

Connected Leadership.

Four essential competencies for future leaders.

Leaders are facing a complex mixture of new challenges. Hiring, engaging and retaining remote employees, addressing the opportunities and risks of a new work model, the uncertainty that pandemic lag, economic headwinds and geopolitical turbulence all create.

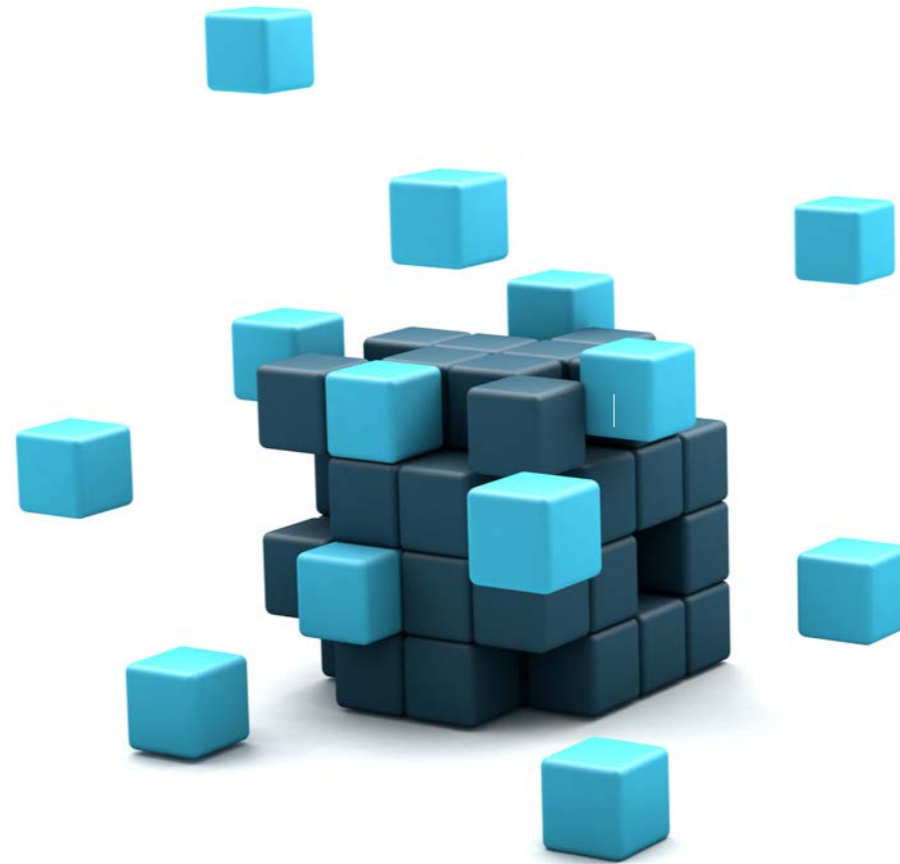
The rapid pace of change and need for quick responses means leaders must develop new cognitive abilities to thrive. The four leadership competencies here will bring teams along at the pace needed, even those anxious about change, when agility is needed.

1. Ethnic, gender, neuro and age blindness

Aside from the moral imperative,

the business case for Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (D.E.&I.) is compelling. Successive McKinsey studies demonstrate that organisations with well developed systems to ensure inclusion, are more likely to achieve financial outperformance. We know also, that employees look at their leaders D.E.&I. commitment when deciding whether to engage with an employer.

Leaders must be authentic in their efforts to build diverse teams. Unfair bias and discrimination should be anathema to them. The best leaders understand the need to shape a culture that encourages all team members to flourish. They actively seek out the higher order thinking that comes from



This often requires the leader to check their own behaviour, to ensure their drive and egotism, those characteristics that brought them to leader level, do not present as obstacles to team empowerment.

having differing perspectives around the table and draw on it for competitive edge.

2. Collaborative instinct

Whether working with a peer group or their own team, strong leaders demonstrate collaboration as a first response. Their firms structure work and processes to ensure all stakeholders leverage their strengths and see meaning and purpose in their work.

True collaboration arises from a trust centred approach to team engagement. This often requires the leader to check their own behaviour to ensure their drive and egotism, those characteristics that brought them to leader level, do not present as obstacles to team empowerment. They shape team culture to ensure introverts feel safe to speak up and extraverts know when to hold back. In many ways, leadership becomes a devolved process, where tasks and projects are led by team members at peer level.

3. Intrinsic understanding of values and their impact

Values are where a leader goes when they do not know what decision to make. Organisation values come from how leaders behave and the decisions they make. This in turn determines whether talent will stay in an organisation or leave to deliver at a competing business.

Leaders must demonstrate organisation values in all their decision making and place values at the centre of team hiring decisions. Of equal importance is the leader's application of values in decisions made around customers, internal or external. This determines employee

behaviours and the customer's experience. The question now for leaders, is to what extent if any, do organisation values need to be reviewed to reflect new working realities and post-pandemic economic shifts?

4. Connecting to the person not the employee

Where previously HR advice may have been to focus only on the 9 to 5 of an employer / employee relationship, it seems that the future of leadership will be different. Working lives are now more intertwined with our home and personal lives, we have even invited our work into our homes. There can be little doubt that younger working generations want change and expect their firms to consider (and accommodate) them in a more holistic manner when making decisions about them, their work and careers.

Leaders should be curious to understand what really matters personally and professionally to each of their team. They should keep in touch on those issues in particular, show maximum flexibility and be supportive when a related need arises.

Being transparent with your employees is not always easy. Sometimes you have to balance discreet information and a need to be open and trusting, while having an appreciation of how a decision might impact an employee personally. Connecting with the person and not the employee helps to work that through.