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Review

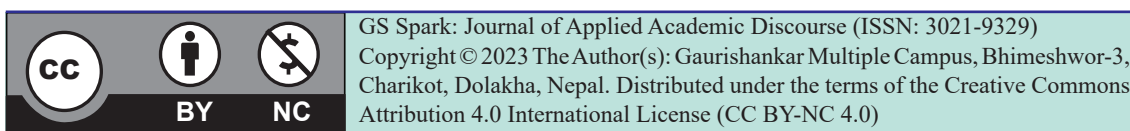
## Strategies for Agile Leadership in a Challenging Environment

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### ABSTRACT

The post pandemic environment has provided many significant challenges for all forms of organisations. The requirement for good leadership in this context is vital. This research considers the features of such leadership and how their application can affect organisations and their required outputs. The need for agility in this sphere is proposed, in order to accommodate the environmental challenges, globally and within the different sectors. There should be an emphasis on creativity in order to provide solutions to the many issues for organisations in the prevailing environment. Recruitment and retention are viewed as critical activities for sustaining these entities by ensuring the supply of the requisite standard of personnel at all levels. The latter should have suitable qualifications or the aptitude to acquire them. These staff should be given appropriate training then empowered, including being given the scope to utilise their own leadership style, as appropriate. The form of the post pandemic environment and its effects on leadership are noted. The principal factors identified here include the economic challenges, hybrid working patterns and the use of agency staff to supplement the permanent resource. The proactive development of leaders is emphasised as a critical activity for organisations, enabling them to address the issues prevalent in their environment.

Research into this area occurred, using qualitative techniques. A literature review and interview with a current practitioner were performed, in order to glean the data for an inductive analysis. A template to assist organisations in creating a strategy for 'Agile Leadership' was then formulated.

**Keywords:** leadership, agile leadership, leadership style, recruitment, staff retention, hybrid working

## Introduction

The current global situation provides a challenging environment for all forms of organisations, irrespective of their sector or nationality. The pandemic and other events have changed the characteristics of the international scene to make normal operations more complex. Organisations are forced to consider and accommodate this situation, in order to continue to survive and be successful. The leadership of these entities is viewed as playing a major role in their actions and, hence, the outcomes, given the complexities of their environments. This paper examined recent academic literature and employs a practitioner viewpoint to discern recommendations for managers and other key stakeholders. The concept of 'Agile Leadership' is suggested as a method to assist in responding to the challenges from operating in such environments.

'Leadership' is defined as, 'Influencing the direction of the organization through a focus on change and inspiring the group to improve performance.' (Needle, 2015: 588). 'Agile' is defined, in respect of business terminology, as being 'able to deal with new situations or changes quickly and successfully' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

## Problem Statement

The requirement to scan the environment for potential issues and opportunities, thus managing risks, is addressed (in Blair, Woodcock and Pagano, 2021). The agile approach involves the identification of potential change and its implementation using flexible change management techniques (as per Blair, Barratt and Pagano, 2022).

Several studies conducted in Nepal (Maskey & Mishra, 2018; Mishra & Nepal 2022; Mishra 2022; Mishra, 2023 a & b; Mishra & Jha, 2023) also conformed the human productivity requirement and environmental consequences in Nepal, urge the researcher to take keen interest in the research.

## Research Objective

This research aims to provide a template to assist organisations in developing a strategy for

'Agile Leadership' in order to formulate effective responses to the challenges in their environments.

## Literature Review

The principal themes were discerned from a selection of current articles on leadership in key publications. These were obtained using inductive methods, without a predetermined coding structure.

## Agile Practice

Organisations can be more effective in respect of all aspects if they adopt practices based on Agile Project Management, according to Rigby et al. (2022). The focus should be on delivering value to customers with income-generation being a consequence of this emphasis, rather than the primary attention being given to profit-making. The initial move can be to create a single workgroup into Agile practice. This team should comprise multidisciplinary personnel, with experts from outside the normal remit of the group. The premise is that this will stimulate the thinking and lead to a more innovative approach to the team's brief. A microcosm of the desired practices for the organisation is, thus, created. This should also enable experimentation, so that testing occurs on the team. The focus should be on delivering value to selected shareholders, rather than concentrating principally on profit maximisation. These arrangements should be based on the Agile team unit, consistent with the premise that investing in the team and networking yields higher benefits than solely targeting the development of individual employees. Leadership that invests in Agile teams will, hence, create enhanced organisations, according to this source.

