

2022



# Reflection on my own Leadership

BHM382 LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

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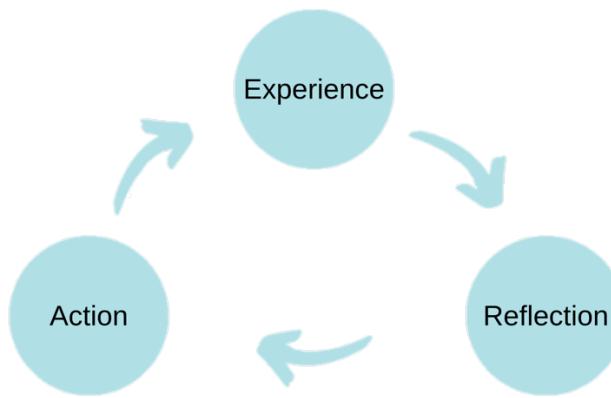
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## Introduction

In this report I will critically analyse past and present leadership within my current role as an Apprentice Software Engineer. My current role has no explicit leadership responsibilities, however there are different types and ways leadership can present itself, not just from managerial positions.

Throughout the report I will be referencing two separate sources of feedback. The largest of these being a feedback form handed out to my fellow teammates, and the smaller being feedback from a mentoring workshop done at university.

Within this analysis I will also reflect on past events in my role including the feedback that I have collected, using the ERA reflection model (Jasper, 2013). I chose this one as I like its simplicity.



*Figure 1 - Diagram of ERA reflection model. (Jasper, 2013)*

All this will be linked to theories of leadership styles, studies, traits and types of power and will be done at the end of both feedback and mentoring sections of this report. Finally, I will set goals for the future, using the SMART framework, to improve both my self-leadership and interpersonal skills within my team.

## The power of receiving feedback

For the main feedback of this report, I created a questionnaire designed to get both positive and developmental feedback from my team, questions and all answers can be seen in **Appendix A**. I wanted to make sure I was getting a diverse range of answers, so I asked the participants for their job role. I did not ask for their name as I wanted it to be somewhat anonymous as this would give me more honest feedback, this can be seen in work done by Hirsh, Galinsky and Zhong's article on anonymity (Hirsh, Galinsky and Zhong, 2011). The final question of this feedback was for feedback about the questionnaire itself, where the participants were asked to rate it between 1 and 10, the results are below.



Figure 2 - Results of final question of questionnaire.

Feedback, especially negative/constructive feedback, is often thought of as unwanted. However, a study done by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman for the Harvard Business Review, found the opposite. They found that employees want this sort of feedback, it was the giver of the feedback who didn't enjoy the experience (Zenger and Folkman, 2014). In another study Jim Asplund and Nikki Blacksmith working for Gallup, a global analytics and advice firm that helps leaders, found that receiving feedback lowered turnover rates by 14.9%, increased employee performance by 12.5% and when managers received feedback profitability increased by 8.9% (Asplund and Blacksmith, 2011). It was for these reasons I gathered the above feedback, so that I could do this again but better.

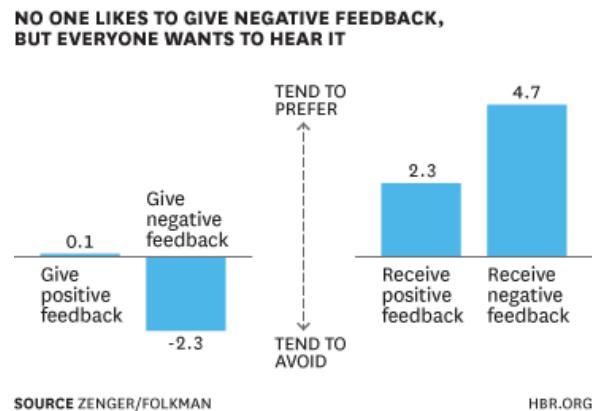
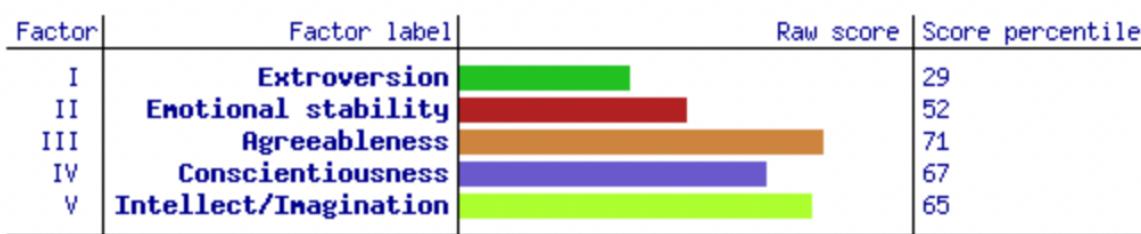


