining what the intention was, how the week would work and encouraged them to consider opportunities for personal development.

A few days after sending the email, I was in our monthly performance meeting, together with my six inspectors and my superintendent line manager.

At the end of the meeting one of the inspectors stated that they wished to raise an issue with me. He went on to say that because of the email, the team were reporting that they felt my message was telling them that they were not good at file submissions. He said they felt this was the reason I had implemented this development week and that it was a waste of the sergeant's time. He advised that I had offended the sergeants and inspectors and that he didn't feel the development week was a good idea and suggested that I reflect on my decision and change it.

Any Emotions occurring

None of the other inspectors said anything or offered any views. My line manager also said nothing, but I could see he was waiting for my response.

How this make you feel?

I thanked the inspector for letting me know and stated that I felt it was positive that he was comfortable to share that feedback and that it was important to me that we were honest with each other as a leadership team.

I explained my rationale for the decision and emphasised that it was to demonstrate to my new team that their personal development was important to me. I also explained that there were issues with the management of files and so it was important this was also addressed. I told him that my decision stood, but that I would reflect on the way it had been communicated and seek to reassure those sergeants. I asked the others present if they had any thoughts, and nothing was raised.

How this make you feel?

After the meeting, I sought feedback from my line manager as to how I had managed the situation in the meeting and the idea of the development week. He advised that I dealt with it well but, needed to remember that the staff did not all know me and so my style of leadership would impact them differently than others who may know me.

were you okay with this feedback?

I sought feedback from another colleague specifically about the email. She advised that the content and structure of the email was quite transactional and to the point.

One of the other inspectors who had been present came to see me afterwards and said that he was not aware that any issue had been raised. I asked that he speak to his team to ensure they fully understood the reasoning and to raise any issues with me.

why did you do this?

I then sent an email to all the sergeants stating that I was aware there were some concerns and apologised if my email had caused that. I reiterated the opportunity this presented them and what they could consider for the week.

I also took opportunities to speak to the team face to face to dispel any concerns, having learnt that emails can be misconstrued.

Happens to the best of us

The outcome of this situation was that the sergeants did take the development week. They embraced it, after they were extremely enthused and updated that they had gained a lot from it. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

To ensure closure with the inspector, I discussed it one to one, I explained I would have preferred him to have spoken to me outside of that forum. He had been with me prior to the meeting, so I asked why he made no mention of it then. I also expressed my disappointment that he had not been able to explain to his staff the benefits such a week would bring, given that I had discussed this with him before I made the decision to arrange. I made sure he knew I was pleased that he had given the feedback and reiterated that it was important that we had that honest dialogue as a team.

Any concern with trust?

My feelings

I would have preferred it if this had been raised with me on a one to one, or at least to have been given advance warning that the matter would be raised. My immediate feelings were of surprise, this was the first I was aware of any issue. On further reflection I was angry and annoyed, this was because I felt embarrassed and undermined in front of my team and superior. I then felt instinctively defensive, I felt he had chosen this forum to undermine me in front of

*his style?
Power or
concern?*

my new team and line manager. It caused me to doubt my abilities to perform at this rank and role. I was unsure what would motivate him to take this approach.

✓
Having learned from previous experiences where I may have reacted more instinctively or let my frustration or anger show. I made the decision to not react or get into a debate. I did not want to come across as not open to challenge or feedback or be seen as confrontational. I chose not to challenge his approach at that time. Instead, I decided to take time to reflect and consider matters raised. I did however reaffirm my decision regarding the development week. Drawing on previous experiences where I had seen supervisors appear indecisive or lack conviction, I was mindful not to change my decision without wider consideration of more information. I was concerned this would show weakness and could undermine my position.

theory?

After the meeting I reflected on the email and read over what I had sent. I picked up on some of the phraseology used and it had been quite to the point. I reflected that some face-to-face conversations would have made for a better way to approach it.

why?

On reflection I have further considered my motivation for instigating the development week. I wanted to demonstrate to my team that their development was important to me, and therefore they should consider the development of their own teams as a consequence. I wanted to reward the team and use this as a motivator to improve performance.

good theory?

