

A Practitioner audit of a 21st Century Public Sector Manager

INTRODUCTION

As a team of four HR Professionals undertaking the Aspire programme we took this opportunity to review the findings of the “21st Century Public Servant” research. We focussed on the 10 characteristics identified as part of the research and undertook an audit to really understand how far and embedded the research is in reality in the workplace.

The research undertaken by Catherine Mangan and Catherine Needham identified 8 roles:

- Broker
- Commissioner
- Municipal Entrepreneur
- Navigator
- Networker
- Resource Weaver
- Story teller
- System Architect

We chose to look beyond the 8 roles and audit the 10 characteristics the research also identified:

- Place Loyalty
- Reflective practice
- Collaborative leadership
- Citizens and humanity
- Generic Skills
- Perma Austerity
- Broad Career
- Fluid Organisations
- New roles
- Public Sector ethos with commerciality

Research Objectives

Our research aimed to test the relevance within our organisations and understand if managers in the Public Sector are already demonstrating these characteristics and working in the way described by the research. The key questions we asked included; do our managers know of this research? How does the research influence our managers to making a difference?

We wanted to identify the difference in roles and therefore the characteristics needed to work in the different settings and structures, including:

- Integrated working
- Partnership working
- Singular working

Research Scope

The scope of this research was limited to organisations delivering services across Cambridgeshire, Coventry, Sandwell and the West Midlands Fire Service. We included County, City and Borough councils to give us a range of local authority structures.

Research Methodology

We undertook both primary and secondary research.

Primary, data collection was collected by holding guided conversations with 14 managers across our organisations some employed by a local authority and others employed by health organisations.

Some of the managers held roles that require them to work across both sectors others are employed by health but have roles that require them to influence local government services.

The guided conversations asked them to consider the characteristics and how they do or don't deploy them in the current roles and how that has changed over the last few years given a change in context to local government.

Some of those managers interviewed were more focused on the services they deliver or operate in one sector ie local government but across a number of organisations which requires an understanding of the drivers for each organisation and the culture that exists in each place.

Secondary research was focused on desk based analysis of the report and articles available on the internet.

Data Analysis

Once the research was concluded we analysed the data and the key findings are set out below;

Janet Dullaghan, Head of Commissioning for Childrens Health and Wellbeing, Cambridgeshire County Council

Janet explains to work in an integrated way there is a need to have skills that allow working with the community and have the ability to disperse leadership throughout organisations without losing accountability.

Christine Guest, Divisional Manager Adult Social Care, Sandwell Council

“Austerity has driven change, five years ago it was inconceivable to think prior to austerity this level of change could be done , but services are still here and functioning.”

Chris talked about how austerity had driven dramatic change and required new partnerships to be formed via collaborative leadership just to be able to survive. She talked about not competing for services on price but on added value in the long term.