Figure 3 - Results of 'negative' feedback. (Zenger, Folkman, 2014)

After doing this questionnaire I realise now I should have asked an open-ended question about how to improve it for next time. The scores are helpful in showing that it was better than average, however not much else. Next time I will add this question at the end alongside the scores. For future feedback I will also now have a starting point on which to assess my progress, which will make it easier to see whether the close ended questions have changed.

## Mentorship and the use of personal power

A surprise to me in the feedback was that I had become a mentor to a fellow junior teammate. We often pair code, which is when one observes the other codes. In the project we were working on I had more experience as I had used the technology in my own projects. Prior to attending leadership lectures, I believed that leadership could only be held in positions of power, and that I could not be a leader in my current junior role. However, the feedback has made me think otherwise. Yukl claims that there are two key types of power, positional power and personal power, with the prior being based on position in a company and the latter not (Yukl, 2013). In this case the power I have as a leader is Personal Power, which Yukl breaks down into Expert Power and Referent Power (Yukl, 2013). Our relationship is very friendly and for that reason I would say I have a lot of referent power. In a current project we're working on it could also be argued I have some degree of expert power, due to having pre-existing knowledge of the framework we're using. When we first started the project, I remember him not being sure about the framework and his ability to work on it. Despite this I kept encouraging him that he could do it, leading him through the first couple of tasks to show him the basics. After a while he was up and running and able to do tasks without as much assistance from me. Below is a chart produced by a Big Five Personality Trait Test, (Open-Source Psychometrics Project, 2019), and this helps illustrate that I have high agreeableness and conscientiousness, which is a key factor in referent power.



Big five personality trait scores calculated by openpsychometrics.org

Figure 4 - Personal results of a Big Five Personalities Trait test. (Open-Source Psychometrics Project, 2019)

In the same way my colleague is a mentee to me, I am a mentee to another more senior member of the team. Once again, his position of power is a personal one, however he also possesses expert power, tables for both referent and expert power traits can be seen in **Appendix B and C**. He has been in the organisation for over 10 years now, so has knowledge of both components/projects within and outside the team, leading to this expert power. However, he uses a transformational leadership style where he “is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals” (copied) (Northouse, 2021, p.185-186). He uses his expert knowledge to know what tasks to provide me, encourages me to push myself with more advanced tasks, and as time has gone on has begun to trust me with decisions like the ‘Off Product Inspector’ that is mentioned through **Appendix A**. He believes in learning through failure, which to a lot of people would seem odd as failing is often regarded as a negative thing. However, a study done by Potts and Shanks showed “errorful generation may play a powerful role in potentiating encoding of corrective feedback” (copied) (Potts, Shanks, 2014).

Learning through failure works for me, however it's something I have never tried implementing when mentoring. This is potentially due to the previously mentioned preconception of most people believing that failure/mistakes are negative. A study from the Association of Psychological Science showed the following.

"[the] brain makes two quick signals: an initial response that indicates something has gone awry ... and a second that indicates the person is consciously aware of the mistake and is trying to right the wrong." (copied) (Association for Psychological Science, 2011)

From these brain signals they could tell if the person was capable of learning through mistakes effectively. It's a tool that I should try and use when mentoring. Despite me feeling like I'm 'saving' them from feeling bad, I could be taking a lot of great learning experiences from them. If I took this approach and the individual I was mentoring did not take well to it I'd have to switch tactics, pointing them to things to research and read about before a task is undertaken.

