

Interview with Stephen Fitzpatrick—CEO of OVO Energy

You started OVO in 2009. What was it like to be your own boss and lead your own company back then?

It was exciting, it's still is exciting. OVO started with just five of us sitting around a kitchen table in a barn in the Cotswolds. We had just three years' experience in the energy industry between us. We all believed that OVO could make a difference. Energy customers were getting a pretty raw deal at that time with substandard service and price hike, after price hike. We created OVO to try and change all that. It's been such a great experience and I'm lucky enough to work with some incredibly talented people.

What has changed for you in the five since? Do you lead in a different way?

OVO has grown a lot over that time. We've gone from the five of us around one table to over 750 of us split across our offices in London and Bristol. We're still the same company, on the same mission and we make sure we always keep our customers at the heart of everything we do. We're incredibly proud that we recently became the first ever energy supplier to be awarded the Which? Recommended Provider status. We wanted to say a huge thank you to our customers so put a little [video](#) together in true OVO style.

You have a strong vision for OVO based around a target of one million customers, to be a top 10 UK employer and have a Net Promoter Score of +40. How did you go about bringing this vision to life for your employees? →

Interview with Stephen Fitzpatrick

Stephen Fitzpatrick CEO of OVO Energy is interviewed about his vision and values

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These goals have always been part of our DNA. Our target is to have one million **happy** customers by 2017 and we're doing well so far. This year we won 10 out of the 12 uSwitch Customer Satisfaction awards including Supplier of the Year. It's incredibly humbling to know that our customers are voting for us and we just want them all to know how much we appreciate it. We've also just been awarded 3* status from Best Companies. The ratings are a bit like the Michelin star ratings for restaurants so to be awarded three stars is an incredible achievement for a six year old business.

You have some very clear values around trust, fairness and leading by example. How are you bringing these values to life in OVO?

We live and breathe our values here at OVO. We want OVO to be a place where people act the same at work as they do at home. We've developed a rich culture and we've all had a part to play in OVO's evolution. We help our values to live in a number of ways. We've named our meeting rooms after our 'value hero's' for example. So we have the Isambard Kingdom Brunel Room, he represents our 'we find a way' value. We've also recently moved offices in Bristol and spent a lot of time designing the new building to make it an inspiring place to work. The best part about OVO however is the people. From the word go, we recruit the right people with values like ours. It's much easier to live and breathe values if you fundamentally believe in them yourself.

And how does your new senior team help you bring these values to life?

We're not your typical energy company - we're a retailer first, a tech business second and at a distant third a utility. Most of all however, we're all a team at OVO and we all help bring our values to life. I don't think values can be delivered effectively from a top down approach. Our values are part of our DNA and we all live and breathe them every day it doesn't matter if you're the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) or a CSA (Customer Service Advisor), you still have the same role to play when it comes to our values.

What do you see as your main leadership challenges for the future?

We grew by 200% last year, went from 300 employees to over 700 and moved offices twice. We

also went to market with our first ever advertising campaign (feel loved again), launched OVO Communities as well as our new Pay as you Go business so it's fair to say that 2014 was full of exciting challenges. With regard to our main challenges for the future, that will always be making sure we do everything we can for our customers, offering the best prices and service we can at all times.

Book Review

***What got you here won't get you there.
How successful people become even
more successful!***

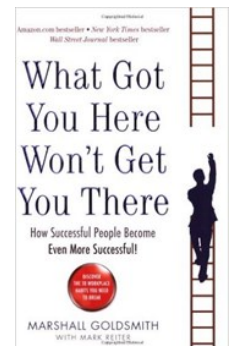
By Marshall Goldsmith

In this book, Goldsmith - one of the most sought after and respected Executive Coaches in the world - presents a very effective, straightforward approach to behavioural change.

The idea the book presents is that there are twenty 'Habits' or behaviours which most leaders regularly demonstrate one or more of, that could be restricting their success. Goldsmith suggests that, 'perhaps one small flaw - a behaviour you barely even recognise - is the only thing that's keeping you from where you want to be'.

From the outset there are case studies which demonstrate evidence of these 'Habits' and offer advice for how they can be addressed through behavioural change. The case studies he details are witty, relatable and put the reader at ease by showing that even the most successful people make mistakes. In total, Goldsmith refers to twenty 'Habits' which results in there being at least one that everyone can connect to, no matter what level of management or leadership they currently find themselves in. I particularly enjoyed the case studies because they are conversational in tone and pleasantly jargon-less.

I would recommend this book for any leader who is committed to continuous improvement and who wishes to reach an even higher level of success.



