



The Hard Work in Leading Humans Resource Pack





Why is it **harder** to lead people today and how do you lead in a human and **courageous** way?

Our experts share their insights and knowledge, dive deep into the human experience of leadership, and explore the complexities of leading in an effective and healthy way.

The Experts



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Encountas Executive Coach and Leadership Development and Culture Change Specialist



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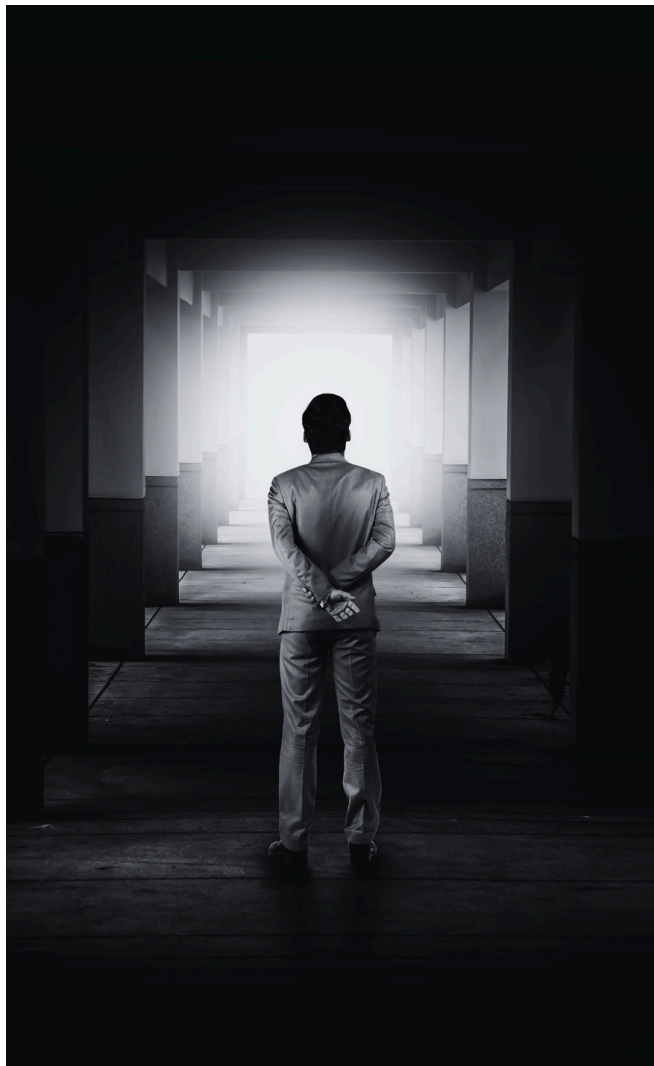
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Encountas Executive Coach, Facilitator, and People and Culture Specialist



Leadership Today

Leadership is harder today due to the fast pace and relational complexity of the workplace, which increases perceived risks.

Leaders are critical to organisation performance. Organisations need to know leaders are challenged in aligning their team, speaking up to power, and taking a stand aligned with their value, and this is impacting their sense of belonging and security.

Courage is in the invisible work, like being able to hold different perspectives, prioritising people's humanity, and being true to oneself despite high pressures.

Additionally, hope plays an important role - believing that strong connections and relationships will yield more benefits than retreating and pulling away.



Hard work in leadership is not about directing others, but about being fully **present**, **nurturing** each individual's potential, and fostering an environment where your team feels **heard**, **valued**, and **inspired** to achieve to their fullest capability.

David Lawson

Encountas Executive Coach, Registered
Psychologist, and OD Specialist



Why is it **hard** to lead people today?

Values amidst Demands

Leadership has always involved challenges, which have evolved over generations.

The feeling of difficulty in leadership arises from the increasing need for leaders to look inward and understand their core values amidst external demands and changes.

Leaders who find it harder are often those who see the importance of deep, value-driven leadership and long-term impact. They seek genuine human connections and struggle with the conflict between self-focus, team connection, and global considerations.

The key is when leaders start to look for ways in which it could feel less hard.

Shifts and Distractions

Leadership retains its core fundamentals, especially when it is connected and empathetic. However, it currently feels more challenging due to the rapid and chaotic shifts in economic, social, political, and technological systems, especially in the post-pandemic world.

