

Being a leader in your school community

By Karen Bonanno

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Biography

Karen Bonanno literally lives online as an educator and consultant. Karen is involved in planning and hosting webinars that cover primary and secondary education with specific focus on innovative teaching and learning strategies and resourcing as it applies to curriculum design and delivery. Her work at Eduwebinar helps teachers and teacher librarians attain their hours of professional learning in a virtual, stress-free environment in the comfort of their home. Karen is also an accredited consultant in Talent Dynamics and Talent Dynamics for Young People.

This article is the first in a two-part series as a follow-up from the keynote address, *Capacity building the profession for the future*, delivered by Karen Bonanno and June Wall at the ASLA XXIV 2015 Conference, 29–30 September 2015.

A concept Karen highlighted during the conference address was talent leadership.

Talent leadership involves identifying the natural talent of an individual and effectively combining this with the ability to lead or guide other individuals or teams to improve, develop trust, and make it possible for organisations to reach their strategic goals (Bonanno & Wall 2015).

Often leadership within a school is associated with the principal. In research undertaken by Vivianne Robinson (as cited in Fullan, 2015) she found that principals who participated as learners and worked with teachers, had the highest impact on student achievement and learning in their school community.

Is there an opportunity for teacher librarians to embrace a similar leadership style in

their school community? A revised concept I'd like to explore in this article is *shared talent leadership*.

Triangulation

One way to effectively explore the concept of *shared talent leadership* is to adopt the method of triangulation. Triangulation involves using a number of data sources to shed light on something extraordinary to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Cohen 2006).

Show up

Talent Dynamics is a psychometric test that links both your strengths and weaknesses to your natural preferences, for example, the way you think, communicate, learn,

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lead, and then it gives you examples of role models and strategies to follow to be successful (Talent Dynamics 2015).

So who are you? The following general explanation of Talent Dynamics may help you to identify your natural talent across the broad energies/frequencies of the Talent Dynamics Square — Dynamo, Blaze, Tempo, Steel.

Dynamo

Those with Dynamo talent boldly go forth into uncharted territory to push the boundaries. They are often told that people aren't ready for their innovative ideas; they are ahead of their time. The visionary/innovator is at the cutting edge through the services, programs or products they offer as they shift society's perspective. It takes a lot of courage and self-belief for these folk

