VENTURE

LEADERSHIP

RUGBY PLAYERS IRELAND

Intellectual Output

Rugby Players Ireland

Abstract

Overview of Venture Leadership: A bespoke leadership course for professional rugby players in Ireland.

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Intellectual Output
Venture Leadership: 2022

Rugby Players Ireland
Player Leadership course

1.   Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to have a leadership course specifically designed with the Professional Player in mind. This is a unique offering for our members and would not have been possible without the support of EU Athletes and the European Commission.

Exclusive to players, Venture inspires our players to invest in tomorrow. Created by Rugby Players Ireland's Player Development team, Venture has come into being, by leveraging the vast bank of knowledge within the association's wide network of experts. The programme uses insights from individuals with backgrounds in tech, food, pharma, financial services and the Irish Military.

It is Rugby Players Ireland's aim to develop our members as leaders and enable them to contribute to their communities and future careers in meaningful ways. While many of the skills will have practical application to their current profession, this course has been designed to equip our members with the skills to thrive in the business world.

Such is the existing demand for high-performing athletes and their transferable skills in Corporate Ireland, Venture Leadership will position participants as effective leaders in that field.

Venture Leadership is a progressive initiative from Rugby Players Ireland, aiming to prepare its members for life during and after rugby. My thanks to Pamela Gilpin for the instrumental role she has played in realising this goal which has forms a further part of our much-envied Player Development Programme. I am excited to hear more as the programme evolves.

2.   Introduction

Rugby Players Ireland (RPI) is the representative body for professional rugby players in Ireland. Educational, vocational and commercial engagement are core principles in equipping our membership with the skills required to succeed both as professional athletes and successful individuals. RPI is formed by three pillars: Represent, Develop and Engage.

WE REPRESENT

Rugby Players Ireland is fully empowered by our membership to represent them on issues of importance in their game, as well as prioritising their welfare and safeguarding their rights.

WE DEVELOP

Rugby Players Ireland operates in a developmental capacity and encourages the player body to fulfil their potential both on and off the field of play. By equipping our membership with the requisite skills, they can succeed as both professional athletes and successful individuals.

WE ENGAGE

Engagement with the community is a core principle of Rugby Players Ireland. As key role models, our membership are aware of their responsibility to contribute to society in meaningful ways. Through commercial and local engagement our players become valued members of the community.

3. Goal of the Course

The over arching aim of Venture was to create a space where players could come together to exlpore and understand in more depth, how the leadrehsip skills they have delveoped through rugby can transfer to the world of work and business. It was also an opportunity to increase player knownledge of the core elements of leadership and introduce some new concepts they may not have been aware of but are relevant to leadership eg sustainability in business and its relationship to the role of the leader.

It was really important to create a course that was accessble to all. Many academic instituions offer courses in leadership but they quite often are costly. Venture was created to be cost free for players to remove this barrier. In addition to this Venture was shaped to impact the following areas:

- Learn about your transferable skills
- Develop skills useful for business and beyond
- Explore leading trends from multiple sectors in business
- Apply your leanings in practical settings
- Become comfortable in leading teams and people away from the rugby environment
- Consolidate learning and intergrate the development areas into thie personal development plans by offering one to one coaching with their PDM's (Player Development Manager).

We found it necessary to accommodate those unable to attend due to training, games and being abroad with their teams. All sesisons where recorded and made available on the RPI Vimeo channel.

4. Overview of Modules

An overview of modules is available in Appendix A. The 'Participant Handbook' is available in Appendix C.

Module 1 Personal Skills & Self Awareness: Who am I?

<u>Module Outline</u>

In this module participants explore personal skills, strengths, and attributes and critically examine when they are useful and impactful in the workplace. Participants will also reflect on their potential skills gap/blind spots that are needed to lead a team and/or a person through challenging conversations, experiences, or tasks. Time will be given to reflect on how they may need to 'flex' from their preferred communication styles when moving from a sport to business/work environment in relation to understanding others'.