The constant influx of distracting information and the seductive nature of the chaotic news cycle make it difficult to focus.

Leaders are now grappling with how to calm, focus, and guide people amidst this chaos. The main concerns for leaders today are creating a compelling vision and leading people towards something better despite the distractions and challenges.

Change and Authenticity

Leadership is significantly harder today. Previously, work was highly hierarchical. While some hierarchical structures still exist, many organisations have shifted to flatter structures, requiring leaders to adopt supportive and authentic styles.

The recent pandemic has heightened awareness of mental health and psychological safety, adding to leaders' responsibilities. The rapid pace of change, globalisation, diversity, remote work, social and political awareness, and technological advancements further complicate leadership roles.

These complexities are often not explicitly detailed in role descriptions but fall under the broad term of "people management," demanding a high level of skill and empathy.



Leading humans is not just about steering them towards a goal; true leadership lies in the **hard work** of **understanding** and **uplifting** the **people** behind the roles.

Liz Gould
Encountas Executive Coach, Facilitator, and
Performance Psychologist



What is **dangerous** about leading people today?

Connections and Values

Leadership can be dangerous due to the pressures and challenges leaders face.

One risk is the potential for miscommunication, especially with the increasing reliance on direct messaging instead of face-to-face interactions. This can lead to misunderstandings and unintended reactions from the team.

Another danger is maintaining ethical integrity and staying true to personal values when they conflict with organisational directives or rapid decision-making.

Leaders must navigate these challenges while maintaining connections and avoiding ruptures in relationships with their teams. These complexities make leadership both important and controversial.

Trust and Pressures

Leadership today involves empowering people who previously felt voiceless, creating more horizontal relationships rather than dictatorial ones.

Leaders risk losing their team's trust and influence quickly if they're perceived to make mistakes, even if the decisions are correct but unpopular.

Miscommunication and lack of complete information can exacerbate this issue, leading to backlash and reputational damage. Middle managers often face pressure from all directions, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout.

High expectations from both the organisation and the workforce contribute to the mental health challenges seen in leadership.

Identity and Belonging

The concept of danger triggers our evolutionary instinct to see risks and seek protection. In leadership, this danger often extends beyond the workplace into personal identity and belonging.

Leaders struggle with defining their identity while balancing the need to belong. Traumatic experiences can disconnect leaders from their humanity and their sense of identity.

Many leaders risk losing themselves in their work, equating their self-worth with their job.

This becomes dangerous when work issues challenge their values and self-concept, leading to internal conflicts about who they are and how they show up.



Humans are **beautifully complex**; there's nothing simple about leading humans. It's in paying attention to what shows up with an **intention** to be our **best** and do what we can with what we have.

Tia Chau

Encountas Executive Coach,
Facilitator, and People and Culture Specialist



What does it look like to be **courageous**?

Unpopular Decision Making

Courage in leadership has been somewhat suppressed. Leaders today need the courage to uphold their values and principles, even when facing opposition or potential cancel culture.

This includes making unpopular decisions that go against the status quo. There is safety in the status quo, as it is seen as a safe and familiar option.

True courage involves making decisions that serve the best interests of both the organisation and the workforce, such as addressing talent performance and mental health issues head-on, despite potential resistance.

Connecting on a Human Level

Leaders need the courage to believe that something good will happen. This involves focusing on subtle actions like slowing down, pausing, and seizing opportunities to connect on a human level.

In goal-setting and performance reviews, it's crucial to see the person beyond the task or role. Leaders must remember that the process is just a guide, and they have the freedom to approach these conversations in a human centred way. The courage lies in acknowledging the humanity of those they work with, despite their own challenges.

Hope and Safety

We know hope isn't usually a word you hear in organisations. But it is important. Hope is the currency of relationships and what we strive to build together. In the face of challenges, it's about maintaining a positive outlook.

Leaders should create a safe and workable environment for their team, allowing them to function without constantly needing to summon courage.

This involves consciously fostering positivity and ensuring the team feels supported and optimistic about their work.



