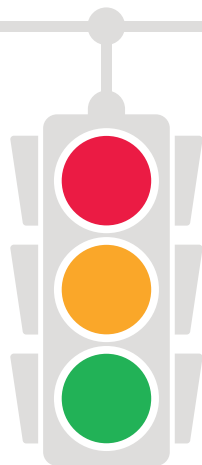


A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO PEOPLE LEADERSHIP



on your
marks,
get set...

LEAD!

Anna Marshall

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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which the members of the People Mastery team and our families live and love; the Bundjalung, Ngarigo, Ngunawal and Worimi peoples. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands where we connect with our clients. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. We deeply appreciate and honour Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

A leadership haiku

Inspiring leaders
Foresee who we can become
And invest in us.

For Neve and Miles, for you dear reader, and for every
other beginning leader out there.

May this be just the book you've been looking for.

First published in 2021 by Anna Marshall

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Introduction

YOUR CHOICE

There are many people who have a responsibility for people leadership who have made the choice (consciously or unconsciously) to serve themselves rather than the people they lead. These people occupy CEO roles, team leader roles and everything in between. I'm sure you've spotted some of them along your way. Sadly, people who have made this choice are still too common in so many of today's organisations.

Early in my career I was working as a Human Resources Manager when I was called in by the then CEO for 'a chat'. He wasn't the most endearing man I'd ever met, and the feeling of dread was slowly rising in my stomach as I walked towards his office ...

'Sit down,' he said, so I sat.

He leaned forward across his desk, hands clasped, and trained his beady eyes on me.

'It seems you're unclear on your role here. Let me clarify for you. Your job is to get the last drop of blood out of each and every one of the employees in this business. Got it?'

Meeting over.

True story. As bizarre as it sounds, I wish all people who had decided to serve themselves, rather than the people they lead, were like this man. Why?

Because it would make such people who *haven't* chosen people leadership very easy to spot. His lack of care for others was so blatant. His lack of people leadership so easily identifiable. Ultimately, it made it easy for me to decide to leave that CEO and his organisation.

Management and leadership are not synonymous, though you are forgiven for thinking they are – they are often used interchangeably. Sadly, I expect many of you have had a ‘manager’ who is ostensibly responsible for other people but who couldn’t lead hungry teenagers to McDonald’s. It’s a very demoralising experience.

THE ‘L’ WORD

Let’s have a closer look at this ‘L’ word: *Leadership*. It’s everywhere these days. Thought leadership. Global leadership. Brand leadership. Project leadership. The list goes on. And on. What we’ll be talking about specifically in this book is *people* leadership. As an emerging people leader, someone who is leading people for the first time, it’s vital that you have a thorough understanding of what leading people actually means for you and for those you lead, so you can make an informed choice about whether you wish to become a people leader, or not.

‘But hang on a minute ...’, I hear you say, ‘... I’m already in a leadership *role*, I’ve already made that decision!’ And boom! Sirens go off, lights start flashing, and you’ve fallen headlong into the first trap.

People leadership is *not* a role. It’s a *choice*.

I admit it’s pretty mean of me to booby trap the beginning of the book. Let me share with you why I did. My opening story illustrated the perils of being in a leadership role when you haven’t chosen to lead the people who are in your care. You may currently be in a role with the words ‘manager’ or ‘leader’ tacked on the end and your position description may list the number of direct reports you have, and it may all sound very impressive, but that does not make you a leader.

I’ll wager that as you stepped into your first leadership ‘role’ you may have been bombarded with a selection of new tasks. They might have included:

- approving timesheets
- creating rosters

- approving leave
- filling in a workplace health and safety report if someone had an accident at work
- ensuring your team members are not bullying each other
- running performance ‘appraisals’
- hiring people
- letting people go
- and everything in between.

And each of those are important tasks that you will need to get under your belt. These are important *management* tasks. (*Woah there, don't gallop on, just go back and read that again – ‘management tasks’, that's it – thank you. Okay, please proceed.*) And getting these management tasks correct is essential, isn't it? Your team needs to get paid; they need to take leave, and you need people doing the right jobs in the right place at the right time. But (and it's a b-i-g but), getting those things right *doesn't* make you a great leader. If only it were that easy ...

Have you ever heard either of these conversations?

‘What was the best thing about your day today, honey?’

‘Well, you're not going to believe this, but ... they paid me correctly today, isn't that *amazing*?’

Or:

‘How was your day?’

‘Oh, it was sooo cool, I turned up at the job site and do you know what? The whole team was there! Yeah! Everyone we needed actually turned up and we had the right gear and we could just get on with it straight away!’

‘Oh, my goodness, you must be so happy.’

‘I am!’

Nup? They don't ring a bell? For me either. Getting the *management* tasks correct stops people from having a bad day, but it doesn't help them have a great day.

‘So, what exactly does make the difference?’ I hear you say. (*Thank you so much for asking!*)

THAT, my friend, brings us back to leadership.

Trying to get your head around people leadership can be a bit of a challenge – even more challenging than scrambling your way out of that first ‘leadership-is-a-choice-and-it’s-not-management’ booby trap. To be honest, my own people leadership journey reminds me a bit of the midnight-blue coloured gin I was given for Christmas. You *think* you know exactly what you’re getting, but the moment you taste it you realise it’s something entirely different! And maybe it’s the same for you. (*For you fellow gin drinkers, let the record state that the gin turned pink when I added the tonic and it tastes of lavender. Very unusual and highly recommended – but doesn’t taste like traditional gin at all!*)

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

As I mentioned, in this book we’re talking very specifically about *people* leadership. Not thought leadership, not strategic leadership, just this beautiful, yet complex thing called people leadership.

Let me share what can happen when you focus on people leadership. I’m going to tell you about my daughter Neve’s very first day at work. As I write, Neve is 16 years old and she’s been working at a local cafe called The Lott as part of their team of waitstaff for about a year. The Lott is owned and led by Steve, and Steve has become Neve’s very first leader.

The Lott is the place to be in our town. The cafe opens from 7 am and runs through until 3 pm each afternoon, operating seven days, with an enthusiastic roster of staff in the kitchen and on the floor to keep the place humming.

Neve’s first day involved a lot of learning – shadowing Steve and other team members to see how things worked and how to do the basics; how to iron her apron, how to hold the plates, how to deliver coffee without spilling it, what’s on the menu, how to clean tables, how to deal with customers, ending up with how to clean the toilets.

At the end of her first shift Steve had organised a team meeting with the whole crew. When I picked Neve up after the meeting she was beaming.

‘How was your first day?’ I asked.

‘It was *amazing*, Mum,’ she said. ‘It just feels like a little family there. Everyone is friendly and was helping me ...’, and then she proceeded to tell me all about the ins and outs of her first day.

Day one and she’s already feeling part of the ‘little family’ that is her new work team. *Now that’s impressive*, I thought to myself. Impressive, but not surprising if you’ve ever met Steve.

Steve has a long list of leadership attributes:

- He’s genuinely interested in connecting with people; he builds rapport easily and deeply.
- He’s an excellent communicator; he asks lots of questions to understand, and shares what he’s thinking and working on and what he expects from his team.
- He can focus his team on what’s important; not just customer service but excellent hospitality.
- He enjoys developing people; he loves taking on school kids and teaching them the ropes, offering awesome on-the-job mentoring.
- He supports his staff to resolve any problems they’re facing, using bucketloads of curiosity and empathy.

And not only that. Steve is also curious, listens deeply and asks great questions. He’s not a coach, but he could be. And a great one. And he’s always learning. Before he ran the cafe, he was an ... acupuncturist! There’s a learning curve, right there.

By harnessing and leveraging these leadership attributes Steve has created a positive culture where his team has fun with each other at work and where after only one day, Neve felt part of a little family. That is people leadership in action. It’s wonderful for all involved, and for the business.

My dream is that everyone could have a leader like Steve, who makes them feel like a deeply valued member of the team, part of the family, every single day, from day one. A leader who enables every team member to flourish; to become their very best.

