



Dr Peter Shaw 100 Great Leading Well Ideas

Marshall Cavendish Business



100 Great Leading Well Ideas

from successful leaders and managers from around the world

Dr Peter Shaw

- // How can you learn to lead well in many different situations?
- // How do you build your own confidence to meet challenges ahead?
- // How do you build effective teams that are motivated?
- // How do you build success that is sustained through tough times?

The 100 ideas in this book show you how to be a successful leader who inspires and empowers your team to be increasingly effective. This book is divided into 10 sections: Why, What, Who, How, When, Which, Where, Be, Become, and Know. These ideas will equip any leader with the necessary knowledge and insight to guide, manage, motivate and coach members of their teams.

100 Great Leading Well Ideas includes inspiring case studies drawn from the experiences of leaders in many different types of organisations. It illustrates how they have developed their own confidence and capability in addressing diverse issues and leading teams well. The book is an invaluable companion for anyone who wants to become the best leader they can be.

DR PETER SHAW is a founding partner of Praesta Partners and works with individuals, teams and groups across six continents to help them grow their strengths and tackle demanding issues confidently. He has held a wide range of board posts covering finance, personnel, policy, communications and delivery, and worked in five UK Government departments. He is a Visiting Professor at Newcastle University Business School, the University of Chester Business Faculty, and St John's College, University of Durham, and teaches at Regent College, Vancouver. Dr Shaw has written 24 influential books on aspects of leadership since 2004. In this book he draws together into one place the themes from these books as they resonate strongly with leaders across different cultures and sectors.

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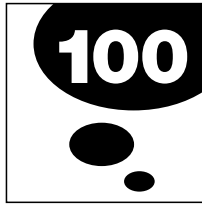


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Dr Peter Shaw

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INTRODUCTION

I STARTED WRITING THIS BOOK during the Rio Olympics of 2016 when the television screens were full of examples of individuals and teams who had prepared thoroughly for their Olympic events. The gold medallists were full of praise for those who had supported and challenged them. The involvement of the coaches in stretching the imaginations of participants was a key ingredient in the success of individuals and teams. My task in this book is to stretch your imagination about how to lead well.

I wrote my first book in this series, *100 Great Personal Impact Ideas*, during the London Olympics of 2012. During subsequent summers I wrote books in this same series: *100 Great Coaching Ideas*, *100 Great Team Effectiveness Ideas* and *100 Great Building Success Ideas*. This book, the fifth in the series, aims to bring together a coherent and comprehensive perspective on leading well. I deliberately cross-refer to other books and booklets I have written or co-authored to provide opportunity for further reflection about these themes.

I suggest that at the heart of leading well is asking the questions of ‘Why?’, ‘What?’, ‘Who?’, ‘How?’, ‘When?’, ‘Which?’ and ‘Where?’ I then look at how you want to ‘Be’ as an effective leader and then at what you want to ‘Become’ more capable at doing as you take on further leadership responsibilities. I conclude with looking at what you need to ‘Know’ about yourself as you build for your future.

This book is relevant to leaders in any sphere and at any stage in their lives. Reviewing how you lead well is just as important for the aspiring leader aged 25 as the experienced leader aged 75. I have deliberately sought to draw from the experience of working with leaders and leadership teams across six continents. The cultural

background and expectations may be very different, but many of the requirements for leading well are the same.

The book is designed so you can dip into different sections. It is intended to be a practical tool both for individuals and for those mentoring younger people. My hope is that the ideas in the book provide you with prompts for thought and action as you review how you can lead well into future.

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SECTION A
WHY?



UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS AT the root of why you want to make a difference helps shape your intent and the values that underpin your actions.

The idea

An easy answer when someone is asked why they want to take on leadership responsibility is, 'I want to make a difference'. The good mentor will want to understand where the individual's motivation comes from and how deep-seated it is. Is it because the individual has inherited from their family or community a strong sense of purpose or values? Does the drive to make a difference come from a strong inner desire to do good, or does the drive result from an inner fear of inadequacy or failure?

It is worth pushing yourself to understand where your drive to make a difference comes from, and whether it is having a constructive or destructive effect on you. You might recognise that you have an inner compunction to climb every mountain before you. You might have, deep in your memory, words from your parents about their expectations of the contribution you would make as an adult. The more you understand why you have an inner drive to make a difference, the easier it is to focus that drive constructively and not allow it to overwhelm other priorities in your life.

