

Professional polymaths

Developing your career as a
generalist in HE

AUA Conference, 15 April 2019

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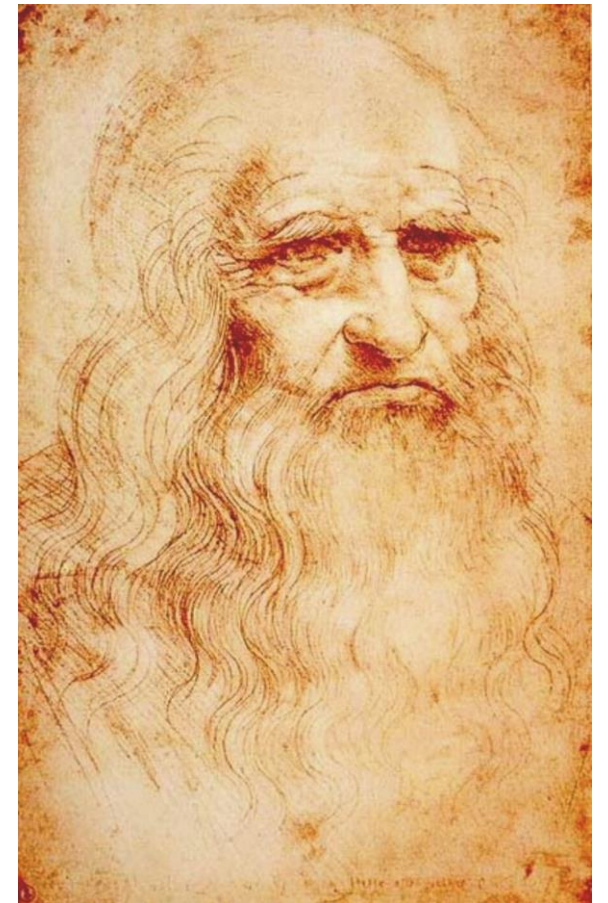
The logo of the University of Warwick, featuring a stylized blue and white graphic of a network or fiber optic structure on the right side of the slide, and the word "WARWICK" in a blue, sans-serif font below it.

WARWICK

Session objectives

- Understand how generalist roles have evolved in HEIs
- Reflect upon experiences as generalists administrators and identify the value they bring to their respective organisations – building a value proposition
- Plan how to develop their skills and knowledge further to progress their careers in HE – deploying the value proposition

Leonardo da Vinci
1452 - 1519



Polymath :a **person** whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas; such a **person** is known to draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems.



Stephen Fry
1957 - present

“Oh, and what are you doing now....?”



Impact of the Robbins Report (1963) and beyond

- First great expansion of universities in 1960s / alongside development of polytechnics through LEAs
- Need for full-time senior managers (and career routes through)
- Dominated by “Sir Humphreys” / Establishment, and Grammar School Boys
- Into 70s & 80s - administrators as partners not servants
- Increased specialisation driven by technology and diversification of mission

The contemporary landscape – refining the model

- Whitchurch work on “Third Space” projects
 - Specialist
 - Generalist
 - Niche (quality, research management)
 - Third space / unbounded professionals

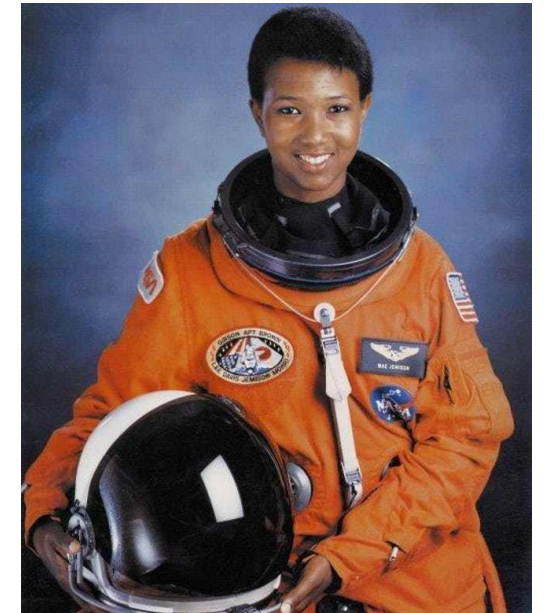
“Reconstructing Professional Identities in HE”

https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.97643!/file/rise_of_third_space.pdf

Generalist roles?

