Growing our team
Leadership, learning and collaboration

A conservator, after all, is only as strong as his/her team. This investment you make in your team, like other investments, is intended to pay off in the longer term.
- Koos Retief, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

This management period, even if it was only two months in total, was one I am glad I had the chance to experience, because it showed me the harsh reality of running a reserve and how tough a manager has to be to stay sane. I definitely will not be lining up for a management post just yet. I first have to get used to being managed!
- Site Manager, City of Cape Town

Through the economic evaluation of the Table Mountain National Park with the Graduate School of Business, we analysed the three areas that are key to sustainability: the Natural Capital, Social Capital and the Financial Capital. It makes good business sense to invest in people while restoring ecosystems, leading to lower running costs and improved capital value.
- Brett Myrdal, Manager: Environmental Planning, SANParks

Nature conservators tend to be very passionate about what they do, and sometimes feel like Lone Rangers; the only voice speaking up for endangered animals and plants. But we can never win these battles on our own. We need to ignite as many as we can with our passion, work together and empower each other to ‘be the change that we want to see’ in the world. In this chapter we explore how adaptive and collaborative leadership and management practices can help us to build a strong dynamic team.

Managing a natural resource collaboratively is not a small task. At any time, it may demand the skills of a farmer, a teacher, a development worker, an entrepreneur, a psychologist, a forester, an office administrator or a fire fighter... It can be emotionally draining and physically exhausting. But it can also be inspiring and fulfilling. Apart from the daily inspiration of watching nature flourish on our sites, the most important factor that may turn our workload from drudgery to reward is a good team.

If managed in the right way, urban conservation sites can play a significant role in creating the conditions to

Nature conservators tend to be very passionate about caring for their sites but this challenge is too big to meet alone
enable communities to manage their natural resources more effectively. If all our work in and around the site is guided by the principles of adaptive co-management, this practice will spread in expanding circles into the communities and organisational partners with whom we work. We will create resilient core systems on the site that can enrich, and be enriched by, the broader community in a flow of knowledge, understanding and practice.

A strong team is a dynamic and complex system, with strengths, weaknesses, blind spots and personal obsessions. Like any complex system, when it works well it is a beautiful and efficient entity, and when it works badly it stutters, becomes chaotic or is apathetic. There are no magic ingredients, and the same individuals in different combinations or circumstances can find themselves in a team that is superb or one that just doesn’t work.

There are however, three key elements that greatly enhance the efficiency and resilience of a team: collaboration, leadership, and learning. These three are linked and flow together. For example, a key skill of leadership, is listening, which is also critical for collaboration and for learning. But for the purposes of this book, we will join them together and distil them out as two separate strands:

- **Collaborative leadership:** having the vision to know where you are going and being able to work collaboratively with a team to make sure you get there.
- **Collaborative learning:** this is the adaptive part of adaptive co-management. It means being open to new ideas, different knowledge systems, our own experiences and the experiences of others; being able to synthesise and evaluate these inputs; and being able to adapt one’s thinking and practice in response to them.

### 1. Collaborative leadership

We need to distinguish between management tasks and providing and building leadership. Managers can manage in a way that builds, respects and recognises the leadership of their team. We don’t want to be building ‘handdlangers’. - Dalton Gibbs, Area Manager, City of Cape Town

Our team comprises everyone involved in the ongoing management of the site. This includes those employed, from the site manager to the ground staff, as well as institutional partners, volunteers, members of partnership organisations and committee members. It may vary considerably in size, and may also fluctuate during the year, for example if temporary teams are taken on for alien clearing or to build infrastructure.

But whatever the size and fluidity of the workforce, working collaboratively will enable all members to share in the responsibility for the site, and to deliver their best efforts. Collaborative leadership is adaptable, inclusive and participatory, and gives all team members the space to express their strengths and carve out a valuable role for themselves. The whole team engages with issues related to the site, the institutional framework, conservation and the community. This active participation not only creates a stimulating work environment, but also promotes a sense of responsibility and commitment.

Collaborative and adaptive leadership contributes to the resilience of the team, in that it has built in processes for managing conflict so that diversity of opinion is seen as a growth opportunity, rather than a threat.

The concept of collaborative leadership may seem to be a contradiction in terms. But it is actually a symbiosis. Collaboration is impossible without good leadership and good leadership is impossible without collaboration.

The following story may give more insight:

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**Rafting – A story by Tony Watkin**

I was able to raft down the Motu River twice during the last year. The magnificent four-day journey traverses one of the last wilderness areas on the North Island. The first expedition was led by ‘Buzz’, an American guide with a great deal of rafting experience and many stories to tell of mighty rivers such as the Colorado. With a leader like Buzz there was no reason to fear any of the great rapids on the Motu. The first half day… was spent developing teamwork and co-ordination. Strokes had to be mastered, and the discipline of following commands without question was essential. In the boiling fury of a rapid there would be no room for any mistake: when Buzz bellowed above the roar of the water an instant reaction was essential… In every rapid we fought against the river and we overcame it. The screamed commands of Buzz were matched only by the fury of our paddles, as we took the raft exactly where Buzz wanted it to go. At the end of the journey there was a great feeling of triumph. We had won… The mystery and the majesty of the Motu had been overcome.

The second time I went down the Motu… the guide was a soft-spoken Kiwi. It seemed that it would not even be possible to hear his voice above the rapids. As we approached the first rapid, he never even raised his voice. He did not attempt to take command of us or the river. Gently and quietly, he felt the mood of the river and watched every little whirlpool. There was no drama and no shouting. There was no contest to be won. He loved the river. We swept through each rapid with grace and beauty, and after a day the river had become our friend not an enemy. The quiet Kiwi was not our leader, but only the person whose sensitivity was more developed than our own. Laughter replaced the tension of achievement. Soon the quiet Kiwi was able to lean back and let us take turns as leader. A quiet nod was enough to draw attention to the things our lack of experience prevented us from seeing. If we made a mistake then we laughed and it was the next person’s turn. We began to penetrate the mysteries of the Motu. Now, like the quiet Kiwi, we listened to the river and we looked carefully for all those things we had not even noticed the first time. At the end of the journey we had overcome nothing but ourselves. We did not want to leave behind our friend the river. There was no contest and so nothing had been won. Rather, we had become one with the river.”
Asieff Khan has built a team of people at Zeekoevlei who love coming to work and who all describe co-workers as their ‘family’. Grant came to Zeekoevlei Nature Reserve when his life was spiralling out of control and he was drifting into gangsterism:

These two experiences illustrate the difference between collaborative leadership and other leadership styles. The Kiwi leads the team in a way that allows all to engage in the mystery of the journey – and allows each team member to take the lead. If the leader of the first expedition had fallen out of the canoe, the team would have been at a loss. The Kiwi’s leadership ensured that the team was not solely dependent on him, and was also in line with a different way of being in the world, where we learn to live in collaboration with nature rather than trying to conquer it.