See inner drives as potentially hugely constructive if they are focused in the right direction, while remain wary of their destructive effect if the desire to make a difference in one sphere crushes your humanity and contribution in other spheres.

Alan recognised that much of his inner drive came from his upbringing in a small, Yorkshire town. His father had died when Alan was seven: his mother had focused her energy on ensuring that Alan recovered from the sense of loss and moved through school into university at a time when a small proportion of young people went on to higher education. Alan's mother had been the first female, senior manager in a manufacturing plant in her early thirties, and had given up her career when she got married. Alan recognised that he had inherited from his mother a deeply embedded desire to carry forward her legacy of making a difference in the next generation.

In practice

- In what ways is a desire to make a difference rooted in you?
- What legacy has been passed down to you from your parents?
- What part did the community in which you grew up play in helping develop and shape a desire to make a difference?
- In what ways does the desire to make a difference in one sphere undermine how you move forward in other spheres of your life?



RECOGNISE THE FRAMEWORK YOU APPLY TO LEADING WELL

IF YOU CAN ARTICULATE clearly the framework you apply to leading well you can more readily observe yourself in a dispassionate way.

The idea

When I coach aspiring leaders I encourage them to articulate a clear framework covering the four Vs of leadership: vision, values, value-added and vitality. I believe these are the essential ingredients of effective leadership. I encourage them to think of these four Vs as the cornerstones of both their work and personal lives. I suggest that aspiring leaders think about their distinctive characteristics and how they want to build on those characteristics to develop a vision of who they want to be in their work, in their family and in their community. I prompt them to think about the values that shape and define them, and how those values can be harnessed to enable them to make a difference in their work and in their community. I encourage them to ensure their values are their biggest asset and not their worst liability.

My belief is that aspiring leaders should be continually reassessing the value-added contribution they can make. This starts from a clear appreciation of their unique strengths, and then clarity about how their strengths can be developed and used to best effect. It includes a recognition that the value-added contribution you made at one stage in your career has got you so far, but now needs to be developed into a different type of value-added contribution. For example, success at an early stage is all about your own individual contribution.

Your value-added contribution in the next stage may focus on enabling other people to do the detailed work in a co-ordinated and effective way.

The vitality strand is core to applying vision, value and value-added to best effect. Knowing the sources of vitality for any leader is at the heart of managing their energy and time well so they are continuing to bring a fresh approach that energises others.¹

Alan had the benefit of a spell early in his career working as the private secretary to successive heads of Government Departments, which helped him develop an understanding of how to be a good senior civil servant. Alan embraced the values of some of his bosses and observed which leaders added most value through their interventions and who wasted other people's time. Alan was conscious that some ministers and senior officials managed their vitality far better than others. Alan allowed himself to be shaped by these early experiences, which provided an invaluable framework as he moved into more senior roles.

In practice

- What is the explicit and implicit framework in your mind about what constitutes a good leader?
- How might you apply a framework of vision, values, value-added and vitality to your own leadership role?
- How best do you ensure that the way you apply your leadership framework continues to evolve in the light of experience?

¹ See *The Four Vs of Leadership: vision, values, value-added and vitality*. Chichester: Capstone.



RECOGNISE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR BELIEFS

THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND the strength of our beliefs, the more we can appreciate the motivation they give us and the risks they can bring.

The idea

Each of us has deep-rooted beliefs about what is important and how best to bring about change. We may believe that it is right to trust people until trust is broken. We may believe that it is right to always give people second and third opportunities and forgive them when they let us down. In contrast, we may have an inner belief that once someone has let us down once, they cannot be trusted again.

An inner belief that out of every problem there will be an opportunity can help carry us through difficult phases. The belief that people always have the potential for good in them can enable us to handle constructively the most challenging of conversations with people we find difficult and demanding.

Strongly held religious and cultural beliefs frame the way we think and lead in subconscious ways. If our world view holds that there are continuing conflicts between good and evil, this will shape the way we view what is happening in organisations where we are a leader. If our frame of reference is that there is always the opportunity for resurrection, with our role being to nurture and grow new life, then we are likely to be focused on drawing out the best in people and able to see the prospect of new life and energy when others do not

see this possibility. The risk is we become an inveterate optimist with a potential streak of naivety when observing the motivation and behaviours of others. It can be helpful to share with colleagues the beliefs that flow from our religious and cultural background so that they understand our behaviours and know the strengths and risks that are consequences of our beliefs and convictions.

