The Programme

The Future Workforce and Human Performance (FWAHP) Programme is a people-centred Programme, within which the People, Opportunities, Threats and Radical Approaches (POTRA) Project sits. POTRA aims to both assess the opportunities and threats to the People component in order to understand the ‘art of the possible’; as well as develop radical and potentially game-changing future People concepts and solutions.

Future Leadership Research

Towards the Workplace of the Future: How Organisations can facilitate Digital Change

This research focuses on the ‘Digital Work’ environment and the underlying transformation process required for organisations to support this emerging way of working. It utilises interviews and observations taken from three case studies (The Allianz Group, Lenzburg city administration and Haufe-umantis which is an emerging software company).

Four major challenges that organisations face when introducing digital work were identified: (1) managing technostress and work-life balance; (2) balancing organisational culture and leadership; (3) workforce’s generational differences and preferences (i.e. digital natives vs digital immigrants); and (4) top management support.

Organisations need to consider how to facilitate ‘digital work’ in a manner that ensures maximum employee uptake. Since digital working promotes dispersed team structures, an open and collaborative leadership style is needed rather than the command and control style of the past.


Thoughts: For Defence, will visibly ‘leading from the front’ be the critical factor in employee morale and acceptance of innovation in the world to come?

Augmented Humanity will Disrupt Leadership. Are you prepared?

This think piece theorises that, based on current social trends and the trajectory of workplace technology, leaders with exceptional decision-making and communication capabilities will be needed more than ever in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Gallup\(^1\), argue that leadership skills, such as the capability to develop employees and the capacity to apply knowledge and experience to inform decisions, are among those abilities that AI is unlikely to replace. Working closely with technology and working remotely will become increasingly commonplace and leaders will need to adapt to ensure business outcomes are still achieved in the face of increasing virtual, or hybrid (human-robot) teams. The capacity to communicate, coach rather than ‘command’ and think critically are posited to become increasingly important.

Therefore, leadership skills will be a vital component of the future workforce. Organisations will need to understand the competencies their leaders will require in a workplace transformed by technology, and how to adequately train and prepare their personnel to lead.

In preparing for the future, organisations should already be preparing to attract, select and retain the...
right personnel for this newer evolving workplace environment whilst upskilling existing leaders to face a workplace that may be very different to the one they currently operate in.

1. Gallup, Inc. is an American analytics and advisory company founded by George Gallup in 1935.


Thoughts: Going forward, could some technical skills currently championed become digitised or automated?

Management 4.0: Future skills you will need.

Expert opinion suggests that older management styles inspired by the 'authoritative leadership' style will not be as effective in the modern and future world of work. New management skills and leadership approaches will be needed to meet the expectations of the new generations of the workforce. It is recommended that managers are prepared to: (1) develop coaching and mentoring skills; (2) be ready to introduce new technology tools for performance management; (3) strengthen communication skills; (4) to reinforce trust; and (5) empower their teams.

The project states that to be a successful leader, a manager needs to understand workforce needs and expectations and be ready to adapt to these. The new generations of employees are likely to require a more individualised management approach, which in some cases may require managers to rethink their leadership style.

In consequence Defence may wish to consider how they recruit for these skills as well as how they upskill their current workforce. Early identification of where changes to management style may be resisted, or where elements of a new approach would not 'fit' with the organisation, will facilitate early interventions.


Why automation, not augmentation is needed in leadership

Al is used 24/7 in our personal lives, for example to help Amazon to predict what customers are likely to purchase, and to enable Facebook to understand users’ mental states. This article looks into how automation will affect leadership in management within business and wider government.

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/the-case-for-automating-leadership/

Academic Perspectives on Leadership

Professor Richard Bolden

Richard Bolden is the Director of the Bristol Leadership and Change Centre (UWE). He provided his ideas on the future requirements of leaders and what would help them to prosper in their roles.

