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Leadership action plan

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**Introduction**

Effective leadership doesn’t just happen. In order to be the best leader one can be, one should strive to critically assess their own strengths and weaknesses, learn about effective strategies and tools in leadership, and analyze how they can be utilized in their own day-to-day work. Once these steps are completed, leaders should practice and apply the newly-learned skills (Quinn, 2011). Creating a Leadership Action Plan that critically assesses one’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to career goals can help leaders to capitalize on their strengths and mediate their weaknesses, helping to achieve determined goals (Cunningham, 2016).

In this Leadership Action Plan I will assess my own strengths and weaknesses in relation to my current and desired position, identify key leadership competencies related to both of these positions, and target specific goals that will help me to develop my own capacity for leadership in my current and desired positions.

**Background**

*Context*

As a social worker in Saskatchewan, I hadn’t felt much cause to identify my own leadership capacity prior to taking this course. I tended to think of myself on the bottom of the metaphorical totem pole. However, after analyzing my position throughout the class I see that this is blatantly untrue. Although I have worked in front-line child protection, at present I am on the Resource team, where I study, monitor, and educate foster parents in compliance with the Ministry’s *Standards for Foster Homes*. Although I might not have put it in so many words before, I essentially supervise over 30 foster parents, both holding them accountable to *Standards* and offering opportunities for development through feedback and education. Recognizing this role over the past three months has been somewhat humbling, as it has also shown me where many of my leadership gaps lay. These gaps will be discussed throughout this paper.

 *Vision and Goals*

As an undergraduate university student, I was attracted to the Social Work program because it seemed like a logical extension of my interest in child psychology courses. I knew I did not want to be a child psychologist, as I didn’t think I would have an interest or skill in counselling, but I wanted to take the information I had learned and use it to make the world a safer place for children. While in the BSW program I found a passion for child welfare theory: how abuse and neglect physically damages a child’s developing brain, why cycles of abuse continue through generations, and the challenge of improving education rates and reducing rates of criminal behaviour in children who have experienced abuse and neglect. I spent little time thinking about the inevitability of providing counselling services one-on-one to parents when I chose my career. Choosing a career based on inaccurate ideas about what the role looks like and how we fit into it is a common mistake people make when planning their careers (Cunningham, 2016).

After obtaining a position within the Ministry, I learned that I loved child protection practice, in that I felt honoured to be part of improving the lives of children and families. I loved advocating in the families’ best interests, I loved tracking a family’s progress and seeing goals become realized. However, over the course of my work, I was continually frustrated by policies and legislation that seemed out-of-touch with what families actually needed, and even more frustrated with social workers who did not question the status quo. Over the past three years, I have been an outspoken advocate for improved practice in the use of “out-of-care” options[[1]](#footnote-1), and I took it upon myself to research the Ministry’s internal statistics and prepared documents comparing local use of out-of-care to the provincial average which were distributed to team leaders throughout the city. This has resulted in an increase of the use of out-of-care options from virtually zero to a rate approaching the provincial average. I have been very proud of my success in this area, and I felt that I was implementing positive change for families on a larger scale than working one-on-one with families. This experience showed me that my true interests lie in using research to further the vision and theory of ethical social work practice. To this end, my goals are to obtain a position as a policy analyst or practice consultant within the Ministry, where I can use my passion for research to implement systemic change that benefits families on a personal level.

**Literature Review**

 *Theories of Leadership*

Transformative Leadership is often cited as the most effective leadership style for social work environments. In the social work environment, transformational leadership is positively associated with higher levels of employee job satisfaction, moral values, motivation, and working towards benefiting the community at large (Tafvelin, Hyvonen, and Westerberg, 2014; Mary, 2005).

There is an expanding body of research on what some are calling Social Work Leadership. Traditional leadership skills are often thought to be insufficient when leading social workers, as social workers as a whole place a greater value on empathy and emotional support in the supervisor/employee relationship than does the general public. Practitioners see “social work leadership as different from other professions in terms of being more inclusive and altruistic” (Tafvelin, Hyvonen and Westerberg, 2014, p. 889). Rank and Hutchison (2000) offer five core attributes of social work leadership: vision, empowerment, communication, “proaction” (anticipating problems and solving them pro-actively), and ethics/values. Holosko echoes this sentiment, labeling his closely-related competencies as developing and implementing a vision, influencing others to act, teamwork/collaboration, problem-solving, and creating positive change.

