

YOUR

# V|E|C|T|O|R Leadership<sup>®</sup>

ACTION PACK

#1

“Defining  
the **path** ahead”



*Setting your goals in the context of the market  
requirements and your business drivers.  
Then taking charge and pushing ahead.*

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## I. LEADERSHIP IN PERSPECTIVE

There's a saying that history is nothing but the stories of great men and women. It's a simplification, but one that carries an important message: individuals, particularly leaders, play a driving role in human affairs – historically and still today.

For many of us, the thing that enlivens history is the tales of key individuals and what they did. The exploits of Alexander the Great over 2,000 years ago. Or, the energy and courage of a Renaissance monarch, like Elizabeth I, expanding or protecting their territory. Or, a great industrialist of the last century, like Henry Ford. And, more recently, leaders like Margaret Thatcher changing the face of Britain, or Bill Gates building Microsoft. And, around these individuals are countless other leaders, who are part of the story.

This historical tapestry is repeated across civilizations, and across fields of human endeavour like medicine, religion, science and the arts.

Leadership is a constant presence. And, interestingly, many of the success factors have not really changed. Leaders have always set goals and created visions of future possibilities. They've demonstrated technical proficiency (for example, at the head of their army – or revolution) to earn credibility. Above all, they've engaged people to join the journey they have in mind. Inspiring, encouraging, guiding and rewarding them.

It's not surprising, therefore, that we still refer to books that pre-date Alexander, such as Sun Tzu's "The Art of War", or ones that guided leaders 500 years ago, such as Machiavelli's "The Prince". Writers in the last century poured out books on leadership. Much of their advice was repetitive, and much was contradictory. But there were new insights offered by a few, like Peter Drucker, responding to contemporary commercial and social realities.

So, there's a lot you can learn from the past. Much stays the same. But **your make-or-break challenge is the uniqueness of your specific situation**. The mix of your operational challenges and the people you're leading. Reading helps. But in the end, you're on your own.

So, as you work through this Leadership Action Pack, take what is useful and reject what isn't. But, above all, regard it as input – not the answer. That's yours to find: the necessary and most effective **leadership actions** to take. I return to this challenge at the end of the bio that follows; I may even have some pointers for you.

## II. TIMOTHY PASCOE: BIO, LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND TESTIMONIALS

I have set out my biography below in three parts: my father, myself, and other leaders. Each part relates to a particular driver of my leadership development and thinking.

**My father.** I only knew him for ten years – from his return after World War II until his death in 1956. But, he and his story were the start of my interest in leadership. He was self-made, having left school at 12, worked in northern South Australia, and then signed up during World War I with an Australian Light Horse regiment. He served in the Middle East, was promoted and became a successful officer. Between the wars, back in South Australia, he started an engineering business. But when WWII started, despite being over age, he signed up again and finished in 1945 as a Brigadier and Commandant of Lae Base in New Guinea. He returned home, resuscitated his business and later took it public. But, he lost focus and it nearly failed. His last two years were spent re-establishing it.

His energy, smarts, people skills and creativity (particularly in adversity) are still vivid for me. But, so is his waywardness and lack of financial prudence. All leadership issues.

**Myself.** In contrast to my father, I had every advantage in my early upbringing. I studied Engineering (and Economics in parallel), won a scholarship to do a PhD at Cambridge, and then did an MBA at Harvard. I joined McKinsey in New York - a worldwide management consulting firm that focuses on solving issues of concern to senior management. I later opened their office in Sydney.

I ran a venture capital company for three years, got involved in politics (turning around a moribund party machine), started a non-profit to provide private sector funding and management skills to the arts, was appointed Executive Chairman of the Australia Council (the Australian Government's arts policy and funding body), and then went back to business consulting 20 years ago – but on my own, focusing on strategy and later on leadership.

In 2004, my decades of voluntary work for non-profits was recognised by my appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia, for service to the arts and community organisations.

My successes and, more importantly, my failures, were my toughest tutors. I came to realise I lacked my father's natural people skills and was far too controlling – both of these weaknesses stemmed, at least in part, from over-belief in my own ability. And, these realisations plus feedback from colleagues continued my leadership development.

**Other leaders.** I've been privileged to work with some great leaders who've been at the top of their fields – in business, the professions, politics, the arts and elsewhere. And, as a colleague, friend or consultant, I've been able to talk with them about how they operate.

As a compulsive categoriser, over the last twenty years I've structured my leadership learnings - focusing on what works, rather than on theory. The result is a practical tool. It extends business planning to cover **what YOU, as the leader, must do** to give traction to what your business, division or team needs to achieve.