I was quite clear in my mind initially that this was the main motivator for the decision. However, on further reflection and considering my new position in the team, I was motivated by a desire to demonstrate my own performance mindset

to my line manager. I wanted to make progress and show an impact of joining the team and improving performance. I had felt this was a good way to also address some low-level performance concerns before they escalated. I also did not want to single out staff so early in my taking up post. I understand now that this was likely motivated by a fear of being perceived as autocratic and not wishing to exert any fear in terms of coercive power.

My line manager stated that the style of email was direct and raised the need to gain the 'hearts and minds' of the team. This term resonated, as on reflection the sergeant and inspector team did not know me well, they had no previous experience to draw upon and so based their belief and perception on the limited interactions to that point and the email. I recognised that I needed to build that trust in me as a leader and develop us as a new team.

Team Building

I felt frustrated with myself that I had not considered this may be an issue. I was worried as to how this incident may impact the team and how they perceived me.

On considering the feelings of the Inspector, I believe he was drawing upon his power as a member of an established team, to which I had been an outsider. I believe that he did not feel confident to approach me directly, but with his peers with him that perhaps gave him the psychological safety to raise it. Professor Amy C Edmundson states "Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes" (Aspire Leadership Development Programme workbook College of Policing 2021, p.22)

When I consider his motivations, I believe he was seeking to undermine me in my role. I subsequently learned that he had attempted promotion to chief inspector and was unsuccessful. Whilst he had some valid points to make, I feel he was

*your thoughts
if this was
good or bad?*

personally motivated by this and that explained the way in which he approached the situation. I believe that he also took it as a suggestion that he was not effective at managing his teams, and perhaps felt undermined by my decision and the way I went about it. I do not think he was motivated to change and perhaps this was drawn from some negative previous experiences.

After this interaction I was really considered in my approach to email construction and consciously tried to soften them to ensure they did not appear too transactional. In doing this, I found that I was not being my natural style and struggled to find my way for a while, looking back this incident had caused me self-doubt and I was overly sensitive.

Shortly after this I attended a Belbin practitioner course, where I had sought feedback through the self-assessment and observers' assessment. I scored highly in the Shaper style. The Shaper according to Belbin's theory can be dynamic, challenging, thrives under pressure and has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles. Belbin's theory suggests that a team should have each of the twelve team roles to be successful. The strengths of the team also have what he described as allowable weaknesses. For the Shaper role, this can mean you are prone to provocation and offend people's feelings. When I attended the course the situation in the performance meeting with the inspector immediately came to mind.

On debrief with the trainer she advised that I should not seek to change who I am, or my natural style but recognise those disallowable weaknesses and when they may present. I found this reassuring as I had been struggling to find a way to suppress what I now know to be a strength. When I returned from the course I

settled back into my natural style of leadership, but with the learning and knowledge I had gained.

Evaluation

I found the experience invaluable as I learnt a lot about myself and the challenges of leading a large team. This was different to being a leader in a smaller team. Since this time whenever I have a similar situation, I reflect on my learning from this situation and manage it differently.

I believe this situation arose because I had been a leader in the same area for a long period, I hadn't given much thought to how I would lead the new team. As such I simply continued how I had led previously. I did not give consideration to the changing team dynamic and the fact that the team I now led did not know me well and the majority had not previously worked with me.

I have identified that my natural leadership style is transformational but when I need something done or am in a task mindset, I become transactional or directive. I have learnt through experience as an operational officer, sergeant and inspector that a transactional style can get things done and is quicker and can be effective in performance management or incident management.

Humphrey (2014) discusses how transactional leadership assists with goal setting and that these are important for overall leadership effectiveness.

Burns (1978) argues that those within an organisation are motivated by two methods of leadership: transformational and transactional and that the two are interchangeable.