There is some research indicating that successful policy analysts demonstrate competencies across four domains: External-technical, relating to an ability to understand the environment in which one is working (political climate, interpreting laws, and awareness of societal values); Internal-technical, referring to one’s ability to critically analyze relevant information (quantitative and qualitative data analysis); Internal-interpersonal, relating to an ability to collaborate with others (teamwork, group facilitation, negotiation skills); and External-interpersonal, referring to an ability to advocate for solutions (Martinez, 2008).

 *Framework and Personal Definition of Leadership*

In reviewing the literature outlined above, it is easy to see that a common thread runs through the models:

* ability to develop and implement a vision, including problem solving and analytical thinking
* staff empowerment/mentorship/education
* teamwork/group facilitation
* communication, including empathy and approachability
* ethics/creating positive change
* measuring performance

These attributes are directly relevant in my current and future work with the Ministry. In reviewing this framework, I can see that it accurately captures the type of leader I aspire to be: a leader who is knowledgeable, analytical, and who advocates in the best interests of the children and families for whom we work, while being a source of emotional and practical support for staff, creating a workplace culture of mutual respect, enthusiasm, and high performance. These attributes can be overlaid on the Competing Values framework:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Personal Development Framework** | **Competing Values**  |
| Ability to develop and implement a vision, including problem solving and analytical thinking | COMPETE: Developing and Communicating a Vision |
| Staff empowerment/mentorship/education | COLLABORATE: Mentoring and Developing Others |
| Teamwork/group facilitation | COLLABORATE: Managing Groups and Leading Teams |
| Communication, including empathy and approachability | COLLABORATE: Communicating Honestly and Effectively |
| Ethics/creating positive change | CREATE: Using power Ethically and Effectively |
| Measuring performance | CONTROL: Measuring and Monitoring Performance and Quality |

This collection of competencies is balanced in that it reflects competencies from all four quadrants of the Competing Values framework. Proficiency in all four quadrants is the mark of a ‘master manager’ (Quinn et al, 2011). There is perhaps an over-representation of the quadrant of *Collaborate*, which I feel is reflective of the values of my profession. Furthermore, I believe that the Ministry has shifted towards focusing on *Compete* at the detriment of *Collaborate*- as a future leader in this organization, I would aim to bring back some balance to this spectrum (for more information, please see my paper “Services Short-Staffed, Families Short-Changed: Leadership Challenges Faced by the Ministry of Social Services,” Assignment 1). Therefore, it is against these attributes (or “Personal Development Framework”) that I will evaluate my own leadership abilities.

**Self-Assessment**

*Assessments*

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: INTP (see Appendix A). INTPs value new knowledge, theories, and information, often debating two sides of an argument in their own heads. INTPs place little value to arguments based on emotion, preferring statistics, facts, and rational logic. INTPs are “great analysts and abstract thinkers” (NERIS, 2015, p. 28), honest, straightforward, objective, open-minded, and quick to grasp new information; but also absent-minded, insensitive, withdrawn, and condescending (ibid). Socially, INTPs present as reserved and detached and often feel unable to relate to other people, which is a challenge in establishing new relationships (ibid.). INTPs are best suited for careers in science, data analysis, or consulting, and are skilled in analyzing how systems function and where they can be improved, and are poorly suited for jobs that involve working directly and primarily with the public (ibid.).

Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation: I scored low across the board on the FIRO, with particularly low scores (zero) in the areas of expressing control over others and expressing openness with others (see Appendix B). I scored “low” in all three columns of inclusion, control, and affection, and with a low overall score indicating that “involvement with others not primary source of need satisfaction. Intellectual stimulation or solitary pursuits predominate” (Singh, 2012, slide 35). The results indicate that I prefer working independently or with small groups of people, discourage socialization at work, can be stubborn and rebellious and dislike being closely supervised (Singh).

Holland Occupational Themes: Investigative/Thinker (see Appendix C). People in this area are inquisitive, analytical, and logical, and like to work independently and perform research (University of Missouri, 2010). My second highest score was Social/Helper. People in this area are idealistic and insightful and like to help others with problems and work with young people.

