"IN THE AGE OF ALGORITHMS, OUR GREATEST COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IS STILL OUR HUMANITY."

THE HUMANIST LEADER

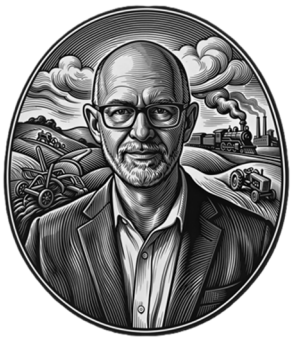
HELPING OTHERS FEEL SAFE, RESPECTED, AND PROUD



A HUMAN-FIRST WORKBOOK FOR THRIVING IN THE AI REVOLUTION

DERRICK VAN MELL

About the Author



Derrick Van Mell is the founder and Principal of the Center for Management Terms & Practices, the standards body for general management (theindex.net). He's the author of many published articles and three other books, including *Atoms & Orchestras: The Case for Standards-Based Management*. Derrick has a BA in Economics, an MBA, and a Master of Arts in English.

Derrick has trained hundreds of leaders and spoken around the world on leadership and management. His personal mission is to develop ethical, competent, and caring leaders who want to build well-run and sustainable organizations. These leaders believe profit is not the goal, but a means.

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How AI Was and Wasn't Used

None of the writing or editing of *The Humanist Leader* was done with AI. All the images, however, including the covers and subtitles, were created by the author using ChatGPT. Almost all of the images reflect the style of Thomas Hart Benton, a painter dedicated to the strains and joys of the American worker.

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Introduction

The world is desperate for competent and caring leaders, people who believe the only way for their organization to reach *its* full potential is for each employee to reach *their* full potential. These humanist leaders make everyone feel safe, respected, and proud of what they achieve together.

Everyone can count on them.

If you're a new or emerging leader, this workbook will help you:

1. Decide with confidence about leadership as your career.
2. Lead your team so they reach their potential—and you earn their trust and respect.
3. Apply the standards of competence so your team adds value every day.
4. Understand the ethics of managerial power, so you never hurt others.
5. Remove the friction that causes people to complain or quit.
6. Create your own development plan.

But not everyone is suited to leadership. We've all seen good people fail as leaders: they hold the organization back, and it's painful for them, too. So, Part I of this workbook tries to talk you out of being a leader, and Part II, if you're still reading, tries to talk you into it. Part III lays out the leader's development path with stories, standards, case studies, and simple group exercises.

While *The Humanist Leader* builds on a strong foundation of servant leadership, it's unique in five ways:

- Written specifically for new and emerging leaders. It's practical and jargon-free.
- Proves that leaders and managers are not different people, finally making the job crystal clear.
- Builds on the 2017 standards of management competence, knowledge, and ethics.
- Resists AI as a de-humanizing force. Instead, fosters the collaboration that makes us human.
- Doesn't imply leadership is easy. Instead, asserts it's worth the work.

This workbook is ultimately meant to be used by groups of four to six, discussing a chapter a week over six months. Appendix 3, "Running a Workgroup," provides guidelines. While it can stand alone as a training tool, support is available from The Center for Management Terms & Practices. See theindex.net.

For executives: If you hire and promote leaders, this workbook will help you decide who to invest in and how to spend time and money on their development. You'll then be able to delegate with confidence.

Thank you for buying this workbook and, more important, for considering leadership as your calling. You'll be in good company.

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Part I: All the Wrong Reasons

1. Unsuitable?

Who hasn't had a boss that simply wasn't suited to the job?



Just won't fit

Lots of good people become bad bosses because they're just not the right fit. It's painful for their employees and for them, too. You can see it etched on their faces.

This workbook is for new and emerging leaders who want to know what it takes to do a good job. It will also help the executives who hire, develop, and promote them.

Part I of this book tries to talk you out of being a leader. Part II tries to talk you into it. If you're still interested, Part III shows you how to lead with competence and humanity.

> *Message to CEOs*: This workbook exists because Nicolas Paris, CEO of Gilson, Inc., a global manufacturer of laboratory testing equipment, wanted help inspiring the right people to be leaders and knowing how best to invest in them. Hard experience and staff turnover taught him that having competent and caring leaders is the only path to steady growth.

A Leader is a Manager

There's a world of confusion about the difference between a leader and a manager, perhaps because there *isn't* one: A leader inspires people to accept a challenge, and a manager helps people work together. How can you inspire a team if you can't help them work together? How can you help them work together if they're uninspired? We'll dive deeper into this in Chapter 3.

This workbook uses "leader" and "manager" interchangeably.

The Humanist Flywheel

Good leaders are driven to help others achieve and be more than they thought possible. They energize all their work by tapping into three deep and connected human needs:



Safety, meaning physical, emotional, and financial safety. Once people feel safe, they can give their attention and support to their teammates.

Respect for one's contributions, abilities, and individuality. Mutual respect lets the group accept a big challenge together.

