Linking Leader Profile

WORKBOOK

What are the Linking Skills?

Effective teams are those that value diversity, that is, they respect the different approaches to work that everyone has and learn how to harness these differences for the benefit of the team. This process is called Linking and is represented by the circle in both the centre of the Team Management Wheel and the Types of Work Wheel. Linking is a set of core skills which describe how people engage both with tasks and with each other in order to achieve goals.

There are six basic **people linking skills** important to all team members. There are a further five **task linking skills** relevant to those in more senior positions in a team. Two further **leadership linking skills** are necessary for those with an element of leadership in their role. Together, all these skills make up the Linking Leader Model.
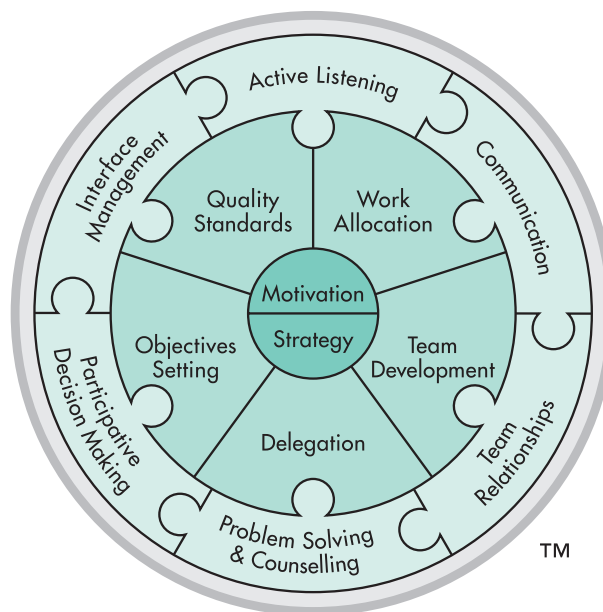
Linking Leader Model

People Linking Skills

The people linking skills are arranged around the outside of the model.

- **Active Listening** e.g. listens well when others are speaking
- **Communication** e.g. varies his/her communication style to match the needs of others
- **Team Relationships** e.g. ensures that team members value one another's contribution
- **Problem Solving and Counselling** e.g. counsels team members to improve performance
- **Participative Decision Making** e.g. involves the team in the development of solutions to major problems and opportunities
- **Interface Management** e.g. encourages team members to co-operate with other groups which interact with the team
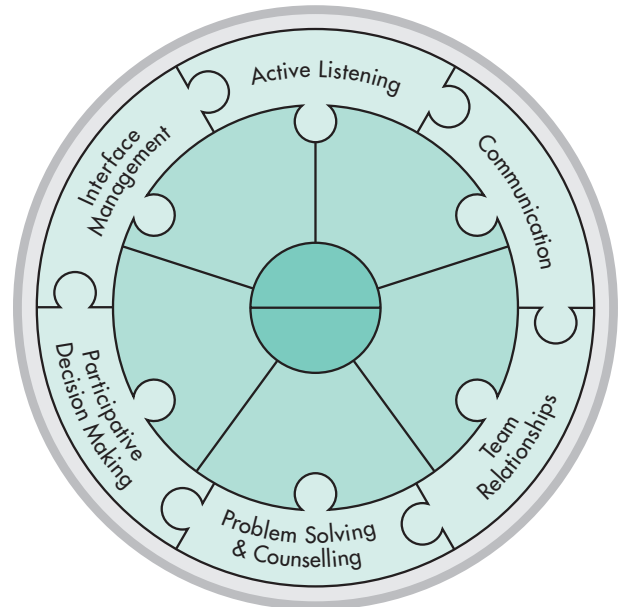
People Linking Skills

Task Linking Skills

Five task linking skills are important to the more senior members of a team.