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Participants will also explore various tools that can help in the process of identifying signature strengths of an individual.

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<u>Target Outcomes for Participants</u>

Content	Deliverable
Understanding personal skills, strengths, and attributes	- Participants to complete a DISC/PPA prior to workshop and/or 'Test Centre Day' - Increase knowledge and understanding of Emotional Intelligence in action - Increase personal awareness of strengths that support our leadership style
Understanding others around us to promote effective relationships	- Overview and discussion around differences in behavioral styles - Understanding personal style and how to relate to others, modifying behavior - Apply this learning to the sports and work environments - Identifying most effective communication approaches
Current tools and use of these in a leadership role	- Explore the application of profiling tools such as DISC, VIA, Myers Briggs, Insights, Spotlight - Establish best practice guidelines for using these tools, increased awareness of the pros and cons.

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	• Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area
Discuss own profile with PDM	• Identify 2 key strengths and development needs from own profile

Points of Interest

1. Possibility of running a 'test center' for participants to explore current skills in leadership. Development report to be produced to guide personal learning.

Module 2 Next Level Communication Skills

Module Overview

Being able to generate and send messages that are rooted in the values and culture of an organization and are of importance to key stakeholders, e.g., employees, customers, strategic partners, shareholders, and the media (e.g. active listening, providing feedback).

Areas of significance and development:

- Communicating as a leader in the workplace
- Communicating as an employee
- Communicating when selling yourself in an interview/sales pitch
- The 6 component parts to effective communication

Structuring your story so it is easy to follow and understand

Keeping your audience engaged to:

- Increase your ability to influence and persuade
- The formula for communication
- How to avoid rambling and going off script
- How to deliver a clear, concise message
- How to grab your audience's attention from the start.
- How to close with impact

An introduction to:

- The four essential criteria for effective communication
- To the T.R.U.E. Vision Story Template
- Understanding your natural communication style
- Authentic communication
- Applying different styles to specific audiences
- Delivering with purpose
- Making an impact

- Providing feedback
- How to build rapport

Target Outcomes for Participants

Content	Deliverable 'experiencing'
Communication Skills	• Understanding your natural communication style • Identifying most impactful methods of communication • Authentic communication
Stakeholder Management	• Developing your network • Applying different styles to specific audiences • Conflict management
Communication styles	• Ability to deliver with purpose • Active listening • Making an impact • Providing feedback
Your Personal Brand	• How do you want others to perceive you? • How to build rapport

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	• Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Module 3 Creating Change: Inspiring a group and making things happen

Module Outline

Having the tools to inspire and enable others to do their absolute best together to realize a meaningful and rewarding shared purpose. Focusing on clear communication, personal skills e.g., empathy and goal management.

This module should reflect on the self-awareness assessment conducted as part of Module 1 and understand how natural behavior styles influences leadership of self and others.

Target Outcomes

Participants to explore and increase understandiung of:

- Leadership Styles and agility (circle of power, trust, influence)
- Political awareness in business

- Making compromises
- Creating a followership (collaboration)
- Motivations of your group/team and understanding them
- Changing motivations

Content	Deliverable
Interpersonal Skills	• Reflection on development center/DISC assessment; natural behavioural styles, how this influence personal leadership
Intrapersonal Skills	• Understanding how your natural behavioural styles influences your engagement with other individuals & feedback
Group Skills	• Understanding how your natural behavioural styles influences your engagement with other teams/groups
Goal management	• Different sort of goals e.g., company, life, behavioural

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	• Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Module 4   Why Organisational Culture is Critical

Module Outline

Learn to interpret an organisational culture and intercultural differences. Learn how to influence the behaviour of people within an organisation by establishing a high performance (HP) culture by creating shared beliefs and values; learn to communicate and reinforce those beliefs and values through various methods and what the role of leadership is in creating a HP culture.

What is organisational culture and why does it matter?

