Building Leadership Capacity and Skills

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The changing context of HE

"Universities, at the heart of the UK's growing knowledge economy, are facing unprecedented challenges. Tasked not only with educating students, whose expectations of education is changing, and with producing cutting-edge internationally recognised research, universities are also being asked to work with local communities and collaborate with businesses. Yet these are significant calls on finite resources and questions need to be raised about how universities and their leaders can best respond to the challenges they are now facing." (Work Foundation, 2008)
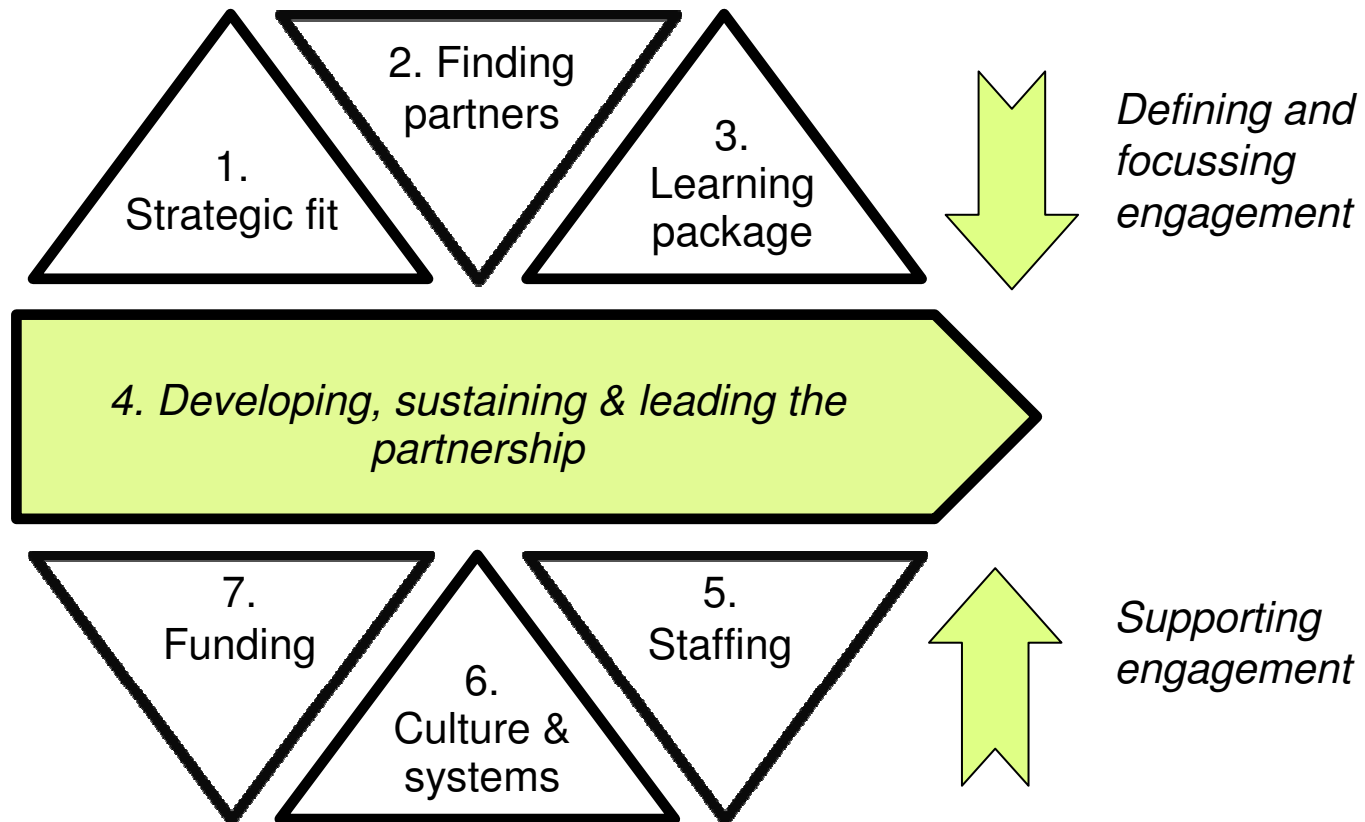
Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Project