Pride that comes from meeting those challenges *and* believing one's work has meaning. Everyone is proud to know they're making a difference.

This flywheel builds momentum when the group meets a big challenge, which makes them feel safe taking on the *next* challenge, which builds respect for each other—and on and on. We focus on these three human factors throughout this workbook.

Above All Else, Leaders Are Caring

This workbook discusses the characteristics of a good leader, but the absolutely central characteristic is that they're caring. Yes, they must be sympathetic, empathetic, and compassionate, but caring is the pinnacle of a humanistic progression. Here, suffering doesn't necessarily mean pain. It can also mean the frustration of an unfilled aspiration:

Sympathy: Understanding someone's suffering and perhaps expressing concern.
Empathy: Feeling someone's suffering, which is a motivator to help.
Compassion: Having the desire to relieve someone's suffering. An emotional state.
Caring: Acting to relieve someone's suffering. A behavioral state.

A humanist leader continually balances empathy with accountability, keenly aware that the stress of accountability is essential to the pride of achievement.

Managing to metrics is essential to any competent leader, but when the numbers become all that matter, people feel unseen. Humanist leaders don't ignore the numbers but use them to direct and develop the people who propel the organization forward.

The Author Falls on His Face

My first job out of college was as the file clerk on a huge mixed-used real estate project in Boston. Two years into it, I was folding blueprints in the cramped workroom when the HR director stepped into the doorway. Next to her was a tall skinny kid. The director said, "Here's your new assistant. I'm sure you guys will get along," and then she left.

That was all the warning and all the training I got before becoming a leader for the first time. I was eventually promoted into another role, and my assistant took over the file room. After he quit a year later, I learned from the printing company that he'd been a terror. So, no, I didn't help him succeed.

Luckily for me and my leadership career, I soon got a great boss who put me on the right path with his example of caring and competence.

Humanist Leadership Is a Noble Tradition

In 1960, Douglas McGregor wrote *The Human Side of Enterprise* to argue that what he called "Theory X" (top down) management was flawed and limiting. He believed that "Theory Y" management, which integrates each employee's goals and needs with those of their organization, would tap incredible energy to everyone's benefit. He wrote "…the potentialities of the average human being are far above those which we typically realize…"

In 1970, Robert Greenleaf wrote an essay, "The Servant as Leader," defining a servant leader as someone who puts others first, prioritizing their growth and well-being over the leader's attainment of power. He proposed a central test for a leader: "Do those served grow as persons? Do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servants themselves?"

Greenleaf wasn't just articulating a technique but leading a movement: "I came to believe that we in this country were in a leadership crisis and that I should do what I could about it."

In 2015, Bob Chapman and Raj Sisodia wrote *Everyone Matters.* The book tells Bob's story of transforming his business, Barry-Wehmiller, into a $4 billion conglomerate by focusing first and always on empathy, listening, and treating everyone with respect. Simon Sinek's forward begins with:

> "Imagine waking up in world in which the vast majority of people wake up every single day inspired, feel safe wherever they are, and end the day fulfilled by the work that they do… more and more leaders are embracing the ideas of giving people a sense of purpose at work and making them feel like they matter."

This workbook carries the banner of this humanist movement, demystifying leadership and providing simple, practical guidance for anyone wanting to make it their calling.

The Challenge and the Reward

Leadership is complex, hard work that demands great emotional strength, but for the right person the rewards are deep and lasting. Clayton Christensen, who *The Economist* described as "the most influential management thinker of his time," captured the leader's calling perfectly:

> "Management is the most noble of professions if it's practiced well. No other occupation offers as many ways to help others learn and grow, take responsibility and be recognized for achievement, and contribute to the success of a team… Doing deals doesn't yield the deep rewards that come from building up people."

But if you find your reward in specialized work—plumbing, accounting, the law, coding—that's great. That's the path for you, and you should stay on it.

Our Journey Together

This book is about the leader's career path. After you check you're on that path for the right reasons, we'll answer the critical career questions:

- What exactly does a leader do?
- How do leadership and management complement each other?
- What do leaders need to know? How should they learn?
- What are their rewards? What value do they create?
- What is their code of ethics?
- What are their career opportunities?
- How will AI affect the future of leadership and management?

But first, let's make sure you become a leader for the right reasons. Grab a pencil.



2. The Checklist

Remember, the most important reason to be a leader is you're driven to help others succeed. That assumes you've got the personality and strength that lets you work with people under stress.



I can check that off

The Wrong Reasons to Be a Leader

The list below is of the most common reasons people make a mistake when they decide to start or continue a leadership career.

These ideas are meant to keep you from making an impulsive decision. If you only check a few of these, you owe it to yourself to flip through Parts II and III, which explain why some people love being leaders and what the job entails. Then go through this checklist again.