How could this happen? How could everyone have a leader like this? How could people *become* leaders like this? Let’s face it, as much as we would like to be able to wave our magic wands and control all of those

around us, we can only control ourselves. Knowing that, the very best place to start is with YOU!

My wishes for you

If I could have three wishes, this is what I would wish for you:

1. I wish you to become the enabling leader I know you can be.
2. I wish you to become the inspiring leader your team deserves.
3. I wish to see your leadership come into bud, form and bloom, so that you can experience the joy of watching your team flourish under your care.

How are we going to get there? How am I going to make my wishes for you come true? Just as the title suggests, I'm going to help you get on your marks, get set and lead! To do this I'm going to guide you through my framework.

Firstly, I'm going to help you 'get on your marks' by looking at how you're going to learn how to learn. That's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it? How you learn is going to have a huge bearing on how successful you will be, not just as a leader but generally in your life. Together, we'll cover what learning tools you currently have in your metaphorical kit bag and some new ones you can implement. We'll also look at your support crew – all the different people around you who can support you to learn and grow. By the end of this part, you'll feel confident that you have the right mindset, tools and support in place to transition successfully to leading people.

Secondly, you're going to learn about the 'being' of leadership before we even tackle what you're going to be doing. (Get set ...) I'll introduce you to coaching and how you might bring a coaching approach to your leadership. This might be one of the most significant differences you notice as you transition from your previous role to leading people – moving away from advice giving and towards asking questions to help your team come up with their own answers to the challenges they face.

Our third and final step (Lead!) is to consider what you'll be doing when you lead. I like to call these the five duties of leadership. They are:

- connecting with your team
- communicating with your team

- focusing your team
- developing your team
- resolving problems with your team.

Then we'll wrap up the book by helping you create your very own leadership development plan.

TIME TO CHOOSE

Hopefully, this is all sounding pretty appealing to you, but before we go on, I just want to circle back to the point I made earlier about people leadership being a choice. If you're reading this book, you're likely at a crossroads in your career. Maybe you've arrived at an intersection and one sign says 'People Leadership' and the other says 'Technical Expert'.

Which way will you go?

Let's be clear: *they are both good options.*

If you choose to take the leadership fork it will be a rewarding and challenging path. And every step you take down this path, will move you further and further away from the technical expert path – the paths diverge.

If you choose to take the technical expert path it will also be a rewarding and challenging path. As you proceed you deepen your knowledge in your area or areas of expertise until, lo and behold, you have become the guru! Someone who metaphorically, or literally, writes the books in your knowledge area.

Problems arise when you discover one day that while you thought you were busy developing your technical expertise, you're actually on the leadership path. Chances are your people saw the problem waaaaaay before you did.

Your choice to take the leadership path has to be deliberate. It has to be well considered. You have to be aware of the benefits and the sacrifices that come with this choice and step into it wholeheartedly. You must have a desire to lead. You need to commit. When you commit to your own development as a leader you can roll with punches, recover from setbacks and day by day become a better and better leader. A leader your team will be proud of.

It's vitally important for your team. If you don't *choose* to be their leader, why should they choose to contribute at work each day? If you care for your team, your team will care for you. Your team needs to know you're serious about leading them. When they feel your support and encouragement they will engage and give their best. And they will make your life easier, and you will all have more fun! And your business will be much more likely to succeed.

THREE COMMON DERAILERS TO AVOID

There are three things, however, that can totally derail your attempts to become an inspiring and enabling leader. I hate surprises, so let's make sure you're up to the challenge before you read on.

Derailer #1: I've got this!

It's the phrase most of us have uttered seconds before disaster strikes. You know the one ...

'All good?'

'Sure thing. **I've got this.**' (Cue explosion, sound of shattering glass and the hapless wails of small children.)

'Yeah, right.' *eye roll*

If you're already thinking 'yeah, I know leadership' before you've even begun, I'd suggest you just place this book back on the shelf and back slowly away. Put. The book. Down. It won't be for you! You're going to get the most out of this book if you are open to learning and confident that you've got a lot to learn. You must be someone who is willing to try and fail and get back up again, and then try again and fail again and get back up again and so on, until you get things right. I hope you make tonnes of mistakes, as with every mistake comes a powerful learning. And the quicker you fall, the quicker you'll learn and the quicker you'll grow as a leader. You will have to harness your humility; it's a powerful partner for growth.

Derailer #2: Lack of desire

Oh, and you've got to want it – desire it. The only people who don't learn and grow are those who don't want to. If you want to become an inspiring people leader who enables your team to flourish you have to want to do the work. As an executive coach with over 1,000 hours of coaching experience I can say that I've only ever met two people who were uncoachable. And it was not that each of them didn't have room for improvement. And it wasn't that they didn't have the capacity to improve. They just simply didn't want to, and weren't open to doing the work required. They thought they had it all covered and they didn't want to change. Thanks for coming. Game over!

I feel this quote, by Brian Herbert, which I have on my wall, sums up this issue of desire to learn quite nicely:

The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill;
the willingness to learn is a choice.

Derailer #3: I'm too busy

I'll never forget a short video I watched by the late Jim Rohn about busyness. It really struck a painful chord with me on the home front, and is also directly applicable to work and to our growth and development as leaders. In a nutshell, Jim said that when someone makes a request of our time and we say 'I'm too busy' in response, what we're *actually* saying is 'I don't choose you.' When we're too busy to do one thing, it's because we're choosing to do another thing instead. Makes sense, doesn't it?

I applied this at home. My cricket-mad son had asked me, 'Mum, could you please come and bowl me a few overs?' My response had been, 'I'd love to Miles but I'm a bit busy right now.' Off he went.

Now let's change that wording around.

'Mum, could you please come and bowl me a few overs?' My response with this alternate wording would have been, 'I'd love to Miles but *I don't choose you.*' OUCH! You'll be relieved to know that I didn't actually say those words (even though, sadly, I'm sure that's the meaning he took away from our conversation), but now they're the only words I can hear when someone says 'I'm too busy':

- When you cancel your one-on-one meeting with your team member because you're 'too busy', your team member hears 'I don't choose you.'
- When you arrive late to your team meeting because you were 'too busy' in another meeting, your team hears 'I don't choose you.'
- When you arrive home late to your loved ones because you were 'too busy' at work, they hear 'I don't choose you.'

And, in a similar vein, when you don't undertake your leadership training and development because you're 'too busy', the message you're sending is, 'I don't choose to develop and grow as a leader.'

I would like to ban the words 'I'm too busy'. Clarity on what matters most is the antidote to busyness, and when you know what's important then you can make time to do *those* things and stop doing the things that aren't important. You can ask yourself, 'If I say yes to this, what am I saying no to?' as a way of self-checking whether you are choosing your highest priorities. And remember, 'not choosing' *is* choosing to keep doing what you're doing now. (*That one stings a bit, doesn't it?*)

By picking up this book and turning your mind to your learning and growth as a leader, you are choosing *very* wisely. You are choosing you. Well done. I'm looking forward to being your guide as you navigate this next chapter (*pardon the pun!*) of your development.

WHO AM I TO BE YOUR GUIDE?

I feel very privileged whenever people feel comfortable to share some of their life story with me. I'm big on disclosure and the vulnerability it demonstrates. I'd like to share an 'abridged version' of my backstory so you can get to know me better, to help us connect. I thought I'd write it like a book synopsis, just for fun. Here goes:

Scottish farm girl, turned Master of Science Uni student meets Australian traveller, marries said traveller and emigrates to Australia. After a career U-turn into human resource management, relocates to a new role with iconic Snowy Hydro. After a not-so-fairy-tale ending to first marriage, meets man-of-her-dreams (#therealprince).

Spends next 13 years developing people – company wide and two little people at home – while undertaking a Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management and coach development just to keep things interesting. Chasing variety, a leadership development consultancy is born: People Mastery. During the next eight years, student transforms into teacher while learning how to navigate challenges; bushfires, global pandemics, book writing and most daunting of all ... life with teenagers!

Nearly 50 years in one paragraph – phew!

