

To Lead Is to Care



TRANSEARCH
EXECUTIVE SEARCH & LEADERSHIP CONSULTING

John O. Burdett



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*“If you wear the mantle of leadership,
people need to **KNOW** that you care.”*

The Challenge of Complexity

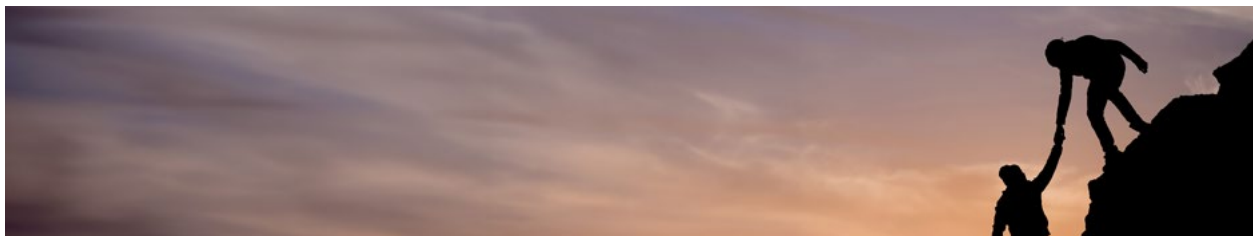
Given the overwhelming pace that artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing, the #1 skill leaders are rightly adopting is AI fluency. Central to that learning agenda is knowing when AI is the solution ... and when the claims supporting AI are either hyperbole or marginalise what it means to be a leader. To paraphrase Vishal Sikka,¹ the past CTO of SAP, large language models and agentic tasks are incapable of delivering value beyond a low level of complexity. In other words, AI will replace 70% of software developers² but don't be deluded into thinking that AI is in anyway a substitute for inspirational leadership.

Here we encounter a paradox. As simple/routine work is eliminated, the guiding role leadership plays becomes more important/complex than ever. Think of it this way. Leadership of a traditional call centre is almost exclusively about management **by** exception (fixing things that go wrong). When AI takes over routine work – and 80% of the call centre workforce is made redundant in the process – the leadership challenge moves to management **of** exception (competing on ideas).³ The new reality? Yesterday's “fix and replace” way of working, of necessity, is being overtaken

1 Vishal Sikka is an Indian-American entrepreneur who is the founder and CEO of Vianai and was CTO of SAP AG and CEO of Infosys. He also serves on Oracle's board of directors, the supervisory board of the BMW Group and as an advisor to the Stanford Institute of Human-Centered AI.

2 Source: Open AI, GPDval 2025

3 Here we have to assume that if one call centre eliminates routine work all the other call centres will have no choice but to follow suit. When that happens, innovation and breakthrough thinking shape the firm's competitive edge – to the point of offering solutions that the customer doesn't even know that they need.

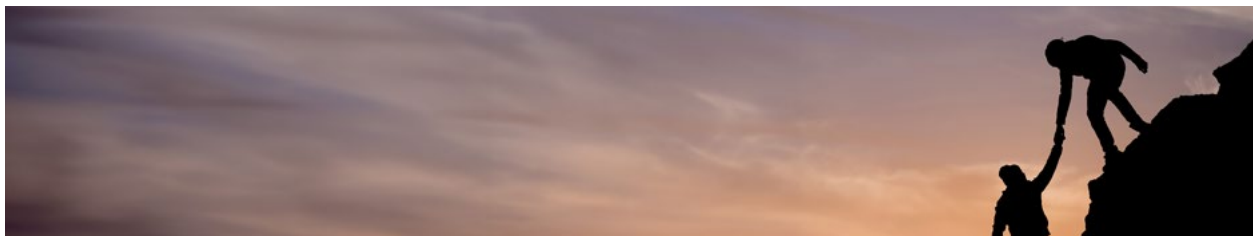


by a complex, make or break, leadership mindset focusing on “innovation and thought leadership.”