Marc Hudson, Station Commander Fire Control, West Midlands Fire Service

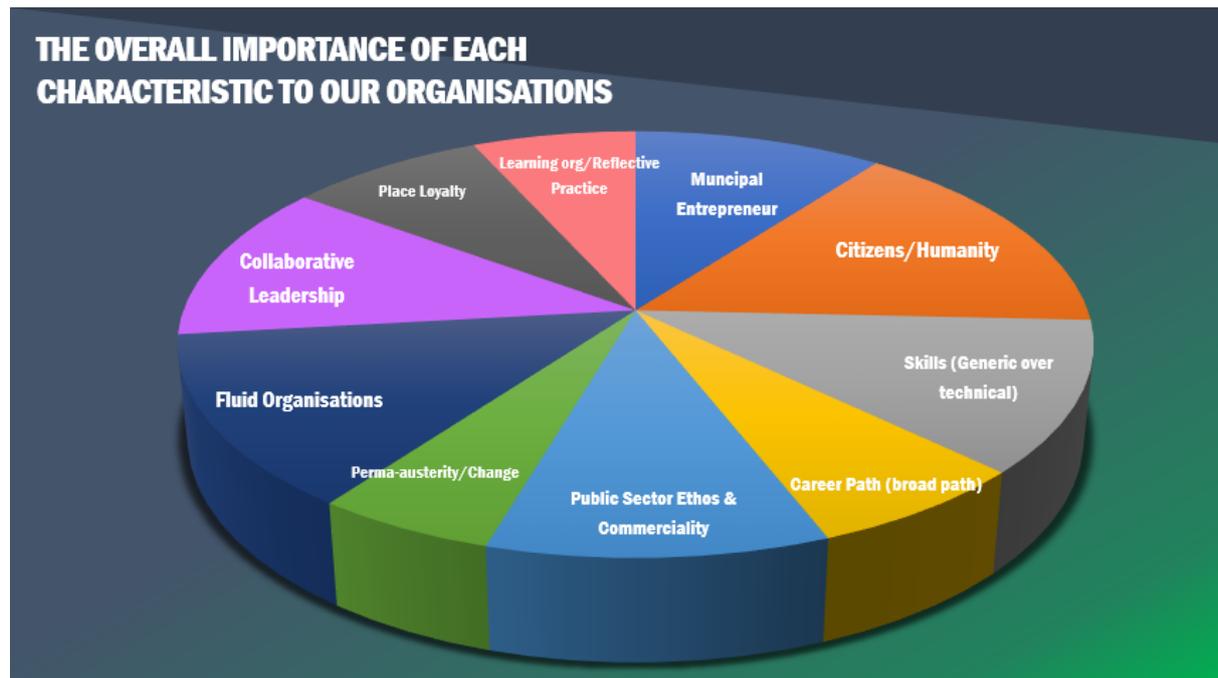
“More than ever as an organisation we need to be aware and have a good understanding of an ever changing external environment; it is vital that we are flexible and adaptable in our approach to meet the needs of our people, service and community”.

Marc picks up on the themes citizens and humanity as he talks about how important it is about the services to meet local customers needs.

Through analysing the data we noticed a trend depending on the context in which the service operated in:

- In integrated services – there was a tendency for the top characterises to be Fluid organisations, public sector commerciality, collaborative leadership and our communities
- In less integrated service the top characteristic were – perma austerity & change

