



Leadership motivation and enjoyment



- it starts with you

— Ledelses
Kommissionen

For public managers

We want to maintain and develop the high level of public welfare benefits in Denmark. We should therefore explore different and new ways of focusing on what is 'important' and what is 'correct'. We need to create a far more sensible and sustainable public sector that is more cohesive across different organisations. This is where leadership really enters the scene. Leadership is immensely important, and the Danish Leadership and Management Commission believes that it is possible to 'make good even better'.

The quality of leadership in the Danish public sector is high, but, like everything else, it can become even better. Denmark has high-quality public welfare benefits. Let's make a foundation to raise quality even higher. Personal leadership is important. Let's together create opportunities to move on to the next level.

This calls for strong public managers and strong leadership. Public managers who can deal with the difficult and complex contexts in large and political systems. Leaders who are willing to live with the prevailing framework conditions, but who are ready to fight for their leadership discretion. However, leadership also requires proper conditions, including strong support from your own leader and a degree of control that enables active leadership.

The ambition of the Danish Leadership and Management Commission is to help every single public manager to contribute to moving forward to a new and better place! This report presents a number of specific and practical initiatives to help develop public leadership and help you to become a better public manager. In our main report *Sæt borgerne først* (Put Citizens First), we appeal to politicians and other decision takers to provide all public managers with a good framework – the right tools. However, this booklet is especially for leaders at the sharp end: Public managers who together with and through their employees deliver value directly to citizens and society.

The overall effect of the suggestions should be viewed as the sum of your own efforts and those of your 46,000 leader colleagues. The overall effect will be noticeable after just a few years. Better public leadership will generate growth and enhance the level of welfare in Denmark.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this booklet and that you enjoy public leadership!

Danish Leadership and Management Commission

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Put the citizen centre stage

The public sector exists for citizens. More precisely, for citizens, businesses and society. These are the target group. These are the objective. These are what it is all about. Being a leader in the public sector therefore means that you have to focus on and fight for the interests of citizens – 24/7, all year round. This is your job as a public manager. Nothing more; nothing less.

Being a leader is not only about your own focus. You have a right and duty to influence your employees' focus. The organisation's focus. It is about being a leader in such a way that your employees constantly focus on creating value for citizens, businesses and society.

That's what leadership is all about, and it should take place at all levels. It is the job of director generals, headmasters, head nurses at hospitals and for officers in Defence Command Denmark. It is the job of heads of finance in municipalities and for the deans of universities. It is the job of heads of child and youth services, commissioners of police, heads of department at the Central Customs and Tax Administration, heads of libraries - in fact every single public manager.

As public managers, what we really want is to provide better and higher quality. We want to make a difference. We want to be the best public sector in the world, and we need to target our leadership efforts towards this goal, so that no one can ever doubt our views and our priorities.

As mentioned above, the absolute most important leadership value is that you are constantly fighting to make your employees aware of what it actually means to be there for citizens and society and to work for them. It is all about communicating how your actions make sense. All the time. It is about the core task: The very task that you're here to do in order to create value for citizens.

Creating results for citizens and society must supersede anything else that you may be tempted to spend your time on; for example fighting for a larger share of resources for your own unit at the expense of the organisation as a whole.

You must establish EXACTLY how overall objectives should be translated to make sense for your specific workplace.

How many of your employees can explain how your organisation creates value for the citizen(s)?

Make your leadership clear

Leadership at the core of victory or defeat. It makes the difference between success and failure. The difference between good results and poor results. We know that leadership makes the difference between job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. That leadership is what we talk about at home and with family and friends. We know that leadership makes a huge difference.

We know that good leadership creates good results, and that poor leadership creates frustration, nervousness and insecurity. That good leadership empowers, while poor leadership drains everyone's energy. And we know that leaders make a huge difference. Leadership is vital. Leadership is a discipline. Leadership is craftsmanship. And, above all, leadership demands effort, because leadership affects a great many lives. Both within the organisation and outside the organisation. You have to be able to sense that your leadership style is actually having a huge impact on people. This requires a lot of effort, but it should be approached with a degree of humility.

There is a great difference between 'becoming a manager' and 'being a leader'. Becoming a

manager is something that others designate to you or select you for. Being a leader means that you yourself assume leadership. That you are conscious of your responsibility in relation to other people. That you build up your leadership identity. That you can look in the mirror with conviction that you can see a leader – otherwise you will never convince others.

Your leadership identity is significantly different from other professional identities. There is a huge difference between being a leader and being a case officer, coordinator, planner, administrator, steward, or expert. The latter deal with problems, an occupational field, technical tasks, functions, procedures and systems. However, a leader primarily deals with people; people as employees, partners or leader colleagues – and the leader takes a holistic perspective. Leaders may often feel they have to juggle many roles. However, our point is that they must never allow their role as a leader to be overshadowed by their other roles. Leadership requires time and space.