My V|E|C|T|O|R framework helps you identify concerns holding your people back, and the actions to address them. It bridges the hard (market and technical) and the soft (people and culture) issues of leadership. And, it produces an **action list**. It started as a consulting tool; and it's now online as well. Above all, it's where I've been heading all my life. This Leadership Action Pack is a sample of what it's about. I hope you find it valuable.

Leadership is neither born, nor bred. It's planned!



## TESTIMONIALS

**“Excellent ... very simple but very effective”**

*Paul Masi, CEO Merrill Lynch Australia*

**“Your planning process is superb”**

*Paul Sprokkreeff, CEO Web Profits Pty Ltd*

**“Resource material is best I've seen”**

*Neil Weeks, CEO Australian Reinsurance Pool Corp'n.*

**“Directly contributed to better service ... and profitability”**

*Adam Simpson, Simpsons Solicitors*

**“I find this process stimulating and inspiring”**

*Dr Rose Alwyn, Master, St Mark's College, University of Adelaide*

### III. DEFINING THE PATH AHEAD

Your takeaways from this Leadership Action Pack will be:



- ➔ **Clarity about the steps needed to define the vision and goals** for your business or area. Helping you think through what you need to do on assuming a new role or, after market or organisational turmoil, to clarify where you're taking your team. You may wish to continue an existing path, modify it or embark on something quite new. Either way, you need to get the vision and goals clear in people's minds. Otherwise, they'll have no basis for supporting you and coming on the journey.
- ➔ **Your Personal Action List** that's driven off the steps needed to define and agree a vision, goals, etc. But, focusing on what you, as the leader, need to do to get these things resolved and enthuse your people about them – thereby driving implementation.

This is not about business as usual. It is about achieving the magic ingredient of total commitment: your people's willingness to give their jobs everything they've got. A determination to win.

The first four articles in this Pack provide thought-starters around:

1. **Analysing and understanding your marketplace.** Like a tracker dog, sniffing out the hidden clues: how well your business is rated; the strengths of competitors; the shifts in technology and product requirements.
2. **Identifying drivers of competitive advantage.** The critical elements in the customer buying decision, factors impacting employee satisfaction, and elements that lift productivity and profits.
3. **Defining destination, goals and outcomes.** What you want your business to look like in the future – target customers, market positioning, product range, price points, productivity levels, margins.
4. **Taking charge and supporting others in doing the same.** Stepping up to responsibility, being visible and proactive, bringing people together – and encouraging others to act similarly.

## GETTING TRACTION

Following these four articles, we've included a blank sheet on which to draft your **Action Pack Plan**. We've inserted the above four action headings to stimulate and focus your thinking.

Your task is to bring this blank sheet alive as a tool to increase business growth and profitability, and your excellence as a leader. There are three steps:

1. **Reflect on what you've read** in terms of your current business and organisational challenges and the needs of the people you're leading – particularly concerns that may be holding them back from full commitment and enthusiasm.
2. **Define what actions you should take** – what you're going to do (adding your unique contribution) in addressing market or technical issues or the alignment and empowerment of your people – and the culture in which they work.
3. **Check each action is clear, actionable and measurable** in terms of what you're doing, who's involved and the deadline for completion.

We'll return to these steps again later.

To thank you for purchasing this Pack, we're including three extra bonus articles – from our archive of Pascoe's Potshots. These deal with broader leadership topics, and illustrate what you can read on my blog. There's a new one (and often other new material) each week. And, you're invited to comment – joining a dialogue with other leaders.

After the bonus Potshots, there's a brief background note on V|E|C|T|O|R Leadership® to round out your understanding of what it's about – and how it can help you.

And, finally, a page about other V|E|C|T|O|R **Leadership Action Packs** you may want to buy – to take your thinking and planning further. Plus, details on our two **online tools**, the top-end V|E|C|T|O|R offerings. These enable you to:

- ➡ **Develop a full Leadership Action Plan:** working through a three-stage process identifying key issues holding your people back, the types of leadership actions needed to address them, and your specific commitments – your Personal Action List.
- ➡ **Solve a pressing Leadership Problem:** clarifying an issue you and your team are facing, and what you need to do so the matter is resolved.

## ARTICLE #1

### ANALYSING & UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARKETPLACE

*You can “get real” about industry trends, competitors and how your business rates; and rid yourself of wrong and ungrounded assumptions.*

First, a question: what’s the best way to understand a new locality? A teacher told me he always sits and listens to the local sounds: ambient noises, the tone of people’s voices, the presence or absence of birdsong. A dog checks the smells.