Alan held in his mind the picture of the seed needing to die before there could be a fruitful harvest. He believed that new life could come out of any situation. The belief that the seed has to die helped Alan recognise that leading change required fundamental shifts, which would be painful. Alan's belief that there was always the prospect of new life meant he was an encourager and supporter to those going through difficult periods. The risk for Alan was in being too much of an optimist and believing that people would always learn constructive lessons from difficult experiences. He had to learn that many people gave up more quickly than he had expected and were more reluctant to believe that there could be a positive outcome.

In practice

- Be clear to yourself what are the underlying cultural and religious beliefs that infuse your thinking.
- See these beliefs as a core part of your inner being that provides you with strength to handle difficult situations.
- Recognise that these beliefs will shape your reaction to situations in ways that could lead to a blinkered approach.



UNDERSTAND WHAT IS SUCCESS FOR YOU

BEING CLEAR WHAT SUCCESS means in every aspect of our lives helps ensure a coherence in the decisions we make and our use of time and energy.

The idea

Success can mean different things at different stages of life. Success in your twenties might be about finding a job or a flat. In your thirties it might be about progressing in your chosen career. In your forties it might be about leading teams well. In your fifties it might be about balancing a range of responsibilities. In your sixties it might be about using those golden years to best effect through influencing and steering others.

Success across the whole of life depends on retaining a balance about what is important to you, including family, community, culture, faith and work. Leading well is likely to involve a willingness to seek success, and if it comes, carrying it lightly. It will require taking responsibility and not running away from accountability. A healthy view of success involves encouraging others to be successful and seeing your mentoring of them as part of your own success. Flexibility is important so that you can move on if success does not come, or if success begins to erode. Despite your best efforts, the success you seek does not always happen, but out of failure or frustration often comes the best learning.

Building success requires commitment, energy and an open mind. It involves listening to others and distilling their perspectives and

advice. Building success involves shaping ideas, testing boundaries, building alliances and learning what works and what does not work well.

- Carrying success lightly involves handling setbacks with care and recognising your emotional reactions to setbacks. It includes addressing what might hold you back and discovering ways of building confidence, while seeking to build experience, address frustrations and minimise the fear of failure.
- Building success involves creating forward momentum that anticipates twists and turns and keeps something in reserve.
- Sustaining success is about recognising what you can and cannot control in the future. It is important to be aware of the blinkers that might limit your thinking and be ready to be surprised about opportunities that might open up.²

Alan recognised that sometimes his success was a consequence of being in the right place at the right time. On a couple of occasions he had strong sponsorship, which meant he took on leadership responsibilities much earlier than he might otherwise have done: he was thankful for this early experience in exposed leadership positions. On other occasions restructuring exercises meant that his job disappeared. When this happened, the frustration of losing his job was replaced over time by a thankfulness that events had forced decisions that had turned out to have much better outcomes than he could have anticipated. He recognised that sometimes success comes through unexpected events that bring out new qualities and new opportunities.

In practice

- Do not be embarrassed about seeking success; but when it comes, hold it lightly.
- See success as a means of opening up opportunities to create a better future for others.
- Have a holistic view about what success means across every aspect of your life.
- Enable others to develop a definition of success that works for them and integrates their personal values and leadership aspirations.

2 See *100 Great Building Success Ideas*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.



KNOW HOW TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND how we work effectively with others the better we can apply our leadership gifts to best effect.

The idea

When a team is working well, productivity is high, individual competences and differences are recognised, successes are celebrated and shared. When mistakes happen they are viewed as times of learning and not failure. We have all had the experience of working with people who stimulate creativity. Working jointly with such colleagues can mean the end result is more productive than we had ever expected. There are people we enjoy engaging with where the stimulus of debate challenges our thinking and helps us move on to conclusions we had not previously thought possible.

There are people who frustrate us who we perhaps avoid or are unwilling to share our hopes and hesitations with. The chemistry feels wrong or the preferred approaches are so different that we feel uncomfortable and unwilling to engage in an open-ended and potentially vulnerable way. Those who lead well engage effectively with a wide range of people in a range of different contexts. The more we build up experience of working in different combinations and different teams, the greater will be our understanding of what works or does not work well for us. Participating in a mix of different working environments enables us to develop both formal and informal ways of influencing others and finding outcomes that have the support of a diverse mix of interests.