Fritjof Capra gives us further insights:

The traditional idea of a leader is that of a person who is able to hold a vision, to articulate it clearly, and to communicate it with passion and charisma. This is still important, but there is also another kind of leadership, which consists of facilitating the emergence of novelty. This is our lesson from nature. Facilitating emergence means creating conditions rather than giving directions. It means using the power of authority to empower others. Both kinds of leadership have to do with creativity. Being a leader means creating a vision, going where nobody has gone before. It also means holding the space for the community as a whole to create something new.²

By its very nature, it is difficult to define collaborative leadership, as it is adaptive, responsive, flexible and intuitive. But Capra has pinpointed its most significant quality, that of facilitating emergence. Let us explore the experiences of conservation managers to see how this operates in practice:

Management is a very big commitment to a relationship. You need time, energy and space to do this, but it is essential. I have spent many years investing in my staff. Sometimes there is limited success within the first few years, but if you commit yourself you will see returns and gratification.

In the end it is essential to have staff who are committed to conserve Rietvlei. You need to encourage staff to see that their future lies in the Reserve, and that it is to their advantage to dedicate themselves to conserving the Reserve. For example, I had a foreman who got divorced and because of his unhappiness drifted into drinking, leading to poor performance and disciplinary problems. I put him into counselling, went through a disciplinary process with him and at the same time also mentored him – these three ingredients together turned him around. One small thing I also did was to take him out for coffee over lunch one day and we just chatted. That was the turning point. I had shown that I cared about him. He knew I believed in him. Now he is a massive asset. This man now manages four staff members. He is motivated and a key member of staff.

The multi-pronged approach of mentoring, counselling and discipline was very effective. The foreman realised that others are making an effort and investing in his future, so now he works beyond the necessary requirement of his job in all his efforts. These results are very rewarding for a manager.

- Koos Retief, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

Asieff Khan has built a team of people at Zeekoevlei who love coming to work and who all describe co-workers as their ‘family’. Grant came to Zeekoevlei Nature Reserve when his life was spiralling out of control and he was drifting into gangsterism:

The best thing that has happened to me was Asieff. He decided to take me under his wing and taught me everything I know. Asieff is always willing to work alongside us. He never tells us to do anything that he wouldn’t do. I am always willing to work late because it is always a learning experience and we all feel the same. I never had the chance to study and am always keen to learn. I am working hard because I want to become permanent staff one day.

- Grant Revell, contract worker, Zeekoevlei Nature Reserve

- Koos Retief, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

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Communication is the key:

I have had to do some deep thinking as a manager. I have always encouraged people to speak their minds and provided the opportunity to do so at a monthly staff meeting. The staff did just that at one staff meeting, and they laid it on thick... They were angry and felt I was not listening to them. It was difficult and hurtful but I examined what they said.

I decided to do the right thing as a manager to make the working environment pleasant for all. I would listen to them, increase their levels of participation, make sure everyone attended Reserve meetings and came to realise they were all responsible for Wolfgat. I had previously believed that Wolfgat was my responsibility. That was getting me down and I realised I could not do it alone. I started to include the staff in decision making, helping them understand the challenges faced by the Reserve Manager. I listened to their opinions, thoughts and ideas. There were good ideas that came forward and we stimulated each other to bigger and better ideas. I felt better and they started to feel good too.

It is still tough some days. Sometimes I feel like a mother hen and sometimes I feel like a teacher and other times a policeman having to check on my staff. But I have enjoyed getting to know each and every member of the team. I have enjoyed having staff and have had to learn to let go. Learning to delegate has made my job easier. However this had to be built up with trust over time. It gives the staff a sense of purpose when you involve them in crucial decisions or just ask their opinions about work. We now laugh and joke around more often. I am, however, still in the process of finding the balance. This is something nobody can teach one. As a manager we all have to find our own balance and sense of purpose in the work place.

- Charline Mc Kie, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

A mother hen, a teacher, and a policeman... these are three important hats of a collaborative manager, but also the hats of everyone on the team. At different times, we need to nurture each other, to teach each other and to call each other to account. In many ways, a successful team is one that gets the right balance as to who wears what hat when.

From these examples, we can draw key guidelines for collaborative leadership:

- We have a shared vision. We all know why we are doing what we are doing in the way that we are doing it. We work for the good of the whole community and organisation, not the interests of the few.
- We feel passion and love for our work. We breathe life into it, and it breathes life into us.
- We think strategically: Our vision guides our priorities and choices.
- We share responsibility. We know what we have to do, and make sure that we do it, and what consequences will follow if we don't do it.
- We are interested in and listen deeply to what people think, what they feel and what they want.
- We trust and support each other, and give feedback openly and constructively.
- We have deep respect and curiosity for who people are, what they know, what we see of them and even what we do not yet see.
- We manage conflict and ensure that it does not erode trust.
- We all participate meaningfully in discussions. We work together to build the necessary skills, confidence and trust to be able to participate. We help people ask their own questions, form their own judgements and make their own choices, even if we disagree.
- We work together to complement each others’ strengths and find ways to build on strengths and overcome gaps in each member’s capacity.
- We lead by example and are willing to learn and grow ourselves as leaders, even when this means being seen to have weaknesses and make mistakes.
- We continuously reflect on our practice and relationships, and learn from that reflection. We help people learn from their own and each others’ experiences. More importantly, we help them to learn how to learn effectively so that they can become more independent thinkers.

Before we explore these aspects of collaborative leadership in more detail, we need to address some common misconceptions:
Collaborative leadership does not mean that we do not lead, or that we have no responsibilities. Each team member has a specific role. Those in a leadership position take responsibility for decisions, and may have to make a judgement call that is not supported by all team members. As a leader, we can never please everybody all the time. However, if we think collaboratively and consider different points of view, we are more likely to take and support decisions that benefit the whole team and our work. The more people are involved in decision making, the more active will be their support.

Collaborative leadership helps to minimise mistrust and dissent. It may be beneficial to decide jointly which decisions should be made by individual staff members, which can be made jointly by the team and which the manager needs to make, and to follow these guidelines consistently.

But managers have to juggle a hundred priorities. We don’t have time to make sure everyone participates.

Collaborative leadership might sometimes seem slow, but in the long term it creates a motivated, productive and efficient workforce, which will take on more responsibility – often pointing out opportunities that the manager might have missed. As Charline Mc Kie remarked, this makes it easier for a manager to delegate work.