Public managers have experienced different journeys towards their leadership identity. For some of them, the journey was quick and a

matter of course. Others had to go through a process of adjustment, reflection and change. All public managers should see themselves as a Leader with a capital L. This strong leadership identity should be combined with a professional identity, although this should never take priority.

Whatever your own journey was like, we at the Danish Leadership and Management Commission recommend that you clarify how you yourself can perform as a leader on the basis of your organisation's leadership principles. How you translate your organisation's strategy and what personal values your leadership builds on. This is how you present yourself as a leader to employees, colleagues and superiors.

Your personal leadership style will always be different from that of others, because as individuals we are all different. The important thing is that you can describe yourself as a leader: What do I find important in leadership? How do I strive to achieve results in my (part of) the organisation? What leadership values do I govern by? What are my goals and ambitions as a leader? How can my employees expect me to react, govern, motivate, control, communicate and delegate?

When you expose to your employees what you are like as a leader and what you want to be like, you are provoking an opportunity for real and concrete dialogue about leadership. You become visible and you create clear expectations. Expectations which, in themselves, can be subject to dialogue between you and your staff.

The great effect of making your leadership foundation clear may not be evident right away, but only after a period of training and experimenting with new variations. After a period, it becomes a matter of course to talk about the positive and negative aspects of your way of managing. You can stop playing hide-and-seek and blind man's buff. You can talk about real life at your workplace.

You must be visible internally as well as externally. Internally for staff by being attentive and present. Externally for citizens and stakeholders by being accessible and outreaching. By being visible and talking about leadership, you help create a leadership language. With your colleagues, your staff and your partners.

The Danish Leadership and Management Commission recommends that, in 2018, all

public managers clarify how they lead within the framework of the organisation's overall leadership principles. We've taken our own medicine at the Danish Leadership and Management Commission. On www.ledelseskom.dk you can read about our personal leadership foundations and there is a starter kit to draw up your own.

Remember that your leadership has a huge impact on other people's lives. In 2018, make your leadership clear for your employees and for your organisation's surroundings.

How many of your employees know where you stand in terms of leadership?

More space for leadership and less space for control

Less control and more support. This is a necessity and a key element in the commission's work. This is not the same as 'no' control and 'no' documentation. Control is important and good, for example when legislation ensures due process and equal treatment in people's dealings with the public sector. Control of finances is also crucial. A vast number of regulations and frameworks have been established to ensure control of our society, so that our society is as we want it to be. As our elected politicians decide it should be. This is good. The same applies for much documentation: if physicians did not write down and collect data, research and recorded experience would not exist, and we would never move forward. It is also essential to monitor results at citizen level and to have an overview of the effect of interventions. Formulation of goals must be razor-sharp, and these goals must be evaluated.

However, having said that, most people know that, ultimately, it is not possible to micro-manage human behaviour. In certain areas, control and documentation require-

ments have got out of hand, and we need to do something about this.

As a leader, you need to ask yourself whether 'dead processes' (rules, procedures, reporting, receipts, forms) should be supplemented or replaced by 'living processes' (communication, values, relationships, feedback, attentiveness, support). If this transformation is successful, it will lead to massive improvements in job satisfaction, motivation and commitment, and ultimately in results.

The active ingredient is value-based leadership. Some people perceive value-based leadership as a soft discipline. This is not correct. Value-based leadership is a hard discipline, because value-based leadership is about the foundation on which the organisation is built – not as words on a poster, but as specific, comprehensible and practical instructions. Values in the brain, in the heart and in the legs.

Be clear about the values that permeate work in your organisation. Start the year, month, week, day, meeting or gathering by making the values specific and real for your employees.

How many of your employees know the key values of your organisation, and how many experience how these values help them in their daily work?

Values that are so strongly incorporated that they are translated into day-to-day routines and work. This provides direction and reduces complexity.

Just to illustrate the philosophy: If cost-consciousness were a sufficiently strong value throughout the public sector, detailed documentation requirements for even the smallest expense would not be necessary.

An important element of public managers' job is to communicate values, exemplify them, make them specific and comprehensible, and to keep them alive and interesting. This will take us to the place where most people want to be: a place with freedom, leeway and the opportunity to help create the right solutions for the society and the citizens we are working for.

Strengthen your employees

Good leadership is reflected in the strength of employees. Good leadership promotes strong, competent, energetic and enthusiastic employees. Poor leadership leads to weak, incompetent, lazy and indifferent employees. Leaders must create strong employees. Without strong employees, we will never create lasting improvements and be able to deal with increasing pressure and financial challenges.

