

2023

The leader's role in agile organisations: a review of the contemporary literature

Sheppard, April

Sheppard, A. (2023). 'The leader's role in agile organisations: a review of the contemporary literature', South West Clinical School Journal, 3 (3).

<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/handle/10026.1/21414>

<https://doi.org/10.24382/j5c5-b159>

University of Plymouth

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

The leader's role in agile organisations: a review of the contemporary literature

April Sheppard¹

¹Single Point of Access Operational Manager and Mental Health Registered Nurse, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, BODMIN. PL31 2QN

Email: april.sheppard@nhs.net

Submitted for publication: 19 October 2021

Accepted for publication: 11 September 2023

Published: 29 September 2023

Background

There are five underpinning trademarks of organisation agility (strategy, structure, process, people, and technology) that healthcare professionals need to recognise, align, and utilise in practice to respond to the complexities in delivering services (Aghina *et al.*, 2017a). The review of the leader's role in such organisations was explored in a review of the literature.

Method

A structured review of publication databases: BMJ, PubMed and CINAHL, were searched using the terms 'Organisation*' AND 'Agility' OR 'Agile' AND 'Leadership' AND 'Healthcare'. Articles were screened to identify leadership traits in agile organisations.

Results

A total of 15 papers were finally screened and reviewed to give insight into leadership traits and informed the discussion below.

Discussion

Leadership agility is fundamental to success when the need for rapid, at pace, change in healthcare is required (McPherson, 2016). Services that continue to be flexible and adapt leads to a team of dynamic transformational individuals capable of taking on new challenges and developing innovative ideas (Aghina *et al.*, 2017a; Aghina *et al.*, 2017b). Servant leadership, in which the objective of the leader is to serve, and a cohesive team environment generate shared team ideas, ongoing improvement activity, role mobility and entrepreneurial drive (Bushuyev, *et al.*, 2010). In these organisations leaders offering mentorship to teams also creates cohesion (Hoda *et al.*, 2013). This in turn generates

opportunities for teams to hold autonomy through accountability, with regular reviews ensuring productivity and efficiency are maintained (Aghina *et al.*, 2017b).

The leader in an agile organisation also has to challenge, when necessary, ensure team cohesiveness and development continues (Bushuyev and Morozov, 2000), pushing creativity and embracing new technologies (Bushuyev, *et al.*, 2010). Structured teams with clear roles encourage identification and utilisation of key strengths in individuals, promoting staff self-development and desire to achieve recognition and reward (Highsmith and Cockburn, 2001).

Finally, service transparency that encourages leaders to increased standardisation and consistency, imbedding trust in those that use the service, are important traits seen in agile organisations (Bushuyev and Dorosh, 2015), as stakeholder involvement is fundamental in developing teams with collective goals, driving organisations to remain agile and responsive to service-user needs (Hoda *et al.*, 2010).

Conclusion

Although leadership skills may be learnt, key character traits are necessary to avoid distortion in implementation that can lead to organisational inefficiency. Therefore, an agile mindset is fundamental in further developing leadership agility and wider organisational efficiency.

References

- Aghina, W., Ahlback, K., De Smet, A., Lackey, G., Lurie, M., Murarka, M., Salo, O., Seem, E. and Woxholth, J. (2017a) *The 5 Trademarks of Agile Organizations*, Available at: <https://ltre-web.azureedge.net/2391/the-five-trademarks-of-agile-organizations.pdf> (Accessed: 11th August 2020)
- Aghina, W., Ahlback, K., De Smet, A., Lackey, G., Lurie, M., Murarka, M. and Handscomb, C. (2017b) *How to create an Agile Organisation*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-five-trademarks-of-agile-organizations> (Accessed: 11th August 2020)
- Bushuyev, S. D. et al. (2010) *Creative technologies of the project and program management*, Kyiv, Ukraine: *Summit-Book*.
- Bushuyev, S. D., Dorosh, M. S. (2015) 'Development of innovative methods and models of project management on the basis of convergence', *Managing the development of complex systems*, 23, pp. 30–37.
- Bushuyev, S. D., Morozov, V. V. (2000) *Dynamic leadership in project management*, Kyiv, Ukraine; Ukrainian project management association.
- Drath, W. H., McCauley, C. D., Palus, C. J., Van Velsor, E., O'Connor, P. M. G. and McGuire, J. B. (2008). 'Direction, alignment, commitment: Toward a more integrative ontology of leadership', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19, pp. 635–653.
- Highsmith, J. and Cockburn, A. (2001) 'Agile software development: The business of innovation', *Computer*, 34(9), pp. 120–127.
- Hoda, R., Noble, J. and Marshall, S. (2010) *Balancing acts: walking the Agile tightrope. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 2010 ICSE Workshop on Cooperative and Human Aspects of Software Engineering*, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Hoda, R., Noble, J. and Marshall, S. (2013) 'Self-organizing roles on Agile software development teams', *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, 39, pp. 422–444.

Lee, G. and Xia, W. (2010) 'Toward agile: An integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative field data on software development agility', *MIS Quarterly*, 34, pp. 87–114.

McPherson, B. (2016) 'Agile, adaptive leaders', *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 24(2), pp. 1-3



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence (see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) which permits others to copy and redistribute in any medium or format, remix, transform and on a non-commercial basis build on this work, provided appropriate credit is given. Changes made need to be indicated, and distribution must continue under this same licence.