TRACE: a high-performing leadership model

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KALEIDOSCOPE
Health and Care

Our approach to developing high performing leadership

1. *Meets you where you are*. Our work is contextual, so we start with curiosity about and compassion for your unique circumstances. We build from there.
2. *Is owned by those who do the work.* Co-design is non-negotiable. If you and your leaders(s) don't feel this is owned by you/them, it won't stick. We guide, you lead.
3. *Is deliberate and planned*. We are rigorous and evidence based. Leadership development is complex and a systematic approach means nothing is left to chance.
4. *Happens through real work*. We engage with real issues you need to work on and build leadership capabilities for those - doing and developing together is key.
5. *Prioritises progress today.* We focus on the possibility and power of achievable, 'better leadership today', not the myth of 'transformed leadership tomorrow'.
6. *Requires curiosity, courage and accountability.* We will bring high psychological safety, high challenge and high standards to our development partnership.
7. *Is relational and rational.* We will pay attention to developing the rational anatomy of leadership e.g. task identification and objective decision-making. And we will insist on equal investment in the relational physiology of leadership e.g anxiety, trustworthiness and power.

Developing high-performing leadership: TRACE

High-performing leadership is critical for individual leaders, teams, organisations and systems to thrive. But what characterises this kind of leadership in those four spaces, and how can we develop more of it? Here's what we've learned: genuinely high-performing leadership rarely happens by accident. Leaders aren't born, they're developed.

Our evidence-based **TRACE leadership model** provides the framework for that development. TRACE describes the five key conditions every leader needs to enable, to help others thrive in achieving their shared purpose: a clear **Task**, a **Route** to success, **Alignment** of people and resources, the **Capabilities** to succeed and the **Energy** needed to sustain effort. In our experience, co-creating and maintaining these is the primary purpose of effective leadership - acting as Architect, Composer and Coach across the TRACE journey.

In addition, high-performing leaders know not only which of these five leadership tasks they are working on, but also which one of four spaces they leading in. These spaces are: self, team, organisation, and system. While all spaces are interdependent, pinpointing the primary space their current leadership task serves helps clarify and focus their efforts.

Introducing the TRACE leadership model

High performing leadership is not about effective individual leaders (who are necessary but not sufficient for group success), but rather a collective, social process that emerges through the relationships and interactions among people within a group - including the 'leader'.

In the words of Marshall Ganz, "Leadership is accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in conditions of uncertainty"

