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# The Tedder Talks – The changing nature of the workforce, and its impact on organisations and leadership: Summary Paper

## Interviewees:

**Baron Victor Adebowale CBE**, CEO Turning Point

**Richard Bevan**, Chief Executive, League Managers' Association

**Danny and Nicky Cowley**, Manager and Assistant Manager, Lincoln City FC

**Zoe Easey**, Founder and Director, epix media

**Air Vice Marshal Christina Elliot CBE MA BSc RAF**, Chief of Staff Personnel, RAF

**Dean Fathers**, Chair, Notts Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

**Steve Gelder**, CEO, The Gelder Group

**Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier KCB CBE DFC ADC RAF**, Chief of the Air Staff

**Dr. Eamonn Molloy**, Tutorial Fellow of Management Studies, Pembroke College, University of Oxford

**Andy Palmer**, President and Group CEO, Aston Martin Lagonda

**Sir Peter Rigby**, Founder, CEO, and Chairman, Rigby Group

**Ian Smith**, Founder and Director, Visiondrive

**Peter Watson**, Founder and Managing Director, Distract

## Interviewer:

**Dr. Craig Marsh**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Director,  
Lincoln International Business School, University of Lincoln

# Introduction

This paper summarises the key themes emerging from the RAF Tedder/University of Lincoln “Tedder Talks”, a series of short video interviews with a diverse group of leaders from inside and outside the RAF conducted in the first four months of 2019. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the changing nature of the workforce as we approach the third decade of the 21st Century, and the implications for those changes on the nature of leadership.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first gives a brief background to the idea of the ‘post-millennial’ generation, clearly a core topic of the interviews. The second section identifies some generic themes from the interviews that appear to identify interesting insights into the question of the impact of a new generation on organisations and leadership. And the third section concludes the paper with some illustrative answers to the question of what effective leadership is in the context of a changing workforce.

## Millennials and post-millennials

In order to avoid the interviews becoming an ‘academic’ exercise of definition, we steered clear of trying to be specific about some terms that have entered the academic lexicon, and which, to a greater or lesser extent, characterise the way we think about those under the age of about thirty; certainly they’re now used more widely than the market analyses that first gave birth to them.

Here we give a definition of these terms and a brief characterisation of the “post-millennial” generation from a well – respected expert author on the subject.

In the interviews, these terms tend to be used somewhat interchangeably, according to the perspective of the contributor.

**Baby Boomers:** Born 1946-1964

**Generation X:** Born 1965-1979

**Millennials/Generation Y/Generation Next:** These terms are used more or less interchangeably to describe the generation born between 1980 and 1994 (in other words in 2019 with a current age of between about 25 and 39).

**Generation Z/iGen/Post Millennials:** This is the generation now entering the workforce, one born between 1995 and 2013, and therefore with a current age range of between 7 and 24.

Prof. Jean Twenge<sup>1</sup> compares the youth of today (iGen) with the youth of the three previous generations. She calls them iGen because of the following three factors that have made them different from any previous generation:

- the Internet (especially smartphones)
- Individualism
- Inequality.

They demonstrate the following characteristics:<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Slow:

They get married, learn to drive, get their first job and leave home later than their forebears. Twenge calls this a “slow-life strategy” – parents keep a closer watch for longer, and children are in no hurry to take on responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> “iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and completely unprepared for adulthood- and what that means for the rest of us” (Simon and Schuster 2017). Jean Twenge, Professor of Psychology, San Diego State University, Ca, USA.

<sup>2</sup> With thanks to Tracy Millar, Senior Lecturer at LIBS, for introducing me to this description of ‘iGen’ characteristics.

## 2. Screens: Yes, they do spend a lot of time on their phones

On average, teenagers spend 2¼ hours a day texting, 2 hours on the internet, 1½ hours on electronic gaming, and half an hour on video chat. That's a quarter of their life on their phones and computers. This generation are shaped by social media—the distraction, the constant sense of being rated, the clear signals of who is in and who is out. iGen see their friends in person an hour less a day than Gen X or Millennials did. They also read fewer books, newspapers and magazines, and get less sleep.

## 3. Sad: Their mental health is suffering

Starting in 2010 (when smartphones arrived), there has been a downturn in the number of teens reporting that they are happy. Between 2010 and 2015, loneliness increased by 25%, and depressive symptoms among girls rose by 50%. Worse mental health correlates with more screen time (any more than 2 hours a day) and with less sleep, exercise or in-person interaction.