After gathering forms of feedback, from my team and classmates it has allowed me to reflect on my mentoring/coaching for the future. Taking inspiration from how I have been mentored, I want to try and delegate more and be more trusting in the people that I mentor. They may be like me and learn through failure or may have to adjust and guide them to correct materials to learn from. Either way a study done by Yukl (Yukl, 2013, p.129), found that 97% of managers would delegate to "develop subordinate skills and confidence", the highest rating of any reason, full table can be seen in **Appendix E**. In addition to this I want to take feedback that was given to me from the coaching workshop we did in class, **Appendix D**. This feedback stated that I should have asked more questions and probed deeper. This will allow me to understand if the person I'm mentoring is struggling with something, and what that problem is. To do this I can jot down some of the questions from the slides provided whilst doing the session and use them to dig deeper (Whitmore, 2017).

## Creating a roadmap for the future using SMART goals

As a final step I want to take some of the feedback gathered from my team, **Appendix A**, and topics reflected on throughout this report and set some goals. Goals work and can increase performance in the workplace. A study done in the American Journal of Surgery showed the difference between setting no goals, performance-based goals and learning goals. The study found that setting goals resulted in better performance, however it also illustrated that setting learning goals was better for performance, than setting performance-based goals (Gardener, Diesen, Hogg and Huerta, 2016).

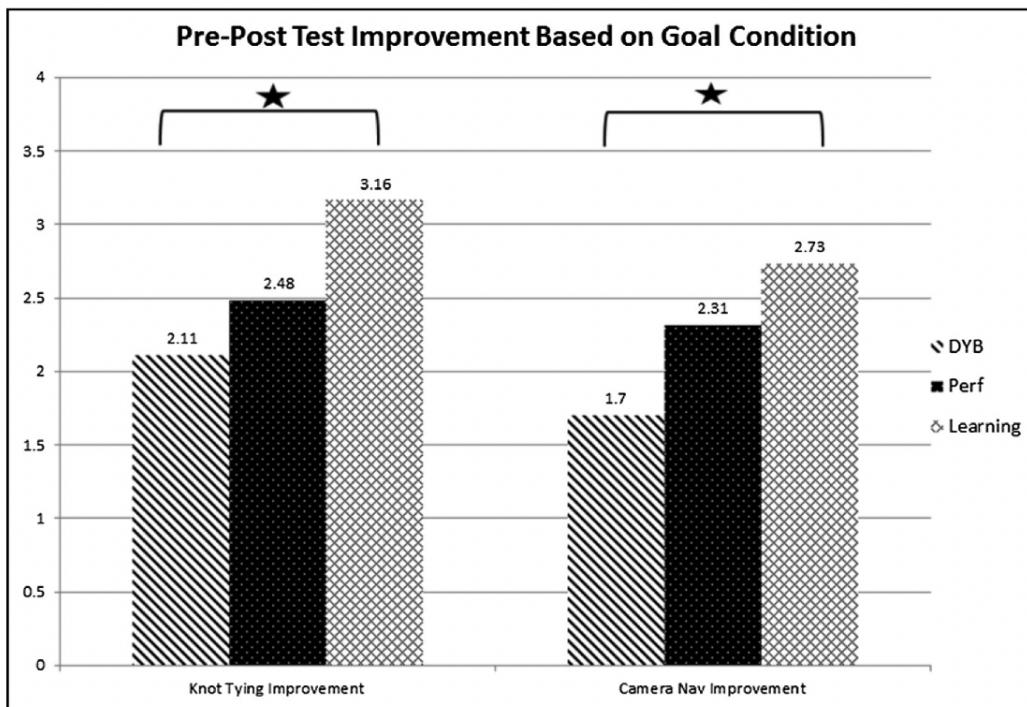


Figure 5 - Results of goal setting study (Gardener, Diesen, Hogg and Huerta, 2016, p.324).

I am going to write SMART goals which is an acronym that defines the criteria of a goal. Originally thought of by George Doran (Doran, 1981), SMART goals have evolved over the years, I will be following the acronyms outlined below from the class material:

- Specific
- Measurable (so you can see progress)
- Ambitious
- Relevant (important to you)
- Time-bound

Writing goals down has been shown to increase the likelihood of their success. further sharing these goals makes the probability even more so (Matthews, 2015). This potentially being due to the ‘generation effect’ which is the theory that when an individual generates something that thing is more memorable (McCurdy, Viechtbauer, Sklenar, Frankenstein and Leshikar). That is the reason why below I have taken the time to write out my goals and I hope to share these goals with my line manager.