If you do not have a natural rapport with a particular colleague, it could be a valuable part of your development to do a project jointly with that individual, so that you understand how to bring the best out of someone who has a very different set of preferences to you. You can draw on each other's qualities so that together you are 'more than the sum of the parts'. Working effectively with others is about unleashing the potential in them and letting them have the credit when progress is made. You will be building goodwill with colleagues, which increases their readiness to join with you on shared endeavours. What is most important is that progress is achieved.³

The most effective team that Alan was a part of was the executive board of a government department, which included people from a wide range of backgrounds with very different personalities and preferences. They built an understanding of each other and knew how to bring the best out of each other, whether they were working as a full board or in groups of two or three. What made the executive team work well was a deep respect for each other, combined with an enjoyment of each other's company. They were not afraid to be frank with each other when difficult messages needed to be given.

In practice

- How deliberately do you adapt your approach in order to bring the best out in others?
- How might you keep widening your repertoire so that you work effectively with a growing range of people?
- Who do you currently work less effectively with and how might you build a stronger sense of teamwork with that person?

³ See *100 Great Team Effectiveness Ideas*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.



APPRECIATE WHAT GIVES YOU DAILY FULFILMENT

A COMBINATION OF LONG-TERM commitment and belief, alongside daily fulfilment, helps keep up the energy to lead consistently well.

The idea

Physically and emotionally we need to be sustained on a daily basis. We need an underlying sense of purpose if we are to be spiritually fulfilled.

Just as we need to eat each day to sustain us physically, we need to be sustained emotionally, intellectually and spiritually on a daily basis. If someone is going through a difficult period as a leader I would often suggest that they note down at the end of each day three things that have gone well. At the end of each week they might write down three insights they have learned from their experiences that week. The more somebody can identify where they have made a difference or contribution, the more they can feel fulfilled and affirmed.

Some organisations have a very strong culture of celebration and affirming staff, even when things go wrong. It is tough if your team fails to win a tender, but if there are genuine, appreciative comments about the effort your team put in, you can then move on more purposefully.

Fulfilment comes through standing back and seeing the journey you have travelled, and being able to smile at what has flowed less easily than you would have liked. It can be helpful to keep some symbols of progress, such as some appreciative letters or a pen or book that dated from a particular era or event. Having moments of giving

thanks recognises the rhythms that work for us as human beings. Enjoy them and do not resist embracing them.

Alan recognised the importance of daily rituals. The 15 minute walk into St James' Park in central London helped refresh his mind on busy days. Alan recognised that he needed to break up the routine of the day so there was a fulfilment from different activities, wherever this was possible. An evening routine of hot blackcurrant cordial followed by a hot bath were rituals that relaxed him and gave him a sense of calm.

In practice

- Recognise the types of fulfilment that keep you fresh and alert.
- Remember the importance of celebrating progress, however small, and do not regard celebration as indulgence.
- Remember to give thanks daily for the gifts and opportunities you have been given.
- Recognise the routines that relax and calm you and seek to build them into the day.



DITCH OUT-OF-DATE REASONS FOR YOUR ACTIONS

WE CAN BE CAPTIVE to habitual ways of doing things and need to be open to developing a different rationale and self-belief.

The idea

The reasons for our actions might be because we have always done things in a particular way. We have inherited or adopted an approach that has worked well in the past and has provided a rationale for the way we do things. We may believe there is one way of doing things and one right or wrong answer to a question. We might be captive to a particular description of success that we need to update.

When I work with a leader starting a new role I invite them to think through what is needed in this new context and what good leadership would therefore look like. The key starting point is what does the context demand, rather than just applying actions that have been used before into this new context. The fact that we have done something before in a way that has worked well does not mean it is the right thing to do in a new context.

The consequence of rapidly changing information technology means that we need to be continually thinking about how to lead and communicate in a fast-moving, globally-connected world. We need to identify the outcomes we are moving towards, the attitude of mind we need to embrace, and the actions that are most important to ensure those outcomes happen. We cannot rely on assumptions about what has worked well in the past. We need to embrace the

delight of exploring new and different ways of building engagement, partnership and shared agendas.

Alan had been bought up to think that government ministers were able to weigh up arguments in an objective way and reach conclusions that would be the most effective way forward. The ideal submission would provide the minister with the information and options they needed to reach the ideal answer. Alan rapidly learnt that decision-making was not as straightforward. The government minister was weighing up emotional reactions as well as facts. They needed to talk issues through rather than just address them on paper. They needed to be encouraged to think through how different people would react and, therefore, identify unintended consequences of what might seem eminently sensible decisions. Alan learnt to recognise that the quality of dialogue he could establish with a government minister was even more important than the quality of any written submission.