Reviewed by Stephanie Small
Values Based Leadership
Publisher: Profile Books

Inspiring Women

By Graham Smith and Karen Frost

Introduction

Graham Smith, Assistant Coach of England's World Cup Rugby Cup winning side, and Karen Frost, leadership specialist and expert on developing women leaders, have come together to share their knowledge and experiences of leading and managing women.

In this article, Graham and Karen explore inspiring ways to lead women and how to inspire them to become great leaders. Graham draws on his 12 years as Assistant Coach for the England Women's Rugby team and Karen from her 15 years as a leadership consultant and business coach working with leaders from multi-national organisations.

How to Lead and Inspire Women

We both agree that women generally lead and like to be led in a very different way to men. This may be stating the obvious! So we have decoded what is different and why.

Firstly, in our experience, women like to connect emotionally in order to help to build trust and respect. Evidence of this can be seen when considering the overall averages of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which is the most trusted and [widely used personality assessment test in the world](#). In MBTI terms, one of the preferences based around decision making is Thinking (T) or Feeling (F) and world-wide results demonstrate a [clear gender bias](#). 75.5% of women who have completed the MBTI profile report a preference for Feeling rather than Thinking, meaning women are more likely, although not exclusively, to make a decision based on moral and personal values, as well as consider the feelings of everyone involved. This suggests that women typically place people before process and this applies to all aspects of their lives, whether they are playing in an international rugby team or leading a division of a multi-national organisation.

If you take this gender bias into account then, as a leader, you can behave in a way that ensures you place significance on emotions and values. In our experience, leaders that do this demonstrate that they care about the women they are managing, from both a professional and personal perspective, and women are far more likely to respect what that leader has to say and how they lead and manage.

Then you need to understand that confidence can be a fragile thing for some women. It can take a great deal to build their confidence but be lost in a



Photo by: Lissy Tomlinson, Rugbymatters.

blink of an eye. These women have self-doubt even if they have been capped for their country on many occasions or have been given numerous presentations as the divisional leader. Despite these achievements and the recognition, they often still go home questioning their ability and skills. This self-criticism also links to being critical of others and translates into how they view and judge other people's skills, commitment or involvement. This means that they can sometimes be considered to be too critical of others.

Then we need to understand that men battle to bond and women tend to bond before they battle. What we mean by this is that the process of working and playing together brings men together and makes them a stronger and tighter unit, whether that be a season playing a sport together or working together through a significant business change such as an acquisition or a re-structure. They bond through the shared experience. In comparison, women are more likely to bond through shared emotions. This still means that women participate well in group activities, however, the bond with their team mates or co-workers is much more reliant on the way the activity made everyone feel ra-

ther than the outcome of the activity. This time together also typically involves a greater amount of communication than occurs among male groups. So setting aside time for women to connect emotionally before they get into the process is vital. Creating bonding time at regular intervals will build them as a team.

And, leading on from this, in our experience women generally like to be led not controlled. They like to feel included and involved, so feel most comfortable and trusting when they are led with encouragement, praise and support.

Finally, in our experience, women under pressure are likely to take an aversion to risk. If you are a female senior leader in an international bank, this can be a real advantage; it will mean that you will take your time and weigh up all the odds before making risky decisions. If you are on the rugby field and you are under pressure because you are 15 - 0 down and in the last 20 minutes of the game, then this skill may not be so powerful!

“75.5% of women who have completed the MBTI profile report a preference for Feeling rather than Thinking, meaning women are more likely, although not exclusively, to make a decision based on moral and personal values, as well as consider the feelings of everyone involved. This suggests that women typically place people before process.”

So knowing these important factors, how do you lead women? In our opinion these are some of the vital elements that can make the difference:

Be open and honest. This connects you emotionally with women and means that they trust and respect you. Showing your emotions and a bit of vulnerability works well when making this connection.

Recognise that women can take offence if their values are crossed and accept that with time the offence will heal. Accept and recognise this and then work on re-building the relationship over time.

Create the right environment, where it is OK for them to express themselves. Give them reflection time and listen to their concerns. Taking this time

to listen to them is often enough to help them resolve their concerns.

Be aware of the self-critical and self-doubting internal voice that some women have. Again, it helps to listen and then offer advice and support so they can move away from their self-critical internal voice. →

Book Review

The Hidden Leader: Discover and develop greatness within your company by Scott K. Edinger and Laurie Sain

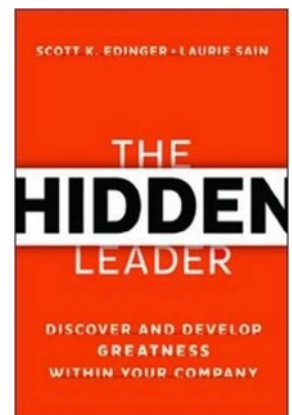
Traditionally leadership is seen based on a managerial position in an organisation. This book gives a fresh view on leadership “it has nothing to do with position or title, it’s what your actions are”.