## 4. Safe: They're more safe, but also more fearful

iGen value both physical and emotional safety. Compared with previous generations, they are safer drivers, get drunk and take drugs less, and get into fewer fights. Yet surveys show most feel the world is less safe than it used to be. Expect the arguments over safe spaces and microaggressions to move from the campus to the workplace as iGen become adults: social justice and free speech beliefs are unrelated among those over 40, but those under 40 who support social justice are less supportive of free speech.

## 5. Self-focused: They're more individualistic, but not so narcissistic

Individualistic people don't need anyone else in order to be happy. In an uncertain and competitive world, they feel they need to focus more on job and career just to survive. Their individualistic values lead them to value equality and inclusivity: in 1990 15% of young adults supported same-sex marriage; in 2016 75% did. They are less likely to join a church, political party or community group.

# General themes from the interviews

## The 'goldfish bowl' of performance

Post Millennials experience considerable, largely self-imposed, pressure, to be seen to be achieving consistently in the eyes of their peers.

Peter Watson describes it thus: “the opinion of the Post Millennial generation as being lazy is completely wrong. Working life almost comes before their personal life, and they want to be part of something bigger. What's driving this is social media - everyone can see how you're doing.”

This generation have been referred to as the 'burnout generation', because they want to do more, and be more, than previous generations. This is how they are, it's part of their being, created by existing in the world of social media 'likes'. Social media is creating social pressure to perform - A 25 year old will have spent 10 years in a sense 'competing' with his or her friends on social media for the perception of doing as well or better than those peers. One of the consequences for leaders is that there is less need to 'sit on their shoulders' to monitor their performance, as they will, with the right culture, do this for themselves. The pressure they place on themselves is largely self-imposed from their environment.

Ian Smith agreed with this notion: “a lot of young people put pressure on themselves now, the need to be achieving is greater, with social media... they're always looking at the need to be achieving more... and they're naturally setting their own benchmarks on how much work they think they should be getting done”.

One of the strong themes from the interviews therefore is that the PM generation feel themselves existing in a 'goldfish bowl' of performance expectations, where their every move - work, or outside work - is under scrutiny from their peers. They will feel themselves extrinsically motivated to be seen to be achieving, but a consequence for us is that the criteria that determine their orientation to achievement are not fully under the control of our organisations or of our leadership. They are at least partly determined by their own peer group.

## **'Unplanned efficiency'**

Ian Smith, himself a millennial, uses the phrase 'unplanned efficiency' to describe the work rate of the post-millennial generation, affected it seems by the way they use social media technology. "We're trying to do more in a shorter space of time. So it's like an unplanned efficiency. We're trying to do three things at the same time, but we're don't know we're doing it.... We're flicking between several online conversations at once".

Peter Watson and Zoe Easey both also state their belief that the post-millennial generation work rate is much higher than previous generations (possibly even the millennials).

Do we therefore seek to understand and work with those self-imposed (or perhaps, more accurately) peer - group imposed criteria for performance? Or cut them off from it?

## **Tech: To limit or not to limit?**

A critical decision therefore for organisations is whether, and how, to limit access to social media for a generation that has grown up with it, when that access is not necessarily related to their work. We heard nuanced views on this question.

Chris Eliot noted the effect of access to technology as creating a 'thirst' for the immediacy of access to information: "I observed... a sense of immediacy to decision making and the reasons lying behind decisions, and I attribute that to the access young people have today... so they're used to a speed of response which is much quicker than when I joined the RAF". What she observed however is that "when they're placed in an organisation that has a different framework, and their access to technology is not removed... but limited, they do adjust".

Why place limits? One of the reasons for encouraging this adjustment, she described, was to develop their ability to interact 'normally' -in other words to develop their people skills (such as influencing, use of eye contact and body language, listening). "One you help them to .. Interact in a different way they soon overcame any perceived challenges".

It seems, on this reading, that there are two key points being made; the first is that there is no fundamental change in the way PMs relate to the world - their brains aren't somehow being rewired - but that they have grown up with a particular set of experiences that can, with support, be developed differently; and that the advantage of this development is that they learn to be more effective in their face to face interactions, which is likely to be an essential part of any organisation, as long as people are required to work together.