- ☐ No one else wants the job
- ☐ It just seems like the right thing to do
- ☐ There isn't another way to get a promotion
- ☐ My boss thinks I'll be a good leader because I'm a good specialist
- ☐ I worry I'll be in trouble if I refuse
- ☐ The title of "leader" strokes my ego
- ☐ I want a raise and a nicer office
- ☐ I want to lead a crusade to "fix the system"
- ☐ I want the power



"How was your day?"

The Human Factor. Mike Markiewicz runs executive education at a top 100 business school. Mike pictures when an employee gets home from work, and their spouse asks, "How was your day?"

If they have a good boss, the room is colorful and bright, and both spouses are smiling and animated. If they have a bad boss, the room is grey and sour, and no one's making eye contact.

A great leader wants people to love coming to work.

Why Some People *Don't* Want to Be a Leader

There are legitimate reasons to decline a leadership job even if you're suited to it: You might not now have the time because you're raising kids or facing burnout. Or despite the rewards of leadership, you love your specialty work even more.

But sometimes people don't want to be a leader because they're confused about the job or about themselves. This next checklist is of their common reasons, but this workbook might prove them wrong:

- ☐ Leading always looks chaotic and stressful
- ☐ I don't see what the reward is
- ☐ I don't want the responsibility
- ☐ I don't want to put in the time
- ☐ I don't want the power
- ☐ I don't want to deal with "people issues"
- ☐ I want to be a "leader" instead of a "manager"
- ☐ I don't want to stop being friends with my peers
- ☐ I don't want to get "corporate"

How to Use this Workbook

Most chapters in this workbook have a list of best practices and tools, a summary of key points, and three questions or an activity for reflection and discussion. The ideas are rich and weighty, so work on one chapter at a time. This is a workbook so underline, scribble in the margins, and fill up the notes lines.

Workgroup: Form a small internal or external group and read and discuss a chapter a week. We always learn from the perspectives, experiences, and questions of our peers. See Appendix 3 for guidelines.

For Executives and trainers: When working with someone who has either asked to become a leader or someone you think should be a leader, discuss the first two parts of this workbook. You might open the conversation by asking:

- How do you summarize a leader's job?
- How do you describe the person who's helped you most in your career?
- When did you make a big difference in someone's life?

If they're considering their *first* leadership job, you could also discuss:

1. Do you see becoming a leader as either a promotion or a career change?
2. How do you feel about dealing with people who are upset?
3. What would you miss about your work as a specialist?

If they're deciding whether *to continue* their leadership career:

1. What was your best moment as a leader? Your worst moment?
2. How have you dealt with a poor performer on your team?
3. How has being a leader made you a better person?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

The ultimate question is, “Why do you want to be a leader?” People often make the wrong choice because there’s so much confusion about the job. Perhaps the worst myth is that leaders are different than managers. Let’s dynamite it next.



3. Leaders and Managers Are Not Different People

Leadership and management are the yang and yin of the same person. This confusion leads a lot of people to make the wrong career choice: They think leadership is glamorous and management tedious.

A leader is someone who inspires people to accept a challenge. A manager is someone who helps people work together.

You must be both inspiring *and* effective. Secretary of State James Baker III summed it up: *"*A leader is someone who knows what to do—and then does it." Chapter 14 provides a simple, 3-phase framework for leadership.



Leader yang, manager yin

Again, leaders and managers are *not* different people. It's just as correct to say a "manager must have leadership ability" as it is to say, "a leader must have management ability."

Background or Foreground

When good leaders are managing, they usually keep a low profile. Like a ship's engineer, they're in the engine room hovering over hundreds of moving parts, oiling a bearing here, checking a gauge there. But when they're leading, they're like an orchestra conductor, standing in front, pointing their baton, being in the spotlight. This fools people into thinking managers and leaders are different, but they're really just capable of operating in different modes.

Style

Some leaders are quiet, others flamboyant. Some are friendly and informal; others are reserved. Whatever their style, you'll see the same behaviors: They're attentive, focused, and encouraging. They always display keen emotional intelligence.

Biographers focus on famous people, so we think leaders have to have big personalities. But any style can work. Better yet just stop thinking about it. Acting a role guarantees you won't be authentic. Some people know how to *look* like a leader, but everybody sees through them pretty quickly.

Title Soup

Every country has confusing and inconsistent titles for leaders. In the United States, this title soup includes Supervisor, Director, Administrator, Coordinator, Vice President, Shift Leader, Team Lead, and on and on. Other countries have their own sets of management titles. And the job descriptions are worse! No wonder people get confused about what it takes to be a leader.

In the next chapter, we'll debunk six other myths that make the career choice confusing. We'll then be ready to hear the case for making leadership a career and a calling.

4. The 6 Most Confusing Leadership Myths

A low estimate of global expenditures on management and leadership development in 2024 was $37 billion[1]. But are we awash in great leaders and leaders? Most of that money is wasted because we're deeply confused about leadership. Let's debunk the six myths that cloud our thinking.



