

VIVE!



Leadership Impact from the Inside Out
Angela Peacock & David Cotton

The successful leader develops, hones and balances four key ingredients - Vulnerability, Intuition, Variation and Energy (VIVE!) to create an authentic leadership image. Heightened self-awareness, the ability to see leadership practices from a variety of perceptual positions and the ability to develop future state thinking further refine a leader's ability to move forward to even greater heights.

Leaders have followers. *People will follow you if they see in you something that inspires them to change direction. If you have serious intent to develop yourself as a leader, two vitally important strands of your leadership practice require your attention: how you look from the inside and how you look from the outside. The greater your awareness of both, the more successful you can become as a leader.*

This article presents a simple model to help you to develop that heightened awareness so necessary in creating a powerful and authentic leadership image.

The easiest starting point is to look from the inside out. Bewildered by the increasing complexity of working life and society, many of us turn to the growing market of self help books to 'find ourselves'. The plethora of books and courses hints at a thousand ways to reach nirvana, but the journey is less complex in principle than the current literature suggests.

In a fast changing world, we need to remind ourselves that we, our brains and souls, are the only true constants. If we do not know who we are, we may appear like a kite, subject to the vagaries of changing winds and anchored by only a thin strand. Better to be like a weather vane: moving with the changing winds, yet sure of where the strong anchor holds us with a sense of certainty of who we really are. However the unconscious beliefs that drive us, are by their very nature, hidden from us. They manifest in our behaviours, in the decisions we take, the teams we build, those we hire, those we promote and those we accept as friends or trust as work colleagues.

However, this bias has effects beyond this. In today's economic climate the alteration in leadership that academics have predicted for years has hastened. No longer do we need the superhuman leader reliant only upon his own knowledge, instinct and wisdom and no longer is the new generation respecting this as an approach worth having.

In its place, we need resilience and the ability to act into the unknown to chart and navigate the waters never before explored. In order to make this happen with confidence, we need leaders with the ability and willingness to see patterns. To listen to what is happening with their organisation, view what occurs in the wider remit and then to act.

For some their unconscious bias is too great and too unexplored to make this possible. The business of Leadership is now more reliant than ever upon engagement, communication, knowledge of self, paying heed to the thoughts of others and finally moving forward with the security of a well honed action guided by many minds and experiences.

The view of a leader from the outside is built on two things: what he manifests to the outside world and what observers are able to see of him. Intrinsically we are all a complex bundle of bias(es), most of which have grown over time. Some may be so deeply embedded we have no idea of their provenance; others we may not even recognise in ourselves. Take a simple Implicit Association Test¹ and notice that however aware you may be of diversity, however driven by equality, like most 21st Century leaders you will almost certainly carry prejudice.

As a result, though you may display a tremendously positive leadership image on the outside, it is perceived by others in an utterly different way. It is your responsibility to be aware and in creating your leadership impact you need to be equally sensitive to, and intuitive about, the reaction it causes in others. None of this is automatic, but with practice can become a great deal easier.

VIVE! (French for Live!) represents the four areas in our experience that create a powerful and authentic leadership image. The word *authentic* is imperative. Great leadership is not about wearing a mask which hides the real you, but about being flexible enough to show the most appropriate facets of your personality to the outside world. Your behaviours must sit comfortably with your personality and belief systems. Take time to explore both these areas.

Note: for brevity, we have used "he" and "him" throughout. Given that one of the authors is female, this is in no sense intended as disrespectful to female leaders.



Angela Peacock is a leadership trainer, speaker, facilitator and the Chair of the award-winning People Development Team. Angela's passionate belief is that a *secure organisation* is built upon *secure foundations* – those foundations being *its people*. Through

developing people, helping them to recognise and unlock their innate strengths, individuals and organisations can embrace change and adopt a positive, forward-looking culture - making a tangible difference to the bottom line.

Angela is increasingly sought as a keynote speaker to address corporate seminars throughout the UK, US and Middle East. She has featured on Open University broadcasts, talking on the topic of Leadership in Industry and Developing Effective Teams within Business and has been a regular guest on BBC Radio 5 Live's topical commentary programmes.

Going 'where angels fear to tread' Angela challenges the *status quo* with her brand of 'reality management', developing high performing teams across the business world.

David Cotton has developed leaders and high performing teams all over the world. He has worked with a wide range of clients including The Royal Bank of Scotland, British Telecom, BBC Worldwide and the Croatian Military and HMRC.



Creativity is something very close to David's heart and, as an NLP practitioner, he uses both the conscious and the unconscious mind to develop creative and innovative techniques and to encourage individuals to make positive use of those around them.

VIVE! – Improved leadership practice from inside out and outside in

V is Vulnerability. Paradoxically, a display of vulnerability is a key behaviour in strong leadership. Vulnerability works both from the inside out and from the outside in. The impression you give an observer and a realistic personal attitude towards your own vulnerabilities give you a genuine inner strength that can be seen. At its simplest level it is about humility and an understanding not only of what you view to be a Vulnerability within yourself but also of how you view those of others – arguably our social bias are simply a reflection of how we view the vulnerabilities of others.