The importance of an agile strategy is stressed by Mankins and Gottfredson (2022). Many organisations adhere to a single strategic plan, defined and then followed over a set period, such as three years. This is only satisfactory in a stable environment, where assumptions can be made that endure throughout the period. This article suggests that volatility is now the norm, in respect of organisational contexts. Major events such as the

Covid pandemic, the UK exit from the European Union, the conflict in the Ukraine and environmental disasters, have led to unstable operating conditions on a global scale. The practice of dynamic strategic planning is recommended, where plans and options are continually re-evaluated and revised over time. The requirement to consider more than one possible future, embracing even extreme views of the future environment, is noted. The number of alternatives considered should be limited, so that resources are not squandered on trying to cover every possible option, leaving the organisation in a worse financial position. Several studies from practice are cited by the authors, in order to illustrate their points. The need for a flexible strategy, considering several options and employing constant review and adjustment, is highlighted. The advantage of this is that the organisation should improve its capacity to accommodate rapid change in a volatile environment. The selection of alternative options can lead to significant advantages over competitors and provision of products and services during challenging operating conditions.

The importance of the time factor in projects and the role of leaders in addressing that element are considered by Siddiquei et al. (2022). An empirical study of over 50 project teams in four companies running similar projects over several weeks was held and the results analysed for this article. A survey of the project team members was used to provide the research results. The effect of leaders' communications regarding the proposed duration of tasks in the planning stage of the project and reminders of deadlines during the execution stage were considered. A systems view of projects was utilised, comprising inputs, processing and outputs. The determination of inputs was the initiation and planning phases with the processing being the execution phase. The output stage was that of delivery of goods and services. The study demonstrated that leaders can influence the project teams' work in the initiation and planning stages with their inputs on project tasks and their planned duration. This research also showed that leaders can influence the project teams' work by sending

reminders throughout the execution phase, in an attempt to ensure that deadlines are met. The ability to set time parameters for project work and encourage adherence to them is viewed as being of critical importance to obtaining successful project outcomes. The leader, therefore, needs to understand the project tasks and desired outcomes, in order to have a significant effect on project work via critical input at the initial and processing stages.

### **Networks**

The importance of forming and maintaining networks is stated by Ibarra and Hunter (2022). The aim for prospective leaders is to practice strategic networking, rather than solely operational networking. The latter entails developing a series of contacts at work to perform projects and routine or periodic tasks. These are usually prescribed by the required functions and type of work and are commonly internal to the organisation. Strategic and personal networks are more discretionary and are developed to accommodate different requirements. Personal networks are contacts developed through leisure interests and hobbies. These are individuals who share a common interest, although there may be a strategic element here, if personal connections can align with work interests, for example by providing a reference or introduction or even directly recruiting the contact. Strategic networking is the primary form of leadership advancement and operation. These are usually outside the individual's work contacts and possibly external to the organisation. These strategic contacts provide a resource that assists in envisioning and executing routine and project tasks, in order to maintain and enhance the status of the organisation and possibly the individual themselves. Operational networks tend to be focussed on technology and techniques, with individuals solving routine and irregular problems. Strategic networks, however, tend to focus on the positioning of the organisation in its environment. Membership of the latter can be disparate in terms of skills and knowledge. This may be advantageous, providing a range of resources and perspectives to help the individuals

and organisation to achieve their objectives. The ability to build a supportive strategic network is viewed as being critical to organisations and individuals, in respect of the practice of leadership and delivery of key work activities.

### **Leadership Techniques**

The two leadership techniques of maintaining absolute control of decision-making and delegating decisions to the group via empowerment are considered (Greer et al., 2023). These are described as the 'two leadership gears'. The premise is that the optimum situation is for organisations and their leaders to utilise both of these methods, depending on the circumstances. These authors' empirical work, based on decision-making in organisations, suggests that the best-performing organisations are those where the leaders can successfully switch from one method to the other, depending on the requirements of the activities. An example is to delegate power to the group for idea-generation activities, so that the activity benefits from the maximum available input, and then switch to authoritarian method when a final selection of the idea for implementation is required. The switching between these two methods must be clearly indicated. Strategies for successfully empowering staff are suggested, such as the leader leaving the group during the relevant period or having limited involvement. The objective is to allow each member of the group to have equal authority, thus enabling any of them to contribute to the discussion, and, hence, maximise the contribution of the group. Organisations should match the appropriate method to the circumstances, therefore, optimising decision-making and possibly generating group support.