While generally management does not recognise the “Hidden Leaders” as leaders, they do act with integrity, build relations, are result oriented, can champion change and focus on customer purpose. What makes this book so exciting, for me, is that the authors give plenty of real life examples to illustrate their ideas and at the same time offer tools linked with the internet to interactively discover and evaluate both the “Hidden Leaders” as well as the organisational culture. The book is inspirational as “Hidden Leaders bring a company value promise to life no competitor can identify or match” and at the same time it is a practical guide how to build a successful learning organization as it clearly explains when to use which of the tools and how to use them.

In short: when discovered and effectively channelled “Hidden Leaders” will help to build competitive advantage for a business. Worth reading if you want to achieve that, too.

Visit the www.thehiddenleader.com to learn more about the book and visit www.edingergroup.com to see what else Scott has to say.

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By Inge Heinsius
Strategic Business Builder & International Marketing
Leader
Publisher: Amacom

Within the sporting world you need your players going on to the pitch believing they are good enough to win and all the hard work and coaching will pay off if you believe in them and tell them so. For women in business the self-doubting internal voice can still be there but the challenge is a bit different. For example, in Karen's experience of coaching women, their self-doubt can make them reluctant to apply for a promotion or a new job because they don't believe they meet all the requirements set out in the specification.

“Be open and honest. This connects you emotionally with women and means that they trust and respect you..”

What else can you advise Women to do so they can inspire themselves?

You can also advise women of some key things they can do that support and enable them to lead and inspire themselves. In both our experiences, there are 4 things women can do that will start to make a difference to their career opportunities:

Get a **mentor**. More often than not, women do not find a mentor early enough in their careers to support and advise them through the challenging times. Your mentor can be male or female; just ensure you make the relationship formal. And gentleman – offer to mentor female middle managers, it will have a positive effect on talent development for the future.

Use the skills of a **coach** at key times in your career. In the Rugby world, this is a given. Historically, women came into Rugby when they went to University and this was the first time they were properly coached. Over the past 10 years this has changed and girls are coming into Rugby much earlier at club level. They are being coached at an earlier age and this is making a significant difference to their skill levels. In business you can use an internal coach

available in your business or an external coach – either will be beneficial and utilising them to develop the right skills and behavioural support is crucial.

Networking. Using a variety of networking sources and skills, including social media, has become vital to career advancement; especially for retiring women rugby players. But when it comes to developing our contacts, women often don't spend the time building their professional networks. In fact, whilst women are far more active than men on social media sites such as Facebook and Pinterest, men have proven to be much more active on business based sites such as LinkedIn with [24% of male internet users on LinkedIn compared to 19% of female internet users](#). In his book *Windmill Networking* Neil Schaffer suggests that you “build your well before you are thirsty” when referring to networking. This is great advice and something that is starting to be understood; from 2012 to 2014, the percentage of female users on LinkedIn increased from 37% to 44%. However, with 350 million users (April 2015) on LinkedIn worldwide, and 2 new members joining every second, there is a massive networking opportunity for women that is perhaps being missed.

Image and Presence. How women present themselves, those first impressions and the image they create in a business context, often needs more thought than the suit, shirt and tie template that men can refer to. So take time to think about your image. Be purposeful in what look you want to create and use some expert advice on how to do that – the earlier in your career you create a brand for yourself, the better.

When used effectively, these first simple and quite straightforward steps can be the foundation of becoming a successful female leader in any environment. With them come confidence, support and advice. So encourage them, advise them and coach them to get a mentor, a coach, develop their network and make sure they put some time and energy into their image.

Karen Frost



Graham Smith



Our Favourite Videos and Articles

[Leaders With Values](#)

[We Should All Be Feminists](#)

Values—Their Role in Developing Leaders

By Graham Tate

What are values?

One way to describe your workplace values is that they are the guiding principles that are most important to your organisation and you, about the way the way in which you work. They should be used to choose between the right and wrong ways of working and help guide you when making important workplace decisions.

Values are often the link between the organisation's founding purpose and ways of working, and the current organisational culture.¹ They can also be defined or redefined by the organisation's Executive Team, either with or without employee involvement, at critical points in the organisation's development. Either way they set the tone for organisational and individual development.