We know high performing leadership is present when the leader and group are working together in ways that establish shared ownership of five things: Task, Route, Alignment, Capability and Energy.
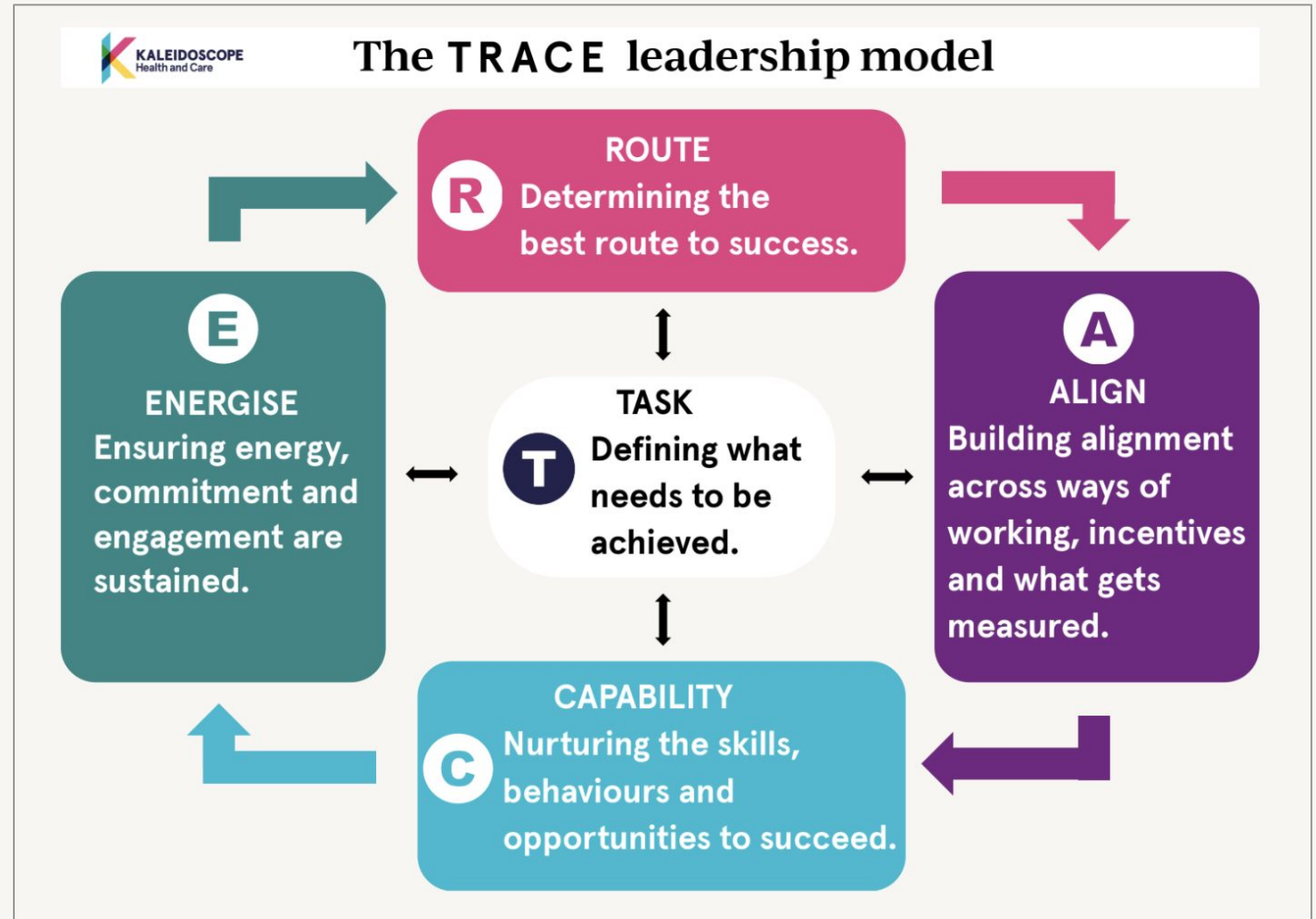
Leader as Architect, Composer, Coach and Champion

Architect: In co-creating the 'Task; and the Route, the leader acts as an architect**,** to lay firm foundations, structures and credible plans to future success.
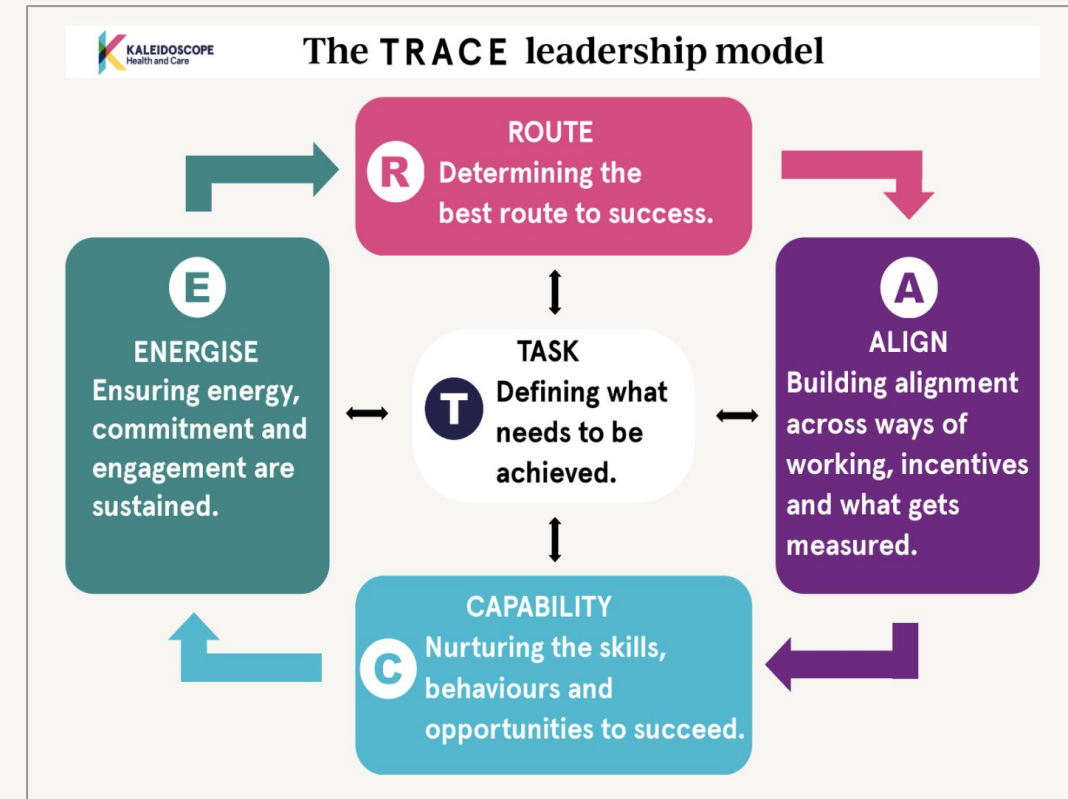
Composer: In co-creating Alignment, the leader acts as composer**,** harnessing and coordinating available resources so they are greater than the sum of their parts and pulling in the same direction.
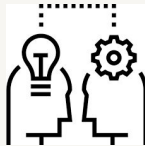
Coach. In co-creating capability, the leader acts as coach, unlocking and developing the potential in others to achieve what has been asked of them.