In practice

- Recognise if you are adopting ways of thinking and acting that do not quite resonate with others.
- Observe how others reach an agreed outcome with their bosses or key interlocutors, and reflect on how you might be able to engage more effectively as a consequence of this learning.
- Keep refreshing your repertoire of approaches for getting things done and influencing others.



RECOGNISE WHEN YOU NEED TO MOVE ON FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S BELIEFS

WE LEARN A LOT through embracing the leadership of others, but there is a point when we need to move on and be authentic in bringing our own approach to leading well.

The idea

When you work for a leader you admire, you soak up a lot of their approach, which influences the way you approach your own leadership challenges. We readily adopt frameworks that have worked well for others and make them our own. Their effectiveness gives us the confidence to use approaches that might not come easily to us. There is a risk that we can become a clone of a successful leader and do not develop the full range of leadership approaches that we have the potential to develop.

When I am coaching leaders applying for more senior roles, I invite them to think about what they admire about people who have done similar jobs and in what ways they embrace attitudes and approaches their exemplars display. I also encourage them to think through what they authentically bring to leadership and how it is different to those they admire. I seek to draw out the distinctiveness of an individual's background and experience and how that feeds into a style of leadership that is personal, individual and not captive to anyone else's legacy or beliefs.

To lead well you have to be comfortable in your own skin, understanding how you deploy your gifts to good effect and integrate

the wealth of your experience and insights into a coherent, believable narrative.

Alan held in his mind's eye a leader who inspired him who was always energetic and engaging. This individual had exuberant energy and always offered a stimulating viewpoint across a wide range of different issues. As Alan moved into new leadership roles he initially sought to model himself on this individual's approach, but it was exhausting. Perhaps Alan did not need to get into every subject in quite as much detail. Perhaps what was needed was a different type of leadership who steered and influenced but did not try to be everywhere or seek to have a hundred ideas before breakfast. Alan continued to apply the freshness of thinking and curiosity of his mentor, but deliberately moved away from adopting his hyper-energetic style.

In practice

- Who are the leadership heroes whose approaches you have embraced?
- To what extent are you captive to the leadership approaches of particular role models?
- How best do you articulate your own, clear narrative of good leadership in a way that is unique to you?



RECOGNISE THE SHIFTING PHASES OF LIFE

AS YOU MOVE THROUGH life it is helpful to recalibrate what is important to you and how you seek to contribute in different spheres.

The idea

I recently had a conversation with someone who had just reached the age of 60 in which she spoke about her retirement and going back to activities she had done in the past. We talked about reframing her narrative, with her drawing on her breadth of experiences when moving into the next phase of life. This reframing of her narrative helped her to describe her future with a smile on her face. It was not a matter of going back. She was looking forward to enjoying her golden years doing a portfolio of different activities that would enable her to influence internationally, nationally and locally. She was moving from executive leadership into a sequence of non-executive roles where she could advise, influence and mentor.

In different phases of our lives the opportunity to lead evolves. Initially we bring the ability to master details and be on top of a discreet function. We develop the capability to lead a team and then influence a wider cross-section of people. We might graduate to become a member of an executive team or having ultimate responsibility for a particular area. We might then move into advisory roles or non-executive positions where we are steering and mentoring.

It may be that you particularly enjoyed the contribution you made at one stage of life and might want to renew your application of those qualities at a later stage: the context might have changed, as you

will be using those qualities differently and probably with different people.

Changes in the economy and society happen whether we like it or not. We either keep up and adapt, or fall behind. We are in a continuous process of recognising the different phases in our individual journey and responding to changes happening around us.

Alan had enjoyed working with government ministers for over 30 years, but there was a repetition in the work that led to his enthusiasm waning. He recognised that the time was right to move into another phase of life, which could be as an executive leader, a consultant or a coach. Alan explored each of these options and began to realise that his enthusiasm for taking on another executive role was less than it might have been a few years previously. He knew he could be excited by consultancy or coaching and approached these two options with a sense of anticipation about the next phase of life.

