

John Deffenbaugh blog – A good innings

Her Majesty the Queen has been in the news this week. 60 years in one job is a long time, much longer than the average tenure of an NHS chief executive. That said, there are a few things that Top Leaders can take from the Queen's experience.

First, the Queen is genuinely regarded with affection. She's an institution, indeed represents an institution. While the King's Fund report last year had the by-line "No more heroes", it was apparent from the Diamond Jubilee celebrations that there was a fair degree of hero worshipping going on. And for good reason. Heroes serve a useful purpose – as an anchor of past glory (Churchill), as a measure of morality (Mandela), as a reminder of the fallibility of life (Olympic relay torch bearers).

Yet, if you take the example of the Queen, the succession is well established, and many will readily say "God save the King" to mark the transition when it comes. We could debate the hero-no hero status of Her Majesty til the cows come home, but the point is that the Royals have a talent management plan in place. Ok, not on the scale of Top Leaders, and with a few more quirks like barriers to succession, but it's a pretty well defined **succession programme** nonetheless. Top Leaders could take a leaf out of the Royal book when it comes to developing successors, though I imagine on a much more egalitarian basis.

Second, the Queen exhibited an **authenticity** of leadership that goes beyond the title or status. Goffee and Jones have written a lot about leaders establishing their authenticity, and they highlight three things leaders should do:

1. Get to know yourself and your origins better
2. Get to know others
3. Connect to the organisational context

I think the Queen demonstrated these traits well last weekend. She probably could have done without standing out in the rain for hours by the Thames watching paint dry, but the concert and church service were no doubt more enjoyable. Well, at least I enjoyed them more. The lesson for Top Leaders is to take the time to get off the treadmill, reflect, connect and show some authenticity.

Finally, it's not the pay check that has kept the Queen going all these years. Nor is it the raw exercise of power. Rather, it's some kind of higher calling. 'Duty' is the word most used to describe what drives the Queen. Danah Zahor has called this **Spiritual Intelligence**. In her book of the same name, Zahor refers to spiritual intelligence as SQ. An individual will have measurable intellect (IQ) and equally assessed emotional intelligence (EQ), but it is the less tangible SQ that is vitally important to understand. Hans Frankel in his study of Auschwitz survivors defined this as a 'higher meaning in life' – not in the religious sense, but rather in the need for a person to have something to live for. In contemporary music, Duffy put this well in her song 'Distant Dreamer':

**Even when you see me frown my heart won't let me down
Because I know there's better things to come
And when life gets tough and I feel I've had enough
I hold on to a distant star**

The Queen demonstrates great spiritual intelligence. Many Top Leaders will have it too, and for those who have a frown today, then get hold of that distant star. You'll get a good innings too.

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