Seriously though, I have a Bachelor of Arts in Export Studies and Languages from Edinburgh Napier University, a Master of Science in European Policy, Law & Management from Robert Gordon University and a Grad Diploma from Deakin Uni in HR Management. It's not your typical leadership development consultant pathway, but that's what makes me unique, right? I became a certified professional with the Australian Human Resources Institute in 2011. Then I undertook an International Coach Federation accredited coach training program with IECL, completing levels 1, 2 and 3 and team coaching programs. I was honoured to be awarded Coach of the Year by Lever Transfer of Learning in 2014 and I've completed over 1,000 hours of coaching with clients. I'm an accredited Five Behaviours of a Cohesive Team (Lencioni) Facilitator, DiSC Certified trainer and an MBTI practitioner.

Since founding People Mastery I've partnered with some exceptional Australian and international businesses to support them in their work and enhance my learning at the same time. I've worked with family businesses, corporates, public service and NGOs of all different shapes and sizes, and I love the variety I see across these different organisations. I also notice many commonalities.

I have the privilege of working with different types of leaders in different situations. In the classroom when I'm facilitating emerging leader development programs; in the boardroom when I work with board and executive leadership teams on the dynamics of their leadership; and even quietly, one on one, inside my coaching sessions with young and 'young at heart' leaders who are striving to be the best leaders they can be. I see and hear their troubles and challenges, their wins and opportunities, and I always feel honoured to be of support to them as they develop.

And I've been a leader too. I've always had a burning desire to lead a team, and as I developed through my career I had the opportunity to lead small teams inside some of the organisations I worked in. Deep down though, the drive to have my very own team unconstrained by the parameters of someone else's 'rules' and someone else's culture formed, and inspired me to start my own business to make that desire a reality. I'm now fortunate to have a fantastic team of six (Ash, Bec, JD, Jen, Kirsty and Kristi) and I take my duty to take care of and lead my team very seriously. You'll hear more about these fabulous ladies throughout the book.

I'm far from perfect. I don't get it right all the time when it comes to leadership. Who does? My intention though is always to inspire my team and enable them to flourish. I'm looking forward to sharing my knowledge, skills and experience with you and providing you with a useful framework and specific actions to help you move onwards and upwards.

Right. I think that's more than enough about me. I wrote this book for you, so let me explain how you can use it to become the inspiring and enabling leader I know you can be.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is set out in three parts. I'd recommend that you work through them in sequence; part I, then part II, then part III. They are designed to build on each other, and you'll find that part II – which is all about developing your coaching approach to leadership – serves as both the foundation and the vessel in which all the duties of leadership (in part III) can successfully occur. Once you've digested and applied part II it will become so much easier to implement the five duties of leadership.

Each chapter begins with a quote. I love quotes, and as you'll know you often see quotes in books, but mine are a bit different. They're not random picks from ancient gurus and the like, they're carefully selected from authors and thought leaders I admire and whose work I've studied. Connected to the quotes is the reading list. Some books I specifically mention in the text, others are included as additional reading to further develop your depth of leadership knowledge. All are included in the 'Recommended Reading' list at the end of the book. Enjoy them all.

Take. Your. Time. Gobbling up the book in one sitting and proclaiming ‘I’m done!’ is not going to serve you very well. (I do hope you find it full of tasty morsels though!) I’d suggest that you read each chapter and then pause. Let each chapter run around in your mind for a while. Reflect on what you read. What did you discover? What are your reflections on that discovery? And what action are you going to take to implement your learning? At the end of each chapter, you’ll find a one-page learning reflection. These set out the key discoveries in each chapter, some questions for you to reflect on. If you really want to power up your learning, answer them all thoroughly. Finally, the summary contains some simple actions (they’re habits, and we’ll talk more about that later) that you might like to experiment with to apply your leadership learnings in your everyday work.

In some chapters you may find that you’re on top of things – excellent! If that’s the case, look for the ‘fine tunes’ or tweaks you can make to become even better in that area than you already are. There’s nothing like a timely refresher to buff up your leadership and give it that extra sparkle! Some chapters may have content for you that feels brand new – super! Take extra time in these chapters to glean all the learnings you can and get the best possible value from the book.

All the examples in this book are real. Some from my direct experience, some shared experiences from my family and friends, colleagues and clients. I like to celebrate the positive examples – my shining stars – so real names are used where that person has given their kind permission. I’ve set out their full names in the appreciation pages at the back of the book. I also use some examples from what my husband calls ‘The Book of What Not to Do’; understandably in those examples, where people have shared their learnings and/or would like to preserve their anonymity I’ve changed the names and marked them with an *.

Once you’ve been through the book once, keep dipping back into it to make sure you stay on track. Need to brush up on your listening? Dip back into the chapter on listening. Team getting a little bit distracted and need some refocusing? Hop back into the ‘Focusing your team’ chapter. Every time you invest effort into implementing your learnings through adjusting your leadership habits you and your team will be the beneficiaries.

ARE YOU READY TO GO?

You've made it to the end of the introduction. Yay! That's a good start! How are you feeling? Are you excited about enhancing your learning? Ready to jump in boots and all to developing your coaching approach? Excited about fulfilling your leadership duties? Wooo-hooooo! It sounds like people leadership is right up your alley!

I believe that you can become an inspiring and enabling leader, and you sound like you're up for the journey. So, what are you waiting for? Put your training shoes on, get on your marks, get set and let's go!

Enjoy the ride!

The image shows a handwritten signature in a cursive script that reads "Anna". Below the signature is a long, smooth, upward-curving line that starts under the first letter and extends to the right, ending under the last letter.



‘Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.’

Viktor Frankl

Part I

ON YOUR MARKS

On the cover of this book you might have noticed the traffic lights. This first part of the book is symbolised by the red light. A stop light; a pause, or a space, for preparation before you get set (amber) and lead (green). We've all heard the overused clichés around planning: failing to plan is planning to fail, yada-yada-yada – but as you embark on your development as a leader it's vital that you pause and reflect on where you are now and how you're going to navigate this next phase of your career.

With that in mind, let's perform a reality check to see where you're at. We're going to have a look at:

- *Self*: that's you!
- *Systems*: the ones you're working in, inside your organisation.
- *Support crew*: the people around you who you can draw on for support.

But before that, let's help you get the most out of this book by supporting you in learning how to learn.

‘If knowledge is power, knowing what we don’t know is wisdom.’

Adam Grant

1

LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

Before you learn how to lead, you need to *learn how to learn*. Of course, I appreciate that you went to school and you learnt there (or maybe not so much). And then perhaps you went to uni or college or tech and you learnt there too. The big difference between learning inside those institutions and learning inside organisations is who's directing the learning. Predominantly in educational institutions it's the teachers and lecturers. If you want to learn inside an organisation, it's *you*. You may be fortunate to work in a business that has a strong development focus with a smorgasbord of development options for you to choose from. If so, count your blessings. On the other hand, you may work somewhere that the responses to your questions about personal development sound remarkably like the chirping of crickets. If that is your situation, don't despair: the first thing I'm going to do is guide you through some effective and simple learning tools that will set you up for success as you learn how to lead.

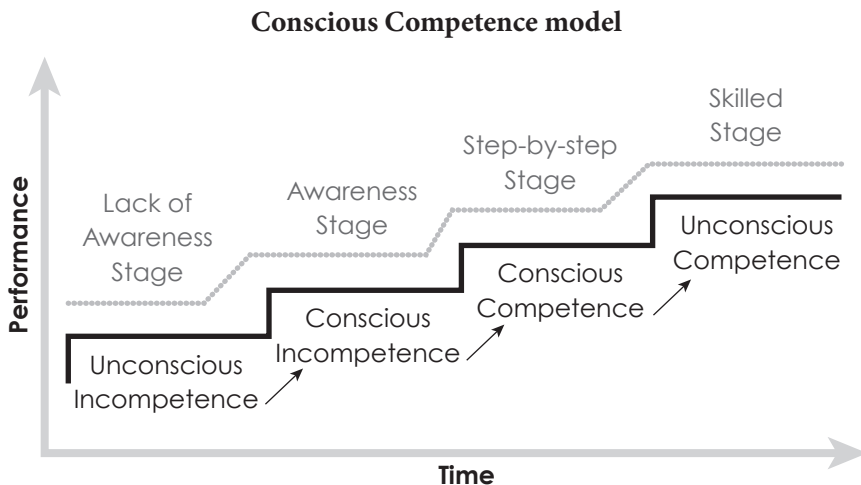
In this chapter we're going to look at one model (the stages of learning), three tools for learning (reading, reflection and journalling) and one tool for learning application (habit formulation). If you already have some of these tools in your kit bag – awesome! This will be a useful refresher. If not – even more awesome – you're going to learn a lot in these first few pages.

