

the
6 key
demands of
leadership

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It takes great focus to be an outstanding leader

Leadership is not easy. If it was, more people would put their hands up to do it.

Some leaders are born to it; some are shaped into it. Regardless, to be effective, those in leadership roles need to understand what others need from them. With that comes some key demands: six of them in fact. And that's what I'll be talking about in this paper.

I am very fortunate to work with some outstanding leaders, and often marvel at how well they are able to galvanise their teams to do great things. A clear observation for me is that many are not able to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes them great. I know that it is partly because many are so humble that they won't articulate why, or even dare to speculate. But sometimes it is because they don't regularly reflect on the things they do that help them achieve. With total focus on the bigger game plan, they don't pause long enough to try and understand their success.

It's obvious that many succeed because they intuitively function in ways that are critical if you are going to run a thriving business. They know how to create the environments that encourage and empower their staff to embrace the organisation's purpose and to want to do more.

Those environments are reflected here as 'the six key demands of leadership'.

They are proven to help ordinary people do extraordinary things.



1: inspiration

How INSPIRED is your team?

I don't know about you, but I have always wanted my team to embrace the bigger picture. Right now, that's even more of a challenge than usual. A crisis or major disruption tends to dilute focus on the future as survival mode kicks in. But now (more than ever), we need to be aiming at what will make us great, so we need to put a substantial effort into painting a vision of the future and getting the team involved in creating it.

And in truth, our teams really want that from us.

Nothing motivates a team more than seeing their creations come to life. I have seen it countless times in the big multi-national advertising agencies I worked with over the past 30 years - when great ideas are executed well, the team lifts, and so do the other people around them.

We love to celebrate success, so let's always work towards acknowledging our wins. 'Ringing the bell' regularly to say "well done and thank you team" sees everyone inspired to do even better. It's your job as a leader to do it.



2: culture

**It's actually
more IMPORTANT than your
strategy. Much more.**

We spend so little time on creating the culture that will help our teams flourish. Our effort is so focused on getting the strategy right and then executing it, that we don't look at how the team is actually functioning together, how much they respect each other, or how well they are getting along. Without attention to this, we miss a lot of what is going on, good and bad.

There's a popular opinion that the behaviour you walk past is the behaviour you accept. Well, let's take it a step further and say that not only do you accept bad behaviour if you walk past it, you actually endorse it. Clearly that isn't good enough and your people expect more.

Some will suggest that culture can be described as 'the way we do things around here', but I think that is too easy a description, and a dangerous one. We need to create environments that thrive, because if the team is engaged and empowered – if they're emotionally aligned to the purpose of the business - we know they will be prodigiously proactive.

A VERY basic prerequisite to this emotional alignment is the need to feel safe, to know that your opinion is valued and that you are encouraged to speak up (with good or bad feedback), because the whole team knows you do it with one intent: to make things better.

Leaders take note: make sure your culture-meters are on.



3: certainty

Perhaps one of the toughest things to confront.

How can you provide certainty? And why is it important?

Employees want to know that their roles are safe. They rely on their jobs to meet basic needs such as food and shelter, and in time, the opportunity to fulfil their dreams. If that is at risk, they are vulnerable, and so is your business. Stability is a necessity for both parties.

The key to delivering a level of certainty is to communicate often and engage your people in many of the discussions that are critical for the business. Doing so helps people know where you're at, what the future looks like and where they fit into it. What's more, they'll now be part of it.

Giving more people the opportunity to contribute to their individual futures invariably provides a plethora of new thinking and innovation. It's infectious and it helps shape a culture where people are always wanting to add to the discussions that help everyone grow.

To help engender a level of certainty in your business, go from one (you) worrying about the future, to many. It's always going to deliver a better result.

A wise old coach once told me "none of us are as smart as all of us". Couldn't agree more.



4: activation

Getting *more people to do more of what makes a difference.*

You know that BURNOUT is a major factor for busy people. Sooner or later their willingness to take on almost anything catches up to them. You know this through observation and personal experience. You're seeing it in your teams as well as yourself at times and you need a solution.

That solution is activation – getting your people doing more stuff, more often. It sounds so simple, yet it is extraordinarily difficult. The common lament of people who won't or don't delegate is “my team are already busy and it'll be quicker if I do it myself.” Actually, it won't, and you'll be lucky if it gets done at all.

It needs to be the right stuff of course and that creates another issue: how do we define what is the right work to delegate? How about we start with one critical (or passion) project at a time?

Lifting output requires trusting your team to take on more, and to do that, you need to know what they are capable of. A simple skills audit will tell you that and it will help you identify the projects that will yield the best results.

Get this right and you'll give yourself and your people more time on the work that makes a real difference. Big benefits will flow.



5: integrity

**It is so simple yet critical,
*do what you say you'll do.***

One thing that teams need to see is total integrity from their leaders. They need them to be true to their word. Anything less and a loss of trust is the result. This will, at the very least, be detrimental to future performance. At worst, it will result in complete disengagement, which can be catastrophic for your business.

You will know yourself what this feels like. If you don't respect the people you report to, you don't go the extra mile, you don't engage and you will stubbornly refuse to be accountable, even if you think that would never be your style. It is unfortunately human nature: we cannot and will not bring ourselves to do our best for people we don't respect.

It's imperative then, that you place the highest value on your personal integrity. You should also demand the same from your team.

You need everyone to level up and own it.



6: lead

People expect their leaders to LEAD.

That simple statement should come as no surprise, yet many in leadership roles simply forget that the people who work with, and for, them are looking for inspiration, guidance and confidence. If you're not giving any of that, you're not leading - and worse, you're shirking the most important part of the job you're being paid to do.

I'm guessing if that sounds like you, it's not sitting too well. If you're in a leadership role, there's a fair chance you've decided that is what you want to do. You're proud, probably results-driven, perhaps a D personality type, and you like to be in control of your environment. Well, you also have an obligation.

A leader's actions can be seen in the behaviour of the people they lead. If you're not serious, or 'walking the walk', your teams won't be either. And if you're micro-managing rather than letting them just get on with it, you're not leading, you're doing. That's an abdication of your responsibilities.

It's imperative that you step up and accept your obligation, and do the 'leading' work knowing that is what your teams expect of you. In fact, they crave it, they need direction and if you've got the pay grade, you have to step up.

If you can't lead them, who is going to?



So how does all that look?

I have worked with hundreds of businesses all over the world in the last 30 years, and it doesn't matter what size, what country or what category, the characteristics of great leadership are the same everywhere. Leaders know they have an obligation to behave in a way that inspires their teams to reach for something more, to shift a business from surviving to thriving, to move from good to great.

They know that the key things to focus on are:

1. **Inspiring** their team to bigger things
2. Creating a strong **Culture** for all
3. Delivering **Certainty** as much as possible
4. Ensuring high standards of **Integrity**
5. **Activating** their teams to do more
6. Fulfilling their obligation to **Lead**

When business leaders recognise these six key demands, their organisations enjoy unparalleled success. They outperform their rivals on almost every measure and they sit in the top 1-3 of their business categories.

The teams they lead, do extraordinary things.

