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## Co-operative leadership within the All Blacks.

### Dear Cooperative Business NZ Members

I was very interested in this [article](#) from well-known sports writer and biographer Phil Gifford in last weekend's *Sunday Star Times* and I decided to call Phil on Monday morning to discuss things further. We talked about Steve Hansen's coaching style and overall leadership regime, and in particular Phil's quote in the article: ***"He's made All Black coaching a co-operative venture, rather than a dictatorship"***.



Under Hansen as Head Coach since June 2012, the All Blacks have played 58 test matches and lost just 3. That's a fantastic record that even surpasses the wonderful legacy that he inherited from previous coaches. Since our first test match in 1903, New Zealand has played 541 matches with a staggering 76.9% winning record, this statistic excluding 19 draws.

Gifford talks about Hansen operating "... almost as a helicopter coach. The final say on everything rests with him, but (Ian) Foster (one of two assistant coaches), as a prime example, does much of the hands on coaching" writes Gifford.

In my view of today's world, effective leadership is all about empowerment and *Doing With Others* as opposed to *Doing To Others*, or even *Doing For Others*. Hansen's coaching style is all inclusive with support provided from a wide range of key people including Gilbert Enoka (assistant manager and mental skills coach), Wayne Smith (assistant coach and head of defence) and Darren Shand (team manager). All three have been with the AB's since well before Hansen took over in 2012.

*"Traditionally All Black power resided with the head coach, and many were happy to wield it,"* writes Gifford.

The lessons here, apart from surrounding yourself with highly experienced and effective people, is that the effective leader today is the mentor and facilitator, not the dictator and autocrat, nor the hero type who tries to do everything for everybody himself or herself. These are interesting parallels between All Black rugby and leadership in business.

Gifford believes that the likely successor to Hansen will be Foster given he has been assistant coach since Hansen took over in 2012. The same parallel exists in business as covered in those two well-read leadership books *"Good to Great"* and *"Built to Last"* written by Jim Collins who says the best organisations globally over the past 100 plus years tend to be those very strong in CEO succession planning and development, as well as CEO promotion from within (Foster?).

Gifford also talks about past AB coaches having tended to micro-manage as any failures have landed at their door. In businesses this can be a big temptation and trap - we need to keep reminding ourselves that by empowering and trusting others we will achieve far more than trying to do it all ourselves. Let the others take the glory. Have them think it was their idea. Ask the right questions then listen and let others come up with the best solutions themselves.

Gifford quotes an All Black insider talking about Hansen: *"He asks questions, and listens to the answers. It's how he gets players to take on leadership. After the discussion the player feels he was the one who had the idea"*. Another strong parallel.

A key component of true empowerment is of course the training and development of individuals. As we know: *"If we give a man a fish we will feed him for a day; if we show him how to fish we will feed him for life"*. Show our people what is expected, where to head and how to get there, then let them go ahead on their own. Sure there will be some mistakes but these usually provide the greatest learnings.

*"So Hansen has demolished the coach is king model,"* writes Gifford. Hansen would rather be the mentor and facilitator leading from above with full empowerment of others. He clearly has alignment with the players, assistant coaches and support staff with all arrows pointing in the same direction. He also has great humility as we see when he speaks publicly, a key trait of most successful world leaders according to Jim Collins.

Hansen is happy for others to take the kudos and often downplays things himself. If he has an ego it is difficult to see on TV or read in the papers. He **works co-operatively with others** as a very effective coach (leader) and with the philosophy that the sum of the whole will be far greater than that of the individual parts.

Some great parallels here between coaching the AB's and leading businesses, large or small. Good luck tomorrow night against Australia Steve and your highly co-operative and impressive team around you, as well the All Blacks themselves!

Passionate All Black and co-operative business fan,

Craig Presland.