At the same time, we need to strike a balance between achieving efficiency in our delivery and supporting team members, while recognising that supporting team members also enhances delivery. This needs to be taken into account when planning and evaluating the team’s performance. The following story explores this:

The fable of the goose and the golden egg may help show us how to build effective and efficient organisations. In the fable, a man discovers that his pet goose has laid a golden egg. At first he is overjoyed with his newfound wealth, but soon becomes greedy because the goose can only lay one egg per day. He kills the goose in order to ‘get all the golden eggs out at once’. Only then does he realise that he has destroyed the source of his wealth.4

It’s important not to obsess about controlling every little thing; you need to let go a little and not be afraid. That takes the pressure off you and your staff.
- Charline Mc Kie, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town
The goose refers to the ability or capacity of the organisation to deliver its service or product. The golden eggs are the services the organisation delivers. Without a conscious effort to balance ‘production/service capacity’ and ‘production/service delivery’, the organisation will develop problems. If too much emphasis is placed on the golden eggs, the ‘goose’ is neglected, and we kill the organisation. If we pamper the goose too much, it gets fat and stops laying eggs – which means services are poor. Strong and vibrant organisations give proper attention to both the service capacity and the service delivery of the organisation.

What if there is a crisis? We can’t sit and debate issues if there is a runaway fire on the site!

Dalton Gibbs suggests that different circumstances demand different styles of management:

To my mind, there are five different styles that we might use. All have a time and place when they are valid:

**The Dictator:** gives direct and specific orders. In an emergency such as a fire, the person in charge needs to be in complete control of the event and to be directing the situation. Staff need to listen and act as directed. (If the manager is not around, someone else may play this leadership role.)

**The Parliamentarian:** listens to all voices and makes a decision having considered the options. For example, in mediating a dispute, the manager will listen to the various parties and their viewpoints and make a decision taking all these into account.

**The Democrat:** All staff members have a say in the decision to be made; where the majority view is respected. To develop an inclusive and participatory style of leadership, managers ensure that staff members have all the information necessary to make a decision.

**Staff Decide:** Staff make a decision and inform the manager. The staff and management would probably have agreed upon this situation.

**Laissez-faire:** Staff get on with their work and make decisions without interference.

-Dalton Gibbs, Area Manager, City of Cape Town

The team needs to discuss how decisions are made and who takes charge in a crisis situation. Crises will, however, be better managed with a high level of trust and collegiality between team members. This trust is the social capital that is laid down through slower processes of collaborative leadership – and it is precisely in times of crisis that social capital delivers its returns. With a strong capable team, crises can be managed even if managers and other leadership figures are not present.

It’s all very well to talk of collaborative leadership. But surely we can’t expect the lower level workers to participate meaningfully.

This was Luzann Isaac’s experience:

We were blown away by the clear vision and active participation brought to the workshop by the ground staff. I realised how much I could learn by listening to them. We found that many of the ground staff and cleaning staff were key informants and, as local residents, were able to give us unique insight into the local community. We learned to listen more carefully to their stories and opinions. This had the additional spinoff effect that they too started to contribute more as they came to understand that they were valuable to the team.

-Luzann Isaacs, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

One of the great lessons of adaptive co-management is realising how much we can learn from each other. A growing trend of adaptive co-management is demonstrating how much knowledge and understanding can be gained from listening to those who live in and around these natural resources, who may have a bedrock of traditional and/or popular knowledge, and that not only scientific experts have valuable ideas regarding the management of natural resources. Team members who come from local communities are well placed to give insights into how to work with and build leadership in these communities.
It may be difficult for those with less formal education to participate, particularly if they lack experience, or are used to an authoritarian style of management. We can do much to enable participation through listening, capacity building and actively promoting inclusivity and trust.

Below we explore the qualities and competencies that can help us develop collaborative leadership in more detail.

1.1 We have a shared vision…

I really like my work. I know why I’m here. Other people, when they come home at night, they don’t know why they are working, but I know why I do what I do. It has meaning for me. We stand together and work together as a team. We are working for the next generation. We will leave something worthwhile behind.

- Beyono Pedro Klaaste, Small Plant Operator, City of Cape Town

Beyono Klaaste’s comment highlights the value offered by a shared vision in a collaborative team. Sharing and internalising the vision enables team members to be innovative and creative, to feel purposeful and inspired and to unite around common purpose. In her case study on page 32 and below, Tanya Layne points out the importance of ensuring that the vision is shared and makes some suggestions on how to do this:

This role that a manager plays, of holding the vision, building relationships and having conversations, is difficult to hand over if you leave. Part of the way we build in long term sustainability that goes beyond one individual, is through ensuring that your whole team owns and holds that vision and also all your community partners. And there are different ways of doing that:

- Always go back to the aim: ask why are we doing this and what is the point with every activity, every interaction. So it’s a constant reminder and articulation to ourselves, our team and our partners of the aim and the vision.
- Hold visioning workshops and ongoing informal discussions with staff.
- Appreciate that staff need some experience before they can fully participate in developing and holding the vision.
- Share case studies and use them to discuss how the vision translates into practice.

- Tanya Layne, Urban Nature Programme Developer, SANBI

In Chapter Two we discussed the importance of having a vision and described in detail different processes of vision building with different stakeholder groups. Building a vision is an ongoing process, however, and it needs to be kept alive and not just framed on the wall. It should provide a constant reference when discussing and reviewing work.

We can also deepen this vision by empowering the team to see their work in the broader context of nature conservation, and understand the critical role that the site, as a node of urban conservation, can play in the bigger picture. Inviting outside speakers or hosting visitors from other organisations, cities or countries can bring refreshing new insights to our work and help us see the contribution we are making to the future of conservation and to the future of our planet and everything living on it. Encouraging all team members to share the vision in different community forums helps them to take it on, internalise it and deepen their understanding of it.

1.2 We feel passion for our work. We breathe life into it, and it breathes life into us…

The conservators show a remarkably broad understanding of conservation management in context and their abilities to grasp the complexities of their working situations are refreshing and inspiring. Working in situations that would demoralise the most fervent believers in nature conservation, these conservators retain an optimistic outlook, a can-do attitude to problems and an enduring commitment to working with people and spreading benefit.

Sue Soal et al

The load is great and conservators can get very overwhelmed. They need space to reflect on their work, particularly reflection which is positively oriented.

- Julia Wood, Biodiversity Management, City of Cape Town

Passion is an integral part of vision. Vision is the brain, passion is the heart. Passion without vision is just noise. Vision without passion is just words. We need passion to breathe life into our vision, and vision to direct our passion.

