

### 3 key factors of an effective leader

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The purpose and strategic direction of an organisation lies at the heart of impactful leadership, says Saara Bange, Associate Director at Aalto University Executive Education.

Based on the leadership framework at Aalto University Executive Education, Bange says that the knowledge, skills and competencies of an effective leader come down to three key factors; sensemaking and interpreting, adapting and aligning, renewing and growing.

A key skill of a leader is to break down information and use it as an aid for decision making – sensemaking and interpretation is key for this as it describes the way we make sense of the world around us.

The leader's task is to ask; What is happening? What will happen? Which beliefs will influence the events? It is necessary to understand and accept that the answers will never be perfect, says Bange.

She adds that this imperfection cannot paralyze decision-making and execution which brings us to the second factor; adapting and aligning.

This refers to a leader's ability to adapt activities to the surrounding reality as it is interpreted – the company strategy, context, and events on both a micro and macro level.

On an individual level, it means that leaders who are aware of their behavioural styles and ways of making sense of the world can use that knowledge to adapt to the situation.

The third skill is renewing and growing – this is both the leader's personal renewal and the impact on organizational renewal and growth. Bange says that this may require challenging both the leader's own and the organization's mindsets.

She adds that adapting and aligning involves continual development, whereas renewing and growing refer to a leader's ability to respond to sporadic, surprising changes in the operating environment.

"It is important to remember that leadership never takes place in a vacuum; the organizational and wider context exist along the perimeters of leadership.

"Even the most skilled leader is unable to leave a positive imprint without structures and frameworks that support leadership. The collective capabilities, knowledge, and skills of the organization set the conditions for a leader's activities," says Bange.

By strengthening these knowledge, skills and individual competences, Bange believes leaders can become more effective and leave their mark – on the team, organization, and surrounding society.

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For more information, or to speak with Saara Bange, contact Katie Hurley at BlueSky Education on [khurley@bluesky-pr.com](mailto:khurley@bluesky-pr.com) or call +44 (0) 1582 790708.