He highlights that future leaders will need to be able to operate seamlessly at local, national and international levels, taking into account the social and economic impact of worldwide challenges, such as climate change. The Covid-19 crisis has already highlighted the importance of adopting this type of Distributed Leadership style to help navigate through complex and widespread problems. A future in which leading is shared across an entire system, not just individuals or organisations, is the best case scenario. A leader’s ability to develop a shared purpose and identity HR Leaders feel unprepared for the future of work.

Evidence suggests that only a minimal percentage of organisations in the US (9 per cent) are prepared for how work will be in the future. It will be increasingly important for organisations to:

(1) Develop an AI ethics strategy;
(2) Rethink how employees develop new skills;
(3) Build an internal transparency strategy;
(4) Rethink the role of managers for a new era; and
(5) Use AI for increased inclusiveness by creating access for the unemployed.

https://workplaceinsight.net/hr-leaders-feel-unprepared-for-the-future-of-work/

Shaw Academy photo reproduced from https://blog.shawacademy.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-characteristics-of-a-good-leader/
amongst subordinates, will also be fundamental to success.


Leaders will need to be effective in conditions of deep uncertainty and ambiguity, constantly balancing leadership paradoxes that have no simple solutions.

Professor Bolden also states that it will be critical for leaders to have the capacity to perform effectively in uncomfortable, stressful and doubtful situations i.e. Negative Capability. Leaders will need to be more understanding of when to slow down and survey problems from multiple angles before making decisions.

The copious amounts of data available to future leaders will further complicate decision-making. This will be exacerbated by the increasing trend of ‘fake news’. Therefore effective leadership will be a balance between appropriate verification and swift decision-making. Technology fuelled ways of working will also impact on leadership preferences. For example the leadership of teams in the virtual world will require a different type of interaction which may at times be challenging since developing team cohesiveness across geographically disparate groups can be difficult to manage.

Thoughts: What does Systems Leadership mean for the Armed Forces? How can Defence leaders create a shared purpose and encourage team cohesion while becoming ever-more dispersed?

Professor Patrick Bonnett

Professor Bonnett is Development Director of the UK National Innovation Centre for Ageing at Newcastle University. One of the focus areas of the centre is to understand the impact of an ageing population on leadership in the future.

What does the UK National Innovation Centre for Ageing do?

The centre was established in 2014 by Newcastle University in collaboration with the UK government. The centre helps companies to understand how to gain older customers. This can become very lucrative as over 50’s own over 50% of the country’s disposable income. An example Patrick provided was a multigenerational kitchen with functionality for both young and old people. Products such as these can be very lucrative as 61 million households in the US are multigenerational.

Ageing population in the workplace

As the age of the working population increases and new technologies emerge, people across the workforce are being required to work differently. To address this, leaders need to ensure that the right structures and processes are in place to support this new way of working.

Changes should consider the implementation of older age-friendly workplaces. For example the use of exoskeletons, virtual reality and artificial intelligence to facilitate support for those extending their careers in places such as laboratories and workshops. Evidence is already available of the impact of not addressing this issue. For example, The Innovation Research & Technology (IRT) sector employs 57,000 people and contributes >£32Bn to the UK economy annually, generating £13Bn in tax revenue. If leaders do not develop suitable workplace adjustments, a skills shortage in the future could instigate an economic decline.

Future leaders should also adapt business activities to support this growing population by considering more flexible options for part-time or phased retirement activities that could include the mentoring of new starters to encourage the transference of knowledge and expertise.

Also from Richard:


Thought: How can Defence look to implement phased retirement and put measures in place to support ageing workers as well as sharing their experience?

UK National Innovation Centre for Ageing:
https://www.ncl.ac.uk/nica/

Iain Snelling

Iain Snelling is a senior fellow at the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham and has provided his thoughts on future leadership across the healthcare sector.

Iain suggests that the main change will be people’s perception of what leadership is. It is more likely that leadership will be a shared commodity rather than the current traditional top-down approach. This is seen as a positive as it helps negate the issue of senior leaders not having a strong understanding of what is happening on the ground. However, caution would be required as too many ‘leaders’ may inhibit effective decision making and causing tension around control. Therefore a balance would need to be identified to support this new framework that is supported by robust policy making.

