

Leadership is Contextual

While generic leadership models abound, we instinctively know that leadership is there to serve the particular organisational ambitions and contexts in which it is placed. That's why taking leadership models 'off the shelf' never really seems to work. They can be good starting points – and indeed are often carefully researched across multi-organisational contexts by researchers and academics – the client organisation needs to adapt the language and terminology so that it 'rings true' for them.

This has been graphically illustrated for us recently in our work with a national religious institution. They were initially drawn to our Changing Leadership model of Attractor (pulling people towards purpose), Edge and Tension (pulling people towards ambition), Container (the processing of uncertainty and anxiety) and Transforming Space (being able to change what is happening 'in the moment'). We interviewed many high potential leaders in this organisation and gathered around 50 stories of successful transformation *in their context*. These findings were processed at a conference involving 100 people representing a cross section of their community.

Following this, and with some important theological 'sense making', they have created a leadership model that rings true for them. For example, in it our Attractor practice has been named as the 'Priest – the signifier – drawing out something bigger', Edge and Tension as the 'Prophet – edge – challenging boundaries and holding new possibilities'. What has been insightful for us through this work is that their interpretation and contextualisation has helped us get deeper insights into our own leadership model. The learnings and benefits have been mutual! And we have learned the vital importance of the organisational need to 'dig deeper' into one's own paradigms and hopes (and dark fears) about leadership in order for leadership to be placed in its systemic context.