Schein’s Career Anchors: Technical/Functional Competence and Service/Dedication to a Cause (tie). Those who score high in Technical/Functional Competence like to be seen as subject matter experts at their work, work independently, and use their skills to solve a problem. Those who score high in Service/Dedication like to “contribute to society in a meaningful way” (see Appendix D).

 *Team Leader Feedback*

Feedback is consistently positive, in both formal and informal (conversational) reviews. In my recent performance evaluation (November 2015), my team leader noted that:

* “Carol has proven to be a strong advocate and resource to other SWs [social workers] with respect to the standards and uses for out-of-care options”
* I “Exceed expectations” on the job, and am an “exceptional contributor” who “takes thoughtful risks, sets clear and often stretch [sic] goals and is accountable for results. Seeks out opportunities to learn and take on more responsibility. Consistently demonstrates the potential and desire to take on new and more challenging work.”
* “Carol is a very valuable member of the Resources team and has demonstrated an exemplary level of performance in her work. Carol’s strong desire for new knowledge and challenges will be supported throughout the coming year”

(see Appendix E)

In informal conversations, my team leader has stated that I am well-respected by colleagues and team leaders alike, and he has received feedback from other workers that when I am assigned to a certain task, they have confidence it will be completed timely and thoroughly. Furthermore, I am widely recognized as someone who stays cool and level-headed even in times of crisis, of which there are many in my line of work; while others are panicking, I am seen as someone who calmly assesses the available options and makes a recommendation that can be followed. My team leader addresses me publicly as the “Director of Research” for the team, and I have overheard him stating to other team leaders and community groups that he relies on my knowledge and passion for my work to inform him in his own role.

He has also said that I am, at times, impatient and condescending with team members (not foster parents) who do not function to my expectations; specifically, in relation to a colleague who was hired to our team in September 2014 and whom, after more than a year in this position, continues to struggle (by his own admission) to understand the policy and standards for our area of work, as well as the computer system we use. In other situations, I have been perceived by senior child protection workers as over-eager to question their practice.

 *Foster Parent Feedback*

By my own initiative, I sent each of my foster parents an invitation to contact my team leader to offer feedback on my performance in advance of my performance review. Four foster parents followed up with emails to my team leader, and these emails were forwarded to me by my team leader with the foster parents’ permission:

* “She has been very easy to work with and never makes us feel as though we are ‘under’ her. Very professional, wastes no time and really cares about how we are doing, not just the children.”
* “Carol supports us in any issues or concerns we have with Ministry people or youth, or healthcare professionals etc without fail and we feel very well supported… Carol lets us know when we are not being reasonable in our expectations in a professional manner. She helps keep us on track when needed... Carol is the best resource worker we have ever experienced and frankly we cannot image how she could be doing her job any better.”
* “I find Carol to be incredibly supportive and is always available… You all [were] so accommodating in allowing me to have Carol as my support worker. I appreciate her so much. She is a willing ear, a valuable resource, and a credit to her profession and the Ministry as a whole.” (from a foster parent who had requested to be reassigned to my caseload based on my reputation in the fostering community)
* “I love Carol! She is efficient, effective, punctual, reasonable and fair. In my view she is very together.”

(see Appendix F)

There has been no negative feedback from foster parents, either formally or informally, although I recognize that there is a power imbalance and that foster parents may not feel comfortable addressing concerns with me directly or ‘going over my head’ and reporting concerns to my team leader.

 *Evaluation of Strengths and Weaknesses*

In reviewing the information above, it strikes me (and not for the first time) that many of my skills and interests are contradictory: I want to help people, but I don’t want to work with people; I am patient and understanding with foster parents, but not with colleagues; I want to use research to influence others’ practice, but I don’t want to be in control in a supervisory capacity. In reviewing my strengths and weaknesses per the assessments and feedback, I believe a clear pattern emerges: I am someone who has a strong work ethic, a desire for ongoing learning and education, and a passionate interest in policy, best practices, and current research. I am a quick learner, eager to take on new responsibilities, calm and analytical in times of stress, and can work independently with little supervision. I have a strong desire to contribute to society and a genuine passion for improving the lives of vulnerable children in Saskatchewan. I believe these skills will serve me well as a practice consultant or policy analyst. However, I am also insensitive, withdrawn, condescending when frustrated, have poor teamwork skills, and cannot make small talk to build rapport.

