

# relearn Leadership

navigational support in times of uncertainty

## *What is our intent?*

Modern society is rapidly changing and becoming increasingly uncertain. The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has further amplified this volatility and presented those in leadership positions, including those in sport, with a range of highly complex challenges to navigate. We believe that the circumstances we currently find ourselves in are asking significant questions of whether our old ways of working are still fit for purpose:

- What does it mean to recognise and attend to our responsibilities as custodians of our sporting way of life?
- How can we ensure that our sport is meaningfully and purposefully connected to our communities?
- How might we best organise the resourcing of sporting endeavour in a spirit of mutuality and common purpose?

Our view is that those leaders who are willing to sit with questions like these can seize the moment and harness an urgent and exciting opportunity to 'relearn' leadership & organisational approaches to life in sport. We have set up this 6-month online learning programme to support up to a dozen such leaders, on a personal and professional journey of fellowship, accompanied by Mark, Al & Jono.

## *Who is it for?*

Most likely people who hold senior positions in a sports organisation, and particularly those at a "system(ic) level" in national/governing bodies.

You could be a:

- Board Member/Director/CEO
- Performance/Sporting Director
- Head of Coaching/Performance
- Head of Participation/Community
- Head of Talent/Pathways
- Director of School Sport

Central to this programme is the concept of "action learning", therefore you will need to be in a position to take action, experiment & collaborate with others inside and outside of your organisation. There will also be an option to involve 1 or 2 other people from your organisation in aspects of the programme.



Mark Upton



Al Smith



Jono Byrne

## *What will the journey involve?*

- You will undertake an "action learning" project based around a current challenge or dilemma in your role/organisation, with Mark, Al & Jono directly supporting you as you navigate this challenge
- You will be involved in a community of practice - sharing experiences with others and being able to tap into the wisdom of our community "fellows" who have already taken steps down this path - a combination of group calls and online spaces for collaboration will be offered
- You will have access to a carefully curated network of content and material that will help you reflect, stimulate new thinking and connect practice with theory

*First 6-month cohort commencing in May 2020*

Please email [info@myfastestmile.com](mailto:info@myfastestmile.com) to explore your interest further

## Leadership

"We need to abandon our reliance on the 'leader as hero' and invite in the 'leader as host'. Leaders as hosts know that people willingly support those things they've played a part in creating - that you can't expect people to 'buy in' to plans and projects developed elsewhere. Leaders as hosts invest in meaningful conversations among people from many parts of the system."

<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/Leadership-in-Age-of-Complexity.pdf>

Margaret Wheatley

"Too many organizations focus on the vision and values when they should feed a sense of belonging instead, especially if you're working with a myriad of cultures. As a team, you can sit down and allow yourself to be vulnerable. It's a powerful strategy; once I'm prepared to share my vulnerability, and everyone else is too, we create an environment that becomes a culture of acceptance."

<https://www.gameplan-a.com/2017/03/make-mental-strength-your-strongest-skill/>

Gilbert Enoka

Leaders prepared to be vulnerable, to share mistakes and to invite dissenting views can contribute to creating the conditions for their teams to thrive. This has been brought into the spotlight recently with Google's Project Aristotle, that looked into team effectiveness and the importance of 'psychological safety'. It reflects a body of work over a number of years from Harvard researcher Amy Edmondson.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/psychological-safety-vulnerable-chris-alexander>

The more complex the work (interdependent, uncertain, new, creative) the greater the need for psychological safety and to overcome learning disabilities:

"It is no accident that most organizations learn poorly. The way they are designed and managed, the way people's jobs are defined, and, most importantly, the way we have all been taught to think and interact (not only in organizations but more broadly) create fundamental learning disabilities. These disabilities operate despite the best effort of bright, committed people"

<http://qaspire.com/2017/02/20/peter-senge-how-to-overcome-learning-disabilities-in-organizations/>

Peter Senge

Along with an empowering approach comes the need to understand acts of 'leadership' being afforded to all, not just the formal leaders. Who leads, and who follows, can flex depending on the situation. The choice is not a binary one between command-and-control and a chaotic free-for-all. True acts of leadership involve 'surfing between the poles' to attend to the ever changing dynamics of learning and development.

*"Don't take control and attract followers, give control and create leaders."*

David Marquet

## *Coaching*

What is 'coaching'? One of the most concise answers we've ever heard was "that's simple - helping people!". So much sits within this short statement and it is always worth coming back to, particularly in dialogue with senior leaders.

*"coaching is not teaching at all, but is about creating the conditions for learning & growing"*

Sir John Whitmore

To become an effective coach requires great self-awareness - of emotions, values, beliefs and the lens(es) through which the world is viewed. It requires being able to understand the same in others and help them to see different perspectives. Empathy, listening with intent and skilful use of questioning are often important. As a former professional team sport coach recently shared:

*"I probably wasn't listening intently enough ... that empathetic side had dropped out of my coaching."*

Great coaches also find the time to reflect, in different ways, and invite others to act as 'critical friends' to help them grow.

Where could a focus on growing distributed acts of leadership, coaching and learning eventually take an organisation? Perhaps an aspirational example is Buurtzorg, the Dutch home-care company. Their model of self-managing teams (of no greater than 12) have coaches, rather than line managers, assigned to them who help the team work through challenges and attend to team dynamics...

*"The development of the role of the coach was very important in that. By the end of 2007, we had our first coaches who were always available when a team or individual was struggling. We always advise everyone to ask for support, and coaches would always offer whatever kind of support was needed"*

<http://www.enliveningedge.org/features/jos-de-blok-founder-buurtzorg-speaks-journey/>

Jos De Blok, Founder of Buurtzorg