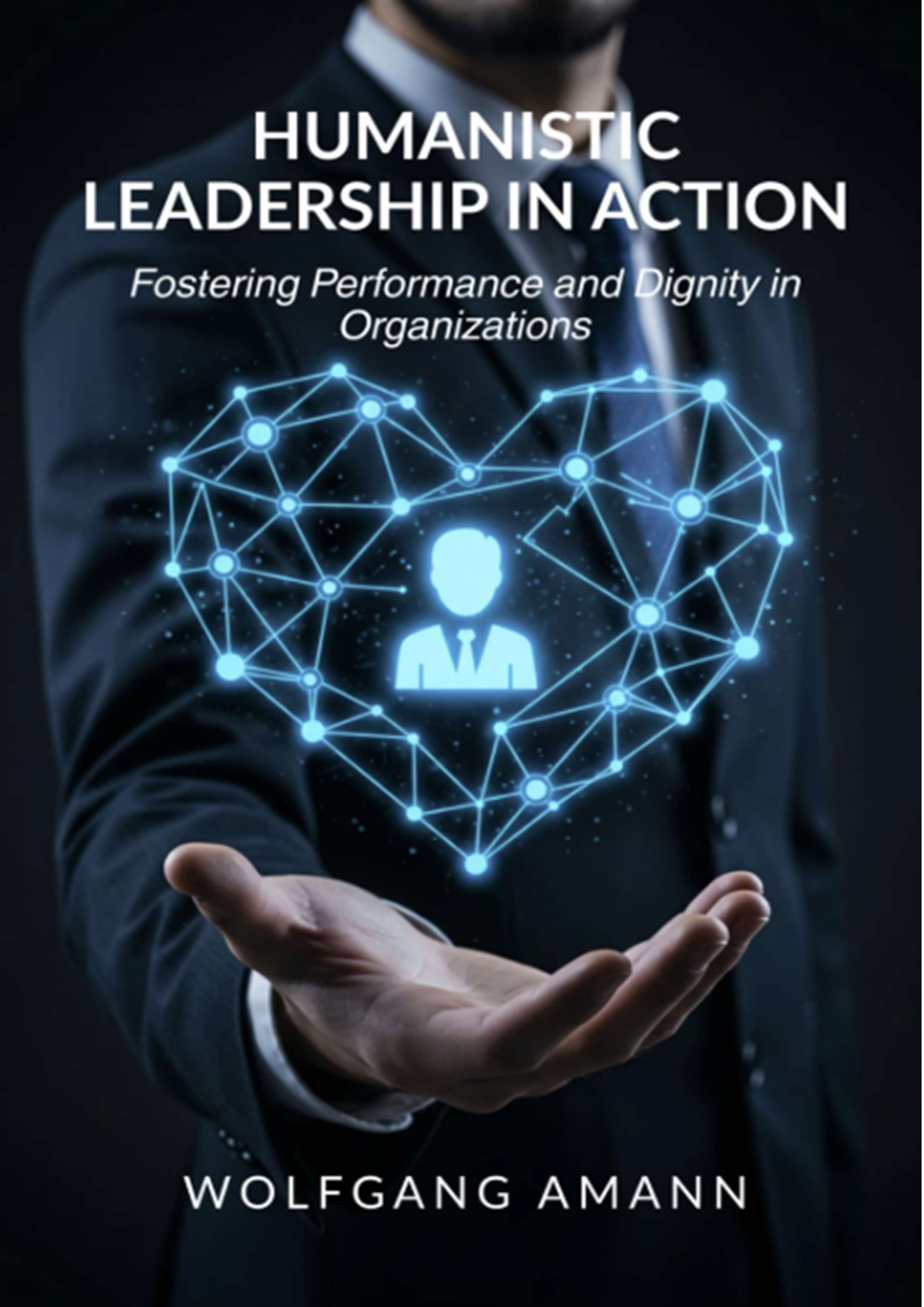
HUMANISTIC LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Fostering Performance and Dignity in Organizations



WOLFGANG AMANN

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Wolfgang Amann

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Foreword and Acknowledgement

As co-founder of the *Humanistic Management Movement*, I am often asked how to bring humanist management to life, specifically. There is an interest in understanding how it matters in industries, corporate functions, countries, and most notably, leadership.

What I also noticed is that there is a substantial fragmentation regarding knowledge applied in business. For example, while there is a rich history and noteworthy substance in the field of philosophy and ethics, practitioners hardly make connections to other management areas. The breadth and depth of what German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has to offer, particularly in the areas of communicative action and discourse ethics, are truly inspiring. But which practitioners and busy executives have worked their way through normative management? The same applies to the insights, perspectives and thoughts that leaders offer in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and other related fields.

As I have observed over the past 25 years in executive education, executive coaching, board assignments, and top consulting, there is a need for more resources that provide actionable knowledge. It boils down to the question of what can be done within one's more or less limited circles of influence and control. What can even be done in the short term is a key question. Not one day, but on day one, as this book will outline.

Over the years during which the thoughts in this book matured, I had the privilege of encountering numerous fellow travellers in the field of humanistic management. They include my co-founders of the *Humanistic Management Network* and all subsequent joiners of the *Humanistic Management Movement*. Together, we laid the groundwork for several organizational spin-offs, including the *International Humanistic Management Association* and the *Humanistic Management Foundation*.

Currently, there are two book series on humanistic management, a humanistic management journal, a global annual case writing competition, conference submissions at top academic events worldwide, webinars, and centres, among other initiatives. May the movement continue to flourish and may the content of this book inspire leaders to dare more and reach even farther, faster.

Finally, the target audience of this book are the practicing leaders, as well as emerging leaders preparing for leadership roles. As such, this book prioritizes readability. Endnotes with further comments acknowledge sources, though the book works without omnipresent in-text references.

Doha,
May 5, 2025

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Chapter 1:
Why Bother About More and New Insights on Leadership?

1.1. Introduction

St. Gallen professor Heike Bruch carried out research on leaders – with daunting results. Roughly only 10% can focus their conducive energy. The other 90% either lack sufficient energy to achieve great things or lack sufficient focus, or both.[1] This is a cause for concern as today's leaders do not have it easy. Distractions await them left and right. AI provides information literally at any moment. Leadership advice is shared on social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, and is part of numerous subscriptions to newsletters from Harvard, MIT, consulting powerhouses, and other institutions. Then why hunt for more insights, especially if focus is an issue? The following figure provides an answer by highlighting four main needs identified among leaders.

Figure 1: Reasons to Engage with More and Newer Leadership Insights

1.2. The Need to Tap into Further Potentials

When working with numerous executives every month, there is often an initial resistance to accepting reality. “What? Leadership is not working? My leadership may not be working, but we have good leaders in place. They have been put in their roles by the organization. They surely are trying.” These are initial reactions, which slowly give way to a more open approach to checking facts.

What helps when improving one’s sense of reality is a thorough fact check. For example, Gallup provides truly unique and multidimensional performance indicators of leadership globally, regionally, and locally. Here are some truths about how well our leaders perform[2] in terms of key outcomes of the leadership process:

Thriving

Around the world, only 34% of employees on average report wellbeing. Especially younger staff members below the age of 35 years show a lower percentage of thriving and this divergence of older (36%) versus younger (31%) generation invites leaders to notice it and adjust what they do. 58% are struggling and 8% truly suffering. This is where a dignity-oriented leader can make more contributions.

Daily Stress

41% of staff members around the world report they experienced a lot of stress yesterday, with women having slightly higher rates of being and feeling stressed. Interestingly enough, it does not matter for global averages if work takes place remotely or on-site. Both groups report the same level of perceived stress. Hybrid working setups display a slightly higher stress level.

Daily Anger

21% of staff members globally report a lot of stress. Women and older employees portray a higher stress level than men. Also, managers' report more anger than non-managerial employees.

Daily Sadness

22% experienced a lot of sadness yesterday. Once more, women, older staff members, and managers' report more sadness. In this dimension, there is a difference between remote and on-site work. 29% of employees working remotely report a lot of sadness versus 21% in a hybrid and 19% in a fully on-site setting.

Loneliness

20% of staff members feel lonely. 22% of the younger generation below the age of 35 years feel lonely versus only 19% of older peers. 25% feel lonely all the time, 21% sometimes, and only 16% report that they never feel lonely. There is more that leaders can do to create more welcoming and warmer workplaces.

Employee Engagement

Engagement figures around the world are astonishing – astonishingly low! Only 23% of staff members are engaged. 62% are not engaged, and the remaining 15% are actively disengaged. Gallup finds that higher employee engagement leads to substantial benefits, such as increased productivity, profitability, and employee wellbeing. Disengaged workers cost the global economy $8.9 trillion annually – about 9% of global GDP. More specifically, Gallup also compares the top- and bottom-quartile teams and their business units. Their research revealed for higher engagement organizations:

- **Fewer Negative Outcomes:** 78% less absenteeism, 21% less turnover in high-turnover industries and 51% less turnover for low-turnover industries, 28% less theft at workplaces, 63% less accidents, and 32% less defects as for quality in manufacturing or service deliveries.

- **More Positive Outcomes:** Global data showed a 10% higher customer loyalty, an 18% higher productivity of sales teams, and a 14% increase in production.
- **Greater Organizational Success:** Organizations with better engagement scores show a 23% higher profitability, and 70% more staff members report thriving and well-being.

The engagement phenomenon can be detailed further and linked to the aforementioned aspects.

- 34% of engaged staff members feel stress versus 40% of not-engaged peers and 54% of actively disengaged staff members.
- 17% of engaged staff members feel anger versus 19% of the not-engaged peers and 32% of the actively disengaged staff members.
- 30% of the engaged staff members worry versus 36% of the not-engaged and 52% of the actively disengaged staff members.
- 17% of the engaged staff members feel sad versus 21% of the not-engaged and 34% of the actively disengaged staff members.
- 17% of the engaged staff members feel lonely versus 19% of the not-engaged and 31% of the actively disengaged staff members.

The following figure summarizes these key statistics, which all boil down to an invitation to leaders to do three things. First, recognize that their impact scores may not be entirely accurate. Second, organize a moment of truth in which they can capture the actual reality, along with tangible, objective scores. Third, conduct experiments to improve these figures over the next three, six, nine, and twelve months, and beyond. It is also important to note that even in best practice, organizations globally, the engagement scores often do not exceed 70%. It is better not to pursue perfection than embark on a process of continuous and never-ending improvement. As good can always be done better.

	Engaged	Not engaged	Actively disengaged	Un-employed
01 % stress	34	40	54	42
02 % anger	17	19	32	28
03 % worry	30	36	52	52
04 % sadness	17	21	34	38
05 % lonely-ness	17	19	31	32

Figure 2: Stress, Anger, Worry, Sadness and Loneliness Data Across Staff Groups
Source: Based on Gallup (2024)

Having established that leadership, by large, lags behind expectations, the next sections outline further factors that argue in favour of ongoing exposure to new leadership insights.

1.3. The Need to Master Their Change

What happens if we perform in our roles? Normally, this gets noticed by superiors. Sooner or later, promotions occur as the organization seeks to reward performance, facilitate ongoing growth and development, motivate employees, retain talent, and fill positions that become vacant due to retirement, headhunting, or other factors.

There are two concepts that help us understand the dynamics that occur during careers. One is the concept of the leadership pipeline, and the other is a map of more realistic career paths. Both are detailed in the following.

The Leadership Pipeline, introduced by Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel[3], is a model that provides a structured framework for leadership development within organizations. The pipeline represents the progression of leadership responsibilities, illustrating how leaders must evolve their skills, values, and time management to succeed at each level. It is designed to help organizations cultivate a steady stream of capable leaders while addressing the challenges that individuals face during these transitions. As outlined in the following, the model identifies six critical passages, each representing a significant shift in responsibilities and mindset.

Figure 3: Six Key Passages as Part of a Leadership Pipeline
Source: Based on Charan et al. (2011).

Each of these six passages must be studied, understood, and mastered if (next generation) leaders aspire to rise further in the organizational hierarchy. Therefore, the subsequent sections detail each one of them.

1. **From Managing Self to Managing Others:** This is the first transition where an individual contributor becomes a manager. At this stage, the focus shifts from personal productivity to enabling the productivity of others. Key changes are threefold. First, this transition impacts skills. Individuals must learn to delegate tasks effectively, provide constructive feedback, and motivate team members. Second,

values get affected. Individuals shift from valuing personal accomplishments to valuing team success. Third, individuals must succeed in time management - allocating time to planning, coaching, and supervising rather than just performing tasks. This is often the most challenging transition for individuals who are used to excelling in their roles through personal effort.

2. **From Managing Others to Leading Managers:** The second transition occurs when leaders move from managing individual contributors to overseeing managers. The responsibilities broaden as leaders must now coordinate and develop a team of managers. Key adjustments include once more the three crucial aspects, skills, values, and time management. As for skills, more focus emerges on building trust across teams, resolving conflicts between managers, and fostering collaboration. Individuals value managerial success rather than direct involvement in tasks. Ultimately, there is a shift in focus toward strategic planning and broader organizational objectives. This stage requires leaders to balance their influence across multiple teams and ensure alignment with higher-level goals.

3. **From Leading Managers to Functional Managers:** At this stage, leaders transition to managing an entire function or department within the organization. The scope of responsibility increases significantly, often requiring cross-functional collaboration. Key elements include individuals evolving their skills, becoming more capable of developing functional strategies that align with business goals, managing budgets, and fostering innovation within the function. They value a stronger emphasis on long-term results over short-term wins and prioritizing the success of the function as a whole. As for how they manage time, they allocate more hours to strategic thinking and fewer hours to operational details. Functional managers must adopt a holistic perspective on their role and collaborate effectively with peers across other functions.

4. **From Functional Manager to Business Manager:** The fourth transition involves moving from managing a single function to managing an entire business unit. Leaders must think beyond their area of expertise and take full responsibility for the business's profitability. Key considerations include in terms of skills, embracing financial data analysis, making investment decisions, and leading diverse teams, while diversity is to be understood rather broadly. Values shift from functional expertise to a broader business perspective. Individuals learn more how to balance time across various functions and prioritizing activities that drive business growth. Business managers need to develop a keen understanding of market dynamics and customer needs to succeed in this role.

5. **From Business Manager to Group Manager:** The fifth transition occurs when leaders are promoted to oversee multiple business units or divisions. This requires balancing competing priorities and ensuring alignment with the organization's overall strategy. Key changes include honing the ability to allocate resources effectively – noticing one cannot be everyone's darling and make everyone happy –, objectively evaluating the performance of multiple units and coaching business managers. As for values, individuals start to prioritize the success of the organization over individual business units and as for time management, they focus on portfolio management and long-term strategic initiatives. Group managers must excel in managing complexity and ambiguity while maintaining a clear vision for the organization.

6. **From Group Manager to Enterprise Manager:** The final transition leads to the pinnacle of leadership within an organization—enterprise leadership. Enterprise managers are responsible for setting the vision, shaping the culture, and ensuring the organization's long-term success. Key aspects include in terms of skills becoming a driving force for innovation, navigating global challenges, and inspiring the entire

workforce. In terms of values, individuals reaching this level, prioritize the organization's mission and legacy over individual achievements. Finally, in terms of time management, they have to delegate substantial parts of the operational responsibilities and dedicate time to high-level strategic planning. Micro-management would demotivate yet may well be required in times of crises or proactive prevention of future issues. At this level, leaders must embody the organization's values and serve as role models for future generations of leaders.

Key takeaways from this concept are the following. The leadership pipeline emphasizes that each passage requires leaders to learn new skills, adopt new values, and re-allocate their time and priorities. Failing to make these adjustments can result in "leadership blockages," where individuals struggle to meet the demands of their new roles. Organizations play a crucial role in supporting leaders through these transitions by providing training, mentorship, and clear expectations. By understanding and applying the Leadership Pipeline framework, organizations can build a robust leadership bench and ensure a seamless succession planning process. A special note has to be made on countries which heavily focus on nationalization policies and quota. For example, the Middle East and in many GCC countries prioritizes the advancement of nationals. Key leadership positions ought to be filled with nationals. While this is, of course, their right to decide, there are a variety of systems in place across the region, bringing nationalization to life in divergent ways. Some policies continue to foster meritocracy with the help of sophisticated point systems. Other states accelerate promotions often before the much-needed experience and practical wisdom have been built.

In a way, achieving true career success can also be compared to climbing your Mount Everest[4] as suggested by Joe Murphy. It requires persistence, discipline, and overcoming obstacles. These should not demotivate, and it is better to view obstacles as lessons – Challenges encountered on the journey to success are opportunities for growth. They instruct rather than obstruct. Taking shortcuts compromises the learning process and mastery. The universe may well "keep score," ensuring that shortcuts result in missing essential lessons. True mastery comes through persistence and disciplined effort. Thereby, it is essential to avoid the comparison obstacle. Comparing yourself to others creates unnecessary hurdles. There's always someone faster or more skilled, but comparison is a trap that can lead to misery. Also, one never knows what hidden hardship others experienced. Instead, observe others to learn and improve, focusing on your own path.

There are the foundational skills at each level of the Leadership Pipelines that sharpen all others and help you navigate the climb toward your goals. Finally, appreciating these passages and levels is as important as taking a breather on the journey to the top of Mount Everest. As we climb, it is crucial to take moments to reflect on how far you've come and savour the progress. Decision-makers on nationalization policies, HR professionals, superiors, and individuals aspiring to reach the top earlier are encouraged to get the speed of progress right.

Below is a figure showing real career paths that complement the Leadership Pipeline concept. There appears to be a widespread misconception that career paths are one-dimensional. Skills, luck, learning, and a conducive environment determine the speed with which we progress. However, we observe several additional career patterns, which the following figure aims to capture. They are described in the following.

The first pattern aligns closely with the leadership pipeline thinking, outlined above. Like climbing stairs, we reach higher step by step. However, a clear risk is the following. The Peter Principle is a concept in management theory formulated by Laurence Peter in his 1969 book The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong. It states that "in a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence." In other words, people are often promoted based on their performance in their current role rather than their ability to perform in the new role. As a result, individuals eventually reach a position where they are no longer competent, and then they stop being promoted. This principle highlights a potential flaw in organizational structures where promotions are based on past performance rather than suitability for the new role, resulting in inefficiency or dysfunction at higher levels of the hierarchy. Ongoing learning is key, and new leadership insights can help evolve.

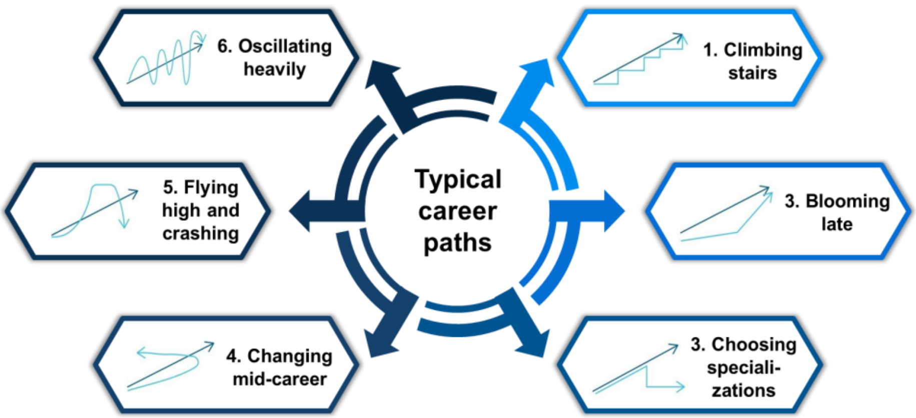

Figure 4: Typical Career Paths
Source: Based on Eppler (2022)[5]

The second pattern included in the figure is a late bloomer pattern. Individuals may only discover over time, perhaps through improved mentoring, how to truly advance and add more value. Individuals also feel a wrong sense of duty and stay put so as not to offend or vex their boss. Perhaps the organization is also more than happy to retain a specialist and well-performing colleague in the role, as a promotion would leave the unit with a vacancy that is difficult to fill. 50% of hiring decisions turn out to be wrong. Therefore, replacing a high-performance colleague who has mastered the expected standards would not occur for a considerable amount of time. Fresh and perspective-altering leadership insights could help us anticipate our blooming, bringing out the best in us earlier than would otherwise be the case.

The third pattern is returning to what you love. Individuals may discover that blindly pursuing leadership roles and promotions can actually lead them away from their areas of strength and the activities for which they initially joined a company or profession. They may also have realized that it gets lonelier at the top. Political games abound. Work-life balance suffers. One of the most important questions as we age is what we want to do with our time. Years are limited. So, why not spend precious time with assignments that we chose consciously and enjoy? This career pattern sees individuals follow this train of thought and return to what they love. Good new leadership insights allow these individuals to be and become themselves. As analytical psychologist C. G. Jung recommended, we ought to spend time figuring out who we really are after attempting to comply with the expectations of our environment in the first half of our lives.

The fourth pattern included in the figure is closely related to this train of thought. The difference is that it foresees a more drastic mid-career shift. Maybe after proving oneself, it is time actually to pursue other passions. Or maybe, and in line with Jung's concept of individuation, we notice who we really are. We may have entered a profession to please our parents or others from our earlier years – only to realize that it is not really for us. To truly achieve lasting fulfilment and feel passionate about what we recognize, we must leave our current contexts.

The fifth career pattern alerts us of the risk of not investing enough into leadership development training and coaching. Individuals perceived as high potentials (or who declare themselves as such) often seize leadership opportunities before they are fully prepared. This reminds us of the story of Icarus. His fate and journey are a well-known myth from ancient Greek mythology, specifically from the tale of Daedalus and Icarus.

Daedalus was a brilliant inventor and craftsman who created the Labyrinth, a complex maze built to house the Minotaur, a monstrous creature in Greek mythology. After helping the hero Theseus navigate the Labyrinth and defeat the Minotaur, Daedalus and his son Icarus were imprisoned by King

Minos of Crete as punishment. To escape, Daedalus crafted two pairs of wings made of feathers and wax for himself and Icarus. He warned his son to fly neither too high nor too low. If Icarus flew too high, the heat of the sun would melt the wax, and if he flew too low, the moisture from the sea would weigh the wings down.

However, Icarus, filled with excitement and the allure of freedom, ignored his father's warning. He flew higher and higher, drawn toward the sun. Eventually, the sun's heat melted the wax holding his wings together, causing them to fall apart. Icarus plummeted into the sea and drowned. The Icarian Sea, located near the island of Ikaria, is named after him, as that's where he is said to have fallen.

The myth of Icarus has been interpreted as a cautionary tale about hubris – excessive pride or ambition – and the consequences of ignoring limits, disregarding wise counsel, and not being prudent enough before making bold moves. It symbolizes the danger of overreaching and the balance between ambition and caution. Sound leadership development efforts can enhance self-awareness and help anticipate potential undue risks. It can help flying too close to the sun, figuratively speaking, before the crashing occurs.

Heavy oscillations characterize the sixth pattern in the figure above. It is a slightly more positive case than the one alluded to by the Icarus story. It may well be their pursuit of high-attention projects, impatience, a challenger or achiever mindset, an edgy personality, or limited emotional intelligence that routinely gets individuals into trouble. At times, they rise as fast as they get fired or demoted, though they seem to have enough fortune or skills to bounce back. Leadership insights could hone their emotional intelligence.

Eventually, however, 70% of leaders fail. This should not be perceived as a fatalistic situation. Instead, it should encourage us to remain curious, to constantly learn and invest efforts in becoming a better leader.

In summary, leaders are learners. The passages they have to master require them to be. Typical career paths observed in reality encourage them to be. Leaders are often considered learners because **continuous learning** is essential for effective leadership. The world is constantly evolving, whether in terms of technology, market dynamics, or societal shifts. Leaders who are committed to learning can remain adaptable and make informed decisions in response to these changes. Leadership requires a range of skills, including communication, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

By continually learning, leaders enhance their ability to connect with others, motivate their teams, and make informed decisions. Leaders who are learners seek out new ideas and perspectives, fostering a culture of innovation. They understand that innovation doesn't just come from existing knowledge but from exploring new concepts, taking risks, and learning from mistakes. Effective leaders set an example for their teams. By being lifelong learners, they show their employees the value of continuous growth and development. This can inspire the entire organization to adopt a mindset of improvement and openness to new ideas. Leaders who prioritize learning are better informed.

They seek out knowledge, gather data, and consider diverse perspectives before making decisions, which enables them to make more thoughtful, well-rounded choices. Learning is often about overcoming challenges and figuring out new ways to tackle problems. Leaders who are learners are more resilient because they view challenges as opportunities for growth and improvement rather than setbacks. Great leaders don’t just focus on their own development—they also prioritize the learning and growth of their teams. By being learners themselves, they create an environment where others feel empowered to learn, grow, and contribute to the organization's success.

In short, leaders are learners because learning is vital for staying relevant and career-wise on track, adaptable, and effective in leading people and organizations through the challenges of the present and future.

1.4. The Need for Sense-Making Convergence

Figure 1 at the beginning of this chapter outlines four primary reasons to pursue further learning in leadership. Four main needs clarify why ongoing exposure to fresh insights can be helpful. After outlining that leadership efforts often do not yield the desired results and that any career shift naturally requires adaptations, the third need is about converging on what truly matters. Individuals yearn for a deeper understanding of how to effectively navigate, at times, starkly divergent perspectives on leadership. Social media platforms like LinkedIn may initially appear helpful for learning about leadership.

However, the offered recommendations are hard to understand. On one day, there is a list of the seven main traits of highly effective leaders. The next day, there are two more overviews, although with a different number of traits or leadership principles, and their content diverges. There is an African proverb that captures the risk inherent in trying to follow such lists. "He who chases two rabbits catches neither." This proverb conveys the idea that if you try to pursue too many aspirational goals, traits, or behaviours, you may end up achieving none. It emphasizes the importance of focus and prioritization. Instead of spreading your efforts too thin, it's better to concentrate on one objective at a time to increase the chances of success. Simultaneously, it clarifies that aspirational leaders portray a need for sense-making convergence. They want to know what truly matters, what is absolutely essential, and what would merely be nice to have but not necessary.

This is the third reason why leaders should continue to be actively developing themselves. This is where this book also aims to create value. It distills the true essence of leadership, in general, and humanistic leadership, in particular. This section outlines what is meant by humanistic management as a movement that I co-founded, along with the international *Humanistic Management Network*, as an NGO towards the end of the first decade of this millennium, with the help of fellow next-generation researchers affiliated with the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland.

The essence of humanistic management, as suggested by the *Humanistic Management Network* (HMN), is the integration of human dignity, ethical principles, and social responsibility into management practices and management education in business schools as well as executive education providers. The core framework emphasizes that business decisions should not only consider profit but also the well-being and dignity of individuals, communities, and the flourishing of natural environments. The core values of humanistic management include, first and foremost, human dignity. Humanistic management places human beings at the center of business practices. It asserts that every individual—whether an employee, customer, or stakeholder—should be treated with respect, fairness, and dignity. This means recognizing the inherent worth of people and valuing them as more than just a means to an economic end.

This means that decisions should be made not just based on financial outcomes but also with consideration of their ethical implications. Leaders are encouraged to make choices that promote justice, equity, transparency, and accountability, ensuring that the rights and welfare of all individuals involved are respected.

Humanistic management advocates for businesses to consider their broader societal impact. Organizations should strive to make a positive contribution to social welfare, public health, and environmental sustainability. This includes promoting fair labour practices and environmental stewardship, as well as contributing to the common good.

Instead of focusing solely on short-term profits, humanistic management emphasizes creating long-term value that benefits all stakeholders. This includes creating a sustainable and thriving business that fosters a positive relationship with its employees, customers, shareholders, and the broader society.

Humanistic management emphasizes collaboration over hierarchical control. It encourages empowering individuals at all levels of an organization, fostering a participative culture where employees have a voice in decision-making. By doing so, organizations can foster innovation, trust, and mutual respect. As experts in designing and leading organizations, humanistic leaders are, of course, fully aware that special situations and contexts require more centralized and top-down approaches than others. Humanistic thinking is adapted to the needs of the situation. A nuclear power plant and accounting department will work with more centralized, prescribed guidelines and rules than this is the case for other settings.

This perspective provides a broader and more integrated view of businesses. It acknowledges that businesses operate within broader societal and environmental systems and that their actions have far-reaching implications. Humanistic management encourages businesses to look beyond narrow economic indicators to consider the full scope of their impact on people and the planet.

While profit is a necessary element of business in light of stakeholder pressures and expectations, humanistic management stresses that it should not be pursued at the expense of people or the environment. This requires complexity and stakeholder management skills. A balanced approach aims to generate sustainable wealth while fostering human well-being and conserving natural resources.

The *Humanistic Management Network* suggests that management should be about more than just maximizing profits. It should involve building organizations that respect human dignity, promote ethical behaviour, contribute to social good, and operate in a sustainable and responsible manner. By aligning the interests of individuals, organizations, and society, humanistic management aims to create a more humane, ethical, and sustainable approach to business leadership.

Three additional remarks are necessary to understand humanistic management fully. First, it is not just about management but about all the enabling conditions that facilitate superior humanistic performance. This is why the network, along with its experts, has conducted extensive research and published findings on the role of business schools.

Second, the network integrates constant learning and evolution. Its experts and thought leaders understood that they needed to reinterpret humanism in the age of AI, in local contexts, and in light of emerging major leaps in the field of leadership development by others. For example, Nicholas Janni published his insights on the leader as healer in his book[6], winning a global business book of the year award. The book centers on the idea that leadership in today's world requires transformation and a new definition of value-added. Nicholas Janni argues that leaders must step into a healing role, moving beyond traditional leadership models that focus solely on productivity and efficiency. Instead, leaders should create environments of coherence, care, and connection, addressing not only business needs but also the emotional and spiritual well-being of their teams. Janni emphasizes that leaders need to heal their own emotional wounds and cultivate self-awareness. This inner work allows them to connect deeply with themselves and others, fostering authenticity and clarity. Great leadership is rooted in presence—the ability to be fully engaged and attuned in the moment. Leaders must learn to embody presence to inspire trust and creativity in their teams.

Janni discusses the importance of integrating traditionally "masculine" traits, such as assertiveness and drive, with "feminine" qualities, as defined by Janni, including empathy, intuition, and nurturing. Leaders should focus on creating coherence—an alignment between mind, body, and emotions. This coherence radiates outward, positively influencing organizational culture and decision-making. Beyond guiding a business, leaders are healers who restore balance and connection, both internally and externally. This approach promotes resilience, growth, and sustainable success. The book advocates for transformational leadership, where leaders not only achieve results but also facilitate personal and collective transformation within their teams. These insights provide a framework for leadership that addresses the complexities of modern organizations while fostering human connection and growth.

While Janni is not an official member of the *Humanistic Management Network*, his revelations are crucial. If the leader adopts the role of a healer for others and is willing to invest in self-improvement, substantial progress in a humanistic sense can occur. As such, humanistic management and its adherents seek out emerging ideas, as the movement is a forward-looking endeavour, ready to embrace innovations and avoid rigid dogmas.

The third additional remark on humanistic management is the traditionally rather blurry and interchangeable use of the notions of leadership versus management. It partly stemmed from the network integrating diverse individuals, and relying on the mere wording of management was encompassing, enabling a platform for efficient coordination. Then, a path dependency was triggered and perpetuated, where the used language was never revisited and corrected, as it should have been about both humanistic leadership and management in tandem.

The following figure attempts to illustrate that both are necessary. The core distinction between a leader and a manager is best understood in this way: A leader works on the system, while a manager works in the system. Both are needed to build and operate humanistic organizations. Even if a humanistic leader is able to conceive, design, create, and build a humanistic organization with corresponding structures, processes, and cultures, there is still a need for humanistic managers to perpetuate what has been established. In humanistic settings, humanistic managers prioritize efficiency and effectiveness.