Here’s a tougher question: what’s the best way to understand an old locality (or market) – in which you’ve operated for years? It’s tougher since, once acclimatised, we often stop listening. Does this apply to your organisation? How well do you know your markets: who’s rising, who’s falling, and where your company fits? New arrivals often roll top-dogs, not because they’re better but because they’ve sniffed out new opportunities. Their senses are still engaged.

A quick test: **how well rated in the market** are your two or three most important products or services – and why? Write down your answers!

What would top competitors say? Or, an independent expert? From my consulting in a wide range of industries, I’ve often found executives don’t really know or, worse, suspect a problem but kid themselves it’s all OK. Like the frog in a pot of slowly heating water, they don’t recognise the change and are eventually boiled alive.

**Long-term successful players seek regular reality checks.** In sport, it’s easy. The game each week gives stark feedback – as do the commentators. But in business or the professions, it’s not always easy. Customers may be complaining – but not to you. Unless you seek information, it may be months or even years before you hear that your product is regarded as out-of-date; or, your service is below par.

As a leader, you need well-tuned senses – to **listen to and smell what’s going on**, and then decide how to act. Here are four actions to help you pick up the scent:

- ➡ **Define the scale, positioning and performance of your business or area:** use a fact-based, quantified evaluation based on revenues, customers, productivity, profit-ability, etc.
- ➡ List the five most significant **market trends and issues that are going to reshape your industry:** these may be structural, legislative, technological or social and you must understand each of them, as this sets the context for your vision and the journey towards it.
- ➡ **Make a table of your top six (established, new, or potential) competitors:** include their strategies, strengths and weaknesses since they will be seeking to steal your customers and revenue, and outdo your reputation and market standing.

➔ **Define where each of your products, services, technologies and resources rank in the industry:** find out where they rate in independent customer and competitor surveys.

Here are two mini-cases illustrating some of the issues above:

### Positive example ...

**Industry experience – Marketing Manager, local government service business.** She joined this organisation having worked with a leading private sector participant in the same industry, so she understood the industry dynamics, cost structures and the approaches key players had taken in shaping their strategies and pricing models. This provided valuable insights for her new employer (only recently separated from government control), and it meant she could provide strong guidance to the top team in their development of appropriate strategies to rebuild the market position of the business.

### Negative example ...

Always remember you need to get the analysis right, but also come up with an acceptable solution. This leader (also a client of mine) did all the right things, but it cost him his job because his advice caused unacceptable embarrassment to the business.

**Too much reality – Executive Director, property.** He was recruited to join the senior management of a large company in an overseas market, bringing years of industry experience from a more competitive environment, where he'd spent the bulk of his career. He promoted a range of performance improvement programs and forced tough-minded assessment of the poor economics (and market potential) of past projects still on the books. The board followed his advice and wrote down the carrying value of these projects. However, embarrassed by market reaction to the bad news and needing a scapegoat, the board shot the messenger!

Finally, here are six questions to test your thinking:

1. How realistic would your staff say you are about the market, your organisation, and its prospects?
2. What will be the two biggest shifts in market structure and expectations in the next 12 months?
3. Which competitor is adapting to these new trends most quickly? What are they doing?
4. Can you adapt to the new requirements – or should you move on?
5. What signs are there that your product/service offering may be losing acceptance?
6. When did you last talk with a group of customers?

## ARTICLE #2

### IDENTIFYING DRIVERS OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

*You can define (and measure) key success factors and how you can improve them; dispensing with scatter-gun or unfocused metrics and controls.*

Survival and safety are the two lowest levels on Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. They're the most intense, requiring unrelenting focus on finding food and ensuring security. It's an appalling prospect I've never faced. However, in some areas of our lives, we all face mini-survival issues. Two I've faced (a business going broke, and saving my marriage) taught me lessons that have kept me safe from repeating those experiences.

Interestingly, it is not laziness that led me to either crisis but a failure to focus on the right things. Not giving appropriate priority and energy to the right issues and appropriate actions.

In your business, do you know **what are the key factors that drive customer-buying decisions?** Or, **employee satisfaction?** Or, **profit margins?** Or, **service quality?** And, **what measures do you use** to track each one?

If measures aren't in place, **what data gathering is needed?** And, how can you do it simply and in real time. There's no point in information that's too expensive or out-of-date.