“One solution is to use your values to obtain feedback on your workplace behaviours, and use the support and challenge of individual and team coaching to positively address this.”

Are Values important?

Research² shows that most employees recognise the significance of organisational values, and consider that it is important to have defined values that govern employee behaviour. Similarly organisations across all sectors (e.g. Virgin Media, Choccywoccydoodah, Healthspan, NHS, and the British Army), will seek through their internal and external communications, and policies and procedures to align their employees with their values,

“Everyone does the right things for the right reasons and this common purpose will help people to build great working relationships.”

What do Values mean for you as a leader?

If we agree that when your people's values align with the organisation's that people understand one

another, everyone does the right things for the right reasons and this common purpose will help people to build great working relationships.

Then, it is imperative that you as the leader “live and breathe” your organisation's values. Actions often speak louder than words, and therefore you as the leader must lead by example and ensure that those values are “accorded the highest priority”³, are fully explained to your staff and applied consistently. If you are not a role model for the values, then why should your people adopt them? Where this works, the reputation of the organisation will be extremely high.

What can you do if you feel that as a leader or leadership team that you are failing to consistently apply your organisation's values in your behaviour?

One solution is to use your values to obtain feedback on your workplace behaviours, and use the support and challenge of individual and team coaching to positively address this. Currently, I am working with a high value food manufacturing company who is doing just this.

Graham Tate

The Executive team collectively felt that they needed to improve their workplace behaviours. They had noted the signs of becoming an underperforming team – people working towards different goals, misunderstandings of each other's intentions, poor behaviour with members of their team, and reluctance for ideas for improvement to be shared. They also spotted that their team members were starting to underperform as well, noting several undesirable behaviours.

They had organisational values to embody how everyone should work, and they recognised that these could be the means to identify the behaviours which they needed to develop. Also, as a team they felt that they would need some unbiased and objective help in order to move forward individually and as a team.



They developed the following improvement process:

1. Revalidate the existing values, using employee focus groups, and make any necessary changes.
2. Develop a simple feedback questionnaire and have each member of the Executive team complete this on each other, and for each of them have this completed by six members of their team (anonymously).
3. Have the results of the feedback questionnaires collated and individual reports created.
4. Use an external and independent coach to provide a safe and trusting environment, this would enable defensive thinking to be replaced by constructive thinking, for a couple of one-to-one coaching sessions to discuss the results contained in the individual reports, and identify individual options and goals.
5. Hold a series of externally facilitated Executive team coaching workshops to share with each other their feedback, and ideas for individual development, and gain support from other executive members to provide them with support in achieving these goals, and to agree team development goals.
6. Complete individual and team Commitments to Action plans and to review progress of these at fortnightly Executive meetings.
7. Undertake the feedback exercise again in approximately 4 months to evaluate success and agree any further action to be taken.

How successful has this been?

The whole process has yet to be completed. The Executive team are at stage 6. Significantly, each member of the Executive team embraced the process to discuss tough issues openly and to identify their key areas for development and specific actions for change. The early signs are more than encouraging. They have fed back that the creation of a safe place to talk openly and not be judged was critical to this. Communication between themselves and their teams have increased and anecdotal evidence supports the view that “better things are happening” and “high quality relationships are developing”.

Summary

Values are integral to organisations and people who work in them. Leaders must lead by example in demonstrating behaviours that are consistent with the organisation’s values. In order to achieve this, the organisation’s values can themselves be used as the development tool for improved leadership behaviour. Feedback and coaching are effective tools to enable this to happen.

By Graham Tate

Graham is an Independent People Development Coach, whose aim is to enable people and organisations to fulfil their potential. He works with multinationals, SMEs and individuals.

References:

¹Keeping Culture, Purpose and Values at the Heart of your SME, CIPD research Report, May 2014.

²Employee Outlook Survey, CIPD Autumn 2012.

³Values and Standards of the British Army, 2008.

Final Thoughts

“Presenting leadership as a list of carefully defined qualities (like strategic, analytical, and performance-oriented) no longer holds. Instead, true leadership stems from individuality that is honestly and sometimes imperfectly expressed... Leaders should strive for authenticity over perfection.”

– **Sheryl Sandberg**

“As a leader, it’s a major responsibility on your shoulders to practice the behavior you want others to follow.”

– **Himanshu Bhatia**

“Values aren’t buses... They’re not supposed to get you anywhere. They’re supposed to define who you are.”

– **Jennifer Crusie**

“Living in a way that reflects one’s values is not just about what you do, it is also about how you do things.”

– **Deborah Day**



Search: Values Based Leadership

Voice is published four times a year by Values Based Leadership Ltd,
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