

# Shifting from Fear to Trust:

## The Journey of Modern Leadership



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It is absolutely amazing to watch a management team shift their thinking when exposed to trust-based leadership.

Sitting down with an executive team of managers one morning, I could feel the suspicion and scepticism in the room. They were questioning why they should lead differently. This organization, a long-standing, successful family-run business, thrived for years under an aggressive, high-handed, owner-led leadership style. So naturally, the idea of leading in a new way felt foreign and uncomfortable.

I walked them through a simple but powerful idea: *We have a choice!* We can lead because people trust us, or we can lead because they fear us. The difference between these two approaches is stark. When we create a safe space for our people, they have the exciting opportunity to bring their best game. But when they're afraid, they only do what is necessary to stay out of trouble. These are two very different motives for being at work.

Slowly but surely, I watched their thinking shift. By the afternoon, the CEO acknowledged how difficult this transition would be. Yet, he also recognized that unless they embraced this new way of leading, their organisation would slowly become uncompetitive.

This journey of shifting management teams from heavy-handed, old-school, autocratic leadership to modern, trust-based, relationship-driven leadership is thrilling. The prospect of guiding organisations to a better future is not just important; it's essential.

Leadership isn't just about doing the right thing or inspiring people, it's about leaving a legacy. A highly competitive legacy that transitions organizations into being long-term, sustainable, and resilient. When leaders see it this way, the motive for change in the boardroom shifts.

The future challenges we face aren't the ones we're used to. Artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and other incredible technologies are making functional tasks less challenging. But what is becoming more challenging are the people dynamics! Creating an environment where people love to come to work.

Last night, I read something that struck me: How do we really know the culture of our organization? It's not in what we stick on the wall. It's how people *feel* on Sunday night when they think about going to work.

If our people show up as their best selves, motivated and focused on creating a better destiny, we have the potential for something special. But if they arrive fearful, stressed, and concerned, the best we can expect is the bare minimum, just enough to stay out of trouble.

The future is vastly different from where we've come from. The leadership styles of the second and third industrial revolutions won't serve us in the fourth. Success now lies in our people's creativity, passion, and innovation. That's where true competitive advantage lives.

*And it all starts with trust.*

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