I used the assessment tools, feedback, and personal experience to further assess my strengths and weaknesses against my Personal Development Framework in order to identify a plan of action:

Ability to Develop and Implement a Vision: As mentioned earlier in my work promoting the use of out-of-care options in my city, developing an idea, researching the benefits, identifying challenges, and preparing the information for distribution is a strength of mine. This assertion is supported by the self-assessments (MBTI, Holland Occupational Themes, Schein Career Anchors), which characterize me as someone who is good at analytical thinking and research. I struggle in coming up with compromises if my idea isn’t immediately understood (see Appendix G), and presenting that information in an inspiring and uplifting way- both hallmarks of an INTP.

Staff empowerment/mentorship/education: I have been a strong mentor for BSW students, with positive feedback from the students, per the University’s field placement coordinator. This is a role I have enjoyed: I liked being able to challenge future social workers, share information, and debate theory and practice. I believe this is supported by the self-assessments, particularly the MBTI, as my ‘type’ enjoys engaging in theoretical debates one-on-one with someone who is eager to learn.

In my work with foster parents, I struggled to identify more than a couple instances in which I provided thorough and evidence-based education directly to foster parents. More typically, I have focussed on being an emotional support (perhaps because this is and has always been an area of perceived weakness for me) and when opportunities for education have arisen, I have typically referred foster parents to resources in the community. Furthermore, as discussed in the Team Leader feedback, I am perceived as condescending when mentoring colleagues. This is a common INTP trait, and not one I am proud of.

I find it interesting to analyze my comparative success in mentoring students compared to my weakness in mentoring colleagues; I suspect that I have a higher expectation of my colleagues, and when they fail to measure up to my expectations I am disappointed. In analyzing the patterns of my relationships with these groups of people, I would characterize the students as more eager and willing to learn, versus the colleagues who admit they feel stuck in their ways and are unwilling to analyze their own practice or ways in which they could improve. As such, I suspect I view the students as actively working towards improving the lives of children and families, whereas I view some of my colleagues as impeding progress in this area. However, an effective leader can use mentorship to motivate and inspire workers (Quinn et al, 2011; van Wart, 2003) and this should be a goal of mine as a future leader. As such, developing foster parents and colleagues is an area in which I would like to improve.

Teamwork/group facilitation: This is an area of continued growth. Until relatively recently, I hadn’t had much opportunity to practice these skills in my day-to-day work. However, in the past year I have become a Coach for the Complex Trauma Response (CTR) project[[2]](#footnote-2). As a Coach, I am responsible for bringing together care teams (foster parents, teachers, support workers), delivering presentations, facilitating care team meetings, assessing and reporting on progress in the child and care team against certain criteria. This role challenges me because, as an introvert, I often find it difficult to be outspoken in large groups of people, many of which are often strangers at the start of the program.

To address my concerns about my Coaching (facilitation) skills, I have already engaged in two services offered by my employer: one-on-one career coaching, and a course on the *Coach Approach to Conversation*, which targeted the coaching experience in group facilitation. Although I have a long way to go to feel confident in my skills in this area, I believe that this is an emerging skill; I am much improved over where I was a year ago.

Teamwork is another area for development. In my self-reflection (see Appendix G), I found that I am open and eager to participate in a team (often in a Challenger role) as long as the team is high-functioning and I have a great deal of respect for team members. When either of these is lacking, I tend to withdraw from the team, preferring to work independently. This tendency is reflective of INTPs and is reflected in my score on the FIRO. This is an area I would like to improve on; as a leader, I believe that it will largely fall on me to foster a culture of high performance and respect among team members, and this is a skill I should start practicing now. Furthermore, developed skill in this area may help to demonstrate that I am able to be a leader in my organization, helping me to obtain more senior positions.

Communication, including approachability and empathy: Again, I feel this is an area of both strength and weakness, with very positive feedback from foster parents, but less so from colleagues. Presenting as reserved and aloof is a common trait of INTPs; the FIRO also reveals that I feel little need for social interaction in the workplace. I have no explanation for the positive feedback from foster parents other than that my work ethic and interest in studying social interaction provides me with enough motivation and knowledge to sustain emotionally supportive conversations if I see it as a fundamental part of my role.