- **Objectives Setting** e.g. encourages the establishment of goals that challenge the work group
- **Quality Standards** e.g. strives for excellence at work
- **Work Allocation** e.g. allocates tasks so that team members' abilities are used to meet organisational goals
- **Team Development** e.g. has a training and development plan for staff
- **Delegation** e.g. negotiates work assignments with team members
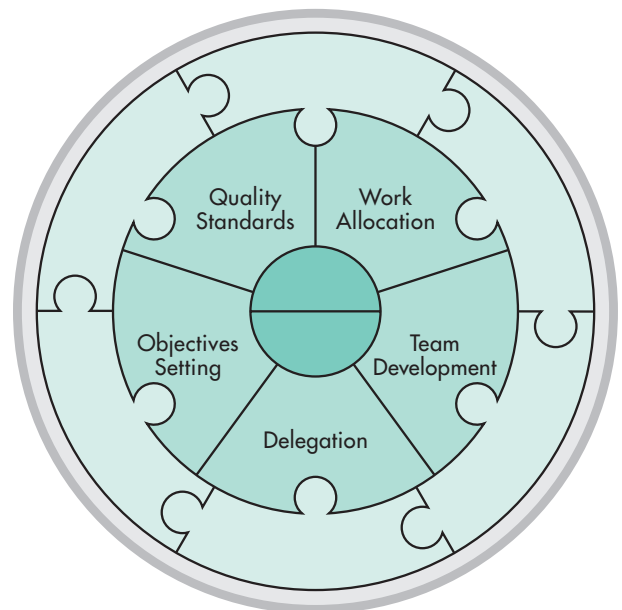
Task Linking Skills

Leadership Linking Skills

There are two skills at the centre of the Linking Leader Model, essential for team leadership. Without them, leaders are unlikely to reach their full potential.

- **Motivation** e.g. inspires team members to perform
- **Strategy** e.g. keeps in focus all elements of a complex issue

Leadership Linking Skills

How are Linking Skills measured?

It is difficult to assess your own linking skills. You may, for example, think of yourself as a poor listener, but if your colleagues have experienced many instances where you have listened attentively to what they have to say, they may conside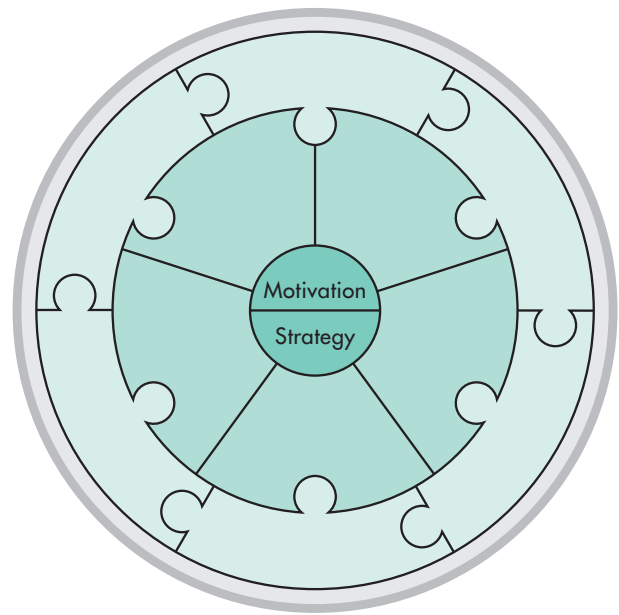r you to be a good listener. On the other hand, they may feel you could improve your linking skills but so far have been reluctant to tell you. This is why the Linking Leader Profile Questionnaire is a multi-rater instrument designed to give you feedback about the gap between how you see your linking skills, and how they are assessed by others.

When you completed the Linking Leader Profile Questionnaire about yourself you were indicating how satisfied **you** are with your own linking skills. When your colleagues completed the Linking Leader Profile Questionnaire about you, they were indicating how satisfied **they** are with your linking skills. In all, you and your colleagues answered questions that measure the extent to which you each perceive you **should** carry out a particular linking skill and the extent to which you **do** carry out that skill.

The results are expressed as satisfaction rates which measure how satisfied the respondents are with a particular linking skill. A 100% satisfaction rate is the ideal but in general anything over 75% is considered to be good. If satisfaction rates are below 75% then there is room for improvement.

How should I interpret my Linking Leader Profile?

In your Linking Leader Profile, following the introductory text, you will see up to three pages containing horizontal graphs which plot the satisfaction rates from all respondents, including yourself. The results from your own assessment are labelled **Self** and show how satisfied you are with your performance in each linking skill. If your supervisor(s) has completed the Linking Leader Profile Questionnaire about you then there will be a graph reporting how satisfied they are with each linking skill and there may be graphs plotted from the responses given by your co-workers.

In all there are a maximum of five possible Satisfaction Rates reported for each linking skill. These are usually:

- **Self**   your own responses
- **Co-worker group A**   averaged responses from those who report directly to you
- **Co-worker group B**   averaged responses from your peers or colleagues
- **Co-worker group C**   averaged responses from those not included in co-worker groups

                   A and B but who interact with you at work
- **Supervisor group**   responses from your supervisor(s)

In most cases, co-worker groups A, B and C are presented separately. However, it is possible that co-worker groups A, B and C could be combined in different ways. Usually your facilitator makes this choice.