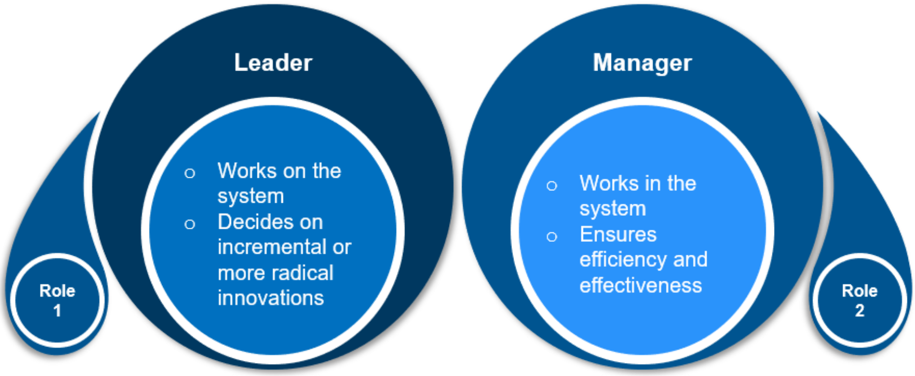

Figure 5: Leader Versus Manager

Having clarified this crucial distinction, outlining the unique contribution of a humanistic perspective on leadership becomes obvious. Humanistic leaders inquire:

- How might we build organizations that protect and foster human dignity?
- What would have to be true when it comes to assumptions in order to make progress?
- What is really in our circle of influence or control and thus achievable?
- Do we have the skills in place in order to make progress happen?
- What and who could help in our endeavour?

The concept of "circle of influence and control" deserves further elaboration. As outlined in the following figure, it differentiates between three circles[7]: First, the circle of concern includes everything that affects us. A number of aspects are beyond our direct influence (e.g., global events, economy, other people's opinions). Second, the circle of influence encompasses things we can indirectly affect (e.g., relationships, workplace environment, team dynamics). Third, the circle of control is what we should pay the most attention to. It is for everything that we can directly change (e.g., your humanistic actions, mindset, and habits).

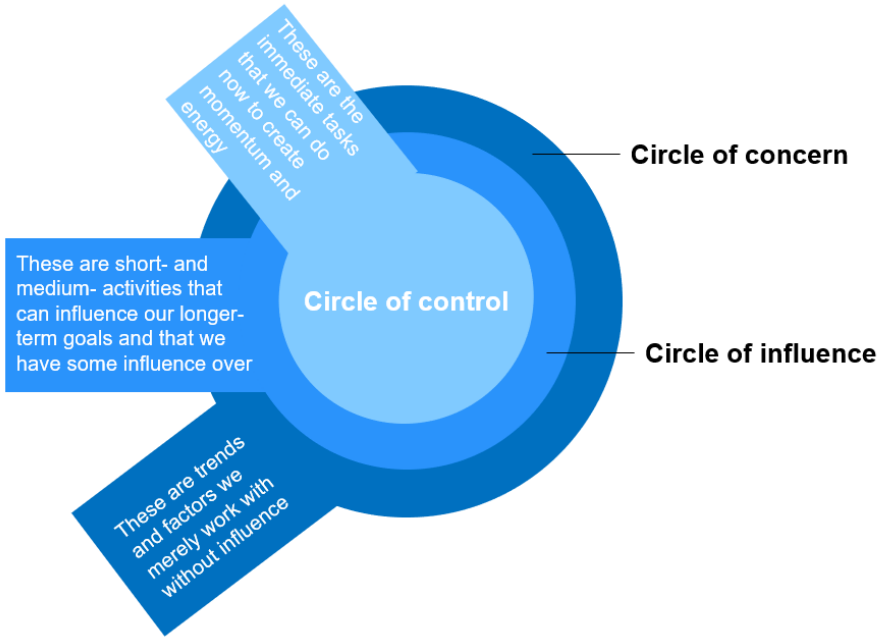

Figure 6: Three-Circle Model
Source: Based on Covey (2020)

As such, humanistic leadership helps converge when individuals would otherwise be exposed to a plethora of tasks in leadership. This book aims to make sense of what truly matters. It helps converge on the essentials within leadership. It presents a core leadership model in the following chapter.

Having criticized the often dogmatically communicated leadership model alternatives put forward by other leadership experts, the reader is encouraged to interpret this book as a mere buffet of ideas. Whether it is the overall humanistic leadership model inspired by human dignity at its core or parts of it, as long as some inspiration is generated while reading the content of this book, it will have achieved its purpose.

1.5. The Need to Master Ongoing Balancing Acts

Finally, Figure 1 included a fourth need – the need to master tensions, which is a balancing act. Several overviews have been presented to clarify for leaders the balancing acts they must cope with when serving their organizations. Some sets are shorter, others longer. The one used in the following builds on the reasoning put forward by Jennifer Jordan, Michael Wade, and Elizabeth Teracino who examine the evolving nature of leadership in the modern, fast-paced world[8].

As illustrated in the following figure, leaders today need to balance two seemingly opposing styles: the traditional approach, characterized by clear authority and consistency, and the emerging style, which values adaptability, listening, and empowering others. The challenge lies in navigating seven core tensions that arise from these contrasting approaches.

First, there is a tension between being an expert and a learner. Traditionally, leaders are expected to demonstrate deep expertise to establish their authority. However, modern leadership demands a willingness to acknowledge knowledge gaps and learn from others, especially in areas like digital innovation. Leaders who master this balance, like Tim Westergren, the co-founder of the popular music streaming service Pandora, combine their expertise with openness to new trends and ideas.

Next, there is the tension between constancy and adaptability. While traditional leaders are celebrated for their steadfast decision-making, emerging leaders must adapt to new information and changing circumstances. Jim Whitehurst, the former CEO of Red Hat, a leading American software company specializing in open-source solutions for enterprises, exemplifies this balance by openly admitting and learning from his mistakes, earning his team's trust despite changes in strategy.

In addition, there is a dichotomy between being a tactician and a visionary. Effective leaders must provide operational clarity while maintaining a broader vision for the future. Vas Narasimhan, the CEO of Novartis, exemplifies this by integrating artificial intelligence into day-to-day operations, ensuring that visionary goals are grounded in practical implementation.

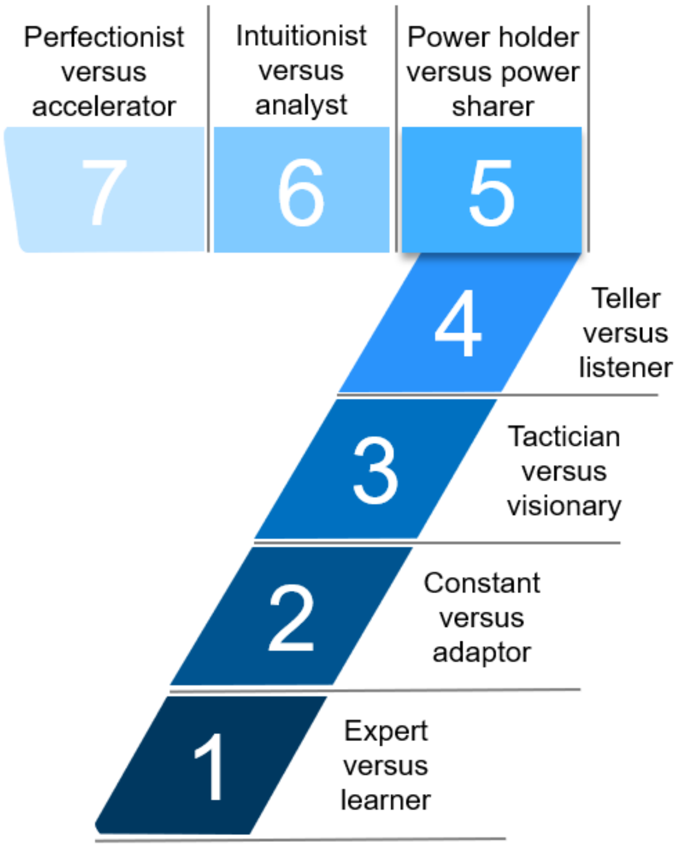

Figure 7: Tensions Leaders Ought to Balance
Source: Based on Jordan et al. (2020)

Another significant tension is that of being a teller versus a listener. While traditional leaders are decisive and directive, emerging leaders prioritize listening to their teams. Angela Ahrendts, as the former CEO of Burberry, balanced these roles by having a strong strategic vision while seeking input from diverse voices, which contributed to Burberry's growth during her tenure.

The tension between holding power and sharing it is another challenge. Traditional leaders often centralize decision-making, whereas modern leaders empower others to contribute. Marco Bizzarri as former CEO of Gucci struck this balance by overseeing financial strategies while creating a "shadow board" of Millennials to bring fresh ideas to leadership discussions.

Leaders also face the tension between intuition and analysis. Traditional leadership relies on instinct and experience, but emerging leadership emphasizes data-driven decisions. Before becoming the CEO of Decathlon, Barbara Coppola as the former Chief Digital Officer at IKEA demonstrated this by standardizing data practices globally while allowing regions to innovate locally, combining analytical rigor with intuitive insights.

Lastly, there is the tension between perfectionism and acceleration. Traditional leaders often prioritize delivering flawless results, while emerging leaders embrace the need for speed and adaptability. As a distinguished humanitarian professional who served as the Director of Communication and Information Management at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Charlotte Lindsey-Curtet navigated this by maintaining stringent privacy standards for refugees while quickly deploying innovative technology to reunite families.

In summary, navigating these seven tensions requires cognitive and behavioural flexibility. Self-awareness plays a crucial role in helping leaders understand their natural tendencies, while deliberate practice and contextual awareness allow them to adjust their approach as needed. By embracing these tensions and learning when to lean into each style, leaders can thrive in the complexities of today's world. Ultimately, leaders ought to balance traditional and emerging approaches, reminding them that ambidexterity and adaptability are keys to success. Ongoing leadership development efforts will ensure such balancing acts are mastered more aptly than this would otherwise be the case.

1.6. Summary of Key Insights – Beware of Zombie Leadership

This chapter outlined why it is worthwhile to remain curious about new leadership insights and concepts. It is argued that there are four reasons why this is the case. First, leadership currently under delivers. Ultimately, 70% of leaders fail, and the current impact of leaders worldwide is truly abysmal. Disengagement, stress, burnout, or quiet quitting are variables that are quantified across cultures. Current research results indicate that there is substantial further potential for many leaders to improve.

Second, beyond the impact that leaders create, they must also manage their own growth and navigate transitions effectively. Unlearning and relearning are essential, as what gets individuals to where they are will not necessarily take them further.

Third, leaders may well suffer from information overflow. There are too many leadership-oriented cookie-cutter recipes floating around that it is difficult to keep track of them all. Harvard Professor Barbara Kellerman[9] identified more than a thousand definitions and ways to understand the concept. Not all players in the leadership development industry have the user's best interest at heart and refresh their offerings in a timely manner, according to her. What the practicing executive needs is not more divergence but convergence on what truly matters. The answer provided by this book focuses on leadership as a means to an end – it should create the conditions and outcomes that protect and enhance human dignity.

The fourth factor, which calls for more leadership development efforts, suggests that leadership, even if once mastered, presents new opportunities, as it is also best understood as an ongoing balancing act. There are numerous tensions to master over time. Learning emerges as the best way to cope with the challenges that result from consciously choosing to be a leader and embracing these balancing acts.

Beware of Zombie Leadership Insights

This first chapter is a call to embark on ongoing learning. There is also an inherent warning for those who do not continue to seek exposure to new leadership insights and upgrade their skills over time.

Several authors have started to warn of so-called "zombie leadership," referring to outdated and debunked ideas about leadership that persist despite lacking empirical support[10]. These ideas endure because they appeal to elites, the leadership industrial complex, and the anxieties of ordinary people. Zombie leadership simplifies the complexities of leadership while legitimizing social hierarchies and the privileges of those in power. It often portrays leadership as an exclusive domain of extraordinary individuals, marginalizing the contributions of groups and followers.

Key characteristics of zombie leadership include the following. First, dated leadership books and materials focus on the leaders alone. They assume leadership is solely about the individual leader, ignoring the role of followers and group dynamics.

Sconed, there is an overemphasis on innate qualities and that they are almost identical across leaders. It promotes the idea that great leaders possess specific, inherent traits, such as charisma or intelligence, which set them apart. It suggests that all great leaders exhibit the same behaviours, regardless of context.

Third, dated material falsely assumes a consensus on what greatness means, along with a universality. It suggests that everyone can recognize a great leader when they see one, ignoring cultural and contextual differences. It treats leadership as a universal concept, applicable across all contexts without adaptation. Fourth, there is a certain element of elitism. Dated material frames leadership as a rare skill limited to a select few, justifying inequalities in power and reward.

Fifth, it assumes an inherent goodness and positions few individuals in a central position. Without critically examining this assumption, leadership is often held too blindly as something that is always beneficial and universally positive. It also posits that groups cannot function effectively without leaders, undermining collective agency.

There are likely to be more outdated assumptions about leadership. Yet, for the sake of argument, these aspects help clarify that, like a zombie still roaming and causing harm in movies, leaders aspiring to learn more about leadership ought to be aware of the need to unlearn and outright reject certain leadership material as well. Several leadership insights have been around for far longer than would be desirable. Finally, one of the reasons it is time for an upgrade is that leadership too frequently ignores the main recipient of leadership services. The followers ought to be understood and served better.

Chapter 2:

Overview of the Central Humanistic Leadership Model

2.1. Introduction – Positive Psychology and Positive Leadership as the Starting Points

Before the subsequent chapters outline each part in further detail, the following sections of this chapter introduce the central leadership model within humanistic leadership. It incorporates insights from inquiry-based reasoning, learning, and leadership into humanistic leadership, guiding leaders with the aid of four crucial questions, as illustrated in the following figure. Inquiry-based leadership is an approach that emphasizes curiosity, questioning, and exploration as central tools for effective decision-making and problem-solving. Instead of relying solely on directives or traditional methods, inquiry-based leaders focus on asking thoughtful, open-ended questions to uncover deeper insights, foster innovation, and engage their teams in collaborative thinking.

It is this open-mindedness, curiosity, empowerment to think, situation specificity, collaboration, and encouragement to learn that foster new insights, which humanistic leadership aspires to promote. By doing so, the leader not only gathers valuable insights but also empowers their team to take ownership of the problem and its resolution. This way to embark on leadership is particularly effective in dynamic and uncertain environments, where traditional top-down approaches may fall short. It aligns with modern organizational needs for innovation, adaptability, and employee motivation and engagement.

The focus on creating new and situational answers is advantageous in two regards. First, it reflects and matches with the early stage of humanistic leadership. There are still too few central sources on how to bring humanistic management to life if one caters to the practicing leader, not mere intellectual debates amongst ethicists.

Second, the inquiry-based method fits with the goal of creating new answers, which is the highest form of learning. Constructivism, particularly rooted in the work of learning experts Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Benjamin Bloom[11], suggests that learning is and should always be an active, constructive process where individuals build new knowledge through interaction with their environment and by challenging existing ideas. This train of thought positions knowledge and solution creation, rather than mere replication, as the pinnacle of the learning and strategic leadership process. It promotes higher-order cognitive skills such as:

- **Critical Thinking:** Analyzing, questioning, and synthesizing existing concepts in traditional leadership in order to create new perspectives on protecting and fostering human dignity.
- **Problem-Solving:** Using but not blindly relying on prior knowledge and experience to devise innovative solutions to novel human dignity and general leadership challenges.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Engaging in dialogue to refine and co-create ideas, often leading to new answers. Simultaneously, involving individuals, followers, and other stakeholders in the process enhances not only the quality of the answers but also the emotional buy-in and support, which is essential for the implementation process. In organizational innovation, there is a clear NIH – "Not invented here". Past research and practitioners' experience have shown that locking others out of deliberations and decision-making processes substantially lowers buy-in.

Figure 8: Essential Questions to Address in Humanistic Leadership

Regarding the first question, the positioning of the book as the primary source of inspiration for truly humanistic leadership clarifies that protecting and fostering human dignity are not merely a means to an end but an end in themselves in the pursuit of business. While both organizations, as well as individual leaders, can develop creative ideas for achieving this, there is an additional element to consider. Individual leaders must also clarify their own why. As outlined in Chapter 3, individuals are encouraged to take a moment to reflect on what motivates them to explore the leadership theme, why they aspire to be a leader, and what kind of exchange relationships they aim to create for themselves. Equally, they have to clarify for themselves what dealbreakers are proactively.

Regarding the second question, the central humanistic leadership model focuses on fostering a deeper understanding of who we are as leaders. It adopts a more modern perspective than most other leadership schools. As outlined in Chapter 4, we will adopt a mindset that focuses on our adaptability quotient (AQ). Three drivers contribute to our adaptability. They include our abilities, character, and the environments in which we operate. Significant progress has been made in the field of measuring AQs, and the model outlined enables the measurement of adaptability with the aid of AI at a uniquely low cost and impressive speeds.

Regarding the fourth question and specific leadership activities, the philosophy of humanistic leadership is grounded in positive psychology, positive leadership, and strengths-based leadership in particular.

The essence of positive psychology lies in its focus on human flourishing. It emphasizes the strengths, virtues, and factors that contribute to well-being and happiness rather than solely addressing mental illness or dysfunction. Introduced by Martin Seligman and others in the late 1990s, positive psychology aims to understand how individuals and communities can thrive by examining areas such as resilience, gratitude, optimism, and the pursuit of meaning in life.

Core elements of positive psychology include, for example:

- **The PERMA Model:** Seligman identified five pillars – positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments – that collectively foster well-being.12
- **Strengths and Virtues:** Identifying and leveraging personal strengths is crucial for personal growth and satisfaction.
- **Resilience:** Understanding how people bounce back from challenges is vital for enhancing coping mechanisms and reducing stress.
- **Flow State:** A state of total absorption in an activity, which leads to high performance and fulfilment.
- **Gratitude and Mindfulness:** Practicing gratitude and being present in the moment are associated with greater happiness and reduced stress.

At its heart, positive psychology acknowledges that everyone has the capacity to cultivate a fulfilling and meaningful life by focusing on what is right with them and the world around them. In turn, positive leadership builds on the principles of positive psychology by emphasizing strengths-based, growth-oriented strategies to cultivate thriving individuals, teams, and organizations. While positive psychology focuses on understanding and enhancing human well-being by fostering positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (PERMA model) as outlined above, positive leadership integrates these principles into a coherent approach for guiding and influencing others. Here are key ways positive leadership builds on positive psychology:

1. **Full Commitment to a Strengths-Based Focus:** Positive psychology highlights the importance of identifying and leveraging individual strengths. Positive leadership takes this a step further by helping leaders recognize and nurture the strengths of their teams. Leaders empower employees to use their talents effectively, boosting confidence and fostering a culture of appreciation and growth.

2. **Fostering Resilience in our World Filled with Adversity and System Shocks:** Positive psychology studies resilience – the ability to bounce back from adversity and ultimately to bounce beyond, emerging from setbacks stronger than ever before. Positive leadership encourages resilience by creating supportive environments, providing resources for coping, and modelling a growth mindset. Leaders help teams navigate challenges with optimism and a sense of purpose.

3. **Creating Meaningful Engagement:** Positive psychology emphasizes engagement in activities that align with personal values and provide fulfillment. Positive leadership builds on this by promoting meaningful work that connects employees to a greater purpose. Leaders inspire teams by articulating a clear vision and aligning individual goals with organizational objectives.

4. **Promoting Well-Being:** Positive psychology focuses on well-being as a cornerstone of flourishing. Positive leadership incorporates practices that enhance physical, emotional, and social health. Leaders prioritize mental health initiatives, work-life balance, and a sense of belonging within the workplace.

5. **Encouraging Positive Relationships with Oneself, Colleagues at Work, And Beyond:** Positive psychology recognizes the importance of strong social connections. Positive leadership builds cohesive and trusting teams by fostering collaboration, mutual respect, and empathy. Leaders actively work to resolve conflicts, celebrate successes, and create a culture of inclusivity.

6. **Facilitating Growth and Accomplishment:** Positive psychology highlights the significance of setting and achieving goals. Positive leadership encourages continuous learning and development, providing opportunities for personal and professional growth. Leaders acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments, motivating teams to strive for excellence.

7. **Cultivating Optimism and Hope:** Positive psychology values optimism as a tool for resilience and motivation. Positive leadership instils hope by maintaining a consistently positive outlook, even in the face of challenging times. Leaders inspire teams to focus on possibilities rather than obstacles, fostering a proactive and solutions-oriented mindset.

Here are some examples of companies embracing partial aspects of positive psychology. Of course, an overall assessment of these organizations would warrant more space. It is equally important to note that many organizations show positive and negative aspects at play. Therefore, the following examples are snapshots and a partial analysis only. Other practices found in these as well as other companies could be perceived as more negative. Positive leadership, grounded in the principles of positive psychology, thrives when paired with real-world examples that illustrate its transformative impact.

Here are some illustrative examples of positive leadership in practice, which demonstrate its connection to positive psychology principles:

- **Strengths-Based Leadership at Google:** Positive psychology emphasizes identifying and leveraging individual strengths. Google exemplifies this through its leadership approach. Managers at Google encourage employees to identify their unique strengths and align these with their roles. For instance, the company uses "Career Development Conversations," where leaders discuss employees' skills and aspirations, helping them grow professionally while contributing to Google's objectives. This practice enhances job satisfaction and team performance by fostering a strengths-based culture.
- **Resilience Building at Johnson & Johnson:** Johnson & Johnson integrates resilience-building into its leadership framework, reflecting the positive psychology tenet of resilience. The company offers its "Energy for Performance" program, which trains leaders and employees to manage stress, improve well-being, and maintain productivity. Leaders are encouraged to model resilience by remaining composed during challenges, demonstrating to their teams how to bounce back effectively, and maintaining a positive outlook.
- **Meaningful Engagement at Patagonia:** Patagonia, the outdoor apparel company, exemplifies meaningful engagement, a core element of positive psychology. Leaders at Patagonia inspire their teams by connecting their work to a greater purpose – environmental sustainability. Through initiatives like "1% for the Planet," the company commits a portion of its profits to environmental causes. Aligning organizational goals with a meaningful mission motivates employees and fosters a sense of loyalty.
- **Fostering Well-Being at Microsoft:** Microsoft's leadership demonstrates a commitment to employee well-being, a key focus of positive psychology. Satya Nadella, the CEO, emphasizes empathy as

a leadership trait, encouraging managers to prioritize employees' physical, mental, and emotional health. Programs like Microsoft CARES offer resources for mental health support, showcasing the company's dedication to a thriving workforce.

- **Promoting Positive Relationships at Southwest Airlines:** Southwest Airlines is renowned for cultivating positive relationships within its teams. Leaders actively foster a culture of respect, collaboration, and camaraderie. For example, Southwest's managers regularly engage with employees through informal check-ins and team-building activities. These practices enhance social bonds and strengthen team morale, aligning with the positive psychology focus on relationships.
- **Facilitating Growth at Unilever:** Unilever integrates positive leadership principles by investing in employee growth and development. The company's leadership programs, such as "Purpose-Led Future Fit," encourage employees to discover their personal sense of purpose. Leaders guide individuals in aligning this purpose with their roles, enhancing both personal fulfilment and organizational impact.
- **Encouraging Optimism at Tesla:** Positive psychology emphasizes optimism as a driver of innovation and resilience. Elon Musk, as a leader at Tesla, often exemplifies this mindset by conveying unwavering confidence in ambitious projects, such as electric vehicles and space exploration. His optimistic vision inspires teams to achieve breakthroughs despite challenges, demonstrating how leaders can fuel progress through a hopeful outlook.

By incorporating positive psychology into their leadership approaches, these organizations have created thriving workplaces where individuals and team’s flourish. Each example highlights how emphasizing strengths, resilience, well-being, relationships, and purpose leads to teams that are engaged and motivated. It is essential to note, though, that isolated initiatives or tolerating other practices with a negative impact do not render an organization perfect, led by a purist, positive, or humanistic leadership style.

In essence, positive leadership applies the insights of positive psychology to the domain of leadership, creating an environment where both individuals and organizations can thrive. By emphasizing strengths, fostering well-being, and aligning people with meaningful goals, positive leadership drives performance while ensuring the holistic development of employees.

2.2. Moving Beyond Positive Psychology and Leadership Humanistic Leadership Model

Positive leadership, while widely celebrated for its emphasis on strengths, well-being, and fostering a positive organizational culture, is not without its critiques. Scholars and practitioners have raised concerns about its limitations and potential drawbacks:

The Positive View on Negative Emotions

First, positive leadership can sometimes lead to "toxic positivity," where leaders prioritize maintaining a positive appearance over addressing real challenges. This can suppress honest communication, discourage critical feedback, and create an environment where employees feel pressured to project happiness, even when facing serious issues.

Second, critics argue that positive leadership oversimplifies the complexities of organizational dynamics. It often assumes that positivity alone can resolve conflicts and drive success, neglecting the nuanced realities of workplace challenges.

Third, positive leadership may inadvertently dismiss the importance of negative emotions, such as frustration or anger, which can be valuable for identifying problems and driving change. Ignoring these emotions can lead to unresolved issues and hinder growth.

Fourth, some critiques highlight that positive leadership theories often focus on idealized traits and behaviours, creating unrealistic expectations for leaders. This can alienate those who do not fit the mold and overlook the relational and situational aspects of leadership.

Fifth, the effectiveness of positive leadership is often deemed too difficult to measure within this approach, as many of its outcomes, such as employee happiness or engagement, are subjective and influenced by external factors.

Sixth, positive leadership can be used manipulatively, where leaders exploit the guise of positivity to suppress dissent or enforce conformity rather than genuinely fostering a supportive environment.

These critics suggest that while positive leadership has its merits, it must be applied thoughtfully and balanced with a realistic understanding of organizational dynamics. This is where humanistic leadership fills the gaps and continues the journey towards ever better organizations. In particular, humanistic management is characterized by the following features:

First, it also embraces the value of negative feelings as part of a larger journey towards a positive future. It can be a catalyst for change, for example. When employees feel dissatisfied, it can illuminate areas in need of improvement—both individually and organizationally. For example, dissatisfaction with unclear communication or lack of autonomy can prompt discussions about improving workplace policies or processes. Employers who take such feedback seriously can enhance their organization, creating a more productive and supportive environment.

Dissatisfaction at work can also foster innovation. Dissatisfaction often drives creativity and problem-solving. Feeling constrained or unfulfilled can motivate individuals to think creatively, leading to innovative ideas and improvements. For example, dissatisfaction with outdated technology might inspire efforts to modernize tools and streamline workflows. Another example is NVIDIA, a company now (at the time of writing this book) worth $3 trillion. It all began in 1993 with a simple dinner shared by three friends weighed down by frustration from their jobs. The rest is history.

Dissatisfaction at work can serve as a motivator for career growth. Personal dissatisfaction can be a sign that it's time for growth or change. It may encourage individuals to seek additional training, develop new skills, or explore opportunities that better align with their values and aspirations. This proactive mindset can lead to personal and professional fulfilment in the long run, which is what truly matters in the grand scheme of things and within a humanistic view of the world.

Dissatisfaction can build resilience. Handling dissatisfaction effectively fosters emotional resilience. Learning to navigate workplace challenges strengthens one's ability to adapt and manage stress, ultimately fostering a more optimistic and proactive approach to future difficulties.

self-reflection. Dissatisfaction can encourage individuals to ask important questions such as: "What truly matters to me in a job?" or "What am I passionate about? This reflexivity is a key feature of a leader. This introspection can lead to clearer career goals and a better alignment between personal values and professional endeavours.

Dissatisfaction can help prompt organizational evolution. On a broader scale, widespread dissatisfaction among employees can reveal systemic issues within an organization. When addressed, such feedback can lead to organizational innovation, cultural transformation, or stronger employee engagement strategies. Many successful companies attribute their growth to identifying and addressing employee dissatisfaction.

By viewing dissatisfaction as an opportunity rather than a setback, both individuals and organizations can harness its potential to foster growth, creativity, and better alignment with values. The following figure aims at capturing many of these considerations. It consciously embraces the realization that being stuck in one of two negative zones merely means there is a cause for action or corrections. Being in the burnout zone implies the situation is unsustainable. Either one adds training or other means of learning, e.g., through coaching, or cuts back on challenges, which can risk perpetuating a situation from which it will be very difficult to recover one day.

Alternatively, one could be stuck in the bore-out zone. Here, one's perceived or actual skill levels notably exceed the quantity and quality of encountered challenges. Negative emotions, such as frustration or anger towards superiors, are equally unsustainable. There is a call to action. More challenges can be taken on. The following visualization also clarifies that negative emotions may well be very close to positive ones if individuals and their teams operate in the flow zone. This represents a solid match between what can and what should be accomplished as posited by flow expert Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[13] and his successor in the theme Zoltan Buzady. Humanistic leadership encourages the use of one's agency, i.e., the discretion one has to move from bore-out and burn-out zones to the flow space. In turn, humanistic leaders should ensure that their team members also experience the benefits of operating in the flow zone.

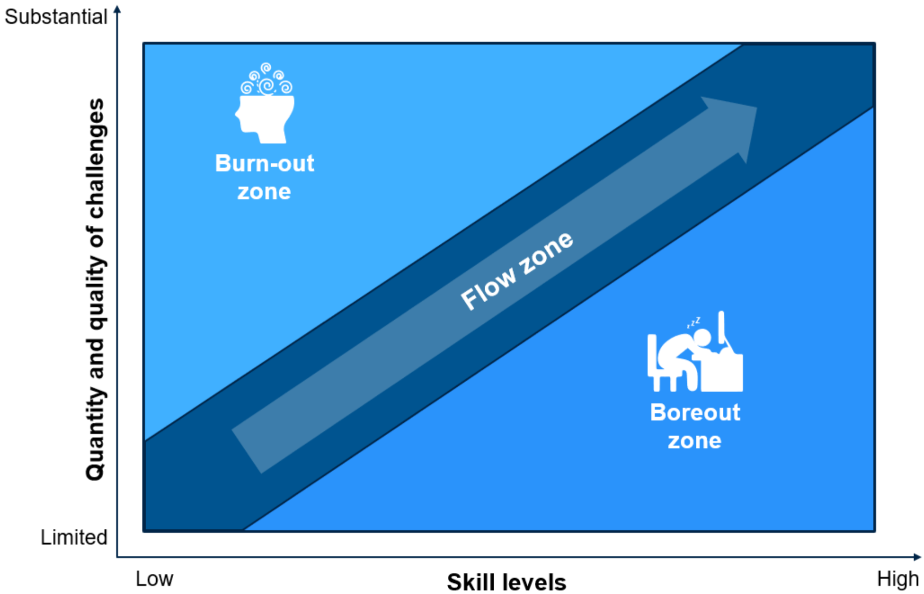

Figure 9: Mapping One's Skill Levels with Encountered Challenges

Embracing Imperfections

Humanistic leadership extends beyond positive psychology and traditional management, embracing even imperfect solutions or short-term progress. Many leaders fall victim to the perfection trap. They expect perfection when it comes to their plans and will not move until they have thoroughly understood, planned, and managed it all from a governance perspective. As a consequence, they tend to shy away from experimentation. They miss opportunities to impact their environment positively within their circle of influence and control. They shy away from creating a so-called pocket of excellence even if they do not have organization-wide or even ecosystem-wide total control over everything and everyone.

The motto of humanistic leadership is that it is better to be done than perfect. It is better to launch an initiative that actually improves the workplace and gives hope for a better future than to dream about what should be the case but never get started. As the following figure illustrates, a significant amount of learning will occur while designing initial projects and initiatives, i.e., through learning by doing. There are unknowns to be detected while experimenting, and this crucial learning will not occur until one gets started with humanistic leadership initiatives. Humanistic leadership has an emerging nature if the environment does not allow for more carefully planned grand approaches that are holistically detailed. Ideally, 70% of learning occurs while being on the job and in humanistic leadership projects. Simultaneously, serving in a development role and helping others also advances the accumulation of practical wisdom (phronesis). This necessitates critical reflection on what advice to pass on, how to distil the essence of successful humanistic project leadership and management, and it ensures that the humanistic way of thinking spreads beyond an isolated individual.