Humans are wired to respond to a compelling purpose, to (literally) copy behavioural excellence, to learn from uplifting stories, to seek psychological safety and to respond positively when someone they respect catches them doing it right. We give of our best when we are part of a great team, when we feel we are growing and when trust is ever present. As individuals we are naturally complex beings. When we are part of different/changing teams, set in an environment marked by ever-greater ambiguity – that level of complexity increases exponentially. And, take it as a given, it will continue to do so! Technology does not of itself build trust. Productivity is not purpose. Knowledge is not know-how. Data is not delivery. Measurement is not meaning. Information is not inspiration. And connectability does not instill commitment. The emerging technology will make us better – but on its own, it won’t make us want to be better.

Artificial general intelligence (AGI) may eventually positively shape complex aspects of leadership but even in that scenario there are leadership domains that will remain essentially human. In Japan, it’s not unknown for certain troubled young men to marry a humanoid robot. The dilemma? If the “bridegroom” starts to believe that





their “partner” actually cares for them, they are displaying the characteristics of serious mental illness. The same concern arises if those taking advantage of agentic technology start to attribute emotion to their digital alter ego.⁴ You can literally burst into flames but your chatbot⁵ doesn’t care, won’t care and, more to the point, **can’t care!**

What Makes a Leader?

A compelling purpose, strategy, technology, brand, financial acumen and operation excellence are the start of it. In a boundaryless world, the capacity to operate in different cultures are clearly part of it ... as are authenticity, humility, energy, passion, mental toughness, tenacity, self-belief and growing the team. But, what lies at the heart of it? What takes people places they would otherwise not go? The overwhelming evidence is that when everything else is stripped away, when you get to the very essence of what it means to be a leader, to lead is to care!

Leadership is, and has always been, about building followership. As such, leadership is a sacred trust. A trust that has to be won every single day. People follow a leader who cares, someone who is more than a figurehead, more than an instrument of shareholder value, more than the face of change, more than the driving force behind the latest technology (AI). Not someone who cares one day and not the next. Not someone who cares for some people and not others. And not someone who thinks that they care. If you wear the mantle of leadership, people need to KNOW that you care. To care is a deep-rooted, authentic, consistent way to be.

The greater the pool of knowledge that rests with those who inhabit the lower echelons of the organization – the greater the need for caring. The bigger the scale of technological change being embarked on – the greater the need for caring. The more intense the degree of anxiety and concern over the future in the workplace (today we are in the midst of an emotional epidemic based on fear of the future) – the greater the need for caring. The greater the risk, uncertainty and ambiguity – the greater the need for caring. And how do I know this? My thesis comes not from conjecture or wishful thinking but from having asked over 14,000 leaders in 30 countries to describe the best leader they have ever worked for. Caring – in its different forms – **always** looms large.