Thoughts: How can Defence use more of a collaborative approach towards leadership in the future? Will giving too many people a say hinder progression?

The Chief Registrar role in the UK: leadership capacity and development of hybrid leaders:
https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/portal/files/91621268/Authors_Accepted Manuscript.pdf

Dr Alessandro Sancino

Dr Alessandro Sancino is a former Italian Politician and current Senior Lecturer in Management at the Open University’s Department of Public Leadership & Social Enterprise. One of his current areas of focus is understanding the potential of ‘Smart Cities’ to lead the world of tomorrow.

‘Smart Cities’ refers to cities that use technology and science to improve public services and residents’ quality of life. It is envisaged that in the future the number of smart cities will increase, leading to the possibility that certain ‘actors’ could exploit them to facilitate political leadership opportunities. One current example is Michael Bloomberg and New York. As well as smart cities being used for individual gain, some prominent smart cities may eventually attain a leading role in the shaping of international policy. Alongside is the possibility of networks of cities i.e. coalitions, which may reach a point of directly challenging national governments.

Leadership in, of, and for Smart Cities – Case Studies from Europe, America and Australia:
http://oro.open.ac.uk/59957/

Thoughts: Should Defence be prepared for the imminent emergence of legitimate city states? And, the possibility of inter-city conflict?

A Government Perspective

Morgan Frodsham

Morgan Frodsham is the head of Insights and Engagement at the Cabinet Office’s National Leadership Centre (NLC). The NLC aims to enable public sector leaders to work more collaboratively and effectively, in systems rather than silos. This is achieved through:

- Their Annual Leadership Programme.
- Maintaining a network of senior leaders across regions and sectors.
- Completion of a range of research and evaluation activities.

Morgan Frodsham states that in regards to the future of leadership, there are a lot of developing and observable trends and it is difficult to judge which will actually stick. A best-case scenario would be the growth of leaders who translate their ideas into a vision that can benefit others, a future where leaders see themselves as part of wider outcomes that go beyond themselves and their organisation.

It is likely that there will be more co-leadership and sharing of responsibilities with a lot more distributed and diverse leadership – supported by society. There is a need to move away from the traditional concept of ‘heroic’ or ‘individual’ leadership and more towards collaboration across teams. Multi-disciplinary leadership teams could more than maximise the delivery of public services.

Although the NLC’s primary focus is the public sector, these characteristics would also be desirable for future leaders in the UK’s wider society.

Thoughts: Could Defence consider rewarding people for shared and distributed leadership rather than encouraging ‘heroic’ and ‘individual’ leadership to achieve promotions?
The following vignette provides some food for thought in relation to management and leadership activities in the future workplace.

**System Trial Report**

**System Name:** KaizenOS

**Specification:** AI management tool that uses machine learning algorithms to optimise and streamline workplace processes.

**Report Compiled by:** John Smith (Senior Team Leader)

**Reporting Period:** 01/01/2025 to 31/03/2025

Now, fair to say, I was a sceptic about handing over so many of my responsibilities to a computer program. And, in the initial stages of Kaizen’s introduction, my attitude remained fairly pessimistic. The odd authoritarian recommendation, such as implementing daily (mandatory!) team lunches (a practice that, Kaizen assured me, would guarantee a boost in performance levels) did not help matters. Nevertheless, to my surprise, my apprehension was a thing of the past come the end of that working week. My time management improved remarkably. It soon became apparent that a good chunk of my working day prior to Kaizen’s introduction was spent on administrative control and coordination. The AI system took over assignment tasking, human resourcing and real-time coordination of projects; all activities that would usually take up the bulk of my time. I simply input my project parameters into its interface and it did all the above independently. I immediately had more time to focus on more interpersonal tasks, such as communicating and socialising with key clients and suppliers. I am hoping these deeper relationships will bear fruit for us in the long run.

