

# Question Led Leadership™

## LONG TERM FOCUS THAT DELIVERS IMMEDIATE GAINS

“THE SECRET OF CHANGE IS TO FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT ON BUILDING THE NEW.” SOCRATES

The world is changing, but when anyone says 'like never before', just stop and think for a moment. The world is and has always been constantly changing. Major breakthroughs for us today will be forgotten as irrelevant in a few years time because time, and life, will have moved on. It is the way of the world. Yet as startling as the new breakthroughs are, they all have at their heart the very same structural building blocks. The fascinating thing about the world in which we live is that everything we see, touch feel, hear or sense in any way is a construction of repeated patterns. At a leadership level we might not be particularly interested in the sub molecular structure of the universe but we are interested in anything useful that helps us become more effective leaders. History tells us that learning can come from all sorts of unusual sources, so it's not so strange that the construction

mechanics making up the fundamental fabric of our world might have something to teach us, particularly if it helps us rethink our approach for the better.

Almost all leadership teachings, models, approaches and tools are predicated on the notion of fixing something by making it better than it was before. It assumes that problems exist and we are there to lead in solving them. Even the application of coaching questions to help a person solve their own problems are another version of a problem solving aid when they stand alone. However when teamed with a different way of thinking, the enquiry led conversation morphs into question led leadership (QLL™). It ceases to focus on making things better and instead puts all of our leadership energy into making things right.



“LIFE IS A SERIES OF NATURAL AND SPONTANEOUS CHANGES. DON'T RESIST THEM; THAT ONLY CREATES SORROW. LET REALITY BE REALITY. LET THINGS FLOW NATURALLY FORWARD IN WHATEVER WAY THEY LIKE.” LAO TZU

In the fast moving world of modern leadership we learn to both push and pull. We set goals and targets encouraging our people to stretch to reach them. We are happy to push people to their limits, pull them along with us, get behind them and give supportive pushes when required or act as a magnet that they push themselves toward. We also know that this isn't an easy path or a smooth road. We accept that some will not make it and will fall along the wayside, and that others will slip and fall, occasionally needing a helping hand and just as often needing to be told that this isn't the journey for them. The path is littered with predictable problems. We can predict the kind of problems they are likely to be, just not exactly where and when they'll show up, so we design systems of management, hierarchy and supervision in an attempt to deal with them as best we can. However somewhat like a person with a suspected illness taking 'preventative' medication, we too suffer from side effects. These unintended consequences mean that more medication is prescribed, not for the suspected

illness but merely to cope with the side effects. Unfortunately those too may cause their own side effects and so yet more medication becomes necessary. Just like this unfortunate person we too can become so focused on dealing with consequences that we forget that the original intent was to 'prevent' an illness in the first place. There was no problem before the course of medication and the following downward spiral began. Similarly there is no 'illness' when leadership begins, however we un-naturally intervene with our own preventative approaches and reap the unintended consequences that they derive. QLL™ doesn't do any of that. It starts with a 'patient' that is healthy and aims to keep them that way. QLL™ draws inspiration from the healthiest structures on the planet and replicates them in the context of leadership. Simple, practical and pragmatic QLL™ applies the most effective leadership approaches in a structure reflecting the strongest connective foundations and the clearest lines of communication.

“THOSE WHO CANNOT CHANGE THEIR MINDS CANNOT CHANGE ANYTHING.” GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The reality of leadership today is that many underpinning beliefs are fundamentally flawed. The vast majority of leadership approaches accept as their premise that 'leadership starts at the top' and therefore an inherent and necessary hierarchy will always exist. QLL™ does not necessarily relinquish the idea of leadership leading, however it does challenge the presumption that the success of an organisation rests on the shoulders of a leader bearing overall responsibility. Instead QLL™ suggests that a structurally sound organisation applying a simple replicated pattern of approach in every aspect of its operation will never be reliant on any one individual.

A hierarchy of sorts still exists and QLL™ firmly places leadership where it needs to be, however the effective shape of an organisation will change, and with it the minds of those who toil within it.

This a quote from the MD of a well known international organisation involved with huge construction projects globally *"This approach has made me rethink everything I do and have ever done"*. He is not alone. Even as an experienced business leaders with an MBA from one of the world's most prestigious universities he recognised the power of simplicity in QLL™, and its potential to strengthen and develop the organisation like never before.



“I ALONE CANNOT CHANGE THE WORLD, BUT I CAN CAST A STONE ACROSS THE WATERS TO CREATE MANY RIPPLES.” MOTHER TERESA

To do something is always better than to regret doing nothing. Hence the reason why so many leaders feel the need to 'transform' or 'manage change' in their organisations. Indeed whole industries of consultants and support workers have been formed on the back of the need to change manage organisations from the state they are in to one they hope will be better. There is however a problem. None of the changes that are made remain sustainable in their entirety. Of course there will always be some aspects of change that remain, however with each change of personnel a subtle lessening of the original change impact occurs. Quite naturally, new people want to bring with them their own ideas and suggestions of improvement. Yet these will often conflict with whatever came before. The new person coming along

is much like a cycle wheel that develops a puncture. It's not considered a big deal. It may be a little inconvenient, but it can be repaired. However the wheel will never be quite the same again. The tyre has changed. It still works, but it is subtly different. Change enough tyres and the subtle changes are magnified.