Figure 1: Shared Talent Leadership

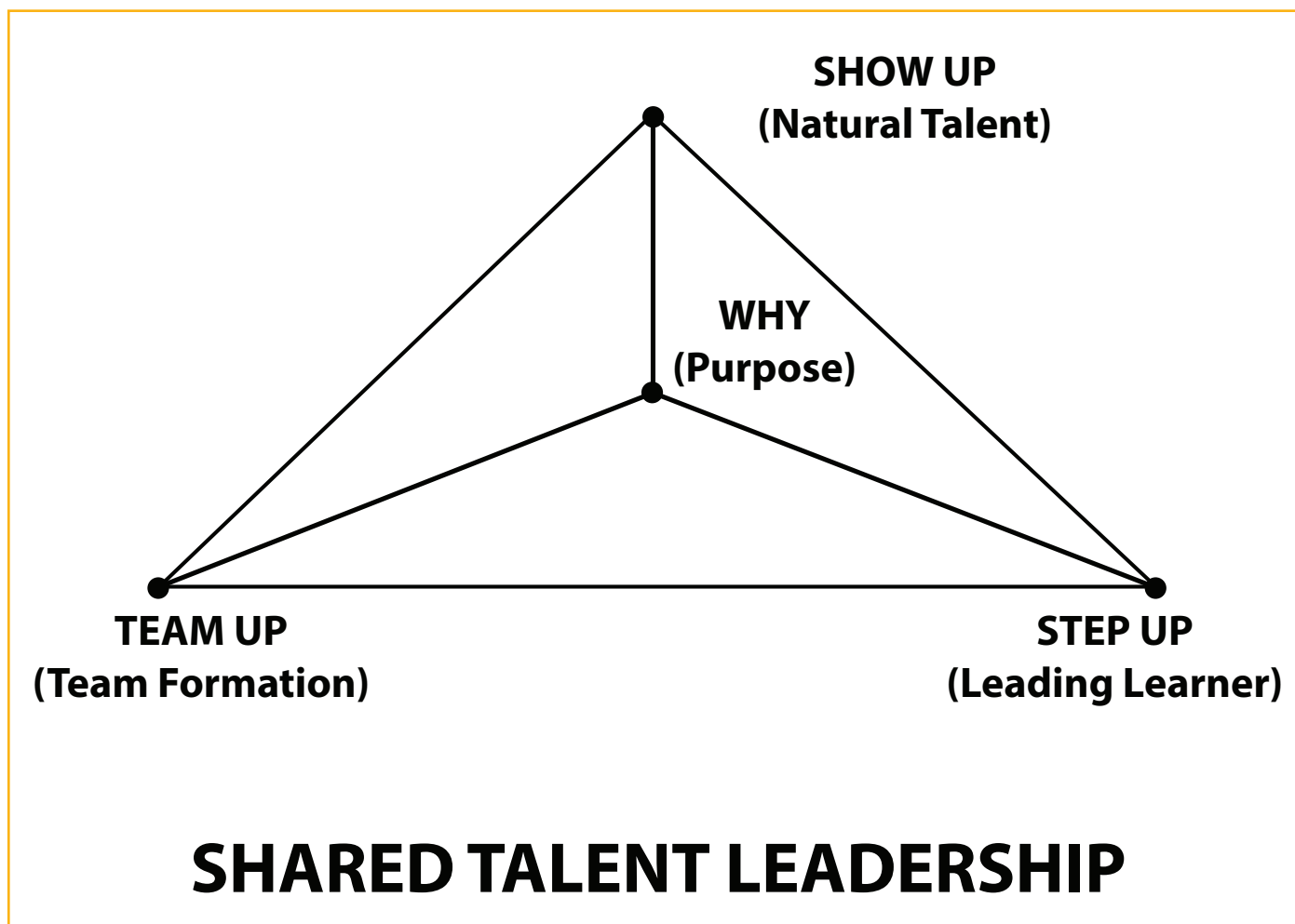




Figure 2:
Talent Dynamics Square

to stay with their project and see it through to completion.

This visionary/innovator is:

- an intuitive and imaginative thinker;
- usually a visual learner;
- very energetic;
- creative;
- inspirational;
- strategic;
- going against the status quo;
- churning big, bold ideas; and
- able to create value through innovation.

One challenge they face is being impatient because they move swiftly on their ideas and become frustrated when others cannot keep up with them.

Blaze

Those with Blaze talent can be considered as provocateurs. The constructive ones are the cheerleader and advocate for a cause that shines the light on others. They illuminate a project and draw attention to it or they point something out and everyone wants it. They are very people-focused.

The provocateur:

- uses divergent and conversational thinking;
- is usually an auditory learner;
- motivates people;
- encourages action;
- instils confidence;
- leads from the front;
- actively networks;

- builds rapport quickly; and
- leverages the value of a project, program or product through people.

One challenge they face is being overbearing because they are so passionate about the cause; they forget to consider everyone and all the options.

Tempo

Those with Tempo talent are motivated to create connections between people for the common good. They value the opportunity to work together and they have an innate sense of timing. They are the great collaborators of the world.

The collaborator is:

- multi-sensory and uses interpersonal skills;
- usually a kinaesthetic learner;
- a team builder;
- a project manager;
- very connected;
- a good implementer;
- able to see possibilities;
- community-oriented;
- focused on how people feel;
- able to build long-lasting relationships; and
- successful at creating value through knowing the right time to do something big.

One challenge they face is being indecisive because they want to get it right for everyone. They don't want to rock the boat.

Steel

Those with Steel talent are often the great problem solvers. They gather the information, data and facts and then analyse

it all before they share their knowledge, research or lessons learned. Even so, they can make complex situations or issues simple. They catalogue and categorise information.

The problem solver is:

- a process-oriented thinker;
- usually a read-write learner;
- systems focused;
- analytical;
- good with detail;
- a gatherer of lots of information and data;
- efficient;
- a tinkerer/tweaker;
- focused on one thing; and
- successful at leveraging the value of a project, program or product through systems.

One challenge they face is avoiding the limelight because they don't need to have a lot of people around to make things work.

Team up

Each Talent Dynamics energy/frequency has a list of challenges, or what could be termed weaknesses. These are strong indicators as to who should be on your team. You definitely don't need someone just like you.

For example, the Blaze talent are people-focused and the best networkers. They add value to the team through the relationships they create, their enthusiasm and the way they communicate. They love variety, for example, like to meet lots of people, but often get so excited by this they forget the detail and the need to really connect. To build their own team they need to have other

team members who will pay attention to the detail and nurture the relationships they create. Someone with Tempo talent is a good addition to this team. They are the best at customer service and project management. They build and nurture relationships and have a great sense of timing. They are great at finding the balance and can bring people and systems together. Then, add in someone with Steel talent and you have the person who has an eye on the detail and the processes, procedures and systems to follow to be successful. A formidable team can be formed by utilising the key elements of each person's natural talent. Focus on the strengths of each person and how they would fit in your team.

They work alongside teachers to find out what needs to be improved. They support a culture where trying out new things is acceptable and encouraged.

How can a *shared talent leadership* approach allow you to step up as a leading learner in your school community?

Talent leadership applied to the Maker movement

In the *NMC Horizon Report: 2015 K-12 Edition* (Johnson *et al.* 2015) makerspaces have been identified as being adopted by schools in one year's time or less. As teacher librarians are beginning to add a makerspace zone to their school library

As teacher librarians are beginning to add a makerspace zone to their school library learning environment to encourage students to explore design thinking, problem solving and their creativity, it is timely to consider talent leadership within this context.

The team doesn't need to be people within the same school. That would be ideal, but possibly not a reality for many teacher librarians. Consider those within your school library networks or your professional learning network. You may have access to people who you have met at a professional learning day or conference. They can be physically present or virtually present. You just need to make the time to connect, communicate and create with these like-minded people.