Step one: Determine realistically where your areas of weakness lie. Take a long hard look.

Step two: Ask yourself why they are there. What do they give you? Are they a 'natural deficit' or a learnt behaviour? For example: "I work best under pressure." Is this really true or did you gain an A grade in an examination by relentless cramming and an adrenaline rush? Did you then continue to hone this assumption until it became a reality weakness?

Step three: Determine those areas of weakness which will add to your impact. Surprised at this? Think of the leaders you admire: which of them is perfect? Probably very few. We are often asked to work with what we call 'granite' leaders. Superficially perfect, they are immaculately groomed, with terrific formal organisation of their thoughts, able to map out meetings and follow-up in copious detail – always seemingly strong, fast and without a flaw, yet often without humility and certainly with the air of not need the help or opinions.

And yet, those who report to them see themselves as failing in comparison to the granite leader: "I could never be as good as him. "He would not listen to me" Those to whom they report, especially those with well developed intuition, think: "I know this guy is great, but I just don't think we are seeing all of him." David Burnham's work on leaders within high performing organisations has demonstrated that we no longer need to have all the answers. Today's economic climate has exacerbated this.

The best leaders surround themselves with people better than them in certain aspects of their work, they identify this in spite of hidden beliefs and prejudice. A leader who shows vulnerability by asking for answers from his staff in the right context creates great teams. Decide on which of your weaknesses you wish to show, selectively and for maximum impact. Even if you are certain of the answer to something, you may be giving your team no opportunity to develop themselves if you always provide

the answers. Sometimes, it's good to tell a team member "I have this idea that I want to bounce off you" or "You're really good at this – can you help me here?" Rather than lose credibility in doing so, you stretch your team and you may learn something useful in the process.

Great leadership is about being flexible in yourself and your beliefs

I is for Intuition. To raise your impact, you must raise your levels of self-awareness. Increase your ability to be in an intuitive state. Intuition is not a mystical gift, but the aggregation of all our experience and wisdom. You learn by making connections.

The broader your experience, the greater the number of possible connections and so the greater your intuition. Because mind and body are part of the same system, changes in emotional state reflect themselves in changes in physical state, and so our gut reaction is a genuine intuitive response. Intuition is one of the great leadership and strategic abilities. It is about being aware and switched on to the impact you are creating. Observing others around the table during a meeting, tuning into the third lady from the left on the interview panel to intuit whether your assertive approach is impressing her or whether you need to turn it down.

We encourage a practice called 'perceptual positions,' which will enhance your ability to be aware, to intuit 'on the hoof'. Simply rerun in your mind a meeting, an interview or even a simple conversation from the position of the other person in the room. The other person may be running a deeper agenda than you can ever know, but gather what you do know and imagine the scene from their perspective. Then rerun it in your head from the position of a third party or dispassionate observer, to see how you and the other people involved really looked and sounded from the outside looking in. You will see missed opportunities to create the impact you sought that would have been obvious with your intuition on high alert.

Luckily, intuition is something we can develop. Every experience you have, whether work-related or outside work will help to inform your intuition. Listen to classical music, change your newspapers once a week and read with an open mind, visit an art gallery, develop a hobby and play with perceptual positions.

Having understood Intuition within yourself it is important to appreciate it in others. Each and every person you encounter, client, friend, team member or boss is on a journey that has afforded them countless pieces of wisdom, dangers, successes, highs and lows which result in their ability to offer thoughts and ideas beyond your own. Being focussed and "clear" enough to listen is the key.

Stretch your team and you may learn something useful in the process

V is for Variation. What makes you different? There is a wonderful quote: "Lord help me to be myself in a world that is trying to make me like everyone else." Your leadership world does not need you to be like everyone else's. It will be your differences that set you apart and get you noticed, that will make an encounter with you memorable. Rehearse your 'elevator pitch': What is different about you and how can you capitalise on those differences?

We have all encountered people with that certain 'je ne sais quoi'. How much better it would be if we knew we could articulate what made them different. Indeed, how much easier for our impact and influence to extend not only to the people we meet, but also to the people they encounter. How wonderful to become the sine qua non of je ne sais quoi! If you don't know what makes you different, then ask someone...

Variation of your leadership style is a key skill. We are often asked about how we combine the theory that a leader should be "authentic" with the need to adapt their style. It is simple. By knowing yourself what is good and what needs work and by understanding how you came by your "story". Tracing where your beliefs came from; and by only holding onto those which serve you well in your 21st Century leadership practice you will be better able to adapt your behavioural style while keeping a hold on your core personality and value set.

We know how deadly “group think” can be and yet so often we encounter teams whose behavioural profiles almost match. Even in teams with differences the “key players” are often the ones with strongly similar thoughts and journeys to their leader. The main issue is that once this is revealed, often the leader had no conscious ideas that this was the case. This can reveal years of exclusion, non listening and even bias at the point of selection. Making it ok to have learnt beliefs that negatively alter your perception of variation is the key. Becoming aware and working to prevent such things is the action.