Team member feedback also mentioned improvements in time management. Time spent searching for internal information or task specific resources was reduced to mere seconds, with Kaizen collating all related data and resources needed for projects instantly. As a result, we completed our monthly goals well ahead of deadlines. This meant more days out and recreational activity for the different branches of the team. From my standpoint, collective morale has never been better. Kaizen also helpfully alerted me to an online surge in positive employee reviews of the company, over the trial period, most of which were related to work-life balance and innovation in some way. Although I will not go as far as attributing this solely to Kaizen and the global branches of my team, I do feel that it played a significant role. I am hoping this improved public perception of our organisational culture will go some way in attracting the best talent in this sector.

The system also works seamlessly with the humanoid members of the team. With Kaizen’s real time updates and alerts, they just seem to show up when needed, oftentimes before human team members have realised an issue is materialising. Since the robots no longer wander from desk to desk searching for tasks, our floor’s energy efficiency is at an all-time high.

Kaizen has also aided me in how I actively manage my team members. It produces automatic performance evaluations, as well as personalised coaching recommendations. Due to these resources, I now have a better knowledge of my team members. And, Kaizen allows me to automatically set them on tailored training paths, which will utilise their particular skillset in the best ways. The time and effort required to do this manually would have made such an approach unthinkable in the past.

The only downside I have experienced over the last three months is the allocation of responsibility when Kaizen does get something wrong. The system can only go on the information available to it. So, missing or outdated information can potentially lead to disorder. As I have experienced first-hand, an angry client, whose entire project has been derailed due to a
misdelivery, does not ask to speak to the system responsible. And, an angry colleague sent to an entirely different site for their very important meeting, does not vent to the system that delivered the instructions. From this perspective, Kaizen did complicate my job at times. I quickly learnt that; even in the case of ‘full automation’ a human somewhere still has to be responsible if things go wrong. A policy of regular approvals and evaluations would probably be best when using Kaizen on a wider scale6. Primarily to avoid small human errors along the chain, evolving into more serious system errors7.

But, all in all, it is a very useful management tool which allowed me to spend more time on leadership, planning clear team objectives and working on our shared purpose, and less time on process and management tasks.


What’s Happening Elsewhere?

The Future of Leadership Initiative (FLI)-*Subject to Change*

The FLI, based in Germany, is a global network of thought leaders, students and business executives. Through this diverse collective, the FLI aims to gain insight and develop future-proof strategies for some of the biggest challenges in leadership.

Agile meets Leadership (Conference)

18 & 19 June 2020 Berlin
8 & 9 October 2020 Berlin

Neuroscience meets Leadership (Conference)

9 & 10 July 2020 Munich
23 & 24 October 2020 Munich

https://www.future-of-leadership.org/

IFTF, Annual Ten-Year Forecast Summit- (TBA, California USA) The Institute for the Future’s Ten-Year Forecast Summit is an annual gathering on the collective future of society, economy, workplaces and technology. These summits employ a range of thought stimulation techniques for attendees e.g. scenario based problem solving, ready-made presentation decks, videos and other rich media content. The latest (2019) summit studied “extreme powers and equally extreme consequences that will define the coming decade for businesses, communities, and individuals around the world”. http://www.iftf.org/partner-with-iftf/vantage/ten-year-forecast/

Offers and Wants

In this section, you the readers can make the most of the space. You can offer some previous work you have carried out and share it with other readers. Also, you could be looking to do some research and need help with participants or for information in that field. Please let us know if you would like to contribute.

Dr Crispin Coombs, one of our community members has kindly shared his recently published review.

“The Strategic importance of Intelligent Automation for Knowledge and Service Work”. This is the first interdisciplinary literature review of the emerging role of Intelligent Automation i.e. AI that can learn, adapt and improve over time, within the Knowledge (ICT, Consulting, Pharmacology and Education etc.) and Service (Retail, Security, Cleaning, Administration etc.) sectors. The paper aimed to inform researchers of the current state of research relating to Intelligent Automation use within these two sectors, drawing from multiple disciplines surrounding this concept including both social and technical perspectives on the topic.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0963868720300081#s0025