Ethics/creating positive change: Foster parents have consistently said that they feel supported in their work and are challenged in a respectful manner. I feel that, in my work with foster parents, I “inspire commitment, rather than require compliance” (Quinn et al, 2011, p. 257) and I often win foster parents over with inspirational appeals and rational persuasion rather than direct orders. I respect their concerns, and I often take responsibility when they make an error, committing to work through the problem together. The ethical use of power is a consistent theme in social work practice; I believe this is an area in which I have demonstrated great proficiency. One area in which I can improve is my ability to create a ‘powerful’ network (Quinn). In my self-reflection exercise I scored a 5 in this competency (see Appendix H).

Measuring performance: I feel this is another area of strength, although I also wonder if this is a case of “you don’t know what you don’t know” as I haven’t had much formal experience in this role. However, I believe that my efforts to bring the city’s local practice more in line with policy and best practices, through the use of compiling statistics (objective/quantitative measures) and research information and monitoring progress against a goal, speaks to my strength in this area. Furthermore, I am excited about this work, and spend much time poring over the numbers and trying to identify potential causes for both success and failure. In the future, I would like to learn more in this area by incorporating qualitative research from families who are receiving services from the Ministry; this is not something I have permission to do in my current role.

**Action Plan**

After reflecting on my strengths and weaknesses against my Personal Development Framework and leadership goals, I have developed the following action plan which will capitalize on my strengths and address my weaknesses:

 *Capitalizing Strengths*

* Ability to Develop and Implement a Vision
	+ Continue to use my analytical thinking to identify areas for improvement, make a case for change, identify goals, and share this information with others.
* Staff Empowerment/Mentorship/Education
	+ Continue to provide mentorship to students based on best practices and current research.
* Teamwork/Group Facilitation
	+ Continue to demonstrate the positive aspects of the Challenger role in group settings, challenging others to attain high ethical standards and encouraging innovation.
* Communication, including empathy and approachability
	+ Continue to be a strong emotional support to foster parents.
* Ethics/creating positive change
	+ Continue to share power whenever possible with subordinates/foster parents.
* Measuring Performance
	+ Continue to research statistics and monitor local trends, advocating for improvements to practice against policy and best practices.

 *Addressing Weaknesses*

* Ability to Develop and Implement a Vision
	+ Focus on improving ways to articulate my vision to others, particularly through “communicating at the personal level” (Quinn et al, 2011, p. 184) and Transformational Leadership skills. Use self-reflection tools and team leader feedback as measures of success.
* Staff Empowerment/Mentorship/Education
	+ Provide educational information directly to foster parents, both in home visits and through monthly written ‘newsletters,’ linking to short informative videos available online.
	+ Mentor colleagues, starting with developing a mentorship relationship with the team member who is still struggling to understand his role after one year on the team. Meet with him weekly and review policy, standards, and the computer system. This plan has already been approved by my team leader and my colleague. Request feedback from team leader and colleague as a measure of success.
* Teamwork/Group Facilitation:
	+ Develop facilitation skills by preparing for meetings through setting objectives, selecting the right participants, preparing agendas, encouraging participation by all, and distributing minutes (Quinn et al, 2011).
	+ Develop teamwork skills by developing the roles of *Communicator*, *Contributor* and *Collaborator* in order to build team cohesion, offer knowledge and information, and establish goals. When working as *Challenger*, focus on remaining respectful and inclusive so that I do not come across as condescending (Quinn et al, 2011). Challenge myself to contribute to groups even when I do not know anyone or do not feel 100% sure about myself, allowing myself to learn more from others by making mistakes and allowing the group to correct me.
* Communication, including Empathy and Approachability
	+ Work on building stronger relationships with colleagues by viewing strong relationships in the workplace as much a part of my role as building strong relationships with foster parents. Utilize the tools of reflective listening (Quinn et al, 2011), as well as engaging in small talk to build rapport before diving into business.
* Ethics/Creating Positive Change
	+ Focus on networking, especially in my role as steering committee member for two community boards in order to build a “powerful network” (Quinn et al, 2011, p 260) and build a stronger mentorship relationship with my team leader.
* Measuring Performance
	+ In the future, aim to develop qualitative research regarding service quality to families involved with the Ministry