I believe that the issue was not with the decision to enable a development week, but the way I went about it in an autocratic, directive style. My communications direct to the team via e-mail meant the messaging was not clear. This was not a situation that required a fast timely decision. I could have used the performance meeting to raise the issue and the concept of the development week. I would have heard first hand the views and ideas of the inspectors and together we could have made the decision. I know that I was impatient and keen to make change in my new role.

I feel that I managed the situation in the meeting well, in that I took on board the inspectors views. I demonstrated to my new team that I took feedback well and that there would be no negative response to being challenged. I also did not back down immediately and so was able to demonstrate some strength and authority from my position as superior, but in a positive way. *good, theory?*

A more recent example to demonstrate the learning I took from this situation, was a year later when I identified performance issues with how officers were dealing with domestic abuse cases and the subsequent supervision and updating of records. I wanted to instigate a process where the Inspector team and myself would review each domestic prior to the daily management meeting and endorse the record. I also wanted to arrange sergeant seminars to make clear the expectations on them and the team.

From the previous experience I knew that I needed to engage with the Inspector team first, on doing so they did not believe there to be an issue. We agreed they would deep- dive review a month of domestic cases in their sections and provide a report highlighting any learning or best practice.

On doing so they saw for themselves issues and immediately were keen to find a resolution. I arranged a meeting, and we collectively produced a plan, which included the daily review. They were invested in finding a resolution and as a result the performance of the team in how they dealt with, and supervised domestics improved significantly over time.

good team learning, how did you feel?

Their motivation for wanting to resolve was that the poor performance had risks to victims, and to the organisation and individual if we got it wrong.

Analysis

I have always supported the development of my staff, encouraging them to seek new opportunities and supporting them to grow. Sometimes this has meant they move on to new teams and I have always viewed this as a positive. Often within policing leaders work in silos and seek to retain high performers or those with potential. I have always seen this as short sighted and looked at the wider organisational gains.

I believe I take this approach as this is something I have seen with my previous line managers; I have always been supported to develop in the organisation. This gives me a sense of satisfaction and reward in knowing my development is important to my superiors. I have had several line managers who I admire, and respect and I have learnt from them. ✓

Whilst I have always considered my leadership style to be transformational, having further studied leadership theories I find that servant leadership is more how I lead.

Servant leadership is broken into seven dimensions by Liden et al. (2008) behaving ethically, conceptual skills, creating value for and serving the

community, empowering followers, helping followers grow and succeed, putting followers and their interests first and emotional healing.

This theory demonstrates that when leaders place a priority on providing tangible support to followers and assisting followers in reaching their full potential, followers in turn see their leader as a role model and engage in appropriate behaviours, not through coercion but because they want to. I now recognise this from those leaders I admire and the influence that has had on me and my leadership style. *what did you do differently?*

According to Liden et al (2008, p.163) whilst there would be anticipated moderate correlation between the two styles of transformational and servant, in contrast, the focus on serving followers first, contributing to the community, and cultivating servant leadership behaviours among followers all represent features of servant leadership that are not captured by transformational leadership. In practical terms however I do see a crossover, and both resonate with me.

On reflecting both situations which occurred twelve months apart I recognise that there is a difference in managing teams of different sizes. Style of leadership and power is a clear influencing factor in terms of performance and effectiveness of a team. Roe (2008, p.279) broadly terms power into two types, position, and person.

Legitimate or position power is where power is achieved due to position or status in the organisation. As I gained rank then this power was a natural consequence due to the rank structured hierarchical nature of policing. But this is not enough on its own, from my experiences with rank you also need to build relationships

and trust with teams and peers. These then draw upon different and more person focused power types.

Referent power is one which is gained or earned through respect or admiration. This is where relationships are leveraged. This power relationship usually delivers results but must be earned. Moral power is where the leader talks the talk and walks the walk. Based upon a strong sense of values. It is on reflection that I had previously relied upon Legitimate power, but more importantly referent and moral power. These are personal power types and Roe (2020, p.291) concludes that successful leaders use personal power as it is more effective in obtaining commitment.