Nature conservation is a life calling for many and most conservators are passionate about their work. Passion motivates us to take up conservation and sustains us in our work, protecting us from burn-out and being overwhelmed by the challenges that we face.
Passion is a valuable quality of leadership and if projected in an inclusive way, it can inspire passion in others. It needs to be nurtured in all team members, whether they are sweeping the office floor, patrolling the grounds outside or managing an entire region.

Elizabeth is a part time contract worker at Zeekoevlei Nature Reserve and has been fortunate in working under the leadership of two extremely passionate managers: Dalton Gibbs and Asieff Khan. This is what she has to say:

- Always be positive. Acknowledge problems, but try to approach them as challenges to be solved and possible opportunities for learning and growth;
- Be playful. Allow time for fun and team-building activities, and give ourselves space to remember why we believe in nature conservation – and to remind ourselves that we are lucky to be working on something so meaningful and worthwhile.

There are some ways in which we can inspire and nurture passion:

- Share with others what aspects of our work inspire us, and explore how it gives us a sense of purpose. Share inspiring or moving experiences;
- Invite inspiring individuals to talk to us. Encounters with such people are often our most vivid and significant experiences;
- Affirm, acknowledge and reward achievements and efforts made by all team members;
- The work is not secure but I love working here. I can’t imagine working anywhere else. Nature is such a good place to be. I grew up in Lotus River, and we used to come here to Zeekoevlei as children to picnic and swim and play. But now that I’m working here, I’ve really learnt to appreciate nature. Dalton Gibbs first got me excited about nature when I was working at Rondevlei. I could see how much he loved and valued nature. He was so absorbed. He is so thoroughly involved in nature. That made me think about my luck. I realised that it was a real privilege to be working in nature. It is so beautiful at Zeekoevlei in the mist in the morning. I love the work whatever it is, as long as I am in nature – what more could you ask for? The trees are there, the snakes, the plants… I’m even happy to work alone. Nature smells so clean and beautiful, not like the bad smells on the train. I thank God for the privilege of working here.

- Elizabeth Wallace, contract worker, Zeekoevlei Nature Reserve

Sometimes it is hard to sustain passion when the work gets overwhelming and problems seem insurmountable.

It is difficult to inspire others when one is feeling worn down. The pressures of managing a nature conservation site are intense, and it is easy for team members to suffer from burnout, particularly those with more leadership responsibilities. We need support to stay focused and enthusiastic and we also need to find time to do the things that keep our passion for nature conservation alive, as Charline McKie explains below:

The reason I studied conservation was to be out in nature – I loved being quiet and being in the veld. When I am out in the veld I feel that my soul is restored. It keeps my passion alive. It is more difficult in the city. I now have to find the time and the space for being in the veld, despite the heavy administrative demands and workload pressures. When I worked at Witzands Nature Reserve in the Northern Cape (a 3 500 hectare Nature Reserve near Upington), I spent most days in the veld. It’s very different in the urban context. Some days, my work is difficult and seems to be overwhelming. So I have to remember to make time to get out into the veld, in spite of how hectic it is.

- Charline McKie, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town
1.3 We think strategically...

One tends to get lost in the detail of the site. You don’t step back and look at the big picture. It can give you a feeling of low self-esteem because you feel as if you’ll never achieve what you want.

- Koos Retief, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

We have the vision, we have the passion. Now we need a plan to translate our dreams into action. If vision answers the question why, then strategic thinking answers the questions what, how, who and when? What do we need to do to get from where we are to where we are going? How can we do it? Who will we work with? When do we want it done by?

Without solid planning, our vision will never be more than a dream. The vision of integrated conservation practice is ambitious and sweeping, and demands very tight strategic thinking and planning to turn it into reality. Without this, we can easily slip into doing whatever task is in front of us, reacting to immediate crises and problems – and there is never a shortage of these.

Strategic planning enables us to prioritise, to anticipate opportunities and problems and to ensure that we have the necessary resources and budget. It helps ensure that all our actions contribute to the bigger picture and that we do not waste time and resources on ill-considered projects. It also enables us to review performance and to adapt our strategy if things are not working the way we want them to.

The foundation for strategic planning is a thorough mapping of the site in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. On page 60 we explore this mapping process in detail. A participative stakeholder process will identify a series of possible projects and priorities, which the core team needs to turn into action. Below are questions that can help us with this:

- Which projects should we prioritise? The following questions can guide this choice:
  - Which hold most value for our stakeholders?
  - Which will create the most value for both the people and nature we serve through our site?
  - Which will help us deepen our community partnerships?
  - Which do we have the best capacity to do now?
  - Which will create the most opportunity for further projects?
• What staff, infrastructure and equipment do we need to implement this project?
• How will we get these if we do not have them?
• Which staff member/s will be responsible for the project?
• Which community partners or other partners will we work with on this project?
• What are our time frames?
• How will we measure the success of the project?
• What difficulties can we anticipate?
• How might we overcome these?

Strategic thinking, like adaptive thinking, is highly responsive to feedback, and can help us alter course if necessary, and to see when it is necessary. It is not only useful when devising plans but can benefit all activities. It can help us maximise every square inch of our space, plan creatively and prioritise to make the best use of our time and resources. A conservator will always have more to do than can be managed. Prioritising helps us to avoid being crippled and swamped by our tasks.

Strategic thinking can also:

• Focus our engagement with stakeholders beyond the site. It can help us find the most effective ways to encourage city planners and developers to prioritise conservation issues. It can help us prioritise who we engage with in communities and decide on the best ways of doing this. It can help us avoid conflict or manage it creatively.
• Enable us to follow nature’s lead in managing natural systems that have been impacted upon by human activity. Nature is a great strategic thinker and the remarkable efficiency and ingenuity of natural systems and the evolutionary process testifies to this. For example, strategic thinking helps us:
  ◦ identify critical and/or indicator species within a natural system;
  ◦ assess which aliens are the most important to eradicate and what time of year is the best to do this work in terms of their growth cycle;
  ◦ find ways of growing our landscape beyond our site by identifying corridors best placed to enable species movement for migration, feeding, pollination or breeding patterns.

Prioritising helps us avoid being crippled by our tasks

Nature is a great strategist…these pincushions have a coating on their seeds that attracts ants; the ants take the seed underground, eat the coating and leave the seed buried; the seeds can then stay protected from animals and fire until the conditions are good for germination.
Recognising and working with patterns is a key aspect of strategic thinking. All systems have patterns, cycles, trends, and repeated processes. We can see these in natural systems, and also in community organisations and in the social and economic life of our partners and communities. Understanding these trends and cycles can help us identify community needs, anticipate difficulties and find ways to work organically and naturally within communities.