The ability to change perspective on organisational issues is viewed as a critical assert for leaders by Kanter (2023). This article suggests that both the near view and the more distant view have their advantages and disadvantages. These actions are described as 'zooming in' and 'zooming out'. The problem is that leaders tend to adopt one or the other stance, as dictated by the demands of their

roles and organisations. This can lead to flawed decision-making, with serious consequences for the individual and the organisation. This is illustrated via a discussion of several cases from practice. The 'near' perspective is viewed as personal management, where personal contacts are heavily utilised in order to perform tasks and situations are viewed from a personal perspective. This is advantageous in non-routine situations or specific cultures where the leader's attention and influence is required to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Leaders who adhere to this approach lack strategic perspective and comprehension of the wider environmental issues and can have problems if there are changes in this sphere that affect the local context, where their attention is focussed. Leaders who adopt a purely strategic perspective may miss issues occurring at the local level that require intervention or comprehension, in order to solve particular problems or understand key issues. The optimum leader is, hence, viewed as being able to switch from a 'near' to 'far' perspective, in order to accommodate all viewpoints and engage in effective decision-making. The method for initiating this dual viewpoint is for the leader to question their interpretations of situations, in order to comprehend the perspective that they are applying and encourage the alternate view, so that they attain a more complete understanding of the situation, namely attending to both the strategic and local spheres.

Zaman et al. (2021) investigated the effects of authoritarian leadership on public sector mega construction projects, namely those that are large scale, complex, capital intensive in nature with multiple stakeholders. These authors surveyed over 300 professionals who were working on a large infrastructure project. This research examined the link between project success and authoritarian leadership, considering the effects on the project team members in terms of their 'silence' in respect of contribution to the project. The latter refers to project workers failing to communicate and withholding their input, ideas and views. This is usually to the detriment of the project outcomes



and is caused, possibly, by alienation from the project. The attitude of authoritarian leaders means that some of the project workers disengage from the project, hence, maintain 'silence', restricting their contribution. Communication is 'one way', in the form of direct instructions from the leader to the project workers. The flow of communications in the opposite direction was, thus, seen to be restricted. This was viewed as having a negative effect on the success of the project outcomes, on several levels. Success was measured from three perspectives, namely project management (adherence to the project plan), project ownership (fulfilment of the project business case) and project investment (value generated by the investment in the project). The conclusion of this study was that authoritarian leadership negatively impacted project success, with the lack of communication from project workers being a major factor in this outcome.

The beneficial effects of shared leadership on project success are considered by Imam and Zaheer (2021). This article focussed on researching completed IT projects in a developing country. The rationale was that the high failure rate prevalent in projects in such countries could be examined for mitigating circumstances. IT projects were viewed as being complex and requiring the coordination of different skills to achieve completion. This increased the dependency on teamwork. Over 200 IT professionals were surveyed to obtain the results. The premise employed by these authors was that shared leadership was more effective in this area, comprising Agile Project Management techniques of creating prototypes by collaborative effort then refining them based on the customer's perspective (as per Highsmith, 2004). The research results demonstrated that shared leadership was more likely to lead to project success. The factors of team knowledge-sharing, mutual trust and team cohesion were found to be important in achieving successful outcomes. This research suggested that project workers were more committed to obtaining solutions if they shared the project leadership, otherwise they restricted themselves to

their individual efforts in their prescribed area of expertise. This shared leadership also helped with making sense of requirements, including changes of scope and user needs. The suggestion was that when potential leaders are recruited, the ability to comfortably share leadership should be prioritised. The empowered team, operating a shared leadership model, was thus viewed as being essential to the successful delivery of complex IT solutions, that depended on a mix of different skills.

