

the last word

Leadership is one of those evocative words that elicits an impassioned opinion about what it means, whether we are talking politics, sport, religion or the workplace.

We all have individual preconceived notions of what leadership is and looks like (for example, a leader's character and personality traits, skills, behaviours, attitudes and values) and whether we consequently recognise leadership in others. We have a picture of leadership that we believe in and if it matches what is put before us then we are more likely to accept it as leadership and realise ourselves as followers. Based on our life and work experiences we construct an image of leadership that is innate within our psyche – it is something that feels right or it doesn't. We can't always articulate why we accept or reject someone's leadership.

“Leadership can be described as a state of mind or an attitude, something that we can all practice if we choose. It could be simply that every day you strive for excellence in professional practice. Perhaps it's demonstrated through your commitment to professional development, or by investing in your professional association through membership and contributing to the profession by an active involvement in committees or local groups.

Whatever it is, don't stop – it's an important contribution to your workplace, to your association and your profession.”

The more you explore leadership as a concept, the more you realise that instead of being black and white, there are all shades of grey and colour. And there are many kinds of leaders and leadership. Perhaps this issue of inCite has introduced you to a few more.

So what does leadership really look like? Is a leader born or made? Can leaders that history considers 'evil' have something teach us? Mussolini, after all, did get the trains running on time, and many of the notorious dictators achieved great power through charisma, persuasive public speaking and devoted followers. They must have been doing something right even if their end goals were so very wrong.

Leaders are said to be inspirational and to create hope and vision within us. Some leaders are described as autocratic and hierarchical.

Some are experts in their field and are highly skilled. What kinds of leaders have you experienced? How did you respond to this kind of leadership? Did they fit your measure of leadership? Is this the kind of leader you would like to be?

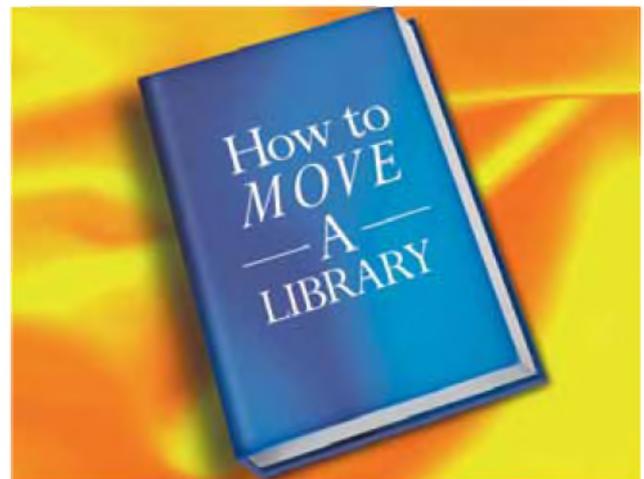
One thing is surely true, without the belief and acceptance of followers, there can't be any meaningful leadership. Leadership is dependent on the willingness of others to be influenced. Each empowers the other to achieve.

The most important question perhaps is what kind of leader are you? Sure, you are a leader if your organisation has delegated responsibilities that put you in charge of teams or services, but there are opportunities to show and develop leadership capabilities even if this is not the case.

Leadership can be described as a state of mind or an attitude, something that we can all practice if we choose. It could be simply that every day you strive for excellence in professional practice. Maybe you are supporting or mentoring a co-worker as they undertake a new project or role. Do you speak up when needed and give feedback honestly and constructively? Perhaps it's demonstrated through your commitment to professional development, or by investing in your professional association through membership and contributing to the profession by an active involvement in committees or local groups. Whatever it is, don't stop – it's an important contribution to your workplace, to your association and to your profession.

Janetta Mascilongo

Director, Professional Services ALIA
janetta.mascilongo@alia.org.au



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