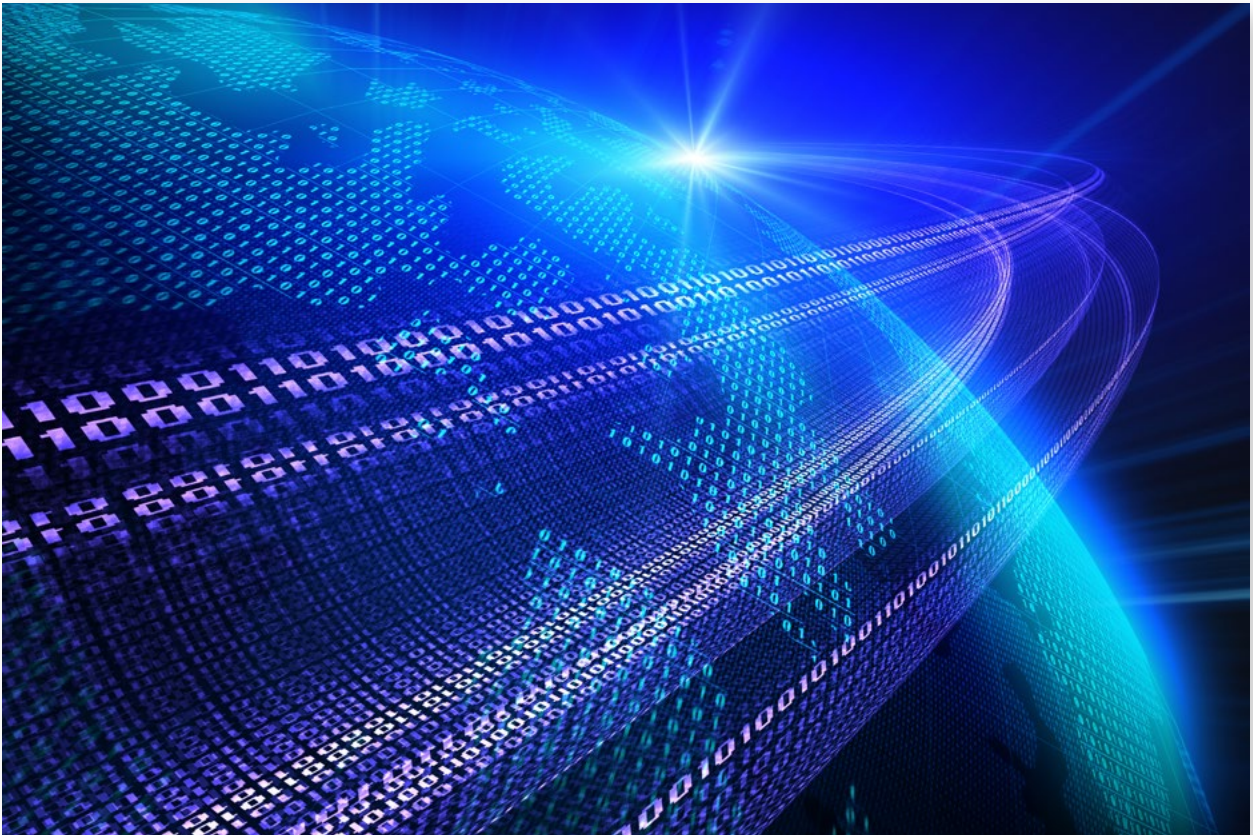
4 Driven by loneliness, lacking a sense of belonging, and the ability of AI to simulate empathy.

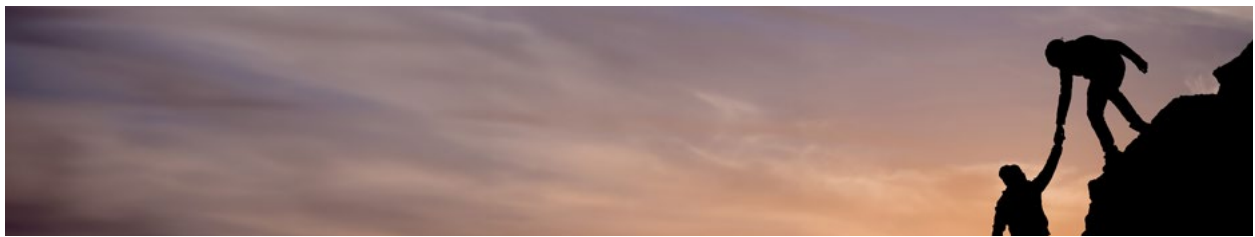
5 Not inherently part of agentic technology but an interface or component within it.



To care is to work from the assumption that the world will (not might!) unfold in unpredictable ways. It is to realise that there is no such thing as sustainable competitive advantage and that unbridled belief in “the plan” is to be wedded to yesterday’s solution. It is to recognise that hope is not a strategy. It is to know that only those who can see what isn’t there can deliver what cannot be done. It is to anticipate what is the worst thing the competition can do ... and do it first. To care is to act in tune with the rhythm of the marketplace. It is to realise that the only thing that can safely be assumed is that today is the fastest things have ever been but the slowest they will ever be and that victory is the prerogative of those who embrace and relish change. Leadership, as a result, is to endorse the first adopter(s) on the team.

To care is to work to become ever-more adaptable, flexible and fleet-of-foot. It is to know when and in what ways to trust our intuition. It is to understand that in a world where change is an ever-present reality, paralysis by analysis is an emotional safety blanket that strangles the ability to compete. To care is to discover new ways to learn. To compete is to learn faster than the competition. The introduction of AI reinforces the absolute and unwavering need to learn how to learn.