### **Crisis Management**

Leadership in extreme circumstances is considered by Ramanna (2023), described as the 'age of outrage'. Stakeholders can adopt a severe attitude in the case of problems, strongly promoting their own viewpoint and criticising the organisation. They can also take an antagonistic viewpoint, seeking to make gains from another party. This can originate from a sense of unfairness with society, based on a belief that prevailing systems are biased against individuals or groups. This can apply to areas such as race, finance and politics. The use of social media can also encourage extreme views by permitting their expression and encouragement by others. The strategies to deal with such situations commence with an attempt to de-escalate the situation then resolve it by analysis followed by response or a decision not to respond. A range of options are available, including the use or threatened use of power by leaders. An appeal to supporters can also be used, thus employing personal contacts or 'position power', based on the role as leader. A potentially superior option was identified, in the form of an appeal to the culture of the organisation or group. This could take the form of requesting that the protagonists suggest their own solution to the issue. This may permit a solution to be found without the leader using coercive power or having to request favours from contacts in their network. A consensus of all parties is generally viewed as the optimum solution as it reduces the scope for dissatisfaction with the outcome. The critical activity for a leader is to analyse the situation and select the optimum response. Failure to do this

may lead to further antagonism of stakeholders, due to a sub-optimal solution, with a consequent impact on the organisation. The relative power of the parties and nature of the specific context are vital factors in considering this decision. It is important to continue to assess the situation and develop resilience in terms of seeking solutions and formulating future leadership strategy.

The ability to address issues in a political environment is considered by Kteily and Finkel (2022). The problem of employees being in conflict with the organisation and each other as a result of differing political views is discussed. Examples of employees reacting adversely to actions by their organisations are given. The latter resulted in staff leaving the company and reputational damage, in some cases. The key problem is that leaders are not trained to address such issues. Attempts to suppress political debate can exacerbate the situation and appear to preserve the status quo, hence be viewed as essentially conservative. The differences are centred on the premise that an individual's political views motivate their actions and decisions. They can also affect their perceptions of organisational aspects, such as recruitment. The rights to 'free speech' and freedom of expression are regarded as being essential by many cultures and individuals.

The solution proposed is to prepare employees at the induction and initial training phase. The policies regarding such items can be outlined. Another tactic is to get employees with opposing views to collaborate on projects and tasks, with the remit of producing the optimum outcome. It is also important to have the metrics available to counter or confirm arguments over potentially contentious issues, such as ethnicity and orientation of staff. The central issue is that organisations are part of society so cannot avoid the politicised debates that ensue. The key leadership strategy is to be aware of this situation and prepared, both in terms of policy, briefing employees and responses to such issues. Failure to do this may result in serious problems for the organisation from an internal and external perspective.

The critical area of managing a crisis on behalf of the organisation is considered by Pearson et al. (2023). This article is based on an interview with leading academic, who is an expert in this area. The problem of highly competitive environments causing increased potential for errors, as resources are reduced and expectations increased in terms of outputs, is highlighted. The time for response has also been reduced, as communications have become more effective. The news of a major crisis is very likely to be communicated quickly into the public domain, thanks to social media and online news sources. The increased speed of online communications has, thus, reduced the time available for leaders to prepare a response to any potential crisis. The competitive environment and interests of stakeholders mean that speculation and opinion may rapidly follow any news of a crisis, with potentially damaging effects for the organisation, in terms of reputation and share value, for example. The increased level of globalisation could also be a critical factor in a crisis. The global nature of organisations and their environment means that any crisis has an additional layer of complexity. This can create communications' problems in respect of translating instructions to staff. The need is for clear directives and trusted delegates to transmit messages and manage locally, as required. The notion of one leader addressing the crisis in isolation or with a small, selected project team could now be viewed as outdated. Leaders need to delegate to the appropriate experts or work with them in order to coordinate a response to the crisis. Technology can assist with communications but may also be a hindrance in that electronic devices distract attention and reduce the ability for prolonged concentration. This may cause issues with the response to the crisis. The assignment of a project team to address the crisis may cause problems in the organisation, for example in rewarding those staff afterwards and the effects on the staff who have covered their tasks for the period of secondment. The notion that risk avoidance measures can reduce the chances of a potential crisis also has consequences. The reduction of

risk may lead to a reduction of opportunities for development, so the organisation loses these benefits and perhaps falls behind competitors.