- To build on successful employer engagement activity within the region to:
  - embed HE in employer workforce development and skills strategies regionally and at a business sector level
  - bring about a step change from supply-led to demand-led provision for businesses

- By exploring and testing ways of connecting employers and HE on a regional basis to:
  - Increase demand from employers for higher skills development
  - Help HE respond to them

Facilitators and barriers to HE-EE

1. Strategic fit

2. Finding partners

3. Learning package

4. *Developing, sustaining & leading the partnership*

7. Funding

6. Culture & systems

5. Staffing

Defining and focussing engagement

Supporting engagement

1. Strategic fit for the HEI and its partners

a) Alignment with institutional strengths and strategic direction
b) A fit in terms of values, ethos and ways or working
c) A real business need
d) HE best placed as the learning provider
e) Benefits which the intended learners will easily recognise

2. Finding partners and establishing the relationship

a) Clarity of contact points in HEI
b) Driving interest for the engagement
c) Joint exploration of what is needed
d) Building trust
e) Partnerships must be manageable

Supporting…

3. Designing and delivering an appropriate learning package

a) Creative adaptation of existing HE offerings
b) Employers can offer complementary learning experiences
c) Effective development of new or bespoke courses
d) Accreditation where appropriate
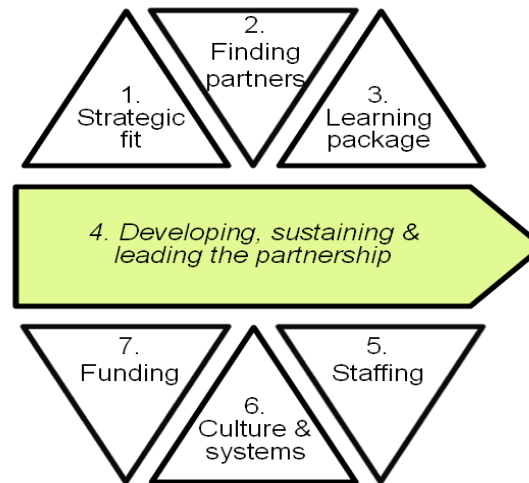e) A learning design suitable for the target group of learners

7. Funding and investment
a) Recognising the real cost of employer engagement
b) Public funding for development
c) Assessing sustainability and financial risk

6. Culture and systems supportive of collaboration

a) Flexible approach to purpose of HE
b) Bridging cultures
c) Time and incentives for engagement built into academic role
d) Financial and administrative flexibility

5. Staff resourcing and capability

a) Subject knowledge
b) Teaching delivery expertise
c) Customer focus and service orientation
d) Resourcing employer engagement in HE

2. Finding partners
1. Strategic fit
3. Learning package
4. Developing, sustaining & leading the partnership
7. Funding
6. Culture & systems
5. Staffing

4. Developing, sustaining and leading the partnership

a) An academic with passion for the work
b) Collaborative approach
c) Role clarity
d) Ensure buy-in   *Sustaining…*
e) Build in continuity
f) Support at senior levels
g) Need for ongoing leadership
h) Recognise complex leadership needs

Bolden, R., Connor, H., Duquemin, A., Hirsh, W. and Petrov, G. (2009) *Employer Engagement with Higher Education: Defining, Sustaining and Supporting Higher Skills Provision*. A South West Higher Skills Project Research Report: University of Exeter and CIHE.

A leadership challenge?