For any leader, a critical skill is understanding the key drivers in all aspects of the business. The few high-level ones, which ensure the business prospers today and tomorrow. And also, the two or three keys to each aspect of organisational activity.

There's an old joke about a technician charging \$1,000 for a quick visit to fix a machine. He divided his invoice into two parts: first for "Minor adjustment – \$50"; and, second, "Knowing what to adjust and by how much – \$950". As leaders, we need to understand **the adjustments that make the difference.**

Here are three steps to start you on your way.

- ➡ **Review and prioritise the top three success factors in relation to: your target customers and markets; personnel and HR; finance; operations; and, technology.** Ensure all bases are checked across your operations and constituencies – but then reduce the list to those few which merit unrelenting focus.
- ➡ **Establish two measures for each of the selected factors.** What's measured gets managed!
- ➡ **Set up appropriate data-gathering and information distribution** to achieve the above. Build management information systems that reflect the priority business drivers, and ensure people have access to relevant information for their decisions.

Here are two **mini-cases** illustrating some of the issues raised on the previous page:

### Positive example ...

**Margins – Entrepreneur, office products company.** With co-investors, he bought control of an old-name private company, which had fallen on hard times, and turned it around through strict focus on a few key metrics (sales volume, margin by product, etc.). And, he publicised these in graphs on the walls of the office and factory, so everyone from the most senior to the most junior knew how things were going and what needed to be improved. When, as part of a corporate review, I interviewed key staff, everyone highlighted the importance of these key business drivers!

### Negative example ...

**Comfort zone – Head of tertiary college.** She spent the majority of her time on infrastructure maintenance (rather than scholastic and inspirational matters), which meant the buildings were in great shape and the plumbing worked. But she failed to lead the college forward. For me and other students of the period, our most enjoyable year was the one she took a sabbatical. Her replacement set an entirely different pace – encouraging (and inspiring) students to excel both in academic studies and in contribution to college community life.

Finally, here are **six questions** to test your thinking:

1. Who are the top-5 market and other external stakeholders for your organisation and what are each of their top-three requirements?
2. What are the top-10 internal drivers or key factors for success?
3. Which four or five of the above two sets of factors need to be worked at relentlessly this year to ensure competitive success?
4. How will you measure progress on each one?
5. Who will receive this information – why not everyone? And, how is it best presented?
6. What level of variation from plan or budget will trigger remedial action?

## ARTICLE #3

### DEFINING DESTINATION, GOALS AND OUTCOMES

*You can specify operational targets and outcomes that establish what success will look like, and thus avoid mistaken decisions and wasted resources*

On 29th of May 1953, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay stood triumphant on the summit of Mount Everest, holding aloft their ice axes. Their joy in that moment was the reward for a clear goal, lengthy planning, intense effort and extreme courage. When did you and your team last stand proud after delivering on a business-changing goal or ground-breaking customer project? Here are some issues to consider:

A mountain top is well-defined. The leader can point to it and everyone sees the same glistening peak. In business, destinations are seldom so clear. However, effective leaders bring them alive. They communicate a **vision** or “**light on the hill**” and the journey to it that inspires potential followers. An effective leader backs this with **goals** and **outcomes** that are specific and measurable. When possible, they’ll also involve everyone, so there’s **shared ownership** of the journey.

If I sat with your team and asked where you’re taking them (and by what route), what would they say? Would they know how the business is meant to look in three years time: **target customers, market positioning, range of products, revenue goals, desired gross margins, number of employees, locations for new facilities or outlets**? Would they know where they are on the journey today?

In working on strategy with clients over many years, I’ve been amazed to hear the woolly (and sometimes conflicting) answers to these sorts of questions. Given such ambiguity about where they’re going, it’s no wonder they have unfocused debates around key decisions and, left to themselves, individuals often make wrong ones.

How long is it since you took time to think about these issues? Or, took your team away to set strategy, or take stock of progress and update the vision and key goals – and plan what you’re going to do to achieve them? Here are four steps on the journey to the top of your mountain:

- ➡ **Set 12-month targets for each of the following: your offerings, revenue, productivity and geographic spread.** Define them as specifically as possible, so people have a clear and common mental picture of what you’re all trying to create and achieve.
- ➡ **Define the business model, brand positioning, and strategic intent** for you business or area. Make sure everyone understands how your operation is going to work, where you want it to sit in the market, and how you intend to beat your competitors.
- ➡ **Quantify the top-4 financial and other targets.** Put numbers on each, so you can measure performance – both financially and operationally.