Champion. In co-creating the necessary energy to succeed and sustain the leader acts as champion, celebrating progress, ensuring incentives are in place and reinforcing desired behaviours.

K KALEIDOSCOPE Health and Care — The **T R A C E** leadership model

ROUTE — R — Determining the best route to success.

ENERGISE — E — Ensuring energy, commitment and engagement are sustained.

TASK — T — Defining what needs to be achieved.

ALIGN — A — Building alignment across ways of working, incentives and what gets measured.

CAPABILITY — C — Nurturing the skills, behaviours and opportunities to succeed.

Task: Defining what needs to be achieved

High-performing leadership ensures the task to be undertaken is clearly defined and understood, including an understanding that every task has its own unique characteristics to be considered. To thrive, individuals and groups need agreement on what they are working on, and why it matters ('purpose') and what they are trying to achieve ('goals').

Why is this important?

When there is clarity on the task, time and resources are not wasted working on the wrong things. When people understand their task, they are more invested, more likely to take initiative and report being happier and healthier.

When people have a shared understanding of what they're trying to achieve, and why, they are able to exercise better judgment about short term priorities. Having clarity on the task also reduces anxiety and interpersonal conflict that are associated with 'task discordance'.

Clear task definition is also about ensuring understanding of the nature of the task. This means people are working in ways that appropriately match its unique characteristics.

Indicators?

❏ Leaders regularly facilitate discussions to build a shared understanding of the task at hand.
❏ All tasks are clearly categorised e.g. simple, complicated, complex or chaotic so an appropriate route to success can be agreed.
❏ The 'why' as well as the 'what' of the task is understood to provide true purpose and motivation.
❏ There is a clear vision, a desired future, or set of goals that are agreed for the end of the task.
❏ 'Success' is clearly defined and agreed upon in concrete terms.
❏ Clear scope and boundaries - clarifies what's included and excluded in the task.
❏ There is shared understanding if a team, organisation or system task - all parties can consistently describe what they are trying to achieve (and why).

Inspiration for action?

● **Patagonia** set a clear task: "We're in business to save our home planet." Whether donating vast proceeds of Black Friday sales to the environment, creating office space by restoring condemned buildings and using recycled materials, it's clear that all actions are infused with task clarity.
● **Buurtzorg** are clear on task: "Help people have rich, meaningful, and autonomous lives". Their task isn't to provide more treatment, but to help patients recover the ability to take care of themselves as much as possible. All decisions are taken locally with that one task in mind. The result: 40% reduction in nursing costs, improved outcomes and satisfaction and a model adopted globally

Route: Determining the best route to success

High-performing leadership brings out the best route to success - a practical plan for achieving the task at hand. This leadership is evident where both the journey to the end destination is well mapped out (where) and the way the journey will be conducted (how) is also clear. The latter will include the explicit values that will act as a guide, the decision making principles that will be used at various junctures en route, the resources which will be used and how direction will be tracked.