What types of culture support High Performance in Business and how can we as leaders create them?

Recognising and assessing different types of organisational culture:

- Understanding what an organisational culture is and why it matters.
- Using different frameworks to analyse culture
- Understand how culture helps or hinders performance in Sport and Business

Understanding how as leaders we embed and transmit culture:

- Looking at Schein's work on the different ways we can embed and transmit culture

- The surprising factor high performing teams have in common

Target Outcomes for Participants

Content	Deliverable
Recognising and assessing different types of organisational culture	• Understanding what an organisational culture is • Understanding different frameworks to analyse culture (including intercultural differences) • Understand the correlation between high performance culture in sport and business (e.g. Barcelona FC case study)
Influencing Behaviour	• Applying your leadership style(s) to influence organisational culture (do your actions reflect organisational culture and are you able to walk the talk) • Authentic leadership • Understanding the relevance of teambuilding and conflict management in a high-performance culture • Being mindful of impact on mental health in managing conflict
Values	• Understand the role of values in defining culture • Learning how to develop shared values in a group setting (followership) • Understand how to align organisational and individual values

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	• Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Assessment/Reflection

- Reflect upon the culture of your own organisation; in how far does the culture meet with the elements of a high-performance culture?
- What is the role the leaders have/take in reinforcing this (HP) culture in your organisation?

Module 5 Flexibility, Adaptability and Sustainability

Module Outline

Participants will be introduced to the key leadership concepts that are challenged in relation to fluid work environments, changing team dynamics and high-pressure situations. Attention will be given to the roles, responsibilities, and behaviours of the leader. These will be linked to a profiling tool eg DISC to help participants understand how leadership styles and approaches could be adapted and modified in a response to uncertainty and change.

Mindset to include the following:

- Understanding fixed vs growth
- Understanding individual motivational strategies
- Responding to uncertainty Flexing your decision-making approach
- Understanding your impact on those around you
- Sustainability: An opportunity to discuss challenges and situations that can threaten the longevity of a leaders vision.

Target Outcomes for Participants

Content	Deliverable
Mindset	- Understanding fixed vs growth - Frameworks to consider eg COPE framework (Spotlight tool) - Understand individual motivational strategies
Behavioural Style	- Maximising personal character strengths - Applying Flexing to connect approach - Recognising blind spots
Responding to uncertainty	- Flexing your decision-making approach - Uncertainty looking after your mental health during these times
Leadership	- Personal leadership - Inter-personal leadership
Sustainability	Sustainability in business and how leadership plays its role

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Module 6 Leadership in Action

Module Outline

Following on from the previous modules on Communication, Inter/Intrapersonal Skills and Organisational Culture, this module will allow the participant to examine leadership in action. It will examine the personal histories of two leaders, how they have developed themselves into the leaders they are today, their strengths and developmental areas.

Taking inspiration from the military, SME and International Risk Management this session will focus on the softer elements of good leadership practice eg vulnerability, empathy, kindness, listening, communicating, collaborating, consulting and failing.

Target Outcomes for Participants

Content	Deliverable
Understanding Leadership in Action Panel Discussion *Potential contributors' leaders in sport/business who have built and developed strong organisational culture*	- A Leadership Panel discussion that will allow you explore the personal journey of 2 leaders - Explore how they have developed into the leaders they are today, their strengths and developmental areas in especially in relation to inter/intrapersonal communication skills and organizational culture - Listen to them 'call out' the key leadership behaviours and styles that have helped or hindered them - Explore how they adapt & flex their styles - Allow participants to question via a Q&A

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Module 7 Crisis & Change Management

Module Outline

Preparing for and responding to moments of crisis are a fundamental aspect of successful leadership. Adopting some of the key learnings from the previous module on adaptability on a more practical level, participants will understand how the application of individual mindset preferences can enable appropriate response to crisis or change.

Participants will reflect on varying responses to stress and pressure and through crisis communications and how the leadership or self and leadership of others through effective communication can help navigate through crisis management scenarios.