- Student Records Officer
- Departmental Administrator
- Astronaut?
- all require degree of skills and knowledge
- is generalist a useful term? What would alternatives be?

Mae Jemison
1956 - present



What are the challenges to building the generalist career?

Paul Robeson
1898-1976

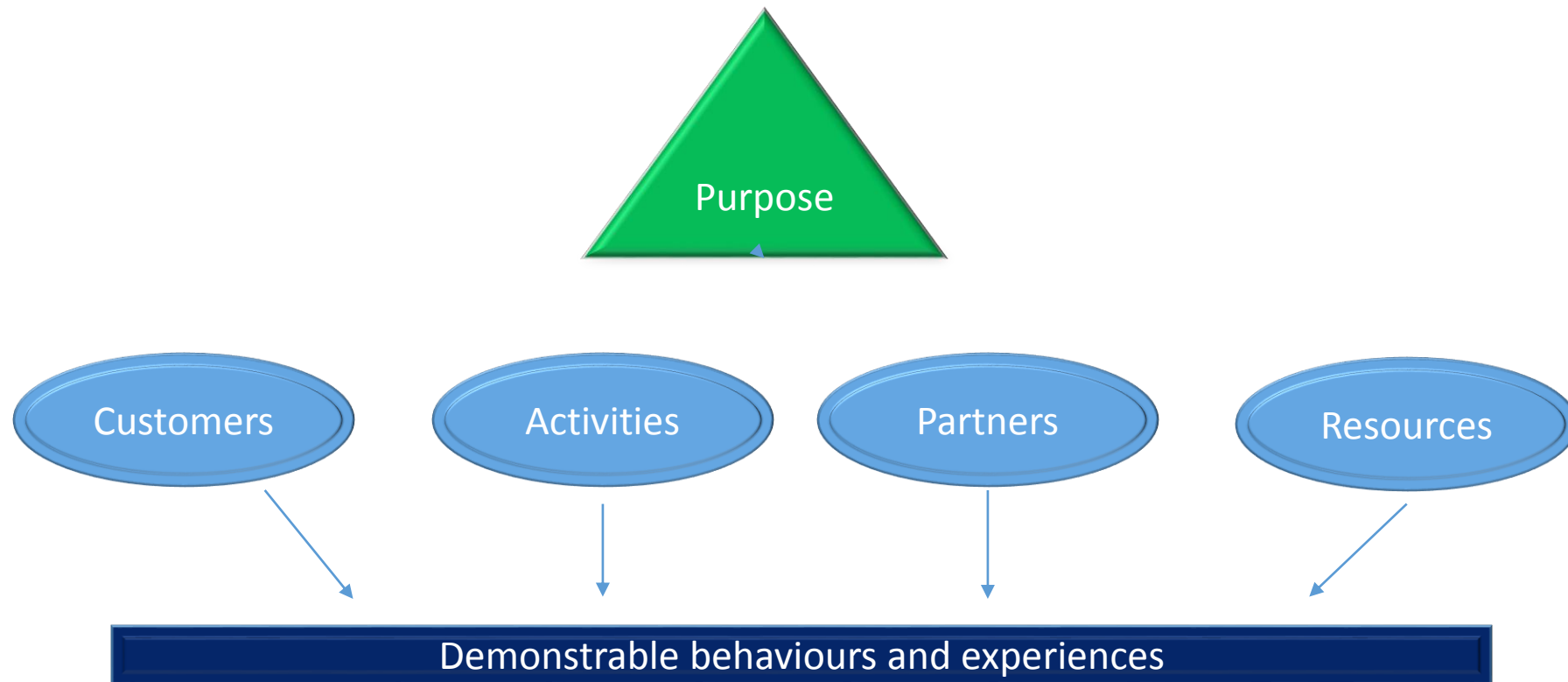


Building a value proposition

- Why do you do what you do? (purpose)
- How do you do it? (activities and resources)
- Who do you work for and with? (customers and partners)
- “This is how I can and will add value...” (narrative)

Inspired by “Business Model You”(Clark et al, 2012)