Why is this important?

When direction is clear and communicated effectively, it acts as the foundation upon which a high-performing, resilient organisation is built .

Clear direction is the basis for for aligning effort, building capabilities commitment, and helps people make better decisions because they understand the destination they are moving towards.

In times of crisis or rapid change, a clear direction helps team-members to maintain focus, rather than being thrown off course. They are clear on which goals are non-negotiable, and which can be adjusted or paused. Directional clarity keeps the organisation grounded and gives employees confidence, even in uncertain times.

Indicators?

❏ People can consistently describe the forward plan and success measures.
❏ Evidence of not jumping into action on tasks without a considered forward route.
❏ Evidence that diverse group of people, with appropriately broad expertise have been involved in planning.
❏ The route and leadership approach is appropriate to the nature of the task e.g. the level of task complexity, time achieve it or the resources available/needed.
❏ Pre-mortems are used habitually to prepare robust and realistic routes.
❏ Evidence of a culture of 'strong plans, loosely held' - regular review of the route and ability to change tact/course in response to changing contexts.
❏ Clear priorities and milestones define what matters most, when and what can wait.

Inspiration for action?

● **Turn the Ship Around!** explains how the US submarine Santa Fe leapt from worst to first in the fleet by developing a 'front-line' leadership culture that upended Navy tradition. By engaging those who do the work in shaping the best route to success, the impossible occurred. An exemplar of high performing leadership enabling a route to success that was informed by reality and worked, not than imposing one in abstract.
● **The UK search and rescue helicopter service** has exceeded all government requirements for dependability since 2015. They embody the characteristics of 'highly reliable teams' working in the context of complexity, safety and time constraints. They practice strong planning (needed for such critical and complex tasks), loosely held (needed for the volatile contexts in which they end up executing those plans).

Align: Building alignment across ways of working and incentives

High-performing leadership is reflected in group alignment - where purpose, goals and practical ways of working come together. After establishing direction, alignment ensures that the collective energy of the group comes together to work in service of this. As work is becoming more complex, multi-disciplinary and interdependent, trusting that there is alignment and shared commitment to defined task and clearly laid out direction is vital.

Why is this important?

When team members are not aligned, groups waste resources, duplicate effort and see gaps where aspects of the work fall through the cracks. These drain momentum and morale.

An absence of clarity on individual and collective responsibilities, priorities and ways of working (including how decisions are made) results in 'interpersonal mush', a phenomenon that accounts for most conflict in groups - with negative implications for performance.

When people have a deep sense of alignment with others they work with, they take positive actions that benefit the group, which they report they would not otherwise. Individually, people who agree that their job is clear and aligns with the work they do, feel greater purpose and tare 2.5 times more likely than others to be engaged as well as happier (and healthier).

Indicators?

❏ There is an operating model that describes how work is done in alignment.
❏ People know what's expected of them, how their performance is measured, and how it contributes to the broader route to success.
❏ The work of each individual, team or organisation is well coordinated with the work of other, enabled by supporting policies, technology and governance.
❏ Incentives exist to make the success of the collective, not one party, the priority.
❏ Individual and collective objectives and priorities are transparent and reviewed regularly for alignment.
❏ Leaders convene regular cross functional/system teams/organisations in ways designed to maintain relational and rational alignment.
❏ It is clear how resources are allocated and decisions made to maintain alignment.

Inspiration for action?

● Success at **Danaher**, one of the world's largest safety critical organisations, doesn't happen by accident. Their Danaher Business System (DBS), drives and aligns every aspect of work. DBS guides what they do, measures how well they do, and how to do it better.

● **Atlassian** went from an unknown Australian tech startup in 2002 to a $50 billion business in 20 years. They continue to hold on to the powerful simplicity of their 'Culture Canvas' to bring 'just enough' alignment to their people so they can succeed.

● **Google, LinkedIn, Huawei and Sears**, have successfully used Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) to successfully link every employee to organisational goals and in turn to measurable results. Everyone can see how they matter.

Capability: Nurturing skills, behaviours and opportunities

High performing leadership creates the conditions needed to build the skills, knowledge, behaviours and resources needed to achieve the task. And creates the opportunities to put these capabilities into action in service of the task and progressing on the route to success.