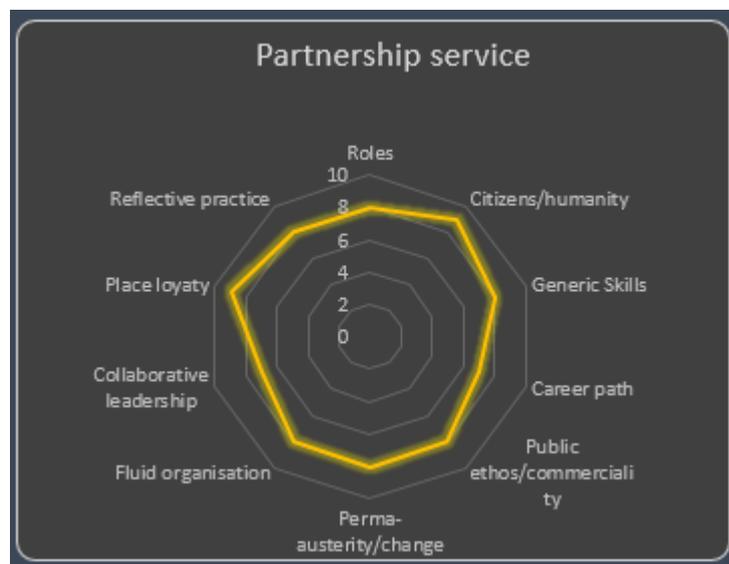
Findings

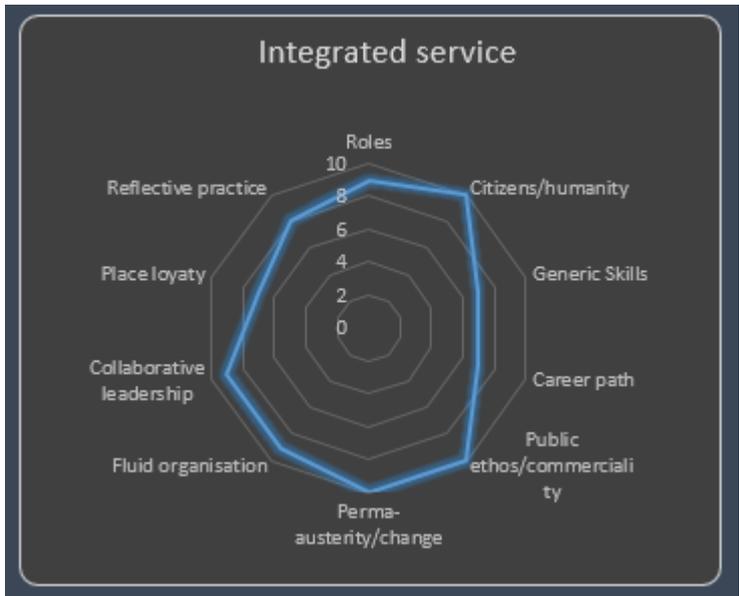
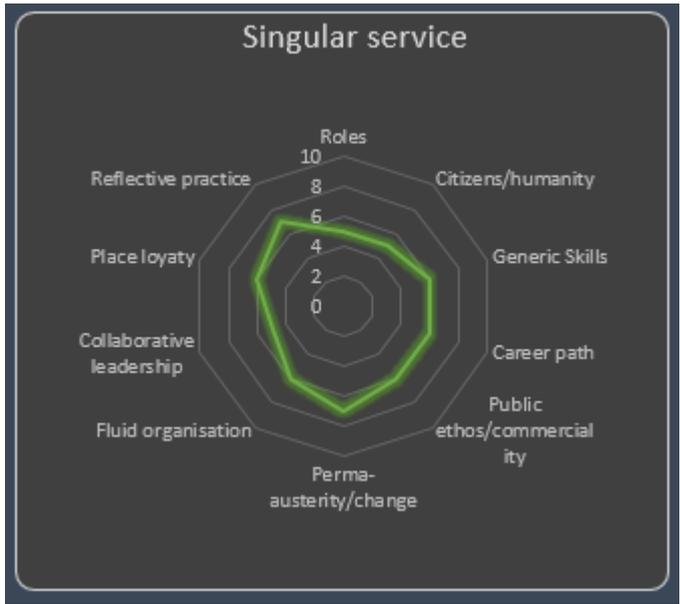


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i.e. In integrated services – there was a tendency for the top characterises to be

- Fluid organisations,
- public sector commerciality,
- collaborative leadership and our communities





In less integrated service the top characteristic was perma austerity & change

We concluded that the research is a little jargon heavy and as part of our project we developed a product called the 4 C's which demonstrates the key characteristics recruiting managers will need to identify in new recruits as they bring talent in for the future



FROM 10 CHARACTERISTICS TO 4 FOCUS AREAS



"THE 4 C's"

COMMUNITY

COLLABORATION

CULTURE

COMMERCIAL

*Citizens at the centre of all service activity.
See people holistically drawing on their strengths and experience*

COMMUNITY

Fluid, collaborative cultures that enable creative and flexible approaches making change achievable

CULTURE

Bring private sector skills into a local gov environment creating new opportunities

COMMERCIAL

Collaborative leadership style and cross sector working

COLLABORATION

It is known that leadership styles are not static, they evolve with time and this is a snap shot of current and future leadership characteristics but is very dependant on external influences. However, it is clear that organisations need to;

- Recruit individuals who are not only technically able but have the softer skills necessary to develop effective relationships
- Develop skills - commerciality will be an essential skill for public sector workers and these skills will need to be developed as a core competency of your workforce
- Prepare tomorrow's leaders - create an environment that allows people to operate in a way they need to; the organisation's culture needs to reflect a style modern day public sector requires

The original research was carried out during a coalition government and is still relevant under the current Government, however some of leaders challenged us to think about whether these characteristics would still be as important if there is a change in future government.

As the pace of change in working practices is much faster than this in reality, changes to leadership styles seem to change not over a 100 year period a timescale much shorter timescale.