Executive Summary
Australian Local Government Leaders

Authored by: Dr Lynne Cruickshank, Head of Research, PBC

Introduction

The current research endeavoured to obtain insight into what differentiates local government leaders from their counterparts in the private sector by exploring differences in relation to personality and multi-rater performance.

Understanding what differentiates local government leaders and the strengths and opportunities that tend to be most prevalent amongst local government leaders is valuable in supporting the development of local government leadership talent.

Personality differences across Australian local government and private sector leaders

Personality differences between local government leaders and private sector leaders were assessed using the following three assessments

HPI

Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)

The Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) describes normal, or bright side personality – qualities that describe how we relate to others when we are at our best.

HDS

Hogan Development Survey (HDS)

The Hogan Development Survey (HDS) describes the dark side of personality – qualities that emerge in times of increased strain and can disrupt relationships, damage reputations, and derail people's chances of success.

MVPI

Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI)

The MVPI describes personality from the inside – the core goals, values, drivers, and interests that determine what we desire and strive to attain.

Differences in day-to-day characteristics

When looking at differences in day-to-day characteristics, leaders within the local government sector were more likely to be resilient and able to handle high levels of pressure and workloads.

Significant differences were found in relation to day-to-day personality tendencies which may contribute to differences in leadership styles and the approaches adopted when comparing local government leaders to leaders in the private sector.

Specifically, local government leaders were relatively more likely to display tendencies associated with being resilient; attentive to detail, procedures, rules and risks; driven and results-focused; curious and open-minded; independent and task-focused; and interested in learning and staying up to date.

Differences in derailers

Derailers (i.e. counterproductive work behaviours) can have a significant impact on the performance and reputation of leaders including by impacting on their leadership style.

Significant differences were also found in relation to derailment tendencies which may contribute to differences in development needs and responses when in situations such as when under pressure or complacent. Specifically, leaders within the local government were less likely to derail by overreacting to situations and being tense under pressure; cynical of others and fault-finding; overly confident and ignoring one's shortcomings; taking unnecessary risks and acting impulsively; being overly perfectionistic and micromanaging others.

When looking more closely at derailment tendencies for local government leaders, the most

prevalent derailment tendencies for these leaders were associated with holding exceptionally high standards of performance, being perfectionistic, exhibiting micromanaging behaviours, being inflexible and failing to delegate work to others.

The second most prevalent derailment tendencies were associated with overvaluing one's independence and being privately resentful regarding requests and work-related suggestions; and taking unnecessary risks, acting impulsively without thinking through the potential implications, and downplaying one's mistakes.

Differences in values, interests and drivers

Values, interests and drivers play an important role in the type of work environment and organisational culture that leaders are likely to foster.

There were also significant differences between local government leaders and leaders in the private sector in relation to motivators and drivers which may contribute to differences in the types of work environments or cultures that they are likely to foster as a leader.

Specifically, local government leaders were relatively more likely to embrace values associated with helping others and making a positive contribution to society; dedication to strong personal beliefs; and innovation, creativity and style.

On the other hand, leaders in the private sector were relatively more likely to embrace values associated with opportunities to stand out and be noticed;

opportunities to socialise; competition and getting ahead; focusing on commercial outcomes; experiencing fun and variety.

When looking more closely at motivators and drivers for local government leaders, the most prevalent values were associated with opportunities to help others and contribute to society; and with engaging in analytical problem solving and objective decision making.
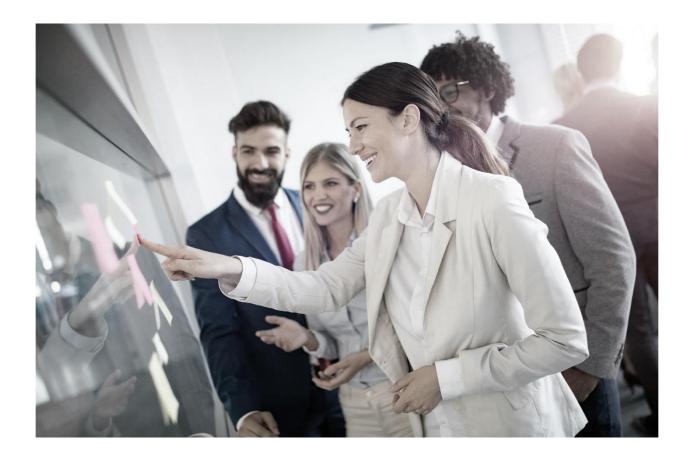
Other values that were relatively more prevalent included having an interest in high standards and appropriate social behaviour; valuing innovation and creative problem-solving.

Differences in leadership performance across local government and private sector leaders

An interesting question is whether these personality-based differences result in differences in leadership performance. To examine whether there were differences in leadership performance, research was conducted exploring differences on the Hogan 360 which is a multi-rater assessment tool designed to assess leader performance.

When looking at differences in relation to performance on multi-rater assessments, there were a number of similarities including in relation to self-management, relationship management, and working on the business (i.e. adding value through innovation and strategic planning). However, there were also some leadership capabilities where local government leaders scored lower relative to their private sector counterparts. Specifically, local government leaders scored lower on working in the business (i.e. achieving operational excellence), accountability, and being driven by internal and external customer needs.

Similarities and differences in top strengths and top opportunities

When reviewing ranked strengths and opportunities for leaders within the local government and private sectors, there were some similarities in the top-rated strengths and opportunities to improve that emerged regardless of sector or leadership level (i.e. executive or manager).

There were some similarities in the top-rated strengths and opportunities to improve when looking at local government leaders and private sector leaders.

This speaks to common leadership strengths and needs. In terms of strengths, these were having solid technical ability, experience and knowledge; having a strong work ethic; being steady and calm under pressure; having a professional approach.

In terms of opportunities to improve, these were stop taking on too much and spreading oneself too thin; challenging poor performance; delegating more; motivating others and improving morale.

There were also some differences in ranked strengths when comparing local government leaders and private sector leaders. Specifically, local government leaders were tended to be rated relatively higher on the strengths of having high ethical standards and integrity, being empathetic and supportive, and being visionary and strategic.

In terms of opportunities to improve, local government leaders tended to be rated higher on the opportunities of setting clearer goals and performance indicators; listening more and letting others have their say; and improving their time management and organisational skills.

About Peter Berry Consultancy (PBC)

PBC is a multidisciplinary global consulting firm with 30 years' experience in the delivery of solutions aimed at maximising the potential of individuals, teams, leaders and organisations. We undertake research to support our evidence-based solutions and have a network of partners and distributors globally.

PBC is the Australian distributor of Hogan Assessments and the authors of a range of diagnostics including the Hogan 360 suite, Agile suite, High Performing Team Assessment (HPTA), and co-authored the Hogan Safety Climate Survey.

Peter Berry Consultancy Pty Ltd
info@peterberry.com.au | www.peterberry.com.au

Sydney Office
T: +61 2 8918 0888
Level 8, 201 Miller Street North Sydney, NSW 2060

Melbourne Office
T: +61 3 8629 5100
Suite 303, 430 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

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