**Keep it responsive and adaptive**

Long term planning helps set down a framework, but unexpected events and processes are likely to be the rule rather than the exception and can bring unanticipated difficulties and/or new opportunities. We need to be open to these, and not feel anxious if everything does not follow the plan. As long as we have identified appropriate indicators and are monitoring them carefully, we will keep on the long term track of realising our vision. Having ongoing and frequent systems of checking in, and monitoring and evaluating strategies, can alert us to issues and to shift strategy as necessary – we explore this more under collaborative learning later in this chapter.

It is also important to remember that we are working with living systems and sometimes these unfold in their own time and follow their own processes. We need to be in touch with these rhythms and work accordingly. We cannot plan for an apple to ripen in two weeks when it takes four. Tanya highlights this in the following example:

**At Macassar Dunes, promulgation as a nature reserve was a priority from the beginning as it had no formal status, but the manager didn’t have enough technical input and support. Six years later it’s being pursued by the Branch’s technical team in partnership with other agencies as part of a process of addressing the legal status of all sites… we put so much pressure on the manager then, now we can all see what it takes!**  
- Tanya Layne, Urban Nature Programme Developer, SANBI

**A note on working with management plans**

Each site has different institutional requirements regarding management plans, depending on its legal status and its governing authority. For example, a five-year management plan is required by law for every declared Protected Area. These plans are required to be drawn up with the inclusion of broader community participation. However, they seldom involve the extensive engagement of stakeholders that is necessary for the emergence of adaptive co-management by communities.

Thinking and practice around conservation is shifting, and hopefully, this engagement will become more institutionalised in time. In the meantime, many management plans are sufficiently flexible to allow stakeholder involvement in aspects of their implementation. At least, they should be discussed and considered by all core team members and by community stakeholders.

### 1.4 We all listen, talk to, and learn from each other...

If passion is the heart that drives the organism, then communication is the nervous system that keeps it connected. Communication is vital for any team, and many good projects have collapsed because of poor communication.

Communication is a two-way process. It involves listening and talking. This sounds straightforward, but we often are surprisingly ineffective at these two most fundamental human activities.

Listening tends to be underrated and is often neglected. Many of us think that we are listening when actually we are just keeping quiet and waiting for our turn to speak. Sometimes we don’t even wait. But listening is without doubt the more important partner in communication and it is well worth developing our capacity. Tanya Layne considers listening a key ingredient for good management and found that her work benefited enormously from training with the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) which identified three levels of listening:

#### Head listening: the most obvious way of listening objectively to thoughts, perceptions, arguments, facts and ideas. We need to listen in a way that conveys a genuine interest, with an open-minded approach and without censure. People all have their own way of thinking about the world. You need to be careful not to assume that they see things the same way as you do or that views, which do not accord with yours, are automatically wrong.

#### Heart listening: listen to feelings, emotions, values, mood and experience. Eyes are also useful in the listening process. We need to concentrate on tone of voice, facial expressions, eyes and gestures. Often we need to put ourselves into someone else’s shoes. Listen to silences, as these can be powerful expressions of feelings. This level provides important clues about what really matters to your team members.

#### Listening for the feet: this is the level of a person’s will; listening to what the person really wants. Skilful listening uncovers what lies behind their thoughts and feelings. These hidden levels are the real sources of potential energy and commitment. Will is often where resistance to change resides. Helping people to listen and transform their own will is one of the deepest challenges.

**Adapted from Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) notes on listening**

Active and effective listening on these three levels greatly facilitates our work and can enhance all aspects of our lives. In addition to listening to each other, communication also involves talking to each other and making sure that:
all team members have an opportunity to express their thoughts and views and
there are good channels of communication to keep every team member informed about decisions, progress with projects, policy and anything else of relevance.

Here we need not only to talk, but to make sure that we are also understood correctly and that we find ways of explaining things that make sense to the listener. As Tanya comments:

For me it’s about communicating in terms that are relevant to people. For example, instead of saying ‘wetlands provide ecosystem services like flood attenuation’, we say ‘you know the floods we get every winter? They’d be so much worse without the wetland absorbing those heavy rains’.

- Tanya Layne, Urban Nature Programme Developer, SANBI

Communication is critical for collaborative management. Without good communication between team members at all levels of leadership, it is impossible to share ideas and opinions openly, or to benefit from each others’ experiences and views. This limits how much we can learn from, and teach, each other. It also makes it more difficult to deal with conflict.

Below are some ideas to facilitate good communication:

- **Report back**: Inform the team of any meetings, workshops or training sessions that any members attend and give full reports of all these processes, so that the whole team understands what is going on in the conservation sector and in the city more broadly;
- **Have clear boundaries and a code of conduct** stating how team members are expected to treat each other and ways of ensuring that these are respected;
- **Come to all processes with an open heart and no pre-judgements.** Forums should be safe spaces where people can express their difficulties and failures without fear of criticism so that everyone can learn from them;
- **Find ways of giving feedback** that is constructive, positive and respectful. Always give positive feedback before giving negative feedback. This also helps us to recognise each others’ achievements, rather than just seeing weaknesses.

**Mastering meetings**

Good meetings are the backbone of collaborative management and vital for successful teamwork. They should be a good communication channel and an excellent opportunity to share ideas, be informed, make decisions, get direction, listen, talk and leave everyone enriched and purposeful.

Well-run and regular meetings are vital in enabling active participation from all team members. Asieff Khan does this with a brief daily action-orientated meeting where staff prioritise and allocate tasks for the day. He also informally discusses work-related issues and decisions while working with his staff. Paula Hathorn suggests a weekly Monday morning meeting to review the work of the previous week, decide on priorities for the coming week and to allocate responsibilities.

**Chairing**

The key to an efficient, constructive meeting is good chairing. A chair should:

- Have a clear agenda which is circulated beforehand and stick to it;
• Prioritise items on the agenda and allocate time in proportion to their urgency or importance;
• Allow discussion around each topic, but make sure it is relevant and not repetitive. Once a few points have been made, the chair can direct the substance of the discussion back to the topic, and move on;
• Do not allow one or two people to dominate discussion;
• Ensure that participants leave the meeting with a sense of resolution on the way forward. Make sure that everyone is clear about what has been decided, who is responsible for carrying out decisions, who they will report to and what the time frames are;
• Try to get consensus on a way forward or have a clear method of resolving disputes if agreement cannot be reached;
• Make sure the meeting is minututed and minutes are circulated soon after the meeting to all relevant parties. Minutes can be limited to actions, but should include discussion if it is important to have an in-depth record of thought on an issue.

Chairing is a valuable skill, but the only way to develop it is to do it. It can be difficult having an inexperienced chairperson, but it is worth giving all team members the opportunity to chair meetings. This advances their skills in chairing and helps them to appreciate what is needed for a meeting to be productive.