A big thing that stuck out to me from the feedback was answers to the questions, ‘What can I do to continue this growth?’, AWS (Amazon Web Services) appeared twice, as well as ‘domain knowledge’ being referenced elsewhere in the questionnaire. This is also something I have not had exposure to prior to my current role. AWS offers certification courses (Amazon Web Services, 2022), which I think will be a good way to improve and assess my progress. Learning more about AWS will help me in my day-to-day role and expand the kind of tasks I can do. The foundational level would be a good place to start, then with future goals going into the more experienced levels, such as the Associate Developer certification.

### **Goal 1 – Pass AWS Cloud Practitioner Foundational by April 2023.**

From the feedback I wanted to understand how I communicate within the team. I got a lot of great feedback, which pointed to me not speaking up enough during meetings. This quietness also contributes to the feeling of me not understanding what is happening in the meeting/project. I don’t feel like this is so much the case, but more so me being somewhat introverted, as the Big Five Personality Traits shows I score low on extroversion. However, as was said in the feedback, just saying things like “I like that approach” or “yes I get that now” is better than silence. This is a tough one to measure and add a time constraint to, however I think by doing another questionnaire in the future I can compare the results from this time to the next. Communication was the only area of the questionnaire where I got a middling ‘neither agree nor disagree’ rating, so my goal can be to improve that.

### **Goal 2 – Improve input in meetings, conduct another questionnaire by March 2023 to measure progress against previous results.**

My final goal is going to be continuing mentoring/coaching. This is a skill I want to keep improving and learning about so that I can help my teammates and myself do the best work possible. My organisation has mentoring training that would then allow me to mentor undergraduate apprentices. I feel this is a great opportunity for me to better my skills in mentoring through learning, as well as through practice after the training.

### **Goal 3 – Attend BBC mentoring training.**

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## Appendix

Appendix A – Table showing questions and answers from questionnaire.

<b>What is your role in Space Chimp?</b> Options - Dev, Managerial, Test/QA
<b>1 Dev, 2 Managerial, 2 Test/QA</b>
<b>You have seen me grow within my role in the last year?</b> Options – Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
<b>2 Strongly Agree, 3 Agree</b>
<b>What can I do to continue this growth?</b>
<b>Aws</b> <b>Increase confidence in oneself in critique code. Never be satisfied of mediocracy or lazy coding practices. Call it out no matter the seniority.</b>
<b>AWS skills practice and more exposure to larger projects</b> <b>Continue coming up with ideas and implementing them. Try to give more inputs to improve the existing architecture or system, bringing in fresh ideas. Collaborate more with others within and outside the team. Try to interact with different disciplines. Like Test, BA. this will help you understand requirements more clearly, and sharpen your domain knowledge</b>
<b>Don't know</b>
<b>I communicate well during tasks/meetings?</b> Options – Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
<b>2 Strongly Agree, 2 Agree, 1 Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>
<b>My communication skills have improved since starting my role?</b> Options – Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
<b>1 Strongly Agree, 4 Agree</b>
<b>What can I do to improve how I communicate in the future?</b>
<b>contribute a little more during meetings such as retro</b> <b>Your domain knowledge is really what is holding you back from contributing effectively. Only time can help improve on this as you become more confident to question or offer alternative approaches in meetings. In smaller meetings you do speak out at the coding level but in general meetings your silence gives me the impression that not all is understood. The same goes to QA members. Even saying "I like that approach" or "yes i get that now" and "I see why we would want to do that" is very good feedback to the room. When something is not understood - force the speaker to repeat and repeat until it makes sense for the entire room. You won't be the only person in the dark that is for sure as the domain knowledge is challenging.</b>
<b>A little slow to stand up and express views.</b> <b>Continue communicating and interacting with people within and outside the team. Take more proactive approach in informing others of anything you find, and investigating.</b>
<b>I suspect you are a naturally quiet, reflective sort of person. If people ask you to be more assertive etc all the time, that wouldn't play to your strengths, so be yourself</b>
<b>Is there a time where I showed leadership qualities when working together (big or small)?</b>

Options – Yes, No

**4 Yes, 1 No**

**If yes to the above, what was it, what went well?**

You have a better command at javascript compared with your peer and it is quite visible that you take ownership and direction to solve issues together. Your confidence in tackling the newer version of INT-GEL library shows leadership of making decisions at the coding level and getting it to work. You have taken Fabrizio under your mentorship without knowing it and you seem to have enjoyed the process.