Myth slayer

Myth #1: Leadership Isn't That Hard

No, it's very hard. This comforting myth lets the wrong people slip into leadership jobs which is bad for their staff, their organization, and themselves. Leadership isn't just technically complicated (see Chapters 8 to 11), it's also hard because you're dealing with people. Leadership demands emotional strength and thorough self-knowledge.

In Chapter 7, we'll talk about the personal characteristics that make a good leader.

Myth #2: Leadership is Easy to Learn

No. This correlates to Myth #1, that leadership is easy to do. For some reason, people think they can become a good leader by taking a few courses, reading a few books, or watching a few videos—and then wind up learning things the hard way. It takes years to become a competent manager and effective leader; learning never stops. You need real experiences in managing real people to learn best practices and to develop your inner strength. See Chapter 0, "How Can I Learn to Be a Great Leader?"

Myth #3: Leadership is Always Chaotic

No, it doesn't have to be. Many people believe work is one unending fire drill. There are too many of these "11:59" leaders, people who leave things until the last minute no matter the consequences to their staff or themselves. One wonders if they create the chaos so they can feel like heroes by resolving it. The standards on page 31 are the path to sanity. Great leaders help everyone get ahead of the clock.

Myth #4: Anyone Can Be a Manager and Leader

No. Perhaps only 1 person in 10 can be a good boss[2] because it demands such a rare combination of personal characteristics, skills, and knowledge. But most industries, particularly service industries, need 1 manager for 6 or 8 employees. In other words, we already don't have enough good bosses to go around.

The Author vs FedEx

I subcontracted to a firm that did long-range facility planning for healthcare systems. They had a great practice, but the principal for whom I worked just wasn't happy unless we were racing to the FedEx depot to ship our reports via overnight mail.

Several times I pounded on the window to beg them to take our package after the depot had closed. The principal thought this was exciting, but lots of people quit working for him, including me.

Perhaps AI will let one manager supervise more people, but it's clear the demand for good leaders is going to be high for a long time.

Myth #5: Leadership Differs by Sector and Scale

No. The standards of leadership don't vary by sector or scale. While their situations vary, small and large non-profits, banks, hospitals, and law firms all engage in marketing, sales, operations, information management, human resources, and finance. Repackaging leadership practices is what people do to make their services seem special or to market another fad.

When you create your own management jargon, you cut yourself off from the world's proven ideas. You perform like a musician who's made up their own kind of sheet music.

The way people work together and treat each other can, however, vary by country. Some national cultures are more collaborative, others more hierarchical. If you ever work internationally, you might see attitudes you like and some you don't. You might value the books written by Roger Axtell, including *Do's and Taboos Around the World*.

Myth #6: AI is Going to Eliminate Leadership Jobs

Yes, but no. Yes, as AI eliminates hundreds of thousands of technical jobs, there's no longer a need for as many of their leaders. But, no, it will be a long time before AI can make snap decisions in a crisis or find creative solutions when the data are sparse.

More importantly, AI will increase the need for caring, ethical, and competent leaders who can inspire people and help them use the new technology to work collaboratively. Working together is what makes us human. Without collaboration, we literally would have been eaten alive 1,000,000 years ago. The demand for humanist leaders will expand at the same rate AI makes our world artificial.

The changes to leadership forced by AI will be profound and lasting. It's impossible to predict those changes exactly, but we can start asking some hard questions:

- How can and will AI help leaders do their work?
- How will AI affect job descriptions and organization charts?
- Will leaders have more direct reports because AI is doing much of the management work?
- Will leaders have fewer direct reports, but also supervise many AI agents?
- Will AI ever be able to replace human creativity, at least enough for most jobs?

AI will probably never replace human creativity, courage, and compassion. We will, however, need to better understand what is essential to being human.

KEY POINTS

- Myths about leadership often lead people astray in their career decisions.
- Leadership is difficult, and it demands a certain kind of person.
- Competent leaders take the chaos out of the workplace.

3 GOOD QUESTIONS

1. *Story*: How clearly does your job description describe the organization's expectations of you?
2. *Exploration*: What do you need to learn to be a better leader and manager?
3. *Action*: How could AI help you be a better leader?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

There are many opportunities to clarify how we think about, practice, and teach leadership. That leads to better career choices. Next, let's make plain the powerful reasons to be a leader.



Part II: All the Right Reasons

5. Why Should I Be a Leader?



Eyes on me

As Clayton Christensen taught us in Chapter 1, management is "the most noble of professions." You can help people feel safe, respected, and proud. That's management's great reward, but there are others.

Practical Rewards

Employability. Great leaders have always been in demand, and CEOs in every sector are still desperate for leaders who can quickly take over a team, lead effectively, and work comfortably with every department.

Mobility and Adaptability. Unlike people with a deep technical specialty, good leaders have excellent job mobility because the principles of leadership are universal. Many leaders move from sector to sector. As generalists, it's easier for them to adapt to planned and unplanned changes.

Influence. Being a leader gives you a say in the organization's big decisions. Leaders are much more likely to be in the information loop.