Embracing imperfections can also be interpreted as a deviation from idealized characteristics. Some critiques highlight that positive leadership theories often focus on idealized traits and behaviours, creating unrealistic expectations for leaders. This can alienate those who do not fit the mold and overlook the relational and situational aspects of leadership. The latter may require different traits, even some that one would not expect at first.

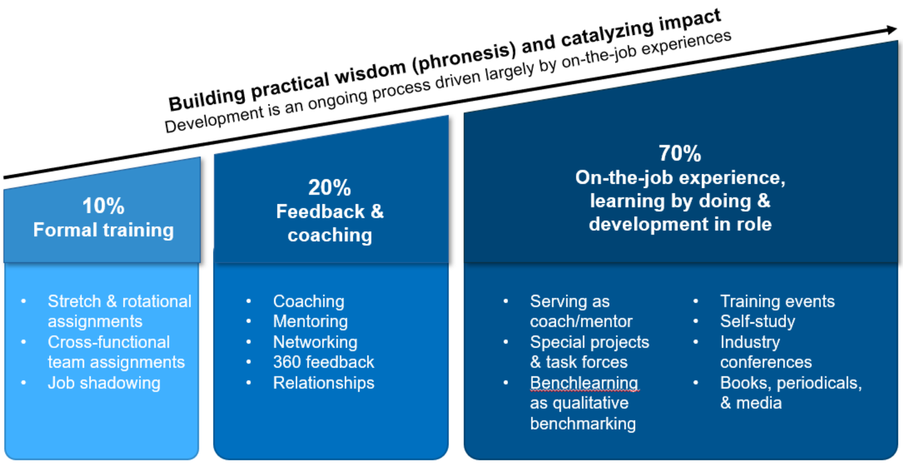

Figure 10: Suggested Mix of Learning Sources – Building Practical Wisdom Through Learning by Doing

Acknowledging Complexity in Organizations and People

Management guru and former dean of the Executive School at the University of St. Gallen, Professor Gomez, from the University of St. Gallen, began to critique traditional leadership and management models, as well as models in general. He argued that they are no longer effective in addressing the complexities of modern organizations and societies. His perspective stems from the belief that these models often oversimplify the dynamic interplay between organizations, their environments, and the people within them. Gomez emphasizes that organizations operate in environments that are constantly changing, requiring adaptive and integrative approaches rather than rigid frameworks.

He advocates for a shift toward models that prioritize human relationships and interactions. Traditional models often focus on processes and structures, neglecting the importance of human dynamics and the role of individuals in driving organizational success. Gomez highlights the need for leadership that is flexible and context-sensitive. Static management models do not adequately address the diverse challenges leaders face in different situations, making them less effective in practice. He argues for the inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives in decision-making processes. Traditional models often focus on hierarchical decision-making, which can alienate key contributors and limit innovation. Gomez calls for leadership and management approaches that incorporate sustainability and ethical considerations. He believes that traditional models often prioritize short-term gains over long-term impact, a trend that is increasingly problematic in today's globalized world. He promotes systemic thinking as a way to understand and manage organizations. This involves viewing organizations as complex systems with interdependent parts rather than isolated entities.

It is in this line of thinking that humanistic management does not want to block out complexity but integrate it. Higher adaptability quotients allow leaders to cope with changes. Higher AQs will enable leaders to do so more effectively, which in turn requires efforts to influence and increase our adaptability.

Gomez's call for more situational and context-specific insights can be easily complied with when focusing on strengths. When measured, honed, and communicated transparently, they ensure a fit in a given situation. Any misfit would entail rearranging talents, workflows, and learning and development programs.

Investigating Sound Measurement Approaches – Not Downplaying Them

The effectiveness of positive leadership is often considered difficult to measure, as many of its outcomes, such as employee happiness or engagement, are subjective in the perception of some experts and influenced by external factors.

According to Gomez, leadership and management cannot be value-free. This is where humanistic leadership simplifies the language and focuses on human dignity. Gomez rightly argues that system thinking is highly beneficial. Humanistic leadership acknowledges inherent challenges. It argues in favour of a separate analysis of performance, humanistic outcomes, and corporate results.

A clear commitment to human dignity from a values and ethics perspective, paired with an integration of dignity in the form of dialogues from a process ethics perspective, and honing dignity from a utilitarian, outcome ethics perspective can indicate whether humanistic leaders perform well. Humanistic outcomes include aspects such as engagement, stress, anxiety, belonging, loneliness, or anger that improve. In contrast, corporate results may be contingent on numerous other factors, such as macroeconomic factors like COVID or war, industry-level factors like competition, firm-specific aspects like product life cycles, or other factors like the impatience of capital markets and owner expectations. Humanistic leadership clarifies what to prioritize even in more complex settings. It provides one, and only one, true North Star.

There are several additional practical factors to consider, which can complicate the analysis of outcomes. One malpractice often encountered is the organization of staff surveys with the help of external consultants, which then manipulate the data. Suddenly, negative comments disappear, and averages are manipulated to please the top management of the client company and work towards securing future follow-up projects. It is rare to see well-implemented staff surveys that accurately depict reality and are free from attempts to manipulate the client. Simultaneously, it is equally rare not to see some manipulative behaviour among survey participants unless the process is managed very well. Staff members may give too positive answers out of fear of retaliation. They may manipulate the data entry to render a sound analysis more difficult and the data quality poorer – unless, as mentioned, the entire process, including leadership communication, gets optimized.

Remaining in the Sphere of the Practicing Leader and Providing Actionable Insights

The fields of philosophy, ethics, and business ethics are rich. Practitioners often struggle with the rich diversity of schools of thought and sophisticated semantics. Dealing with Deontology, the various approaches and discussions within consequentialism that have emerged over the centuries, as well as nonmaleficence and moral relativism in cultures worldwide, can keep the practicing leader busy for a considerable amount of time. Having clarified above that human dignity is a guiding North Star, it is equally essential to remain conceptually and semantically within the workspace of the practicing leader. Humanistic leadership aspires to have the complexity in the right place. The emphasis is only initially on inspiring how to dare more in terms of leadership and human dignity. Most importantly, humanistic leadership is about enabling progress, showing the way, clarifying better ways, and anticipating traps. Humanistic leadership is all about actionable knowledge, not endless intellectual debates on the mere normative level.

Humanism as a Clear End of Conducting Business, not a Mere Means

Some scholars point out that positive leadership can be misused. Positive leadership can be used manipulatively, where leaders exploit the guise of positivity to suppress dissent or enforce conformity rather than genuinely fostering a supportive environment. This reflects a constellation in which positive leadership serves as a mere means to an end. However, humanistic leadership fosters human dignity, which is not a means to the end of more profits or shareholder value. It is a central end of conducting business. The following overview summarizes the aspects that describe those areas where humanistic leadership corrects, complements, and exceeds positive leadership as it is often understood.

Figure 11: Features of Humanistic Leadership

2.3. Summary of Key Insights – Questions are the Answer

This chapter clarifies how humanistic leadership contributes to the ongoing debate on positive leadership. It is related to traditional positive leadership but fixes several shortcomings of past approaches. Adopting an inquiry-based approach, humanistic leadership raises four crucial questions. All of them will be the focus of the subsequent four chapters.

When interpreting the positioning of humanistic leadership, one notices a significant influence of Hal Gregerson's philosophy, which posits that "questions are the answer."[14] This MIT leadership and executive education expert focuses on the transformative power of asking the right questions to spark creativity and solve complex problems. Gregersen, a leadership expert, emphasizes how curiosity and thoughtful inquiry can lead to innovative solutions in both professional and personal contexts.

The ability to ask insightful, open-ended questions is essential to overcoming challenges and achieving breakthroughs. Asking better questions can challenge assumptions, inspire new perspectives, involve others, empower them, and unlock innovative thinking. As such, humanistic management equally builds on a "questioning mindset," encouraging readers and practicing leaders to cultivate habits of curiosity and to embrace discomfort and uncertainty as part of the problem-solving process.

However, this book not only acknowledges the power of questions but continues to guide with answers as outlined in the following chapters. Chapter 3 focuses on the why question. Chapter 4 addresses the question of who we are as leaders. Chapter 5 continues by revising the question of what great leaders do or ought to do. Chapter 6 addresses the question of how to determine if one is on track.

Chapter 3:
What Purpose does Leadership Fulfil for Us?

3.1. Introduction – Three Aspects of the Leadership Exchange Relationship

This book is not the first to argue how it is to start with the question of what drives leaders. Why bother about leadership? Why engage in leadership activities instead of ducking and taking it easy? While in humanistic leadership, the overall organizational purpose is linked to protecting and fostering human dignity in creative, company-specific ways, there is a second level to address. On the individual level, there must be clarity as well. Here, it is crucial to note that three aspects matter:

1. What is it that an individual wants to give to others as part of the social exchange and engaging in leadership efforts?
2. What is it that an individual aspires to receive from others as part of the social exchange and engaging in leadership efforts?
3. What are deal breakers in social behaviour, i.e., what behaviour would a person never accept as part of the social exchange and engaging in leadership efforts?

Amongst the many leadership experts and thought leaders, it is Simon Sinek's idea of "Start with Why" in particular that is well aligned with humanistic leadership. Sinek's reasoning revolves around the notion that successful individuals and organizations are those that can articulate their core purpose or belief — their "Why" — before focusing on how they do what they do or what they do. His concept is popularized through his book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* and his widely viewed TED Talk. The following sections explore why Sinek advocates for this approach, examining the psychological and practical benefits of beginning with the "Why," its implications for leadership, business strategy, and motivation, and how it can foster innovation and drive long-term success.

At the heart of Sinek's philosophy is the "Golden Circle," a simple but powerful model[15] presented in the following figure that distinguishes three concentric circles representing different layers of communication and behaviour: Why, How, and What.

- **What:** This is the outer circle, representing what a company or individual does. It encompasses the products, services, or roles a person or organization offers to the market or the world.
- **How:** The second circle focuses on how these products or services are delivered, including the processes, strategies, or unique value propositions that differentiate them.
- **Why:** At the core of the Golden Circle lies the "Why" — the central belief, cause, or purpose that inspires an individual or organization to do what they do. This is not about profit or tangible goals; it is about understanding why one exists and what deeper purpose drives them.

According to Sinek, most companies or leaders operate from the outside in, starting with "What" they do and moving inward to "How" they do it, often forgetting to articulate or even understand their "Why." This is true not just for businesses but for individuals as well — many people define themselves by their roles, titles, and actions without connecting these external facets to their deeper purpose or personal values.

However, Sinek argues that the most inspiring and successful leaders and organizations operate from the inside out. They begin by clearly understanding and communicating their "Why" – their purpose – and use that as a foundation for everything they do. This approach not only inspires but also fosters stronger loyalty, trust, and engagement, both internally among employees and externally with customers.

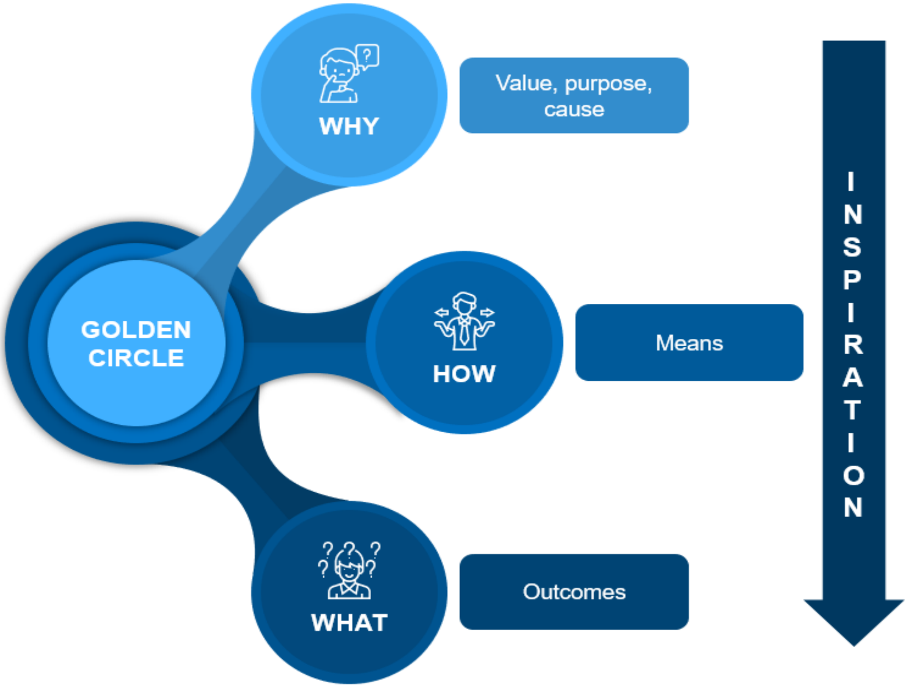

Figure 12: Simon Sinek's Golden Circle Model
Source: Based on Sinek (2009)

Starting with "Why" is a transformative way to approach leadership, business strategy, and personal development. Sinek suggests that when organizations or individuals can articulate their "Why," they can inspire others to rally behind them. People are naturally drawn to leaders or organizations whose purpose resonates with their own beliefs and values. By starting with "Why," a deeper emotional connection is made that drives action, loyalty, and long-term success.

Sinek references the example of Apple, which embodies this principle. Apple is more than a technology company; it is a brand built around challenging the status quo and thinking outside the box. This core purpose — their "Why" — is what inspires customer loyalty, drives innovation, and fosters a strong sense of community. While Apple's competitors might focus on the specifics of what they do (selling computers or smartphones) and how they differentiate themselves (through design or features), Apple focuses on why they do it — to create products that challenge the status quo and empower individuals to think differently.

Similarly, Sinek discusses how leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Steve Jobs had the ability to inspire because they articulated a compelling "Why." King's speeches were not about the specifics of civil rights laws or political strategies but about his vision of equality and a better world. His "Why" inspired millions to take action. Likewise, Steve Jobs didn't focus on selling technology; he focused on empowering individuals through innovation, which ultimately led to Apple's widespread success.

One of the key benefits of starting with "Why" is the creation of trust and loyalty. Sinek explains that people are drawn to organizations or leaders whose values align with their own, resulting in a deeper sense of loyalty that extends beyond transactional relationships. This loyalty is built on the understanding that the organization or leader stands for something meaningful, not just for profit or personal gain.

In the business context, companies that effectively communicate their "why" create a sense of community among their customers and employees. This emotional connection goes beyond a simple product or service; it taps into shared values and beliefs, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. When customers feel like they are supporting a company that stands for something they believe in, they are more likely to return and recommend the brand to others.

This loyalty also extends to employees. When a company's "Why" is clear and authentic, it creates a workplace culture that is aligned with a higher purpose. Employees who understand and believe in the organization's mission are more motivated, engaged, and willing to put in extra effort to achieve shared goals. They feel like they are contributing to something greater than just a paycheck, which enhances job satisfaction and retention.

Effective leadership is another area in which starting with "Why" has a significant impact. Sinek emphasizes that leaders who inspire others are not focused on command and control but on articulating and embodying a clear sense of purpose. These leaders understand that their role is not just to manage tasks or drive results but to inspire and empower others by connecting them to a shared vision.

Leaders who start with "Why" have a clarity and conviction that is contagious. They create an environment where employees, customers, and followers are motivated by a common purpose. Rather than simply following orders or working to meet external demands, individuals become motivated by the vision and values that underpin the organization or cause.

One of the key elements of inspiring leadership, according to Sinek, is the ability to communicate the "Why" in a way that resonates emotionally with others. Leaders who can connect with people on an emotional level are able to inspire greater commitment, passion, and action. In this way, starting with "Why" transforms leadership from a function of authority to a role that inspires and unites people behind a common cause.

Sinek's philosophy also ties into the idea that innovation and long-term success are achieved not by focusing on what or how but by concentrating on why. When a clear sense of purpose drives an organization, it is better equipped to adapt to changing circumstances and innovate in ways that align with its core values.

Sinek argues that companies that begin with "Why" have a natural resilience because they are grounded in a deeper sense of purpose. This enables them to make decisions that align with their values, even in times of uncertainty or disruption. Instead of focusing on short-term profits or external pressures, they prioritize long-term goals that align with their core values and beliefs.

Innovation, in this context, is not just about creating new products or services but about staying true to the original purpose. Companies like Apple and Tesla, for example, have been able to innovate repeatedly because their core "Why" – challenging the status quo and pushing boundaries – guides their actions and decisions.

By staying focused on the "why," organizations can remain authentic and true to their mission, even as they evolve and adapt to new opportunities and challenges. This authenticity, in turn, strengthens their brand, increases customer loyalty, and drives long-term success.

Sinek's ideas are rooted not only in business strategy but also in neuroscience and psychology. He explains that our decision-making processes are influenced by the brain's structure, particularly the limbic brain, which controls emotions and decision-making. The limbic brain is responsible for feelings like trust, loyalty, and belief, which is why emotional connections are so powerful in driving behaviour.

When we make decisions, we often do so based on emotions, even if we rationalize them afterward with facts and logic. Sinek suggests that the "Why" connects with this part of the brain, while the "How" and "What" appeal to our more logical, rational thinking. When organizations or leaders focus on the "Why," they are speaking directly to people's emotions, creating a stronger and more lasting bond.

This insight helps explain why some companies are able to inspire incredible loyalty, even in competitive markets. People are drawn to brands and leaders that speak to their emotions and values, not just their rational needs. By starting with "Why," organizations tap into the deeper motivations that drive human behaviour.

In summary, Simon Sinek's "Start with Why" concept challenges the conventional approach of focusing on what or how and instead encourages individuals and organizations to start with their core purpose, their "Why." This philosophy is not just about articulating a mission statement but about understanding and communicating the deeper values that drive action and decision-making. By starting with "Why," organizations and leaders can inspire greater loyalty, trust, and commitment from employees, customers, and followers. This approach also fosters innovation, long-term success, and resilience by grounding decisions in a clear sense of purpose. Ultimately, Sinek's concept provides a blueprint for effective leadership, personal fulfilment, and sustainable success in an increasingly complex and competitive world.

Within humanistic leadership, the why matters, and as outlined above, it is conceptualized as an exchange relationship. Humans are social beings. When interacting with others, they want to give and get something. Equally, they want to operate with norms that regulate social behaviour. Therefore, a third question has been added to the list above. It inquires what behaviour an individual would not accept and, therefore, halt social processes. The next section presents and discusses a way to find answers to the three pertinent questions of what to give, what to get, and what to watch out for when interacting socially and leading others.

3.2. Finding Out Why We Aspire to Become Leaders – the Power of Images

This section elaborates on the use of imagery exercises in leadership learning and development, as well as in coaching, breaking it down into its conceptual background, process, psychological underpinnings, real-world applications, and an explanation of why it resonates so deeply with people.

Imagery exercises can be an integral part of learning and coaching methodologies that aim to unlock personal motives, needs, and aspirations. By engaging participants with visual stimuli, these exercises transcend verbal communication to tap into the deeper layers of human consciousness. The simplicity of presenting images to individuals belies the profound insights that can emerge, making this technique a favourite among coaches, therapists, and facilitators. This exploration will delve into the nuances of how these exercises are designed and executed, why they work so effectively, and their broader applications in personal and professional development.

Conceptual Foundation of Imagery

Human beings are inherently visual creatures. Even before we could communicate through words, our ancestors relied on images – such as paintings on cave walls – to convey complex stories, ideas, and emotions. Today, this primal connection to imagery still persists, as visual experiences often evoke feelings and memories more potently than words ever could.

Imagery exercises in coaching leverage this innate human trait. They operate on the premise that images can act as mirrors, reflecting the inner world of an individual. Unlike words, which are filtered through layers of logic and self-consciousness, images have a direct path to the subconscious. This directness makes them an effective medium for self-reflection and exploration. In the context of coaching, imagery is used as a tool to:

- Identify core values and aspirations.
- Unearth hidden motives, desires, and fears.
- Facilitate communication in cases where words fall short.
- Foster personal growth by encouraging introspection.

Process of an Imagery Exercise

The structure of an imagery exercise is simple yet profoundly impactful. It does not require many resources, not even much time. Below is a typical step-by-step process:

Step 1: **Preparation**

- Either an individual, the program faculty as part of an executive education program, or a leadership coach curates a diverse set of images tailored to the goals of the exercise. These images may include abstract art, nature scenes, depictions of relationships, symbols of achievement, or ambiguous visuals designed to provoke thought.

- The environment is prepared to ensure a comfortable and nonjudgmental setting, allowing participants to feel at ease.

Step 2: **Image Selection**

- Participants are presented with the images and invited to browse through them. The process is usually open-ended, allowing individuals to take their time. Participants ought to select one, two, or more images that "speak to them" regarding the three questions outlined above: What do you want to give to others as part of the leadership efforts? What is it that you want to get from others? What is unacceptable behaviour which would cause you to pull the plug, intervene heavily, and insist on correction?
- The instruction is to select images that resonate emotionally, intellectually, or instinctively – without overthinking.

Step 3: **Reflection**

- Once the selection is complete, participants are encouraged to reflect on their choices. Questions like "Why did this image speak to you?" or "What does this image symbolize in your leadership journey and maybe life overall?" guide the process.
- Participants may write down their thoughts or share them with the program faculty or coach. If done in a group setting, it will be very interesting to note how different the answers could be.

Step 4: **Deeper Analysis**

- The participants continue their reflection. The program faculty and coach can facilitate a dialogue to explore the deeper meanings behind the choices. This phase often uncovers themes related to personal values, unmet needs, or aspirations.
- Patterns in the selections can also provide insights. For instance, an individual repeatedly drawn to images of open landscapes might be

seeking freedom or escape.

Step 5: Integration

- The insights gained are integrated into the broader context. Once participants are clear why they are in the leadership game, any subsequent insight on how to lead will merely help them to achieve what they are after in the social exchange. The motto is that when the why is clear, the how is easy. Actionable steps can then follow based on the participant's newfound self-awareness. This book will embrace action steps in the next chapters.

The Psychological Underpinnings: Why Imagery Works

The efficacy of imagery exercises can be attributed to several psychological principles:

- Engaging the subconscious: Images bypass the logical filters of the conscious mind, allowing them to tap directly into the subconscious. This is where our deepest desires, fears, and values reside.

- Facilitating emotional connection: Visual stimuli are known to evoke emotional responses quickly and powerfully. These emotions serve as cues, indicating the aspects of life that hold personal significance.

- Circumventing verbal limitations: Words are sometimes insufficient to express complex or deeply personal feelings. Imagery offers an alternative, allowing individuals to articulate themselves in a nonverbal yet meaningful way.

- The projection mechanism: Psychologists often reference the concept of projection, where individuals attribute their inner experiences to external objects. In the context of imagery exercises, this means participants project their emotions, thoughts, and desires onto the images they choose.

- Neurobiological factors: Research in neuroscience suggests that visual processing engages multiple areas of the brain, fostering a holistic and integrative experience. This could explain why imagery exercises often lead to profound insights.

- The activation leverage: By conducting this exercise, participants become active. They are not merely lectured to or told what to think, which would keep them in a passive state. Active participation engages, gives participants a sense of shared control over what is happening, it acknowledges that participants love to have agency over what is being done to them, and normally, participants welcome opportunities to learn about themselves and express themselves.

Imagery exercises have found widespread application across various domains. In personal development and leadership coaching, they help individuals gain clarity about their life goals, values, and motivations. The exercises facilitate a clarification of what leader one aspires to be and why. Equally, it helps explore career paths by identifying what "speaks" to an individual through visual themes. Imagery exercises help leaders understand their leadership drives and styles, identify their strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement. Implementing the steps outlined above encourages self-reflection to align personal values with organizational goals.

The value of imagery exercises is not limited to individual leaders. Teams can also benefit from introspection and transparency. As part of team-building interventions, imagery exercises facilitate team bonding by exploring shared values or collective aspirations through group imagery exercises. This can support the identification of potential sources of conflict by understanding individual team members' needs and motives.

Therapy and counselling have also adopted these exercises. Imagery interventions are often used in psychotherapy to address issues like anxiety, trauma, or depression. Visuals can evoke memories and emotions that are pivotal for therapeutic breakthroughs. This is more relevant than a corporate leader might initially think. Chapter 1 of this book outlined how crucial it may well be to view a leader as a healer. This does not mean leaders ought to pursue ten years of psychology studies and clinical therapy training. Yet, the question arises of how one can develop a minimum of insights to understand colleagues, what drives and worries them, and how to provide holistic service beyond the provision of a salary.

Once leaders gain a profound understanding of how a person ticks and a conducive work environment is established, there are positive consequences for the rest of the organization. It all starts with imagery exercises, which can be used to unlock creativity and foster innovative thinking.

Consider a scenario where a next-generation high-potential individual is eagerly pursuing a leadership role but is unable to articulate why. He or she cannot articulate why and when working in a leadership role would actually be fulfilling. During the imagery exercise, the individual selects an image of a bustling marketplace. When asked why, this individual explains that the market represents energy, creativity, and opportunities for connection. Imagery exercises can reveal whether it is about shining in front of others, being acknowledged for brilliance, or feeling a sense of loneliness. Once it is clear what an individual is after, subsequent leadership knowledge can help achieve it.

Another example could involve a team-building session where members choose images that symbolize their vision for the team. Imagery can help clarify what winning is. The resulting discussion helps uncover shared goals and potential areas of conflict, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration.

The success of imagery exercises lies in their universality and adaptability. Images transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, making them accessible to people from all walks of life. Moreover, the open-ended nature of the exercise allows individuals to bring their unique perspectives and experiences into the process, ensuring that the insights gained are deeply personal and meaningful.

3.3. Summary of Key Insights – If the Why is Clear, the How is Easy

This chapter outlined just how important it is to start with why. If the why is clear, the how is easy. The chapter introduced and discussed a method for uncovering motives and needs that is likely to be more revealing than mere conversations.

Imagery exercises are more than just a tool – they are a gateway to the inner world of human thoughts and emotions. By leveraging the power of visual stimuli, these exercises empower individuals to uncover their true motives, needs, and aspirations. Whether used in personal development, leadership coaching, therapy, or team building, the impact of imagery exercises is profound and far-reaching.

By engaging the subconscious, fostering emotional connection, and bypassing verbal limitations, imagery exercises enable transformative insights that can lead to lasting change. They remind us of the adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words" – and in the context of coaching, perhaps even more.

During the debriefing of a recent executive education seminar for leaders, a participant shared his appreciation of this exercise, using a different set of semantics and analogies to explain why he thought it worked well. He said it is like heating up the oven before sticking it in the turkey. In a way, he is right. As the stove needs to be ready for the turkey, the leader, as a learner, should be prepared to acquire actionable knowledge. Having clarified the why will ensure readiness for the what and the how. All of the tools available to leaders then help secure what one is after.

Chapter 4:
Who are We as Leaders? An Adaptability-Based Inquiry

4.1. Introduction – Insights from Ricardo Semler

This brief case study summarizes Ricardo Semler's leadership journey, including a key moment of truth and the humanistic leadership solution he created.[16] His own interpretation centers on workplace democracy, employee autonomy, and breaking away from traditional management norms. His approach emphasizes trust, flexibility, and self-management, creating environments that promote well-being, engagement, and creativity. What makes this case even more interesting and truly relevant for this chapter is his ability to completely reinvent himself, showing tremendous adaptability.

The Origins of Semco

At a very young age of 21, Ricardo took over Semco, a Brazilian manufacturing company founded by his father, Antonio Semler, during a period of economic downturn in the 1980s. As a young leader, Ricardo initially adopted a modernizing yet traditional leadership style, trying to copy, please, and honour his father, implementing rigorous controls and statistical methods to turn the company around.

While this approach was successful in improving efficiency and profitability, it created stress, dissatisfaction, and alienation among employees, as well as serious health challenges for Ricardo himself. His doctor attested to a severe burnout, which triggered massive changes in his mindset and leadership behaviour.

Transformative Leadership at Semco

In 1984, Semler began radically transforming Semco's culture by empowering employees and dismantling traditional hierarchical structures:

- **Self-Management:** Employees were given control over tasks, decisions, and even hiring new colleagues.
- **Transparency:** Ricardo abolished systems of distrust, such as expense reports and timecard checks, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.
- **Flexible Working Conditions:** Employees were allowed to set their own schedules, wear casual attire, and operate on trust-based policies.
- **Profit-Sharing:** Ricardo introduced profit-sharing programs designed and controlled by employees.
- **Evaluation System:** Employees evaluate their managers, ensuring accountability and performance improvement.

The following figure juxtaposes the leadership style of the early and the late Ricardo. These changes resulted in higher employee engagement, productivity, and long-term growth for Semco. The company's profits soared, and its innovative practices gained global recognition.

Crisis and Co-Management in the 1990s

During Brazil's economic crash in the 1990s, Semco faced declining sales and rising unemployment. Ricardo implemented experimental co-management practices, such as workers taking pay cuts while also jointly running business operations. This approach not only helped the company survive but also reinforced its employee-driven ethos, demonstrating resilience in challenging times.

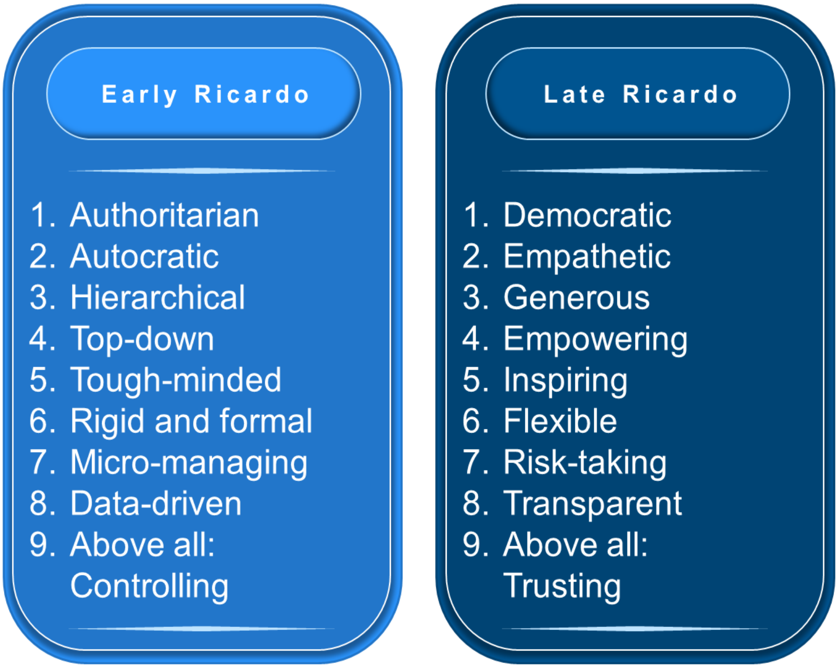

Figure 13: Comparison of the Leadership Styles of the Early and the Late Ricardo

Accomplishments up to Today

Ricardo Semler's model demonstrated that democratic and employee-centric leadership can drive sustainable success. Semco's growth persisted even after Ricardo stepped down as CEO in 1999, highlighting the strength of the workplace culture he built. His practices have inspired leaders worldwide and challenged the assumptions of traditional management models.

The Semco Group, under Ricardo Semler's leadership, evolved into a federation of around 10 companies spanning industries such as manufacturing, professional services, and high-tech software. The group is known for its radical workplace democracy and innovative management practices, which have allowed it to thrive even in challenging economic conditions. Semco's unique approach includes self-management, profit-sharing, and employee-driven decision-making, which have contributed to its sustained growth and adaptability.

Semco continues to operate successfully, maintaining its democratic structure and innovative culture. The group has diversified its operations, with its original industrial machine unit still active alongside ventures in other sectors. Semco's ability to adapt and innovate has kept it resilient, with an average annual growth rate of 27% over nearly three decades. Its employee turnover remains remarkably low, and it has avoided layoffs and strikes for over 20 years.

Ricardo Semler stepped down as CEO of Semco in 1999 but remains its main shareholder. He has since focused on applying the Semco philosophy to other ventures and initiatives:

1. **Lumiar Schools:** Semler founded these innovative schools in Brazil, which emphasize student-driven learning and democratic decision-making. The schools aim to revolutionize education by making students the center of the learning process.

2. **Botanique Hotel*:** A luxury eco-resort in Brazil, co-founded by Semler, operates on democratic principles, with employees involved in decision-making and flexible roles.