Paula has the following suggestions for facilitating the development of chairing skills:

Rotate chairing so that everyone has an opportunity to draw up the agenda and chair the meeting. Then have a feedback session at the end of the meeting about what was good or not so good about the chairing so that everyone learns. If the person is insecure about chairing the meeting and drawing up the agenda, someone with experience can assist them.

- Paula Hathorn, Manager, Cape Flats Nature

Encouraging participation
The Barefoot Guide offers the following suggestions for encouraging participation in meetings:

• Before a group discussion give the participants a few minutes to think about the topic on their own so that they can get in touch with their own thoughts and feelings about it;
• Suggest that they chat briefly to the person next to them to try out their ideas;
• Where appropriate, encourage people to express their own feelings and what they want, not just their thoughts. (A word of caution: Some people when asked what they feel, say “I feel that…” This is usually a thought and not a feeling. Ask for a quality before the ‘that’ – I feel happy that… or I feel disturbed that… etc);
• Journaling is a great technique to get people to focus. Give them a chance to sit quietly and write their ideas, feelings and wants and to think of the questions that matter to them.6

Prioritising meetings
Working for a big state bureaucracy involves many meetings. When starting off as a young manager on the site, it is difficult to miss any meetings, and they can be extremely helpful in showing how the organisation functions, as well as revealing internal dynamics and power struggles. But over time, we learn that some meetings are not as critical to our practice as others. We can cut down on time wastage if we prioritise meetings and only attend those that are essential.

Mother tongue
Working in South Africa, it is almost inevitable that there will be a range of first languages spoken in our teams, as indeed there should be if we are to be truly representative. While it is unrealistic to assume that everyone will speak each other’s language, it is a good gesture for team members to at least master basic greetings. It can be a fun teambuilding activity to spend a few minutes each meeting learning each other’s language, and it is a good experience for those who have the privilege of being able to use their mother tongue at work to be reminded that others have to get by in second or third languages. It’s also important to be aware as a team of how communication is affected by language, for example areas where misunderstanding can easily happen.

1.5 We trust and support each other… and see conflict as an opportunity for growth

Social capital is the shared knowledge, understanding and patterns of interactions that a group of individuals brings to any productive activity. It is created when individuals learn to trust one another so that they are able to make credible commitments and rely on generalised forms of reciprocity rather than on narrow sequences of specific quid pro quo relationships.

- Elinor Ostrom 7

Social capital depends on a network of relationships and trust. Like a forest, it creates a resilient system that is slow to grow and difficult to regain once it is destroyed.

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Chapter 3

All teams may feel a bit prickly sometimes!

Trust is a critical aspect of collaborative leadership and teamwork, and both facilitates and is facilitated by good communication. Several studies have identified it as one of the most important preconditions for the creation of social capital, which in turn is necessary for creating sustainable, adaptable and resilient social systems. Trust is essential for free communication and participation and greatly facilitates learning. However, it is a lot easier to destroy it than to create it.

Building trust is a complex and organic process that develops within groups over time. It is hard to force it, but there are ways of working in a team that help to foster it. Below are some suggestions.

To build trust in our team we need to:

- Always be honest, fair and transparent in our dealings with each other;
- Deal with conflict quickly and decisively, and discourage gossiping or complaining about other team members;
- Stress respect for confidentiality;
- Incorporate teambuilding activities in our programmes;

- Ensure that there is total transparency and accountability in all decision making;
- Ensure that disciplinary processes are transparent and impartial.

Turning conflict into a growth opportunity
The way we handle conflict has a major impact on the level of trust in a team. Well-managed conflict can help build trust and strengthen a relationship, as the following story shows us:

I was having immense difficulty with a staff member who had recently joined the team. We just did not get along. We saw everything differently and we began to believe we could never work together. It was a total disaster.

Adele from Head Office offered to try to mediate the dispute. She was brilliant as a mediator. For a whole day we sat together and discussed our relationship and where the difficulties arose. Adele was able to show us that we were not listening to our emotions. It was an exhausting process which required much honesty from both of us. After that matters improved. Now the new employee is a star performer, an environmental education person of note, who is left with much responsibility and gets on with it.

Investing a whole day in the relationship was well worth it. I now have a reliable and responsible member of staff who is eager to work and delivers an impressive service. Reports from schools of his knowledge and ability to communicate are legendary.

- Name withheld, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

This story shows us how important proper talking and listening are to resolving conflict. Conflict offers an opportunity for sharing ideas and for honesty, and can enable growth for all involved. Some conflict is healthy in a team. We need diversity in our systems just as much as nature does, and a networking of diverse views can be beneficial in creating resilience and adaptability. As long as conflict occurs within relationships of trust, openness, and a willingness to listen and respect exists, it will strengthen rather than weaken the team.

However, some of us find conflict very threatening. If this is the case, we need to be aware of our own attitudes and approach to conflict, and be willing to learn and be challenged.

How we manage conflict depends very much on the relationships within a team. If we have a high level of trust and mutual respect, differing opinions can be aired and talked
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per year, including one where team members can meet each others’ families. Keep them as low key and casual as possible.

Tanya Layne has the following suggestions:

Allow the team to decide on team building activities and different members to take the lead… do things that give you insight into the worlds and/or lives of team members and/or the communities you work with. Team building activities can also support work at the same time, for example we once hiked through Macassar Dunes as the full team to support Lewine in her strategic planning process.

- Tanya Layne, Urban Nature Programme Developer, SANBI

In the following section, we explore more about learning from our mistakes as well as our achievements.

2. Collaborative learning

Monitoring and on-going learning are cornerstones to effective decision making amid uncertainty in natural resource management.8

A learning organisation deliberately puts regular time aside to learn from its experiences, to think about what this means for practice and to develop its capabilities, in order to continually improve the quality of its work, to rethink its purpose when necessary and to strengthen how it organises itself to do the work. It’s about an organisation that nurtures itself… The rule of thumb is that we need to put aside 15% of organisational time for learning.9

Ecosystems (may be seen) as learning systems that have developed a number of traits that are both crucial and exemplary for social systems, including resilience, flexibility, adaptiveness and networked connectivity.10

through, and all can benefit from hearing other points of view. If the team is new to each other, and has not had the chance to build up trust, conflict can be trickier. Sometimes, we just get a personality clash that is difficult to deal with.