Building your value proposition



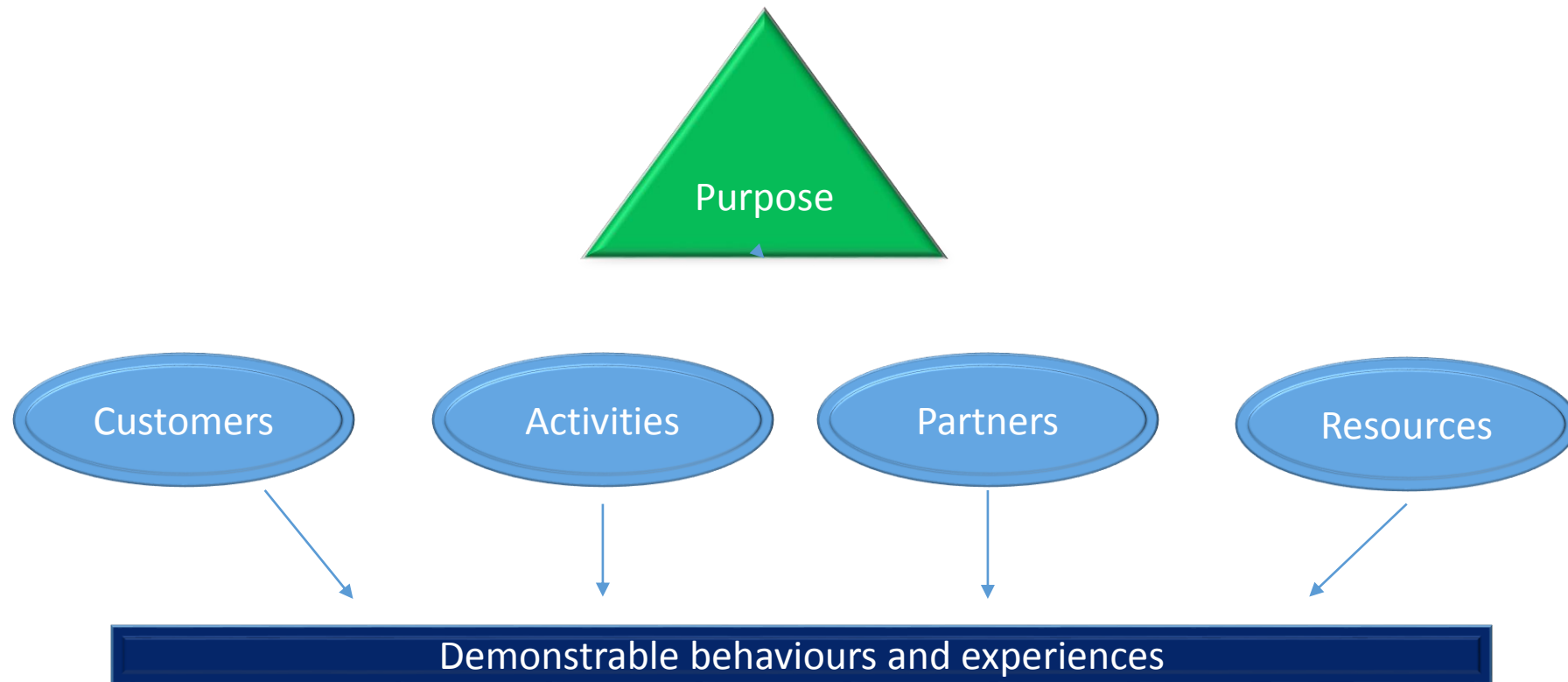


“Why on earth would you want to do that?”

Building your value proposition

- Who do you help? (customers)
- How do you help them? (key activities)
- Who helps you? (key partners)
- Who you are and what you have? (key resources)

Building your value proposition



“Oh, and what did you say you were doing now....?”

- Why do you do it (purpose)
- Who do you help? (customers)
- How do you help them? (key activities)
- Who helps you? (key partners)
- Who you are and what you have? (key resources)
- And an example of where you made the difference!



Deploying your value proposition

1. Narrative – this is who I am and what I can do
2. Habits of a polymath
3. Opportunities

Habits of a polymath

- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Persistence

Mary Somerville
1780-1872



Opportunities

- Work shadowing
- Secondments
- Job rotations
- Work outside your bubble!
- Anything else?



Alexander von
Humboldt 1769 -1859



Thank you!



Brian May
1947 - present