3. **Semco Style Institute:** Semler established this institute to promote his management philosophy globally. It provides training and consulting to organizations seeking to adopt people-centric and democratic practices.

4. **Environmental and Social Initiatives:** Semler has been involved in NGOs like SOS Mata Atlântica, Brazil's leading environmental organization, and other projects aimed at sustainability and social impact.

5. **Investments:** He is a founding shareholder of Tarpon Investments, a public company managing billions in assets, which operates according to Semco's principles.

Ricardo Semler continues to advocate for workplace democracy and innovative management, inspiring leaders worldwide. His work demonstrates that empowering employees and fostering trust can lead to both personal fulfillment and organizational success.

Discussion of the Ricardo Semler Case

Ricardo Semler has built an empire worth billion. He gained global fame through his leadership awards, publications in the Harvard Business Review and other prestigious outlets, and keynote speeches. He is not only a Brazilian but also an international icon in the field of leadership. Yet, he encountered substantial adversity at the very beginning of this success story. As the following figure summarizes, there were both forces for and against change. There were factors at both the personal and organizational levels. Few 21-year-olds can be expected to cope with such a situation adequately. It can easily overwhelm – and it did so for young Ricardo.

The changes that then occurred were interesting, as they were not necessarily in line with Brazil's national culture. As the following figure outlines, the Brazilian national culture has a specific profile based on established dimensions. Based on culture guru Geert Hofstede's[17] dimensions, as depicted in the image below, Brazil's national culture as the software of minds can be described as follows. Thereby, scores are deemed higher if above 50:

- **Power distance (69):** Brazil has a relatively high score, indicating that hierarchical structures are widely accepted. People tend to respect authority and expect inequalities in power distribution within organizations and society. Ricardo Semler's leadership innovation does not align with this cultural dimension, as it heavily relies on decentralization and empowerment.
- **Individualism (36):** Brazil scores low on individualism, reflecting a collectivist culture. Relationships, family, and group loyalty are prioritized over individual achievements, fostering strong social

bonds. Ricardo Semler's leadership innovation does not necessarily comply with this cultural dimension as it enables involvement of individuals in fixing solutions instead of a solution imposed by the collective.

- **Motivation Toward Achievement and Success (49):** This dimension, also known as masculinity, shows a moderate score. Brazilians value both competitiveness and a high quality of life, striking a balance between ambition and care for others.
- **Uncertainty Avoidance (76):** Brazil's high score suggests a preference for structured environments, clear rules, and minimizing ambiguity. This reflects a cultural tendency to avoid risks and embrace stability. Ricardo Semler's leadership innovation runs counter to the clarity in terms of pay and authority structures that Brazilians would expect to be in place, making them feel more comfortable.
- **Long-Term Orientation (28):** A low score indicates a focus on traditions and short-term results rather than long-term planning or perseverance.
- **Indulgence (59):** Brazil's relatively high indulgence score underscores a culture that prioritizes enjoyment, leisure, and the gratification of desires, fostering a vibrant and celebratory lifestyle. Instead, Ricardo Semler's solutions create a meritocracy, which pulls individuals in at work, leaving less time for non-work-related indulgences.

Furthermore, these insights and statistics are worth mentioning.

- 90% of individuals in a large-scale study indicated they would rather want to work for the late Ricardo.
- Yet, when prompted what leadership style they would adopt and exert once in power, 90% indicated they would rather behave like the early Ricardo.

Figure 14: Overview of the National Culture of Brazil
Source: www.theculturefactor.com

This indicates that leadership expectations run deep. Business schools have not upgraded their content sufficiently to inspire better and more humanistic behaviours.

What triggered the change was severe burnout, although he could also bring about massive change. His adaptability was extraordinary. It triggered critical reflections on how to better understand his colleagues and create value within his organization. He conceived a truly humanistic approach, allowing individuals to gain a sense of co-ownership. He engaged his staff. He never rested on his laurels and continued to improve his approach to inclusively create value incrementally. He inspired other leaders globally. However, the crucial question is whether next-generation leaders must first experience burnout to embark on change – or if this can be done proactively.

What if a thoughtful discussion of a leader's adaptability can take place proactively? Self-awareness can be extremely helpful when addressing the question of who we are as leaders. The next section outlines what adaptability entails and how to measure it.

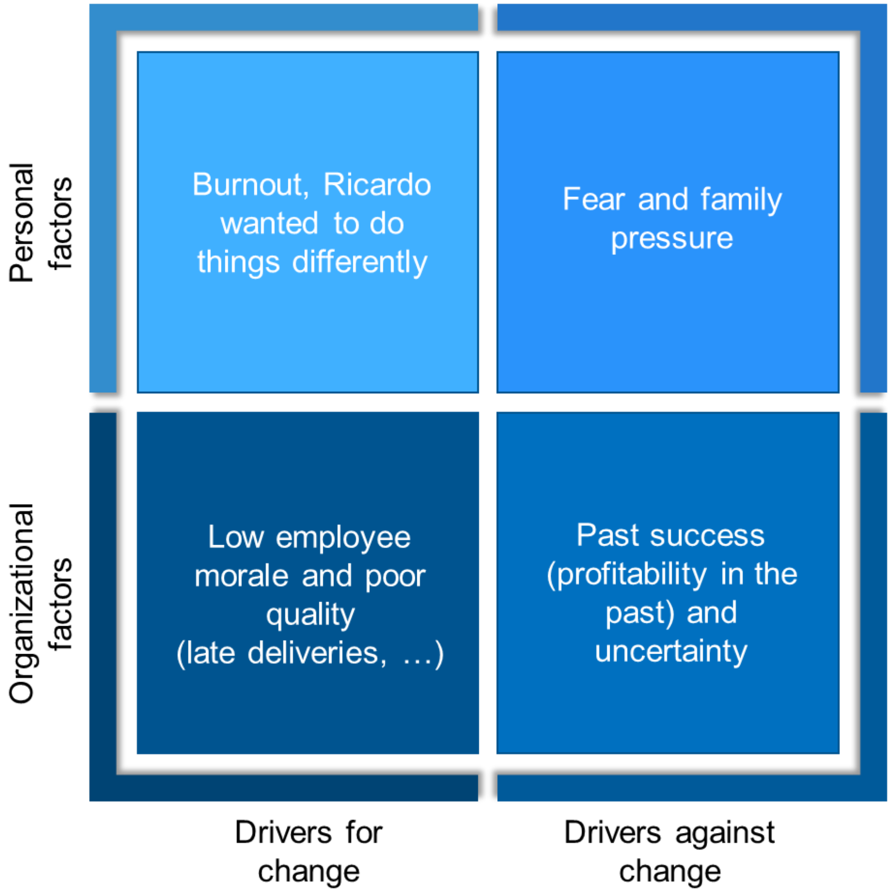

Figure 15: Forces Impacting Ricardo Semler in the Early Days

4.2. Elements of the AQai A.C.E. Model of Adaptation

Adaptability is something that everyone has at least a rudimentary understanding of. Scientifically, Martin et al. (2012) define adaptability as "individuals' capacity to constructively regulate psycho-behavioural functions in response to new, changing, and/or uncertain circumstances, conditions, and situations" (Martin, Nejad, Colmar, & Liem, 2012)[18]. Pulakos et al. (2000) describe adaptability as "the ability to effectively adjust to changing work environments, tasks, and interpersonal demands" (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000)[19]. Britannica explains adaptability in biology as "the process by which a species becomes fitted to its environment; it is the result of natural selection acting upon heritable variation over several generations" (Gittleman, 2025)[20].

Adaptability was absolutely crucial for Ricardo Semler to survive in his role as company leader and beyond. Yet, its relevance is not limited to Brazil and Semler's setting. Adaptability is more vital today than ever before because of the rapidly changing landscape of modern life. Technology evolves at lightning speed, global events shape markets and cultures in unforeseen ways, and organizations face constant demands to innovate and stay competitive. Here are some key reasons why adaptability matters:

1. **Navigating Uncertainty:** The world is becoming increasingly unpredictable, with economic fluctuations and global challenges such as pandemics and climate change. Adaptability helps individuals and businesses respond effectively to unforeseen circumstances.

2. **Thriving in the Digital Age:** The rise of automation, AI, and digital technologies means that roles and industries are undergoing continuous transformation. Staying adaptable enables individuals to acquire new skills and adopt innovative tools, thereby remaining relevant.

3. **Fostering Resilience:** Being adaptable enables people to recover quickly from setbacks, whether personal, professional, or societal. Resilience is crucial for maintaining mental well-being and progress in turbulent times.

4. **Embracing Diversity and Globalization or Deglobalization:** Exposure to diverse cultures, perspectives, and global networks calls for openness and flexibility. Adaptability allows individuals to collaborate effectively across borders and navigate cultural differences with ease. Over the last years, there were moments of deglobalization as well. Global supply chains got shaken up due to COVID, wars and sanctions, and other national policies.

5. **Personal Growth:** Adaptability fuels lifelong learning and self-improvement, encouraging individuals to step out of their comfort zones, explore new opportunities, and expand their horizons.

Ultimately, adaptability is a cornerstone for success in a world where the only constant is change. It empowers people to turn challenges into opportunities and to build a future where they can thrive. Therefore, a crucial question within humanistic leadership is: Who are we as leaders in terms of adaptability? The following section introduces a state-of-the-art model for further discussions.

The A.C.E. Model of Adaptability by AQai

Adaptability has emerged as a crucial skill in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world. But we need a shared understanding of what it includes and what is out of scope. We would also benefit from opportunities to measure it. AQai, a research and data-driven organization, has proposed the A.C.E. (Ability, Character, Environment) Model of Adaptability, providing a structured framework (also visualized below) for understanding and enhancing adaptability. The following sections explore the model's components, significance, and practical applications. The A.C.E. Model is built upon three core pillars:

1. *Ability* – How and to what degree do individuals adapt?
2. *Character* – Who adapts and why?
3. *Environment* – When does someone adapt, and to what degree?

Each of these dimensions comprises specific traits and factors that influence adaptability. The subsequent sections detail them step by step.

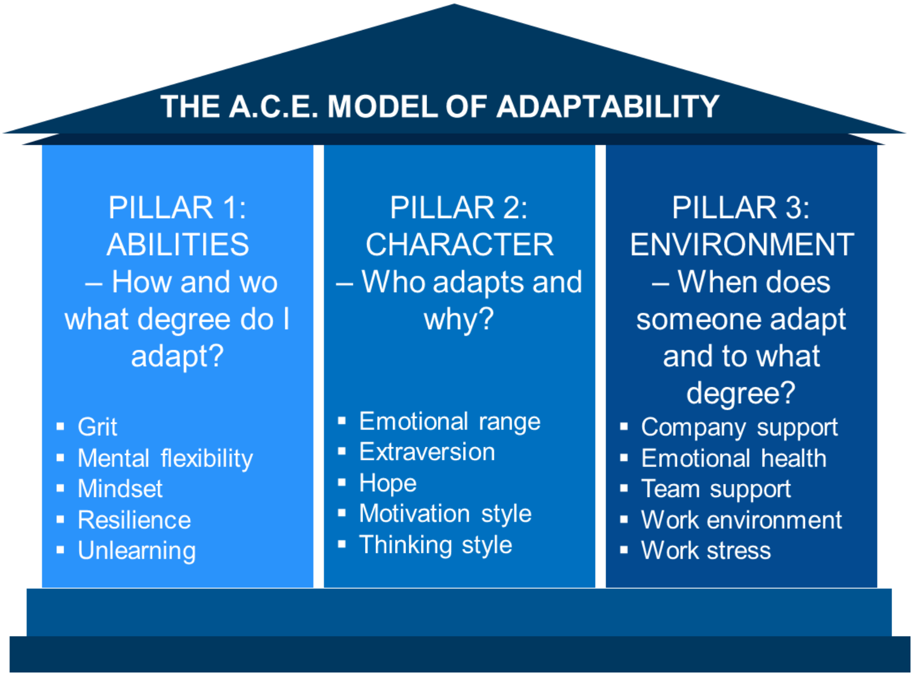

Figure 16: A Holistic Framework for Adaptability Suggested by AQai
Source: AQai.io

4.3. The Ability Dimension of Adaptability

Ability refers to the mechanics of adaptation. It is about an individual's capacity to learn, evolve, and respond effectively to change. It is composed of five key sub-factors:

Growth Mindset

It refers to the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and learning. A growth mindset significantly enhances adaptability because it encourages openness to learning, resilience in the face of challenges, and a proactive approach to change. A strong link exists between a growth mindset and adaptability. People with a growth mindset believe that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and learning.

This perspective makes them more likely to seek out new experiences, skills, and knowledge, which are crucial for adapting to evolving situations. A growth mindset fosters the view that failures are opportunities for growth rather than permanent obstacles. This resilience helps individuals recover quickly, analyze setbacks constructively, and adjust their strategies to move forward effectively. Those with a growth mindset are more likely to see change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

They approach new challenges with curiosity and a willingness to adapt their behaviours and attitudes as needed. A belief in one's ability to improve and adjust reinforces confidence when facing uncertainty. This self-assurance enables individuals to tackle unfamiliar situations head-on, maintaining focus and optimism. A growth mindset nurtures the desire for lifelong learning and self-improvement.

This commitment to personal development is essential for remaining adaptable in a world where change is the only constant. By fostering a growth mindset, individuals can develop the skills and mental frameworks necessary to navigate complex and ever-changing environments.

Mental Flexibility

It addresses the ability to shift thinking, consider alternative perspectives, and approach challenges with creativity. Mental flexibility and adaptability are closely intertwined, as both involve the capacity to respond effectively to change, uncertainty, and new challenges.

Mental flexibility involves the ability to see situations from different viewpoints, which enhances adaptability by allowing individuals to consider alternative approaches and solutions when faced with novel or shifting circumstances. Adaptability requires quick and effective problem-solving skills, which are strengthened by mental flexibility.

A flexible mind can pivot between ideas, think creatively, and adjust strategies to meet changing demands. Mental flexibility helps individuals break free from rigid thinking patterns, making it easier to unlearn outdated habits or beliefs – an essential aspect of adaptability. It fosters openness to change and innovation.

Both mental flexibility and adaptability contribute to emotional resilience. A flexible mindset allows people to reinterpret challenges as opportunities, stay composed under pressure, and adapt their behaviour to maintain well-being. Mental flexibility supports continuous learning by encouraging curiosity and openness.

This drive for self-improvement is central to adaptability, as it enables individuals to acquire new skills and thrive in an ever-changing environment. Ultimately, mental flexibility acts as a foundation for adaptability, providing the cognitive tools necessary to navigate complexity and change with ease.

Mindset

It refers to the general outlook that change and adaptation will result in positive outcomes rather than negative ones. A positive outlook reduces the fear of the unknown, making individuals more likely to approach new situations with curiosity and enthusiasm rather than resistance.

Believing that adaptation can bring positive outcomes fosters a "can-do" attitude, encouraging proactive problem-solving and creative thinking when facing challenges. Optimism acts as a buffer against stress and setbacks, allowing individuals to bounce back quickly and maintain their focus on finding solutions, rather than dwelling on obstacles. A positive mindset reinforces the idea that change provides opportunities for improvement, driving individuals to seek new knowledge and skills to meet evolving demands. Positive thinkers are better at managing emotions during uncertainty, enabling them to stay composed and make sound decisions even in high-pressure situations.

By focusing on potential benefits rather than risks, a positive mindset builds confidence in one's ability to adapt successfully, creating a self-fulfilling cycle of success. In essence, a positive attitude helps shift the perception of change from something to be feared into an opportunity for growth, thriving, and success. This shift in perspective is a cornerstone of adaptability, particularly in today's rapidly changing world.

Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to recover from setbacks, failures, or stress. Resilience plays a pivotal role in supporting adaptability by equipping individuals with the emotional, mental, and behavioural strength needed to navigate change effectively. Resilient individuals can bounce back quickly after failures, using these experiences as opportunities to learn and improve.

This ability to recover fosters a mindset that embraces adaptation rather than resisting it. Resilience enables people to remain calm and composed during stressful or uncertain situations, allowing them to think clearly and make informed decisions while adapting to new circumstances.

By managing emotions effectively, resilient individuals can avoid becoming overwhelmed by change. This emotional stability allows them to approach adaptation with a constructive and solutions-focused perspective. Resilient people often view obstacles as chances for growth rather than insurmountable problems. This positive framing is essential for adaptability as it encourages proactive engagement with change.

Resilience ensures that individuals can sustain their effort and determination even when adaptation requires prolonged effort or persistence in the face of repeated challenges. A resilient mindset instills confidence in one's ability to navigate change successfully, reinforcing a belief that they can handle whatever comes their way. In essence, resilience serves as the emotional and psychological foundation that enables individuals to remain flexible, proactive, and optimistic in the face of change.

Unlearning

It addresses the willingness to let go of outdated knowledge and behaviours to embrace new methods. Unlearning is a crucial component of adaptability, as it enables individuals to break free from ingrained habits and outdated thinking, making room for new and more effective approaches.

Unlearning allows individuals to recognize and discard assumptions or biases that no longer align with current realities. This openness to change enhances adaptability by promoting more informed and adaptable decision-making. By letting go of old methods, unlearning fosters a willingness to experiment with new technologies, processes, or ideas, making it easier to adapt to advancements and changing environments.

Holding onto outdated knowledge or behaviours can create barriers to progress. Unlearning promotes a mindset of continuous improvement, reducing resistance to change and increasing receptiveness to novel approaches. The willingness to unlearn outdated skills is crucial for adapting to shifting professional demands and acquiring new competencies required in today's fast-paced world.

Unlearning outdated interpersonal habits or hierarchical thinking fosters better teamwork and collaboration, as individuals become more adaptable to diverse viewpoints and dynamic group dynamics.

Unlearning encourages a mindset that views change as an opportunity rather than a threat, empowering individuals to adapt more quickly to unexpected challenges. Letting go of the past creates space for self-reflection and transformative learning, enabling individuals to grow and thrive in an ever-evolving world. By mastering the art of unlearning, individuals unlock their potential to adapt effectively and embrace progress in both their personal and professional lives.

4.4. The Character Dimension of Adaptability

Character focuses on the psychological drivers of adaptability, encompassing intrinsic traits that determine how individuals respond to change. It includes five fundamental aspects, as outlined below.

Emotional Regulation

It clarifies how we manage emotions and remain more or less composed under pressure. Understanding our emotional range – from reactive to centered – is highly relevant to adaptability because emotions significantly influence how we respond to change, challenges, and uncertainty.

Recognizing when we're in a reactive state (e.g., stressed, defensive, or overwhelmed) helps us take steps to return to a more centered state, where we can think clearly and respond thoughtfully. Emotional regulation is essential for making sound decisions during times of change. A centered emotional state supports resilience by promoting calmness and stability. This emotional balance allows individuals to recover from setbacks more effectively, a key component of adaptability. Reactivity often leads to impulsive or narrow decision-making. Being centered, on the other hand, fosters a more open and creative approach to problem-solving, which is critical for adapting to new circumstances.

A centered state enables better interpersonal interactions, as it promotes active listening, empathy, and constructive dialogue. This is crucial when adapting to team dynamics or navigating organizational change. Reactive emotions such as fear or frustration can lead to resistance to change. When centered, individuals are more likely to embrace change with curiosity and optimism, making adaptation smoother and more effective.

Understanding emotional states enhances self-awareness, helping individuals identify triggers that may push them into a reactive state. This awareness empowers them to develop strategies for staying centered, even in challenging situations. Ultimately, adaptability requires not just the ability to change behaviours or strategies but also the capacity to manage emotions effectively. By recognizing and shifting between reactive and centered states, individuals can navigate change with greater agility and resilience.

Extraversion Versus Introversion

This distinction refers to how we engage with our environment and seek new experiences, interactions, and relationships. Extroversion and introversion influence adaptability in unique and nuanced ways, as these traits shape how individuals interact with their environments, respond to challenges, and leverage social dynamics during periods of change.

Extroverts are typically energized by social interactions and external stimulation, which can enhance certain aspects of adaptability. Extroverts often have larger social networks, which can provide emotional and practical support during transitions. This network can help them adapt more smoothly to new circumstances. Their comfort in group settings makes extroverts more likely to engage in teamwork, seek feedback, and learn through shared experiences – all of which are valuable for adaptation.

Extroverts tend to be action-oriented and outgoing; qualities that can help them embrace change with enthusiasm and take initiative in unfamiliar situations. Introverts are typically energized by solitude and internal reflection, which fosters a different set of adaptability strengths. Introverts often excel at thoughtful analysis and self-reflection, allowing them to develop well-considered strategies for adapting to change. Their ability to work independently and concentrate deeply can enable introverts to adapt effectively in situations that require sustained effort and focus.

Introverts may prefer to observe and learn before acting, which can be an advantage when navigating new environments or challenges with care. Both extroversion and introversion contribute valuable traits to adaptability, and individuals with a balance of these traits – known as ambiverts – may find themselves particularly well-equipped to adapt across a variety of contexts.

While extroverts may thrive in highly social or dynamic situations, introverts may excel in introspective or solitary environments. Adaptability involves leveraging one's natural traits while developing skills to navigate situations that fall outside one's comfort zone.

Hope

It is about maintaining an optimistic outlook toward change and the future. Hope significantly impacts adaptability by shaping how individuals perceive and respond to challenges. Hope focuses on the belief that positive outcomes are possible, motivating individuals to look ahead and prepare constructively for change. This forward-thinking mindset is essential for effective adaptation. Hope mitigates the anxiety that often accompanies the unknown.

By fostering confidence in the possibility of good outcomes, individuals approach changes with less fear and greater willingness to embrace it. Hope serves as a source of inner strength during challenging transitions, enabling individuals to recover quickly from setbacks and maintain their motivation to adapt and grow. Hope sparks innovation by inspiring individuals to search for solutions and alternative approaches, even in challenging circumstances. This creativity is critical for navigating change successfully. Hope provides the emotional energy to persevere through uncertainty and to engage actively with new opportunities.

This motivation keeps individuals focused and proactive during periods of adaptation. Optimism rooted in hope helps individuals maintain emotional equilibrium, preventing despair or negativity from hindering their ability to adapt effectively. Hope fosters faith in one's ability to navigate change, reinforcing the belief that effort and persistence will lead to positive results. In summary, hope serves as a guiding light, empowering individuals to view change not as a threat but as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Motivation Style

It relates to our understanding of what drives an individual – intrinsic (internal satisfaction) or extrinsic (external rewards). Our motivation styles significantly shape how we approach and adapt to change. People with intrinsic motivation are driven by personal fulfillment, curiosity, or a desire to learn. This fosters adaptability, as they are more likely to embrace change as an opportunity to grow or explore. Internally motivated individuals tend to find satisfaction in overcoming obstacles, which makes them more likely to persist and adapt when faced with difficulties.

The intrinsic joy of problem-solving enhances creative thinking and flexibility, both of which are critical for navigating new or uncertain environments. Intrinsic motivation promotes long-term engagement with change, as it is less dependent on external rewards that might wane or shift. People with extrinsic motivation often adapt effectively when there are clear external incentives, such as promotions, financial rewards, or social recognition.

These external drivers can inspire quick action and focus. External motivators can encourage individuals to adapt in situations where internal drive may be lacking, especially when the stakes are high (e.g., meeting a deadline or achieving recognition). However, adaptability driven by extrinsic motivation might falter if the external rewards are removed or deemed insufficient, potentially reducing long-term flexibility.

The most adaptable individuals often combine intrinsic and extrinsic motivators: Intrinsic motivation provides the emotional resilience and curiosity needed to embrace change willingly and sustain effort over time. Extrinsic motivation offers additional incentives to overcome immediate hurdles or meet specific targets. By understanding and leveraging both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers, individuals can navigate change more effectively and maintain adaptability across various contexts.

Thinking Styles

It is about making sense of this world, the ways we view, categorize, and process information in our work environment. Thinking styles significantly shape our adaptability because they influence how we subjectively perceive and process stimuli, approach problems, and respond to change. Analytical thinkers excel at breaking down complex problems into smaller components and evaluating options in a logical manner. This approach enhances adaptability in situations requiring careful decision-making and structured problem-solving.

Over Reliance on analysis can hinder adaptability in fast-paced or uncertain environments where swift decisions are required. Creative thinkers thrive on generating innovative ideas and exploring unconventional solutions. This flexibility fosters adaptability by allowing them to approach change with originality and openness.

Creative thinkers may struggle to stay grounded in practical constraints, which can hinder adaptability in situations requiring immediate, actionable responses. Critical thinkers question assumptions and evaluate evidence objectively, enabling them to make informed choices in changing circumstances. This scepticism helps them adapt to novel situations by identifying the most viable paths forward. Excessive critical thinking can lead to indecision or resistance to change if too much focus is placed on questioning rather than action.

Systematic thinkers excel at organizing information and following step-by-step processes. This methodical approach can help them adapt effectively to structured or gradual changes. Rigidity in adhering to systems may limit adaptability in unpredictable or chaotic situations requiring spontaneous adjustments.

Intuitive thinkers rely on gut feelings and rapid assessments, which can enhance their adaptability in situations that require quick decisions or creative leaps, even without extensive data. Intuitive decisions may lack thorough consideration, leading to risks in situations that require in-depth analysis.

Practical thinkers focus on solutions that are immediately feasible, which supports adaptability by enabling swift and pragmatic responses to challenges. Overemphasis on practicality may limit long-term adaptability if deeper innovation or exploration is needed. Abstract thinkers excel at understanding broad concepts and envisioning possibilities, which helps them adapt to complex or theoretical changes. Abstract thinkers may struggle to connect ideas to tangible actions, which can reduce their adaptability in hands-on scenarios.

Ultimately, adaptability hinges on the ability to balance and leverage various thinking styles in response to the demands of the situation. Cultivating diverse thinking approaches can help individuals become more agile and effective in navigating change. The AQai A.C.E. model primarily differentiates between detail- and big-picture-oriented thinkers and thinking styles.

4.5. The Environment Dimension of Adaptability

This dimension relates to external influences on adaptability. The environment plays a critical role in shaping adaptability by providing the context in which change occurs. It consists of once more five major components

Company Support

This dimension addresses organizational culture, policies, and leadership that foster adaptability. A culture that values openness, innovation, and continuous learning promotes adaptability by creating an environment where employees feel encouraged to experiment and embrace change. Additionally, when employees feel secure in expressing their ideas and taking risks without fear of criticism, they are more likely to adapt to new methods and contribute to the organization's evolution. A culture of teamwork and shared goals enables employees to support each other during transitions, making adaptation a collective effort rather than an isolated struggle.

Flexible work policies, such as remote work options or adaptable job roles, empower employees to adjust to changing circumstances with greater ease. Policies that encourage professional development, training, and upskilling equip employees with the necessary tools to adapt to new roles, technologies, and market demands. Recognizing and rewarding adaptability through performance evaluations and incentives signals the value the company places on this trait, motivating employees to cultivate it.

Adaptive leaders who embrace change and model flexibility inspire their teams to do the same. Their behaviour sets the tone for how change is perceived and managed within the organization. Transparent and consistent communication from leaders about the reasons for change and its potential benefits helps employees understand and engage with adaptation efforts. Strong leaders delegate authority and trust their teams, fostering a sense of autonomy and ownership that encourages employees to take initiative in adapting to challenges. When all these factors align, they create a supportive ecosystem where employees feel equipped and motivated to adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

Emotional Health

It refers to the degree to which individuals are thriving at work by experiencing positive moments while limiting the negative ones. This has a profound impact on adaptability because it influences mental clarity, resilience, engagement, and overall well-being. Emotionally healthy individuals are better equipped to handle stress and setbacks, enabling them to recover quickly and maintain focus when adapting to new or challenging situations.

Thriving at work fosters a positive outlook, which helps individuals perceive change as an opportunity rather than a threat. This optimism encourages proactive engagement with adaptation efforts. Emotional health supports cognitive functioning, allowing individuals to approach complex or uncertain situations with clarity, creativity, and sound decision-making.

Thriving emotionally at work enhances interpersonal skills such as empathy, communication, and teamwork. These skills are critical for adapting in collaborative environments or during organizational transitions. Emotional well-being reduces anxiety and fear, making individuals more open to embracing new methods, roles, or technologies. When people feel fulfilled and valued at work, they are more likely to engage actively with challenges, demonstrating the initiative and energy required to adapt successfully.

A stable emotional state helps individuals remain centered during periods of change, allowing them to manage reactive tendencies and adapt thoughtfully. In essence, emotional health provides the psychological and emotional foundation needed to navigate change with confidence, resilience, and flexibility.

Team Support

This dimension describes the extent to which colleagues and leaders encourage adaptability. Team support has a profound impact on adaptability because it fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered, encouraged, and equipped to navigate change effectively.

Working in a supportive team fosters collaboration and open communication, enabling members to pool their strengths and collectively solve problems. This shared effort enhances adaptability by allowing individuals to learn from each other and develop solutions together.

A team that cultivates trust and psychological safety allows members to express concerns, share ideas, and take risks without fear of judgment. This sense of safety encourages experimentation and innovation, both of which are essential for adapting to new challenges.

Team members offer encouragement during periods of change, reducing stress and promoting resilience. Knowing that others have your back fosters confidence and motivates individuals to embrace adaptation with a positive mindset. In a supportive team, members often teach and mentor one another. This exchange of knowledge and expertise equips individuals with the skills needed to adapt effectively to new roles or environments.

Teams bring diverse perspectives and thinking styles to the table. This diversity leads to more comprehensive solutions and enhances the ability to tackle complex challenges during adaptation efforts. Supportive teams reinforce a culture of resilience, ensuring that challenges are met with unified strength rather than individual struggle. This collective approach makes adaptation smoother and more effective.

Being part of a supportive team boosts morale and motivation, inspiring members to actively participate in adaptation processes and see change as an opportunity for growth. In essence, team support serves as a stabilizing and empowering force, enabling individuals and groups to adapt confidently and collaboratively to changing circumstances.

Work Environment

It addresses the degree to which organizations facilitate and encourage self-disruption, rapid experimentation, and regular adaptation. When organizations embrace self-disruption and rapid experimentation, they create a culture that thrives on innovation. Employees are motivated to challenge the status quo, explore new ideas, and adopt cutting-edge solutions, enhancing their ability to adapt to evolving circumstances.

A work environment that views experimentation as an essential part of growth helps employees overcome the fear of failure. By normalizing mistakes as valuable learning opportunities, individuals become more willing to take risks and adapt to uncertain situations.

Regular adaptation requires employees to refine their strategies and processes continuously. This dynamic approach ensures that individuals and teams remain agile and responsive to both internal changes and external market shifts.

Such environments encourage a culture of lifelong learning. Employees are motivated to acquire new skills, unlearn outdated practices, and stay updated with the latest trends, all of which are key to adaptability.

Rapid experimentation fosters creative problem-solving by encouraging employees to test different approaches and iterate quickly. This mindset empowers teams to adapt effectively to challenges with innovative solutions. Organizations that encourage self-disruption often provide autonomy and trust to employees. This empowerment builds confidence and motivation, enabling individuals to take initiative and embrace change.

On a larger scale, this type of work environment enables the organization to anticipate and adapt to industry trends, disruptions, and unforeseen challenges more effectively. It helps create a future-ready workforce that can pivot quickly when needed. By fostering an adaptive work environment, organizations empower employees to develop the skills, mindset, and confidence necessary to thrive in a constantly changing world.

Work Stress

This part of the A.C.E. model relates to the level of pressure and demands in an individual's work environment. Too much stress has clear negative impacts. High stress levels can lead to cognitive overload, making it harder for individuals to think clearly, evaluate options, and adapt effectively to new circumstances. Stress often amplifies reactive emotions, such as frustration or anxiety, which can hinder adaptability by creating resistance to change or impulsive responses. Chronic stress depletes mental and physical energy, diminishing the motivation to engage with challenges or opportunities for adaptation proactively. When overwhelmed by stress, individuals may avoid confronting new situations, delaying or preventing necessary adjustments.