To interpret the data, first of all look at the satisfaction rates for each linking skill for your own responses - the self graphs. If the satisfaction rates are above 75% then you are probably reasonably satisfied with your performance in this area, although you should always strive to achieve the maximum score of 100%.

If satisfaction rates are below 75% then you will realise that you may need to improve your performance in these areas. It can also be useful to compare your results to group norms, explained in one of the following sections 'How do my results compare with others?'. From this information you will be able to see whether you are above or below average in comparison with other people who have had their linking skills assessed.

Next look at the difference between your own satisfaction rates and those of the co-worker groups. If the co-worker satisfaction percentages are similar to your own then there are no surprises for you. If you have been getting the results you want then you should continue with what you are doing, unless the satisfaction rates are well below the norms.

If the satisfaction rates of the co-worker groups are more than 10 percentage points below your own ratings then there is a significant gap between their perception of the relevant linking skills and your own perception. If the satisfaction rates of the co-worker groups are more than 20 percentage points below yours, then this suggests a serious gap and that relevant action needs to be taken.

Next look at how your supervisor group has rated you and compare the results with those from the co-worker groups. Again, assessments that show a satisfaction rate of more than 10 percentage points below your own should be flagged for attention. You should arrange for discussions to take place on what action might be required to improve your linking.
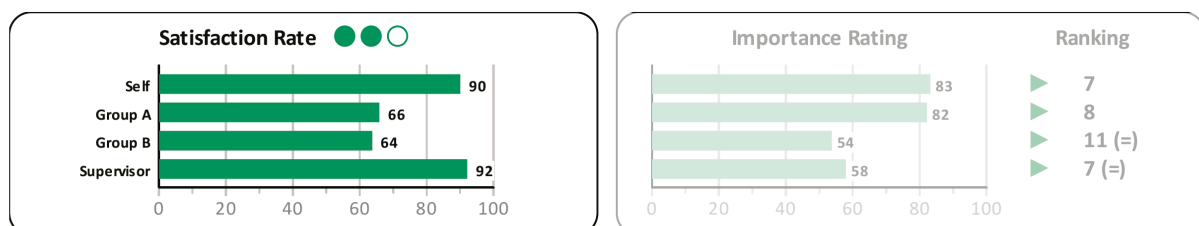
What are the importance ratings and rankings?

At the right-hand side of each linking skills satisfaction graph is the Importance Rating Percent and the Ranking. These measure how important each linking skill is considered to be by each respondent group (including Self). An average is calculated for each group from the **should occur** column of the Linking Leader Profile Questionnaire. The results are then ranked in order for each group.

By examining the data you can see the relative importance placed on each linking skill by yourself, your colleagues and your supervisor group. If a particular linking skill rates high on your list but lower in priority on your supervisor's list, then you should reflect on why this might be and, if necessary, discuss it with the appropriate people.

The maximum possible importance rating for each linking skill is 100% indicating this linking skill is of maximum priority for this rating group. If the rating is, for example, 80%, then the linking skill has been rated at 80% of the maximum by the relevant respondent group. The importance ratings, together with the ranked order, give information on the relativities between each linking skill. If, for example, all linking skills have a higher-than-90% importance rating, they can all be considered to be highly important. If some are below 60% then these could be given a lower priority.

Satisfaction Rate ●●○	
Self	90
Group A	66
Group B	64
Supervisor	92

Importance Rating	Ranking
83	▶ 7
82	▶ 8
54	▶ 11 (=)
58	▶ 7 (=)
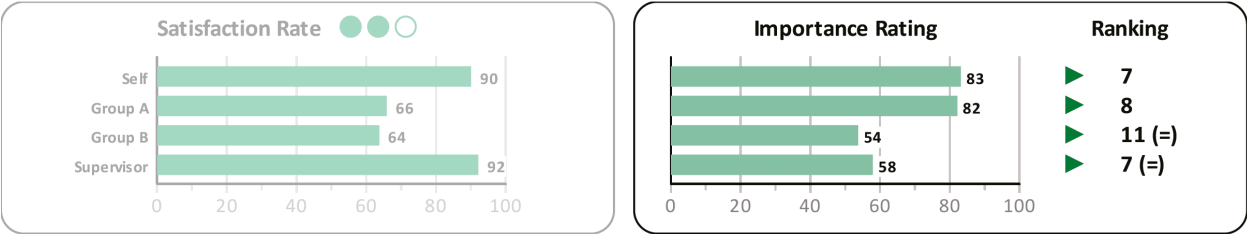
How should I interpret the data in the Quantitative Report?

