

## Seven Principals of Leadership



### Will Hutton

Since joining The Work Foundation (then The Industrial Society) as CEO, I have seen it go from being a large and stagnating organisation that was on a financial knife edge to a small, fast-growing research-based consultancy that is just about the break into profit. It has been my job to lead it through that change, and I thought I might say something about that experience.

The transition from The Industrial Society to The Work Foundation involved many changes. The physical move from three buildings (one in Birmingham and two in London) to our sole office at 3 Carlton House Terrace; the reframing of the vocation to emphasise not only improving the standards of working life for people, but also the productivity of UK organisations; the reduction of staff numbers from 300 to its current 70 employees; and the move from offering training solutions to becoming a research-based consultancy, whilst retaining its core information services membership base. Throughout this period of change, there have been four different leadership teams; one to sell, one to transition, one to take the cost out and now one to build.

Three years on, The Work Foundation looks and feels different. It is more outward looking, responsive and innovative. It has a skilled workforce with a professional culture that understands values have to be consistent with performance. And this is reflected in its improved financial output. We have gone from haemorrhaging cash to cash generating in 30 months.

This journey, however, has not been an easy one to lead. There were many times when I felt uneasy about the decisions I was making — many dark nights of the soul. I could not guarantee its success and I felt responsible for the implications these changes had on the people working here. For all of 2003 I was concerned that I could not pull it off. What kept me on track and sure I was doing the right thing was being certain that this organisation could not survive without making these changes.

I also believe to lead lasting change, the tenure of a CEO should be more than the current three-year average in today's organisations. If you embark on change, you should have the commitment and resolve to see it through.

During this time, I have formed what I describe as the 7 principles of leadership which I believe are integral in leading a successful organisation with long-term sustainability.