

# Leading Insights



*...a better way to manage*

the  
happy  
manager

Published by Apex Leadership Ltd.

# HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

## Leading Insights

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# How to be a Better Manager...

**Leading Insights** is one of a series of practical, thought-provoking guides, designed to help you deal with a wide range of management ideas, activities and situations. Whether you are a new manager, or one who wants to hone or develop existing skills, we're sure you'll find something valuable in any of these guides.

This series of e-guides is published by Apex Leadership Ltd. The guides have been developed by a team of professional managers, consultants and educators. The full range of titles is available from [Apex Leadership Ltd](#), or from [the Happy Manager.com](#). Use these guides to benefit from our wealth of management expertise. Let us help you find: **a better way to manage...**"

Phil Higson & Anthony Sturgess  
Directors, Apex Leadership Ltd

## Using the guides

Each guide contains information, insight and inspiration on essential management topics. The best way to use the guides is to read through each section in turn, ensuring you pause for reflection wherever you see the "Consider..." points. Be sure to answer any questions posed, wherever they appear - they are there for a reason!

**Consider ...**

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### Uncommon insights

There is a wealth of leadership theories, models and definitions. Many provide valuable principles and advice for practice. Sometimes though, we need to be encouraged to think differently, to:

- Provoke our thinking with fresh insights.
- Stretch our understanding.
- Ignite ideas.

Theories and models can provide useful frameworks for our thinking, but they can also be limiting. If we allow our thinking to stay within the confines of a framework, they can be counter-productive. Insights which provoke you to think differently about leadership can be a powerful complimentary approach to these others methods for understanding leadership.

In this guide we have brought together some uncommon insights into leadership. These will help you to continually define what leadership means for you, for the organisation and people you work with, and in relation to the context in which you work. Considered together, the insights reinforce an important notion. That leadership is increasingly needed in unpredictable circumstances, where resources are constrained. It's leaders who are expected to show the way forward, often by thinking differently.

Amongst other things, the guide will help you to think about:

- Turning around performance within difficult working contexts.
- Avoiding compromise by holding competing tensions.
- Resourceful leadership – building resource flexibility when resources are constrained.
- Going with the grain - what behavioural sciences can contribute to the key leadership role of influencing.
- How your mood as a leader has a bigger impact than you might think.
- Saliency, sagacity and serendipity: 3 uncommon elements of strategic leadership.

**"Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sometimes sail with the wind and sometimes against it - but sail we must, and not drift, nor lie at anchor"**

Oliver Wendell James

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## Chrysalis Leadership

### Chrysalis – transforming change

For some change it isn't the spark or energy of a catalyst that is needed. It is the time and space to let an idea develop, or the ability to see what others don't see:

"Man's mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions."

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jnr, US Judge.

At such times, what is needed is chrysalis leadership.

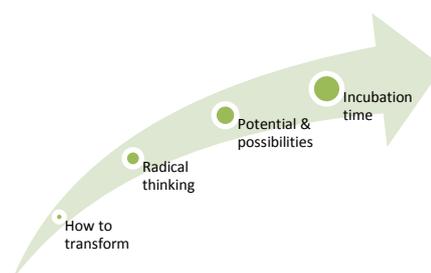
Chrysalis leadership is about change that develops and transforms. It is the chrysalis that transforms a relatively ugly caterpillar into something of beauty. In this example the transformation only happens through incubation, via a cocoon. Chrysalis leaders allow time and space for themselves and others, to think, and to enable the development of ideas.

#### Chrysalis leadership:

- Asks, how can the ordinary be transformed into the extraordinary?

Chrysalis leadership looks for the potential in the ordinary, seeing how things could be combined differently, perhaps to create the extraordinary. "The secret of success is to do the common things uncommonly well" (J.D. Rockefeller, U.S. industrialist).

- Means thinking more radically about what is possible.
- Sees potential and possibility in the current context - what might be.
- Allows time for ideas to incubate and develop. Some ideas need time and a nurturing, safe environment in which to grow.



**"Some look at things that are, and ask why. I dream of things that never were and ask why not?" George Bernard Shaw.**

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### Infectious Leadership

Do your moods and emotions matter much to the colleagues around you? They may well matter more than you realise. Often leaders may be unaware of the power of their mood, and the messages they convey through the expression of their emotions - deliberate or accidental.

Anyone's moods and emotions can be contagious. As the saying goes:

"Smile and the world smiles with you, cry and you cry alone."

Given that leaders are critically placed to influence what happens in organisations, then it follows that their moods and emotions are even more contagious than most. In fact you might say that leaders are highly contagious!

It's not surprising then that Daniel Goleman (the writer and thinker behind emotional intelligence) thinks it pays for leaders to be optimists. Not indiscriminately, mood needs to match the situation yes, but there should be a healthy optimism about how situations are approached. Why? Well, as Goleman said: "Good moods galvanise good performance."

As one of the world's great leaders put it:

"I'm an optimist, it doesn't seem to be much use being anything else."

Winston Churchill

In their Harvard Business Review article: "Primal Leadership", Goleman and his colleagues made another interesting point. According to them, numerous studies:

"show that when a leader is in a happy mood, the people around him view everything in a more positive light. That, in turn, makes them optimistic about achieving their goals."

Most people would probably agree with these sentiments, at least anecdotally. What's interesting about Goleman's claim is that it supports one of our key beliefs - that happier manager's encourage better performance. Infectious leadership is catching - others will catch your energy, passion and optimistic attitude to work and life. Then just imagine what the impact might be of a group of leaders working together, with positive, optimistic purpose.

Of course, infection is a two way street! There is always the possibility that leaders may be susceptible to the mood and emotions of others. Especially key people in their lives. Ask yourself, to what extent do we catch the mood of others, perhaps without realising it? How can we guard against this?

This also raises another interesting point. Perhaps another salient question is when you have a team that seems be down or negative. Have they caught the mood from you?! This is something we explore in the next section on infected leadership.

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### Defining moments

If you were asked to sum up leadership in a phrase, what immediately springs to mind?

- Lead with vision?
- Focus on the bigger picture?
- Learn how to communicate and inspire?

These are all important elements of leadership but we should never forget that in leadership, as in life, it's often the little things that count.

In South Africa in the 1940's a black boy of 9 years saw a tall priest in a black cassock doff his cap as a mark of respect to the boy's mother - a black domestic worker. The boy couldn't believe his eyes. At that time and in that place, no white person did that for a black servant.

The boy grew up to become the Archbishop of Cape town, Desmond Tutu. In later life he described this incident as a turning point in his life – **a defining moment**.

What about the priest? A simple action, no more than a small gesture which he may not have realised had any particular significance.

Interestingly the priest in question was called Trevor Huddleston, of whom Nelson Mandela was later to say:

"No white person has done more for South Africa than Trevor Huddleston."

It's not uncommon to think that life's defining moments come from major events. However, sociology professor Frank Furedi, suggests that it's more likely to be the small and personal moments that really shape our lives:

"Sometimes very minor personal events that you don't notice at the time, sneak up on you and a week later, or a month or a year later, you realise you're never the same person again."

What do these stories tell us? They illustrate the power of simple, straightforward acts that show others you care. They encourage us to:

- Think about the things you may consider small or irrelevant, yet which others might feel to be quite significant.
- Reflect on the potential impact of some of the simple things we do. Attention to the small things can have an impact far beyond our initial comprehension.

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## HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

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