Why is this important?

The capabilities invested in to support yesterday's challenges, are often not sufficient for today or tomorrow's challenges in an ever-changing world.

Groups that don't invest in deliberately developing capability in people, processes, technologies and supporting governance fall behind, lose talent, and struggle to adapt when circumstances shift.

When leaders prioritise capability building which matches the characteristics of the task to be undertaken and the route chosen to tackle it, they create resilient systems that can tackle increasingly complex problems, reduce any single points of failure, and build confidence that helps to fuel innovation.

Indicators?

❏ There is an early assessment of existing capabilities and resources, and a gap analysis to what is required to deliver on the route to success agreed.
❏ People report having the knowledge, skills resources and opportunities to do what they have been asked to do.
❏ Space is created for learning and reflection - time for to learn from experiences, not just to do more tasks.
❏ There is a culture of regular feedback - offering specific, timely input focused on development rather than just evaluation.
❏ There is an investment in skill-building.
❏ There is an ability to work skillfully with conflict, resolve competing priorities and surface conflict for positive ends.
❏ Group members report having the ability to influence and innovate.

Inspiration for action?

- **Barts Health NHS Trust** successfully tackled backlogs in elective surgery, but not by focusing directly on increasing punctuality and efficiency. Instead, it prioritised understanding what conditions and capabilities their people needed in place to succeed, then made those (simple) changes.
- **Pixar Animation Studios** success is often attributed to their 'Braintrust', which meets to actively listen to and improve from colleague & customer feedback. They develop skills in 'active listening, curiosity, and emotional awareness' and an opportunity in the Braintrust to use these skills
- **Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB)**, a 168-year-old Nordic bank exceeded revenue targets by 25% after investing in psychological safety training.

Energise: Energy, engagement and commitment are sustained

High-performing leadership is evident when there is the sustained energy and commitment needed throughout the journey. This is reflected in a strong dedication and willingness among group members to prioritise the success of the collective over individual interests.

Why is it important?

Research suggests that it is energy, not time or resources, is the primary driver of high performance. One of the most frequently occurring results in efforts at significant team, organisation or system change is that the effort runs out of energy and fades away.

Groups with high positive energy do better on every dimension of performance and leadership which generates and harnesses for the benefit of achieving their task are more likely to succeed.

People who are highly motivated are more focused, persistent, willing to take risks and able to sustain high energy. In the context of clinical engagement, there is a strong correlation between clinicians who are engaged and motivated and high performance in almost every dimension, including patient outcomes and mortality.

Indicators?

❏ There is attention to and measurement of 5 types/domains of energy: social, spiritual, psychological, physical and intellectual.
❏ People express considerable passion and motivation for the work, reflected in discretionary effort
❏ People report strong on relational (not just transactional) commitment i.e. 'If I don't deliver this, I let the group and our purpose down and I don't want that'.
❏ There is public celebration of effort (even in failure), as well as success.
❏ There's a sense of trust and mutual responsibility for the work.
❏ People report they get the credit they deserve for their contributions to the group.
❏ Members of the group are matched to projects that they are most enthusiastic about, while still assuring that all the work is adequately resourced.

Inspiration for action?

- **MPFT** has seen significant year-on-year improvements over the last five years in its NHS Staff Survey scores right across the People Promise, Staff Engagement and Morale metrics, achieving some of the highest scores across the NHS.
- **Kaiser Permanente** achieves strong staff commitment by fostering growth, ensuring satisfaction, promoting inclusion via equity principles, and aligning values like teamwork, compassion, and integrity with patient care and community health.
- A 'compact with physicians' at **Virginia Mason Hospital** drives their work and is based on their understanding if people feel like they're part of something that matters, something bigger than themselves they will thrive and excel.

High-performing leadership: four spaces

At its best, high-performing leadership is evident in four spaces:

- leading self
- leading team
- leading organisation
- leading system.

While all four leadership spaces are interconnected and dependent on one another, pinpointing the primary space for the current leadership task helps clarify the leadership role and focuses individual and/or collective efforts.