Managers of the team need to use their intuition to feel out the best way of turning conflict into a positive experience. But the following guidelines can help us ensure that it remains constructive:

- Discourage people in conflict from discussing it with others in a destructive or uncontained way – gossip can turn a small fire into a runaway blaze;
- Ask the parties to stand back a little and reflect, and to put themselves into the other person’s shoes. You may ask them to present each other’s point of view, and to correct each other as necessary;
- After they have done this, encourage a dialogue between them. Remind them to:
  - talk about “we” and “us” and steer away from “you”;
  - avoid making generalisations and to be specific. Instead of “you always insult me …” say “I felt insulted when you said … at the meeting last week”;
  - Express how they feel in relation to the behaviour: “I feel alienated when….”;
- If the parties still can’t agree, call in an appropriate mediator – someone who is impartial and trusted by both sides. Set enough time for them to really thrash through the issues;
- As a manager, avoid any suggestions of favouritism, and avoid disciplining staff in public. Feedback in a group situation should always be given in a positive and supportive way.

With thanks to Dalton Gibbs, Area Manager, City of Cape Town

Teambuilding activities

Informal teambuilding games, social events and other activities can help with creating a relaxed working environment, building trust and easing communication between team members. Try to build in at least two of these

Ecosystems may be seen as learning systems …
Learning and adaptation are vital to all natural systems. Learning is also pivotal for adaptive co-management and for the creation of resilient social ecological systems and it needs to flow through every breath of our organisational life.

Each day of working in a collaborative team should be a learning experience. Much of this learning may happen informally, through discussions, observations, sharing experiences, and conferring. However, we can also build in more structured processes to facilitate learning from experience, which we explore below.

2.1 Action learning

I have learnt by bumping my head.
- Asieff Khan, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

The best way to learn is through experience, and most learning comes from doing – and from getting it wrong. But we need to ensure that our mistakes and our successes are both learning opportunities, and that all team members can learn from each others’ experiences without fear of criticism or ridicule.

The process of adaptive learning is captured well in the cycle of action learning. This is a simpler version of the model we portray in Chapter Two and depicts the ongoing cycle of action, reflection, learning and adaptive planning that is the backbone of adaptive co-management.

Action learning has been an important part of the growth of collaborative conservation practice pioneered by Cape Flats Nature and its partner organisations, with the guidance of the Community Development Resource Association. Cape Flats Nature and its partners have used this model to enable different communities and conservation site managers to learn from one another and share their experiences. One such opportunity was created with the Community Exchange Programme, where site managers and community conservation volunteers spent time in other areas learning from people in the same field. In 2008 community champions from the Cape Flats visited communities in the Cederberg. They describe the trip as a “wonderful opportunity for seeing things differently and for learning”.

Case studies

Another action learning tool that Cape Flats Nature has used extensively is the presentation of case studies. The case studies document problems, challenges, failures and successes encountered by team members and managers. They are presented in different forums, with clear guidelines to ensure that feedback is positive, and that people’s confidentiality is respected. The case studies have enabled conservators to share their experiences, highlighting the complexities of the issues and promoting positive lessons from and suggestions for tackling difficulties. The case study experience has deepened the relationship between the conservators piloting a collaborative practice, and helped to develop trust and collegiality. The managers of the pilot sites met every Monday morning for five years “thrashing issues to the bone” to determine how to integrate a people-oriented approach to their practice. Through this process they deepened their vision and built a shared conceptual framework.

‘Failures’ and missteps are part of the management process. It is from these mistakes that we learn and improve on our performances. It is hard to admit to mistakes but if we can cultivate an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and positive response, these mistakes become a rich opportunity for all concerned to grow. Listening well is key.

Action learning enables us to learn from experience and adapt our practice to meet challenges so that our organisational practice can stay on the cutting edge in a fast changing world. The Cape Flats Nature evaluation reflects that through action learning, team members learn lateral thinking approaches to problem solving that equip them to deal with new and previously unknown challenges and opportunities which they face on their reserves. In this way, they greatly extend their resilience in the face of uncertainty and the unknown challenges of climate change.

Case studies have formed a large part of the practice on which this book is based, so that you as a reader are also part of this learning cycle.
Learning from case studies

We have found that groups of 4 – 15 people can usefully discuss a case study and allow for 45 – 60 minutes for presentation and discussion.

At each session we decide who will present the next case study. We choose issues that we feel will build our understanding of what it means to do nature conservation in a city. A person may also ask to do a case study on an experience or process that he/she is stuck with, so that the group can help him/her to understand the situation and work out the next step.

We encourage participants to write without worrying about grammar or spelling and to keep it to less than two pages. We ask them to think through the situation they want to share, and to record their experience faithfully, guided by the following questions:

- When I got there, the situation was this…
- I thought that…
- I did this…
- The result was….
- And now I think…
- And my questions are….

The case study is written up and distributed. The presenter reads the case study out loud without interruptions. The group concentrates on listening at all levels. We listen to what is written, but also for what is not written: the feelings, the will and the intentions behind the writing. Listening is the most important skill in the case study process. When we did training on learning through case studies, we thought the emphasis in the workshop would be on writing skills, but we spent most of the time learning to listen... it was profound!

The case study ends with two or three written questions. We discuss the questions or any other issues that arise. We try not to jump to offering solutions and giving advice (and many of us find this very difficult) because we want the discussion to explore the situation, to really try and understand and work out what helped and what hindered and what the responses were. This discussion usually helps the presenter gain clarity as to what the next step could be. If we jump into giving advice then we usually don’t explore more deeply what really happened because we think we know what to do already.

We keep a copy of the case study and a write up of the discussion. This has given Cape Flats Nature a rich record of our work. There have been some complex processes and over the years we have three or four case studies dealing with these. It is very helpful to have this record for inducting new people, and for others to refer to when dealing with similar issues.

- Paula Hathorn, Manager, Cape Flats Nature
Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

The SWOT analysis is often used in strategic planning, but it can also be used as a tool to monitor and evaluate ongoing work. Below we describe how this analysis may be conducted:

1. Draw four columns on a blackboard or flipchart, headed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/challenges. Explain each evaluation category to participants, and find a key question for each category (e.g. strengths: what do you think are the strongest features of, or most positive gains made by this project? How do these strengths deepen and advance our vision?).
2. Beginning with ‘strengths’, jot down the group’s responses in the relevant column. Make sure that anything positive about the project is reflected, however minor it may seem.
3. When all points of strength are represented, use questions to ask the group to identify weaknesses.
4. Discuss the challenges faced by the project. Discuss whether and how the strengths can be used to overcome weaknesses and the challenges the team faces.
5. Discuss the opportunities presented by the work. Is there a way to take it further and deeper? Have some of the ‘failures’ opened up new possibilities?
6. Discuss ways to get the project back on track, or to change strategies to make it more effective, and devise a plan of action.

