

## England's Success: is *Leadership* coming home?

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Football might still be coming home. But it's going to take a little longer than we hoped for.

We may not have gone home with the World Cup trophy this year, but perhaps an even more remarkable thing has happened – the English once again after some 28 years felt hope that their team could win. Central to this dramatic and surprising transformation has been England Manager Gareth Southgate.

So how did the mild-mannered man in a waistcoat do it? How did he transform a team that was so hugely underperforming (having lost to minnows Iceland) with a predecessor who lasted just 2 months (after a newspaper sting) – just 2 years ago?

What is remarkable is the shift in leadership style from those that have gone before him. We have waved goodbye to the cult of the leader (for now at least) and focused on leadership: building a team with common values and a bond which gelled them together to form a solid team.

Unlike most England managers before him, instead of playing the short game and chasing quick wins, Southgate concentrated on establishing a solid foundation on which to build longer-term success.

Just a third of Premier League players are eligible for selection for the English national team, so Southgate has the challenge of doing more with less. What he has focused on is creating an environment where team success overrides everything else and the team is able to become greater than the sum of its parts. There is no space for individuals that disrupt that ethos, and it has clearly paid off.

Businesses have much to learn from this.

The success of worldwide marketing and communications specialist WPP was seen as being inextricably linked to founder Sir Martin Sorrell. Last year the firm suffered its worst financial performance since the recession.

Sir Martin lay the blame at the feet of Google and Facebook and other advertisers for cutting agencies out, trying to avoid the question of whether he as the leader had failed to adapt to a changing industry and simply whether he had been around for too long. His bullying behaviour towards junior staff and excessive expense accounts, finally saw him being forced out of the company after 32 years.

Arguably, Facebook may also soon be about to learn this lesson. Mark Zuckerberg seems to have similar reluctance relinquishing control of his bedroom start-up turned global behemoth. Operating as both CEO and Chairman means important checks and balances on how the company is run are put at risk. Would the Cambridge Analytica scandal have happened if leadership had been more democratised within the company?

Conversely, Lidl is a brand that appears to value leadership above the cult of the leader. In the marketplace, the German retailer has taken on British supermarkets with significant disruption, knocking back the nation's once favoured Waitrose to the eighth spot in market share. But CEO Jesper Hojer CEO is a relatively anonymous figure who over the past three years has quietly gone about delivering a hugely successful growth strategy.

Leadership builds a strong team of leaders that isn't focused on one personality, thus ensuring an inclusive companywide culture. It also encourages longer term decision making, rather than laying

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short-term traps for the future. To quote Southgate "Manage every game as though you are going to be around forever".

While the country is still coming to grips with the team's semi-final defeat in the World Cup, the foundations for future success have been set. The 2020 European Championship final is set to be played at Wembley Stadium, and this England side will be full of confidence that they can make it very special.

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