Rightio ... let's kick off with the learning model.

THE FOUR STAGES OF LEARNING MODEL

As Adam says, ‘knowing what we don’t know is wisdom’, and this stage of ‘knowing what you don’t know’ is just one of four levels within the learning model I’m going to share with you. At every step along your leadership development journey, I’d encourage you to refer back to this model – ask yourself, which stage am I in? And how do I move forward from here? I’m sure you’re going to discover that at various times you are at different stages in the different components that make up people leadership. Let’s have a look at a learning model – which sets out these different levels – now.

Noel Burch of Gordon Training International developed the Conscious Competence model in the 1970s. It’s an oldie but a goodie. It identifies how consciousness and skill level change as we learn something new. Learning to drive provides an excellent example of how this learning model applies in real life.



At level one, we are unconsciously unskilled and we don’t know what we don’t know, or that we need to learn something. It’s a blind spot. In our driving example, this would be a soon-to-be L-plater who doesn’t even know that a ‘hill start’ is a thing.

When we move to level two, we become conscious of our incompetence; we know what we don’t know. It’s an opportunity. When our L-plater gets

in the car for the first time and is unable to perform a hill start – where she has to balance the clutch, the accelerator and the handbrake without rolling backwards – she now knows what she doesn't know.

As we move to level three – conscious competence – we now know what to do and can do it. It's become a skill. Our L-plater's skills have developed, and now when she gives the hill start her full attention she can pull away smoothly.

Finally – at level four – we become unconsciously competent. This means we can perform the skill almost automatically. (This can also be a hidden talent; we'll talk more about that later.) For now, back to our driver. She can now regularly perform hill starts whenever needed and doesn't have to focus on it much anymore. She can successfully execute the hill start seemingly effortlessly.

You can see the driving analogy demonstrates how an L-plater progresses through the four levels to achieve unconscious competence. Back to you now. As you're reading this book, I'm sure you're going to experience the four different levels, even if you don't roll through them in order.

It might look like this. As you're reading this book ...

You finish a chapter and think, *Oh my gosh, I'd never even thought of that as related to people leadership*. You've just discovered an area where prior to your reading you were unconsciously incompetent.

Or ...

Now that you've had that discovery, you reflect, *Geez, I really don't think I'm very good at that yet*, and you've moved into conscious incompetence.

Or ...

You made your discovery and reflect, *That's cool. When I think about that I can do it quite well. I just need to keep doing more of that to improve*, and you're in conscious competence.

Or ...

When you reflect on feedback you've had from people over the years, they've always mentioned that you're very skilled at resolving conflict. You don't really need to think about it, you just seem to navigate it smoothly and effectively. Unconscious competence. You can just do it without thinking.

At this stage in the book, we're applying the learning model to you. I'm sure you can already see how useful the learning model will also be with your team. When you're trying to figure out where they are on their development journey you can revisit this model.

Don't worry if you suspect you're a bit all over the place in terms of people leadership. That's perfectly normal. Some things you'll already be smashing out of the park (unconsciously competent), and some things you won't even have realised were in the park (unconscious incompetence). That's what this book is all about – helping you move through the levels towards level four: leading with ease.



Now that we've got that model under our belts, let's move on to our first learning tool. The good news is you're already using it (woo-hoo!): reading.

READING

Did you know that reading can be one of the most powerful ways to learn and grow? Barack Obama says, 'Reading is a gateway skill that makes all other learning possible.' I love that. Reading enables you to access some of the most brilliant wisdom in the world from the comfort of your own lounge, or now with audiobooks even in your car or on your bike! Whether you read or listen to books, articles, blog posts or newsletters, when you are consuming quality content you are learning and growing. I must confess that I love books, though at different stages in my life it has been difficult to make reading a priority. At one point I joined a book club to hold myself accountable for making reading a priority – it worked! Now I run leadership book clubs inside organisations as a way of building knowledge, and at the same time creating a supportive peer group.

Interestingly, feedback from my book group participants who tried both listening to the book and reading the book found that reading the book helped the content land more effectively. When you're actually reading you can make notes in the margins, highlight different passages and quotes that stand out to you and even note down questions that might arise. While writing on your

books may sound sacrilegious – *it may bring back memories of scribbling on books as a child and being reprimanded!* – it's an extremely useful practice as an adult as a way of highlighting pertinent aspects in the books we read. Or you could consider using sticky labels to bring your attention to certain pages if you just can't bring yourself to write in the book.

If you find a great book and take lots of learnings from it, recommend it to others in your workplace. You could also set up your own people leadership book club – maybe you could start with this book?! – and have a great discussion about what landed and what didn't, and what you're going to implement into your own people leadership practice.

And if for some reason you find reading a bit too challenging or time consuming, you might consider subscribing to a book summary site, or accessing free book summary sites, where you can glean the key learnings in bite-sized chunks rather than having to consume the whole book.

REFLECTION

Reflection is giving serious thought and consideration to how you are leading. It's when you take a step back or a step up and observe *how you are being* and *what you are doing*. You know when you see yourself in a dream, as if you're watching yourself in a movie? This is the position you are taking during reflection. It takes time and conscious effort to undertake reflection. When you're rushing through work and life it is very hard to step back quietly into reflection. Let's look at some practical ways to engage in reflection, so you can do so more easily.

You can do it on your own (self-guided reflection) or you can do it with another person. You might engage one of your support crew (which we'll cover in chapter 4): a trusted colleague or confidante perhaps to whom you can speak your thoughts and regard them afresh, or even a professional coach.

In this section we'll cover two tools to support you with self-guided reflection. That way you can get started immediately. These tools are:

- the Discovery Reflection Action (DRA) cycle
- journalling.

The DRA Cycle

Let me take you on a wee journey. (*Oh! Remember I'm Scottish? Well, to be honest I'm a dual citizen: Scottish/Australian. So, you might find a few 'wees' sneaking into the book. It's Scottish for 'little' or 'small'.*)

Take a moment. Sit back comfortably and take a deep breath in. And now slowly exhale, relax, and then imagine this: you're out for a walk and you come across a pristine lake. There's not a breath of wind, it's a gloriously sunny day, with not a cloud in the sky. The surface of the lake is as smooth as glass, and as you stand there looking out over the lake you see your reflection looking back at you. As you consider your mirror image, you see yourself from a slightly different perspective. Maybe you look relaxed, maybe a little tense. Or perhaps you see everything in order, or one or two minor things out of place and you make a few adjustments – you roll down your sleeves and tie up your shoelaces, and you run your fingers through your hair, and before you know it, you're back to rights again. Satisfied, you continue on your walk alongside the lake.

Using the analogy above I want to help you see how you can bring the cycle of reflection, which is usually invisible to the eye, to your development as a leader. When in reflection you enable yourself to take a figurative step back and regard yourself anew – what are you *discovering* about yourself? Just notice, without judgment.

Sleeves are up, shoelaces are undone, hair's a bit messy.

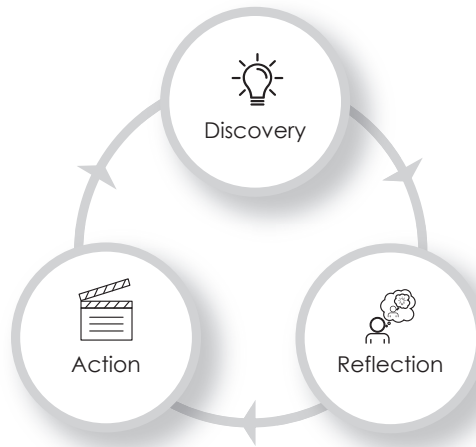
Then you move into the *reflection* stage – given I notice these things, what do I think about that?