2.2 Mentoring

Mentoring is an important aspect of collaborative leadership. It is usually a one-on-one process between team members, or between a team member and an outside person, which usually takes place in several meetings over time and includes tutoring, counselling and sharing knowledge drawn from personal experience. Mentoring is an excellent way of building relationships and trust, sharing and developing knowledge, addressing problems and possible areas of conflict and supporting a person in their efforts to reflect on and learn from difficult stretches of their work. It offers significant learning opportunities for both members of the mentoring partnership.

Koos Retief puts a lot of effort into mentoring his staff and has seen its benefit in their motivation and performance:

Mentoring helps you draw on your own knowledge, skills and experience to support and guide your staff. You may also refer your mentee to other experts for further advice and guidance.

When mentoring someone you get to know them better and become interested and invested in their future. If you invest in them, they will invest in themselves and their jobs. Mentoring is invaluable to the morale of staff. It creates a different work culture.

The City of Cape Town has realised that it is lacking in mentorship and now runs South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) accredited courses on the subject. Managers have to keep a mentorship file to monitor performance of all their staff. They will also be measured on how well they mentor. As a manager, your mentoring is documented in the performance assessments.

- Koos Retief, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town

2.3 Training

Capacity building and training for team members is an important method of improving skills and promoting excellence in the workplace. Many institutions offer opportunities for training – for example, the City of Cape Town is implementing a Workplace Skills Development Plan which allows staff to highlight the skills they wish to develop over three years. It is important to ensure that team members have sufficient on-site opportunity and support to implement formal learning from training and skills development programmes.

Investing in the skills development of team members can be a slow and painstaking process. Results may only be seen in the long term, but they are enduring and rewarding. All team members, including management, need to look out constantly for and networks that will help develop our knowledge, capacity and skills.

Management at Table Mountain National Park have been involved in extensive training and development of the hundreds of contract workers employed each year through poverty relief programmes. 563 people from local communities have benefited over the past four years. They were provided with both training (25 106 training days) and employment opportunities (197 086 job days). The following case study explores some of the many success stories.
**Paths to success**

Table Mountain National Park has made extensive use of poverty relief programmes to upgrade paths and other facilities in the Park. In 2004, they invited people from neighbouring low-income communities and informal settlements to train as guides for the Hoerikwaggo Trail. After an intensive selection process, 15 were chosen to undergo training and become accredited trail guides with knowledge of natural and cultural history, and diverse skills. The National Department of Labour was so impressed by the first intake, they offered to fund the next one, and refunded the costs of the first one. One of these guides, Lindela Mjenxane, is now a passionate conservationist, running her own programme that takes children up Table Mountain.

Fezile Dyosi, from Imizamo Yethu, is another successful recruit, who is now employed as an Assistant Project Manager for footpath construction in the Park that is being funded by the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

He first became involved with the Park in February 2004 when the footpath construction project started. “I heard from a friend that the community forum in Imizamo Yethu was looking for recruits to work in the Park and I was one of the guys who was nominated in the first group of 30,” he recalls.

That group was divided into three teams, each led by a contractor who reported to an overall project supervisor. Dyosi’s abilities were quickly apparent and after just one year on the job as a general worker, he was selected to become a contractor.

“Probably, it’s when you believe in yourself and also believe in the people who are working around you, so that they can also believe in you. And also I was keen to learn,” he modestly explains.

He led his team in footpath construction, building gabions (wire baskets containing stones that are placed in vulnerable areas as highly effective anti-erosion measures) and helping to renovate several old buildings in the Park.

He continued to impress and was nominated again for a promotion post that he still occupies at the Park’s Orange Kloof station – Assistant Project Manager for the DEAT Social Responsibility Directorate-funded footpath construction project.

Currently the teams are attending training courses to improve their construction skills – like building work, carpentry and painting.

“I like working in the Park. It’s opened my mind because I never knew there were all these paths on the mountain and all the old buildings on the Back Table and the new tented camps. But now I’m in an environment where I’m enjoying myself.”

He’s studied privately for a project management course and has learned various additional skills ‘on the job’ at Orange Kloof.

“For the future, I see myself maybe as one of the project managers and perhaps I’ll be able to start a project where I can also transfer some of my skills to a younger generation,” he says.

*Adapted from interview with John Yeld, published in the Table Mountain National Park’s ten year anniversary commemoration book.*
Discipline is also a learning tool in that it sets clear boundaries for what behaviour is acceptable, and brings consequences to breaches of discipline. It is one of the more difficult tasks of a leader and manager, and many people find it hard to reconcile with the more informal style of collaborative management. Hopefully, with a motivated and supported team, discipline will rarely be necessary, but there are likely to be times when it is called for.

The managing structures of most conservation sites should have disciplinary procedures set out, which all team members should be aware of and understand. These processes are there to protect both managers and staff from unfair treatment or from being wrongfully accused of unfair treatment, and they should be strictly adhered to. It is equally important that discipline is meted out fairly and impartially. Once team members have been disciplined for a breach of conduct, we need to move on and give them the opportunity to show that they can improve their performance.

Favouritism is extremely damaging to staff relations and can lead to a breakdown of trust and communication. To avoid any suggestions of favouritism, we need to be scrupulously fair and transparent in our dealings with all staff members. If we feel that there are particular circumstances around the breach in discipline that call for leniency, these should be explained to other staff members. Luzann Isaacs explains further: “When there is even the perception of favouritism, it is particularly important that very clear and transparent procedures are in place and applied across the board.”

Moving on...

With a well-equipped and motivated team, we are now ready to tackle the challenges that we will explore in the next chapter: growing the value of the site in partnership with neighbouring communities.

2.5 Discipline

It’s all very well having an inclusive, participatory approach. But what if your staff members don’t do their work or step out of line?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Pathway</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You do not know if performance or a project is on the right track.</td>
<td>Seek feedback or identify and monitor indicators immediately and more regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance is poor but you don’t know how to improve it</td>
<td>Engage with your team through a case study or another feedback method. Ask for help from outside mentors or experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You know what you need to do to improve performance but you don’t have the capacity.</td>
<td>Find ways to improve capacity through mentoring or training, or seek assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance is poor but the team members involved seem too unmotivated to improve it</td>
<td>Engage in a process to identify and resolve blockages or problems. Engage in visioning to increase motivation. Explore the creation of feasible incentives together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project is doing well but you don’t know how to maintain or replicate it</td>
<td>Document the project and engage with others to identify what factors contributed to its success and whether and how it could be replicated. Compare it to similar, less successful projects to help identify the important factors that determined its success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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11 Adapted from “Monitoring and evaluation: tools for biodiversity conservation and development projects”, Cape Action for People and the Environment 2008, SANBI Biodiversity Series 11, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria, p47