This repetition and replication of a pattern is inherent in all we do. People have the capacity to think different thoughts but choose to repeat many of the same thoughts over and over again. Therefore pattern repetition isn't an alien concept. QLL™ simply applies a different approach to pattern repetition at a more fundamental level of thinking. It allows one idea to spread easily and simply like a stone skipping over the waves.

“YESTERDAY I WAS CLEVER, SO I WANTED TO CHANGE THE WORLD. TODAY I AM WISE, SO I AM CHANGING MYSELF.” RUMI

There is always a place for big ideas and often big egos to accompany them. It is interesting how many leaders 'make their mark' by imposing their own way of doing things, assuming by definition that they are already the 'finished article' themselves. Recent history tells us a different story. No sooner has the new Chief been heralded into office than he or she is criticised for one thing or another, then in an effort to protect themselves defends their actions or disappears behind a protective wall of silence.

No one is ever the finished article. The wisest leaders realise that they are on a path of development just as

much as those they lead. The structure and approaches within QLL™ do not just allow for personal development at every level, including the most esteemed level of leadership, it insists on it. QLL™ makes it easy for every person in every part of the organisation to identify and recognise areas of development. However unlike a traditional 'gap analysis' that focuses on what's missing, QLL™ focuses on the very heart of strengths and expands capacity, skill and influence from there. Gaps are filled naturally and confidently as the whole organisation becomes wiser and changes from within.

“DRIPPING WATER HOLLOWS OUT STONE, NOT THROUGH FORCE BUT THROUGH PERSISTENCE.” OVID

Today's smart transformational leader already recognises that to the world they are the reflection of the difference they're trying to make. Leading by example is not the exclusive territory of QLL™, however the challenge facing most leaders is not necessarily to remain consistent themselves, but to ensure everyone else in the organisation does too.

The principles of QLL™ combine all aspects of management, supervision, training and operational activity. It therefore permeates through every aspect of the organisation. No stone remains unturned and no person unaffected. QLL™ is not a set of tasks but both a philosophy and set of methodologies that apply across the board. They are as appropriate at

board level as they are on the shop floor, with colleagues as well as customers and apply to tactics just as much as strategy.

Sustainability is achieved with inherent strength and QLL™ provides the structural integrity necessary for consistent and congruent actions to be replicated again and again throughout an organisation. QLL™ did not create the building blocks but merely replicates those that have been proven, it is not a new 'idea' but the application of solid, simple and effective concepts that are naturally persistent.



The iABCt is an independent training academy dedicated to the teaching of coaching related subjects. QLL™ is the application of a coaching culture in conjunction with the principles of Intuitive Growth (iGrowth™) building on the foundations of a question led coaching culture. Together they are a powerful and sophisticated people-centred approach to the leadership of any organisation

THE 3 STEPS TO IMPLEMENT QLL™

1 INTRODUCTIONS

Key stakeholders need to know what QLL™ is and what it will do for the organisation. The more they understand what it will deliver and where it came

from, the more likely they will be to support the one-time-only process of implementation into the organisation.

2 INTERVENTIONS

QLL™ is a different path that necessitates the changing of 'minds'. The human condition determines that each and every person within the organisation will have a view on how that organisation 'should be run'. These minds must be allowed to change in order for QLL™ to be successfully introduced, and they will not change on their own because, again due to the

human condition, they cannot change on their own. Training and Coaching Interventions must therefore take place at strategic junctures. These will include the developing of the existing senior leadership team, the implementation of a team of internal specialists and the support required to allow QLL™ to flourish.

3 INTERACTIONS

QLL™ predicates a change of culture, the nature of which is often referred to as a 'coaching culture'. However QLL™ has an even deeper impact because of the structural implications within it. Coaching becomes the natural leadership style, servant-leadership becomes the natural methodology, and positive transformation, growth and development in

every appropriate direction become the norm. Each operational interaction strengthens the structure, each communication interaction clarifies the structure, and each external interaction demonstrates the power and effectiveness of adopting a leadership approach that extends beyond the personality of whoever happens to be placed at the helm.

To discuss how QLL™ may be of help to you and to arrange a personal introduction from iABCt Director Martin Goodyer please email us at [admin@iabct.org](mailto:admin@iabct.org) or call us on 0044 8452 300 443

The iABCt is a year round 'Summer School' for coaching and offers an incentive training package for applied coaching skills. designed to support QLL™