**Seek wide involvement and ownership.** Ensure there is buy-in and commitment, not just acquiescence in what you or a small group have come up with.

Here are two mini-cases illustrating some of the issues raised on the previous page:

#### **Positive example ...**

**Stretch goal – new CEO, subsidiary of global investment bank.** One of his first actions was to define a 5-year vision – and communicate his ambition to move the business from the middle of the second division into the top-half of the first. I was privileged to work with him and his team in refining the vision and fleshing out what it meant in terms of needed market share in key product/service areas, what additional lines of business might be added, etc. The CEO then asked each key manager to explain the draft vision and goals to his or her team and get further input. After some weeks, the vision, goals and key operating values were finalised and shared throughout the organisation. As a result, they became owned by everyone – and a number of the operating divisions established supporting visions and goals for their own areas. From then, the organisation was absolutely clear about where it was going and who it now regarded as its competitors. Over the next three years, it achieved its goals – and more!

#### **Negative example ...**

Secrecy – Chief Executive, software house. She believed the company’s vision was clear. The senior team knew the CEO had one, but wanted it spelt out so they could fully understand and share it. After a long and angry struggle, they got it on-the-table and then built plans around it. But a lot of energy and commitment had been wasted.

Finally, here are six questions to test your thinking:

1. Which of your team members are really clear on where your operation is going? How many have explained this to their staff – and their customers?
2. Is your business model defined – and viable both operationally and financially?
3. How would your top-3 competitors know (and regret) you’re competing with them?
4. How far down in the organisation do people know and feel ownership of the vision, goals and values?
5. Are there targets at each level, which support overall organisational goals?
6. Does the vision excite members of staff? How vigorously are they “signing on”?

## ARTICLE #4

### TAKING CHARGE & SUPPORTING OTHERS IN SAME

*You can demonstrate ownership, responsibility, and decisiveness; and avoid your people feeling they're on a rudderless ship*

For many of us, the image of the courageous leader has military overtones. The platoon sergeant taking troops forward under fire. Or, the captain of cavalry, standing high in the stirrups, sword aloft, galloping towards the enemy lines.

In businesses, leaders seldom see physical combat. But this doesn't lessen the need to be upfront: showing the way – and demonstrating courage. Equally, there are times to be within the group, ensuring everyone's OK; finding out what they're thinking and feeling. But, at critical moments, someone has to lead – whether representing the organisation in negotiations, presenting a case to the board, or setting out goals and a plan of action. Even seemingly ordinary activities require conviction and courage.

Over decades of consulting, I've noted that effective leaders do similar things. They're **proactive** and **take responsibility for key problems and priorities** – grasping the prickly nettles. They **take stock** and then **simplify things**. They're **visible**. Whether out front or within the body of the team, their presence is palpable. They **bring people together** at critical moments: to explain, listen, reassure and encourage. Equally, they **encourage others to lead**: to step up and take charge. And, where appropriate, may **pass the leadership** to someone else who is better equipped for a particular task.

Across the teams you've led, in your career to date, do you remember doing these types of things? What was the effect? What did you learn? Here are five actions to consider in taking charge:

- ➔ **Identify the critical problems facing your people** and take personal responsibility for the top two or three. Focus on what is important and where your input will make a vital difference.
- ➔ **Be visible and out there** – each day or each week, as appropriate. Your physical presence will give more reassurance than you realise.
- ➔ **Call your people together** – again, regularly. Or, if there's a problem looming, convene a meeting to deal with it.
- ➔ **Let others lead**. Review your current list of tasks and decide which three to delegate. You can't and shouldn't do everything; others need to test their skills as leaders.

**Involve all key senior executives** in major issues – not just one or two. For major projects or challenging situations, you need top-down commitment across all relevant functions.

Here are two mini-cases illustrating some of the issues raised on the previous page:

**Positive example ...**

**Visibility – Museum Director.** He took over a tired, colourless organisation. By taking charge and driving hard, he soon put a personal stamp on the place, energising both day-to-day operations and all the organisation's key public events. He and his team achieved unprecedented growth in community support and both government and private sector funding. Over a period of five years, the museum became a role model for other institutions.

**Negative example ...**

**Fear – Regional Chief Executive, global agency business.** I was asked by this long-serving, local CEO to assist him and his team develop a new business strategy. However, he was so frightened by the magnitude of industry changes and the driving energy of the younger members of his executive that he was unable to take charge of either the issues or the people. Sensing this, the global board stepped in to replace him. After which, the work and business proceeded – and prospered.