I'm feeling cold, I may trip over if I don't tie my laces, my hair's getting in my eyes.

And then finally to the *action* stage – given my reflections about my discoveries, what, if any, action do I want to take?

I need to roll my sleeves down; I need to tie my laces; and I need to move my hair out of the way.

This is your introduction to a reflective cycle known as DRA – Discovery, Reflection and Action. We'll be using this cycle throughout the book to highlight key learnings, elicit your reflections on those discoveries and then invite you to put in place some key actions to move you forward. You'll notice that I've purposely included this tool in the chapter summaries, to help you become familiar with it. We'll also examine it in detail in chapter 12.

Discovery Reflection Action cycle

D: What are your new discoveries?

R: When you reflect on your discoveries, what have you learned?

A: Based on your discoveries and reflections, what action could you take now to further improve?

Here's a real example of another self-guided reflective practice that a coaching client of mine had. You will see how she linked some planning with an effective DRA cycle.

Anne* was at the time a people leader in one of Australia's largest telecommunications companies. She had a neat little weekly reflective practice. On a Monday she thought about her week ahead and asked herself which three conversations were going to be the most important this week. Then she considered what she'd like to get out of those conversations, how exactly she would like them to go, and then she planned accordingly. Then at the end of the week she would reflect on how they went, taking some time on a Friday to sit back and consider what actually happened. This would lead her to review what went well and what she might do differently, which would enable her to get an even better result the next time. Then she would implement those actions the following week. I loved how Anne kept her reflection tight – focusing on three conversations – not attempting

to change ALL her conversations at once. Starting small and building up her abilities over time would ultimately shape all her conversations, but she started with something really achievable to begin with.



Leadership tip: the dancefloor and the balcony

A slightly different way of gaining a different perspective through reflection is to use one of my favourite analogies: the dancefloor and the balcony. Often when we're leading, we are actually 'on the dancefloor'. We are *doing* leadership; demonstrating leadership behaviours like connecting and communicating with our people, focusing them on priorities and so on. If we're not careful, that can end up being all we do. It is important from time to time to step up on to the balcony (*or the mezzanine level in that cool leadership nightclub of yours*) and have a good look down at what is happening on the dancefloor. Maybe you're doing a fine impression of John Travolta's Saturday Night Fever while everyone else is doing Gangnam style! Ooops! Getting up on the balcony is another way of reflecting on what is going on and what you might need to do differently to get a better result with your leadership. You might like to consider booking some 'balcony time' into your diary.

JOURNALLING

Following on from reflection, journalling is reflective writing. This is just a neat way of saying 'writing stuff down as a way of clarifying and distilling your thinking', and if you have a stationery fetish it's a great excuse to buy a nice new journal from your favourite store!

This beautiful line by Dawson Trotman captures the value of journalling:

Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and fingertips.

Capturing your thoughts in writing (through your fingertips) helps you make sense of what you're thinking and feeling, and consider them anew. It's interesting how much clarity you can get by writing something down. You read what you've written on the page and then – BING! – the light bulb switches on and you have a different insight about that thing. In my experience, writing a book feels much like writing a really, really, really long journal. I find that as I write things down, I have increasing clarity about my thoughts and there's a whole heap of disentanglement going on.

Are you wondering whether you should type or handwrite your journal? There's some interesting research indicating that if you're keen to be more mindful, explore your emotions, generate new ideas and insights then handwriting will serve you best. If you simply want to keep a record of information then you can stick with typing. Given that journalling is intended to be a reflective, developmental process my recommendation would be to handwrite your notes. These days of course handwritten journals can be digital; you can handwrite your journal with a stylus on your favourite tablet or iPad or you might consider using a reMarkable like me.

Whichever medium you choose, don't worry, I'm not encouraging you to write a book! (*Not just yet, anyway.*) I would, though, strongly encourage you to simply begin. Just start really small. You could use a little phrase to stimulate your writing – maybe one of these will be helpful:

- What went well today was ...
- The one thing I learned today was ...
- Three things I'm grateful for are ...
- What I'm learning about people leadership is ...
- When I stand on the balcony, what I notice is ...
- One thing I could do differently is ...

Or create a little phrase of your own.

Run a little experiment with yourself. Pick a timeframe to experiment with journalling. Maybe you set yourself a goal of writing for 10 minutes once a day, or half an hour a week, or a paragraph a day (whatever feels achievable for you), and then stick to that for at least a month. When you get to the end of that period, what do you notice? If it's useful – awesome! If not – no problem, you can just try something else.



Time for a quick recap. We are now one model and three learning tools down, with one learning application tool to go.

Are you still with me? Excellent. Time to get our habits on.

HELPFUL HABITS

Learning without application is like a joke without a punchline. It's vital you transfer your learning to your work so that you can improve. Why else would you bother?

When I first joined Snowy Hydro in 2001, I received a call at my desk one day from a person who was about to attend a leadership program we were running ...

'Is this going to be one of those programs where we attend and then go back to our work and just keep doing the same things we were doing before?'

'No. This will NOT be one of those programs,' I replied incredulously.

While I was dumbfounded at the time, I look back now and appreciate the candour. How many programs are actually like that in organisations? Too many! I want to prevent you from falling into that trap. I want to help you transfer your learnings to your work as a people leader so you can perpetually improve. Habits are the key.

Applying your learning through habits

There are many excellent books on habits (I've put a list together for you later in the book). One author in particular who has written about habits and whose work I adore is Michael Bungay Stanier (affectionately known as MBS), who has written among other books *The Coaching Habit: Say less, ask more and change the way you lead forever*. In his book, MBS sets out a habit formula as follows:

When X happens, instead of doing Y, I will do Z.

Where X is the triggering event, Y is the behaviour you are going to stop doing and Z is the behaviour you're going to start doing.

Here are a few examples to put the formula in context:

- When a team member arrives late for work at the cafe (triggering event), instead of letting that go (stop doing), I will take them aside and ask them if they're okay and ask about why they were late and make sure they are clear on our expectations of punctuality (start doing).
- When I've finished my tasks for the day on the job site (triggering event), instead of just closing the site and heading home (stop doing), I will think about three good things I've seen the team do that day and share that feedback with team members before they leave (start doing).
- When I'm struggling to lead a tricky team member (triggering event), instead of going round and round in circles in my own head (stop doing), I will reach out to my leader for guidance (start doing).

Leading people is all about who you are being and how you are behaving (aka what you're doing), and as habits are recurring behaviour loops, looking at how we might change our habits is an incredibly effective way of changing and improving our behaviours. It sounds so simple, doesn't it? And the formula IS simple, but that doesn't mean changing habits is easy.

If you've ever tried to modify your eating habits, you'll know just what I mean here:

When I'm feeling hungry in the afternoon (triggering event), instead of eating cake (stop doing), I'll have a large glass of water and a piece of fruit (start doing).

Simple? Yes. Easy? Hell no! Changing your leadership habits is going to be sooooo much easier than that one!



You've *almost* made it to the end of the first chapter. Nice. I'd like you to think of this first chapter as the first of two bookends. This chapter on

learning to learn is the first bookend, then you're going to have mountains of rich content on learning to lead in the middle, and then at the end of the book you'll find a short chapter on creating your very own people leadership development plan; bookend number two.

You'll find that I've distilled the key elements of each chapter into a neat summary for you at the end of the chapter. You can use the cycle of Discovery, Reflection, Action in each chapter summary to identify and capture your development gaps as you read. Let's briefly run through what a development gap might look like:

- It might be a **behavioural** gap. You'd like to be more courageous and step into the feedback for improvement conversations you need to have with your team members, but instead you've been avoiding them.
- Or it might be a **skills** gap. You want to support your team members to create a development plan, but you don't know what a good plan looks like, or how to go about it.
- Or it might be a **knowledge** gap. There's a new organisational priority for your team that you need to get everyone across, but at this stage you're not even sure what it's all about!
- More than likely, it will be an interesting combination of all of the above.