The Quantitative Report is designed for those who want to examine the responses question by question. There are six questions per linking skill and these are listed page by page, beginning with Active Listening.

No. refers to the number of respondents in any grouping. Next, the **should occur** and **does occur** columns contain the average score for all respondents answering that question. The **Gap** shows the average difference between these scores and the range and is represented by a bar graph with a **D** at one end (for **does occur**) and an **S** at the other (for **should occur**). The **Guide for Action** column enables you to quickly see which question needs attention.

- **M** (purple bar) indicates that **More** should be done of a particular activity

- **L** (purple bar) indicates that **Less** should be done of a particular activity

- **?** (blue bar) indicates uncertainty, usually because some members of the group are satisfied whereas others are dissatisfied

- **OK** (green bar) indicates that no raters have a gap above 1 between what should and does occur. No action required

To the extreme right of each table is the **Range of Opinion**. These figures show how many people in each group have returned a particular gap between 'should' and 'does'. From these figures you can see whether the responses to a particular question are uniform or inconsistent. It may be that most people in a particular group are satisfied with a particular linking skill but one person in the group may have recorded dissatisfaction. In the example below, with 4 respondents in Group B there are 3 respondents under the zero column, and 1 under the three column. This would mean that 3 people are **completely** satisfied with what you are doing and only one is dissatisfied. Most likely this scoring would result in a ? in the **Guide for Action** column. This information will help you decide whether or not action on this activity needs to be taken.

Linking Skill	No.	Should Occur	Does Occur	Gap	Not at All 0	To a Little Extent 1	To Some Extent 2	To a Great Extent 3	To a Very Great Extent 4	Guides for Action	Range of Opinion 0	1	2	3	4

Question 61: Organises effective meetings so that team members can contribute to problem solving.

Linking Skill	No.	Should Occur	Does Occur	Gap	Graph	Guides for Action	0	1	2	3	4
Self	1	1.00	1.00	0.00	D ■ S	OK					
Group A	4	4.00	1.50	2.50	D ▬▬▬ S	M		1	1		2
Group B	4	3.25	2.50	0.75	D ▬ S	?	3			1	
Group C	2	3.50	2.50	1.00	D ▬ S	?	1	1			
Supervisor(s)	1	4.00	2.00	2.00	D ▬▬ S	M					

Improving my Linking Skills

This section of the Development Guide will help you formulate plans on how to improve your linking skills. It should be used in conjunction with your own Linking Leader Profile and in discussion with your facilitator.

Refer to your Profile and record the results for each linking skill measured.

Date when your Linking Leader Profile was prepared:

Date for review of Action Plan:
(Between three and six months from above date)

Key actions and notes:

People Linking Skill: Active Listening

Good Linkers listen before deciding

From your own perceptions, what can you say about your own Active Listening Skills?

Consider someone you think doesn't listen very well. Try to get a good mental image of that person. What do you see? How do you feel about that person? Try to be specific.

Consider two people who you think listen very well. Close your eyes and get a good mental image of them. Try to describe the eye contact they make with speakers. What facial expressions do they use when listening? How much do they use their hands and body?

How long can you listen to someone without your mind wandering?

List below anything you tend to do that indicates you may not listen well when others are speaking.

List three positive steps you will take to develop your Active Listening Skills.

People Linking Skill: Communication

Good Linkers keep team members up-to-date on a regular basis

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, list the characteristics that you associate with people whose communication style you respond well to, and those that you don't respond well to.

I respond well to:

I don't respond well to:

Use the space below to write down any observations you have about the relationship between your preferred ways of doing things at work and your likes and dislikes.

Try to think of a person with whom are you having a particular communication problem at present. Identify what you think their preferred approach is to doing things, and how this differs from your own. Now write down a five-point plan for improving your communication with this person.

List below people in your team/organisation with whom you would like to improve communications. Write down two or three key points you will implement to better interact with these people.

What can you do to improve your team meetings?

What informal meeting processes can you implement?

People Linking Skill: Team Relationships

Good Linkers encourage respect, trust and understanding among team members

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, what are the key similarities and differences among your team members?

What are two positive steps that you could take to help team members to understand and respect each others' contributions?

Do you have any ideas about how to ensure team members have clarity about their roles and responsibilities?

What actions could you take to ensure that your team regularly celebrates its successes?

What activities might be beneficial in improving team relationships?