Strong employees are energetic and enterprising. They are professionally competent, support one another and are constantly becoming more knowledgeable and more skilled. Strong employees are also robust and generate job satisfaction. They are proud of their workplace.

See yourself as a trainer. Training your employees means practising and getting better together. Better at tasks you know about already, and also better at new tasks. It entails both technical training and mental training. It entails guidance, exemplification, coaching and inspiration. It entails experiments, exams and feedback. As a leader, you set an example from the front and provide support from the rear. You advise and summarise. You work on a weekly basis to empower your staff.

As a leader you openly appreciate the good results and dedicated effort of your employees, communicate few and clear goals, and delegate tasks in a manner that suits the organisation and yourself. You motivate your employees by setting clear and ambitious goals, by showing professional respect and by providing clear feedback.

You cannot manage anything that you are not fully in contact with. If you are not visible, present and attentive, you will not stand a chance of influencing the climate, values and everyday life at the workplace. If you don't show the way, follow up, intervene, provide inspiration and motivate, you will never achieve good results. Dialogue and attentiveness are preconditions for influence and impact. Without dialogue and attentiveness, there will be no leadership, and management will be reduced to a dead process instead of a living process.

There's no future in limiting contact with the employees you have leadership responsibility for to a monthly meeting at which communication only goes one way: from you to your staff.

See yourself as a trainer creating strong employees. Take responsibility for job satisfaction. Be attentive when talking about work and tasks.

How many people in your organisation see you as an attentive leader who strengthens them and enhances their job satisfaction?

Just communicating in writing to your staff is not a good idea either. Without dialogue and attentiveness, you will never get support for values or promote a common understanding of how tasks should be done.

An enormous span of control, in many cases with 40-80 employees referring directly to

the same leader, makes attentive leadership impossible. This may have been possible on the assembly lines of the old industrial society, but it makes no sense in modern public organisations.

Find the team spirit

A public manager should always be competing with him/herself on improving services for citizens. If public managers are to succeed, they have to work together, and they need to pass on professional competences focusing on citizens. In other words: professional leadership.

Competition encourages good performance; it keeps us on our toes and leads to better results. In the private sector, competition is the driving force on the market and it keeps the wheels of business going round. Competition is what makes businesses come up with new, smarter and cheaper ways of doing things.

A core leadership task is to exploit competition to promote solutions instead of obstructing them. Internal rivalry and fights over resources between departments are a bad form of competition and they shift focus away from the core task in both private and public institutions. In a private business, it is all about replacing internal rivalry with uncompromising focus on 'beating' the competition on the market.

The task is somewhat different in the public sector. Here, the primary leadership task is to ensure that we constantly compete with our-

selves: How can we be better than we have been in the past, and generate more value for citizens in the future? How do we deal with new societal challenges? How do we deal with major societal challenges? How do we develop and apply professional competences, and how do we build a bridge between all the specialist knowledge present in the public sector?

The crux of the matter is that we need to cooperate. Not many public managers can create value without cooperating with others within their own organisation, across municipalities, regions and central government, and across specialist pillars and silos. Solutions will inevitably cut across structures and professional competences, especially for complex problems. Internal rivalry is a waste of time and resources.

As a public manager, you are on the same team as all other public managers, and you have one common task: to create value for society. And this demands cooperation.

At the same time, it is important that the high degree of expertise in the Danish public sector is constantly developed and maintained as specialist knowledge. Specialist knowledge

As a public manager, you are on the same team as every other public manager. Use each other, learn from one another and work together to create the best public sector in the world based on systematic knowledge and evidence within the various professional competences.

How many of your employees are working on the basis of professional standards based on systematic knowledge about what works?

runs most of the public sector, and this should be nurtured, while at the same time looking across disciplines for solutions to complex problems.

We want a public sector where employees know exactly what they are doing and where they have the latitude to exercise their professional competences. We perceive professional competence as working on the basis of systematic knowledge and evidence. And being in control of your data.

Knowing what works and what doesn't – for the social field, for education, for the envi-

ronment, for employment, for integration, etc. This is the foundation for ensuring a high-quality public sector.

Professional competence is not about demanding decisions on priorities. That's the politicians' job. Professional competence is only rarely individual. There is a need for collective professional competence; to share and commit to knowledge about methods and results, so that everyone can work on the basis of what everyone agrees works.

Improve operations

Operations is relevant for most public managers. Operation of a nursing home, a school or a technical department. Operation of a hospital ward or a financial department. Operation of an appeals board, tax centre or a daycare facility.

A large part of leadership concerns the continuous improvement of operations so that we obtain better results. You could say that it is about improving yourself, like competitive swimmers or athletes. Therefore, it may be a good idea to challenge yourself and aim for higher goals by competing with yourself.