I realise that in the new leadership position and reflecting on the situation, that respect was yet to be earned as I was new to their area of the organisation. I am mindful that I also entered a uniform policing role from the criminal investigation team, therefore my credibility at both the rank and role was yet to be tested. I was yet to show I could indeed walk the walk.

As I reflect back upon this period as a leader, I was very conscious of being an outsider, of being judged. *why?*

An example of this was having to undertake the training and role of a firearms commander. There is much discussion amongst peers and supervisory ranks regarding the difficulty of the course and assessment required to be a firearms tactical commander. I frequently heard peers remark how those from a criminal investigation background struggled with the course. This undermined my confidence, yet also became a great motivator to me succeeding. I felt the need

why?

to prove myself as competent, which I subsequently have by passing the course with ease and being competent and confident in doing the role.

I recognise that Imposter syndrome as termed by Clance and Ames in 1978 has also impacted on my leadership journey. When situations such as these arise, they can reinforce those feelings. In learning that this is something that impacts me, I have researched and sought to understand the phenomenon further. I have developed strategies to manage the effects. Young (2011) has assisted in this and provides insight and tools to overcome this.

In my previous teams there had been a long developed understanding personal relationships and trust. On reflection I realised how much I relied upon those around me understanding me and my style. I realise now that it is likely in some situations they made allowances for perhaps misjudged situations or behaviours. I was more able to trust in my team that we had a common goal and purpose, due to learned behaviours.

Lynch (2021, p.577) discusses the approach to leadership styles, he argues that the most successful leaders will generate trust, enthusiasm, and commitment. But from experience this isn't something you can achieve overnight.

Capon (2008, p.183) describes leadership as the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals. She goes on to describe leadership styles as falling into three broad categories, autocratic, democratic and laissez faire.

When I made the decision as to the way to approach the situation, with little consultation with the Inspector team, there was no buy in to my idea. They felt like a decision that impacted them and their own teams was put upon them. I recognise that I was autocratic in my style at that point, on reflection this style

was not suited to the objective I was seeking to achieve. I believe that if I had dealt with the situation the same in my previous team, they would have understood my motivations better. But as this was a new team with no previous experience to learn from, they made assumptions and reacted differently that I had anticipated.

How did you feel about this?

I learned from this and involved them in the review of domestic abuse cases and problem solving. In that situation I clearly demonstrated the democratic leadership style. This was a positive experience that worked well and achieved the results for which I had hoped.

How did your team feel? motivated?

Capon (2008, p.185) describes the democratic leadership style as power being devolved between the leader and the team, with the team having greater control.

I recognise that both styles have a place in my leadership style, I have exercised both in a multitude of scenarios. The difference is that I now understand the benefits of each approach and importantly the pitfalls.

I have also demonstrated the Laissez faire style where I make a conscious decision to enable the team to make their own decisions and direction.

How?

In policing there is a need to be able to draw upon a different leadership style depending on the situation. In command scenarios a transactional or autocratic style is suited. It has the benefits of quick decision making and action, people understand what is required and this is essential for example in public order or firearms command. A democratic approach in some policing command situations could cause risk to staff or public or lead to ambiguity.

Whilst leadership style is important to understand, motivation theory provides some deeper understanding to develop and support me in my leadership journey.

Motivation is a reason to behave or act in a particular way. We are all motivated by different things. These can be intrinsic, and therefore internal so our interests and personal satisfaction, or they can be extrinsic and therefore external such as pay, rewards and tangible things.

Giblin (2007) describes how motivation theories can be drawn into two areas of theory, content theory and process theory.

Content theory he describes as theories relating to the basic needs that drive behaviour, or rewards that drive behaviour. Process theory he describes as more complex and recognises that individuals are driven by different factors. He also argues that these fulfilled needs would not automatically translate into action or behaviour.

Roe (2020, p.105) describes the motivation theories and refers to Vroom who suggests motivation is "an explanation of choices made by organisms among different voluntary responses. Roe explains this as when individuals have freedom to make choice they are driven by motivation.