Finally, here are six questions to test your thinking:

1. Are there major issues or challenges, which lack a champion? Who should do it?
2. On which major problems would staff say you are in charge?
3. When you're in charge, are your instructions clear and to the point – or woolly and confusing?
4. Can you tell the difference – or do you need an editor?
5. How many times a week do you walk the floor?
6. Would any staff not recognise you?

## IV. YOUR V|E|C|T|O|R PERSONAL ACTION LIST



After you've read the four Action Area articles, you should then develop your Personal Action List: what **you're going to do** to get those Action Areas addressed. You won't be doing all the analysis and legwork – or necessarily writing the business plan that **defines the path ahead** – and how you're going to get there. Your challenge is to find that smaller set of actions, which are peculiarly yours. **Things only you can do, or where you add unique value to the content or process.**

To decide on your actions, the question to ask yourself is this: **what would my people say I should be doing**, so that they are enthusiastic to do the work required to develop – and start implementing - the business plan?

By adding your unique value, you empower others to do the rest. You may need to establish ground rules and high-level assumptions for the planning process. Assumptions, for example, about industry growth rates, availability of new technology, or likely regulatory changes. Or, you may need to share your industry knowledge. Or, organise and run a workshop, in which the team can work through the market analysis and develop options and key parameters for the business plan.

### CREATING YOUR PLAN

After this introduction, there's a blank form in which you can write **your action commitments**. As indicated earlier, your task is to bring this blank sheet alive as a tool to increase business growth and profitability, and your excellence as a leader. The three steps you need to take are:

- ➔ **Reflect on what you've read** in terms of your current business and organisational challenges and the needs of the people you're leading – particularly concerns that may be holding them back from full commitment and enthusiasm.
- ➔ **Define what actions you should take** – what you're going to do (adding your unique contribution) in addressing market or technical issues or the alignment and empowerment of your people – and the culture in which they work.
- ➔ **Check each action is clear, actionable and measurable** in terms of what you're doing, who's involved and the deadline for completion.

We've inserted the headings from the four Action Area articles you've read. These will act as prompts, and below one or more of them, you can insert your action commitments. Let me illustrate this using the first Action Area heading as an example.

## ILLUSTRATION

## MY V|E|C|T|O|R PERSONAL ACTION LIST

**Date developed:** 7 October      **Period:** November to January

















ACTION HEADINGS AND COMMITMENTS	Deadline
<p><u>Analyse and understand your marketplace</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ <i>Invite two of my industry colleagues to meet with my team to share views on industry developments, key shifts in competitive behaviour, and likely changes to the regulatory regime over coming 24 months</i></li> <li>➔ <i>Brainstorm additional issues at same meeting</i></li> <li>➔ <i>Ask team members to share final list with their divisional colleagues and come back to next Executive meeting with their top-5 priorities</i></li> <li>➔ <i>Agree final list at Executive meeting and hence assumptions to underpin this year's planning</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Week of 19 Oct.</i></p> <p><i>23 Oct.</i></p> <p><i>23 Oct.</i></p>

These are just examples, but they may give you a sense of what could be in the first section of your Action Pack Plan. For each action, there has to be a **deadline**.

In amongst all the work, remember **the buck stops with you** – and whether the planning gets done and is worthwhile depends first and foremost on you taking the lead and doing the things that add that unique value – and encourage others to give of their best.

## MY V|E|C|T|O|R PERSONAL ACTION LIST

Date developed: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION HEADINGS AND COMMITMENTS	Deadline
<u>Analyse and understand your marketplace</u>    	
<u>Identify drivers of competitive advantage</u>    	
<u>Define destination, goals and outcomes</u>    	
<u>Take charge and support others in doing the same</u>    	

## V. YOUR BONUS POTSHOTS

### LEADERSHIP: THINKING IS OFTEN THE LEAST OF IT

*Prompted by “How Successful Leaders Think” by Roger Martin  
Harvard Business Review – June 2007*

<http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/relay.jhtml?name=itemdetail&id=R0706C>

“How Successful Leaders Think” is a classic HBR article: big-name leaders (yes, Jack Welch is there), a handful of anecdotes (passing for evidence), a strong metaphor (we can all understand) and a simple diagram. A revolutionary idea and leadership made easy - except that the core “opposable” thinking (thesis/antithesis/synthesis) is as old as time, as is the CEO’s unique integrative role across conflicting needs of individual business units, functions and market groups. But, above all, **leadership is about much more than thinking.**

The article focuses on how Bob Young of Red Hat found a middle way between “the high-margin proprietary model” for software sales and distribution (of Microsoft and others) and the “free-software model” (of Linux). Yes, he built a fine business; and, made a lot of money. But how does this article fit within the territory of leadership? Much as Brussels fits within Europe: important but not the real story.