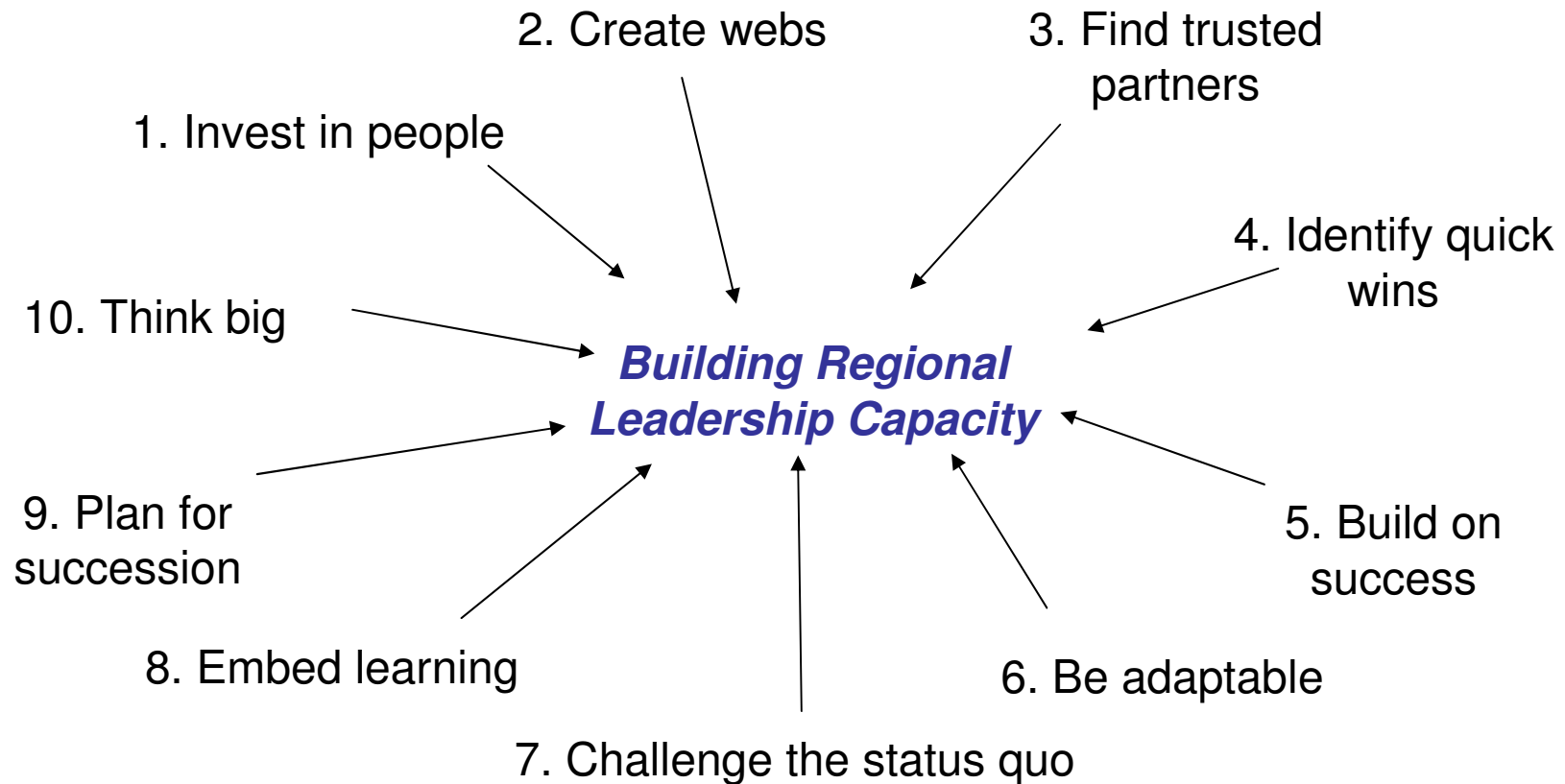Direction   Alignment   Commitment

Collaboration and partnerships

"The key to successful partnerships is developing a relationship based on mutual respect and understanding. To use the analogy from the Native American proverb 'never judge a man until you walk a mile in his moccasins', universities, employers and other organisations/bodies with an interest in the development of a high-skills economy must take time to get to know one another – to develop an appreciation of the unique contribution of (and pressures on) each partner and what each partner could do to facilitate better working relations." (Bolden et al., 2009)

Capacity building

Building Regional Leadership Capacity

1. Invest in people
2. Create webs
3. Find trusted partners
4. Identify quick wins
5. Build on success
6. Be adaptable
7. Challenge the status quo
8. Embed learning
9. Plan for succession
10. Think big

Bolden, R. and Bagnall, J. (2009) Building regional capacity: lessons from Leadership South West, *Education + Training*, 51(8/9), 635-647.

Discussion

- How can business schools develop the necessary leadership skills and capabilities to respond to the innovation and growth agenda?

- How can businesses, universities and policy bodies collaborate more effectively with one another?

- Who needs to lead this process and what can/should they do?