Ian Smith had a slightly different angle on this question. He described how in his company they've adopted some of the more common social media apps to their own purpose: "we found it's easier to use apps... because more is being captured, more is being communicated quickly and also everyone is accountable. The hardest thing from a leadership point of view is implementing that - you have to be clear about what you want to achieve, and if you don't know how to use it then it can be used wrongly". Peter Watson agreed, arguing that in his organisation his people benefit from having full access to social media and the space within it to thrive. What is clear from both of these younger managers however - both 'digital natives' themselves - is that the use of technology has to be bounded by both structure and purpose for it to be effective.

## **"You can't fix everything with an instant message"**

In one fundamental way Ian was in complete agreement with Chris Eliot. While the use of social media technology provides clear advantages to speed and accountability of information flows, Ian also recognised that - in a company that employs both 17 and 70 year olds - there are still essential people skills to be learnt: "you can't fix everything with a... whatsapp message". Older members of his workforce teach younger members about maintaining standards of personal interaction with clients, for example, that are so crucial for his business' success. In one or two cases, those older employees are ex-services, "with a regimented approach that keeps our company standards, but that gets lost in digital transactions".

On the flip side, the younger members of his company teach the less “tech savvy” (older members!) how to use for example skype rather than a face to face meeting with a client. Thus the essentials of modern technology are combined with, and complement, the traditional but equally essential skills of developing and maintaining high standards of personal interaction through an organisational model that encourages different generations to work closely with each other.

### **“The plumber is using snapchat”**

Steve Gelder referred also to the positive effect of having different generations learning from each other, in a way that seems to contain eternal truths about the centuries-old relationship between master and apprentice, but with a modern take in which the learning process is in two directions. A young person arriving in his building company will be placed alongside one of the ‘old hands’ for three months, to the initial reluctance of both parties. Steve insists on it, however, and “the person latches on to those around him, and becomes a mirror of them... the apprentice’s body language... he’s walking very much like the plumber, and the plumber... is a little bit younger, suddenly he’s using... snapchat.”

### **Younger generation are more independent learners**

Building on some of the themes already described, the Cowley brothers highlight the instant and easy access to information available to their younger players, that is both making them prepared to be more opinionated - based on sound data - and more able to form their own judgements about their performance than players who are over thirty: “the older players are more used to a more command, didactic style, but are learning to adjust to the new culture”. Critical also to this new style of working is the expectation of instant debriefing and feedback, again driven by technology, but which is improving their ability to ‘see’ how they are doing - via online clips of their game performance - and make their own judgements on how to improve. The job of the coaches in this environment is to encourage the players to ‘own’ their performance.

### **Moving from a ‘demanding’ to a ‘convincing’ culture**

Their comments are also reflected in the views of Richard Bevan, discussing the relationship between younger managers and older mentors in the footballing world. Older, successful football managers have credibility with younger upcoming managers because of their ability to build a number of successful teams over a longer period. He quotes Sir Alex Ferguson, that “society as well as sport is moving from a demanding to a convincing culture... managing younger players is more about mentoring than being the boss... getting them to come up with the answers”.

### **“I want people who challenge us as an organisation”**

The idea that a younger generation are more demanding is picked up by Stephen Hillier, who is clear that the PM generation has a much higher degree of expectation than previous generations of career progression, and expects the RAF to provide those opportunities to them: “their impatience to get on has to be healthy for us”. While he welcomes this challenge, it also presents a question to the organisation about “how we empower people; how do we drive levels of responsibility down through the organisation so we can exploit the talents we have?”

Stephen also surmises that their expectations also run to ‘making a difference’: “they are better informed about the world and therefore very clearly focused on making a difference. It’s very noticeable that whenever the RAF is involved in a major humanitarian relief effort, there’s a spike in recruitment.”

### **‘wiifm?’**

This point does raise a key question about the younger generation: to what extent they are ‘self regarding’ (‘what’s in it for me?’) versus ‘other regarding’? The interviews revealed some nuanced views on this question. Zoe Easey recognises the ‘what’s in it for me’ attitude of the millennial generation, and tries to use this as an opportunity for the company to help the individual understand their own worth, value, and contribution through supporting self development: “we try not to get too hung up on whether someone is going to be with us a long time or not, you can’t control those things....”



We invest in every person... and make sure that everyone understands we're there to support their learning.”

Victor Adebowale's experience is that they are joining organisations “more in search of what the organisation can do for them, rather than what they can do for the organisation”. He does also echo Stephen Hillier's observation about higher expectations. He said: “I see people coming in with business degrees and their attitude is that “I expect promotion within 2 years. The problem is that they don't always realise what that means”. In other words they'll move on if their expectations aren't met, and they combine this instrumentalism with a more acute political sense: that is, an increase awareness of, and a lack of sympathy toward, organisations that don't do what they say they're going to do. This creates a potential for either a powerful alignment, or a severe dislocation, between their values and that of the organisation. The ready availability of information (another consistent theme of these interviews) on companies, such as the website “Glassdoor”, fuels their lack of patience with any discrepancy between the rhetoric of a company and the reality of what it does.