System

Leaders create and sustain the conditions for collaboration.
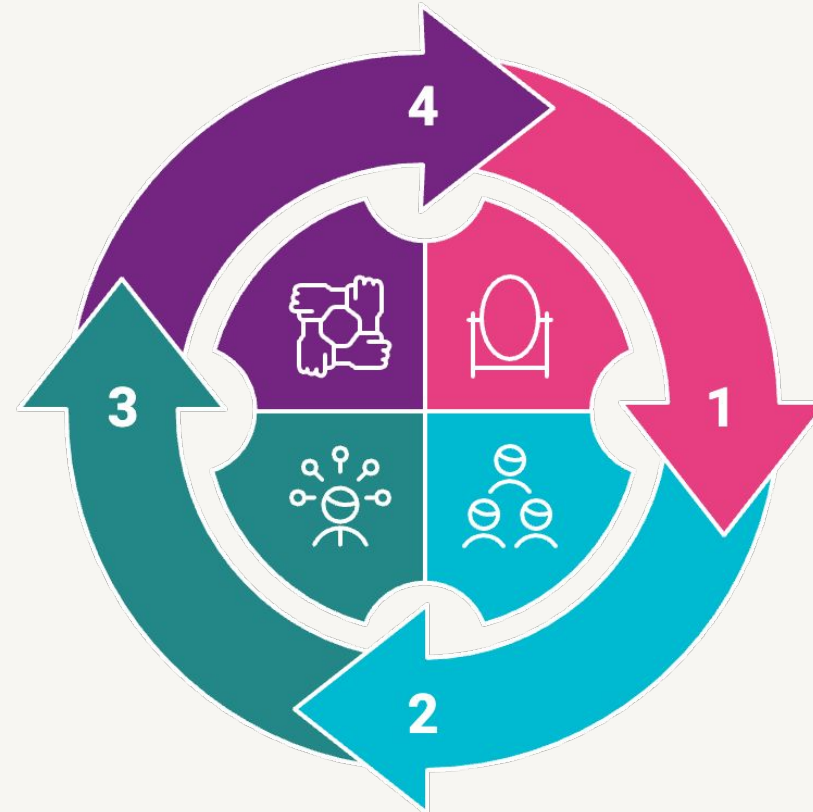
Organisation

Leaders prioritise organisational goals over personal portfolios.

Self

Leaders understand their strengths, weaknesses and responsibilities.

Team

Leaders create the conditions in their teams for high performance.

Industry and academic research that inspired and informed us

- Patrick Lencioni on the 5 Dysfunctions of Teams
- Google's Project Aristotle
- Daniel Coyle - Culture Code research
- Gustavo Razzetti - Fearless Culture research
- Amy Edmondson - Psychological Safety
- Burke and Litwin's Organisational Performance Model of Transformation
- Ron Heifetz on Adaptive Leadership
- Susan Michie's COM-B model of behaviour change
- Katzenbach and Smith - 'Discipline of Teams'
- Tannenbaum and Salas' drivers of team effectiveness
- Edgar Schein - Organisational Culture and Change
- Dan Pink - Motivation research
- Marshall Ganz and Hahrie Han on Public Narrative leadership and social movements
- Gervase Bushe's CLEAR Leadership model
- Priya Parker on the 'Art of Gathering'
- Peter Senge on System Leadership
- Centre for Creative Leadership
- Megan Reitz on 'Spaciousness'

- Prof Mark Moore - Public Value Model for strategic organisational decision making and development
- Bate and Greenhalgh - how stories shape organisations
- Davies and Nutley; Senge on learning organisations
- Simon Sinek's 'Start with Why?'
- Elizabeth Menzies Lyth - Anxiety in NHS organisations
- Ron Fisher's 'Transition Curve'
- Kings College London ICS learning community
- Professor Thomas Lee - workforce engagement
- Marshall Rosenberg - nonviolent communication
- Lewis Deep Democracy methodology
- The work of Fred Laloux, Aaron Dignam, Bruce Daisley, Doug Conant, Adam Grant and Gary Hamel on human centred models of strategy, organisational design, development, performance and leadership
- Brené Brown on trust vulnerability and belonging
- The work of bell hooks, Layla Saad, Reni Eddo-Lodge, June Sarpong on diversity, equity and inclusion
- NHS guide to Large Scale Change (2018)
- IHI guide to effective Board leadership
- Nancy Kline on Thinking Environments