

## Section 1

# Redundancy, redeployment and transferable skills

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the financial crisis will dramatically change the way the public sector looks in the future. Many outside the public sector and some inside, consider that the management structures built in the good times are bloated, unaffordable and unsustainable. Slimmer structures are predicated with fewer tiers and greater spans of responsibility. This will inevitably mean redundancies and redeployments. The survivors will be those who can demonstrate transferable skills, the ability to work across traditional service boundaries and the ability to manage without knowing the detail. This will come as a shock to some colleagues.

Recently a shoe shop manager was appointed to a management post in the Registrars service. This was much to the disapproval of some colleagues who felt the individual's lack of a professional background in the service should have disqualified them. 'What will they know about the service and the procedures?' It was apparent that these colleagues did not give as much value to the experience of hitting income targets, managing a large staff group, operating a seven day a week service, dealing with customer complaints, and dealing with building maintenance and security as did the interview panel.

As a result of financial pressures many of us will find ourselves doing the work of two people. This will require us to look at how we are spending our time. Which meetings are essential? Am I doing this because of who's asked me to do it, because I enjoy it or because it's crucial to the business?

Fewer managers means greater spans of control, working across client groups and across service areas and being responsible for services you do not have a background in. It means knowing less about more and more, since the more services you are responsible for, the less you will be familiar with what is going on in these services. You will be more reliant on your managers telling you what you need to know. You will worry more about what you don't know which some will find stressful. Keeping yourself informed will require regular one to one's. With twice as many managers directly reporting to you it will be essential to plan these one to one's. Rather than saying your door is always open, dates will need to be booked in diaries.

The informal catch up will need to be replaced by a more structured approach with an agenda agreed in advance, providing progress reports and alerting you to any emerging issues or politically sensitive situations. This means these meetings will need to take place at least four weekly if you are not to be inundated with backside covering e-mails and overwhelmed with 'for information' briefing notes.

The traditional weekly team meeting will be seen as a luxury. In any case the team meeting will no longer be relevant. Your managers represent such a diverse range of services there is little by way of a common agenda. Corporate briefs can be provided electronically.

Not so much a brave new world for managers as a scary new world. A world which focuses a lot more on management skills and a lot less on professional knowledge. A world where you are responsible for more but know less. A world where you need to empower managers because you haven't the capacity to micro manage. A world where you need to encourage managers to be innovative in order to do more with less. All of which means you're less in control – scary.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are transferable management skills?
2. How can manager's best deal with increased spans of responsibility?
3. What changes could you make to the way you manage your team in order to increase your capacity?

## Section 10

# Is it better to be feared than loved?

- Can you claim to value staff and cut their pay?
- Can you maintain a position of openness and honesty when you are going to make people redundant?
- Can you afford to be sensitive and caring when you are going to cut services to vulnerable people?
- Can you be committed to partners who want to protect their own budgets at your expense?
- Does a recession need a different type of leader – one who is feared rather than loved?
- Do these difficult economic times require a different type of manager and are you cut out to be that type of manager?

We all want recognition, we all want to be considered successful and a little bit of power wouldn't hurt, but how far are you prepared to go?

- Is it OK even inevitable to step on a few toes on your way up?
- Do you feel comfortable pushing yourself to the front of the crowd?
- Do you think you should be 'spotted' or do you think you have to get yourself noticed?
- Do you think it is OK to be openly ambitious or is it something you find a little vulgar?
- Do you mind if colleagues see your enthusiasm to please the boss, to demonstrate your commitment by staying late or volunteering for projects?
- Do you think it is who you know rather than what you know?
- If your boss was singing your praises about a piece of work that was mostly the result of the efforts of someone else, would you own up or keep quiet?
- If the current mess was down to one of your colleagues would you drop them in it or would you accept collective responsibility?
- Do you think an effective manager needs a hint of menace to go with the charm?
- Do you think it is better to be feared than loved?
- Do you think effective managers if not loved should be respected? If the economic situation puts a strain on partnerships isn't this when we most need senior managers with relationship building skills. When budgets are cut and we are required to do more with less, then we need managers who are innovative. When efficiencies require services to be

delivered in different ways and working practices to be changed, we need managers with leadership skills who can inspire staff. When people face a cut in real wages and are worried about future employment, we certainly need managers with good people skills.