Practical exploration of the human reaction to pressure and chaos.

Summary refresh of leadership skills from Module 4 (Leadership In Action) Self analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses Scenario problem solving (x 3) in the room (some simple challenges where the participants have to assess, plan, manage and debrief on a problem presented to them) Hot debrief

Target Outcomes for Participants

Content	Deliverable
Mindset	- Applying personal skills in an experiential crisis scenario - Understanding how your individual mindset preference influences crisis management preparation and response
Behavioural Style	- Ability to adapt and flex individual mindset and behavioural style depending on the crisis scenario - Understanding when mindset is useful to influence the crisis situation
Crisis Communications	- Understanding your response to stress and pressure - Influencing and leading others in times of stress and pressure through your communication approach

Activities

Content	Deliverable
Reflective diary	Participants will assess the depth of thinking on subject area

Rational of module selection

RPI were keen to provide a learning experience for players whereby they could identify their personal strengths in relation to leadership. Having this information as the baseline module enabled the remaining workshops to build on the players personal profiles and provide insight as to how best utilize these strengths.

A second theme of the workshops was to provide insights in the workplace or business. Many of the players involved where still actively playing but have long term career aspirations of going to the workforce as either employed or self-employed. It was important that Venture tailored for both these mind sets and gave lots of opportunity to explore how the leadership skills they have acquired as players transferred into other environments.

Thirdly, RPI wanted to introduce players to thoughts leaders in the various leadership modules to help grow their network. A network that would help support the transition from rugby to the work place. The presenters or lead facilitators from each of the workshops are very experienced coming from a variety of backgrounds e.g., academia, pharma, tech, business consulting, the Irish Military who were able to give unique insights into a wide selection of sectors.

Finally, Venture was shaped to aid as a transition tool for players adding to their skills and confidence in preparing for the chapter after rugby. The modules all helped players realize an identity that is more than a player.

5. STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE OF THE COURSE

The course is developed in an online as well as in-person form.

Online
Venture was developed to be mainly an online program. This was to accommodate 7 different squads, locations and training times.

In-Person
It was strongly felt that 2 of the modules needed to be delivered in-person. These were the action orientated workshops that required participants to complete tasks and be immersed in experienced based learning.

Timing
All workshops where run during the rugby season. Online workshops where in the evenings as where the in-person workshops.

Session Recordings

All sessions where recorded and made available to watch via the RPI Vimeo channel.

Participant materials for Venture

Apendix A   Venture Module Overview

Apendix B   Reflections Journal as part of the Participant Handbook

Apendix C   Participant Handbook

Apendix D   Invite sent to players inviting players onto Venture

Apendix E   Certificate of Attendance Awarded to Participants

Example of Venture Delivery Date and Times

- Tuesday 29th March 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 5th April 7.30-9.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 12th April 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 19th April 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 26th April 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Sunday 1st May 11-4 pm (RPI HQ)

* We can accommodate those unable to attend due to matches/travel

Promotion and Application process

An application process was established whereby the PDM (Player Development Manager) with each of the Provinces and Team talked to the individual or group of players interested in Venture. After the content and its purpose was discussed with the players, they could make an informed decision as to whether it was in line with their Personal Career Development Plans.

6. REQUIREMENTS POLICY

The requirement to complete Venture had 5 requirements:

1. To attend all the workshops and if not able to attend they must watch the recorded session.
2. To attend the in-person modules and if not able to attend they must 'catchup' with their PDM to discuss the workshop content and its application to their learning.
3. Although no formal marking criteria where in pace to evaluate learning all participants were required to contribute to the discussion in the online workshops.
4. All participants were required to meet with the PDM to map their personal development journey across the modules.
5. Participants were required to complete the workshop evaluation forms.