ReactJS solution for off product inspector. Great feedback from other developers both senior and junior.

Working on off product inspector with little guidance. Leading your teammate, when senior teammate was on leave and delivering quality releases.

You lead the daily stand-ups when its your turn

**What improvements/changes could I make to help myself?**

not sure

Defo slow down. You should fail early and refactor before moving on to another ticket. You should critique your own code along with the tests. Can it be done better? Is the test maintainable? Does it read well? Can it be more optimised? Is it over engineering? then decide to finish the ticket. So even when a ticket is handed over to QA - take the time to reflect and say can I do better? The art of software engineering is to write LESS code and be able to back your decision to argue for less code.

more input in meetings and team events, we want to hear more from Oli

As previously said, collaborate with different disciplines. Adding more onto that, try to connect to people from other teams that may or may not have any relation with your current team. Connect with other iplayer teams, see how they work. You may learn something new everytime you connect with others.

Contribute more in Slack when you have something to say

**Out of 10 how was this questionairre?**

**1 : 7 rating, 2 : 8 ratings , 1 : 9 rating, 1 : 10 rating**

Appendix B – Expert Power according to Yukl (Yukl, 2013, p.203)

**TABLE 8-5** Ways to Use and Maintain Expert Power

- Explain the reasons for a request or proposal and why it is important.
  - Provide evidence that a proposal will be successful.
  - Don't make rash, careless, or inconsistent statements.
  - Don't lie, exaggerate, or misrepresent the facts.
  - Listen seriously to the person's concerns and suggestions.
  - Act confident and decisive in a crisis.
- 

Appendix C – Referent Power according to Yukl (Yukl, 2013, p.204)

**TABLE 8-6** Ways to Gain and Use Referent Power

- Show acceptance and positive regard.
  - Be supportive and helpful.
  - Use sincere forms of ingratiation.
  - Keep promises and commitments.
  - Make self sacrifices to benefit others.
  - Lead by example (use role modeling).
  - Explain the personal importance of a request.
-

Appendix D – Screenshots of feedback captured during in class coaching session

Coaching conversation feedback		
Date of coaching conversation: 22/11/2022		
Name of student facilitating the coaching conversation:	Name of observer:	Name of coach:
Please comment on the following areas:		
Skill/attribute	Observer's comments:	Coachee's comments:
Appropriate non-verbal communication and listening skills	Maintained frequent eye contact . Attention .	Yes eye contact and acknowledgement
Questioning skills	Open questions	Good open questions, could have probed deeper into potential actions short term actions
Demonstrating positive regard and offering support	How can I help? was asked	Yes, helped to come to a solution

Use of the GROW model		
Area	Observers' comments:	Coachee's comments:
GOAL	Questioned about goals	Yes
REALITY	Planning & training	# Yes, coach asked about current situation & how I felt about it
OPTIONS	Without opportunity to attain new skills	A number of different potential long-term options were discussed
WILL	Quite committed 7/10	Arrived at an option to which I felt more committed

Appendix E – Reasons manager would delegate a task (Yukl, 2013, p.129)

**TABLE 5-5**

**Percent of Managers Who Rated a Reason for Delegating As Moderately or Very Important**

Develop subordinate skills and confidence	97%
Enable subordinates to deal with problems quickly	91%
Improve decisions by moving them close to the action	89%
Increase subordinate commitment to a task	89%
Make the job more interesting for subordinates	78%
Reduce your workload to manage time better	68%
Satisfy superiors who want you to delegate more	24%
Get rid of tedious tasks you don't want to do	23%