Leading people in our current climate requires sophisticated **relational skills**. As the **complexity** and **pace** of organisational life continue to grow, leaders must learn how to deepen their understanding of different **perspectives** whilst simultaneously growing their **awareness** of how they are being experienced by others moment-to-moment. No one is born with these skills; they are learned through a process of **constant reflection** – with self and with others.

Nicole Hercus

Encountas Executive Coach and Leadership
Development and Culture Change Specialist

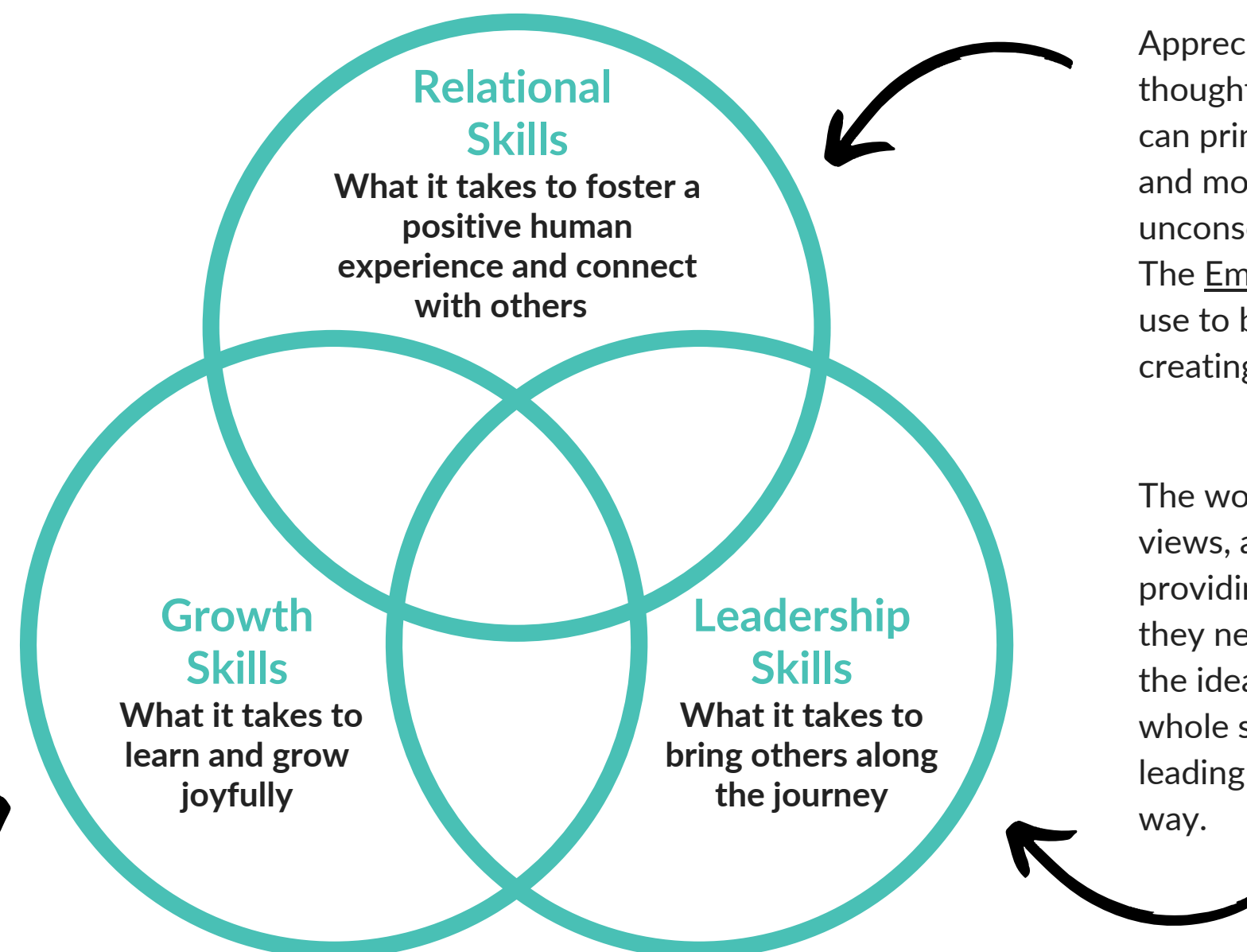


Crucial for **leading humans**

Build momentum

The new world of work calls on a few critical sets of skills that create a robust foundation for leaders to not only be successful but to also feel good about it. Here we share some ideas for leaders to explore and experiment with.