In practice

- How fixed is your view of leadership? Has your perspective changed over time?
- What do you foresee as the next phase in your contribution as a leader, and what might that be?
- What beliefs about yourself as a leader do you now need to refine?
- How can you use significant birthdays to reframe the leadership approach you want to bring in the next phase of your life?



BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR AMBITIONS

THERE IS NO POINT in holding on to outdated ambitions. We need to keep updating our ambitions in the light of experience and reality.

The idea

There is a time and place to talk about your ambitions. When you are having a performance review with your boss you want the best possible guidance about your development, hence being clear on your ambitions provides a framework for your development. On many occasions being too overt about your ambitions creates antipathy from others and generates a greater sense of competition than is helpful.

For some people their level of ambition is unhelpfully low. An individual may have lots of potential but be holding back on their aspirations. This reluctance has held many people back and meant that the quality of leadership in many organisations has been restricted because those with the greatest potential have often felt a reluctance to develop or show their ambition. Excessive deference or humility has got in the way of them using their abilities and potential to the full.

It can be helpful to have a frank conversation with a coach or mentor about your embryonic ambitions and where you believe you can make a significant impact. It helps to be frank about those ambitions and then talk through how realistic they are and what would need to happen for those ambitions to materialise. Perhaps it is helpful to put together a plan about how you can prepare for and explore these

possibilities. It is often helpful to have more than one focus for your ambitions so your sense of fulfilment is not dependent upon one particular avenue opening up.

Core to your ambition might be a strong sense of service where personal achievement is irrelevant. The ambition may be focused on young people you might enthuse, or older people whose lives could be made better because of your interventions. Be willing to be ambitious about what might be possible and seek to make a difference. Do not let a false sense of inadequacy or humility stop you from aspiring to make the impact you believe is right.

In his early career, Alan had been ambitious to demonstrate that a Yorkshire lad could reach senior levels in government service. He was willing to take on tough jobs and work in a determined way to ensure progress. His sense of ambition evolved as he spent an increasing amount of time mentoring and coaching his staff. A new sense of ambition developed that was about enabling others to step up effectively to take on demanding leadership challenges.

In practice

- See a strong sense of ambition as helpful.
- Do not be too blinkered in your ambitions and allow them to expand over time.
- Be open about your ambitions with those you trust who can give you good advice.
- Take your ambitions seriously, and at the same time embrace them with a light touch.

SECTION B
WHAT?



WAKE UP AND DREAM

WHEN WE WAKE UP and dream we open our thinking to different possibilities for the future.

The idea

It might be time to wake up and dream. There are barriers to be addressed and potential opportunities to take forward. It could be time to look more widely and dream about what might be possible. Now could be the moment to be open to different avenues and be excited about the difference you can make.

The apparent contradiction between ‘wake up’ and ‘dream’ is deliberate. Waking up to new realities is a precursor to dreaming in an open and fruitful way. There are moments when we need to combine realism with a sense of adventure. Following one’s imagination can transform the aspirations of individuals, groups and teams. It can give confidence to think big, entertain new possibilities and turn hopes into practical next steps.

Waking up to the future requires accepting the realities of the past and present, while not being overwhelmed by them. Waking up to the next phase of life is about being ready to dream, bringing an open mind and recognising that you have competencies and insights that will be valuable for new situations.

Dreaming well is not about moving into a land of unreal fantasy. Dreaming well is about bringing creativity, being open to the unexpected, being willing to step into the unknown with a sense of anticipation, and allowing yourself to believe that you can make

a contribution that is more significant than you had previously anticipated.

There might be a moment when you wake up to your dreams and begin to discern what could be possible. There may be times when you are dreaming through darkness, when you have to handle dreams with care. Following your dreams can take you into new and worthwhile places that you had not previously anticipated. A dream might be about moving into a new leadership role, building a wider influence in a portfolio of activities, or balancing your personal and work responsibilities more effectively. Dreaming from pillow to pathway involves allowing a dream to develop in your mind and then turning it into practical propositions and next steps.⁴

Jeanette was head of year at a secondary school. She enjoyed her responsibilities, but sometimes became frustrated by the decisions of the leadership team. Jeanette's colleague, Henry, suggested that the best way that she could solve these problems was by becoming a member of the senior team. Henry encouraged her to think about what type of member she would be. Jeanette was taken aback by this suggestion and was challenged to think through whether she wanted to be one of the school leaders or not. Initially she was hesitant, but then recognised that she had much to offer.

