

## In the hot seat – Institute of Leadership & Management

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*This month, Edge meets Jane Harders, Managing Consultant of Portfolio who coaches leaders and develops coaches in the UK, Europe and Middle East.*

- **What does leadership mean to you?**

As a coach, I see leadership in many forms and in varying quantities. Where it is plentiful, there is passion, drive, engagement – and shining eyes. Where it's in short supply, or sporadic, there's a noticeable flatness, a lack of clear purpose, and an overall dullness in the workforce. Leadership – for me - is about having the capacity to inspire others, the passion to generate enthusiasm, the courage to forge ahead – and humility.

Leadership is present in the smallest of actions – the CEO who greets the receptionist by name, or who sends a handwritten note thanking you for your time; it's this humility that for me epitomizes great leadership. Whether you label it as "servant leadership" or "upside down leadership", leaders who genuinely respect and listen to the voices and views of their workforce have an edge.

When working with student coaches, I often talk about "leaving your ego at the door"; if your ego is in the room, there's no space for anyone else. It's the same with leadership. Ego takes up space, and leaves little air for others.

- **What are your clients biggest leadership challenges at the moment?**

Undoubtedly the top 3 currently would be: communication, leading through others and providing visible leadership.

- **How does the general landscape of what's happening feed into those challenges?**

As a coach I am privileged to share rare, unguarded moments with leaders who are grappling with complexity, and never more so than in the present Brexit-charged climate. Ever since the referendum vote, the challenges facing many leaders have been VUCA-related – in a landscape that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, it's a fine balancing act to inspire confidence and vision when so many factors are in flux. Effective, in-tune leaders have recognized that whilst the needs of their followers are for increased communication – to provide clarity, direction and reassurance – there are often scarce few absolutes that can be communicated, and thus physical presence has in many cases replaced verbal communiques or newsletters. Nothing beats "boots on the ground" leadership, where a leader's energy and physical presence can instil confidence and reassurance in equal measure.

- **What are you personally focusing on from a leadership perspective?**

Colleagues say that I'm good at noticing; I notice small nuances, patterns and emerging themes in people and in situations. I'm naturally curious and enjoy noticing little things that – combined – make leaders great, and inspire shining eyes. I'm currently coaching leaders in a VUCA-climate, and this is bringing forth some interesting observations. Some leaders are thriving, whilst others aren't; it's not just about resilience or "surviving". There are other factors at play including agility, about pro-actively creating opportunities to make choices which in turn generate a sense of control - even when the situation or circumstance may be well out of actual control. So – for now – I'm soaking up the noticings created by this unique set of circumstances, and baking them into my future recipe for great leaders.

- **How do you develop your people?**

In a nutshell the Portfolio philosophy is to encourage “insatiable curiosity”, and to follow wherever that takes us. Last year we explored emerging themes such as resilience and leadership agility, and tried out a range of different tools to enhance and support our team coaching practice. As coaches, we’re constantly using reflective practice, supervision and playback to check in, raise awareness and spot opportunities for further stretch and challenge. Personal growth is part and parcel of our day job, and I guess we’re fortunate that our coaching and supervision practices drive ongoing development from both sides.

- **How does membership of the Institute of Leadership & Management benefit you?**

Membership of the Institute is a visible statement about my commitment to understanding, growing and developing leadership and good leadership practices. It’s more than just a badge or a line entry on a profile; membership of the Institute of Leadership & Management makes a clear statement about my commitment to staying current in my chosen field, and to expanding my knowledge via the member resources available.