Complexity. Some people love the technical practices of management. They're fascinated by marketing and operations and finance and by how all the disciplines connect. These generalists are natural systems thinkers.

Relationships and Connections. Let's not forget leaders are people, too, and find safety, joy, and satisfaction in their relationships at work. Many introverted leaders like the structured relationships with their employees and peers. Extraverts will welcome the chance to add whole groups of people into their work lives. Both introverts and extraverts enjoy making meaningful connections for others.

Indirect Rewards

When you switch from specialist to leader, be prepared for a very different set of rewards. A specialist gets immediate rewards because it's easy to see if their work was done well. But a leader's rewards are indirect and delayed: it takes time and patience to help people feel safe, respected, and proud of a job well done. The rewards of an executive (a leader of leaders) are even more indirect and deferred. In Chapter 0, we'll answer the question, "How will I know if I'm doing a good job as a leader?"

Advanced Ideas

Leadership as a Calling. The reward of being a great leader is the same as that of being a great teacher or coach: making a lasting difference in people's lives. As a school superintendent said, "My purpose is to give other people purpose."

> Greg Baker was my favorite high school teacher; he was also my swim coach. I loved his English classes: We read *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* instead of the usual tame stuff. He challenged me in the way that was best for me. He taught me how to really read and write. 500 students attended his memorial when he passed away.

Moral Imperative. The only way to keep your employees safe, financially and emotionally, is through competent leadership. It's the only way to make them feel confident that their work has meaning. To be blunt, it's irresponsible to take on these responsibilities and not manage to the highest possible standards: You create unneeded risks for the people in your care.

We've all probably met materially successful people who had one set of morals at home and another at work. Remember, "Wherever you go, there you are." It's a dog-eat-dog world because some people choose to be dogs.

Entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur without leadership ability is just an inventor slowly going broke. If you're running a start-up, you must be a manager until you can afford to hire someone who loves it. Entrepreneurs need to develop themselves as well as their product.

Social Mission: The workplace is a great place to learn leadership, but you can be a leader in your community and government. You could set an example that contrasts with those in authority who only want to gain personal power and advantage.

KEY POINTS

- The rewards of being a leader are very different from those of a specialist.
- Even in the age of AI, good leaders have excellent mobility and growth opportunities.
- It's irresponsible to run an organization without adhering to high management standards.

3 GOOD QUESTIONS

1. *Story*: Who was your favorite boss? How did they make you feel about yourself?
2. *Exploration*: What are the top three things that motivate you to be a leader?
3. *Action*: How do you make the world a better place by being a better leader?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

A leadership career has many personal rewards, but how can you add value to your employer, who might be investing in your leader development? As you'll see next, you can contribute a lot.



6. How Do Leaders Add Value to Their Organizations?

Leadership ability is rocket fuel for your organization. The next story shows how it directly correlates to gross and net margins, which fund growth and opportunity. Each improvement to the income statement increases business value and reduces risks and volatility.

You can quantify the value of leadership ability in each discipline: marketing response rates, sales conversion ratios, safety incidents, turnaround time, quality, employee productivity, and retention, and so on. But you can also contribute many qualitative benefits.



Leadership is rocket fuel

Let Executives Delegate With Confidence

Most executives want two things from their leaders: not having to solve the leader's problems and not get drawn into personnel conflicts. The executives want and need to spend their time solving big problems and creating big opportunities. They want to help people grow and be excited to try new things, not to be stuck and unhappy.

That said, it's up to the executives to provide the conditions for their leaders' success (Chapter 20). They need to invest the time and money in hiring, developing, and mentoring suitable people so the executives can delegate with confidence.

Good executives make leader development a top priority and budget their time accordingly. A ROI analysis template for leadership development is on page 86.

Make Better Daily Decisions

Leaders make hundreds of decisions a day: choosing who's in a meeting, making a minor budget correction, reviewing a presentation, recognizing an achievement, and on and on. These small decisions add up to help everyone become more efficient and productive.

You'll later meet Jeff Jaeckle, the CEO of a third-generation family business, an exemplar of humanist leadership. As an example of the importance of small decisions, one of his dock managers thought they were using too much packing tape… which led Jeff and his team to decide to consolidate three buildings into a new distribution center.

Numbers Don't Lie

Susan Dineen was Marketing Director of ACS, a design/build firm. She and her engineer bosses loved numbers, so she ran an annual customer satisfaction survey with a 1 to 5 rating. Over six years, she proved these ratings directly correlated to repeat sales—which saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales expenses.

Though each 10% gain took a company-wide effort of process improvements, staff training, and marketing communications, Susan had proven the value of management ability.

Decision-Making. There are three modes of managerial decision-making: you decide, the group advises, or the group votes. You might delegate the decision, but then the "delegate" has to choose a decision-making mode. A humanist leader chooses the mode fitting the situation, team, and urgency. Some employees want to be included in every detail, but others won't want to be included at all.