Thinking lays a foundation – and is critical for strategic decisions (where the article focuses) but these are only occasional decisions. What about more gritty aspects of leadership: inspiring people, driving quality and customer service, influencing industry developments, evaluating investment decisions, and so on. These are more about **action.**

And, from my observation, the best leaders are often the selectors (not architects) of critical or creative thinking, though they often (like heads of state) get credit for it, since it happened on their watch. A too cerebral CEO often creates complexity, vacillation and confusion. Nothing is ever resolved. And, it’s not coincidental that business-school students with the best grades often go to consulting, investment banking or academia, which are driven more by ideas than leadership.

So, what should we down-on-the-ground leaders do? Firstly, get a map of the full territory, not just the street directory for Brussels. In other words, develop our own **Leadership Action Plan.** What we, as the leader, are going to do that adds unique value – whether contributing our own ideas (if we’re good at that) or providing the space and encouragement for others if they can do it better.

Whatever our chosen role, let’s be sure to develop our own **Plan** – that maps what we’re going to do to drive the journey, and keep us accountable along the way.

## LEADERSHIP: A BROADBAND APPROACH

The Brookings Institution claims the US gains 300,000 jobs for each one percent increase in broadband penetration. And, two European consultancies see 2 million new jobs by 2015 from increased broadband access\*. That's the good news. But what about the bad? What's the upside (and downside) of broadband for your leadership – and your job?

For some citizens, broadband opens vistas of connectedness, mobility, service innovation and so on. For others, just overload and more confusion: larger data-downloads and intrusiveness into every corner of our lives via Blackberry or its cousins. So, where does digital technology contribute to your role as a CEO, division head, team leader or project coordinator?

With broadband, our individual research capacity has multiplied hugely – and is now 24x7. So, wherever we are, we can check market trends, edit a memo or search for suppliers, review their prices and read how they're rated. Or, check out the presentation our marketing team gave to the board this morning. Or, yes, contact our family and send them our love.

So, two questions: first, how well are you leveraging technology to lift your leadership competitiveness – and keep your job? How could you improve your market analysis and goal-setting, planning and resource allocation, communication and follow up, monitoring business metrics, and so on? These are tough times, so don't get left behind!

Now, the second question (and let's be metaphoric): how "broad" are you in thinking about the multiple "bands" of your leadership? Mark yourself out of ten on each of the following:

- ➡ **Action-oriented:** do you have a **leadership action plan**? Specific actions, not just a list of issues or points of feedback you mean to address sometime?
- ➡ **Integrative:** does your plan cover both "**hard**" market and technical issues, as well as the so-called "soft" ones of people and culture? Credibility requires both.
- ➡ **Digital:** is your plan created online using a **problem-solving framework** plus **resource material** for your challenges? And, ability to **print** the plan, **email** it to colleagues, and **update** it as times change? All important if you're serious about leading.
- ➡ **Value-for-money:** can you do all this in less than an hour and for **less than \$100**?

Whichever way you look at it, broadband is central to our lives as leaders. Technology provides a platform for activities, which help us lift our game and survive the cull in these times of ruthless competitors and sudden retrenchments. And, remember: broadband involves both bigger pipes and bigger thinking: the key to inspiring followers and holding your job.

\* [http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=13022193&subjectID=348963&mp;fsrc=nwl](http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displayStory.cfm?story_id=13022193&subjectID=348963&mp;fsrc=nwl)

## LEADERSHIP: THE THREE NOT-SO-EASY STEPS

Alcoholics Anonymous famously offers a 12-step process to turn your life around. And, it has much to be proud of. However, you can't say the same for many self-help programs offering either life or leadership skills. But users say my online leadership tool is a positive exception. It **accelerates your climb** up both the leadership performance chart, and the organisational career ladder.

So how does it work?

**Step 1 – Follower Questions:** If you asked them today, what would your team members say is the most important question for you to answer to lift their commitment to the journey on which you're taking them? Is it simply "Where are we going?" or is it more about "Can we do it?" or "Who else is coming along?" Finding these or similar questions is the first step in deciding what you need to do.