*At a Glance: Overview*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure of Success** | - Self-reflection tools- Team leader feedback | - progress by worker, as reported by worker and team leader- sending information to foster parents monthly | - prepare agenda, etc for all meetings- take time during each meeting to encourage team members | 1+ social conversation per day with someone outside my team | * Meet three new people in each of my steering committees
* Ask team leader to mentor and set up monthly check-ins
 | Complete qualitative research as part of my Master’s Project (if approved) |
| **Goal Date** | March 2016 | Immediately | March 2016 | March 2016 | January 2016 | 2017 |
| **Tasks: Addressing Weaknesses** | Improve ability to communicate vision effectively | - Mentoring new worker- Sending more educational information to foster parents (monthly newsletter) | -Strengthen facilitation skills-build stronger team relationships, developing skills as Collaborator, Contributor, Communicator | Build stronger relationships with colleagues, viewing this as a part of my job | - Network- Engage with team leader as a mentee | Conduct qualitative research |
| **Competing Values** | COMPETE: Developing and Communicating a Vision | COLLABORATE: Mentoring and Developing Others | COLLABORATE: Managing Groups and Leading Teams | COLLABORATE: Communicating Honestly and Effectively | CREATE: Using power ethically and effectively | CONTROL: Measuring and Monitoring Performance and Quality |
| **Personal Development Framework** | Ability to develop and implement a vision | Staff empowerment/mentorship/education | Teamwork/group facilitation | Communication, including empathy and approachability | Ethics/creating positive change | Measuring performance |

**Conclusion**

Although I am passionate about child welfare services, I believe that my strengths and skill set are more conducive to working in policy development, where I am able to bring my passion to improving the lives of children and families together with my passion for research and analysis to implement systemic change. It is my goal to leverage the respect I have gained in my field into a position as a policy analyst or practice consultant with the Ministry. The Action Plan developed here will help me to capitalize on my strengths while addressing my weaknesses, providing me with a solid base of experience and expertise to better position myself to achieve this goal. By achieving these competencies, I believe I can come closer to meeting my personal definition of leadership: someone who is knowledgeable, analytical, and who advocates in the best interests of the children and families for whom we work, while being a source of emotional and practical support for staff, creating a workplace culture of mutual respect, enthusiasm, and high performance.

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Appendix A: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

As demonstrated by the graph:

I am a strong **Introvert** (n= 34) with little development in Extroversion (n=6).

I am nearly even in **Intuition** (n=22) and Sensing (n=18)

I am a strong **Thinker** (n= 30) with little development in Feeling (n=10)

I am near even in **Perceiving** (n=23) and Judging (n=17)

“Close seconds” would be:

ISTP

INTJ

ISTJ

Appendix B: Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Inclusion** | **Control** | **Affection** | **Total** |
| **Expressed** | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| **Wanted** | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| **Total** | 4 | 5 | 1 | 10 |

In this graph, it is shown that I have a low (<5) desire for expressing or wanting inclusion, control, or affection in the workplace. This can be interpreted to mean that I prefer to work independently, at my own pace, and according to my own interests.

Appendix C: Holland Occupational Themes



Appendix D: Schein’s Career Anchors



Appendix E: Performance Review

Appendix F: Foster Parent Feedback

**Email 1:**

**Email 2:**

**Email 3**

**Email 4**

Appendix G: Summary of Relevant Self-Reflection Exercises

Week one: What is your definition of leadership?  In thinking about, and writing up, your definition, try to develop the beginnings of your understanding of leadership for your leader development plan. What kind of demands does your organization place on you and your colleagues?  What are important contextual features that differentiate your workplace from others?  What examples of leadership do you find effective in meeting those demands? What kinds of leadership outcomes are you expecting?

* Someone who is knowledgeable, a subject matter expert
* Someone who can build strong mentorship relationships with staff
* Contextual factors: policy and legislation, tendency to be called out in media. Successful leaders in this area are knowledgeable and confident and cool under pressure

Week two: How would you describe how leadership and management "works" in your organization? What management and leadership behaviours have you observed or experienced? Can you think of examples of positive/good management & leadership behaviour? Can you think of instances of negative/poor management & leadership behaviour?