Step up

In his article, 'Leadership in a Digital Age', Michael Fullan (2015) identifies principals who are 'lead learners' as those who can have the biggest impact on student learning.

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The visionary/innovator (Dynamo) will generate boundless ideas of what a makerspace will look like. They are imaginative and inventive and have a big picture view of the learning outcomes to be achieved. They will identify lots of ideas and activities that will potentially engage students and, quite likely, they will want to buy everything now! Their mantra is 'isn't this cool!' and they ask the 'what' questions. Think of Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, or Mark Zuckerberg, and you have your visionary/innovator.

The provocateur (Blaze) will identify who needs to be involved. They will be the greatest advocate for what happens; the cheerleader for the school library makerspace. They enjoy meeting new people, so are very good at identifying the people who need to be on the virtual and physical team. They are fantastic networkers and quick to bring like-minded people together. They will connect to folk to follow in the social networks and will quickly identify with whom they need to physically network to create greatness. Their mantra is 'come and play' and they ask the 'who' questions. Think of Oprah Winfrey, Barak Obama, or James Packer, and you have your provocateur.

The collaborator (Tempo) will make sure everyone knows what to do and have all the resources to make the makerspace zone highly successful. They will nurture the virtual and physical team. They will know where you need to go to get the best supplies and resources, and at the right price. They will be in the thick of the action, very hands-on, and actively engaged. They are great at monitoring how things are progressing and will know when to introduce new makerspace activities and tools. Their mantra is 'we're all in this together' and they ask the 'when' and 'where' questions. Think of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, and you have your collaborator.

The problem solver (Steel) will definitely have the best budget to build a makerspace zone. They will research the information, analyse the detail and provide the best advice on how things need to happen. They will back up their decision with evidence for why this needs to happen in the school library. They will be great at scheduling and writing policy and procedures so the makerspace runs smoothly. They will

measure and analyse the results because numbers, evidence and data are important to them to get feedback so they can improve the makerspace zone. Their mantra is 'there has to be a simpler and easier way to do this' and they ask the 'how' questions. Think of Frank Lowy (Westfield), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), or Larry Page (Google), and you have your problem solver.

By tapping into each energy/frequency capabilities, it is possible to have a well-rounded approach to developing a makerspace zone within the school community. Also, it does mean that at least one person on the team is talking the same language as the person who manages the finances of the school or who makes the decisions within the school.

Talent leadership applied to skills acquisition

Globalisation of the workforce, the use of digital platforms to manage micro-jobs and flexible work options, adoption of technology-smart machines and automation across multiple industries, are transforming the world of work. Future jobs, whether cognitive or manual, will require a different skill set.

In *The Global Achievement Gap*, Tony Wagner (2014) advocates the need for schools to focus on developing skills for work/career readiness and not standardised testing. He identifies a set of core survival skills as follows:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Effective oral and written communication

Table 1: Skills mapping

Survival skills (Wagner)	Enterprises skills (Wall & Bonanno; FYA)
Critical thinking & problem solving	Critical thinking Problem solving
Collaboration across networks & leading by influence	Collaboration Interpersonal relationships / Social intelligence Global citizenship
Agility and adaptability	Agility
Initiative and entrepreneurialism	Design thinking Leadership
Effective oral and written communication	Communication
Accessing and analysing information	Critical thinking Digital literacy
Curiosity and imagination	Design thinking Creativity

- Accessing and analysing information
- Curiosity and imagination
(Wagner 2014, pp. 14–41).

The work of Wagner is reinforced by Wall and Bonanno (2014) and the Foundation of Young Australians (2015) in the identification of future work/enterprise skills that our students are going to need for the future employment landscape:

- Leadership
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Agility
- Digital literacy
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Global citizenship
- Design thinking
- Collaboration
- Interpersonal relationships/social intelligence

Table 1 maps core survival skills to future work/enterprise skills.

Each Talent Dynamics energy/frequency has a natural way of learning and can feel comfortable with a particular skill set. For example, the Steel talent would gravitate towards critical thinking, problem solving, digital literacy and design thinking. A Tempo talent would have a stronger interest in collaboration, interpersonal relationships, social intelligence and global citizenship. Adopting a team approach to the delivery of skills development for students can mean there is a more balanced distribution of skill development. In addition, each individual has a blend of all the energies with a predominant energy/frequency and can, therefore, be open to learning. This openness helps to introduce and expose students to different ways of thinking and essential core skills relevant to career/workplace preparedness.

Why?

Why adopt a *shared talent leadership* approach to teaching and learning within a school community?

It mirrors the way businesses today are functioning and the changes to business models and structures. Many businesses are being flattened, that is, removal of the hierarchical method of operation. Work is being organised with emphasis on a network of cross-functional teams that work together on projects. As the project develops, the team members change to address the steps from design to implementation. Fluidity and responsiveness (agility and adaptability) are evident.

This is an opportunity to skilfully combine the natural talent and expertise of specialist professionals, for example, teacher librarians, to work effectively with the school community to deliver a future work/enterprise skills development program through project/inquiry-based learning.

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