Take your time to work through the DRA at the end of each chapter. Experiment with one of the suggested habits, or create one of your own. I'll help you draw all the gaps together when you get to the final chapter to create your very own people leadership development plan.

DRA learning reflection



Discoveries:

- ☐ Reading is a powerful way to learn and grow.
- ☐ Reflection enables us to see ourselves, others and situations from a different perspective.
- ☐ Coaching is facilitated and supported reflection.
- ☐ Moving from the dancefloor to the balcony enables us to reflect more broadly.
- ☐ Journalling, like other forms of reflection, creates clarity.
- ☐ When you want to develop you need to be clear on your development gaps.
- ☐ Developing new habits helps us adjust our behaviour and bridge development gaps.



Reflection questions:

- ☐ How regularly do you undertake self-development activity?
Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly? Rarely?
- ☐ What do you think might be a sustainable frequency for you?
- ☐ Which reflection option would work best for you?

***Actions to choose from:***

- ☐ When I have my lunch break, instead of checking social media, I will read five pages of a book relevant to my development.
- ☐ When I'm organising my week, instead of jamming my diary full of back-to-back appointments, I will book in three reflection appointments so I can get on the balcony and have a good look around.
- ☐ When I identify my development gaps, instead of just writing them on a list and forgetting about them, I will select the most important one and create a supportive habit to implement.

‘In a growth mindset, challenges are exciting rather than threatening. So rather than thinking, oh, I’m going to reveal my weaknesses, you say, wow, here’s a chance to grow.’

Carol Dweck

Chapter 2

LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF

How well do you know yourself? I'm not talking '168 cm, silver hair, brown eyes and I like cake' kind of knowing (which might be true but is useless); I'm talking deep knowing. The kind of self-knowledge which allows you to stand assuredly in who you are and what you offer to the world. And in the case of people leadership, knowledge of your internal resources on which you can draw as you learn how to lead.

This might sound a bit daunting if you haven't reflected on these things before; no matter, I'm going to gently guide you through an initial exploration of the things that make you, you! In this chapter you're going to reflect on your beliefs about people, your personal values, and your skills and talents and how they will influence and inform how you lead people.

To begin this chapter we're going to jump inside your head and look at your mindset.

WHICH MINDSET DO YOU HAVE?

How do you know which mindset you have? Before I have a chance to influence your responses, have a look at the following statements and decide which ones you most agree with. Be honest, now!

1. People have a certain amount of intelligence, and there isn't any way to change it.
2. No matter who you are, there isn't much you can do to improve your basic abilities and personality.
3. People are capable of changing who they are.
4. You can learn new things and improve your intelligence.
5. People either have particular talents, or they don't. You can't just acquire talent for things like music, writing, art or athletics.
6. Studying, working hard, and practising new skills are all ways to develop new talents and abilities.

If you tend to agree with statements 1, 2, and 5, you probably have a more fixed mindset. If you agree with statements 3, and 4, 6, you probably tend to have a growth mindset.

If you haven't heard of fixed or growth mindsets before, you're about to learn about a really interesting concept. For the rest of you this will be a timely refresher. The research into fixed and growth mindsets was carried out by Carol Dweck and captured in her book *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential*, which was published in 2006.

In a nutshell, mindsets relate to whether you believe your intelligence and talent are fixed or changeable traits. With a fixed mindset you believe that you've got what you've got; you have a certain amount of intelligence and talent and that's never going to change. If you believe in the phrase 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks' that's a warning bell that you're sitting in the fixed mindset.

With a growth mindset you believe that these traits can be improved upon with commitment and hard work. Basically, you believe that you can grow your own mind – now that's cool!

Back now to your responses to the questions. If you landed with the growth mindset statements – great! And if you landed with the fixed mindset statements – great! Now you know where you're at. Now you get to choose which mindset you'd like to move forward with. No matter where you've landed right now, we can all improve and strengthen our ability to harness a growth mindset.

If any of you were thinking, 'Oh dear, those poor people with the fixed mindsets, they're done for!'... *you're* revealing a fixed mindset about people with fixed mindsets – it's a trap, right?

Think about how this plays out in your workplace. You have a team member who's struggling for some reason – maybe you know why, maybe you don't (yet). If you take a fixed mindset to this, you'll be thinking things like 'they'll never change', or, 'there's no point spending any time with them because they're never going to be able to do *that thing*'. But if you take a growth mindset approach to this you'll be thinking, 'I wonder what we could do to help this person improve?', or, 'What am I missing here?', or, 'What could I do differently that would enable this person to behave differently?' How different will that feel to the person concerned? Rather than being treated as a 'write off', they'll be treated with compassion and support and a good dose of curiosity. I wonder what might be possible if we all took that approach?

While I didn't learn about mindsets until I was in my 30s when I came across Carol's work – I am confident that most of the time I'm sitting in a growth mindset. I confess I have my lapses now and again, but now that I know this concept it's easier for me to dust myself off and get back into growth mindset when I slip up. Here's a story from my early career that demonstrates no matter how 'smart' you are, you can always choose a growth mindset:

When I worked as the People & Culture Manager at Snowy Hydro, I had lots of interesting conversations with the executive team, who were a really interesting group of people with extremely diverse knowledge and experience. I remember sitting at my desk one day when one of the executives rang for some advice.

'Anna, I was wondering if you would come and meet with my team and have some development conversations with them one on one, to see what they're thinking and how they might like to develop into the future?'

'I'm happy to help,' I said, 'though I think your team would really appreciate if you would have those conversations with them, rather than me. What do you think?'

'Oh, yes. Actually, I've already had those conversations with them, I just wanted to make sure that I was doing it right.'

How refreshing! This executive was super smart – PhD smart and people smart – AND really humble and still looking for his learning. I'll never forget that conversation; for me it epitomises a growth mindset.

Developing your growth mindset

Here are two things you can do to develop your growth mindset:

- Remind yourself that effort will grow your abilities. The more effort you put in to something, the better you will become at it. The more effort you put in to your development as a leader, the more likely you will become an inspiring people leader. When you're learning, just tell yourself that you haven't got this – *yet*.
- Change the way you perceive 'failure'. A really useful phrase you can use when you hit a speed bump and something doesn't go as you'd planned is to say, 'That's not like me. Next time I will ... [add in what you want to happen the next time].' Nelson Mandela said, 'I never lose. I either win or learn.' Again, that phrase epitomises taking a growth mindset.



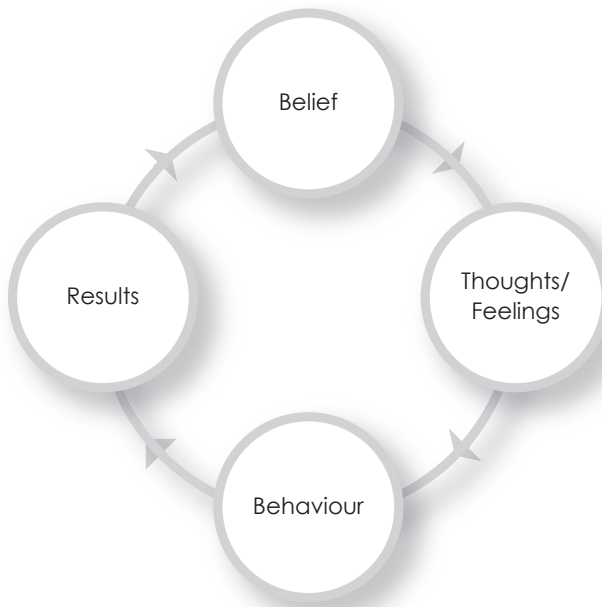
Now that you've got your growth mindset switched on, let's look at what else is floating around in your mind. What about your beliefs about people? Have you ever considered what your beliefs are and how they might shape how you lead?