In practice

- What type of dreams do you have about your future?
- What are the realities you need to wake up to?
- How best can you turn your dreams about the future into reality?
- With whom can you test whether your dreams might be realistic?



SELF-AWARE

THE MORE SELF-AWARE YOU are, the better you can anticipate your impact on others and your reactions in different situations.

The idea

In order to be single-minded in reaching desired outcomes, we can become so blinkered that our self-awareness is constrained. On other occasions our self-awareness can be so acute that we freeze and become inhibited from taking necessary action. The dial on the self-awareness button needs to be constantly adjusted so that we are fully aware of our impact on others and their impact on us—but without self-awareness stopping us doing the right thing in a particular situation.

Awareness of your impact on others comes through recognising previous patterns and understanding the personalities of those you are engaged with. Self-awareness comes from recognising your personality traits and preferences alongside an understanding of how different people and situations impact upon you. Psychometric assessments, such as the Myers-Briggs test, can be helpful in understanding personal preferences.

Systematic feedback from others can be valuable, provided it is recognised that this feedback says as much about the person giving it as it does about the individual being commented upon. It is important to ensure that self-awareness does not inhibit taking bold action. If you need to give a difficult message to someone, your awareness that it will not be well received will help you decide how to communicate this message; but this should not put a constraint on the need to

deliver that message. When you sense that too much self-awareness is inhibiting you from taking necessary action, it is helpful to ask what is holding you back from taking the necessary next steps.

Andrew was conscious that giving a clear message to a colleague about their performance would be painful, both for that individual and for himself. Andrew recognised that he needed to anticipate how difficult the conversation would be and was prepared for a negative, emotional reaction from Ben. Andrew played through in his own mind the different, likely stages in the conversation and prepared himself accordingly. He knew that he had to hold his nerve and come through his own pain barrier.

In practice

- Recognise when your emotional reactions provide insights and when they might inhibit action.
- Seek to increase your levels of self-awareness through feedback from others.
- Understand your likely patterns of response in different situations.
- Know how to stop your self-awareness from inhibiting necessary action.
- Keep fine-tuning your self-awareness in new situations.



FOCUSED

THE KEY TO SUCCESS is to be focused and then ensure the focus is maintained—even when there is a lot of extraneous noise.

The idea

Being able to keep your focus is crucial in moving from ideas to implementation. When I write a book I set aside days when I can focus exclusively on writing chapters, and give myself a target about the number of chapters I will write each day. I seek to keep that focus both through a clear timetable and through giving myself regular, short breaks to rest my brain, before refocusing on the next section.

Being focused is not about being utterly relentless in pursuing an outcome for 100 percent of the time. The good athlete learns how to relax their muscles, then focus entirely on the race. The athlete plans the race carefully, executes precisely and then moves into a slower physical and mental pace for the post-race warm-down.

The ability to focus on the main task of the moment is a talent that is well worth cultivating. The focus might be on one person, or one calculation, or one project. The ability to focus relentlessly on one outcome over a short period ensures that mental and emotional energy is not dissipated. We can train ourselves to be increasingly focused in the way we prepare for interactions through reinforcing in our hearts and minds actions and approaches that have worked well before and that will be valuable in the future.

Effective focus is both about the short and long term. It involves a combination of being focused in the moment on the next steps, while

ensuring that you keep calibrating whether your immediate focus will lead to the type of outcomes that you desire in the longer term.

Andrew knew that he had to keep focused on the key issues in the performance conversation with Ben. He prepared carefully, noting the points he needed to make in two important areas. Andrew recognised that he needed to listen to Ben's comments and concerns, and demonstrate that he was listening. Andrew knew that he must not become diverted from focusing on the messages that needed to be given to Ben, and communicate the agreed next actions.

In practice

Keep practicing the art of focusing on one issue for a half-hour period.

Recognise the type of distractions that can impede that focus and know how you counteract those distractions.

Know what 'warming down' activity you need to put in place after each period of intense focus.

Recognise how you best create a range of different types of focused activity in order to keep yourself fresh and alert.



WHAT MIGHT BE THE DEFINING MOMENTS FOR YOU GOING FORWARD

IT CAN HELP US think constructively about the future if we can anticipate defining moments that are going to be important to us.

The idea

A defining moment you might be looking forward to could be the birth of your first child or grandchild, your next promotion, or your retirement. A defining moment might be an event that gives you special pleasure, or it might be a new insight or understanding about your future contribution. When you climb a hill in the Lake District, a defining moment might be the last steps before you reach the summit, or it might be the moment you see a vista of other mountains and lakes. It can be helpful to view some defining moments as making progress, while other defining moments are when our eyes are opened to life's possibilities.

