



Trustee Academy #6: the listening leader

Description

Trustees Learning and Development Programme

Always striving to find a better way through lifelong learning



Introduction

A manufacturing company with a sophisticated process suffered persistent intermittent failures with one of its machines. This caused a major disruption to productivity.

Endless hours were spent by the maintenance staff. But they could not find a solution to the problem. Even the specialist brought in from the company who designed the machine, struggled to discern the cause of the failures.

Eventually, an engineer, recently retired from the machine supplier, was brought in. He listened to the frustrations of the maintenance staff, listened to the machine, and felt around at the various components.

After half an hour or so, he told the maintenance staff to change one particular component. The intermittent fault never reoccurred. Sometime later, a rather large account arrived for the work. The manager of the company queried the amount, “You were only here for half an hour!” Back came the reply, “The charge is not for my time, but for my skill and experience”.

It is a story that has served to remind me that whatever challenges we encounter, it’s important to take time to stand back, listen, understand and then think about solutions. To each challenge we bring our not inconsiderable life experience.

Another vital ingredient is our ability to evaluate the context and influences that surround the situation. So it is that *learning and development* is never finished – but always a work in progress as MMHS travels through the changes and challenges ahead.

Alan

Legal and Governance

Charity trustee standards for governance and leadership

Those who MMHS seeks to serve, Methodist presbyters (not forgetting their families), made a declaration at their ordination of lifelong commitment to their ministry.

Every year at the Methodist Conference, ordinands are asked a series of questions which take the form of vows as a precursor to the President of Conference laying hands on each as a sign of their ordination. Every year thereafter, at Presbyteral Synod, presbyters are invited to reaffirm their ordination vows.

This guidance note, [Charity Trustee Standards For Governance And Leadership](#) – covering values, competence, and probity – has the feel of vows. No doubt, our residents would resonate with the note’s ideals.

It's a good discipline for each trustee to visit and, over time, revisit each of the questions asked.



Finance

Reviewing Investments

A key feature of learning and development for trustees is acquiring the skill to ask the appropriate questions regarding the general context of the subject and the specific situation of the charity.



MMHS Board L&D
June 2022
Reviewing Investments

What follows is actually an advice note more than anything and is based on general advice given by the Charities Aid Foundation on *reviewing investments*.

The advice is in bullet point form. Critical questions are added throughout and a final observation is made.

- We should be reviewing the performance of our investments regularly to ensure that they are continuing to support our charitable aims. How often are we doing this?
- Who within our organisation has responsibility for carrying out those regular reviews? What processes are used?
- We also need to be reviewing our investments on an ad hoc basis if:
 - We have concerns about the performance of our investments or those who manage them
 - Our financial situation has changed
 - The economic outlook has changed
- What should a review cover? We should have benchmarks against which we review our investments. They could include:
 - Overall performance. What performance did we set out to achieve and how have our funds performed against this expectation?
 - Income and capital returns. What return have we received over a given time frame? Did these returns deliver the results we needed to support our mission?
 - Risk. Are we taking too much risk, or too little?

If our investments are underperforming, we need to understand why. Can we accept the loss? If our investments are overperforming, we need to ensure that we are not being exposed to greater risk than our investment policy allows.

Final observation

It is likely that on reading this note and in particular after answering the questions posed, you will want to explore this subject more. In thinking on your trustee role, do bear in mind the importance of keeping MMHS's Investment Policy fresh and relevant and agreeing with management, the benchmarks which they should be using.

This note on [reviewing investments](#) within MMHS raises a series of questions on the topic.
How many answers do we have â?? or are there more to learn?

Personal Development

Building personal leadership

In the Methodist Church, the term â??leadershipâ?? may evoke emotive reactions when much emphasis is placed on being a servant. Many interesting debates have taken place about servant leadership.

So, what does leadership mean for the trustees of MMHS? At one level it is fulfilling the legal responsibility of oversight of the charityâ??s activities.

At a deeper level, as the charity continues to go through major transformation, it is vital the trustees exercise strategic leadership to give direction to the executive.

[This workbook](#) is a useful tool for each trustee to reappraise how leadership is exercised both as individuals and as a board.

Skillbook

Building Expert Power



Category

1. Bulletins

Date Created

28/06/2022

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