* Typically works by following direction from senior managers: micromanaging
* Positive: some mentorship, some emotional support from some TLs
* Negative: “CYA” practice, not engaged with staff, not emotionally supportive

Week three: Complete the Diagnostic Surveys for Scale Self-Awareness  (which include the Locus of Control and Tolerance of Ambiguity scales). First score the questions and then evaluate your scores using the answer key provided in the coursepack. Reflect on your results. Do they surprise you? Compare these results with your results from your other assessments completed to date. How might these results inform your behavior? How might these variables affect your interactions with others? You may also want to review and complete "Assessment: Anchors and Oars" (Quinn, et al., pp. 37 - 38). Note any consistencies or inconsistencies between your earlier exercise and this one.

* Did not agree with Diagnostic Surveys: odd questions? Do not feel that this describes me, do not agree with the measures (especially Emotional Intelligence factors, p. 48 Q. 9).
* Was rated very low: while I wouldn’t normally say that I have a high EI, I would think it is higher than what this test revealed

Week four: Assessments

* Are you a team player? My scores for this test hovered around the midline, with an equal amount of check marks on the second-to-right column as the second-to-left. This was a difficult test for me to do because I found many examples on both ends of the spectrum. The common theme I found seemed to be that I am an eager team player when I am part of a cohesive team and I respect the team members. When either of those things are lacking I prefer to work individually. In my current team, I often “readily contribute in group meetings” but in many (even most) meetings outside of this team I do not readily contribute.
* Solution Oriented: 4.27; Non-confrontational: 3.92; Control: 4.14. Again, this was a hard one because I thought of many examples on both sides. If the situation is one I am really passionate about and I know I have the policy and research to back me up, I will argue my side. In other times, if I’m not 100% sure I’m right, I will often shrug off the disagreement. This can be a trait of an INTP; wanting to understand an argument in our heads before arguing it to other people. My scores were all quite similar and all around the midline; I feel this is actually fairly accurate. I’ve been told consistently that I am usually easy-going without being a pushover, which seems to be what the midline suggests (not overly or ‘underly’ confrontational; not demanding or conceding control). One area I would like to improve is the “solution oriented” dimension. I think too often I tend to think, “either you’re right or I’m right” and don’t spend too much time looking at compromise.

Week five: Assessments

* Communicating a Vision: 37 out of a possible score of 50. As in week four, I tend to be able to argue my vision referencing policy and best practices and research (which scores well in this test) but I will revert to getting frustrated if people don’t immediately see the wisdom in my argument, and never try to find solutions other than what I am proposing. This, again, is a trait of an INTP. This is an area I would like to improve; as a leader I would like to offer a practical and compelling vision that gets people on board.

Appendix H: Competing Values Assessment

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| **COLLABORATE**6.8 - understanding self/others6.6 - communicating honestly/effectively5.75 - mentoring/developing others5.6 - managing groups/leading teams4.8 - managing constructive conflict**5.91 overall average** | **CREATE**5 - using power ethically5.6 - championing new ideas4.6 - fuelling innovation6 - negotiating commitment3.6 - implementing change**4.96 overall average** |
| **CONTROL**6.8 - organizing information3.8 - working and managing functions4 - planning projects5 - measuring performance quality4.8 - encouraging compliance**4.88 overall average** | **COMPETE**1.8 - developing and communicating vision5.6 - setting goals and objectives5.6 - motivating self and others1.8 - designing and organizing4.6 - managing execution/results**3.88 overall average** |

My area of relative strength is the *Collaborate* quadrant, with particularly high scores in the subsections of “Understanding Self and Others” and “Communicating Honestly and Effectively. In fact, I noticed that areas that deal primarily in communication tended to rank higher across all four quadrants. This is perhaps unsurprising, given my line of work (social work), but I was somewhat surprised that the rankings didn’t seem to quite capture just how effective I might be in these areas. My job, by and large, is communicating with others, and by and large I would say I do so successfully, which is the central criterion in this assessment. I wouldn’t say I am *as* successful as some of my colleagues, but the assessment only asks me to rate from *how often* I successfully use what skills I have, not the *quality* of these skills. I think this generates a somewhat skewed result, as I believe I still have much to learn in the area of effective communication.

