Establishing a BA Leadership Code and improving leadership practices.

This workshop aimed to establish a leadership code for the business analysis profession (part 1) and allow attendees to complete a review of their own leadership practices (part 2).

Part 1 – The BA leadership code

The code would be comprised of a set of values and behaviours that are deemed appropriate to business analysis leadership.

The session takes it's lead from a similar exercise completed by the British Army as it sought to redefine itself to a new generation and shape best practice and behaviours. Whilst the two professions operate in very different environments, defining a code has an equal value across the disciplines.

The first exercise was to establish a top five values that should be attributed to BA leadership. As the workshop ran twice, we can compare the results from two groups and then 80 BA managers.

The numbers provided in the table below are the relative positions (1 to 5) attributed to the values by the attendees. A total 13 values were originally suggested to the participants who could each choose their top five values. There were around 40 participants in each group.

Value		Group 1 – top 5 positions	Group 2 – top 5 positions
Integrity		1	1
Innovative		4	
Courageous			
Teamwork		2	3
Self-improving			5
Accountability			
Commitment			
Dependability			
Loyalty			
Professionalism		5	4
Empathy		3	2
Results driven			
Optimism			

When taking the total scores across the two groups we have a combined top 5 values as below;

1. **Integrity**
2. **Teamwork**
3. **Empathy**
4. **Professionalism**
5. **Self-improving**

The top 3 values scored particularly highly amongst the delegates. Other values that gained reasonable scores were accountability and courage.

Workshop attendees were then asked to define the behaviours that support and/or are driven by the top 5 values. The behaviours they identified are as follows.

Integrity

- Being honest, transparent and truthful with your team
- Following through on stated actions or commitments
- Aligning with expected company behaviours
- Maintaining confidentiality and discretion
- Being respectful
- Consistency of approach, equal or fair treatment of colleagues.
- Willing to challenge when appropriate
- Standing by values/beliefs

Teamwork

- Encouraging others
- Working towards shared goals not own agenda
- Sharing knowledge
- Listening to others
- Trusting others
- Respecting others and their views
- Playing to each other's strengths
- Supporting people with weaknesses
- Providing a safe environment to work in
- Removing hierarchy and silos
- Working collaboratively
- Being flexible
- Being enthusiastic

Empathy

- Active listening – giving time and being genuinely interest
- Responsive actions
- Willingness to understand – stand in others' shoes and demonstrate understanding (playback)
- Open mindedness
- Tolerance and acceptance
- Emotional intelligence
- Recognition
- Being sensitive to situation/environment
- Tailoring messages

Professionalism

- Leading by example
- Delivering on promises
- Selling the role "walk the walk"
- Having respect for other's values
- Working to the best of your ability "bring your best game"
- Maintaining positivity
- Being a role model
- Self-reflecting
- Looking forwards and seeing the wider professional picture
- Advocating for the profession

Self-improving

- Open to feedback
- Pro-active to seek opportunities for self-improvement
- Recognition of weaknesses and willingness to address
- Promote and champion self-improvement
- Encourage feedback
- Reacting positively to feedback
- Thinking ahead and setting objectives/targets for self-improvement

It was clear to all attendees that values and behaviours are inextricably linked. The values you demonstrate will only be accepted if the behaviours you demonstrate match your stated values.

One attendee made an interesting observation relating to personal values aligning to organisational values. If organisational values change, and are then out of line with personal values, this can affect individual behaviours and ability to inspire in a negative way.

Part 2 - Leadership Practices Exercise

After discussion in more general terms on BA leadership values and behaviours, workshop attendees turned their attention to their individual leadership behaviours and practices.

This part of the workshop was based on the work of Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner and their development of a Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Attendees were asked to complete a short questionnaire and score their answers to provide a profile of their own leadership practices.

Kouzes and Posner's work focuses on 5 practices (or behaviours) that their research identified as being critical for leadership success. Their inventory approach has been in use for over 25 years as a tool to identify and improve leadership practices.

In researching the work of Kouzes and Posner it is interesting to note that the start point for their leadership work was to first look at values. This work soon took them into thinking in more detail about behaviours and practices.

A further point Kouzes makes is that all of their leadership based work focuses on relationships. This might be an obvious thing to say but too often we may concentrate on tasks and not enough on the relationships we have with those around us.

Kouzes also makes the important point that leadership behaviours can very much be developed and improved. It is not simply a case of being a "natural" leader.

The five leadership practices that form the basis of their work and the questionnaire are defined as follows.

Challenging the Process

Effective leaders are pioneers, they do not accept the status quo but search out opportunities and step into the unknown. They innovate and experiment and encourage others to do so. They recognise other's good ideas, take risks. They learn by leading in the face of obstacles. They:

- Treat jobs/task as a new adventure

- Break free of daily routines

- Devise ways of recognising and promoting good ideas

- Foster and encourage people who evaluate then take risks

Inspiring a Shared Vision

Leaders should be looking to the horizon; imagining the future they want to create. They enlist the emotions of others to share in that vision. They show how mutual commitment to a common purpose is a benefit to all. They:

- Learn from the past, look for gains not losses

- Know their followers

- Appeal to a common purpose

- Communicate expressively

- Believe in what they are saying

Enabling Others to Act

Leaders enlist the support and assistance of all who must make the project work. They stress co-operative goals and build relationships based on trust. They:

- Say "we" and stress the team effort

- Create interactions, meetings and dialogue

- Involve teams in planning and problem solving

- Keep people informed

- Delegate important work on critical tasks

- Allow people to innovate and take risks

Modelling the Way

Leaders are clear about their values and beliefs it is what drives them and their teams. They keep things going by being consistent with their value they model how they expect others to behave. They make it easier for others to achieve goals by breaking tasks into manageable chunks end celebrating small gains. They:

- Do what they say they are going to

- Walk the decks, talk about their beliefs

- Be expressive, even emotional, about their values

- Spend time on the important tasks

- Mark out milestones and celebrate achievements

- Get started, build on successes

Encouraging the Heart

Leaders give encouragement and heart to people to carry on in difficult situations. They realise that recognition is needed if their teams are going to persist when the going gets tough. To continue to pursue the vision people need heart inspirational leaders encourage the heart. They:

- Foster high expectations

- Be creative in the use of rewards

- Say thank you about specific things

- Link performance with recognition and reward

- Give people feedback about results

- Be involved as a cheerleader

- Fly the flag for their team.

Questionnaire results and findings

All workshop attendees were asked to complete the LPI questionnaire and the results were recorded in terms of individual highest score (strength) and lowest score (development need) . We could then look across the two groups at common areas of strength and development.

Lowest scoring practices

The two lowest scoring practices and so those with greatest need of development were – *Inspire a shared vision* and *Encourage the heart.*

Highest scoring practices

 The two highest scoring practices and so those with least need of development were - *Enabling others to act and Encourage the heart.*

The practice of *Encourage the heart* then appears under both the highest and lowest scoring categories which on the surface may appear contradictory evidence. It is simply the case that we have a mix of practices with almost equal portions of the BA leaders able and unable to demonstrate strength in this area.

Very high numbers identified *Inspire a shared vision* as an area for development and only two people had this as their highest score. Perhaps an area for development across the BA leadership piece.

Summary and close

The value of this workshop and its findings lies in individuals being able to reflect on their own values, behaviours and practices and where we might then seek to improve and work more closely to the BA leadership code.