Decisions are a manifestation of managerial power. You can use your power to decide on your own or you can facilitate joint decision. Decisions made collaboratively make employees feel included and in control. It takes time (and humilty) to include others, the time at the start saves a lot more time in the end. Good decisions mean better results, which are always opportunities to feel proud.

Build Loyalty

People quit because they hate their boss, and people stay because they love their boss. So much turns on how well people are managed, individually and as a team. They feel great when they get to make the most of their time and talents. Good leaders bring out the best in their employees; It's the only way for organizations to succeed year after year. Retention is perhaps the greatest return on their investment in your leadership ability.

Improve Communications Up, Down and Sideways

Strong connections require clear communications. Good communications show you understand the issues, and you know what's important. We'll elaborate on communications in the "Project Mint" case (page 40), but this quotation from a 2022 Stanford University study[3] says it all:

> "More than just about any other leadership skill, people are fiercely criticized for poor communication. The higher up you get, the more brutal that criticism becomes."

Nurture a Positive Culture

Your "values statement" is also your "culture statement." It lists the principles by which you promise to make all decisions. But good intentions about values aren't enough. Leaders must set a good example of ethical behavior and supervise each person and team in a way that works for those individuals. That's humanism.

Any leader, by doing the right thing, sets a good example for everyone, even their own bosses.

Compete and Win in the Labor Pool

Every smart job candidate asks around, "What's it like to work over there?" Organizations and teams need a reputation as well-managed and ethical as well as friendly, successful, and stable. When they have that reputation, hiring costs decrease and growth positions don't stay empty for long.

There, Not Here

"Jane" was in the human resources department of a non-profit, but her irritability got on everyone's nerves—just the opposite of what you want in HR. It clearly wasn't working, and lots of people wanted her fired.

But the executive director could see that Jane worked hard, was bright, and cared about the mission. After a long, long conversation, Jane was given a new role as head of the IT team. She brightened and everyone brightened around her. Friction was replaced by harmony, goodwill—and excellent IT support.

Replace Friction with Collaboration

People love working with other people, though many employees get frustrated and give up on collaboration. It only takes a few disagreeable moments to make employees withdraw, but it can take years to get them to re-engage.

A skillful leader gets people to work together enthusiastically, not reluctantly. The chance to collaborate with people they respect is most employees' greatest motivator. The leader must set a challenge that's so inspiring, everyone will look past petty resentments. Even a little more leadership skill will lead to a lot more collaboration. And collaboration is fun!

Accelerate Innovation

Starting with best practices lets everyone find new ways to improve their own products and processes. We've all seen how one idea can make a big difference. Good leaders don't trust to luck: They build on the basics in each meeting. Your organization wins when you innovate.

Strengthen Resilience and Succession

Our initial premise was that having the wrong person as a leader is expensive and risky for everyone. Manager turnover creates big risks and costs. When the leader leaves, the entire team's career progression stalls. Organizations can't grow; they can only struggle to keep up.

If the leaders' job descriptions are standardized and consistent, it's easier to pass along knowledge when people leave. Hiring and promoting leaders that meet high standards minimizes gaps and weaknesses. This makes your organization steadier and lets your leaders advance with it.

We'll introduce the 2017 management standards in chapter 8.
They'll become the backbone of Part III, The Path.

Reduce Risks

High competence and strong ethics reduce risks of all kinds. Emerging and new leaders who speak the language of management and learn to view things from the organizational perspective help executives spot and mitigate risks. Every chief executive appreciates it when a risk is extinguished long before it comes to the attention of the owners or board.

Improve Family Business Harmony

J.P. Cullen is a five-generation construction company in the Midwest. One of its best practices is that family members must spend several years working outside of the business before they can work in it. It's won "top workplace" awards nine years in a row.

In 2021, 27% percent of US businesses were family-owned[4], using the US Small Business Administration's strict definition that two or more family members own a majority of the business. Thinking globally, the largest 500 family-owned businesses in the world accounted for $8.8 trillion in revenue, per EY in 2025[5]. That's a lot of employees.

Leadership ability is at a premium in family businesses because mistakes and uncertainty become personal. Adopting standards-based leadership provides a fair and objective basis for decisions and promotions.

Build Goodwill & Trust

Managing well makes life better not just for your employees, but also for your organization's vendors and customers. They like it when decisions are made promptly. They also like consistency, and they trust the organization when they see the employees trust their bosses.

This goodwill stimulates everyone in your constellation of connections to share new ideas or to warn you about new risks. Goodwill is a reservoir for when your luck runs dry. A reputation for good leadership in your market, labor pool, supply chain, and communities can earn you that critical second chance.

KEY POINTS

- Even a small improvement in leadership ability produces large returns.
- Having a reputation for competence and ethics retains and attracts talented people.
- Anyone can set a good example for everyone.

3 GOOD QUESTIONS

1. *Story*: When did you add measurable value to your organization?
2. *Exploration*: How else would you like to add value to your organization?
3. *Action*: What big thing do you want your boss to delegate to you?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

Organizations get big returns from investing in their leaders. To bring the humanist leader to life, the next chapter spotlights Stefanie, Tom, and Jeff.