There are some benefits associated with certain levels of stress. Moderate levels of stress can serve as a motivator, prompting individuals to devise creative solutions and adapt to overcome challenges. Successfully managing stress can build resilience, teaching individuals how to cope with challenges and adapt more effectively in the future. Stress can prompt individuals to reassess priorities, focus on essential tasks, and streamline their approach to adaptation efforts.

This two-sided view underlines the importance of stress management. Practices such as mindfulness, time management, and seeking social support can help individuals regulate their stress levels and remain flexible in the face of change. Work environments that promote employee well-being – through reasonable workloads, supportive leadership, and opportunities for self-care – can reduce stress and enhance adaptability.

In essence, work stress is a double-edged sword. While unmanaged stress can diminish adaptability, moderate stress, paired with effective coping mechanisms, can spur growth and strengthen one's capacity to adjust. The A.C.E. model of adaptability tends to prioritize the positive view of less stress, as this enables energy, attention, and time to prepare effective adaptations.

In conclusion, the A.C.E. Model by AQai provides a structured, research-backed approach to understanding adaptability. By addressing Ability, Character, and Environment, individuals and organizations can develop resilience, flexibility, and a proactive mindset. Emphasizing adaptability in the workplace leads to enhanced performance, innovation, and long-term sustainability in an ever-evolving world. Through self-awareness, continuous learning, and supportive environments, adaptability can be nurtured, enabling individuals and businesses to thrive in the face of change.

4.6. Advantages of Working with the AQai A.C.E. Model of Adaptability

The tool that AQai offers is, to date, truly unique. In addition to a sophisticated online learning environment, there is an opportunity to administer an analysis. In contrast to other psychometric tests, participants do not have to complete lengthy tests and surveys. AQai relies on AI to learn more about participants in conversations. This has several advantages.

- First, the tool ensures a minimum amount of curiosity amongst participants.
- Second, it is a tool that is not overused, unlike MBTI, Hogan, and others. Therefore, there is less risk of disappointing executive education seminar participants or coaching clients who may have come across other tools.
- Third, as the process is automated with AI, dozens of such conversations can take place in parallel. The AI agglomerates results and insights into a group report. As a consequence, top management, program faculty, and coaches learn quickly how adaptable individuals, teams, business units, and organizations can be.
- Fourth, the online space provided by AQai equips learners with a wealth of information, personalized feedback, and – if this is deemed helpful – even a customized learning and development plan for the months and years ahead.
- Fifth, the generated reports also reveal predictive scores. It provides change readiness indices to consider in planning change initiatives. The higher the score, the faster and further an organization can go. As 70% of change initiatives fail because they often lack crucial insights, working with better data can help tilt the odds of success. In addition, the system generates a reskilling index for individuals,

teams, business units, and organizations. It addresses the likelihood of investments in learning and development efforts leading to success.

- Sixth, not all change initiatives are equal, and the AQai system is also capable of providing differentiated insights. It distinguishes between two types of strategies. One focuses on incrementally improving existing strategy, structures, cultures, processes, and other systems elements. The other one, in turn, deals with more revolutionary strategists and exploration of new terrain, such as diversification, rapid internationalization, upstream and downstream integration, and bolder strategic moves in general. The AQai tool assesses how well-suited and ready the organizational setup is for each of these two primary approaches.

- Seventh, the model allows comparisons among team members, units, and entire organizations. There are global benchmark scores for ability and environment, which can help foster humility and change readiness as leaders can see how much still has to improve to join the ranks of best-practice companies or the score zones of top-ranked individuals.

- Finally, the model is rather holistic. It offers a broad range of factors to discover as part of honing self-awareness. Equally, the model does not convey a sense of fatalism, as abilities can be developed, workplaces can be improved, and character traits can be managed.

In summary, administering the AQai tool before major change initiatives and at the beginning of executive education seminars or coaching sessions helps gather truly unique insights on adaptability. It can help prioritize development efforts.

4.7 Summary of Key Insights – AI Measuring Adaptability is a Game-Changer

This chapter helped address the second crucial question within humanistic leadership – who are we as leaders? The idea behind measuring one's adaptability is not to identify weaknesses and sort out incapable individuals but rather to uncover actionable knowledge. If leaders understand how quickly they can implement change and how much change to adopt at any given time, they prepare for success much more effectively than ever before.

For the first time, sound data can be gathered to strategically position change initiatives, develop available talents, and manage resources holistically. In addition, there has been considerable hype surrounding AI, although securing relevant use cases may be more challenging. In contrast, AQai's AI tool, based on the A.C.E. model, collects highly relevant data at an amazing speed and impressively low cost.

Technically, it could analyze an entire organization with hundreds or even thousands of staff members within less than an hour, provided all employees logged in and participated in the survey. This is a use case of AI that adds value. Having applied this tool to several organizations, its inherent message stands out as well. Even if certain elements and scores of the A.C.E. model aren't perfect, but there is transparency about it and clarity about what can and should be done. Overcoming the problems associated with a fatalistic view and a lack of data, humanistic leaders can now professionalize their approaches based on data, help develop talents, and thus reduce the risk of failure and the adversity associated with it.

Chapter 5:

What do Great Leaders do?

5.1. Introduction – Why Strengths-Based Leadership is Superior?

This book started off with a critical review of leadership success. By and large, leadership is not working as well as it could and should[21]:

- 66% of staff members report their boss is the worst part of their life.
- 75% would take a pay cut if they could change their boss.
- 21% say their performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.
- Yet, when we focus on what is right with people, the likelihood of reporting an excellent quality of life is three times higher, and the probability of being engaged at work is six times higher. On average, if leaders focus on strengths-based leadership, engagement ratios in organizations are as high as 73% versus 9% in organizations without a focus on strengths.

Therefore, Don Clifton, often referred to as the "father" of strengths-based leadership, suggested focusing on what is right with people rather than dwelling on what is wrong with them. When introducing the strengths-based view in executive education seminars, participants are often invited to write something down on a piece of paper using their non-dominant hand. It will be less pretty, frequently done more slowly, and it usually feels awkward. So why do we press individuals into roles unnaturally without an effort to organize for better conditions? There are lost opportunities, as the uniqueness of individuals, one aspect of their dignity, is not acknowledged.

The work flower model[22], visualized in the following figure, clarifies that there is agency both when it comes to what superiors do to facilitate roles and how a staff member interprets a role and brings it to life. Companies may overpromise or are inaccurate when describing roles:

Therefore, the work, as explained, may turn out differently. The work imagined can diverge to some extent from the work prescribed. Prescribed work may differ significantly from the work being done and negotiated by an individual. So, why not utilize the system's inherent flexibility to optimize work conditions? Of course, degrees of freedom differ across roles and industries.

Further statistics substantiate that perfect person-job fits are harder to achieve than many think. As for executives in C-suite roles[23]:

- 41% of a role's expectations do not align with the candidate's qualifications.
- 36% of responsibilities do not align with a candidate's professional experience.
- 33% of the time, expectations do not match a role's area of responsibility.

In light of these imperfections and adaptation needs, why not look for opportunities for individuals to operate more in line with their strengths? Beyond acknowledging individuality and leveraging strengths to enhance engagement and performance, there are additional opportunities for effective leadership communication. Considering fast-moving business environments with frequent system shocks or even perma-crises, framing an issue is within our control.

A humanistic leader can help guide others by outlining how strengths contribute to achieving aspirational goals. Positioning work as a hero's or heroine's journey, as outlined in the following visualization, can help with confidence, grit, and resilience[24]. Several framing options exist, such as viewing oneself as a victim ("poor me"), persecutor ("it is your fault"), rescuer ("let me help you"), or heroine ("yes, we can, and we will"). The latter bears great potential as it anticipates there being "dragons" impeding us from reaching the treasures or aspirational goals. In a heroic journey, a quest to overcome barriers to success is an essential part of showing one's greatness and strengths.

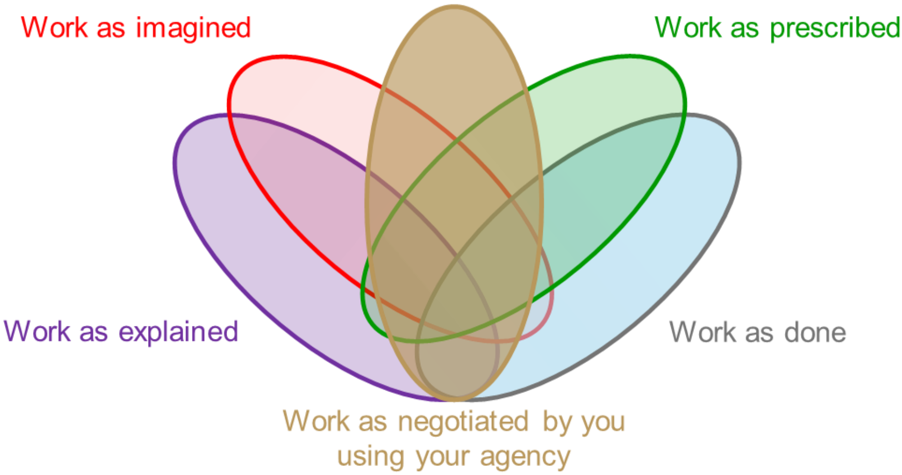

Figure 17: Work Flower Model
Source: Based on humanisticsystems.com

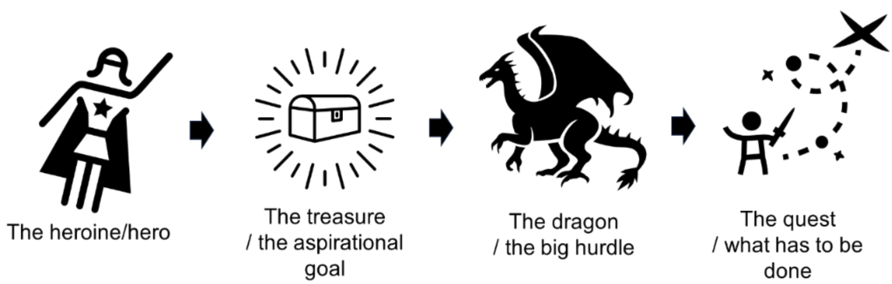

Figure 18: Framing Issues as a Hero's or Heroine's Journey

In this context, Don Clifton, an American psychologist, along with his research team, analyzed more than a million teams to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals create value[25]. Clifton understood the crucial role of talents and strengths. For him, a talent is a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied.

In turn, a strength is the ability to provide consistent, great performance in each activity.

He equally observed that staff members operating in their zone of strengths look more forward to going to work. They have more positive than negative interactions with coworkers. Such micro-experiences are absolutely essential for thriving in the workplace. Even as few as three wonderful micro-moments a day can make an employee satisfied and return home after work feeling more fulfilled than they would otherwise be.

In addition, staff members being able and allowed to deploy their strengths treat customers better, boosting customer loyalty. They are also better ambassadors for the employer, speaking more positively about the organization. They simply achieve more, and have more creative moments. The next section introduces four main areas of strengths before subsequent sections details them further

5.2. Overview of Four Areas of Strengths

Based on Clifton's research, strengths can be categorized based on two dimensions, as visualized in the following figure. First, he distinguishes if a strength relates to tasks versus people management. Second, there is a time-related way to differentiate them. Some strengths primarily deploy their value in the present, while others will be future-oriented.

There are several essential points to consider when working with strengths. First, it is of utmost importance to apply the strengths' view with integrity and good intentions at all times. Strengths-related insights are extremely powerful and could also be used to cause great harm. Imagine a harsh, non-humanistic leader trying to consolidate their power, neutralizing threats to their position. If a colleague possesses tremendous skills in a field, a negative situation could arise where these skills are overlooked, which can demotivate and lead to quiet or actual quitting.

Second, themes are neutral. None of the strengths are good, better, best, or worse. It is all about understanding what strengths are available and then organizing them accordingly. This also means we should not label individuals, providing room to grow and not reduce them to merely a few aspects of a larger personality and richer profile. All themes are accessible to everyone. It would cause more energy, feel more awkward, or the results may not be as good as they could otherwise be.

Third, humanistic leaders see interpersonal differences as an advantage. They resist hiring and promoting based on a similarity bias. They provide an opportunity for individuals to thrive within the broader context of value creation. Actually, granting the opportunity to be acknowledged for certain skills and deploy them is one way in itself that value is created. Adopting a system view, diverse staff members need each other to leverage their uniqueness and complement one another. It is what makes workplaces more special and productive. The world of symbolic value, in which our uniqueness matters, and functionalistic value in terms of efficiency and effectiveness can easily be combined.

Fourth, humanistic leaders are encouraged to take the time needed to understand team members and how to create the best workplace processes and cultures. While many leadership positions come with fancier titles, better pay, and other tangible perks, they also entail easier access to key information, decision-making authority, and power, as well as additional responsibilities. Gallup offers two types of surveys to measure strengths.

The Top Five focuses on the top five themes at the forefront. They largely define an individual's success recipe and the underlying thinking patterns that drive this success. Additionally, a more comprehensive version of the report is available, which incorporates all 34 themes within the Gallup Clifton StrengthsFinder methodology. Naturally, if there is an opportunity to measure as part of a thorough, evidence-based approach to leadership, then numerous advantages arise. However, familiarizing oneself with the themes, how they are presented, what they entail, and how to complement them can also help make progress. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the four main domains.

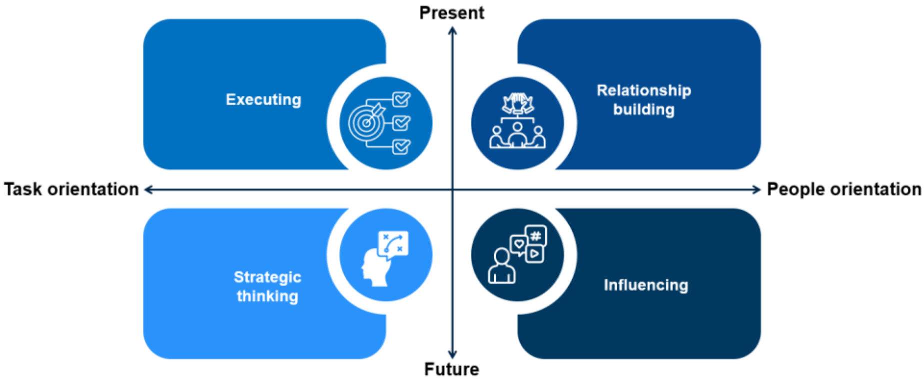

Figure 19: Overview of Strengths Domains in the Gallup System

5.3. Adding Value with Themes in the Executing Domain

The executing domain of strengths includes nine distinct themes. Each one of them adds value in a special way and, therefore, must be understood well enough before being honed and deployed correctly.

1. Achiever

The "Achiever" theme within Gallup's executing domain describes individuals who have an exceptional drive to accomplish things every day. Achievers find satisfaction in being productive and thrive on setting and meeting goals. They possess a strong work ethic and often feel compelled to complete tasks – even when others might consider their efforts to be above and beyond what is necessary.

Examples Include:

- **Workplace Success:** An Achiever in the office may be the one who consistently volunteers for challenging projects, stays late to ensure everything is completed, and meets deadlines with unwavering reliability.

- **Personal Goals:** Outside of work, an Achiever might set ambitious fitness goals, like training for a marathon, and relentlessly pursue them until they're met.
- **Team Dynamics:** On a team, Achievers bring momentum and energy. They motivate others with their persistence and dedication to completing tasks.

2. Arranger

The "Arranger" theme describes individuals who thrive on organizing and coordinating resources to achieve the most effective outcomes. Arrangers are known for their flexibility and ability to adapt when priorities shift. They excel at orchestrating people, tasks, and strategies, often finding more effective and efficient ways to achieve their goals.

Examples Include:

- **Workplace Success:** An Arranger in the office might take a disorganized team project and efficiently reorganize responsibilities to ensure everyone plays to their strengths.
- **Problem-Solving:** In moments of chaos, Arrangers shine by staying calm and reshuffling tasks or resources to keep things on track.
- **Team Leadership:** As leaders, Arrangers effectively juggle multiple moving pieces, always looking for opportunities to optimize workflows and collaboration.

3. Belief

The "Belief" theme represents individuals who are deeply driven by their core values and principles. These individuals have a strong sense of purpose and direction, and their actions are guided by what they believe is right and meaningful. People with the Belief strength bring stability and motivation to others, as they are often unwavering in their dedication to their cause or mission. Examples include:

- **Purpose-Driven Work:** Someone with Belief strength might excel in roles or organizations that align with their values, such as nonprofit work or social advocacy.
- **Consistency:** In decision-making, they stick to their principles even when faced with challenges or pressure to compromise.
- **Inspiration:** Their commitment to their beliefs often inspires others to stay true to their own values and work toward meaningful goals.

4. Consistency

The "Consistency" theme within Gallup's Executing domain focuses on fairness and balance. Individuals with this strength believe in creating an equitable environment where everyone is treated fairly and afforded the same opportunities. They thrive on setting up clear rules, procedures, and systems that ensure predictability and equal treatment.

Examples Include:

- **Fair Leadership:** A person with this strength may establish unbiased guidelines for a team or organization, ensuring decisions are fair to everyone involved.
- **Structured Environment:** They excel at maintaining stability by setting up routines or processes that help groups stay organized and consistent in their approach.
- **Conflict Resolution:** In disputes, they emphasize fairness and impartiality, often seeking solutions that honour shared standards or principles.

5. Deliberative

The "Deliberative" theme characterizes individuals who are careful, thoughtful, and thorough in their decision-making. People with this strength excel at identifying risks and considering all possible outcomes before taking action. They approach situations with a cautious mindset and are highly intentional, which enables them to make well-considered choices and avoid mistakes.

Examples Include:

- **Risk Management:** A person with Deliberative strength might be the one in a team who evaluates potential challenges or dangers in a new project before proceeding.
- **Strategic Planning:** They are excellent at weighing the pros and cons of a decision, ensuring the best path is chosen with minimal risk.
- **Trustworthy Advisers:** Their thoughtful approach makes them a valuable resource when important decisions need to be made, as their insights are grounded and reliable.

6. Discipline

The "Discipline" theme within Gallup's Executing domain reflects individuals who thrive on structure, order, and organization. They are meticulous planners, focused on creating routines and processes that bring predictability and efficiency. People with the Discipline strength enjoy working in environments where they can organize tasks, prioritize effectively, and ensure everything runs smoothly.

Examples Include:

- **Time Management:** A person with Discipline might maintain detailed schedules or to-do lists to stay on track and ensure deadlines are consistently met.
- **Organized Workspaces:** They often have tidy and systematized environments that enable them to work efficiently without distractions.
- **Project Efficiency:** When overseeing projects, they break tasks into

manageable steps, streamline workflows, and eliminate unnecessary clutter or chaos.

7. Focus

The "Focus" theme represents individuals who are goal-oriented, driven, and persistent. People with this strength excel at prioritizing tasks and staying on course, avoiding distractions and maintaining momentum until they achieve their objectives. They bring clarity and determination to their work, ensuring that everything they do aligns with their purpose. Examples include:

- **Goal Achievement:** A person with Focus is likely to set specific, measurable goals and work tirelessly until those goals are met.
- **Efficiency:** They avoid sidetracks and distractions, maintaining a laser-like focus on the task at hand.
- **Strategic Progress:** These individuals naturally break down their big ambitions into actionable steps and diligently pursue them.

8. Responsibility

The "Responsibility" theme is all about reliability and accountability. People with this strength are deeply committed to honouring their promises and taking ownership of their tasks. They are known for their dependability and often feel an emotional commitment to doing their work well, which makes them highly trustworthy. Examples include:

- **Commitment to Excellence:** A person with Responsibility ensures that every project or task they take on is completed with the highest standard of quality.
- **Trusted Team Member:** Colleagues and friends know they can count on them to follow through on their commitments without needing reminders.

- **Sense of Duty:** These individuals often go above and beyond, staying late or doing extra work because they feel personally obligated to see things through.

9. Restorative

The "Restorative" theme is centered around problem-solving and fixing things. Individuals with this strength excel at identifying problems and devising solutions to enhance situations, systems, or relationships. They enjoy the challenge of overcoming obstacles and often thrive in environments where their ability to resolve problems is valued. Examples include:

- **Troubleshooting at Work:** A Restorative individual might step up to identify inefficiencies in a process and suggest ways to streamline operations.
- **Conflict Resolution:** They can mediate disagreements effectively, using their skill at pinpointing the root cause and fostering understanding.
- **Innovative Problem-Solving:** Whether it's a product flaw or a project hurdle, they tackle problems head-on, turning setbacks into opportunities.

5.4. Adding Value with Themes in the Relationship-building Domain

The relationship-building domain encompasses themes that help manage people in the present moment. In contrast, influencing themes relate to moving people into the future.

1. Adaptability

Adaptability reflects individuals who embrace change and thrive in dynamic, unpredictable environments. They focus on the present rather than being overly tied to long-term plans or rigid structures. Adaptable individuals bring a calm, flexible approach to challenges, enabling them to respond effectively to changing circumstances. They excel in roles or situations where quick adjustments are needed and are often seen as steadying forces during chaos. Examples include:

- **Flexible Leadership:** In a fast-paced project, someone with Adaptability might seamlessly reallocate resources or modify plans to address unforeseen obstacles.
- **Crisis Response:** During an unexpected office disruption, they keep the team calm and focused by adapting priorities to maintain productivity.
- **Living Spontaneously:** In their personal life, they embrace last-minute invitations or unplanned adventures, always ready to go with the flow.

2. Connectedness

People with Connectedness believe that everything in life is interlinked and happens for a reason. They see patterns, relationships, and the deeper meaning behind events. Their outlook fosters a sense of unity and purpose, enabling others to understand how their efforts contribute to larger goals. Connectedness brings a unique ability to unite people and ideas by emphasizing shared values and relationships. Examples include:

- **Unified Team Goals:** In a work setting, they articulate how individual tasks contribute to the success of the larger project, fostering cooperation and shared purpose.
- **Community Engagement:** They organize events that highlight cultural or social connections, inspiring people to see how their contributions affect the whole.
- **Guidance During Change:** When a colleague is struggling with

uncertainty, they help reframe the situation by emphasizing its connection to a broader journey.

3. Developer

Developers are drawn to growth and progress. They naturally spot potential in others and take pleasure in helping people become the best versions of themselves. Whether mentoring or coaching, Developers are fulfilled by investing in others' personal and professional growth. They celebrate every milestone along the way, encouraging perseverance and self-improvement. Examples include:

- **Mentorship:** A Developer actively works with new team members, coaching them through early challenges and building their confidence.
- **Leadership Roles:** They champion initiatives like training sessions or professional development programs to foster team growth.
- **Celebrating Achievements:** In personal relationships, they encourage loved ones to reach their goals and celebrate progress, even in small steps.

4. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to sense and understand the emotions of others. People with this strength have a profound ability to connect emotionally, making them trusted confidants and supporters. They excel in creating environments of care and understanding, helping others feel valued and listened to. Their insight into emotions strengthens relationships and promotes collaboration. Examples include:

- **Conflict Mediation:** During disputes, someone with Empathy senses the underlying emotions and helps parties address feelings rather than just the surface issues.

- **Team Support:** They recognize when colleagues are feeling overwhelmed and take steps to offer encouragement or a listening ear.
- **Meaningful Friendships:** In personal relationships, they are the friend who intuitively knows when someone needs emotional support or reassurance.

5. Includer

Includers are driven by a desire to ensure everyone feels valued and involved. They naturally gravitate toward those who might otherwise feel excluded, making sure no one is left out. Their ability to foster a welcoming environment enables the creation of diverse and cohesive teams, allowing everyone to contribute meaningfully. Examples include:

- **Team Building:** An Includer ensures that new members are fully integrated and feel comfortable contributing to group discussions.
- **Event Organization:** They plan gatherings that accommodate people's preferences and actively encourage everyone's participation.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** In meetings, they seek out input from quieter team members to make sure all voices are heard and valued.

6. Individualization

Individualization reflects an ability to see and appreciate the unique qualities in every person. People with this strength tailor their interactions and strategies to fit the specific strengths, needs, or styles of others. They thrive in roles that require customization and personalization, making them invaluable in teams or customer-facing positions. Examples include:

- **Tailored Leadership:** They delegate tasks based on individuals' strengths and passions, ensuring higher levels of engagement and success.
- **Client Services:** In customer-facing roles, they customize experiences

to meet unique needs and preferences, making clients feel valued.

- **Personalized Gifts:** In personal relationships, they give thoughtful gifts or plan surprises that perfectly reflect the recipient's personality.

7. Positivity

Positivity is characterized by enthusiasm and optimism. People with this strength are like rays of sunshine in a group, uplifting others with their energy and good cheer. They excel at creating fun, engaging environments and motivating teams to overcome challenges with a can-do attitude. Their encouragement helps people stay hopeful, even during difficult times. Examples include:

- **Morale Booster:** In high-pressure situations, they keep colleagues motivated and upbeat, ensuring stress doesn't take over.
- **Team Celebrations:** They organize activities or events to celebrate small wins, fostering happiness and camaraderie.
- **Personal Encouragement:** In one-on-one relationships, they always have a kind word or a pep talk ready to lift someone's spirits.

8. Relator

Relators value deep, authentic connections and thrive on meaningful, long-term relationships. They are drawn to building trust and intimacy with others, whether in personal or professional settings. Their ability to form genuine bonds allows them to work effectively in teams and create a supportive network. Examples include:

- **Trusted Advisor:** In a workplace, a Relator builds strong, personal connections with colleagues, earning their trust and becoming a go-to confidant.
- **Loyal Friendships:** They invest time and effort into nurturing deep, long-lasting relationships outside of work.

- **Team Collaboration:** On projects, they excel in fostering understanding and creating cohesive, trusting teams.

Each of these themes offers a distinct yet powerful way of connecting with others and building strong relationships. Each of them can also be overemphasized and overplayed.

5.5. Adding Value with Themes in the Influencing Domain

This subchapter zooms in on how to lead people for a more positive future. Once more, there are multiple ways to reach out to others and encourage them to move into a different space.

1. Activator

The "Activator" theme describes individuals who excel at turning thoughts into action. Activators are impatient to get started, preferring progress over perfection, and thrive in fast-paced environments where they can initiate change. Their energy and enthusiasm are contagious, motivating others to move forward and take action. Examples include:

- **Project Kick-Off:** An Activator might inspire their team to launch a new initiative without hesitation, energizing everyone to take the first step.
- **Action-Oriented Leadership:** In leadership roles, they push their teams out of indecision and encourage immediate action, ensuring momentum isn't lost.
- **Personal Drive:** Activators often jump into challenges head-on, preferring to learn and adapt along the way rather than waiting for everything to align perfectly.

2. Command

The "Command" theme portrays individuals who naturally take charge and lead with authority. People with this strength are not afraid to express their opinions, confront challenges head-on, and guide others in times of uncertainty. They bring clarity and direction to situations, enabling groups to move forward with confidence. Command individuals are often the ones you turn to when boldness is needed! Examples include:

- **Bold Leadership:** Someone with Command might step into a chaotic situation and bring order, decisively steering the team toward a solution.
- **Confidence in Decisions:** They excel in making tough choices and expressing their rationale clearly, even in high-pressure environments.
- **Inspiring Others:** Their strong presence often motivates others to act decisively and rise to challenges.

3. Communication

The "Communication" theme represents individuals who excel at expressing thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a compelling and engaging manner. Communication-oriented individuals often bring ideas to life for any audience! People with this strength are natural storytellers, bringing messages to life and ensuring others understand and connect with them. They often help bridge gaps in communication, fostering understanding and collaboration. Examples include:

- **Public Speaking:** Someone with Communication might thrive in roles where they present ideas, such as leading team meetings or giving inspiring speeches.
- **Storytelling:** They have a knack for turning complex information into relatable and entertaining narratives, making ideas easier to grasp.
- **Team Building:** Their ability to connect people through clear and engaging communication fosters collaboration and camaraderie.

4. Competition

The "Competition" theme within Gallup's Influencing domain embodies individuals who are driven by comparison and performance. They love measuring themselves against others and strive to be the best. Competitive individuals often raise the stakes for excellence in any environment! People with this strength are motivated by winning and achieving excellence, often pushing themselves to outperform rivals and set new benchmarks. Examples include:

- **Goal-Oriented Achievements:** A person with Competition might aim to win awards, contests, or recognition by consistently outperforming peers.
- **Performance Excellence:** They use their drive to refine skills and strategies, ensuring that they stay ahead in their field.
- Motivation for Teams: Their competitive spirit often inspires and energizes teams, encouraging collective effort toward success.

5. Maximizer

The "Maximizer" theme within Gallup's Influencing domain represents individuals who focus on turning good into great. Maximizers are the champions of progress and potential! People with this strength are driven to identify excellence and refine it further, ensuring that people, projects, or ideas reach their full potential. They are highly selective about where they invest their energy, often preferring to work on areas or individuals that show the most promise.

Examples include:

- **Optimizing Strengths:** A Maximizer might work with a talented team member to help them refine their skills and become exceptional in their role.
- **Continuous Improvement:** They excel at identifying areas of potential and investing in high-impact activities or projects to elevate them further.

- **Strategic Prioritization:** Maximizers focus on opportunities that offer the greatest return on investment, preferring quality over quantity.

6. Self-assurance

The "Self-Assurance" theme within Gallup's Influencing domain reflects individuals who have confidence in their abilities and decisions. These individuals are often the steady hands in moments of doubt or adversity. People with this strength trust their instincts and often rely on their internal compass to guide them. They are comfortable taking risks and leading others, standing firm even in uncertain or challenging situations.

Examples include:

- **Confident Leadership:** Someone with Self-Assurance might step up to make bold decisions when others are hesitant, trusting their judgment to navigate the situation.
- **Entrepreneurial Spirit:** They are likely to pursue ambitious ideas or ventures, confident in their ability to succeed despite potential risks.
- **Resilience:** Self-assured individuals handle setbacks with poise, trusting themselves to adapt and overcome challenges.

7. Significance

The "Significance" theme within Gallup's Influencing domain is all about the desire to make a meaningful impact and be recognized for accomplishments. Significance-oriented individuals often inspire those around them to dream big and aim higher! Individuals with this strength are driven to create work or contributions that will leave a lasting legacy. They thrive in environments where their efforts are recognized and appreciated and where they can inspire others to strive for excellence. Examples include:

- **Motivational Leadership:** Someone with Significance might lead by example, pushing themselves to achieve excellence and encouraging others to do the same.

- **Personal Impact:** They often seek roles or opportunities where their work can have a visible, meaningful effect on others or their organization.
- **Legacy Building:** These individuals focus on long-term achievements that will be remembered and valued even after their immediate involvement ends.

8. Woo

The "Woo" (Winning Others Over) theme within Gallup's Influencing domain is all about building connections and relationships. Woo individuals bring a spark of energy to any social or professional environment! People with this strength thrive on meeting new people and making a positive impression. They are energized by social interactions and have a natural ability to engage others, breaking the ice and creating a sense of camaraderie. Examples include:

- **Networking:** A person with Woo might excel in events where they can meet and connect with a wide range of people, quickly forming relationships.
- **Charismatic Leadership:** Their ability to engage and charm others makes them effective in roles that require persuasion or rallying a group toward a common goal.
- **Social Energy:** They bring energy to social settings, making others feel comfortable and included, often becoming the glue that holds groups together.

This domain relating to influencing skills is frequently underrepresented amongst strengths. However, it becomes obvious quickly how these themes can help move people into new directions at more conducive speeds – and for the right reasons.

5.6. Adding Value with Themes in the Strategic Thinking Domain

Finally, the descriptions of themes as part of the 34 strengths identified by Gallup arrives at strategy thinking. Especially when it comes to humanistic leadership, it is essential to note that not all individuals promoted to leadership roles have such themes. Often, the cause for promotion lies in a performance related to other tasks. Therefore, measuring is key, or at least critical reflection of how one scores with regards to the following themes.