WHAT ARE YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT PEOPLE?

Whenever I run one of our two-day workshops called 'Engaging People' with emerging leaders, we have a very interesting session about participants' beliefs about people. Voicing our beliefs provides us with the opportunity to review and challenge the extent to which they are serving us and the people we lead. I have to confess that the very first time I ran this session I was very daunted by it. I had no idea what people were going to say, and I was worried that the question 'What beliefs do you hold about people?' was going to create a stony silence. I think this was because having tried to answer the question myself prior to the session I realised that it's fairly deep and requires some vulnerability.

The belief cycle

Beliefs are fascinating things, and they run in an internal cycle in our mind – like this:



You can think of it like this:

Our beliefs shape our thoughts and feelings. Our thoughts and feelings then shape our behaviours. Then our behaviours shape the results we get. And funnily enough these results in turn reinforce our beliefs, and so the cycle continues and they become more firmly ingrained in our minds.

Here's an example. If you believe that people are generally lazy and try to get away with doing the least amount of work possible then you might feel frustrated and think that your team is trying to avoid doing their work. Consequently, you are fairly abrupt with them (*Such time wasters!*) and you keep hammering them about delivery (*C'mon people! Seriously!*). As a result, the team feel a bit stressed and are finding it hard to focus, and therefore are struggling to get their work done (which you don't really perceive), which means their work is often submitted late and with several mistakes, and you think, *Aha! I knew they were lazy!*, which confirms the belief you held and so the negative cycle continues.

On the flipside, if you believe that people come to work each day intending to do their best work, you might feel excited and interested in what your team is going to achieve today. Consequently, you are curious about what they're doing and ask helpful questions and provide support. As a result, the team feels encouraged by you and engaged in their work and with their colleagues, and they submit high-quality work and a range of new ideas for consideration. This confirms your belief that your team is here to do their best and the positive cycle continues.

Which belief might serve you best as a people leader, do you think?

I'm not for one moment suggesting that you take on the belief above. Beliefs are highly personal, and they come from our experience (real or perceived), and sometimes they serve us well and sometimes they don't. What I *am* saying is that when we're not aware of our internal beliefs about people we are powerless to challenge and change them. When we dig deeper, we may find that there is a negative belief looping around in our mind that is not serving us well, and it may be detracting from the wonderful things you want to do as a leader.

I hold a belief that evolved in my mind from a book I read many years ago. My cousin Neill was staying with me for a few days as he travelled in Australia. Neill is a kind and curious soul. He's into personal development, exploration and growth, and he was reading a book by James Redfield called *The Celestine Prophecy: An adventure*. Generously, on his departure he left the book for me to read. In a nutshell, the book is written as an adventure and uses the story to discuss various psychological and spiritual ideas rooted in multiple ancient Eastern traditions; really, it's like a parable. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and one of the beliefs that formed for me from reading that book was:

Everyone I meet is going to teach me something. Maybe something to do, or perhaps something NOT to do. So, I'd better pay attention.

As I hold that belief, I feel curious when I meet new people about what their teaching might be and I feel excited about the discovery. Consequently, I am open to new people, ask curious questions and look for my learnings. I gain many insights from the people I meet and the occasional 'what not

to do, and this reinforces my belief that everyone I meet is going to teach me something.

When you begin to lead people, it's important to understand what belief cycles might be running under the surface for you, so you can question and challenge them. Are they assumptions or biases? Is there evidence to support this belief? And probably most important of all, do these beliefs serve you and your team well?

The interesting thing about our beliefs is that you have choices. You are in charge of your beliefs and their impacts; they should not be in charge of you. So, when you uncover one of your beliefs, you can challenge it at each of the stages of the belief cycle:

- Is this **belief** helping or hindering me as a leader?
- Are my **thoughts** helpful or unhelpful?
- What would be a more useful **thought**?
- Are my **feelings** comfortable or uncomfortable?
- What would be a more desirable **feeling**?
- What impact is my **behaviour** having?
- How might I need to change this **behaviour**?
- Are these **results** helping or hindering me as a leader?
- Are these **results** serving the people I lead?

Your beliefs shape your behaviour choices. Therefore, it's important to explore your beliefs and determine whether they are serving you, and others, well as you transition into people leadership. And remember, you can change them any time you choose.



Beliefs are not the only thing that shape your behaviour. Your behaviour is also shaped by your values. Our values are shaped over many years, and are influenced by our family, our culture and heritage, our life experiences and more. Behaviours are on the surface – we can see them in our daily interactions with one another – while the values that drive them lie quietly underneath.

Let's have a look at your values now.

WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

If you're going to lead with your values then you'll need to be clear on what your values are, right? This is critical when you want to lead in a way that feels true for you – you will feel and appear more genuine, self-aware and transparent. A commonly used term these days is 'authentic.' Authentic leaders use their values as a guide as they lead their people.

We all have our own values mix

Values are an interesting concept. While we may have some values in common with others, in reality we all have our very own values mix. A little cocktail, if you like, of values which mean the most to us.

The question 'what are your values?' can be tough to answer. You may never have been asked that question before, so perhaps this version of the same question might be more helpful: 'what do you value?' It might be friendship, kindness, honesty, connection, creativity – the list goes on, and on, and on ...

I think there are two types of values which are most relevant to you right now as you transition into leading people:

- your core values
- your aspirational values.

Let's have a look at each type.

Core values

Core values by their very nature are the values at your core: the things that are central to who you are. Often, they form part of our own description of who we are. Perhaps you think of yourself as a kind person, or a courageous person, or an honest person. Similarly, when we get to know people, we can start to have insight into their values. When you first meet someone, you don't know what their values are – very few people come with their values tattooed on their arms (some do, though!). But as you get to know them you may start to deduce their values from their behaviours. Behaviours provide a window through which you can see people's

values. Likewise, the behaviours *you* choose will give others insight into *your* values.

Perhaps you have a team member who is always looking out for other team members, performing small gestures of support, asking whether their help is needed. They volunteer after hours with a local charity and coordinate a sponsored walking event at work. Maybe one of their core values is service, or perhaps it's kindness, or something else – as we get to know them and see their behaviours, we can start to see the values which are driving their behaviour.

Where do our core values come from? Our core values develop over time, they might come from our parents or family – maybe one of your parents was big on 'respect' and that's something you also hold dear. Or they might come from our schooling – maybe your school had a value of 'excellence' and again this was something that resonated with you. They might also come from your experiences in the world – maybe you've spent some time volunteering and you have a value of 'service'.

While they become fairly stable as we grow older, particular experiences and life events may still adjust your values. You, or someone you may know, may have had a significant health scare – maybe a cancer diagnosis, or a stroke, or a car accident – and it causes a values review. Sometimes we notice a marked change in their behaviour post event as a different value comes to the fore. The person has a new value as their priority and now their behaviours evolve to make sure that they are in tune with that value from that point forward. The person might turn the dial down on work and turn it up on time with their family. They make their family their priority. I call that alignment; your behaviours are in alignment with your values.

Aspirational values

Aspirational values are values that you would like to hold, but you're not consistently demonstrating them through your behaviours – *yet*. As you're thinking about the type of people leader you'd like to become, you may have considered some additional values that you feel are important. Maybe you want to be known as a caring leader, or an honest leader, or a supportive leader, or an inspiring leader, and maybe you feel that you haven't got this quite down pat yet. Maybe you're already on the path to adopting a

new value, but your behaviours are a bit patchy at this stage – sometimes you're nailing it, and sometimes, well ... not so much! It's all part of your learning curve.

Getting clear on how you might be behaving *when* you are living a certain value will help you put this value into practice. It will help you walk your talk. What can be useful is to consider someone who you think currently lives this value really well. For example, if you wanted to be a more authentic leader – more comfortable in your own skin, more self-assured, more honest in your opinions – who do you know, or know of, that demonstrates this value? Maybe it's your own leader, or a colleague. Or someone famous; say, Malala Yousafzai or Barack Obama. What do you see them doing that tells you they are an authentic leader, someone who demonstrates the value of authenticity? When you identify their behaviours, you can choose to bring them into your own practice.