What processes are in place within your team to identify team learning needs? What opportunities are available for team learning, such as workshops, mentoring schemes, etc?

To what extent do you feel that your team communicates openly? What could be done to encourage more open discussions of team issues?

People Linking Skill: Problem Solving & Counselling

Good Linkers are available and responsive to people's problems

How available and responsive do you think you are to other people?

What do you do to demonstrate that you are available?

What do you do to demonstrate that you are responsive?

How would you rate your problem solving skills?

What can you do to improve them?

Think about a team you know well. Look at the grid below and identify where you would place the type of questions that team members respond to best. Is it a combination of specific questions focusing on facts? Or do general questions, more focused on feelings work better?

On the grid, make a note of specific questions that different individuals would find most useful as you help them find solutions to problems.

	Specific Questions	General Questions
Focus on Facts		
Focus on Feelings		

People Linking Skill: Participative Decision Making

Good Linkers involve team members in solving key issues and problems

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, what are the major opportunities facing this team?

What are the obstacles (actual or potential) facing this team?

Which of the above issues should be discussed by the whole team?

What specific decisions can you make without involving the rest of the team?

What can be done to help your team's Participative Decision Making process?

People Linking Skill: Interface Management

Good Linkers co-ordinate and represent team members

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, draw an internal Linking chart for your team. Put the leader in the middle and then place the team members surrounding the leader. Indicate the strength of relationship between each person by drawing lines of various thickness. Where the links are low, represent them by a dotted line.

What are the major internal links that need development?

What can you do to improve these?

What are the main issues on which you represent the team?

Consider a major problem, opportunity or project on which you are currently working. On the Analysis of External Influences (AEI) diagram below, plot the people who will have an influence or interest.

What can be done to influence those who are against a task or project?

How can you best approach the people in the upper right-hand quadrant of the AEI diagram to help achieve your goals?

Task Linking Skill: Work Allocation

Good Linkers allocate work to people according to their capabilities

Write down the top four work functions from the Types of Work Wheel that characterise your job.

Types of Work Wheel

Describe how you prefer to work.

To what extent is there an overlap between what you have to do in your job and what you like doing? Does this also overlap with your skills and experience?

What changes would you make in order to give a better overlap between the tasks that have to be done in the team and your preferences?

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, consider each member of your team in turn. Are there any activities that must be done by them even though it may not match what you perceive as their preferred approach to work? What can you do to ensure that each activity is performed well?

Task Linking Skill: Team Development

Good Linkers develop a balanced team

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, which areas of the Types of Work Wheel do you think your team focuses on?

Types of Work Wheel

Which Types of Work do you think the team needs to develop?

Colour-themed meetings can be effective in providing balance to a team with preference gaps:

The colours of the Types of Work Wheel and Team Management Wheel can be used to run effective meetings as follows:

Green meetings concentrate on gathering information and thinking about new ways of doing things. These are not meetings for decisions; they are held purely to investigate the available options, possibilities, and generate lots of ideas.

Yellow meetings focus on promoting the ideas both within the organisation and to external customers. Often to make a project work, teams have to sell their ideas to others in order to obtain the people and resources to carry them out. Communicating ideas is an important part of the team focus if it is to continually deliver what people want.

Red meetings move into the development and organising of ideas. The development of ideas needs attention to ensure that practical products are delivered within budgetary constraints. Ideas that end up costing too much or not delivering the expected outcome can waste time, money and effort. Once the idea is fully developed, people and resources need to be organised to deliver results. These meetings are therefore also ones in which decisions can be made and action is set in motion. Establishing goals and schedules will ensure that outcomes are delivered.

Blue meetings focus on time to reflect on progress and evaluate the processes used. These kinds of meetings can often be overlooked, and teams who neglect the time needed to assess their projects tend to miss areas that could be improved. Taking time to check the details and audit projects will go a long way to keeping your customers satisfied and your team effective.

Task Linking Skill: Delegation

Good Linkers delegate work when it is not essential to do it themselves

Delegation is a process that starts from the moment someone joins your team. A six-step process for Delegation is shown below:

Selection

⬇

Training

⬇

Competence

⬇

Confidence

⬇

Trust

⬇

Delegation

The delegation process

Working backwards, you will see that we delegate tasks to those whom we trust will do the job according to our standards. We trust people only when we have confidence in their skills, knowledge and abilities. We develop this confidence by observing and allowing others to demonstrate their competence. Finally, people will be willing and able to show their level of competence if we are working with them and ensuring that they receive the proper training and support. At all levels in the organisation, training should be the first critical activity as soon as someone is selected; their training should be specifically linked to both the needs of the team and the wider organisation.

