



### Make network leadership work for you

1. Context determines exactly what kinds of network leadership behaviours a team needs at any specific time. Be alert to your changing context.
2. Key network leadership behaviours - communicating and listening – are needed continuously so ensure these are in good supply. Without these behaviours teams will languish and eventually collapse altogether.
3. If you're having 'performance' issues, take a close look at coordinating and motivating. You are likely to need more of either or both of these behaviours. Ideally these behaviours will be displayed by multiple team members.
4. Taking brave and considered steps into the unknown is a leader's task. Make sure any of this 'risking' behaviour is not reckless.
5. Getting others to contribute is essential. Use channelling to unlock contributions from the less vocal members of your team, who may also be deep thinkers that contribute thoughtful insights at just the right time.

## WHAT 'NETWORK LEADERS' DO

### *'Critical informal leaders' and organisational culture*

A recent UGM briefing reported on how High Performing Organisations are developing talent and leadership pools deeper within their organisation than ever before. This new focus on reaching more individuals recognises that much of the value generated in organisations comes from informal links and networks.

As often happens with leading-edge thinking, similar ideas emerge from different sources around the same time. And so it is that practitioner-researcher Jon Katzenbach and colleagues highlighted 'critical informal leaders' as one of three 'critical components' of organisational culture. These 'informal leaders', at all levels, aren't necessarily in charge but they nevertheless exercise 'critical' influence within the organisation.

For the sake of completeness, 'critical behaviours', which "have the potential to generate a real business impact", comprise Katzenbach's second vital element of organisational culture. The third component is the group of 'existing cultural traits', the "three or four emotional elements of current culture that...are the manifestation of the organization's collective sense of identity".

### *What Katzenbach's 'critical informal leaders' do*

To help readers identify the 'critical informal leaders' within their organisations, Katzenbach provides two kinds of identifying behaviours as examples. The first is 'pride building'. These people are often 'instinctive motivators'. The second common behaviour involves acting as hubs ('connectors') in informal networks that usefully link formal parts of their organisation.

Interestingly, Katzenbach and colleagues suggest that these critical informal leaders ought to be consulted by senior management, with a view to finding out what it is these individuals do to influence, despite the absence of formal authority. Top bosses have the tough responsibility of 'listening and learning', ensuring they don't act like bosses! In a cited case, an industrial organisation in deep financial distress used this approach to secure 'a swift and lasting recovery'.

### *UGM's 'network leadership' behaviours*

UGM research has identified eight 'network leadership' behaviours that all teams and other organisations need. Included are two of the behaviours that can be distilled from Katzenbach's 'critical informal leader' examples: motivation and coordination. These particular behaviours fall into UGM's 'key influencing behaviours' category. Motivating focuses on getting the best out of people in the team. It also ensures that people feel their

contributions are valued and enjoy what they are doing. Coordinating has a broad 'resources' focus and aims to extract maximum value from resources available to the team, by putting them to best use.

UGM research suggests that when team members don't exercise sufficient 'motivating' and 'coordinating' behaviours then team performance will be adversely affected. Similarly, high performing teams are likely to have plenty of 'motivating' and 'coordinating' behaviour from team members. Note this is not restricted to a single individual! Multiple people in the team can exercise these two 'network leadership' behaviours. Any close observation of productive teams you work in will undoubtedly identify plenty of motivating and coordinating. The reverse is likely to be the case in under-performing teams.

### *The 'core' network leadership behaviours*

Importantly, two other 'network leadership' behaviours are critical for team success. They are the pigeon-pair of 'communicating' and 'listening'. UGM research shows that when these two behaviours are missing, or in short supply, team collapse is pretty much guaranteed. This is why they are considered 'core' network leadership behaviours.

Individuals exercise 'communicating' by taking charge of information processes in a team, with the end goal of influencing team processes and/or team goals. At any time they do this, even if momentarily, they are exercising network leadership. Listening becomes a network leadership behaviour when a team member actively pays attention to the communication of another. This 'active attention' has a clear influencing effect on the communication.

### *Four 'contingent' network behaviours*

In addition to the two core and two key behaviours, UGM identified four other network leadership behaviours whose value is contingent on the context. That is, whether these behaviours are needed or not depends on a team's situation.

'Risking' involves a willingness to take actions, on behalf of and agreed by the team, under conditions of uncertainty and where failure is a possible outcome. 'Mediating' seeks to reduce or resolve conflict between members and to restore relationships. 'Anchoring' demonstrates total commitment to team outcomes and all team members. It's worthy of emulation and is often the source of inspiration for others. Finally, there is 'channelling', wherein the contributions of the characteristically quieter members of the team are facilitated.

With awareness of eight types of network leadership behaviours, you shouldn't have any trouble recognising leadership throughout your organisation!