A consequence (or perhaps a cause) of this, in his view, is that they have little or no respect for hierarchy in the sense that previous generations had.

### **‘Breaking through the Hierarchy’**

Several interviewees picked up on this theme of the challenge to hierarchy presented by the latest generation of employees. Perhaps counter-intuitively to an outside observer, our RAF leaders Chris Eliot and Stephen Hillier both referred to the need to ‘get around’ or ‘overturn’ the hierarchy in order to engage with the post-millennial generation. Stephen Hillier observed that there shouldn't be structure for structure's sake; if you have an expert then the expert should be treated as such regardless of the rank held.

In Dean Father's view, the strong links and loyalty this generation feel to their peers through social networks are, by counterpoint, weakening the links and loyalties to their organisations. Organisations therefore have to focus more on “purpose and value creation, so that if the younger generation coming through recognise that they share that purpose then they will buy in to it and offer their followership; and it's followership that we're seeking these days”. This places the onus on the organisation, and its leadership, to work out what this generation want and to provide it for them and thus allowing them to offer and provide the value they can to our organisations.

### **‘Value’ and ‘Values’**

For Dean, there is a balancing act inherent in this relationship with the post-millennial generation; an exchange of values for value. In return for engaging with them around a common purpose, we should find ways of developing a common understanding with them about how value is created. There is a perception that the only possible way value can be created is through profit and ‘resource grabbing’ versus an increasingly multidimensional view about how organisations can create and capture value that will appeal much more to the post-millennial generation.

For this reason he notes that the NHS is moving from a competition (marketplace) culture to a partnership one, representing a fundamental shift in the way leadership is conceptualised. Partnership models, he describes, are predicated on “leaders who are able to empathise with and understand the worldview of a partner, and therefore understand how to add value to their life or to their organisation instead of imposing a proxy measure of value. I therefore engage with them on a level of one, and can design a system that delivers that value for them”. This he reasons resonates very much with the broader ‘purpose’ sought after by post-millennials.

One interviewee had an interesting way of describing the nature of this cross-generational relationship in organisational terms.

## “Consensual Meritocracy”

Andy Palmer made a close connection between the greater degree of connectedness of the ‘Millennial’ generation compared with the previous, whose networks may have been less broad - a connectedness born of their familiarity with social media technology that facilitates these networks across organisation and national boundaries. As a consequence, for him, they are less likely to think about how they ‘stand out’ as leaders: “they ... have an advantage in that they search more for consensus, and this makes their leadership more reliable”. The ‘sharing technology’ makes this consensus-driven approach very much the norm for them. He conceptualises this as a ‘consensual meritocracy’ that younger members of his leadership are more comfortable with than the older generation: “they’re more comfortable to sit physically in their networks... whereas the older generation cling on to their office and the badges of their status. Leadership based on consensus strikes more of a chord with the younger leaders”.

## ‘Cognitive Diversity’

Andy also echoed the point made by Ian Smith and Steve Gelder , that diversity of the group is also essential (diversity in its broadest sense), and the “‘old sage’ may offset the weaknesses of the more consensus driven population”. Leadership by consensus bears the risk, he says, of losing the more selfish, intuitive innovative ideas that requires a degree of individual drive to bring them into being.

Diversity however does not it seems just represent ‘good value’ for the organisation; it also seems to represent a strong element of the value set of the millennial generation. Victor Adebawale talks about the clear expectation from this generation in this regard: “millennials are more diverse.. In all respects. They expect... cognitive diversity to be seen as a plus rather than something to be defended. They’re questioning why in organisations there are so many people of the same ‘type’ in leadership positions, where it requires different approaches or an understanding of a complex context or landscape.” Furthermore their nature is that they will question any perceived lack of diversity, either openly, or simply by leaving.

## Trust starts from the leader

One of the consequences of these behavioural traits and value sets is that the onus is now on leaders to create trust with followers for the relationship to be able to function. Victor talks about any notion of leaders being ‘better than’ simply no longer works in this world. Trust building also no longer depends on ‘objective setting’ by leaders - the millennial generation will simply manipulate this process to their own ends. Trust building has to occur before any transactional element enters the relationship, through orientation, engagement round the question of ‘why’ before ‘what’, and ‘empowering’ the individual to decide on their own outcomes.