Dealing with a crisis, thus, requires preparation for a response. The leader and key staff should be briefed on the format of the response. This could include draft statements for media channels, formation of response team, definition of roles and communication mechanisms. The response and potential solutions may be facilitated by such preparation and, thus, the effects of the crisis be mitigated. The importance of identifying key staff and working collaboratively on the crisis situation is viewed as being essential. Delegating appropriate tasks is also vital to providing an effective response, in many cases.

### **Recruitment**

The importance of having a leadership team that can make strategic progress with the organisation is highlighted by Leinwand et al. (2022). These authors propose that the leadership team should focus on changes to the organisation, defining a new strategy to anticipate demand and take advantage of opportunities, rather than just manage the current situation in the prevailing environment.

The necessity is to recruit the appropriate personnel to the required roles on the leadership team. These may be new roles, based on the anticipated needs of the organisation. The key point is to have the requisite leaders in these roles to supply the expertise for future strategies. These new posts should be full members of the leadership team and not external to it, hence indicating the commitment to these areas. Digitisation is often viewed as one of these critical change areas but these authors suggest that organisations require leadership in more spheres. This may lead to removal of existing leadership team members, as the focus on strategy is emphasised. The requirement, according to this article, is to be prepared to reinvent the organisation, in respect of its purpose, methods, culture and accepted practice. This is to address the challenges of the current and future operating environment. Failure to implement these changes

may cause stagnation, the reduction in scale and even the closure of the organisation, as the leadership team rely on an outdated rationale in a changed environment. 'Reinventing' this team to implement future strategies should, therefore, be an ongoing process. This 'future orientation' approach is viewed as being vital for the leadership team to adopt, for the ongoing health of the enterprise.

### **Findings**

A senior manager from the public sector with a remit that covered health, education and social services, who also had responsibility for private sector contracts, was interviewed. The aim was to discuss the key elements of effective leadership in the current environment. A semi-structured interview was held, thus allowing the respondent more licence to contribute their own perspective to the discussion. A thematic analysis of the interview results was then performed, using inductive methods. The main points were then presented and these findings were referenced to the literature, in order to further analyse the outcomes. A series of recommendations was then formulated as a template to assist practitioners and contribute to this research area.

### **Recruitment**

The importance of recruitment in terms of selecting an organisation's leaders is stated in the literature (Leinwand et al., 2022).

### **Qualifications**

The respondent stated, 'Leaders need appropriate qualifications and values'. An appropriate Masters' degree and ethical values were given as examples. The requirement for formal qualifications as an indicator of ability to lead is viewed as being essential. Lack of such qualifications may even disqualify potential candidates. The appropriate ethical values are regarded as vital for leaders, emphasising the social and environmental perspectives. This will ensure that the organisation provides a progressive, supportive context for its stakeholders. Training is considered in Blair and Pagano (2021a).



### **Proportion of Agency Staff**

The variety of employment mix, in respect of the proportion of full to part-time staff, was noted by the respondent, 'Some areas (for example London) there are a majority of agency staff - others have more 'home-grown' staff.'

This refers to the percentage of personnel brought in on contracts via an agency, rather than developed from the organisation's own staff. The greater the local pay differential between regular staff remuneration and agency rates, the more problematic it is to retain staff in leadership and project leadership roles. This forces the organisation to use agency staff and pay these premium rates. The activity of outsourcing is considered in Blair, Woodcock and Pagano (2022).

### **Networks**

Networking is viewed as a critical activity by several references, such as Ibarra and Hunter (2022).

### **Empowering Leadership**

'The move has been to less hierarchical, empowering, distributed leadership models.' The aim is to distribute power and responsibility to staff, so that leadership is a more collective activity. The trend is towards 'flatter', less hierarchical forms of organisation. This leads to more empowered teams, where members have equal status and are primarily responsible for their own work.

### **Leadership Techniques**

Leadership techniques are viewed as vital by several sources (for example, Greer et al., 2023).