1. Analytical

Individuals with The Analytical strength have a keen ability to understand and dissect information, searching for patterns, relationships, and causes. They are not satisfied with assumptions or emotional reasoning—they demand data and evidence to back up claims. Analytical thinkers excel in environments where they can delve into details, test hypotheses, and work with facts. They are naturally curious and excel at identifying inefficiencies, inconsistencies, or errors. Examples include:

- **Data-driven Decision-Making:** An Analytical person might review financial statements meticulously, uncovering trends that guide strategic business investments.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** They investigate why a project failed or succeeded, breaking down the details to gain a clear understanding of what worked and what didn't.
- **Scientific Research:** They thrive in labs or research environments, analyzing experiments to ensure accurate and replicable results.

2. Context

People with The Context strength look to the past to make sense of the present. They recognize the importance of history and use it as a reference to inform current decisions. Context-oriented individuals thrive on understanding how and why something came to be, applying lessons from history to shape a more informed future. They are often seen as reflective and insightful. Examples include:

- **Strategic Planning:** During team discussions, someone with Context might recall previous projects, citing what strategies succeeded or failed to guide the team effectively.
- **Historical Perspective:** A Context-driven historian may study past social movements to develop approaches for current advocacy work.
- **Team Development:** In a leadership role, they value the experience of team members, using their backgrounds to assign roles or tasks thoughtfully.

3. Futuristic

People with the Futuristic strength are inspired by what could be. They think beyond the present, imagining possibilities and envisioning a better future. Their ability to see potential often motivates and inspires others, as they articulate bold, imaginative ideas that bring energy and optimism to teams or projects. Examples include:

- **Visionary Leadership:** A Futuristic leader might energize their team by painting a vivid picture of what the organization could achieve in five years, inspiring collective ambition.
- **Technology Innovation:** They may brainstorm futuristic inventions, such as developing conceptual ideas for cutting-edge apps, devices, or sustainable solutions.
- **Personal Planning:** On an individual level, they meticulously plan for future personal milestones, like pursuing educational goals that align with their long-term aspirations.

4. Ideation

Individuals with the Ideation strength are fascinated by new ideas and the connections between seemingly unrelated concepts. They thrive on creativity and are energized by exploring new approaches or perspectives. Their out-of-the-box thinking makes them invaluable in brainstorming sessions, where innovation is key.

Examples include:

- **Creative Marketing:** Someone with Ideation might design a unique advertising campaign that combines art, humour, and storytelling to engage audiences.
- **Product Development:** They may conceptualize groundbreaking features for products by merging ideas from different industries or disciplines.
- **Problem-Solving:** When a traditional approach fails, their creative thinking leads to novel solutions that no one else has considered.

5. Input

Input-oriented individuals are collectors of knowledge, ideas, and resources. They are naturally curious and enjoy gathering information, whether it's through books, articles, or personal experiences. Their wide-ranging curiosity makes them a fountain of insights and expertise that others often turn to for advice or recommendations. Examples include:

- **Knowledge Repository:** Someone with Input might create a comprehensive database of resources for their team, curating articles, tools, and references to assist with projects.
- **Lifelong Learning:** They constantly seek to expand their horizons, whether through attending workshops, reading extensively, or exploring new subjects.

- **Advisory Role:** Friends and colleagues often seek their recommendations, knowing they have an endless reserve of insights.

6. Intellection

People with the Intellection strength are deep thinkers who enjoy mental exploration and introspection. They are drawn to thoughtful discussions, philosophical debates, and opportunities to delve into complex ideas. Their intellectual curiosity allows them to explore abstract topics and contribute profound insights. Examples include:

- **Philosophical Exploration:** In a book club or debate, they bring thought-provoking questions and perspectives that challenge others to think deeply.
- **Critical Analysis:** In work or academia, they analyze challenging problems, breaking them down into manageable, well-considered solutions.
- **Personal Growth:** They dedicate time to self-reflection, journaling, or studying to continuously expand their understanding of themselves and the world.

7. Learner

Learners have an insatiable thirst for knowledge and growth. They are energized by the process of learning itself, regardless of whether they achieve mastery in a given subject. Their enthusiasm for development often makes them adaptable and versatile in changing environments. Examples include:

- **Professional Development:** They are the first to enrol in training sessions, certifications, or skill-building workshops to stay ahead in their field.
- **Adaptation:** In a new role or industry, they quickly grasp unfamiliar concepts and become valuable contributors.

- **Personal Projects:** They might spend evenings exploring hobbies like learning new languages, mastering musical instruments, or experimenting with cooking techniques.

8. Strategic

Strategic individuals excel at creating plans that anticipate obstacles and maximize opportunities. They see patterns where others see complexity, mapping out clear paths forward. Their ability to think several steps ahead makes them invaluable in both long-term projects and high-stakes decision-making. Examples include:

- **Crisis Management:** In the face of unexpected challenges, they quickly identify actionable solutions and lead teams to regain stability.
- **Long-Term Planning:** They design detailed strategies for achieving ambitious goals, such as launching a product or entering a new market.
- **Efficient Processes:** They refine workflows or organizational structures to make operations more streamlined and effective.

This overview of strategic thinking themes illustrates the diverse strengths that can be brought to bear on shaping an organization's strategic direction. As mentioned earlier, the top five themes are the most intense. This also means that strategists differ, not in eight, but in five, which would function as the most intense for each person.

5.7. Optimizing Humanistic Team Leadership with Strengths-Based Insights

The likelihood that two individuals share the same top five strengths from the longer list of 34 is one in 33 million.[26] Therefore, it is safe to say that even amongst experienced strategists, there is diversity – and there are gaps.

Humanistic leaders should reflect on their own strengths, the strengths a team profile reveals, and how to utilize this information to create value and drive further transformations over time. The following table presents a sample team. Each row represents one team member and their top five strengths. Gallup offers software to compile such overviews and variants, with an emphasis on top or bottom fives, for example, in a relatively short period. Adopting a strengths-based and humanistic view, several insights emerge.

As for the team depicted in the table below, there is a rather big diversity. If 16 people have strengths in terms of strategic thinking, what they prioritize may well not be as easily understood as what others would like to focus on. When strategizing, it is essential to pay sufficient attention to contexts. This team has only one member with related strengths. He or she could take the lead and keep the team on track.

One of the additional first insights that emerge when analyzing this table and team is that few team members have strengths in the influencing domain. This can inspire questions about who can and should lead in the future. That individual must be able to bring something unique to the team that others do not have. One particular aspect is fostering a sense of competition. So far, none of the team members have portrayed such strengths. The team may well operate nicely yet deep in their comfort zone. With 18 people having strengths in relationship building, this team is likely to offer a warmer and more welcoming work environment.

Table 1: Overview of a Sample Team to Optimize from a Strengths-Based Humanistic View

Strategic Thinking								Influencing								Relationship Building									Executing								
26%			16 People			31		17%			13 People			20		31%				18 People			37		27%				19 People			32	
Analytical	Context	Futuristic	Ideation	Input	Intellection	Learner	Strategic	Activator	Command	Communication	Competition	Maximizer	Self-Assurance	Significance	Woo	Adaptability	Connectedness	Developer	Empathy	Harmony	Includer	Individualization	Positivity	Relator	Achiever	Arranger	Belief	Consistency	Deliberative	Discipline	Focus	Responsibility	Restorative
2	1	2	7	3	0	8	8	3	1	6	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	4	3	5	5	7	4	6	7	6	1	0	2	1	1	10	4
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Yet even humanistic teams are not just about comfort zones, being relaxed, or almost indulging. A humanistic high-performance team is actively managed and challenged, relies on team member strengths, and utilizes tools such as Gallup surveys and the table below to organize itself. Blind spots must be discovered and gaps filled. Individuals with rarer strengths must be spotted. They can take the lead on certain tasks, but it must be ensured that they find an audience.

This team is also likely to see some conflict over time. Several individuals possess strengths related to the Achiever theme. They enjoy check-marking tasks after completing them. In contrast, others who are Activators start new projects and spread an energy for embracing new challenges. These two subgroups are likely to disagree about priorities.

There is a wealth of further information in this table. The experienced humanistic leader makes sense of such a mapping or seeks support in the form of a coach to analyze and develop the team. Ideally, team members are involved in joint debriefings. This will make them feel acknowledged as integral members of the team. This also allows for transparency in future decisions. Most importantly, everyone in the team can be accepted, as each individual team member has the top five strengths that matter at some point in time in the value creation process. Highlighting that everyone has strengths and no one is perfect fosters team development and creates great value together.

Finally, humanistic leaders can move beyond the team strengths maps and carry out further "norming before the storming". As outlined in the following figure, there are four moments of truth to create value. They include the moment we propose new ideas, when we ask for help, when we push back, and when we ask for personal favours. Colleagues can be encouraged to utilize their own approach and strengths to do so. This will give them further confidence and courage.

5.8. Qatar's Urban Point as a Case Study

This sub-chapter aims to complement the conceptual explanations of the 34 strengths as well as the anonymous overview of a team that can be analyzed and optimized by a humanistic leader with the help of the strengths-based view.

The company[27] is led by two great individuals, and their strengths profiles are included in the text below. Knowing such profiles can help both of the two founders to be themselves, to contribute special themes to each other and their venture. Working with the strengths view also helps spot areas that may drain and could, therefore, be optimized by a well-composed top management team.

The case starts on May 26, 2022, 5.13 PM, DOHA, QATAR: Susanna Ingalls and Saif Qazi, both 37 years old, sat sipping coffee at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Park Café, overlooking the turquoise water of the gulf and the silhouette of West Bay offices as the sun slowly set. The MIA Park was one of their favourite places to brainstorm. The weather was warm, not yet reaching the temperatures and humidity of summer. Susanna, dressed in a loose indigo linen dress, was her calm, reflective self on the day when they had received once again an invitation from Mannheim Business School in Germany to speak about Urban Point to the new batch of MBA students. It had always been a wonderful experience to return to where it all began.

Figure 20: Key Moments to Manage with Strengths

Mannheim was the birthplace of Urban Point, Susanna and Saif's venture. In 2015, they were MBA students and worked together on this project. Returning to their Alma Mater with their success story was exhilarating. They looked forward to inspiring the next batch of soon-to-be graduates. While the success story of Urban Point was well-documented in the media, Susanna and Saif wanted to use this teaching opportunity to revisit their ideas for the company's future:

> “Should we focus on international expansion, do more of the same, or offer other services through Urban Point in Qatar?”

Saif spoke out aloud while brushing his fingers through his well-trimmed beard. Their visit to Mannheim was less than a month away, and they wanted to be prepared for the laser-focused questions they expected from ambitious MBA students.

Urban Point: The Idea

In a typical MBA scenario, the students of their batch spent nine months attending courses. The last three months were devoted to either completing a consulting assignment or developing a business plan. Susanna and Saif opted for the latter. They explored new markets with high growth potential, and both were drawn to the Middle East. Saif was raised in Saudi Arabia and had spent 12 years there. Susanna had never visited the Gulf countries but was eager to explore new territory. Together, they thought of successful models from the West that were not yet explored in the Middle East.

First, they thought of trying a transport platform like Uber, but soon realized that Careem was already present and dominating. Souq.com was dubbed the 'Amazon of Middle East' and was already operating in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, so that would not work. Then they took a break from thinking about the models they could launch and tried a different approach: Susanna researched aspects of countries in the region including population, cost of living and ease of doing business, and mobile phone penetration to see where it would make sense to launch a new business model.

Using decision analysis tools for her evaluation, Susanna was surprised to see that Qatar came out on top. Neither she nor Saif knew much about the country, but the region was developing fast, and Qatar looked to be the best place to launch, especially since it was a small market which meant that they could test and iterate their new model faster than if they were to launch in a large one. Once they could prove a model, then they could expand into other markets.

Susanna and Saif prepared their business plan and the report and submitted them to program management naming Qatar for their theoretical market of choice to launch something new.

> *"At first, it was only an academic discussion, and we had no real plan to put it into practice yet, "*

Saif recalled. On the day of the presentation, the management committee was impressed with their idea, and the members were surprised that neither Susanna nor Saif had ever visited Qatar. The admissions director Dr. Nina Landauer knew that a student joining Mannheim in the coming semester was from Qatar and offered to make introductions. This was the beginning of an academic idea turning into reality. When Susanna and Saif spoke to the student, Mr. Ali Al Hajri, about their idea, he was thrilled that they had thought of Qatar as a potential market. He told them,

> *"I know someone in Qatar who is very well connected. He is an investor and an entrepreneur. He is a very helpful person. He is also my Father. He will be visiting Heidelberg next week, so why don't you meet him and propose your business plan?"*

The following week, Susanna and Saif met Dr. Khalid Al Hajri, CEO of Qatar Solar Technologies, who saw their potential and chose to be their first investor and partner. Then, in 2015, Susanna and Saif moved to Qatar. They soon realized that despite its small size, Qatar had enormous potential and progressive leadership.

It was also fertile ground for new ideas, with government support in the form of incubation and training centers, such as the Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) and the Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), as part of the Qatar Development Bank (QDB), and the Digital

Incubation Center (DIC). With the FIFA World Cup planned for 2022, the country was developing rapidly, and residents were open to new initiatives. It seemed like a good decision to try the idea in Qatar rather than in a developed market.

The Daily Deals Industry

Susanna and Saif had thoroughly studied the discount industry while preparing for their MBA project. They looked at the daily deals industry, which was prevalent worldwide. Daily Deals platforms such as 'Groupon' aggregated high value offers (40-70% off) from local businesses and listed them for sale on its website. The platform took a 30-50% commission per transaction by the customers. In this model, the platform helped connect the business with the customers.

The business offered inexpensive deals to the customers for a limited period. The customers paid the platform and would get a voucher to present to the business and benefit from the discounted product or service. The merchant would then get their money from the platform. The payment came in after the customer had used the service. To be on a platform like this, the merchants had to offer a discount to the customers and a commission to the platform, which reduced their profitability. The model was not a win-win for all.

Initially, this model looked attractive to merchants, and customers got good deals. Merchants attracted new customers, and DD sites generated revenue by taking a commission from the firms for every deal made by the customer. However, many businesses were walking away from daily deal platforms and refused to return to offer more deals since their discounted deals were not leading to the financial successes that the daily deal companies promised. The model was grappling with significant issues, and the following were the main ones.

Profitability

Businesses were persuaded to offer substantial discounts to create a highly lucrative deal for consumers. DD companies convinced them to incur short-term losses and view them as a marketing expense in exchange for new customers who would pay back the investment in the long run. Businesses were also offered the hope that once consumers visited their stores to redeem a coupon, they would spend beyond the face value of the voucher.

However, research showed that almost half the businesses that participated lost money or broke even, and less than 20% of the customers returned for a full-price purchase. The high commission and delayed payment meant that the merchants were losing money and having to cover the cost of the service they provided to the customer.

Repeat Business

The main reason for the DD websites' inability to provide repeat customers to merchants was that customers who swarm DD websites were often not looking to discover a new business or activity but were seeking a deal on service, regardless of the business providing it. This means that once consumers tried a service for a heavy discount, they would then try a different provider of the same service the next time they needed it, rather than going to the first merchant and purchasing another session for a full price.

Daily deal websites provided consumers incentives to be disloyal to the business they used the last time by featuring a similar business again on the platform and offering another huge discount. The incentive to drive the consumer to the store was the discount, and then the same incentive drove the consumer to a different store. This way, the consumer's loyalty was to the daily deal platform and not to the merchant.

Limited Exposure

Most daily deal websites did not focus on a long-term relationship with businesses but a long-term relationship with the consumer. This was because even before a deal expired, the daily deal company focused on attracting the next business to offer a similar deal on its platform to continue offering deals to its consumers. The business would gain online visibility for the duration of the offer and then lose it to another business.

Urban Point: The Original Concept

Susanna and Saif designed their model around an e-commerce platform where consumers could explore and discover offers from local businesses. The platform would offer merchants an online sales channel and allow them to create a permanent storefront with deal listings.

Unlike the DD platforms that kept listing all the possible merchants one after the other, leaving no scope for developing customer loyalty, Urban Point would give the merchants a permanent online storefront and the ability to structure offers according to their available capacity. The flaws of the DD model presented the areas of opportunity that Susanna and Saif decided to explore. They wanted to address all the challenges that the DD model caused for customers and businesses.

So how would it differ from DD sites? Susanna and Saif were clear that their platform would allow merchants to decide how many deals they wanted to sell each month, depending on the excess capacity they anticipated. It would offer merchants a permanent online storefront and a sales channel. Unlike DD platforms that had to replace the merchants after a maximum of 30 days due to the structure of the business model, Susanna and Saif's platform would give the merchants a permanent storefront and the ability to control their offers according to their capacity. They also wanted to ensure that customers had complete transparency based on reviews from customers who had used offers at the merchants and that customers would only buy offers that merchants could handle based on their available capacity.

They would also let merchants determine the structure of their offers so that the discounts would not be so heavy that the businesses would end up losing money. They would charge 10-20% commissions to keep the merchants on a long-term basis, compared to the 30-40% set by DD platforms. The platform would allow the merchants to build their reputation based on the customers' ratings and feedback. The merchant would have to maintain a rating of at least 4 out of 5 to remain listed on the platform. This was to ensure that merchants treated the discount customers in the same manner as their regular customers, and if they did not, they would be removed from the platform.

The consumers would be able to explore and discover new lifestyles and services through a permanent discount platform in their city. They could also assess the merchant's reputation and treatment of customers before their purchase. They would not have to worry about over-capacity issues since they would only purchase the offers from businesses based on their available capacity.

They soon realized that Amazon had started something similar called 'Amazon Local' in the UK and the USA, where they connected the customers to local businesses through a permanent online storefront. This was a significant vote of confidence, as they realized that Amazon had seen the same problems with the DD model, and they were on the right path.

The Ground Reality

Groupon was not active in Qatar, but there was a small local DD player. In addition, there was The Entertainer, which was quite successful in selling its annual subscription for $80-$100 USD to consumers, offering access to hundreds of "Buy 1 Get 1 Free" offers valid for the entire calendar year. Once in Qatar, Susanna and Saif learned that online payment options were restricted.

In 2015, the Qatar Central Bank did not permit the use of debit cards for digital transactions, and Qatar had a credit card penetration rate of only 15%. As a result, most of the population was unable to buy online locally. Most local e-commerce services, as well as the local ride-hailing startup

Careem, offered a cash payment option. They quickly realized that this was only one of the challenges that they would face.

The Dream Turns into a Nightmare

Once Urban Point went live, Susanna and Saif realized that several issues were still unresolved. While Susanna and Saif thought that giving merchants a permanent space on their platform was a great idea, many merchants did not share their enthusiasm because they did not want to be associated with a discount platform in the long term. They felt it made them look 'desperate' for more business, indicating they were not doing well. This became an issue with merchants who initially agreed to join but started having second thoughts.

Merchants did not want to deal with the concept of capacity management and spend time figuring out how many discount coupons to offer. Since merchants had control over the structure of their offers, many were putting up offers that were too weak, such as 10% off, to attract customers. Many wanted to offer discounts only during specific lean periods, not always, which resulted in a complicated customer experience.

From the customer's point of view, a platform that offered discounts from the same merchant all the time eliminated any sense of urgency to make a purchase, even though the offers were limited in number. However, when this was combined with the fact that many of the offers were of low value, customer motivation to purchase from the platform declined.

This was a major problem. This meant that the amount spent marketing the platform to customers was proving to be relatively high, as customers often refused to make a purchase. Urban Point's customer acquisition costs were skyrocketing; merchants wanted to come off the platform. Susanna and Saif realized that their model was on the path to bankruptcy. Not surprisingly, even Amazon Local closed down after facing similar challenges.

Susanna and Saif had not anticipated this. They had to do something disruptive to overcome this challenge or pack their bags and leave. They wondered how WhatsApp or Skype made money despite providing free services to customers, and this sparked an idea that to disrupt, they would have to attack the revenue sources of companies like Groupon and Entertainer. But this was easier said than done.

These companies connected customers and businesses, making money by charging either firms or customers. To have a platform that is free or very inexpensive for both customers and merchants, they would have to come up with a model that monetizes and grows through other sources.

The Pivot

Saif had worked with T-Mobile in the USA before joining his MBA at Mannheim. He was aware that there was no clear distinction between various Telco providers. They offered the same talk time, data, and internet speed packages. They could not differentiate on price, speed, or service.

With number portability, customers could easily switch from one provider to another. With the advent of voice and video calling platforms like WhatsApp, Skype, and Zoom, Telcos have lost revenue. What if they could develop the model in a way that helps telcos differentiate themselves and increase customer engagement? What if a telco wanted to launch a Groupon or Entertainer model? Wouldn't they have so many advantages right away on day one?

Susanna and Saif decided to create a customized model for telcos. The proposition for telcos was that, since they only compete on price, data, and minutes, they should consider offering an Urban Point subscription as part of their postpaid telco plans to enhance the value of their service.

Urban Point would structure its model of offers such that a customer could redeem each offer once per month, and all offers would renew on the first of every month. If the customer did not use an offer in a particular month, then would lose it but could still use it once in the following month. This aligned with the telco model since postpaid customers paid their bills once per month, and that would renew their monthly data and minutes. Urban Point would charge a subscription fee for access to its service, but the subscription would be free for postpaid customers. The telcos would then pay Urban Point on behalf of their postpaid customers.

By receiving free access to offers from local businesses that renewed every month, customers would benefit from their telco company every day. Since merchants paid zero transaction fees, they would be happy to offer year-long discounts, which were restricted to a particular set of customers and could only be used once per month.

It sounded great and made sense. Customers would love it because it was free and offers would renew every month. Businesses would continue to receive customers regularly, and even though customers would return to receive a discount, they could still be profitable for every merchant, as they did not have to pay a commission and could further upsell their services. Telcos would pay Urban Point a small fee per customer, but if customers used the service and saved enough monthly, they could cover the cost of their monthly telco payments with the savings they would generate through the Urban Point app.

The chicken-or-egg dilemma was tough when creating a 2-way platform, but this would be a 3-way platform with the telco being the additional player. The idea wasn't tried anywhere else, so the Telcos would have to take a leap of faith. Telcos would first want to know who the partner merchants were. The merchants would like to see where the customers would come from; without these two, there would be no customers. Susanna and Saif first targeted the merchants and slowly convinced them to join the Urban Point platform.

Ooredoo was the largest telco in Qatar and had a presence in 13 countries. Saif and Susanna proposed their model to Maha Al Khulaifi, the Senior

Manager for Digital Services at Ooredoo, who found the idea intriguing.

The idea sounded great but had not been tried anywhere in the world. Urban Point didn't have the merchants or a mobile app; it just had some concept designs on a piece of paper. Ooredoo couldn't partner with newly graduated students and launch a national product just because of an idea on a piece of paper, especially considering that their initial attempt at establishing a business in Qatar had failed.

Saif proposed that they should set benchmarks before proceeding to the next steps. Urban Point would procure as many merchants as possible to demonstrate to Ooredoo that merchants were interested in joining, and simultaneously, Urban Point would develop its proposed mobile app. Once they achieved 60 merchant partners and Ooredoo approved their mobile app, it would enable subscription payments for Urban Point through Direct Carrier Billing (DCB), allowing customers to pay for Urban Point subscriptions through their Ooredoo bill.

If this phase proceeds well and Ooredoo is satisfied with Urban Point's performance and customer feedback, they could bundle the Urban Point subscription as part of their postpaid plans and offer it to their customers at no additional cost. Saif further proposed that Ooredoo should promote Urban Point through its communication channels, such as its app and SMS. Urban Point would share the revenue generated through the subscription sales through DCB. Maha agreed and set up to meet again in a month for a progress update. Urban Point had gained a second chance.

A Second Chance

Invigorated with a chance to correct the course, Saif and Susanna convinced Dr. Khalid Al Hajri of their pivot and requested additional funding support to implement the new vision. They focused on onboarding as many merchants as possible and enhancing the mobile app in the next 30 days. Susanna took the lead on merchant partnerships. Merchants were offered commission-free agreements and informed that they would be promoted to

Ooredoo's customer base if they agreed to join, and the service was launched. The merchants had to provide high-quality offers that could renew every month.

Saif worked with the development team to expedite mobile app development. For their next meeting with Maha, Urban Point had managed to sign 40+ brands, including household names Chili's and Applebee's. The mobile app was enhanced significantly and had the Ooredoo logo strategically placed in multiple places to show what a co-branded partnership would look like. Maha loved it and agreed to proceed with the co-branding and DCB partnership launch.

Urban Point would integrate with Ooredoo's billing and communication systems and would continue to procure more brands while the technical integrations took place. At the same time, they worked together to develop their marketing and communications plan for the launch. The DCB partnership was launched in December 2017.

Early Differentiation

The Entertainer, present in 15 countries, was the dominant player in the Qatari market, with more than 350 partner brands. Urban Point would be launching with only 60 brands and had to differentiate without attacking the competition but in ways that would allow for early adopters and traction.

In 2016, while Qatar had one of the highest smartphone penetrations in the world, at 95% +, it had a relatively low credit card penetration of around 15%, and Qatar Central Bank still did not allow the use of debit cards for digital transactions.

The Entertainer had sold voucher books in local supermarkets earlier and had also launched a mobile app for its vouchers. Each brand had three offers for the entire year, and its subscription was priced at QR 350 annually, which had to be paid upfront Urban Point introduced the concept of offers that renewed every month, with the option of a monthly subscription that could be cancelled at any time, and the customers could pay for it using their credit card or together with their telco bill.

If customers chose to subscribe with their mobile number, they would get their first month free and could cancel anytime. These differentiations immediately found a base of customers previously untapped by The Entertainer and its local copycats. Ooredoo promoted Urban Point by targeting its base of prepaid and postpaid customers, and subscriptions started to flow in. Instead of attacking The Entertainer, Urban Point focused on early adopters and ambassadors to build its customer base.

Even if Urban Point didn't have enough brands, customers could visit their favourite brands repeatedly and cancel their subscriptions if they travelled. Urban Point conducted customer surveys and invited different types of customers to dinner to gather additional insights. These included a variety of customers: active users, churned users, users who never subscribed, and users who subscribed but never utilized any offers. Insight was gained through a customer who lived alone but only subscribed and used Urban Point when his family was visiting, then unsubscribed again. Since all the offers from Urban Point and The Entertainer were Buy 1 Get 1 Free (e.g., Buy 1 Burger Get 1 Free, Buy 1 Coffee, Get 1 Free, etc.), single customers had little use of the offers.

The team immediately realized another area of differentiation and started adding offers suitable for singles, such as Buy 1 Dessert, Get 1 Coffee Free, or Buy 1 Main Course, Get 1 Dessert Free. These differentiations helped gain early adopters without provoking the market leader. Urban Point continued to sign up new brands, and the early traction and positive feedback from customers convinced Ooredoo to embed Urban Point subscriptions as part of its postpaid offering.

They negotiated pricing and agreed to brand Urban Point as a "Powered by Ooredoo" service. In exchange, Ooredoo would heavily promote Urban

Point to its customers through its marketing channels. This would be the first value-added service like this to be launched by a telco anywhere in the world.

Urban Point finally launched as a bundled service with Ooredoo's higher-tier postpaid plans in November 2018. Ooredoo offered Urban Point subscriptions only to customers who subscribed to its top-tier plan of QR 1000 per month. This did not convince Susanna and Saif, as they thought that someone who pays QR1000 as a Telco bill per month would not be interested in discounts.

However, to their surprise, even the higher-tier customers had begun using Urban Point offers repeatedly. Ooredoo conducted its customer churn analysis a few months later and began to see an impact, subsequently making Urban Point free for all its postpaid customers. Since many of Urban Point's early adopters were prepaid customers, offering Urban Point for free with Ooredoo became a great migration strategy from prepaid to postpaid.

Urban Point initiated this strategy in Qatar, creating a new market trend through this partnership. As of May 2022, Netflix, Starzplay, OSN, and a few other services are also offered by Ooredoo and Vodafone to their customers. The new model enabled their customer acquisition cost to be almost zero, whereas the industry average was around $15-$20 per customer. Urban Point was designed to ensure that Ooredoo benefited by providing it free to its postpaid subscribers. Ooredoo would then promote the product, as it helped them retain customers and increase engagement.

Their model was a success with both customers and merchants. Even the most famous international brands, such as Pizza Hut, Burger King, Baskin Robbins, Papa Johns, Dunkin Donuts, Caribou Coffee, Hilton Hotels, and Grand Hyatt, all became partners, which led to a snowball effect of other brands joining. Urban Point started with 60 brands on its platform and expanded to over 600 by the end of May 2022. Merchants preferred customers continuing to return, albeit with offers, as they did not have to pay hefty commissions, giving them a chance to build relationships with their customers.

When Urban Point started sending a substantial amount of traffic to the merchants, it began charging merchants an annual participation fee of QR 2500 to be on Urban Point. In addition, as Urban Point gained new insights into customer preferences and activity, it started offering marketing packs to merchants, which they could purchase for additional promotion to Urban Point customers through SMS, push notifications, and premium in-app placements. Urban Point's Revenue model had finally matured. It monetized from:

1. Customers who were not eligible for the free service,
2. Ooredoo, who paid them on behalf of their postpaid customers,
3. From the merchants who paid for their listing in the app, and
4. From additional marketing services sold to merchants.

With revenue streams sorted, Urban Point had to focus on growing the base further and increasing engagement.

Leveraging Insights and Experiments to Drive Growth

One of the challenges of offering a free service to customers was that they would often claim it, but since it was free, its perceived value diminished, and customers would frequently forget to use it. Urban Point saw a massive number of free subscriptions activated, only to see the customers were not using the offers. There were also instances where customers would go to a restaurant, pay full price for the meal, and then discover that they could have used Urban Point to reduce their bill, but they had never bothered to open the app to check for an offer. They also noticed that customers would use an offer but then not use it again the following month, once the offer was renewed.

Saif and Susanna decided to delve deeply into their data and conduct various experiments to determine what would encourage consumers to redeem more offers. Their north star metric was "redemptions per month," and they established a Control Tower where they would track all marketing and engagement experiments. They would run and monitor the results of their experiments. If the experiment were successful, they would try to automate it if possible; else, it would become a recurring task for their marketing team.

First, they set up geo-fences around all their partner outlet locations. This way, whenever a user was in the vicinity of a mall, for example, they would get a notification informing them of the brands that were on Urban Point. This helped remind customers of nearby offers so that they wouldn't forget to use them and save when they had the chance.

Second, the 1st of every month was declared 'Urban Point Day,' so all customers who had used an offer in the previous month would get a congratulatory message on 'Urban Point Day' informing them that their offers had been renewed.

Then, the team evaluated a combination of different messages to entice customers to use their first offer on the app, utilizing messages that triggered the 'fear of missing out' emotion, encouraged people to improve their social lives, and reminded them not to waste money. Once the right configuration of messages was established, they created a content bank of 200+ messages that were automated to different users in various stages of their journey. For example, the messages to those users who created their account but had not subscribed were different from than messages sent to those users who had subscribed but had not used their first offer yet, which were different from those users who had used more than three offers but had not used an offer in the last 30 days.

Some of the experiment results were surprisingly unexpected, as the hypothesis seemed obvious but was, in fact, incorrect. For example, the team targeted the Indian customer base with messages that included a list of Indian restaurants on the app. The idea was to inform the Indian community about Indian restaurants offering Urban Point deals, which would entice them to subscribe. To test the effectiveness of this strategy, they crafted another message that didn't mention any names of the restaurants. They just communicated that Urban Point had numerous offers they could utilize.

Surprisingly, the message with no restaurants performed twice as well in conversions as the message that mentioned the Indian restaurants. This was unexpected, so they decided to launch another experiment, and this time, they would craft a third message which would include international chains such as Papa Johns, Burger King, and Baskin Robbins.

Interestingly, the message with the international chains performed the best, while the message with the Indian restaurants was the worst-performing message. They decided to deep-dive into this, and what their research revealed was quite astonishing. It turned out that for the Indian community, the local Indian restaurants were not considered REAL Indian food.

Authentic Indian food was something that they prepared at home or something they had in India, so the mention of Indian restaurants had no impact on subscription or activation. At the same time, the international brands offered something different and were more interesting. After conducting this experiment and recognizing their own biases and assumptions, they evaluated how other messages performed with diverse audiences, such as Filipinos, Egyptians, and Westerners, and then refined their messages based on the best results.