7. COURSE EVALUATION

Course evaluation is required from participants in order to be able to continuously improve the course and ensure each module is reaching the intended learning outcomes. The data is also used to ensure participants feel they have learnt something new and feel they can apply it to their world of work either now or in the future. Long term the course evaluation is used to shape future years of Venture so eventually it becomes a course developed by players, for players.

Course Evaluation forms
A sample evaluation form can be found here. This form was adapted for each module and distributed to the participants.

8. REFLECTION & BEST PRACTICES

Moving forward:

i. Move away from online delivery and run Venture over a weekend with follow up on-line workshop (possibly during the pre-season where players are not required to travel for games). The purpose being to:
    - Minimize dropout from the online sessions
    - Increase the experienced based learning method
    - Increase participant familiarity with the wider group
    - Provide an increased opportunity for team building and experience sharing amount the group
ii. Increase the one-to-one coaching sessions with the PDM to consolidate understanding and learning from the workshop
iii. Engage with an Academic partner with a track recorded in leadership training (to create financial sustainability)
iv. Increase opportunity for players to grow their networks by having non-rugby/sport participants.

9. APPENDICES

A. Venture Module Overview

Building Leadership Skills for the Future

What is Venture?
A player only, focused leadership programme to develop leadership skills for the future.

How will Venture be Delivered?
5 online workshops and 1 in-person at RPI HQ

Who will deliver the workshop?
Developed by RPI but delivered by established experts from a range of backgrounds including the Irish Military, training and development coaches with experience in tech, food, pharma, financial services in global big business.

Modules

1. Who am I: Personal Skills & Self Awareness of Leadership
2. Next Level Communication Skills
3. Creating Change: Communication skills to inspire a group and making things happen
4. Why Organisational Culture is Critical
5. Flexibility, Adaptability and Sustainability
6. Leadership in Action
7. Crisis/Change Management

How Will You Benefit?

- Learn about your transferable skills
- Develop skills useful for business and beyond
- Explore leading trends from multiple sectors in business
- Apply your leanings in practical settings
- Become comfortable in leading teams and people away from the rugby environment
- Coaching sessions with your PDM (pre, mid and post course)

Dates

- Tuesday 29th March 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 5th April 7.30-9.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 12th April 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
- Tuesday 19th April 6.30-8.30 pm (Zoom)
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Interested?

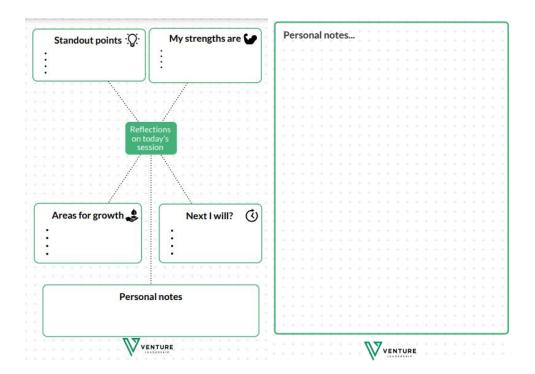Register your interest with your PDM
Limited spaces available

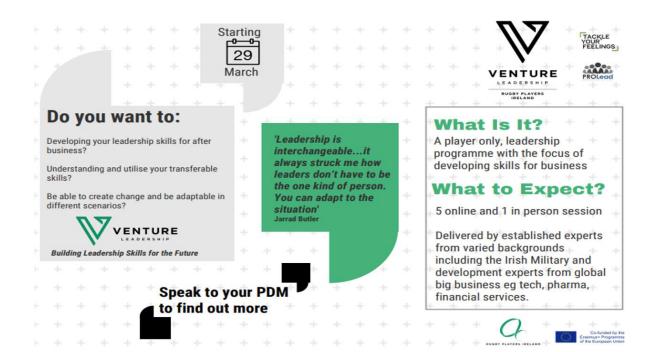**B. Reflections Journal as part of the Participant Handbook**

C. Participant Handbook

D. Invite sent to players inviting players onto Venture

E. Certificate of Attendance Awarded to Participants