### **Leadership Development**

'Important to grow your own leaders, as recruitment and retention are the major challenges', according to the respondent. The need to have an effective policy on recruitment, retention and succession planning was suggested. Competition in the employment market means that staff who have been trained and given experience as leaders are attractive to other organisations and may also be

tempted to work as self-employed contractors, for greater rewards. It was suggested that a realistic assessment needs to be made for these staff, in that they will probably have shorter employment periods than other staff, as they move to more lucrative jobs elsewhere. Training personnel, for example in a virtual environment, is indicated in Blair and Pagano (2021c).

### **Problem-Solving**

Problem-solving and creativity in a work environment is essential for leaders. The input of new ideas for the organisation should be stimulated by the leaders. This is summarised by the respondent, as 'the need to innovate and the ability to experiment to obtain novel solutions is important.'

The role of technology to solve organisational problems and support activities is addressed in Blair, Grant and Woodcock (2020). The key areas in respect of managing and implementing technology are identified in Blair and Pagano (2023) and Blair, Morris and Pagano (2023).

### **Hybrid Working**

There has been a move to 'hybrid' working in terms of location, comprising work at home and in the office. This has been a consequence of the pandemic, when restrictions on movement led to an increase in virtual working (mentioned in Blair and Pagano, 2020). The respondent indicated that this has been accompanied by a change to measurement of work performance. 'Use outcomes and outputs, comprising added value, rather than hours worked. Financial and non-financial outcomes are used, depending on the circumstances.' This statement details the position. The tendency has been to move away from 'recorded hours worked' as an indicator and towards measures of contributions to value. This focuses work more directly on productivity, in terms of results, rather than attendance.

### **Individual Style and Progression**

'Important to allow staff to have their own styles. Also give opportunities for development and

progression.' The suggestion is that staff should be allowed discretion to utilise their own styles of leadership, as appropriate. Opportunities for career progression should be available in order to provide incentives for the staff. The facility to permit self-expression as a leader, within the cultural context of the organisation, is important as it both encourages a broader range of management development as well as inspiring loyalty, as these personnel are given a remit to exhibit their own personal style.

### **Crisis Management**

The requirement to accommodate challenging environments and develop the ability manage any crises is regarded as paramount by many authors (for instance, Pearson et al., 2023).

### **Economic Environment**

The challenges of the local and global economic conditions were mentioned. The problem of reduced capital programme budgets and high interest rates, increasing the cost of borrowing, was outlined. The costs of the pandemic and the conflict in the Ukraine, for example adversely affecting energy costs, have caused a real reduction in funds for projects. This is stated as, 'Economic conditions may lead to reduction in budgets, such as for capital programmes, leading to a decrease in project work.'

This aspect should be reflected in strategy formulation (as per Blair, Barratt and Pagano, 2021). The need to consider the sustainability aspects of operating in the environment are also noted, especially in respect of the use of technology (Blair and Pagano, 2021b),

### **Agile Practice**

The incorporation of Agile practices into the leadership of organisations is emphasised in the literature (Rigby et al., 2022 and in respect of time management, Siddiquei et al., 2022).

### **Agile Leadership**

'You need to be an agile leader, prepared to adapt to circumstances', according to the respondent. The importance of using a flexible approach with work, projects and staff, for example, was stressed. The

need to use tactics that are based on a contingent perspective, in order to accommodate changing circumstances, was highlighted. The latter could include: global issues, such as trade or funding variations; organisational issues, such as changes in policy or senior personnel; and local issues, such as the requirements of a variety of staff, with different needs and motivations.

Agility in terms of leadership means being flexible, in respect of using different approaches in response to different circumstances. This will require the leader to understand the range of options and their potential impact, as well as be able to gauge the decision-making environment, in order to select the appropriate option.

### **Methodology**

A review of a selection of the main academic journals in this area was enacted and suitable articles were identified for analysis. The key themes were noted and were organised using an inductive analysis, forming a hierarchy of categories as required (Blair and Pagano, 2021a and Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). An interview with an experienced manager from the UK public sector, who also managed private sector contracts, took place, in order to ascertain key facets of leadership. Inductive techniques were also employed, in order to organise the interview data. The aim was to make recommendations in terms of managing change in this sphere and to advise practitioners on the topic of improving leadership in their organisations. A template to enable practitioners to create a strategy for 'Agile Leadership' was then constructed from the research findings, comprising a contribution and summary of this work (as per Blair, Pagano and Burns, 2019).

