**WHAT DO YOU NEED TO LEAD?**

Many professionals are happier doing pure finance rather than leading and are often unsure whether the leap to leader is a price worth paying. In acquiring a professional qualification, you have demonstrated that you have ability and you probably know the essentials of the business very well indeed because you have to report and monitor it so closely. But you may like doing the day job too much and find it hard to give up. To be the best you can be in the finance function is admirable but if you’re planning on being a leader ask yourself whether building relationships is your strong suit. Is emotional intelligence something you can acquire to make you more comfortable in a world of ambiguity? Can you bring people with you, spend time with them, connect with them, build a psychological contract? Experience is vital.

**GETTING STARTED**

You do not need to be another Nelson Mandela or Winston Churchill to be a good leader. Some of the behaviours that help make you successful in finance – determination and resilience, for example – will also help you as a leader. But some behaviours need to be left behind and new ones acquired. The ability to delegate, to see the wider context around the detail, the value as well as the price, becomes more important. Soft people skills such as influencing, communicating and motivating are the hardest to acquire.

Think about your experience so far in your career. Why should anyone in your office be led by you? How do you relate to others in the team? Could you have done a better job leading the last project? Have you made sense of complex and ambiguous situations where there do not seem to be any right answers?

**FROM MANAGER TO LEADER**

Today’s successful leaders motivate and connect teams of skilled professionals to deal with a rapidly changing, complex world. This involves a different mindset, a different view of leadership. If you as a leader develop your people, your people will develop your business. Success is not just about leaders at the top but leaders at every level. Lofty remuneration is a thing of the past. You have to be in the middle of the action and looking forward to things to sense what will work. You are at your most effective when you are leading. This is not the same as being yourself – when you lead you are on a stage. It’s not about being perfect either – what makes people interested are their imperfections. Find the right leadership style for you and forget a fixed template. Building your emotional intelligence is vital, so show openness and trust, give feedback and accept feedback and find a psychological contract. Experience is vital.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

Aim to be a leader with the pride, pace, passion and professionalism to do the job well. If you can’t get passionate about success within your organisation, innovating and inspiring others, creating sustainable businesses that care about people and the planet we live in, then what can you get passionate about?

**DO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER?**

There is a world shortage of leaders, particularly those who can give clear direction, show vision and help their organisations succeed. Is this you? Dr Mark Pegg, director at Ashridge Business School finds out.