



In the last 50 years, Leaders have adopted new technology and equipment, but have their leadership styles changed as fast?

Too many of our modern management practices are influenced by the heavy smell of smoky factories and crashing noises of the old world production lines. Born in the Industrial era, these old leadership styles called for clear rules, simple actions and ruthless efficiency. Decisions were made by bosses, workers did what they were told and motivation came weekly in pay packets. But the world of work has changed dramatically and so have the rules of impactful leadership.

Today, we live in a volatile world of disruption. It isn't enough to build a team of hard workers. Modern leaders need to motivate diverse groups, able to respond quickly to constant change. They need to not only adapt to rapidly evolving technologies, but also to anticipate the unexpected and create it before competitors! They need to collaborate effectively with other teams, other companies and even competitors to meet unquenchable thirst of market demands and shareholder expectations.

Leadership is challenging and many leaders are struggling. Too many of them are struggling to connect with their people. The paid robots of the industrial era are gone and the emerging force are here, the wave of beautiful humans with hearts and minds, yearning to be heard, searching for meaning and purpose in their lives.

The future of leadership isn't just policies and processes. To truly harness the power of modern, diverse teams, leaders need to be able to understand what drives people. We need to help them build a new set of leadership capabilities. We need to build Empathy as a leadership capability. Here are three little tips to help today's leaders build the empathy we all need:

1. Connect to your inner 5 year old

If little kids are good at one thing; it is asking WHY? But why? Why? How come? Kids do this a lot and for one very good reason. As we age, our brains form mental models that help us explain and remember how the world works. We learn something, build a little model, then use this forever after. Little kids don't have these yet and so they seek more information, incessantly, to the point of parental abuse.

The problem is as we get older we rely so heavily on these models, we stop being curious. We lose the ability to seek deeper understanding when needed. This is a massive problem for

modern leaders. If you want to understand the complexities of your team, your people, your market and the changing needs of customers, you need to reignite your childhood curiosity.

This flies hard in the face of the old world of Management. In the old world, the Manager knows best. The empathic leader has an insatiable appetite for knowledge and constantly seeks to understand. Always ask why!

2. Embrace Emotions

Economics suggests that humans are rational creatures that make decisions based on maximizing our utility. We spend money on things that provide us with the best returns. We are rational, sensible beings. But this is totally wrong! If humans were rational, how many types of car would there be? Maybe a few different sizes. But certainly not the thousands of ever changing models we see today. One thing is for sure, Ferrari's wouldn't exist.

Humans are largely emotional creatures. Emotions drive the show and three in particular call the shots. Hope, Love and Fear. In the past, a lack of imagined possibility and career options helped to dampen Hope and managers used the dark shadow of Fear to control the hearts of men. Today, the world is amazing and the possibilities almost limitless. Modern leaders can't just threaten employees. True leaders are able to embrace the positive emotions of their people, support them through the challenging times with care and compassion, and paint a future worth believing in. Modern leaders aren't scared of emotions, they see emotions as key tools in their leadership toolkit.

3. Be Brave and Make Decisions

Well, I bet you didn't expect that? While I am all for leaders asking more questions and building better understanding of what is happening in the complex lives of your people, remember that you are still being expected to be the Leader. Far too many modern leaders frustrate and fail their teams, confusing the need for collaboration with the abdication of responsibility.

Your people need you to lead, take a position, make a call, own the outcome and wear the responsibility. Leaders curiously gather information, seek to understand the emotional and rational drivers of their people, but then, an empathic leader will step up and make a call.

You can't lead in the shadows. Empathic leaders stand tall, wear the risks and do so with the confidence that their people reciprocate the trust and empowerment that they give to them.

William Arthur Ward said it best: "We must be silent before we can listen. We must listen before we can learn. We must learn before we can prepare. We must prepare before we can serve. We must serve before we can lead." We need brave leaders who take action. We need curious leaders who seek understanding. Most of all, we need Empathic Leaders, who inspire us with hope of a better future.

by [Daniel Murray](#) , **Empathic Consulting**

About Daniel Murray

Daniel has forged a career as a Business Strategist for some of Australia's leading corporations. Along the way, he realised using empathy as a driver for change enables businesses to deliver tangible and profitable outcomes, while also creating a positive social impact that solves real world problems.

Daniel speaks at conferences and conducts corporate workshops to teach Australian businesses how to demonstrate thought leadership as well as integrate systems and processes for making a flexible and high-performing workplace.