These experiments were vital to taking their growth to the next level. They ensured they would put their growth on autopilot by improving conversions at every stage. The supply of customers came from Ooredoo's end, but they had to make sure that these customers would then be engaged and retained.

International Expansion

After successfully establishing themselves in Qatar through a partnership with Ooredoo, Susanna and Saif planned international expansion to Kuwait and Oman, the two GCC countries where Ooredoo operated. Their first institutional investor funded the expansion. They held meetings with Ooredoo in these countries and struck similar deals to those in Qatar, onboarding merchants and launching a DCB partnership for the first time.

They onboarded local teams and initiated the procurement of local brands. Things moved faster now that they had evidence of success in Qatar. Brands signed up faster, and they soon launched the DCB partnerships in December 2020 and January 2021 in Oman and Kuwait, respectively. They became the first Qatari startup to expand to both countries. It took only six months in each country to launch their service. This was a basis for expansion, but then the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March, just as Urban Point was about to launch its marketing campaign for the new countries.

Surviving the Pandemic

The pandemic turned out to be an existential challenge for Urban Point. All three countries imposed strict lockdowns and shut all non-essential businesses for months. The team had grown significantly in all the countries, and suddenly, Urban Point had costs in three countries but no revenue. The lockdowns changed the priorities of the telcos and merchants. They had never fully implemented their model of embedding their subscription as part of the postpaid plans in Kuwait and Oman. Now, this did not seem likely to happen at all.

"It was like acid being thrown on all we had done,"

Saif recollected. Urban Point had to make the difficult decision to shut down its businesses in Oman and Kuwait to focus on the Qatar market.

Back then, Susanna realized the following lesson she shared with other entrepreneurs,

> *"Focus on the long-term vision of your start-up and set bold goals for yourself so that you can inspire yourself and others through the tough periods. Entrepreneurship is not luxurious, and you should be prepared for hard work. You should be mentally prepared to go through ups and downs, of which there will be many, but it's worth it once you get to the other side."*[1]

As Urban Point had a robust business model, it quickly returned to pre-Covid highs (cf. the following figure), although it experienced a dip in business with the 2nd and 3rd waves of the virus. However, they were able to survive the pandemic in their home market and started setting new all-time highs.

Local Support and International Recognition

At Urban Point, Susanna and Saif put their MBA education to good use. However, the support from the local startup ecosystem proved invaluable throughout their journey. DIC offered them free office space and mentoring from the CEOs of successful startups, such as Careem and Namshi. After they graduated from DIC, QBIC helped them through lean startup classes, which further solidified their product offering.

QDB joined them as their first institutional investor, providing them with global exposure through sponsored trips to international tech conferences, such as the Web Summit in Lisbon and the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Urban Point also gained international recognition and awards, specifically:

1. **2016:** Mobile App of the Year Award by Entrepreneur.com
2. **2017:** Selected by World Economic Forum as a top MENA region startup
3. **2018:** Winner of Seedstars Competition Qatar & among the top

twelve finalists globally

4. **2018:** Featured as the Qatari start-up of the year for Al Jazeera's Entrepreneurship Series
5. **2019:** Winner Digital Startup of the Year by MOTC
6. **2021:** Determined to be one of the fastest-growing tech companies in MENA by Deloitte

The Power of a Duo

Susanna and Saif's friendship started during their time in the MBA program in Mannheim. They were peers and learners first, then entrepreneurs and co-founders, and later, husband and wife. They both viewed sharing an innovative approach to solving business problems as a great strength. As MBA cohort peers, they could first apply what they learned in their coursework. In a way, they shared a mental software acquired during the MBA journey. But there was more.

Both understood that they complemented each other's strengths. While both led with strategic thinking, benefits were working in tandem. Already back in Mannheim, they participated in the Gallup StrengthsFinder survey as part of a leadership course. The idea behind this leadership development and team optimization tool was to create transparency about one's strengths and leverage them as part of a strength-based leadership approach. The Gallup StrengthsFinder survey differentiated between four broad areas of strengths:

- Strategic thinking-related themes help individuals internalize and analyze information, informing better quality decisions.
- Executing themes, in turn, supports individuals in bringing things to life.
- Relationship-building themes enable individuals to form better relationships, holding teams together.

- Finally, influencing themes allow individuals to speak up, take charge, and ensure that others are included and heard[28.]

In addition to her marketing expertise and unique automation acumen, Susanna could navigate challenging situations with composure. Her top five strengths include[29]:

- **Connectedness:** Having faith in links amongst things, believing there are fewer coincidences and events having meaning.
- **Input:** Being interested in collecting and accumulating ideas.
- **Learner:** Keen to learn and grow while it is the process and not just the learning outcome.
- **Restorative:** Being able to explore and overcome issues effectively.
- **Responsibility:** Taking ownership of their commitments, keeping values stable over time.

In turn, Saif's top five signature strengths comprised different ones that complemented Susanna's. Her 'restorative' and 'connectedness' were at the bottom of his Gallup theme list. Susanna's 'maximizer' theme was last on her list, yet among Saif's top five strengths so the founder duo not only had complementary strengths but also aptly leveraged their individual and joint founder team profile:

- **Relator:** Enjoying close relationships and finding satisfaction in progressing towards goals together.
- **Strategic:** Quickly identifying essential patterns and issues.
- **Intellection:** Appreciating introspection and intellectual discussions.
- **Maximizer:** Stimulating group and personal excellence, transforming anything into something better.
- **Self-Assurance:** Feeling confident in one's ability to take risks and

navigating one's life based on a strong internal compass.

In the process of starting and running Urban Point in the way they have done it, Susanna and Saif learned some important lessons:

- Patience was key because one was required to get through several departments and approvals.
- As for cost management, time was the enemy. Thus, keeping the costs low was necessary to sustain yourself.
- Time moved faster for entrepreneurs than for corporates, as they had to start making money.
- The ability to manage crises needed refinement as they happened frequently. This had to be done in a calm, composed, and strategic manner.

Scaling-up and Expansion

Susanna and Saif reflected on the journey of Urban Point over a freshly brewed cappuccino at the MIA Park Café, recalling the insights they had gained and the agility and resilience they had demonstrated in the face of unprecedented COVID challenges. As strategic thinkers, they had their minds on the future. They also encountered black swan events in business environments during their studies, which may be unlikely, but would have an above-average impact when they occurred. In hindsight, everyone would admit they should have seen it coming. What black swan events should they ponder about?

"It is easy to pivot if it is just academic,"

Saif reasoned. However, they had long left the academic world, and more was at stake. Susanna reckoned:

"It is key to be aware of your assumptions."

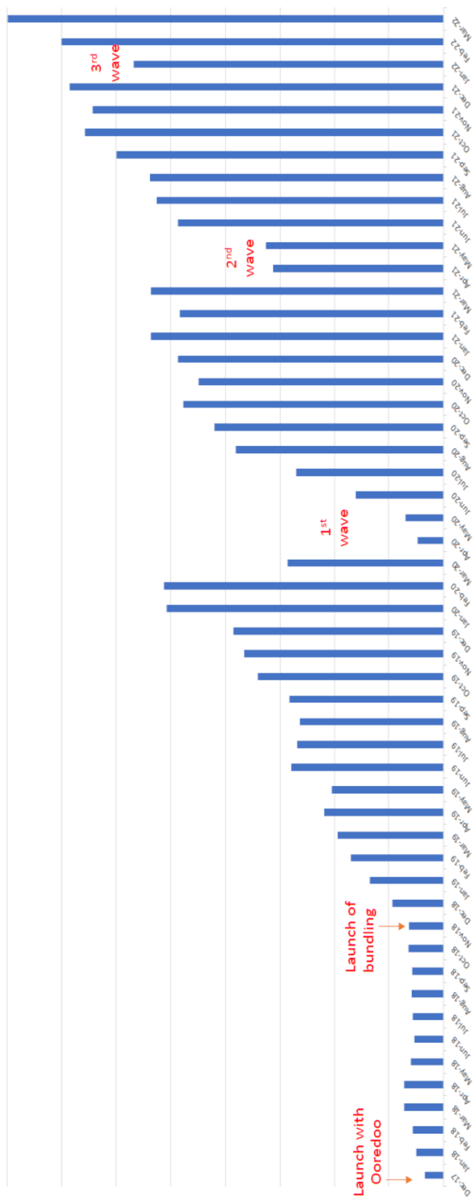

Figure 21: Impact of Three Primary COVID-19 waves on the Overall Pattern of Transactions Per Month

But what were they? She remembered vividly that they had revised the app sign-up page multiple times based on their analysis of how many individuals merely downloaded the app without signing up. Was enough time spent on incremental improvements? When to explore the next big thing and its subsequent trajectory? What could it be?

Urban Point did dabble into food delivery but did not find the sector attractive. COVID-19 led to the mushrooming of delivery businesses, but it also involved the complexities of hiring riders, obtaining their visas, and providing accommodation, making the effort daunting and unlikely to generate enough revenue. Expansion into other markets was something Urban Point had attempted with Ooredoo, even before COVID-19, choosing Saudi Arabia as a potential market. Still, the political crisis between Qatar and its neighbours killed that opportunity, and expansion in Kuwait and Oman was suspended due to COVID-19.

Urban Point could expand into other countries – again – via tie-ups with telcos, but to what extent had these so-called windows of opportunity already closed? The digital space was moving fast, and the founders of Urban Point were not the only ones thinking about global market gap analysis and classic market arbitrage of ideas.

Susanna and Saif wondered if they had hit the end of the innovation S curve. What else mattered – and what should they do next? How best should they leverage their strength? Should they attempt international expansion as they did earlier with Oman and Kuwait? Or should they go deeper in Qatar and pursue other opportunities?

Discussion of the Role of Strengths in the Urban Point Case Study

When creating humanistic organizations and leading in a humanistic spirit, the strengths-based view adds several advantages.

They include the following:

- Starting a partnership and interactions being fully convinced that everyone, especially one's business partner, has strengths, sets the right tone from the beginning.

- Being open to creating transparency about strengths builds trust, as one can believe in and tap into their strengths.

- The Gallup tool in its extended form lists "bottom five". Everyone has themes that drain them, while others can do better. It's also important to explain focus, as well as why and how individuals want to and should focus on certain responsibilities but not others. This can result in a blame-free dialogue about what these priorities and responsibilities should be.

- If one partner has strengths in connectedness, this can lead to more credibility and better risk management. Paired with input, data can support expected relationships between key success variables. Learner strengths ensure there is energy and curiosity to sustain the quest for proving such links. Then, restorative, theme-oriented strengths help fix a system – with the right diligence. Portraying a profound sense of responsibility can once more foster trust and is also relevant when building credibility. A perception of reliability is equally enhanced by reported strengths in the responsibility theme.

- If then the other partner adds relator, strategic, intellection, maximizer and self-assurance strengths to the duo, there is a sound balance. Every start-up, especially those having experienced COVID times and the adversity affiliated with internationalization, can benefit from self-assurance. Entrepreneurs also benefit from the strategic theme as part of the strategic thinking domain. Intellection helps convince investors, as it is easy to engage in discussions where the best objective argument will prevail. Maximizer, as a strength, can help take a good solution and turn it into an even greater one.

- Combining each other's strengths allowed the duo to carve out task niches for each one of them, create a symbiotic interdependence, and argue with ease about which tasks to outsource or leave to team members, granting opportunities to shine to others.

5.9. Summary of Key Insights – Good can Always be Done Better

This chapter outlined what great leaders actually do, how they can gain credibility, and what to focus on. In summary, great humanistic leaders build better systems. They acknowledge that softer factors, such as well-being and engagement, drive successful workplaces. A successful workplace, however, is not just one in which the functionalistic view dominates. It fosters mere efficiency and effectiveness. A successful workplace respects individuality. It tries to understand what is right with everyone and how to bring out the best in all.

Holistic talent management is best understood as a process that fosters further growth. Even reasonably strong performances in certain themes can improve over time. Expectations and other factors, such as technologies change. Therefore, good can always be done better, and talents as well as strengths must evolve over time.

Humanistic leaders are encouraged to become experts in identifying the unique strengths of their colleagues and designing workplaces that reflect these strengths. Optimizing workplaces may mean that the best opportunity for an individual to thrive may also be elsewhere.

For example, a project leader may have designed a strategic and complex project in collaboration with a joint venture partner. He or she could get it started. If this project leader demonstrates strengths in terms of command, activation, and ideation, then retaining them in the role of project leader may be a misfit. If execution skills are now required, command-oriented behaviours could neutralize the benefits of decentralization and empowerment.

In the execution phase, the primary need shifts from activation to achiever – getting things done. New and more diverse ideas on the strategic level may be important overall, but they could compromise a sound implementation plan. Later, new ideas or major changes should be implemented in the execution phase, as these would become more expensive adaptations.

The risks of missing budgets and deadlines also multiply. In such a setting, a person with execution and relationship-building skills should take the lead and replace someone with strategic thinking strengths. Past accomplishments, egos, loyalty, and other factors should not distract from what is needed to optimize the entire system.

In this sense, humanistic leaders are fully aware that their responsibility is not just to establish a dignity-oriented system once and then leave it untouched. On an ongoing basis, a winning performance must be continually refined, as even the best can always be improved.

Chapter 6:
How can Leaders Check their Success?

6.1. Introduction – Understanding Outcomes of Leadership

Measuring success in leadership is both an art and science in itself. Several approaches exist. Like tools, all of them ought to be handled with the right care. This chapter aims to discuss available options and how to understand and deploy them. Measuring success in business has remained a challenge, though. It is often unclear how to deal with the following questions:

- **Legitimacy**: Who gets to decide what to measure? Is it the owner? Can one realistically satisfy multiple stakeholders, such as investors and staff, simultaneously? Within a stakeholder approach, does the loudest or most powerful group only have the privilege to win?
- **Governance Approach**: Is it done in a top-down approach by skilled senior executives? Does it have to be bottom-up?
- **Cultural Relativism Versus Universalism**: Can one approach serve the entire world? Even if some cultures, such as the Brazilian one in Chapter 4, have a different power distance constellation than many other countries.
- **Invisibility**: Direct visibility is limited when it comes to human dignity. It is a latent construct. It only shows indirectly in the right behaviours, which are then interpreted accordingly.
- **Symbolic Micro-Moments Versus Highly Abstract Grand Scheme Approaches**: What to measure? How scientific, academic, or abstract

can it be without losing relevance and understandability by practitioners?

- **Multidimensionality and Methodological Challenges**: Beyond cultural relativism and opportunities to include various dimensions of leadership success and human dignity, how to conceptualize and operationalize all properly? What is the weight of individual aspects versus others? Is it an ideal point model in which a predefined and specific target must be hit, or is it an ideal vector model in which a philosophy of "the more, the better" logic applies?

- **Human Nature**: On paper and conceptually, close-to-perfect performance measurement systems could be designed. Yet, human beings adapt their behaviour in reality. They optimize input-output relations. They know that what gets measured, gets done. There is a risk of unwanted behaviours spreading, even being triggered as a side effect by a performance management system.

- **Changing Standards Over Time**: How to deal with the phenomenon that standards at one point in time may lose their special nature. An earlier version, 1.0, of measuring success may not be as sophisticated as versions 3.0 or 6.0. This could demotivate and create hindsight biases in which past achievements do not appear that special.

- **The Benefits of Lag Effects and Delays**: In economics and behavioural sciences, there are several theories that suggest the benefits of sacrificing in the short term. Within such "sacrifice for growth" or "deferred gratification" models, individuals are encouraged not to secure the eventually desired outcomes right away. The logic of some models can be broken down to companies. For example, the Harrod-Domar growth model promotes higher savings and lower short-term benefits in order to reap long-term benefits. The Solow-Swan growth model implies, once more, that short-term sacrifices, such as reduced consumption and increased capital

> accumulation, secure long-term economic growth, stability, resilience, and more, as well as greater benefits for a larger number of people involved later on. The Prebisch-Singer hypothesis in structuralist economics suggests that developing nations must endure short-term hardship by prioritizing industrialization over short-term consumer satisfaction. Already, Max Weber, in his views on (Protestant) work ethics, suggested that delaying gratification leads to long-term success and prosperity. The "sweat and toil" development model encountered in South Korea and the P.R. of China, where initial harsh labour conditions and sacrifices characterized decades, eventually led to rapid economic progress. It remains a crucial question when humanistic benefits ought to appear in the big scheme of things, taking mid- to long-term aspects into consideration.

In business, a straightforward and go-to approach for measuring success is to review financials. However, a company can be highly successful without sound leadership in place. This can occur when current success originates in the smart decisions of past executives. There are several strategic moves that can be made to boost financial performance, even in the absence of humanistic leadership. For example, Siemens sold the Siemens brand to a new legal entity, creating the potential for billions of dollars in profits for that business year. It was more of a strategic move within a corporate framework than evidence of truly effective leadership. Profitability can stem equally from scale effects, harsh layoff measures, corruption, poor product quality, and other factors. Financial outcomes can but do not have to be linked to great leadership in general or great humanistic leadership specifically.

It is essential to measure success with integrity and a truly holistic approach. The following sections do not necessarily represent the absolute and perfected approaches. However, they have great potential to inspire and outline options. There is a likelihood that if a humanistic leader decides to measure success, a learning curve will be encountered to advance. Earlier approaches chosen will lay the foundation for more sophisticated ones in the future.

6.2. Details of a Dignity Scale

Fordham Professor Michael Pirson, one of the co-founders of the humanistic management movement, and research partners made progress with the development of a dignity scale.[30] They propose an operationalization of dignity in three parts, utilizing 24 items as outlined in the following figure.

Figure 22: Suggested Parts and Items of a Dignity Scale
Source: Pirson et al. (2022, p. 110)

The good news is that human dignity has become a measurable concept. Year-on-year progress can be tracked more easily with the help of the scale outlined above. Organizations and industries can become more comparable with the help of such a tool. Statistical qualities seem solid as well.

It is also worth noting that, although the tool and scale encompass 24 items, they reflect a narrower understanding of leadership success, even in terms of humanistic leadership success. It would also impose a predefined understanding, conceptualization, and operationalization of human dignity developed in one culture of the planet. It cannot grant a voice to those who operate in a different culture and pursue divergent aspects of human dignity more relevant to them and their situation. A case in point is the topic of apologizing. In some cultures, there is more openness to do so. In others, this is even discouraged as a sign of weakness. In others, it would, in turn, lead to a loss of face. Leadership is not culture-free but culture-bound in several aspects.

Methodological questions persist, such as those pertaining to the weights of each of the three pillars. For example, if the organizational pillar, on average, shows positive scores but individual answers for their personal level don't, what does this leave us with? From what score on does an organization count as humanistic or a success? Several ambiguities remain. Measurement in itself as well as interpreting results places high demands on those carrying out and receiving the results of the analysis.

Finally, a crucial downside of an overly specialized scale and measurement tool is that it requires more intensive sales efforts to stakeholders. Regular shop floor employees may not have recognized the normative value of humanism in business and may not have adopted humanistic values. After all, human dignity is a latent construct. Intellectually, it is more accessible to some than to others.

Therefore, relying on more established constructs with their semantics can be even more beneficial. There are numerous tested and proven tools available that help mitigate the liability associated with the novelty of more recent and specific humanistic management-related tools. Established concepts, such as organizational culture, energy, and engagement, have not only been linked to leadership and organizational performance, but they also hold tremendous potential for humanism. The following sections detail three approaches and compare them.

6.3. Organizational Cultures, Energies, and Engagement as Measurement Options

Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, behaviours, and norms that shape how work is done in a company. It evolves over time and is deeply influenced by leadership. It is a strong indicator of leadership effectiveness because of the following factors:

- Leaders set the tone for culture through their vision, decisions, and behaviour.
- A positive culture fosters trust, innovation, and long-term success.
- Organizational culture is the social glue that holds the company together.
- Culture affects everything – from employee experience to customer satisfaction to business performance.

It can be measured in a variety of ways, such as:

- **Employee Surveys:** Questions about values, psychological safety, inclusion, and ethical behaviour.
- **Turnover and Retention Rates:** High turnover can indicate a toxic or misaligned culture.
- **Alignment with Core Values:** Are employees living the values leadership promotes?
- **Performance Metrics:** Do employees feel empowered and accountable for results?
- **Glassdoor and Reputation Reviews:** External perception often mirrors internal culture.

What speaks in favour of organizational culture is that it is a long-term and deep-rooted

measure of leadership effectiveness. It helps diagnose systemic issues beyond just leadership charisma. Cultures are harder to manipulate. Real change requires skills and short-term manipulation of the mental software or social glue is not tha easily possible.

Simultaneously, organizational culture shows this stickiness and inertia. If past leaders were ineffective, this effect may not wither away quickly enough to allow for newer impulses to deploy their effect.

The most published tool on the planet was suggested by former IMD Professor Dan Denison[31]. It comes with optional consulting services, an opportunity for international and industry benchmarking, and a wealth of training material for partners as part of their certification program. As there are numerous publications on the tool, its statistical qualities and strong explanatory power have been made public and became transparent. The Denison Organizational Culture Model assesses organizational culture based on four key traits as outlined in the following figure. They have three subcategories each.

These 12 subcategories are further measured using 48 specific survey items that provide insight into an organization's strengths and weaknesses. The following table lists the four main traits, along with their subdimensions and 48 corresponding items for measurement. Organizations measure these items through employee surveys. Each question is rated on a Likert scale to assess strengths and weaknesses in different cultural areas. The results help leaders understand which cultural elements need improvement to drive better engagement, innovation, and business success. The survey methodology requires some items to be inverted to prevent the downsides of a demotivated survey participant consistently ticking 5s. In non-profit organizations, the survey can be adapted to replace customers with service recipients, for example.

Figure 23: Dimensions of Organizational Culture Based on the Denison Model
Source: Based on Denison.com

When implementing an organizational culture survey, it is essential to have a minimum of experience running such initiatives. Leadership communication must be authentic. The purpose ought to be clarified. There should be enough trust for staff members to participate. Anonymity must be ensured.

If an organization learns that, in the aftermath of such surveys, no action is taken and no improvements are made, the willingness to participate in the future deteriorates quickly, and rightly so. Therefore, such surveys must be integrated into a comprehensive approach to performance and change management.

Table 2: Overview of the Denison Culture Survey

Factor	12 subcategories	Survey items
1. Mission (long-term direction & purpose)	1.1 Strategic direction & intent	1. Our organization has a clear strategy for the future. 2. Leaders have a long-term vision that guides decision-making. 3. Employees understand how their work contributes to the company's strategy. 4. Our organization adapts its strategy based on changes in the business environment.
	1.2 Goals & objectives	5. Our company sets clear goals that guide daily operations. 6. Employees know what is expected of them to achieve success. 7. Goals and performance metrics are well-communicated throughout the organization. 8. Leaders track progress toward company goals and adjust as needed.
	1.3 Vision	9. Our organization has a clear vision for where it is headed. 10. Employees feel connected to the company's long-term vision. 11. Leadership communicates the vision effectively to all levels of the organization. 12. The vision inspires employees and provides a sense of purpose.
2. Consistency (core values & systems)	2.1 Core values	13. Our organization has a well-defined set of core values. 14. Employees are encouraged to act in ways that reflect our values. 15. Leadership consistently models the company's values. 16. Core values guide decision-making in the company.

	2.2 Agreement	17. Employees generally agree on key business priorities. 18. Conflicts are resolved based on shared understanding and company values. 19. There is a high level of trust among employees and leadership. 20. Employees feel they have a voice in company decisions.
	2.3 Coordination & integration	21. Different departments work well together to achieve company goals. 22. Teams across the organization share information effectively. 23. Employees understand how their work fits into the broader company strategy. 24. Processes and systems support effective collaboration between teams.
3. Involvement (empowerment & team orientation)	3.1 Empowerment	25. Employees feel they have the authority to make decisions about their work. 26. Leadership encourages employees to take initiative. 27. Employees believe their ideas and input are valued. 28. The company supports autonomy while maintaining accountability.
	3.2 Team orientation	29. Teamwork is a core strength of our organization. 30. Employees work together effectively to achieve common goals. 31. There is a strong sense of belonging among employees. 32. Collaboration is encouraged across different teams and departments.
	3.3 Capability development	33. Our organization invests in employee development and training. 34. Employees have opportunities to grow and advance in their careers.

		35. The company supports continuous learning and skill development. 36. Leadership provides feedback and coaching to help employees succeed.
4. Involvement (empowerment & team orientation)	4.1 Creating change	37. Our company is willing to change to stay competitive. 38. Employees are encouraged to find new and better ways of working. 39. Leadership actively supports innovation and experimentation. 40. Changes are implemented effectively and communicated clearly.
	4.2 Customer focus	41. Our company understands and responds to customer needs. 42. Customer feedback is valued and used to improve products/services. 43. Employees are committed to delivering high-quality customer experiences. 44. We continuously adapt based on changing customer expectations.
	4.3 Organizational learning	45. Our company learns from successes and failures to improve. 46. Employees are encouraged to share knowledge and best practices. 47. The organization fosters a culture of continuous improvement. 48. Leadership supports a mindset of learning and development.

Source: Based on Denison.com

If conducted properly, organizational culture surveys provide valuable insights into what to do. Year-on-year improvements can be tracked with ease. Incentives could be aligned to positive changes and achieved improvements.

The Denison survey is particularly advantageous as it focuses on behaviours. These can be changed more easily and with less blame, criticism, or triggered defensiveness than is often the case with deeper values and often unknown assumptions.

When communicating results to top management or peers, it is advisable to highlight the positive elements of the organizational culture first in order to avoid defensiveness. After highlighting some strengths, the debriefing can continue with an outline of prioritized behaviours to fix. Brainstorming sessions could take place to discuss how to improve and how quickly this can be achieved. This inclusion helps with acceptance of the need for change.

In summary, organizational culture encompasses the multifaceted nature of organizational life. The Denison model can serve as a solid foundation for measuring leadership effectiveness in general and humanistic leadership effectiveness in particular. Staff members will feel more respected and are likely to be better off when they know the vision, mission, and a clear strategic direction. It prevents a feeling of being lost or excluded. How else can they be expected to do the right thing when a customer calls if there is no clarity from the top?

In addition to the mission, which is the primary part of organizational culture, consistency helps clarify values and the best ways to work together. The following figure illustrates the organizational culture differences between Daimler and Chrysler. These two companies attempted what was, at that time, the largest transatlantic merger ever. Imagine how difficult it must have been with an almost perfect inconsistency. Mercedes focused on quality, with a strong sense of pride in their in-house engineering, thorough methods, and sound formal governance, albeit slower.

In contrast, Chrysler operated with an emphasis on style, outsourcing, speed, and pragmatism. Documenting everything and ensuring compliance with handbooks, procedures, and a larger bureaucracy was not a priority.

These elements of organizational cultures, even at the behavioural level, are so deeply rooted that they cannot change in the short term.

The cause for their existence, in the form of past leaders shaping such a culture and facing bankruptcy or "death" as a company, was also unique to Chrysler. Colleagues at Daimler did not share such a past or own cultural element that had formed over time. Unsurprisingly, a planned full integration of operations was impossible. Attention was diverted from serving customers to fixing internal issues and conflicts. Ultimately, the shareholder value of over USD 60 billion was destroyed, and the companies split apart after only a few years. It was also a lack of concern for the well-being and dignity of staff members, paired with a lack of experience in integrating cultures, that led to this significant failure.

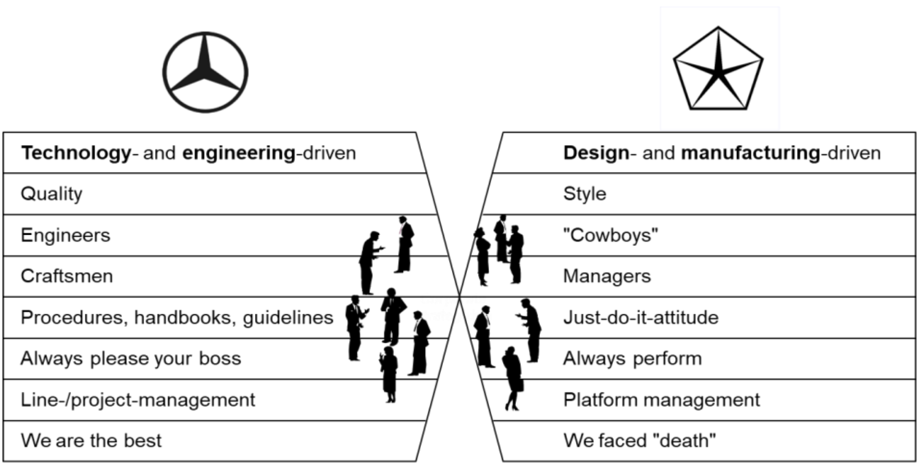

Figure 24: An Example of Incompatible Cultures in the Automobile Sector

Organizational Energy as a Measure of Leadership Effectiveness

Organizational energy refers to the collective force with which an organization mobilizes its emotional, cognitive, and behavioural capacities to pursue its goals.

Key milestones in maturing the concept were the following:

- Cross, Baker, & Parker (2003)[32] suggest that energy is defined as "a type of positive affective arousal, which people can experience as emotion – short responses to specific events" (p. 56).
- Bruch & Ghoshal (2003)[33] view organizational energy as "the force with which companies operate and get things moving. The amount of organizational energy determines the extent to which companies have tapped into their emotional, cognitive, and behavioural potential in the pursuit of their primary goals" (p. 45).
- Vogel & Bruch (2012)[34] specify that "organizational energy broadly refers to the force of a collective unit (an organization, department, or team) in pursuit of its goals" (p. 692).

These definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of organizational energy, emphasizing its role in harnessing collective emotional, cognitive, and behavioural potentials to achieve organizational objectives.

As such, their advantages to the organization become immediately apparent. Also, from a humanistic leadership point of view, the benefits of the right organizational energies are straightforward. Excitement beats boredom. Positive reactions trump negative ones. Tapping into energy potentials to embrace corporate challenges reflects a more conducive work environment than perceiving inertia, feeling stuck, and struggling to get started on strategies and solutions in the first place.

Led by University of St.Gallen Professor Heike Bruch, much progress has been made developing the concept of organizational energy. Key insights related to the individual and team level on one side but also the organizational level on the other.

For individuals, she alerts to the insight that only 90% of staff members in traditional organizations are not fit for duty. Her research revealed that only 10% have not only enough energy as such and sufficient focus for this energy. Disengaged colleagues may have focus but lack the energy.

On average, about 20% of staff members feel exhausted before the weekend arrives. They also lack the inner resources to reenergize properly and would not start the new week with fully charged batteries. As a consequence, it is challenging for them to commit to new initiatives, which hinders strategic progress and change. Especially when it comes to tasks without obvious meaning, activating this segment can be challenging. That segment could respond with defensiveness, resistance, arrogance, fear of failure or absenteeism.

Bruch's research indicates that the second segment can reach a size of up to 40%. These colleagues may well have high energy but no focus. Bringing good intentions to work, they misunderstand mere busyness with clear and relevant value creation. They are overcommitted and respond to incoming emails or meeting requests without filters or prioritization.

An additional 30% could be referred to as procrastinators. Often, they fail to take or follow initiatives. They pull colleagues, teams, and departments down. They shy away from a meritocracy and – feeling overwhelmed – remain passive. Over time, insecurity emerges as they have forgotten what peak performance looks like.

Only the remaining 10% are role model employees. They self-manage well, prioritize tasks, and adjust their pace as needed. Within leadership in general, and within humanistic leadership in particular, the leader coaches accordingly and grows this segment while shrinking others. Annual surveys can help track progress.

There is an additional opportunity to analyze organizational energy at the organizational level as outlined in the following figure. Thereby, it helps to further differentiate two features. Energy intensity represents the degree to which an organization has activated its emotional, cognitive, and behavioural potential, while its quality reflects the extent to which emotional, cognitive, and behavioural forces align with organizational goals.