To improve delegation and negotiation skills, you can use the following process:

1. Encourage people to keep a time log of their activities over a two or three week period. Do this twice a year.

2. Ask the question: Which of the activities on your time log could be done as well or even better by someone else? Such delegation may require negotiation with fellow team members, as appropriate.

3. Get them to ask themselves the question: What would be the effect if I stopped this activity altogether? If no negative consequences will result, then the activity could be discontinued.

4. If activities have not previously been delegated because of a lack of confidence in the ability of other team members to deliver an effective result in the required time, the question needs to be asked: How can team members develop the skills required for these activities?

5. Time allocation should be reviewed regularly as it is easy to return to bad habits.

Which activities in your own job might you be able to delegate but do not want to because you enjoy doing them?

Which of the activities that you do now could be done by someone else just as well, if not better?

Which activities do you feel you cannot delegate, but would if you could find a suitable person?

In terms of the Types of Work Wheel, which would be the ideal work function preferences of the person to whom you delegate the activities you have mentioned above?

What training might be required to enable them to take some of your workload?

What can you do to start the process of delegation with them?

Task Linking Skill: Objectives Setting

Good Linkers set achievable targets but always press the team for improved performance

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, what are the team's key outputs and performance indicators for this year?

Outputs   **Performance Indicators**

What is the major target for each team member, including yourself?

Name   **Target**

What should you (and the team) do to reward the achievement of the various targets?

What celebrations do you, or could you, have for a job well done?

Task Linking Skill: Quality Standards

Good Linkers set an example and agree high quality work standards with their team

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, in what areas do you try to set a good example for your team?

Where could you improve?

What are the key areas in your team where quality is important?

How can you help the team to improve quality standards?

Linking Leader Skill: Motivation

Good Linkers inspire others to give their best

People who are already pursuing a long-term vision often find it easy to communicate their vision in a way that inspires others. The following exercise can be used to explore your own vision in relation to your job, your organisation, or your career as a whole.

Visioning Exercise

Imagine it is your last day in your current role. Your colleagues have gathered to wish you well and your boss is making a speech about your contribution to the company. As you listen to the list of your main achievements you glow with pride and know that you have achieved everything you set out to do in your role. Make a note of the key points in this list:

Work through each of the items on your list and imagine yourself achieving them in reality. Think of anything that you could do to make them as close as possible to your ideal.

Set a timescale for achieving your vision. To be genuinely inspiring, your vision needs to be challenging, but not inconceivable.

For each aspect of your vision, list the key people who could help you to make it a reality.

Thinking about a team you are, or have been, part of, do you articulate a compelling vision of the team's future?

How well do you inspire team members?

Do you take a stand on controversial issues affecting the team?

Linking Leader Skill: Strategy

Good Linkers devise effective action plans to achieve goals

Are you an effective strategic thinker?

Do you critically examine assumptions to discover potential weaknesses?

How well do you keep in focus all elements of a complex issue?

Do you foresee problems before they arise and take preventative action?

Strategy Exercise

You might like to use the following process to set a strategy for yourself as part of your personal reflection on Linking Skills.

1. Decide on the focus for your strategy – whether it will cover you, your team, your division or your company as a whole.

2. Set a timescale for your strategy. If you have not carried out this exercise before, it can be exciting to pick a point five years or so into the future as it allows you to envision major changes and achievements taking place. When choosing a time period that enables you to set exciting goals, make sure it also seems realistic in terms of your personal circumstances. Identify the key elements of your vision over the timescale, ensuring that this is in line with your core values and purpose.

3. Set goals for the half-way stage. For example, if you plan to achieve your strategy within four years, consider what you will need to have accomplished by the time you reach the two year stage. If your timescale means your halfway point is more than three years into the future, repeat this exercise until you have set goals for a point no more than two years from now.

4. Now consider what you will need to accomplish in the next year to put you on course to meeting your two year goals. Set three- and six- month goals accordingly.

5. You will now be able to start putting some action plans together for achieving your three- and six-month goals. Include specific descriptions of the actions you need to take, plus deadline dates for achieving them. Although there may be other things you need to attend to during this period, give highest priority to your strategic actions to ensure you are always making progress towards your vision.

6. At the end of three or six months, extend your planning period by setting goals for the last six months of the year. Then, at the end of the year, return to your two-year goals to set targets for the following year.

Use the space overleaf to make notes on the points above.

Notes

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