**Step 2 – Action Areas:** Having agreed the questions, what would they say are the types of actions you need to take to address them? If the question is "Where are we going?", then are the actions about defining goals, about making plans, or what? If it's "Can we do it?", is this more about driving execution or aligning resources?

**Step 3 – Action Commitments:** Finally, with the right questions and a shortlist of action areas, what specifically are you committing to do? Let me repeat that. What are you committing to do? Decide that and tabulate your actions as a short but focused plan and you're ready to go – to take relevant actions and move to a higher level of **personal leadership performance**.

It all sounds easy – like many self-help promises. But it isn't. It requires time, hard thinking, and honest evaluation. Like anything worthwhile, it takes effort.

## VI. AN OVERVIEW OF V|E|C|T|O|R



The V|E|C|T|O|R framework is a leadership problem-solving tool that can help you address three central issues of effective leadership:

- Determining the concerns holding your people back from fully committing to the tasks and journey in hand;
- Identifying action areas, which they would feel address their concerns;
- Converting these into a Personal Action List of specific commitments.

You can do this for as little as \$277. And, this also brings you the following:

- ➔ Capacity to print and email your Action List – and update it whenever you wish as implementation proceeds, or conditions change.
- ➔ Resource material with additional illustrative material and case examples for the action areas in your plan.
- ➔ Our weekly Pascoe's Potshot dealing with a current or important leadership issue.

A good business plan keeps your operations ahead of the curve in meeting changing customer and market demands. Similarly, your Leadership Action Planning will ensure you lead responsively in light of both changing business requirements and their impact on the motivation and commitment of your people.

On the next page, you'll see a list of our other Leadership Action Packs and how you can register to create your Leadership Action Plan (leading to a Personal Action List), or use our simpler Leadership Problem Solver to address a single, pressing problem.

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Let me end with a metaphor. When I was in my first year of engineering at university, we were offered two types of mathematics: pure and applied. The former was full of equations, theories and abstractions; the latter was more concerned with calculations for lifting and shifting things in the real world. In these terms, V|E|C|T|O|R is about applied leadership: on-the-job lifting and shifting to build your business or change your organisation. It's about fuelling business performance and accelerating your career.

Dr. Timothy Pascoe AM  
Creator, V|E|C|T|O|R Leadership®

## VII. OTHER V|E|C|T|O|R MATERIAL

### OUR LEADERSHIP ACTION PACKS

1. Defining the path ahead [http://www.vectorleadership.com/defining\\_the\\_path\\_ahead](http://www.vectorleadership.com/defining_the_path_ahead)
2. De-risking your plans [http://www.vectorleadership.com/de-risking\\_your\\_plans](http://www.vectorleadership.com/de-risking_your_plans)
3. Creating a performance culture [http://www.vectorleadership.com/creating\\_a\\_performance\\_culture](http://www.vectorleadership.com/creating_a_performance_culture)
4. Improving your peopleskills [http://www.vectorleadership.com/improving\\_your\\_people\\_skills](http://www.vectorleadership.com/improving_your_people_skills)
5. Motivating your team [http://www.vectorleadership.com/motivating\\_your\\_team](http://www.vectorleadership.com/motivating_your_team)
6. Delivering outcomes [http://www.vectorleadership.com/delivering\\_outcomes](http://www.vectorleadership.com/delivering_outcomes)
7. Raising the bar for everyone [http://www.vectorleadership.com/raising\\_the\\_bar\\_for\\_everyone](http://www.vectorleadership.com/raising_the_bar_for_everyone)
8. Energising renewal [http://www.vectorleadership.com/energising\\_renewal](http://www.vectorleadership.com/energising_renewal)
9. Building a personal brand [http://www.vectorleadership.com/building\\_a\\_personal\\_brand](http://www.vectorleadership.com/building_a_personal_brand)
10. Learning from the GFC [http://www.vectorleadership.com/learning\\_from\\_the\\_gfc](http://www.vectorleadership.com/learning_from_the_gfc)

### PASCOE'S POTSHOTS - free

You can register for the Poshots by weekly email here:

[http://www.vectorleadership.com/potshots\\_subscribe](http://www.vectorleadership.com/potshots_subscribe)

Or subscribe to our RSS feed:

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/PascoesPotshots>

Or browse and search the Potshot archive:

<http://www.vectorleadership.com/potshots>

### OUR ONLINE TOOL KIT OFFERINGS - from \$277

View the VECTOR Leadership Toolkit and purchase credits to start working with it here:

[http://www.vectorleadership.com/tool\\_kit](http://www.vectorleadership.com/tool_kit)