

Don Campbell
(left) with **Phil**
Gilbert-Smith,
operations
director of
Foundation.



The culture of leadership

IN these unsettled times when the news seems to linger on threats to businesses, nation states and individuals, we're all having to look to our mettle both for ourselves and for the people who work with and for us.

Developing a culture of leadership is one of the ways in which directors can enable themselves and all with whom they come into contact to handle situations better. Yet countless surveys, research and other evidence point to the failure of companies to embrace this concept and to nurture and motivate their own talent so that it can be developed to the fullest extent.

Don Campbell, passionate CEO of leadership development company Foundation, and a beanch member of IoD Three Counties, believes it isn't that organisations necessarily fail to identify leaders, or to help them develop their potential, but rather that they have a tendency to concentrate solely on individuals and, furthermore, are likely to focus on young up-and-coming leaders rather than adopt a more strategic and long-term approach.

The problem is exacerbated by a tendency to view leadership in the traditional sense as a purely 'downward' process and the assumption that all good leaders possess key characteristics that can be emulated or learned. But, Don argues, this simply isn't the case. 'There are no set rules about what makes a good leader and, indeed, different situations will demand different leadership skills in varying degrees. The key to developing leaders in the workplace is first to understand what leadership means and then how it can impact on every level in an organisation.'

As important as downward leadership, wherein you motivate, inspire and focus the team that

reports to you, is upward leadership (to your line manager) and sideways leadership (to your peers).

For sideways leadership to be effective, the ability to influence your peers through credibility and personal power is imperative. A successful combination of talent, ability and personality is the best way of achieving sideways leadership.

For upward leadership to work, managers need to know what the truth of a situation is, rather than to be told something that will make them feel better or make life easier. This takes courage and sensitivity and an appreciation of what it is like to be in that person's position.

For all levels of leadership, responsibility and accountability are vital, as are effective communication and listening skills. The key to being a good leader, at whatever level, is the ability to know yourself and what effect personality, manner and behaviour have on others and the difference between perception and reality.

Central to the development of a leadership culture within an organisation is the attitude of the senior management team and their ability to embrace the concept and to delegate and trust others within the same organisation. A shared vision of what the company has achieved and where it is going is also important, as it underpins the organisation's ethos and conviction of its direction. This takes constant time and effort to sustain.

As Don points out: 'There is no instant solution to good leadership and individual and corporate time needs to be devoted to practice, but, in the majority of cases, once the process starts it can be self-perpetuating, infectious and impossible to stop.'

The Foundation website is at www.foundation-uk.com.

☐ **Brian Salter is a director of the Topspin Group.**