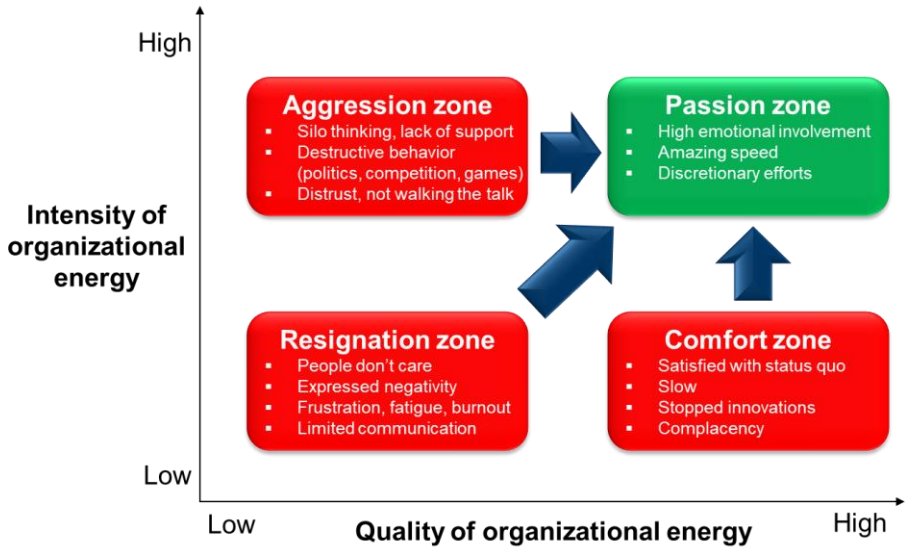

Figure 25: Four Zones of Organizational Energy
Source: Based on Bruch and Goshal (2003)

Once again, leadership effectiveness in both general and humanistic senses becomes evident. Leaders will not be effective the larger the aggression, resignation, and comfort zones are. In the resignation zone, where the energy of a good quality is lacking, people stop caring, exhibit negativity in their interactions, and usually retreat. Great and humanistic leaders minimize this segment and energy.

Equally, the aggression zone characterized by an intense, yet negative and even corrosive energy ought to be improved and minimized. Political games and intense competition can erode motivation and undermine psychological safety. Distrust and integrity risks grow.

The comfort zone shows a positive energy, but it is too low to drive innovation and strategy. A satisfaction with the status quo reinforces solutions established in the past. Leaders must excel at activation in order to ensure progress. Overall, the larger the number of staff members in the passion zone is, the more effective leaders appear to be. A higher intensity of good-quality energy can boost speed and progress.

The following figure shares a sample illustration of how to visualize and debrief an organizational energy intervention. Survey items, which indicate global benchmark figures publicly available, could be linked to a firm or department-specific energy profile. Quantification and an attempt to benchmark externally could then substantiate discussions on the need for change as part of a larger, evidence-based approach to performance management.

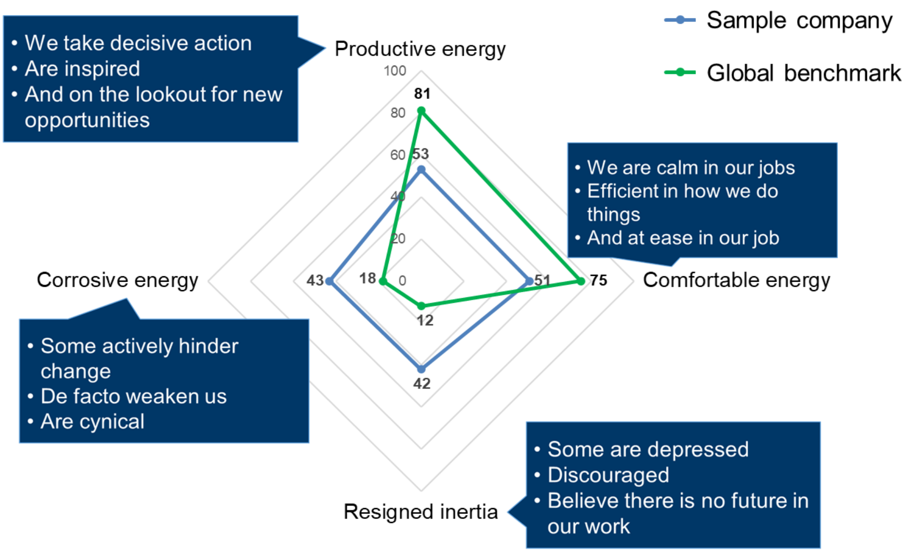

Figure 26: Illustration of How to Measure Organizational Energies
Source: Based on Bruch and Vogel (2011)[35]

The sample company depicted in the figure exhibits a limited amount of productive energy while simultaneously harbouring corrosive energies, resignation, and a sense of being too comfortable.

It is very much in line with humanistic leadership ideals to take individuals out of their comfort zones, help channel corrosive energy and alter its nature in the process, and reignite passion amongst all colleagues stuck in the resignation zone. Capturing the impact of leadership interventions can be done more frequently than in year-on-year performance evaluations and organizational health checks.

So, if energy refers to the level of enthusiasm, momentum, and drive that leadership brings to an organization or team, then measuring it regularly with the help of employee feedback and shorter pulse surveys can demonstrate effectiveness. It reflects how well leaders inspire and mobilize employees.

Organizational energies are a great short-term indicator of leadership impact. It is a useful concept during times of change, crisis, or rapid scaling. It can quickly reflect how well leadership is resonating with employees – and how much work remains to be done. To optimize energy, it is necessary to deploy substantial leadership efforts across levels and hierarchies to minimize the sizes of aggression, resignation, and comfort zones, as well as the number of staff members in each.

Like every tool, relying on organizational energies to gauge leadership effectiveness has potential limitations that must be acknowledged and managed proactively. Energy can be fleeting – leaders can create temporary hype that fades. In contrast, humanistic leadership aspires, sound energy over time. This means that leaders may well have to reinvent the ways they lead in order to set new stimuli.

Humanistic leaders must bear in mind that, over time, a truly holistic energy management can also benefit from lower-energy phases and recovery times. It is an illusion to think that one can consistently thrill, excite, and maintain a high level of positive energy over time. There are risks of toxic positivity or burnout if leadership does not manage their energy effectively, including the intensities, qualities, rhythms, and speeds.

In addition, it is not just energies that ought to be optimized. Even the most energetic, motivated, hyped-up and well-trained team depends on the larger organization to add value. Energy alone isn't enough – strategy and execution intelligence quotients of leaders also matter.

Engagement as a Measure of Leadership Effectiveness

This section focuses on engagement as an additional measure of leadership impact. Engagement is the emotional commitment employees have toward their work, team, and organization. Engaged employees are more productive, motivated, and loyal as outlined in the introduction chapter of this book.

Engaged employees believe in the organization's vision and leadership. High engagement leads to better performance, retention, and innovation. Engagement links leadership effectiveness to tangible business outcomes. Engagement can be measured in multiple ways:

- **Engagement Surveys:** Measures enthusiasm, satisfaction, and commitment.
- **Employee Productivity Metrics:** Engaged employees produce higher-quality work.
- **Absenteeism & Retention Rates:** Disengaged employees are more likely to leave.
- **Manager Feedback Scores:** Employees rate leaders on inspiration, trust, and support.

Measuring engagement as a means of gauging leadership effectiveness does justice to the direct link between what a leader does and the consequences. It is a direct reflection of how leadership affects employee motivation. Also, relying on engagement is highly actionable. Data foundations can be generated quickly as there are several professional tools in existence. Leaders can quickly adjust based on engagement data. Results of engagement strongly correlate with business performance, customer satisfaction, and humanistic standards.

Several key considerations should be taken into account. Engagement can fluctuate based on external factors (e.g., economy, COVID and lockdowns imposed externally). There are naturally occurring organization-internal dynamics as well, including life cycles of products coming to an end, patents expiring, or even nepotism within a family business. At the same time, other leadership aspects may be perfectly humanistic and spot on. However, it may be the prerogative of a family owning the business to make legitimate decisions on promotions.

Additionally, the construct measures employee perception rather than objective performance. This opens up for influence by additional factors, such as perks, benefits, or job conditions – not just leadership. In the sections, the world's most prominent engagement tool is introduced and critically reviewed. The Gallup's Employee Q12 Engagement Survey follows the logic of differentiating four layers as outlined in the following figure.

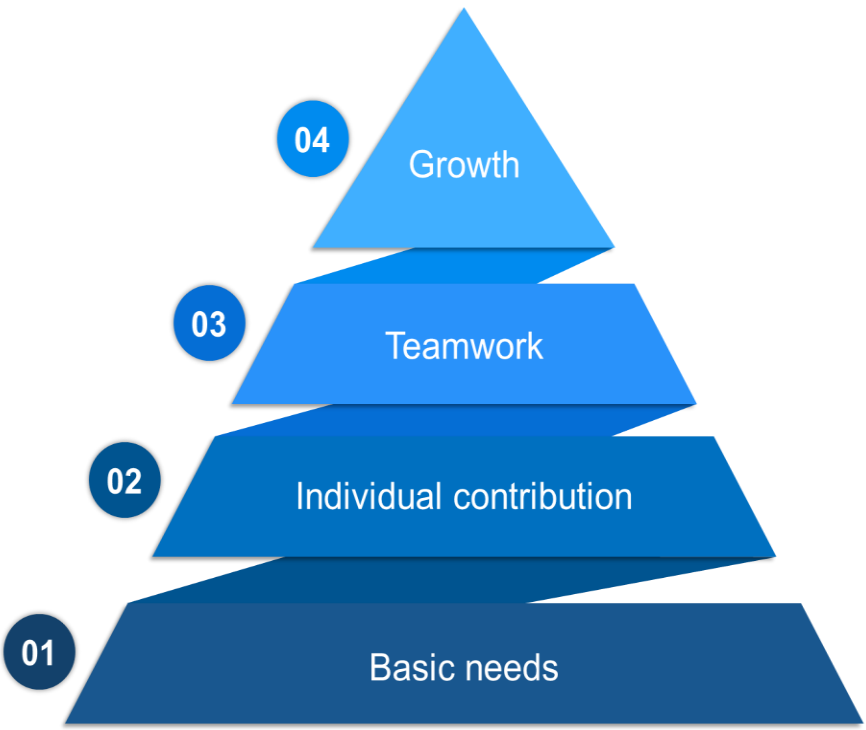

Figure 27: Understanding the Levels of an Engagement Analysis
Source: Based on Gallup.com

The Q12 survey includes the following 12 items:

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

When evaluating the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey, the following strengths emerge. First, it offers a unique simplicity and clarity. The Q12 is concise, containing only 12 questions, which makes it easy for employees to complete. Unlike long, exhaustive surveys, its brevity increases response rates and ensures better data quality.

Moreover, it has a strong research foundation. Gallup developed Q12 through meta-analyses of thousands of organizations worldwide.[36] The survey is strongly correlated with key business outcomes, including profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, and retention.

Additionally, Gallup's research team has demonstrated strong links between employee performance and business success. Gallup research suggests that companies scoring in the top quartile of employee engagement exhibit higher employee retention, lower absenteeism rates, fewer safety incidents, and increased customer satisfaction.[37]

The Q12 framework aligns with self-determination theory, emphasizing autonomy, competence, and relatedness – critical factors for engagement and motivation.[38] While there is a need to revisit each of these dimensions in specific cultures and concrete groups of employees internationally, humanistic leadership does not question the general desirability of these constructs and values. However, it encourages dialogues on their relevance and complementation locally. In turn, this discourse ethics and dialogue-oriented approach may be more effective in certain cultures than in others. Therefore, humanistic leaders require practical wisdom when applying a dialogue-oriented approach in their more or less unique setting.

More generally put, the Q12 lacks contextual nuances. Organizations vary. Different firms can afford to display more innovation and care, making faster improvements over time. What counts as a major achievement in a less professionally run entity may be considered merely a minimal effort elsewhere. Industries are likely to show statistically significant idiosyncrasies. Working in the oil and gas sector in remote locations may require longer shifts, 12 hours per day, over two weeks, before staff members can enjoy a work-life balance with two weeks off. This model would not be applicable to many other organizations or industries. Different generations also place a divergent emphasis on warmer and more humanistic aspects of the workplace. Older generations have been found to sacrifice themselves and their needs more to provide for their families while younger generations show a stronger interest in self-actualization and having things their way at work.

The Q12 survey does not account for cultural and industry differences. For example, in some cultures, having a "best friend" at work (Item #10) may not be seen as critical to engagement. Employees in highly structured or hierarchical cultures might hesitate to emphasize peer relationships.

Critically reviewing the Q12 survey items and its underlying model, there may well be an overemphasis on supervisor-employee relations. Several items (e.g., #4, #5, #6, #11) highlight the role of supervisors in engagement, assuming that managers are the primary drivers of workplace motivation. However, engagement is also influenced by organizational policies, job design, and leadership style.[39] The discretion and agency of supervisors may be more limited. The actual behaviour of humanistic leaders elsewhere in the organizational hierarchy may not be felt. In addition, initiatives are at times characterized by ambiguities. Policies give stability and ensure fairness across employee groups even if they are perceived as less advantageous by individuals.

Extending the critical review of the Q12, it needs to be noted that there is a potential for bias and social desirability. Employees might feel pressured to provide socially desirable responses, especially in organizations with low psychological safety. If employees fear retaliation, they might not provide honest feedback, leading to skewed results.

Also, a fundamental issue with conceptualizations and operationalizations of constructs in surveys is how comprehensive the emerging tool can be. If it is shorter, the likelihood of participation grows. If the survey is longer, then this could demotivate individuals who would rather wish to get work done than participate in surveys. In this sense, the Q12 survey does not include aspects of work-life considerations[40]. All items focus on what happens at work. One might argue there is an overemphasis of aspects that show a functionalistic bias. Items screen what makes a staff member even more fit and motivated for duty. The survey does not explicitly measure work-life balance or employee well-being, which are crucial for sustainable engagement Given the rise of remote work and burnout concerns, this omission is increasingly problematic.

Finally, another methodological shortcoming linked to conceptual completeness and comprehensiveness is the lack of open-ended questions or feedback opportunities. The Q12 uses only closed-ended questions, which limits employees' ability to explain why they feel engaged or disengaged. Organizations may need to supplement Q12 with qualitative methods (e.g., open-ended questions, interviews) for deeper insights. Gallup offers to add organization-specific questions though this comes at an additional cost. Within humanistic management, it is invaluable to pursue customization of what leadership can and must deliver. In contrast to the Q12, blue ocean leadership fosters dialogues about what a staff member needs and expects. The Q12 prescribes what has to make a staff member engage. The levers are imposed. Even if research on these factors is solid, from a process perspective granting space to the recipient of leadership efforts would clearly be preferred in humanistic leadership.

This is where a comparison with other engagement models may well add value. First, there is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model[41]. The JD-R model argues that engagement is influenced by the balance between job demands (stressors) and job resources (support systems). The Q12 focuses mostly on job resources (support, recognition, development) but does not address job demands (e.g., workload, stress, role conflict), which are key determinants of burnout.

In turn, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)[42] measures vigour, dedication, and absorption, which are psychological states of engagement. The Q12 focuses more on workplace conditions rather than psychological states, which means it may not fully capture emotional engagement.

Moreover, there is the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS), which asks one question: How likely are you to recommend your workplace to others?" While simpler than Q12, it lacks depth and diagnostic power. Q12 provides actionable insights, whereas eNPS only signals overall sentiment.

As a consequence, practical implications for organizations emerging from this brief juxtaposition include that it does make sense to supplement the Q12 with additional measures. It can and should be used in conjunction with other tools, such as qualitative feedback (e.g., employee interviews, pulse surveys), well-being assessments (e.g., burnout and stress surveys), and 360-degree feedback mechanisms, to capture managerial and peer perspectives.

Humanistic leaders are also advised to customize the approach and evaluate leadership performance holistically for different work environments in their specific country setting. For example, in high-pressure roles (e.g., healthcare, finance), they can add questions about workload management and mental well-being. In remote or hybrid work settings, they can include questions on virtual collaboration and flexibility. In any case, humanistic leaders must ensure psychological safety to facilitate honest responses and a commitment to follow up in due time.

The Gallup Q12 survey remains one of the most effective tools for measuring employee engagement, providing a research-backed and actionable framework. However, it has limitations, including a lack of context sensitivity, limited focus on work-life balance, and potential bias in responses.

These considerations bring this chapter to a final verdict. The following table summarizes the arguments made for organizational culture, organizational energy, and engagement. Based on the timeframe that matters, these tools offer diverging value. For long-term impact, explore organizational culture. For immediate leadership influence, prioritize energy. For a balance of both, engagement can help. If leadership is only creating energy but not building a strong culture or maintaining engagement, their effectiveness might be short-lived. The best humanistic leaders balance all three. They build culture, sustain engagement, and use energy strategically.

Table 3: Comparison of Leadership Effectiveness Indicators

Factor	Organizational culture	Energy	Engagement
Time horizon	Long-term	Short-term	Mid-term
Key focus	Values, norms, and systems	Momentum and excitement	Motivation and connection
How it is measured	Surveys, turnover rates, cultural alignment	Pulse checks, pace of execution, meeting energy	Surveys, productivity, retention
Strengths	Hard to fake, long-lasting impact	Fast indicator of momentum	Ties directly to employee performance
Weaknesses	Slow to change, hard to measure	Can be temporary or misleading	Influenced by factors beyond leadership

6.4. Summary of Key Insights – What Gets Measured Gets Done

Humanistic leaders do not shy away from moments of truth. They do not blame the environment for organizational inefficiencies and assume full responsibility. They commit to hone their own skills to serve better over time – and they actually measure the impact they have on the organization. This chapter clarifies that even if there is a willingness to measure, carrying out an effective performance evaluation is often more challenging than one may think. There are options outlined in this chapter, and each of them appears to have its strengths and liabilities.

This should not deter one from getting started and making progress in learning how to measure performance holistically. Likelihood is that one's approach must evolve. Equally, the likelihood exists that humanistic leadership is not static. It will evolve over time and adapt to situational needs.

At some point, further inspiration from other leadership schools will need to be drawn upon to set new stimuli. This chapter also clarified that the benefits of humanistic leadership must be balanced over time. The benefits of short-term sacrifices must be weighed against the benefits later. To make progress over time, leaders must understand themselves as lifelong learners. They grow their versatility, toolkits, and opportunities to gather feedback with the help of the tools outlined in this chapter – and beyond.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1. The More You Know, the More You Dare

The saying "The more you know, the more you dare" encapsulates a profound insight into the relationship between knowledge and courage. It suggests that an increase in understanding, awareness, and expertise in a given field or life in general gives an individual the confidence and capability to take risks, challenge conventions, and venture into the unknown.

At its core, the saying implies that knowledge facilitates confidence. Knowledge enables leaders to understand their environment, anticipate challenges, and discern opportunities, which in turn reduces fear and uncertainty. When we have more information, we are better equipped to navigate the unknown and make decisions that might otherwise feel too risky or daunting. This book aims to share more knowledge in the field of humanistic leadership. In the ideal case, it mitigated the fear of the unknown and enabled action.

Knowledge Reduces the Fear of the Unknown

Fear often arises from the unknown – uncertainty about potential outcomes, unfamiliar terrain, or a lack of control. The more you know about a situation, the less intimidating it becomes. Knowledge of humanism in business and humanistic leadership provides a roadmap, a set of tools, and a framework for navigating uncertainties.

Take, for instance, the example of an entrepreneur launching a startup. In the early stages, many entrepreneurs are overwhelmed by the uncertainty of market conditions, financial risks, and the potential for failure. Is there space to bother about people and human dignity? Or is the focus not on generating lead users, sales, and a stable business?

This book clarifies that, indeed, humanistic leadership can amplify complexity. In addition to creating an economically sound engine, entrepreneurs should protect and foster dignity.

At the same time, this book simplifies complexity, as it helps address questions about why we need companies in the first place, what constitutes a good company, and what sound humanistic leadership looks like. The more the entrepreneur knows about the business challenges and opportunities in general, and humanistic tensions fields in particular, the more daring they become in pushing boundaries, trying new approaches, taking calculated risks, becoming a role model, inspiring others, and functioning as a force for good.

This principle of knowledge catalyzing courage also applies to individuals pursuing personal growth and growing talent in others. For example, someone who is fearful of public speaking may feel paralyzed by the unknown aspects of addressing an audience. But as they acquire knowledge about speech techniques, audience psychology, and their own communication strengths, they become more confident. With more knowledge comes a clearer understanding of how to handle the situation, and thus, they are more confident in taking on more challenging speaking engagements. Chapter 3 of this book provides clarity on why leaving the comfort zone in the first place is beneficial. Chapter 4 outlined how we can proactively gauge our adaptability and embrace new tasks. This can help determine the speed at which we dare to take on more, as well as the quantity and quality of issues we tackle.

The Role of Expertise in Taking Calculated Risks

Subchapter 2.1. alerted us of various zones to watch out for – avoiding the burnout and boreout zones while aspiring to thrive and reach peak performance in the flow zone. Knowledge does not just make us brave; it also helps us take calculated risks, i.e., by mapping skill levels and the nature of our challenges. Calculated risk-taking also involves assessing potential benefits and drawbacks before taking action, and it's a hallmark of successful innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. In fact, experts in any field are often the ones who dare to explore new frontiers, as their deep understanding of the subject enables them to predict and manage potential outcomes. This book hopefully conveys numerous insights into human beings as social creatures, which facilitates embarking on journeys to new frontiers.

In the world of business, for example, leaders with insight into adaptability and strengths are more likely to make informed, bold decisions, which can then lead to success. Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, is often cited as an example of someone who used his deep knowledge of design, technology, and consumer behaviour to push the boundaries of what was possible in the tech industry. His leadership style and corresponding governance mechanisms allowed him to move faster and in a bolder way. Jobs dared to create revolutionary products like the iPhone, not because he was uninformed, but because he understood the potential of the technology and how to harness it in a way that others could not see. His knowledge gave him the confidence to make decisions that others considered risky or even impossible at the time.

In the context of innovation, knowledge is the key to unlocking new possibilities. Innovators are often the individuals who dare to explore the unknown and venture beyond conventional wisdom. However, this daring is not reckless — it is grounded in a deep understanding of the area in which they are working. The strengths-based approach outlined in this book also clarifies how to determine if one is an innovator or has different opportunities to contribute.

Throughout history, great innovations have often resulted from individuals who possessed a unique insight or knowledge in a particular field. For example, Thomas Edison’s invention of the electric light bulb didn’t stem from blind curiosity or chance. Instead, Edison’s extensive knowledge of electricity, materials, and previous inventions allowed him to innovate in a way that others could not. His understanding of the science behind electric lighting gave him the courage to persist through countless failures, ultimately leading to the development of a product that changed the world. Yet not everyone is an Edison. Using one's own talents can help us thrive in unique ways. We don't copy; instead, we start by taking stock of our strengths to then achieve success. The more they knew, the more they dared to push the boundaries of what was considered possible. Acknowledging and utilizing our strengths is a key part of the equation.

Knowledge as a Tool for Humanistic Leadership

In leadership, generally, and humanistic leadership in particular, knowledge is a crucial factor in inspiring others to take action. A leader who is well-informed and has a deep understanding of their team, mission, and the challenges they face can guide their group with confidence and decisiveness. This understanding gives them the courage to make tough decisions and navigate difficult situations, knowing that they have the necessary tools at their disposal to succeed.

Leaders who possess knowledge in their area of expertise are more likely to be trusted and respected by their followers. This trust is built on the leader's ability to make informed decisions and take action based on a clear understanding of the facts and circumstances. In contrast, a leader who is uninformed or lacks knowledge may struggle to gain respect, as their decisions may appear reckless or uninformed.

Furthermore, knowledge enables leaders to encourage and empower others to take risks. When a leader has a deep understanding of the potential challenges and rewards, they can create an environment that fosters innovation, creativity, and calculated risk-taking. They can guide their team through uncertainties and challenges by providing the necessary context and resources to succeed, making it easier for individuals to dare to take on new initiatives or pursue bold ideas.

Within humanistic leadership, all of this is done not in manipulative ways or with the end in mind to be as exploitative as one's environment allows, but to serve. Humanistic leadership protects and fosters human dignity as an end in itself. Humanistic leaders leave a system better than they found it. They do so even if no one is watching or applauding them for their transformational, transcendental impact.

7.2. Humanistic Leadership is a Journey

A critical component of daring is the willingness to face failure. In many situations, the fear of failure can paralyze individuals, preventing them from taking risks. However, knowledge can mitigate this fear. When we are knowledgeable about a subject, we are better equipped to handle failure because we understand that setbacks are a natural part of the process and provide valuable learning opportunities. Humanistic leadership acknowledges imperfections as a means to learn and grow. Ricardo Semler did not start off at the age of 21 as the greatest humanistic leader ever. He first had to learn what was not working. He then made a bolder move, gradually improving solutions over time. Even in tough economic conditions, he never compromised his convictions.

In conclusion, the saying "The more you know, the more you dare" emphasizes the powerful connection between knowledge and courage. Knowledge equips individuals with the tools they need to navigate uncertainty, take calculated risks, and embrace challenges. It reduces the fear of the unknown, fosters innovation, empowers humanistic leadership, and provides the confidence needed to pursue bold ideas. As humanistic leadership is still a relatively new field, this courage will be helpful in revising one's version of humanistic leadership from 1.0 to 2.0 and 3.0 over time. Whether in personal development, business, science, or any other area of life, the more knowledge we acquire, the more willing we are to step outside our comfort zones and take on new challenges. Ultimately, knowledge does not just provide us with the answers; it gives us the courage to ask the difficult questions, explore the uncharted, and push the boundaries of what is possible.

7.3. We Shape Our Own Legacy – A Call to Action

Throughout this book, several examples illustrated daring ventures into the unknown. The heroes and heroines relied upon to make a point and illustrate concepts are likely not to have had scripts to follow or textbooks to gain off-the-shelf insights that would work in their unique settings. If more knowledge allows you to dare more, and if humanistic leadership is a journey, then now is all about taking the first steps, conducting initial experiments, and making progress on one's learning curve.

Humanistic leadership can create tremendous value. Initial statistics on the state of workplaces, outlined in Chapter 1, illustrated how far we are from what would be the case in an ideal situation. Is there an alternative to humanistic leadership? What would happen if we never reached a tipping point towards warmer workplaces that allow us to thrive in flow zones and with our dignity protected? Societal problems would escalate at an alarming rate.

This book elucidated that humanistic leaders do not need to wait to be a CEO to trigger change in their circle of influence and control. Even if one becomes a CEO, the likelihood exists that the situation feels like being the middle part of a sandwich. From the top, the board communicates demands and exerts pressure. From below, expectations for clarity, budgets, and inspiration never seem to get paused.

"Leading without authority" can start much earlier. We can leverage our ability to influence, guide, and inspire others without relying on formal titles, positions, or hierarchical power. Instead of relying on positional authority that is expected to be in place at a future point in time, this type of leadership focuses on building trust, fostering relationships, and leveraging personal skills to create a lasting impact. It emphasizes collaboration, emotional intelligence, and the ability to inspire action through persuasion, vision, and shared purpose. Let us build strong, trust-based relationships that allow us to gain credibility and motivate others. Let us understand people's needs, concerns, and perspectives to help create alignment and buy-in. Let us articulate a compelling humanistic vision that resonates with others and encourages them to support your efforts. Let us cultivate a sense of partnership and shared responsibility that motivates individuals to work towards common goals. Recognizing and managing our own emotions while understanding and influencing others' emotions in a humanistic sense is crucial.

This requires us to be role models who walk the talk. It requires us to be the go-to person in your area of knowledge to build credibility. It requires us to learn how to use clear, persuasive, and empathetic communication to connect with others. It requires us to be reliable, honest, and consistent in our actions to earn the trust of others. It requires us to encourage and enable others to contribute their strengths and ideas.

7.4. A Dream with a Deadline – From “One Day” to “Day One”

In the field of leadership, Anne-Valerie Ohlsson-Corboz and Jacques Horovitz encourage not only thinking of or embarking on a call for action but also having a dream with a deadline.[43] Humanistic leaders and organizations ought to transform ambitious visions into actionable and measurable outcomes. It underscores the importance of creating a vision that is both inspiring and time-bound – "dream with a deadline” – to ensure the realization of strategic goals. A vision without initial concrete steps to achieve it remains just a dream. The authors emphasize that successful leaders not only dream big but also define clear deadlines and processes to turn those dreams into reality.

The phrase "dream with a deadline" also encapsulates the balance between aspiration and accountability – ensuring that vision is paired with systematic execution. Therefore, humanistic leaders must craft visions that inspire people and align them toward a common goal. The vision should be aspirational but also clear and specific enough to guide decisions and actions.

A more compelling vision motivates teams by connecting with their values and emotions, giving them a sense of purpose. The more followers notice you care about them, the more they care about you and the journey you want to take them on. Then, followers must break down big-picture goals into manageable steps, with clearly assigned responsibilities and measurable objectives set. Deadlines are essential for maintaining momentum and ensuring progress. It is essential to establish realistic yet challenging timelines to keep teams motivated and accountable. These deadlines serve as a motivational tool, transforming abstract aspirations into urgent priorities. In summary, humanistic leadership does not end with knowing what may well be desirable. It must be clear how the initial steps and key parts of the journey would be like. As outlined throughout this book, perfection traps ought to be avoided. Yet, it must always be clear for colleagues not what humanistic leaders aspire to achieve one day, but how day one looks like.

7.5. Opportunities to Continue Learning

The community of individuals who value a dignity-oriented approach to *leadership and management is growing. Since its inception, more than 15 years ago, the Humanistic Management Network* has been expanding globally into an active community, featuring conferences, book series, journal publications, a global case writing competition, and online and on-site events, among other activities. If connecting with a larger community of researchers and practitioners is of interest to you, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Humanistic Management Network (https://humanisticmanagement.network/) and the *Humanistic Management Foundation* (https://humanistic-management-foundation.org/) at your convenience. There are numerous opportunities to continue your learning journey with experts from around the world who are active in a variety of fields and industries.

About the Author

Dr. mult. Wolfgang Amann is a professor of Strategy and Leadership at HEC Paris. He has been involved in directing degree, certificate, open-enrolment, and custom programs for HEC Paris in the Middle East since 2014 and has over 26 years of experience in executive education. He earned five doctorates in international business strategy, integrative social sciences, (learning) psychology, educational leadership, and philosophy, exploring what wisdom means in today's complex world.

He is a graduate of key faculty development programs, such as Harvard's MLE, IESE's IFP, IMD's ITP, CEEMAN's IMTA, and EFMD's International Deans Program. He previously served as Dean of the Complexity Management Academy, Executive Director, and Executive Academic Director of the Goethe Business School at the University of Frankfurt, as well as Executive Director of international MBA degree programs at the University of St. Gallen, and as Project Director for the foundation of EBS University of Business and Law. He also led a think tank unit on long-term corporate development at Daimler, established the *Humanistic Management Network* as a globally active NGO, and founded the Humanistic Management Foundation. Additionally, he founded a trading company for environmental technology with offices in Japan, China, Germany, and the US.

Wolfgang Amann is passionate about developing academic entities, as well as creating unique learning resources and thought leadership content. He published 50+ books for executives and compiled more than 100 case studies for his executive education seminars. He is certified to administer a number of psychometric tests for strategic leaders, such as the AQai Adaptability Quotient, DiSC, Birkman, Change Style Indicator, Firo B, Gallup StrengthsFinder, Harrison, Hogan, LVI, and the Talogy Resilience

Questionnaire. He received numerous research, teaching, book, and case writing awards, as well as honorary professorships, for his academic impact. Most notably, he won five best course awards at the university level and repeatedly received the prestigious CEMS teaching award for the best course in top business schools worldwide. In his free time, he participates in long-distance running and Ironman races.

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[42] Cf. Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two-sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. Journal of Happiness Studies, 3(1), 71-92.

[43] Cf. Ohlsson-Corboz, A.-V., & Horovitz, J. (2005). A dream with a deadline: Turning strategy into action. Pearson Education.https://www.gallup.com/q12/?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=p_social&utm_term=gallup&utm_campaign=li-wk-q08_033125