

Mindful leadership

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We are experiencing what has been termed the fourth, if not the fifth, industrial revolution. In 2016, in his book “The Fourth Industrial Revolution”, Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), brought us face-to-face with our leadership responsibilities, as great technological, environmental and societal changes are under way. Again in 2016, Gilles Vernet made the documentary “Tout s’accélère” (Everything is speeding up”), which has had a considerable influence on many people. A couple of years earlier, in 2014, Janice Marturano published her book “Finding the Space to Lead”, and if we go a little farther back, the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa wrote an article on the increasing pace of change in the periodical “Le Genre Humain” (2010/1, no. 49, pages 105 to 113). More recently, Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish activist, had a big impact at COP24 and has started a powerful movement among young people. And it is true: everything is speeding up. If we want to survive, and enable future generations to do so, the **speeding-up** that now needs to take place is a speeding-up in **awareness**, in human consciousness.

As leaders with a key role to play we need to develop **mindfulness in leadership**.

The notions of full awareness and mindful leadership have become more prominent in the last few years, though they have never been entirely absent. An effective boss, a good leader, needs to be self-aware and exercise self-control if he or she is to guide others, understanding the impact we have on other people (see my article on this subject) and emphasizing the importance of self-reflection (concept at the heart of to the nine dimensions of LP3: see video at <https://www.lp3leadership.com>).

I am going to consider specific aspects of mindful leadership (distilled from various articles and approaches that can be found on the web) and relate them to my own practice. All my previous articles provide additional information and tools relating to the points I am going to set out below. I shall not therefore mention the corresponding article on each occasion, as this would result in too much repetition. At the end of this article, however, I will set out a simple procedure for increasing your awareness where the different dimensions of leadership are concerned. I call this the “LP3 Power” exercise.

Let me remind you of my definition of leadership:

1. The capacity to create momentum, to mobilize people towards a common objective, an attractive vision, via a stimulating, creative and inspiring framework
2. Legitimate power

Mindful leadership implies self-awareness and awareness of your impact on others. Many leaders are highly intuitive. However, if they can learn how to pull the right levers (adopting a systematic approach) in interacting with others, they will be better able to control their impact, reduce collateral damage and motivate people more effectively.

Mindful leadership in fact involves an ethical dimension, acting with kindness. This is what I wrote at the beginning of my book *LEADERS for a Sustainable Economy*”:

“Can a single individual make the world a better place? Can you help to improve the world? Have you ever asked yourself this question?”

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Personally, it has been on my mind for years. If I consider my children, our world and our economy, there is only one possible conclusion: not only can I help to improve things, but it is my duty to do so."

Self-reflection

Self-reflection lies at the heart of leadership. So how about you? Are you aware of your personal values? Have you prioritized, explained and communicated them to your employees, colleagues, friends and family members?

Where self-reflection is concerned, I always get managers and employees, too, to ask themselves the three following questions:

1. Do I know my intellectual, psychological and physical limits?
2. Do I listen to myself and what my body is saying?
3. Am I happy with myself just as I am?

A good leader, a leader who is self-aware, has a degree of humility. He or she is **humble**, while being aware of his strengths and having a powerful vision. You could say that he/she combines humility with a sort of positive narcissism. He/she is kind, without being indulgent. He/she is able to say "thank you" and "sorry"; knows his/her strengths and weaknesses. Adam Grant has written about this paradox, this need for a right balance ("Tapping into the power of **humble narcissism**", 14 May 2018).

As he explains:

"Humble narcissists bring the best of both worlds: they have bold visions, but they're also willing to acknowledge their weaknesses and learn from their mistakes."

This self-assurance, this inner strength, inspires confidence and – combined with humility – makes for **psychological security**.

And self-reflection helps produce another of the fruits of mindful leadership: **systematic and systemic learning**. The principles of the learning organization (Chris Argyris) and the various learning methods are the key to greater self-awareness. For instance, feedback and debriefings in pairs or in a group help to make you aware of new or different factors, and thus gradually to develop your intuition.

As a result of self-reflection, a mindful leader will also know when he/she needs to recharge his/her batteries. He/she is able to strike a balance between involvement/performance and energy/rest/building up resources. Not only for him/herself, but for others, too. Listening to others (showing empathy), being present, it is as if he/she has sensitive "antennae" and, by showing interest, asking the right question and observing carefully, is able to support others and help them overcome their limitations. Alongside such a leader, we feel at ease, strong and confident, valued. We want to give our all!

To recharge and recentre, a mindful leader will have times of rest and withdrawal, when he/she is **fully conscious** of him/herself and his/her environment. Short periods of meditation or breathing exercises are very helpful.

To sum up (see previous articles), a mindful leader has a powerful vision (he/she imparts meaning and works for the common good). He/she involves others (taking into account the opinions of employees, partners and customers), is present (showing interest), plays an active role (while husbanding his/her resources), and combines humility with inner strength (the humble narcissist). He/she brings out the best in others and encourages them to take the initiative. He/she shoulders his/her responsibilities and sets a good example.

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LP3 Power (exercise)

Where the nine dimensions of leadership are concerned, especially the central dimension of self-reflection (see the video explaining the nine dimensions at www.lp3leadership.com or the relevant section of the book “LEADERS for a Sustainable Economy”), consider the following questions on a regular basis:

Mindful leadership (**impact**)

- How can I measure my impact and the impact of my team?
- What prevents or hinders me from having a greater impact?
- How can I avoid these obstacles?
- How can I strengthen the impact I have on others?

Mindful leadership (**motivation**)

- What provides motivation in this area?
- What positive experiences have I had in this area?
- What motivates me?
- What demotivates my team?
- What can I change?

Good luck in your journey towards mindfulness!

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