Zoe Easey, whose business is competing with many others for young creative talent, very mobile, believes that part of her ability to distinguish from others is the way they trust their employees. That trust is reflected in a relaxed, flexible working environment: “if someone needs to go and do something life-related in the middle of the day they can go and do it”. No-one clock-watches; there isn’t a close monitoring of what they deliver, there is an “intangible give and take” with employees.

This process also requires the post-millennial to be given confidence, something they don’t always possess, according to a recurring insight from the interviews.

## ‘Hand on the shoulder’

One consequence of their attachment to an online world of peer support and a mentality oriented more to ‘group-think’, is that they appear to lack confidence to take risks, interpreted as an organisational or performance risk - a risk based on the worry of being seen to fail. Peter Watson talks about the importance of the - literal and metaphorical - ‘hand on the shoulder’, the reassurance that this generation requires from others that what they’re doing is just fine. This chimes with a theme we have touched on already, the need for regular, immediate feedback.

Richard Bevan describes an environment in which younger managers are being exposed, through technology, to many examples of high performance; this in turn creates a situation where “they themselves are striving to take on more responsibility, and at the same time, being nervous at getting it wrong. So you tend to see the development of this generation through working in teams... the more successful ones realise that avoiding failure means not doing it on my own.” Mentoring from more experienced managers becomes crucial to their continued success.

Zoe Easey’s take on this is that it’s important to recruit people who - without being boastful - appreciate their worth, by encouraging them to submit examples of their work with a cover letter showing how they recognise their own talent. Once in the organisation she tries to adapt to their individual need for support as part of their development, without worrying about how long they’ll stay. Some are relatively autonomous, others require more regular reassurance and feedback. She does - as a millennial herself - recognise the ‘what’s in it for me’ attitude, but answers this by giving them to the extent possible what they’re looking for from the company, without seeing this ‘selfishness’ as a threat; which in turn acts then as a source of increased retention.

Does this increased need for reassurance also indicate a lower level of resilience in the post-millennial generation?

### ‘Snowflakes’?

Dean Fathers believes that to a large extent, accusations of a lack of resilience levelled at the post-millennial generation are down to a lack of understanding of what drives them: “they’re not lacking in resilience: we’re starting to see a change in their attitudes towards... being open and honest about mental health. They’ve seen some of the issues that people of our generation have had where there’s been ... a degree of stigmatisation attached to mental health where they wouldn’t disclose issues that led to significant trauma. This generation are much more communicative in many ways”. Victor Adebowale also referred to this ‘open, questioning’ quality, derived in part from their increased familiarity with the consequences of not discussing such issues openly through what they see and read on the internet.

Chris Eliot did however highlight one risk of this tendency to openness, a phenomenon that has been referred to elsewhere as the ‘echo-chamber’ of social media, itself leading to increased problems of mental health: that is, that in their online community the reinforcing narratives are not always necessarily correct, fact based, or supportive of the individual. It behoves the organisation therefore to develop, where necessary, counter-narratives and structures that are more directed to meeting the individual’s needs.

Interestingly, the Cowley brothers, with their experience both as former teachers and as managers to young footballers, alluded to an increase in sensitivity in this generation: “the world of football can be quite brutal; we definitely see a difference between this generation and the over 30s.” The lack of ‘critique’ at school of the modern generation (they mention no use of ‘red pens’ any more) means that discussions about and reviews of performance have to show more awareness of this sensitivity to critique, while providing regular and technology-based feedback to them, as discussed above.

## What common themes emerged on the subject of leadership?

All the interviewees were asked about their own ‘credo’ of effective leadership: the attitude and behaviour that they strive to achieve. Despite the diversity of the interview group there were some relatively common views on the nature of effective leadership. Of course these themes weren’t shared by all respondents, and there are some that may be debated by one or two of them. But they emerge regularly enough to serve as illustrative of the nature of effective leadership in the context of a millennial or post-millennial workforce. Given this was the objective of the interviews it would be unwise to draw general conclusions from these themes, or claim that they offer a conclusive or universal list of characteristics of effective leadership. But they do point to a wider discussion as to whether they form some of the essential criteria of effective leadership, regardless of the context.



These are outlined here with illustrative quotations from the contributors.