What if you don't know what your values are?

If you are unclear about what your values are or what you would like them to be, there are a few different things you can do to get more insight.

Option 1: Review your own behaviours

Think about the behaviours you demonstrate every day. Write each one down individually on a sticky note. If you were to cluster them into groups of like behaviours, what would the labels be on each group? Would they be 'generosity' or 'contribution' or 'care' or 'fun'?

Once you're aware of the labels – in other words, your lived values – then you can consider how you feel about these values. Are they the values you would like to be driving your leadership, or would you like to tweak them? Up to you.

Let's just say that you've uncovered an 'unsavoury' value; let's pick 'arrogance' as an example. This presents you with a choice. Which value would you actually like to be demonstrating *instead*, and which behaviours should you be choosing so you can move away from arrogance? You might select 'humility', and start by demonstrating behaviours such as asking for help, admitting when you're wrong and apologising.

Option 2: Review the values and behaviours of your role models

You may also look at others you respect and admire and ask yourself two questions:

- What values do I see them demonstrating through their behaviours?
- Which of those values do I aspire to emulate?

Then select some of these behaviours to implement.

Option 3: Reflect on times when someone stepped on your values

Interestingly, sometimes we're not aware that we hold a particular value dear until someone 'steps' on it. Have you ever had that experience when someone does or says something and it's like a million alarm bells have just gone off in your mind?

*EMERGENCY, EMERGENCY, WOOP, WOOP, WOOP,
VALUES BREACH!!!*

It's like someone has just stomped on something very important to you and every cell of your being screams out in defence. If, or when, that situation occurs for you, just be curious. You might ask yourself a few questions:

- What is it about this situation that is most concerning for me?
- What is this person doing, or not doing, that doesn't sit well with me?
- What would I rather have happen in this situation, and why?
- Which of my values do I feel is being contravened here?

For me, these alarm bells can go off when something unfair is happening, as I have a strong sense of equity and justice. Taking time to reflect on these situations can help us define which values are important to us and which are not.

Option 4: Ask other people what they think your values are

This is a fascinating and illuminating exercise.

Select a handful of people you trust. People who know you really well. They may be family, friends, your leader, colleagues or team members, and ask them, 'If you were to describe me in three words, what words would you choose?' Once you've gathered their feedback you will likely start to see patterns in their responses. A lovely friend of mine is most often described as 'kind and generous' by others, and her key value is kindness. She behaves in accordance with her values.

When you receive their feedback, you have choices.

If what they're seeing identifies values that you feel are 'just right' for you, that's great. Just keep on going and now perhaps you will feel clearer on what your core values are.

If what they're seeing in some way feels a little jarring, and doesn't feel quite like the values you would like to be demonstrating, you can choose to behave in a different way that would feel better for you. You are now in a position to select an aspirational value – one you would like to be living – and start behaving in accordance with that value. When you choose an aspirational value – let's just say 'service' as an example – then ask yourself, 'If I were to behave in accordance with a value of service, what would people see me doing?' Then start doing those things!

The way I see it, behaviours are like your clothes. Every morning when you wake up you get to choose what you put on. Similarly, you really do get to choose how you behave. Sometimes you may feel your behaviours are a reaction to someone else's behaviours – that's part of being human, isn't it? But when you keep coming back to your values, you will make better behaviour choices and you'll feel a lovely sense of alignment as you lead through your values.

How do you use your values?

When you lead your people through your values, you are using your values to help you make decisions. A-ha! *They are a decision-making tool.* When you come to a metaphorical fork in the road and you're trying to decide, should I go right or left? You can come back to your values and decide which fork your values are indicating. For example, if you have a value of fairness, you would ask yourself, which fork best satisfies my value of fairness – the right one? Okay, let's go right. When you are clear on your values and lead through them, you will feel a strong sense of inner alignment.



Phew! Mindsets, beliefs and values ... they are meaty topics, aren't they? I hope that this last section may be a bit easier for you to get your head around: your skills and talents. Did I just hear a *groan* ... ? C'mon now, I know some of you do find it hard to *talk* about what you're good at, but you're just reading and thinking at this stage. You. Can. Do. This.

WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT SKILLS AND TALENTS?

You chose to keep reading? Good on you! So, when you're embarking on this journey to becoming a truly exceptional people leader, you need to know your starting position ('On your marks ...', remember?). Otherwise, you won't know in which direction you should head to reach your destination. This again is an exercise in self-reflection. How well do you know your current skills and talents? How well can you answer the following questions?

When it comes to people leadership ...

1. What are your strengths and development opportunities?
2. What motivates you and what stresses you?
3. What are your hidden talents and (trick question) blind spots?
4. What do you find easy?
5. What do you find hard?
6. What brings you joy?
7. How would other people answer these questions about you?
8. How do other people *actually* answer these questions about you?

While questions 7 and 8 may look very similar, they are actually quite different. You can answer question 7 all by yourself – it asks you to stand in the shoes of another person and see yourself through their eyes. It's a powerful exercise in perspective taking. It's actually a classic interview question, and over the years I've heard some hilarious 'accidental' answers. It usually goes something like this:

Me: 'And can you tell me about a time when you had to have a difficult conversation with a team member at work? How did you handle that situation?'

Interviewee: 'Oh well, I remember when [insert textbook interview answer here] ...'

Me: 'Oh, yes? Thank you. And if I asked your current teammates about how that conversation went, what do you think they would say?'

Interviewee: 'Well, they'd probably say that I charged in like a bull in a china shop ... *[followed by that *bunny in the headlights* look combined with the thought ... OMG did I actually just say that out loud ... ???!]*

Yes, this does actually happen! If you could video these interviews they would make the best blooper reels! Anyway, hopefully you can see my point. Taking turns to 'sit in other people's shoes' and see yourself differently adds to your self-awareness. Write down a list of four or five people who you interact with a lot, and if you can, people who are different to one another in some way – different styles, different experiences, different roles – and consider what they might say about you.

After you've done that, you could move onto question 8 and actually ask them. It will be fascinating to see how your anticipated answers align (or misalign) with what they actually say.

What is the value of being able to see ourselves as others see us? There's a clue in two lines in the final verse of a poem called *To a Louse* by Robbie Burns (famous Scottish Poet) in 1786:

'... To see ourselves as others see us!
It would from many a blunder free us ...'

When we can see ourselves as others see us it helps us avoid making mistakes. Especially mistakes that we may have previously been blind to. (You can read the whole poem at the back of the book.)

Once you've answered these questions, you will have a much better insight into where you are now, your current capabilities and the internal resources you can draw upon as you learn to lead.

DRA learning reflection



Discoveries:

- Your mindset is your choice. Choose a growth mindset!
- When you have a growth mindset you believe that you can improve yourself through commitment and hard work.
- Your beliefs about people shape your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and, accordingly, the results you get.
- When your beliefs are unhelpful, you can challenge them and choose to demonstrate different behaviours and achieve a different result.
- Core values are the things you place value on, which drive your behaviour.
- Aspirational values are the things you would like to place value on, which aren't driving your behaviour yet.
- Get clear on your values and use them to guide your decisions.
- Understanding your skills and talents enables you to determine where you are now and what capabilities you can draw on as you learn to lead.



Reflection questions:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 low and 10 high, how consistently are you holding a growth mindset?
- Where, or about what, might you be holding a fixed mindset?
What impact is that having?
- What beliefs do you hold about people? How well are they serving you and your people?

- What existing unhelpful beliefs might you challenge?
- What are your core values? How are they showing up in your leadership?
- What, if any, aspirational values do you intend to hold into the future?
- How clear are you on your skills and talents? How often are you using them?



Actions to choose from:

- When I'm struggling with something, instead of thinking 'I can't do this', I will tell myself 'I need to spend more time learning how to do this'.
- When I make decisions, instead of just rushing in, I will use my values to guide my decision making.
- When I'm learning how to lead, instead of randomly trying new things, I will take time to build on my existing skills and talents.