It is in difficult times that we most need inspirational leaders – people we trust and people with integrity. Most of all we need managers with leadership qualities and good people management skills. It is when partnerships are strained that we most need managers skilled in relationship building and those who can see beyond the immediate budget problem.

This is not a time for Machiavellian managers.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. To what extent does a harsh financial climate force you to be a harsh manager?
2. How do you get the balance right between supporting and demanding?
3. How do you lift spirits and inspire people to do more with less?

## Section 22

# Doing more with less

The harsh financial climate in the public sector means we will have to do more with less. But what does doing more with less mean?

- Is it another way of saying be more efficient?
- Is it part of the myth that there are some painless options for reducing spending without cutting services or reducing staff?
- Is it a belief that technology will save us if we just embrace it?
- Is it based on an assumption that if you have less managers they will concentrate more on what's important?
- Does it reflect the view that the best way to improve a service is cut its budget, and, in so doing focus minds and force people to be innovative?

It's difficult to argue that any organisation couldn't be more efficient but if the price means being less effective is that acceptable in public services? Should the NHS use cheaper but less effective drugs? The NHS spends millions on drugs yet primary care trusts want GPs to use cheaper generic drugs. GPs want the right to prescribe branded drugs if they think they will be more effective.

In the public sector costs are mostly about staffing and the number of people employed. So efficiencies are about getting staff to work harder and longer, to pay them less or get someone else to do it cheaper. Alternatively you can replace some teaching posts with cheaper teaching assistant posts and not pay them for school holidays. Instead of using expensive supply teachers to cover for absent teachers you can use cheaper teaching assistants. Of course this may impact on quality. The NHS is often criticised for using expensive agency nurses, but if a hospital bans the use of such staff it may find it has to close a ward due to staffing shortages – with the result that waiting list for operations will increase.

Another way of doing more with less is to use economies of scale in procurement, that is to get together with others and negotiate a discount for bulk purchasing. This can work with office furniture or computers but it's difficult to see how this would work in buying residential care for older people where block contracts are to be replaced with people having the money to buy their own care.

Accommodation for all these staff is expensive so if we can get more staff into fewer buildings we will be more efficient. Hence the fashion for hot desking, mobile working and home working. This is also an example of making use of technology like Blackberries and laptops to enable people to work away from the office.

Another example of embracing new technology and reducing admin costs is electronic filing. Do you know how much it costs just to rent the floor space for all those filing cabinets? Of course everyone should do their own typing. The typing pool is a thing of the past, no-one has their own PA any more, but on the down side, how many hours a day does a manager spend wading through e-mails?

Reducing the number of managers without having an adverse effect on frontline services sounds attractive and would appear to constitute doing the same with less. However, increasing an individual manager's span of control and responsibility, or removing a tier of management, essentially means someone doing the job of two people. As this is not achievable within the working week decisions have to be made about what will and won't get done.

Partnership working is often given as an example of how duplication could be removed and how, if people would only just look at the bigger picture and take a whole systems approach, then they would see it was in their interests to work together to achieve common goals. The only problem is that managers tend to be judged against their performance in areas specific to their organisation and their responsibility. The NHS might see the value in tackling homelessness, poor housing or long term unemployment in improving people's health, but hospital managers are focused on waiting lists. There is also a tendency when budgets are tight and services are being cut, for organisations to retreat to core business and shunt costs to partners. Hospitals seek to discharge elderly patients from expensive acute beds as quickly as possible hence forcing some to go into expensive residential care, paid for by someone else. A jointly funded health and social care rehabilitation service would allow for speedy hospital discharge and prevent unnecessary admissions, but why should the NHS contribute to funding if it can get the local authority to pay for it?

Back office savings are often presented as a painless way of reducing costs. The aim is to deliver the same service for less. An example of this in local authorities is the centralisation of the human resource function. Why do departments need their own HR staff? Bring them all together in one smaller team and save on management costs.

Why not also outsource the majority of the work which is around administration – for example placing job adverts, sending out job application forms, arranging interviews, sending out letters of appointment etc whilst at the same time retaining the expertise around employment legislation.

The risk is that some of the work that was carried out by HR is now left to managers. This may not be the best use of their time and of course, as a result of reducing management posts, they are already doing more with less help following the reduction in admin posts.

It is possible to do more with less, but this may result in doing less and doing it less well.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. How is the expression 'doing more with less' used in your organisation?
2. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of out sourcing 'back office' services in your organisation?
3. If you end up with fewer managers in your organisation what would you suggest managers stop doing?