### **Show genuine interest - and learn from the process**

Victor Adebowale observed that in a senior role you will often be looked to for ‘the answer’. “If people look to you for the answer, sometimes it’s best to ask them the question. I’m frequently surprised that the answer you think you know is surpassed or dismissed by the person you ask the question of.” The approach highlights two things; that by being genuinely interested in their view, you’re engaging with them; and by engaging with them, often a better solution or decision emerges from the process.

### **Be both nice - and successful**

Zoe Easey was recently challenged in one of her team meetings that it’s very difficult for a leader to be both ‘nice’ and ‘successful’ at the same time, and this made her realise that this is at the heart of her approach to leadership - to be both - and sees it as her mission to prove that this is possible. To the obvious question - whether this principle means you avoid making difficult decisions, which she clearly must have done over a successful business career - she replies: “there’s a difference between being horrible, and being brave, not afraid of conflict, and of making the right business decision.” A someone who naturally wants to be liked, she has had to learn to manage conflict, but believes it’s still possible to do this effectively and not lose your empathy for the people you’re leading.

### **Set high personal standards**

Peter Rigby describes an aspect of leadership that recurs a number of times across the interviews when he discusses his own successful leadership journey: “you do have to have a set of standards as to how you work; it’s entirely possible to be ethical... and successful, without being ruthless, and you do have to pass on your success and capability to others.”

### **Explain the ‘narrative’ behind decisions**

Christina Elliot emphasised how important it is these days for all leaders to pay close attention to the ‘why’ question, because, as she says: “if you don’t say what that narrative is, the way that social networks work these days is that if you don’t then something else will replace that narrative, so it’s making sure people understand your journey. While it’s always been the case it’s more important today because people will fill in the void”. This, she says, is both about being able to relate your approach as a ‘story’, literally a meaningful narrative that will engage followers and that increases the opportunity for them to favour the narrative you relate over other, competing narratives that they are inevitably exposed to; but also to ensure that your narrative is supported by facts and evidence, so that it has a solid foundation to it.

### **Empower the experts**

Stephen Hillyer chose to highlight the particular importance of effective leaders’ ability to recognise and empower the experts in their organisations who almost inevitably know more than they themselves do about delivering the task in hand. This will often feel like a direct challenge to the leader’s sense of self, who may well be in post because of recognition of his or her own expertise in a similar area. As he describes the issue: “if you [empower the experts], what’s left for us to do? And of course the answer has to be ‘why wouldn’t you want to exploit the maximum capability of your team, which then... enriches and empowers you as a leader?” The opportunity is therefore not to be the best specialist in the room, but the best leader. He uses the example of the first joint graduation ceremony of officers and airmen at Cranwell last year, when he highlighted to the graduating officers that there were many of the graduating airmen with first and higher degrees in their specialisms. Reaching across the rank structure, hierarchy and sometimes outside the organisation, to understand, develop, and empower those experts is for him a key to modern leadership in the RAF.

## You never lose if you learn

Danny and Nicky Cowley naturally emphasise the importance of the collective effort for success. What is striking though is how much they talk about the learning culture as an essential component. Danny mentions that he has studied leaders from different backgrounds, not just sport, and this is an area he has identified as a common theme for effective leadership: “If you can create a culture where people are learning from each other on a daily basis, that certainly is a foundation for success”. This learning culture derives from a combination of setting high standards and a strong work ethic (“you get back the standard that you set”, they observe), of allowing the team to take responsibility from their own learning, and making sure that performance is constantly debriefed based on evidence and areas for improvement discussed rather than individuals being blamed for failure. “You never lose if you learn” is their mantra to summarise this idea of creating a learning culture.

## Influence the system

Dean Fathers relates insights on systems thinking to the question of effective leadership, a question particularly relevant to his roles in the NHS as it moves from a competition or market-based model to a partnership or collaborative model. However this thinking seems to have general relevance, as senior leaders, especially, increasingly lead across organisation boundaries: “True systems operate across organisation boundaries, so we are... part of a wider integrated network, and collaborating with [other external bodies] becomes key. So... we’re moving from a type of hierarchical organisation where you could have command and control, to a network of relationships where influence is essential.” In this environment, Dean argues, successful leadership is understanding the position of other key influencers in the network to reach positions of common ground or consensus, rather than imposing a position or value set on them.



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Lincoln International Business School,  
University of Lincoln,  
Brayford Wharf East,  
Lincoln,  
LN5 7AT, UK

Telephone: +44 (0)1522 835509  
Email: [libs@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:libs@lincoln.ac.uk)