

# 3

## Getting and giving direction

*A leader is best when people barely know he exists; not so good when people obey and acclaim him; worst when they despise him.*

Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism

### AIMS

- A To understand how to give direction
- B To learn about communicating direction and communication styles
- C To identify key skills for good leadership
- D To examine the relationship between direction and hierarchy

### A Discussion and listening

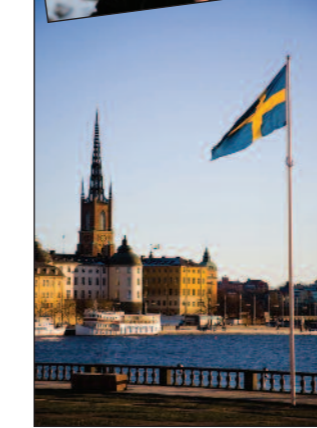
#### Think about it 1 Discuss these questions.

- a Do you agree with what Lao Tzu says about leadership?
- b Are you clear about your own targets at work for the week? for the month? for the year? Are you clear about your department's or team's targets? Do you think everyone agrees what the team's targets are?
- c How do organisations establish direction?
- d Who sets the targets for individuals and teams in your organisation?



#### Listen to this 2 8 Alfredo Diaz is a factory manager for the Mexican subsidiary of a German chemicals company based in Mexico City. Listen to him talking about how direction is established in his organisation and decide whether these statements are true or false.

- a Direction is weak in Alfredo's company.
- b The company does not have statements of vision and values.
- c Communication is as much bottom-up as top-down.
- d There is a lot of reporting to head office.
- e Alfredo has a directive management style.
- f Production targets can be challenging.



#### 3 9 Eva Petersson is the administrator for an international construction project, managed by a Swedish engineering company in Stockholm. Listen to her talking about how direction is established in her organisation. Complete these sentences as you listen.

- a Eva's job is to liaise between the management committee, the ..... and the .....
- b The main contractors are from Germany, ..... and .....
- c The goal of the project that Eva works on is to complete a major ..... in the centre of Stockholm.
- d The project leader ..... the big decisions himself.
- e Decision-making can take .....
- f Communication is mainly ..... - ..... from the management committee to the zones.

#### 4 Direction is established in different ways in the two organisations featured in Exercises 2 and 3.

- a Which is your own organisation closer to?
- b What are the main differences between your organisation and theirs?
- c Does your organisation have a statement of its mission or values? If it does, what do you think of it? How useful is it? If it doesn't have one, should it?

#### Focus on language 5 Look at some of the terms Alfredo uses when talking about direction in his company. Complete the sentences below with words from the box.

|                   |                |           |          |                |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------------|
| boardroom         | cascading down | directive | intranet | process worker |
| shareholder value | shop floor     | values    | vision   |                |

- a A ..... is someone who works on the production line of the factory.
- b The ..... of the company is a set of ideas about why it exists, what its people believe in, and where it wants to go.
- c The ..... of the company are a statement of what the organisation stands for, and what it believes is right and wrong.
- d The company's ..... is a private computer network which can usually only be accessed by the organisation's employees.
- e A ..... manager is one who mainly tells other people what to do.
- f ..... is the extra money investors in the company get from its successful performance.
- g ..... is a process by which information travels through an organisation
- h The ..... is the place where the directors of the company meet.
- i The ..... is the place in the factory where goods are made.

#### Let's talk 6 Henkel is a privately owned international company, headquartered in Düsseldorf, Germany, with 48,000 employees worldwide. These are its values.

- ▶ 1 We put our **customers** at the centre of what we do.
- ▶ 2 We value, challenge and reward our **people**.
- ▶ 3 We drive excellent, sustainable **financial** performance.
- ▶ 4 We are committed to leadership in **sustainability**.
- ▶ 5 We build our future on our **family** business foundation.

Think of a company you know well. Write a statement of its values and show it to your partner, without identifying the company. Can they guess which business it is? (If you need help with this, look up the mission statements of some well-known companies on the Internet.)