Some people claim that operations are the opposite of development and that 'development' is fancier and more fun. Unfortunately, there are places where operations are not being developed, and where developments never get into operation. In other words, there are places where there is no renewal, and places where renewal is never put into practice.

Both 'operations without development' and 'development without operations' are a waste of valuable resources; resources that are always in short supply. The useful thing to do is to push your leadership and area of responsibility forwards, with focus on creating better – and

preferably lasting – operational improvements. Small steps are fine, as long as they are in the right direction.

Some say that operations are not very 'sexy'. That operations are boring, monotonous and an endless treadmill. Perhaps this is correct, if you do not have an eye for the significant impact operations have on people. As a public manager, you're lucky. Because other people will always depend on your good operating results. Your success is important for the surrounding world, for citizens, and for the rest of the public sector.

Good operations should be appreciated and recognised, because creating good operational results is both a skill and a sign of good leadership. The Danish Leadership and Management Commission strongly advocates more focus on operations. We want to make stars and heroes out of operational leaders.

In this context, we could mention what does NOT contribute to better operations: Excessive focus on political decision-making processes, carelessness with regard to costs, laissez-faire attitudes towards powerful employees, careless mistakes, conflict-averse management, poor work ethics, lack of energy, mutual power strug-

Leadership focusing on operations is important. However, leadership is not important for leadership's sake. Leadership is important because it is a short-cut to better results. Preferably good and sustainable better results.

How often do you put spotlight on implementation of new knowledge in operations?

gles, rights that are seized rather than earned and other toxic influences.

Good operations and good leadership go hand-in-hand. Just like poor operations and poor leadership. You can be an even better leader via clearer communication focusing on

operations, a more personal leadership style, clear objectives, firm demands, more courage, greater capacity to act, less conflict averseness, more drive, greater commitment, more enthusiasm, passionate leadership and a fighting spirit.

Always work on your own leadership development

Assuming a leadership identity means being willing to bring yourself to the stage and therefore being willing to develop personally. You can always become a better leader. The outside world is changing, your organisation is changing, you are changing, your job is changing and your staff are changing. You're never fully developed as a leader; you must continuously work on your own development.

You must strengthen the effects of your leadership, but also approach the task with humility: I know that my work has an impact on other people's lives. I know that I am not perfect, but I am constantly striving to be a better leader.

Just as you have to train your staff, you also need a training programme for yourself; a programme that has been set with your superior. You have a development plan that you evaluate regularly to keep yourself sharp. You take your training as seriously as any sportsman or musician who is well aware that training and practice are crucial for success.

It's not our job to tell you exactly what you need to train. Meaningful training can only be established in dialogue between yourself and your own leader. It depends on who you are, your level of ambition and how fit you are. In some cases, it may make sense to work on getting better at what you're bad at. In most cases, it makes sense to work systematically on getting even more out of what you're good at.

Perhaps you need to be better at taking the stage and getting your message across in large assemblies? At working systematically with user satisfaction or data? At resolving conflicts? At showing courage? At setting relevant goals? At daring to let go of control? Or at managing upwards and making a difference?

It is not our job to tell you exactly how you should to train.

However, clearly the more relevant your training is for your everyday leadership tasks, the better. The steepest learning curves are for your own specific tasks.

As a leader, you are part of an ongoing development project with yourself. Insist that your own leader gets involved in the content. Focus on what you need to be better at to carry out your leadership, and take your training seriously.

How many times a year do you think about your fitness as a leader?

New leaders in particular need mentoring and on-the-job-training; they need experienced leaders to take them under their wing to discuss the tasks and the challenges and to otherwise help understand the norms and culture of the organisation.

This does not mean that it is never relevant to train outside the organisation. If you have not received training in management, administration, financial management or conflict resolution, targeted courses or actual leadership

training can be a huge support. This can also result in valuable relationships and in understanding conditions in other parts of the public sector. The important thing is to maintain focus on developing yourself. Training in itself is the active ingredient.

Keep the dialogue on leadership going

The Danish Leadership and Management Commission has consciously tried to spark more interest in public leadership and management, and we feel that a wide coalition has been built across the public sector; a coalition that is ready to develop leadership and management.

We believe that, if not a new language, at least a more descriptive dialect has been created in the debate about leadership and management. This is positive in itself.

Our overall goal; our dream is that the dialogue on good leadership will continue, and that as many people as possible will contribute with good examples that can serve as a basis for mutual inspiration for the 46,000 public managers currently on their journey to becoming better leaders.

And better leadership doesn't only mean better results. It also means better lives and a happier Denmark!

———Ledelses
Kommissionen