### **Results and Discussion**

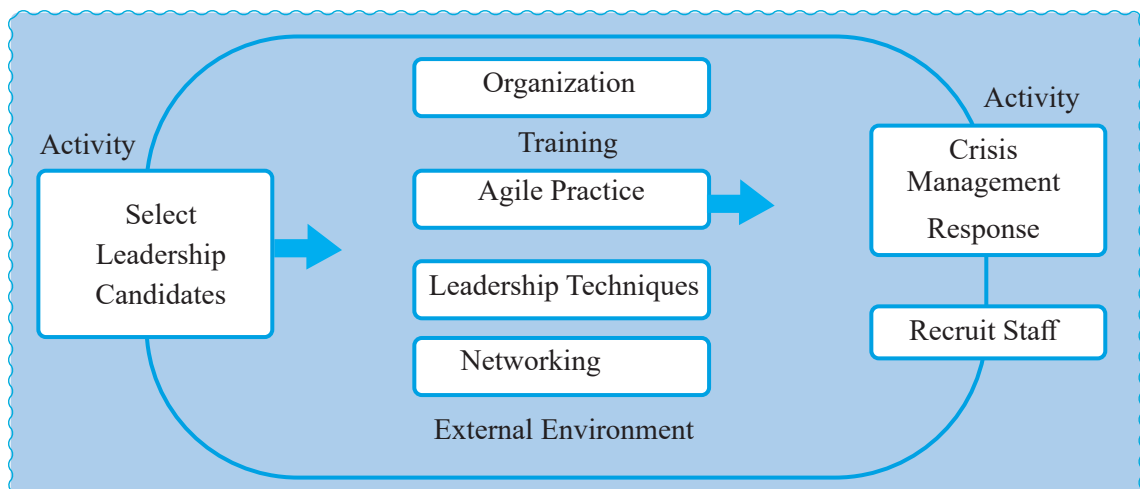
This research can be summarised with a template to help to formulate a strategy for 'Agile Leadership'. This is based on the principal areas identified during the study and is intended as a contribution to practice and change management in this area. The following recommendations are, thus, presented (see Diagram 1).

- a) Agile practice means using a flexible approach, therefore select the best option, based on the culture and environmental circumstances.
- b) Promote Agile techniques, using prototyping with expert opinion to refine the end product or service.
- c) Build up supportive networks inside and outside the organisation to assist in key areas, therefore supplementing skills, experience and knowledge.
- d) Empower your staff to allow creativity and ensure commitment in teamworking.
- e) Develop leaders from in-house staff and supplement this with policies on recruitment, retention and succession planning.
- f) Leaders should excel at problem-solving and be comfortable working in a hybrid environment, with employees at home and on site.
- g) Leaders should be able to switch between authoritarian decision-making and delegating decisions, as appropriate.
- h) Have a plan to manage crises and a mechanism for detecting them and responding.
- i) Ensure appropriate leaders are recruited in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude.
- j) Introduce staff to the methods and expectations of the organisation from recruitment to induction and ongoing professional development.
- k) Hire temporary staff as necessary, to ensure delivery of objectives.
- l) Ensure that all key work has a time plan which has the proactive backing of the leaders.

**Diagram 1. Template for Creating a Strategy for Agile Leadership**

The principal themes are considered, namely: Agile Practice; Crisis Management; Leadership Techniques; Recruitment; Networks. These

comprised the main themes identified in the research, both empirical and the literature review.



**Diagram 2: Strategy for Agile Leadership – Key Activities**

The key activities of a strategy for Agile Leadership are illustrated (see Diagram 2). Suitable leadership

candidates should be selected, potentially from outside or within the organization.

## Conclusion

This research comprises an attempt to gain a current perspective on leadership, using empirical work and a review of the literature. The findings are summarised as recommendations for practitioners and a possible agenda for change management. The study could be extended by further research into different sectors, accessing a range of practitioners in different global locations.

These candidates should receive training and experience in respect of Agile Practice, Leadership Techniques and Networking. A response for managing a possible crisis should be determined and appropriate staff recruited from inside and outside the environment. Recommendations for practitioners were produced from these themes and presented in the template, as previously stated.

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