Although I scored well in the sub-section of “Mentoring and Developing Others” I was a little bit inconsistent in this area, with rankings ranging from 2 to 6. I find this surprising, and disappointing. A primary and meaningful part of my job is developing others, and I would have wanted to score higher in this area. Although my scores in the areas of “Managing and Encouraging Constructive Conflict” and “Managing Groups and Leading Teams” were both lower than the “Mentoring and Developing Others” score, for now I am satisfied with my score in these two areas, and would prefer to focus on areas that are more applicable to my day-to-day work.

The next area of relative strength is the *Create* quadrant. My lowest scores were in the areas of “Implementing and Sustaining Change” and “Fueling and Fostering Innovation.” These two sub-sections seem closely linked, and feel important to focus on as ‘fostering innovation’ in my Ministry is a major reason I became interested in the MPA program. Areas of strength included “Negotiating Agreement and Commitment” which did come as a surprise.

Next is the *Control* quadrant. Areas of strength include “Organizing Information Flows” and “Measuring and Monitoring Performance and Quality.” Areas of opportunity include “Working and Managing Across Functions.” I agree with this assessment and plan to make it a priority moving forward.

The last quadrant is *Compete*. I was surprised that this score wasn’t lower as I don’t see competition as a focus in my job in any way, and many sub-sections did receive several scores of 1. However, there were many factors that I hadn’t thought of as competitive at first glance, but make more sense in hindsight. This includes the sub-section of “Motivating Self and Others” which was an area of relative strength, and one that I agree with. Areas for improvement include “Developing and Communicating a Vision” and “Designing and Organizing.” Creating a vision is important to me in my work, and this sub-section rated the lowest of all subsections, and so this is an area of priority for me moving forward. Unfortunately,in reviewing the questions, I feel my hands are somewhat tied as I am not sure what I could do to move my ranking up from a 1 in at least three of the questions that contributed to the score in this sub-section (questions 5, 9, and 35: emphasizing the need to compete, developing a competitive focus, and insisting on beating outside competitors). I don’t see these questions as playing a role in my work. The one question in this sub-section that I can aim to bring up from a score of 1 is question 62: writing a vision that addresses strategic philosophy, tactical policies and practices, and individual emotions.

With these results in mind, my goals are:

1. continue to use and improve my communication skills, with a focus in empathizing with the client while sharing information and recommendations that are rooted in research and policy
2. continue to work on mentoring and developing others. I supervise approximately 30 foster parents. I would like to create a culture in which each of them has a passion and drive to learn more about child development, especially as it relates to children who have experienced trauma, and help them to understand the importance of changing their own responses and routines to better meet the needs of the children in their care, and ongoing education to learn new skills in working with traumatized children.
3. develop a stronger sense of fostering innovation and sustaining change through encouraging others to be creative, and overcoming individual and organizational barriers to creative thinking. This may mean advocating for foster parents and others who come up with ideas that are “outside the box” but deserve to be heard and considered by management.
4. improve on developing and communicating a vision, including sharing with others a vision that encourages good practice in working with the families of BC.
1. When a child is removed from their parents’ care, the Ministry has the authority to transfer custody of that child to an involved and stable family member. Provincially, this is a popular option for keeping children out of foster care. In my city, out-of-care options were virtually unused, and family members were instead told to apply to become a foster parent to care for the children. This is blatantly against policy and is very intrusive social work practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The CTR project is a new program developed by the Ministry and was recently nominated for a Premier’s Award for Innovation. The program was developed after recognizing that as many as 85% of children in foster care meet the criteria for a mental illness, and often more than one. This is thought to be caused by the complex trauma that they have experienced in their family of origin, and the physical impacts of complex trauma on the developing brain. Rather than medicate children, CTR coaches bring together care teams and develop intervention plans tailored to the child’s needs that create an environment that enriches and stimulates development in the child’s brain. Over the course of the intervention plan (18 months) subject children’s development has been demonstrated to improve across seven domains of functioning. The CTR program is currently operating in only a couple regions in the province, but is rapidly expanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)