Perhaps there is a defining moment when you recognise that you are not going to move up the greasy ladder of ambition. Instead of looking relentlessly upwards, you are now looking outwards to see what opportunities you can embrace in a different sphere. It was a defining moment for me when I got my third rejection following interviews for university vice chancellor roles. I stopped trying to push a door that would not open and decided to take forward coaching, which proved to be a wonderfully fulfilling, sideways step.

A defining moment can be a 'no' as much as a 'yes'. If we accept that defining moments might change our lives in ways that we had not

initially hoped or expected, then we can be open-minded to travelling a different route and not being bound by preconceived notions of success.

Rose became an ambassador for the organisation where she worked, speaking on its behalf in front of critical audiences. She recognised that it would be a defining moment for her when she had to contend with public criticism. Rose was surprised that she was able to handle conflict situations with more equanimity than she had anticipated. Perhaps she was tougher than she thought: she recognised that if she believed in the case she was arguing and had robust evidence, then she could handle whatever was thrown at her. This gave her a new insight into herself and a new level of courage that she had not previously thought was there.

In practice

- How open are you to defining moments that could lead to a fundamental shift in the way you think and act?
- How open are you to engineering defining moments that are outside your comfort zone?
- How ready are you, when a defining moment is a resounding ‘no’, to be open to switching direction, learning new insights and accepting new uncertainties?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Shaw works with individuals, teams and groups to help them grow their strengths and tackle demanding issues confidently. His objective is to help individuals and teams to clarify the vision of what they want to be, the values that are driving them, the value-added they want to bring and their sources of vitality.

His work on how leaders step up successfully into demanding leadership roles and sustain that success was recognised with the award of a Doctorate by Publication from the University of Chester in 2011.

Peter was a founding partner of Praesta Partners, an international specialist coaching business. His clients enjoy frank, challenging conversations leading to fresh thinking and new insights. It is the dynamic nature of the conversations that provide a stimulus for creating reflection and new action. He often works with chief

executives and board members, taking on new roles and leading major organisational change. Peter has worked with a wide range of different leadership teams as they tackle new challenges.

Peter has worked with chief executives and senior teams in a range of different sectors and countries across six continents. He has led workshops on such themes as 'Riding the Rapids', 'Seizing the Future', 'Thriving in your Work', 'Being an Agile Leader' and 'Building Resilience'.

Peter has held a wide range of board-level posts covering finance, personnel, policy, communications and delivery. He has worked in five UK government departments (Treasury, Education, Employment, Environment and Transport). He delivered major, national changes such as radically different pay arrangements for teachers, a huge expansion in nursery education and employment initiatives that helped bring UK unemployment below a million.

He led the work on the merger of the UK Government Departments of Education and Employment. As finance director general, he managed a £40bn budget and introduced radical changes in funding and accountability arrangements. In three director general posts he led strategic development and implementation in major policy areas. He was awarded a CB by the Queen in 2000 for his contribution to public service.

Peter has written a sequence of 24 influential leadership books. He is a Visiting Professor of Leadership Development at Newcastle University Business School and a Visiting Professor in the Business, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department at the University of Chester. He has worked with senior staff at Edinburgh University, the University of Brighton and Herriot Watt University, and post-graduate students at Warwick Business School and lectures regularly at Regent College in Vancouver. He is a Professorial Fellow at St John's College, University of Durham. He was awarded an honorary doctorate (Doctor

of Civil Law) by the University of Durham in 2015 for ‘outstanding service to public life and to the Council of St. John’s College’.

Peter is a Reader (licensed lay minister) in the Anglican Church and has worked with senior church leaders in the UK, North America and Asia. In December 2016 Peter was installed as a Lay Canon at Guildford Cathedral in recognition of ‘distinguished service to the Church and the community’. Peter chairs the Guildford Cathedral Council.

Peter’s inspiration comes from long distance walks: he has completed 24 long distance walks in the UK, including the St Cuthbert’s Way, the South Downs Way, the Yorkshire Wolds Way, the Yorkshire Dales Way, the Ribble Way, the Speyside Way, the St Oswald’s Way, the Great Glen Way and the Westmoreland Way. Peter and his wife, Frances, have three grown up children who are all married, and four grandchildren.