On reflection the development week should have motivated the sergeants intrinsically. They were being afforded time and space to explore development opportunities, the work was self-directed, and I would have expected it to lead to job satisfaction. I have considered Herzberg's motivation-hygiene factors. Some of the factor's dissatisfaction were being removed and nearly all the positive motivation factors were present, achievement, recognition, challenge, responsibility, growth and advancement (through development).

Despite the initial issues in establishing the development week, once the sergeants had the opportunity they benefited greatly. I now understand that this is due to the positive motivation factors being present. *How?*

Sadler-Smith (2006, p.285) discusses the managers role in learning and development and highlights the need for identification and facilitation of learning for their staff, creating opportunities. By demonstrating this to my team in practice, I have enabled them to do this for staff under their supervision. I have been explicit in my approach to this, giving autonomy to the sergeants and inspectors in identifying and pursuing development opportunities. I have created a culture of learning and development, which has benefits for the individual, the team and the wider organisation of Dyfed-Powys. It also goes wider and improves the service we provide to the communities we serve. *why important?*

There is much theory on learning styles, supportive leadership is underpinned by the principles of social learning theory as defined by A Bandura (1973), where people model behaviour that they have observed. This is modelled behaviour and results in outcomes we approve of. Social identity theory, where there is a sense of belonging and social cultural theory, where culture shapes behaviour.

Sadler-Smith (2006, p.115) states that emotions are increasingly seen as important for learning. This is demonstrated by an understanding of the limbic system and how cognitive learning works. Cognitive learning is a way which I identify as learning from experience, if I can relate back to how an incident or experience made me feel then I can learn. This is how I learnt from the situation with the inspector team as it caused strong feelings that I would not want to replicate and so in similar situations I have dealt with them differently. ✓

*> How?
Are you comfortable
with the change?*

Conclusion and action planning

Walsh and Vito (2019, pp.68-71) discuss the Leadership Challenge Model, this highlights five practices that effective leaders demonstrate. Transformational leadership forms the basis for the model. They model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, encourage the heart.

As a force Dyfed-Powys police have adopted the transformational leadership approach, officers and staff have attended courses regarding this style of leadership. On reflection and further learning I believe that whilst the transformational leadership style is one that will benefit the organisation, servant leadership is more suitable to policing. This style of leadership is one I will continue to foster in my teams through modelling of behaviours.

Policing or leading?

Peter Neyroud (2011) discussed the need for police leadership to adapt to the challenges faced in the 21st century.

The use of the Development Assessment Portfolio (DAP) which is a performance review for staff encourages self-reflection and one to one meetings between staff and line managers. Use of performance reviews are important in managing and developing staff. They need to be meaningful and not become a tick box exercise. I have previously had reviews that are rushed, and I know have only happened due to a deadline in the process looming. This did not inspire me or leave me feeling valued.

The DAP is an excellent way to recognise and develop staff and I will ensure that I promote the use of this form of appraisal and self-reflection and that staff do not see it as tick box or not relevant to their role.

How?

When I consider myself now as a leader, I have gone through a number of learning experiences. I have developed through lived experiences when things have gone well and not so well. I have observed other leaders, I have taken advice and feedback. I have also utilised 360 feedback and psychometric testing to really understand my natural style, and what motivates me. I am comfortable that I understand how I want to lead, and how I can adapt and change the style dependant on the situation.

What remains consistent and of utmost importance to me are my values, however I adapt my style of leadership those values remain fixed.

- which are?

I have considered wider learning and benefit from these experiences. I know that in future when I move through the ranks or into new teams, I will always remember my transition to Chief Inspector and the learning I gained fairly swiftly. I will ensure that I take time to get to know the team and for them to know me, I will ensure that my expectations are made clear, and I will demonstrate the behaviours I would want to see modelled.

I believe that from this experience as a new senior leader, I developed and have been able to create a culture within my team that is positive. It enabled me to create the right supportive culture and subsequently enhanced performance.

Organisation better?

Ramchunder and Martins (2014) in their research concluded, "there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, there is a significant correlation between self-efficacy and effective leadership, and lastly, there is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy"

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