Many leaders focus more on what they want to grow rather than how they want to feel as they grow. You can use the IAA (Intentions, Attention, Action) model to get clarity on what growing means to you, the experience you want to have, and how to best build up to your ideal growth journey.



Appreciating that forming connections takes thoughtfulness and time, there are ways leaders can prime themselves to do this with less friction and more quickly. This involves working on their unconscious biases and deepening their empathy. The Empathy Map is a great tool that leaders can use to become more conscious and practice creating intentional connections.

The world today is vastly diverse with cultures, views, and different needs. Equity takes care of providing people with what they need, where they need it, and when they need it. This creates the ideal environment for people to bring their whole self to the game and is a core part of leading with trust and doing it in a human-centred way.

Top **tips** for leading others



Embrace Courage

Embrace courageous moments when you can. Engaging this part of yourself is essential for effective leadership. Back yourself in making tough, sometimes unpopular, decisions with empathy and respect for people's wellbeing.



Core Human Needs

In any of your interactions, lean into the needs of belonging, being capable and safe, and remember those core human needs are fundamental to everyone.



Feedback

Be conscious around how we are taking in feedback and giving ourselves the opportunity to store positivity and to eliminate self-criticism.



Forgiveness and Compassion

Be curious, compassionate, and open. Don't corner yourself into having to know.

Crucial for the human leader

Peer Support

Having the right level of support, especially in those moments of need, is a game changer, particularly in today's fast-paced world. Leaders are relied on to think fast and move even faster, and yet it's hard at times for them to even hear their own thoughts.

To alleviate this pressure and loneliness and be able to drive better outcomes, leaders need to leverage their peer network for support. Whether it be a one-to-one conversation or team connections, reaching out to peers and external professionals, creates a thriving space to inspire professional growth, find creative solutions to problems, and ultimately learn to operate with greater perspective, at a higher level. Leaders also get to share mistakes and be vulnerable knowing that they have the emotional backing, and importantly, it promotes a culture of trust.

Self Care

The idea of wellbeing and benefits is well known, yet leaders often pushback on doing this for themselves. It gets shelved as a nice to have often until something serious happens, signally burnout.

There is a common trivialisation of personal self-care, like it's a luxury that leaders cannot afford given their more immediate responsibilities.

We can reframe looking after yourself as an investment that determines a leader's potential for greater productivity and increased effectiveness as a leader, not to mention a well-functioning human being. Self-care is now more than ever a critical practice for leaders to embrace in order to have career longevity and be impactful.

Meaningful Joy

Joy is an often overlooked yet essential component of human well-being. While humans naturally seek joy, we do not always prioritise or embrace it.

On a fundamental level, joy is closely linked to a sense of purpose, and a strong sense of purpose contributes to fulfillment. This aspect of life can often be overshadowed by an emphasis on achievement, particularly in leadership roles where performance metrics often take precedence.

Leaders who experience and cultivate joy are more likely to exhibit resilience, emotional intelligence, and empathy – qualities that are indispensable in guiding teams and organisations through challenges.

Where to from **here**?

Because leading humans **is hard**

We know that leading humans is in fact hard work and expectations of leaders have changed. Leaders can actively uplevel their capability in the flow of work to build confidence and feel equipped to lead themselves, their teams, and the organisation.

Because you are **not alone**

Far from it. We have heard it from our team of experts and countless leaders that leadership can at times feel lonely. We have worked with an extensive number of leaders and work closely to support them in creating an elevated space to break through the limiting beliefs and judgements they harbour.

All-Levels **Leadership**

We need leaders more than ever, and we fundamentally believe that “being human is where it starts,” which emphasises the importance of looking after the humans that lead the humans.

Our encountas All-Levels Leadership experience is an active experience that collectively engages, aligns, and upskills leaders to deliver organisational outcomes in a human way, enhancing their influence and impact, developing strategic influence, and driving change.

Learn how you can activate your leadership teams:



[All-Levels Leadership Brochure](#)





Questions? Want to dive deeper?

We're here to help.
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