7. Who Becomes a Great Leader?

A simple networking question for anyone considering a leadership career is “Who was your favorite boss? What were they like?” It won’t be long before you hear this pattern:

- “Everyone trusted them, including the CEO.”
- “They were honest and ethical.”
- “They were tough, but fair.”
- “They really cared about me. They treated me as an individual.”
- “They knew what they were doing but never showed off.”
- “They helped me do more than I ever thought I could.”

Great leaders are trustworthy, ethical and honest, tough yet fair, caring and competent, humble and effective. These are the characteristics needed to put other people first so you can help them and, through them, your organization. Who wouldn’t want to be described this way?

Here are three inspiring humanist leaders:

Stefanie



Stefanie Primm is one of the founders and now executive director of LOV, Inc., a non-profit agency (an NGO or Non-Governmental Agency) dedicated to helping young adults with disabilities expand and enjoy their independence.

Entrepreneurship takes courage, particularly when funding is scarce and society isn’t quite ready for your idea. But Stefanie persevered through all these start-up challenges while providing services to a growing number of clients, including innovative programs for Hispanic and Native American populations. She is an amazing source of inspiration and strength for her clients, their families, her staff, and her funders and supporters. She built an organization with a culture of compassion, hard work, and professionalism.

Tom



Tom Oakley is a professional CEO and entrepreneur and was recently CEO of a pharmaceutical research company. Tom’s smart and decisive; his passion is professional management for its own sake, which is lastingly good.

I’ve known Tom for fifteen years and have never once seen him condescend or exert his power over anyone. He doesn’t see people as boxes in an organization chart, but as fellow human beings with fears and shortcomings—and potential. He’s never aloof, never exclusive, always fair, always patient. Tom is often called upon to make big changes by a company’s owners but does not reflexively fire managers to install flatterers or to pump up short-term value. He takes responsibility for his decisions but refuses to talk about himself.

Jeff



Jeff Jaeckle is the third-generation president of Jaeckle Distributors, a family business wholesaling flooring products. I met Jeff when he was facing a tough decision about building a new central distribution facility. He realized this decision entailed many tough practical decisions: What are all the financial considerations? How will this affect operations? What message will this decision send to suppliers and customers?

But Jeff was also keenly aware this decision would personally affect everyone in the organization. He spent months analyzing his situation, being open about the issues, and engaging all his managers. He decided to go ahead with the new facility, and the business took a leap forward. It was a big challenge and change, but in the end, it created better work and more opportunities for everyone.

Trusting and Trusted

More than any others, these two words—trusting and trusted—define a great leader. You'll remember our definition of a leader: someone who helps people work together. Fenton Sharpe[6] perfectly captured the connection between trust and leadership:

> "Trust is an element in every human and social interaction … it is the adhesive which holds people together and prevents them from being isolated individuals."

Sharpe defined trust succinctly: "It is an act of willing dependence by one person upon another or a group…" Stefanie, Tom, and Jeff trust both wisely and well.

The Many Faces of Honesty: Everyone should always be honest, but this is a good place to remind leaders of the different faces of honesty. It isn't just not saying things that are false; it's also not over-stating or under-stating something's importance. It also means not withholding information others would want. One moment of dishonesty can break trust forever.

What Happens When There's No Trust? First, no one has faith in the organization's direction. It's frightening to lose one's rudder in mid-ocean. Second, gossip and suspicion lead to ill will, mistakes, and loss of productive energy. What should be understood clearly is distorted. Third, people become suspicious of new ideas, including good ones. There is no social cohesion, but social cohesion—collaboration and cooperation—is the fundamental need at the heart of humanist leadership.

Leadership is impossible in a culture of distrust. Leadership means facing a challenge, which means taking a risk—and accepting a risk requires trust in the people around you, an "act of willing dependence."

The Elements of Trust-Building and Trust-Protecting. The chief executive must be a perfect example of trustworthiness: honest, open, consistent, competent, and able to keep a confidence. Traces of all these elements should be seen in problem-solving and decision-making, whether they're collaborative or authoritarian, open or secretive.

Managing to standards promotes consistency, competence, and openness. Formally adopting the Pledge of Managerial Power (Chapter 11) promotes ethical behavior. Trustworthiness in your organization is an aggregation of all the leaders' behaviors.

But, as Fenton asserts, "authenticity is paramount." The leaders and executives must have courageous self-knowledge, express their feelings, and admit mistakes. They must trust themselves. Perhaps the issues and questions in this workbook are helping you learn about yourself.

Advanced Ideas

Nature vs. Nurture: Waking Up a Hidden Leader. On one hand, many management and leadership abilities seem to be innate, that you can't train someone who just isn't suited to it. However, it's also true that these abilities can be hidden within someone and then woken up. Discovering and developing these abilities is why this workbook was written.