Look at your nutritional habits. What you put in...shows on the outside

E is for Energy. A question to ask yourself is: “If leaders have followers, why should anyone follow me?” The key here is to understand how the person we are on the inside manifests itself on the outside. What do you look like on the outside? Can I see in you the same energy and brilliance on a Monday morning and at 5:00pm on a Friday? Does it wane as the week progresses? Imagine that the international group director holds your future career moves in her hand, and chooses to speak to you at 4:30 on a Thursday. Keeping your energy levels at maximum and therefore your physical appearance at its peak begins both in your body and in your mind.

Examine when you have maximum emotional and physical energy. How does it feel to be this way? Learn to recreate that same state as often as possible. Then think about the inside out impact of that state. What does it look like from the outside? Our work in impact and influence often involves us in physical coaching.

We ask our clients to experience how it feels to walk tall - the classic shoulders back, feet on floor, unfolded arms actually works. It not only creates maximum impact on those around you instantly but it also sends great messages from your body to your brain. Imagine the messages your body receives by your brain when you are slouching and closed in. Which would you want? When working with leaders with disabilities the very act of raising, albeit slightly, their chin can alter the whole impact.

Look at your nutritional habits. What you put in will have a direct result on what others see on the outside. Many of our clients work under tremendous pressure. Often a good way for them to relax is to go home, open a bottle of wine and finish it in an evening. If this is a habit you fall into, do the three week experiment. Take a good look at yourself in the mirror, especially noticing your eyes. For the next three weeks abstain from drinking during week nights. Monitor nothing at all during that time. After three weeks take another close look, starting with your eyes and then reflecting on your energy levels.

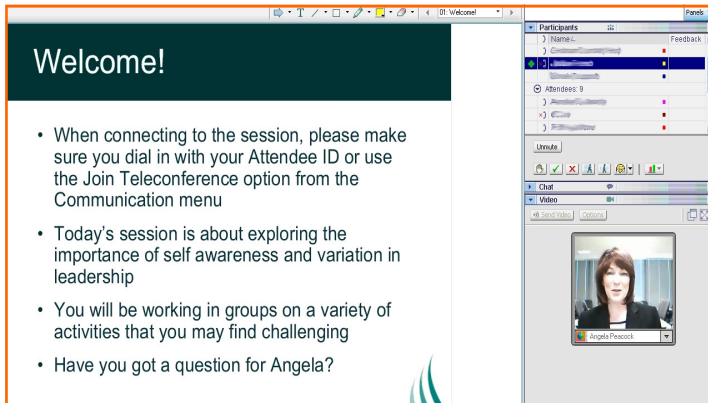
Have a look at your lifestyle. Take stock of the rituals that enhance your physical and emotional energy and those that deplete it. Looking in the cold light of day can often bring surprises.

One final thought. The most powerful change you can make in your impact is brought about by using ‘Future State’ practice. As you consider moving up the career ladder, see yourself in the new role now. Imagine you have been there for three years and are well established and successful. What do you look like? How do you carry yourself? What are you wearing? How are you speaking? What are the reactions you hear and observe from those around you?

Got it? Then start appearing like that right now – at this moment. Put on your best interview outfit now. Spend your time now in the state you want to be in in the future. Can you see how you need to walk and talk? See the kind of people you would be networking with....do it now. You will automatically alter almost everything both inside and outside.

VIVE! gives you the framework you need to be the leader you want to be. With heightened self-awareness, a good look at yourself from both inside and out, and the application of these ideas, you can be a truly successful leader.

How is “VIVE!” delivered?



The screenshot shows a teleconference window. On the left, a 'Welcome!' slide contains the following text:

- When connecting to the session, please make sure you dial in with your Attendee ID or use the Join Teleconference option from the Communication menu
- Today's session is about exploring the importance of self awareness and variation in leadership
- You will be working in groups on a variety of activities that you may find challenging
- Have you got a question for Angela?

On the right, a 'Participants' panel shows a list of attendees, including 'Angela Peacock' who is currently speaking. Below the list is a small video window showing Angela Peacock.

The interventions we offer based upon the model are varied. In practical terms, it can form the basis of a residential or retreat programme either for a cadre of leaders or for a specific leadership team. These can be run globally and are usually 2 days in duration and with between 10-20 delegates.

“VIVE!” has also been successfully delivered as a web enabled intervention. In this case we offer a 5 module (2 hour) masterclass approach – generally run monthly.

As a conference offering it has huge impact, a minimum of 2 ½ hours needs to be allowed – number up to 300.

Finally, “VIVE!” is available as a coaching format.

What level of leader is it aimed at?

Any and all. We adjust the programme to suit the delegates. At the top end with Senior Execs the issues may alter, however many First Line Managers have benefited from the module and it also features on our graduate programme.



Is it a pure Leadership piece?

No. It is a pure discovery piece. Since the original conception of “VIVE!”, it has developed and grown and explores areas such as deep beliefs and unconscious bias. As such, it is right up to date with the Diversity and Inclusion and Talent agenda and is often used in this way. We have a “VIVE!” programme for all genders.

How do I find out more?

Please email info@angela-peacock.com
or call +44 (0)1920 485569.