The Challenges of a Leader's Ego. It's human nature to want to be the center of one's story. It's a survival mechanism: It keeps us alert to personal threats and opportunities. Yet ego harms us and others when it becomes self-righteousness (believing that all one's ideas, words, and actions are right) or narcissism (needing to be the center of attention). Put a system in place for checking your ego. Family, friends, and a spiritual practice can keep us humble and empathetic.

Bullies Can Win. It's sadly true that you can achieve material success by being a bully, cheater, and liar. But it's also true these people have a demon that claws at them every day. When they leave the scene, they leave behind no friends, no goodwill, and no lasting good. Let's pity them—from a safe distance.

Can Leadership Help Me Grow as a Person? The quality of our characters is revealed in our relationships. Working through relationship challenges is how we learn about ourselves and the depth of our compassion, confidence, humility, and wisdom. Managers, people who help people work together, work every day to improve their own relationships and those of everyone under their care.

Leadership as a Spiritual Practice. Most religious and spiritual development follows the same four stages we'll later see in the standard of ethics, the Pledge of Managerial Power:

1. Awareness
2. Introspection
3. Appropriateness
4. Intention

You might discuss your leadership challenges with your spiritual advisor. Most faiths have scripture that addresses morality in the workplace and speaks directly to the qualities we've identified as important to a leader: honesty, compassion, humility, strength, and wisdom.

KEY POINTS

- Great leaders are trusted and trusting, tough, fair, caring, competent, honest, and humble.
- Great leaders are always working to do the right thing for every person.
- The challenges of leadership can help us grow wiser and kinder.

3 GOOD QUESTIONS

1. *Story*: How would you contrast the best and worst leader you know?
2. *Exploration*: Do you gain energy by helping others succeed? When did that happen?
3. *Action*: What are you curious about at this stage of your leadership career?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

It takes strength and maturity to look inside oneself, to face one's fears and to answer the question, "Have I behaved well toward others?" Part III outlines how to make that happen. Its first chapter introduces the three standards great leaders and managers live by.



Part III: The Path

8. What Are the 3 Standards of Management?

I'm no craftsman, but I love working with my hands. Next to me as I write is my German great-granduncle's drafting tools from 1905.

Then, a skilled carpenter could install one door in a day, but now, with standard dimensions, standard hinges, and standard locks and handles (with standard screws driven by standard screwdrivers), a carpenter can install twenty good quality doors in a day. Every industry depends on standards to guarantee consistent quality.

But management itself—the science of running an organization—didn't have any standards until 2017. Why did it take so long? Perhaps it's because selling "quick fix" leadership and management techniques is so profitable, or perhaps management jargon is such a good way to avoid conflict and difficult decisions.



Performance standards

You can learn more about the Center for Management Terms & Practices, the standards body for management, in Appendix 2.

Though many people still feel management is inherently chaotic, there are now three standards that can help. You now can share the same best practices, use the same terminology, and adhere to the same high ethical standard.

The Three Management Standards: Musical Notation for Leadership

Students of music learn musical notation, the 1,000-year-old language for learning, creating, and performing together. You're about to learn the common language of leadership:

Standard of Competence: The Milwaukee Model (page 33)

Standard of Knowledge: The Index of Terms & Practices (page 34)

Standard of Ethics: The Pledge of Managerial Power (page 36)

THE STANDARDS

Each standard will be explored in following chapters, but they're all available for free at *www.theindex.net/standards*. Click through them now; we'll refer to them often.

All three standards will help you work with people skillfully and compassionately from your first day as a leader. They'll help you be a keen observer and listener, which builds trust. And they're a framework for development throughout your career; they're used by leaders at every level around the world.

One of life's great tricks is knowing what you don't know. We've all been blindsided by an "unknown unknown." These standards are simple to use and, once you've gotten familiar with them, they will make sure you don't miss something big.

Applying Standards with Standard Tools. The standards are applied through the one-page tools in The Center of Management Terms & Practices' Toolkit. The relevant tools will get highlighted as we talk about skills and practices. But if you already have tools that work for you and your team, stick with them.

THE TOOLKIT

Social Mission. The workplace is a wonderful setting in which to learn humanist leadership, but these abilities and attitudes can be applied in wider and wider circles of society: your community, place of worship, city, and state.

It's possible and important to imagine world leaders as humanists who collaborate to bridge social and political borders.

KEY POINTS

- Standards promote quality and consistency, and management standards are no different.
- Managing to standards clears up communications between executives and the front line.
- The 2017 standards of knowledge, ethics, and competence replace chaos with collaboration.

3 GOOD QUESTIONS

1. *Story*: To what standards of competence and ethics are you managing now?
2. *Exploration*: What management tools help your team work together?
3. *Action*: How can these standards help you communicate more clearly?

ANSWERS

ACTION:

Now that we've introduced the management standards, let's first dive into the standard of competence. The Milwaukee Model defines the leader's job, its skills, practices, and perspectives.