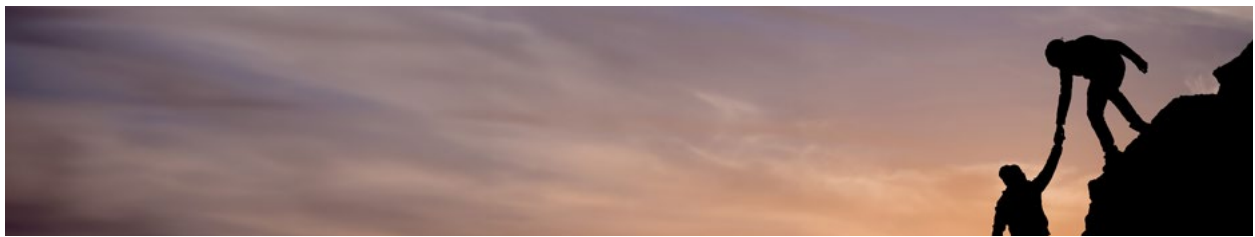
To care is to recognise that the customer's emerging needs dictate the what, values underscore the how, pragmatism orchestrates the where, opportunity dictates the when ... but it is integrity that dictates the why. Integrity is manifest in high ethical standards, an emphasis on personal responsibility and a supportive work environment. Integrity is caring for the workers in an outsourced factory in Honduras no less than for those who work in the company's own plants. Integrity is asking the questions that some would prefer to avoid. It is a compensation approach that rewards contribution, not the size of the office.

Caring is treating everyone the same, regardless of role, background, ethnicity, level or from where the work is carried out. Honesty, transparency, moral courage, independence of judgment, impartiality and fairness are words that capture the spirit of integrity. Power without integrity is exploitation. Values without integrity is manipulation. Leadership without integrity is a broken promise. This is especially the case when introducing new technology. Integrity is to prepare the way. It's to invest in both human and organizational readiness. It's to replace anxiety with awareness and animosity with an emphatic action plan. If people are ill-equipped for and/or surprised by the proposed technology ... you've got it wrong. Technology should enable and develop the organization's talent, not emotionally elbow them aside.

To care is to dream. It is to know that to lead is to compete for other people's dreams. Caring is thus a quest that seeks to rid the workplace of work that strips people of dignity. Caring leads to the assumption that, given the chance, "people will get it right." Caring embraces freedom to act not simply as a means to improve productivity, but because it nurtures the human condition. It draws on the belief that people take pride in producing quality work.

Caring builds on the assumption that, given the opportunity, front-line employees will always strive to simplify/improve the processes that dictate how the work they do gets done. To care is to have an unrelenting drive for improved results. It is to be committed to goals that others merely aspire to. It means that a commitment is absolute and that growth, in its many forms, is the wellspring of sustained success.

To care is to make the discipline of delivery a drum beat that is echoed in every presentation, team meeting and/or coaching conversation. To care is to have top of mind that what a leader does is far more important than anything they may say. It is to be always conscious of how even small acts will be interpreted. To care is to be a role model. It is to continuously challenge the status quo and, in doing so, give others permission to explore new ways to act.



To care is to appreciate that because something is difficult to measure doesn't mean it should be judged purely by how the tide of uninformed, subjective opinion happens to be running at the time. Collaboration, culture, commitment, diversity, sustainability, speed of delivery, why people stay, teamwork, leadership succession and the human behaviour that drives innovation are all fundamental building blocks of organizational success that, although difficult to measure, with flair and creativity can be, and should be, regularly assessed. Conversely, to care is to know that just because something can be measured doesn't necessarily mean it should be. To care is to recognise that more measurement means less meaningful measurement.⁶ Caring is to regularly review and decide specifically what needs to be measured and, just as important, what measurement is no longer of value.

To care is to understand that, paradoxically, selling is never about selling. Great selling is to care more about what (and why) the customer wants to buy than it is about what the vendor has to offer. It is to uncover in what ways the seller can make the customer's business better. It's to recognise that today's winning value proposition,



6 An example of this is a leadership centre with residential accommodation. The quality of learning (difficult to measure), invariably, becomes overshadowed by bedroom occupancy (easy to measure).



is tomorrow's commodity. It is to coach the customer such that they better uncover new possibility. It is to listen, really listen. It is to talk the customer's language and in doing so gain insights into the customer's world. It is to ask great questions such that strategic empathy with the client's cause is a mainstay of the relationship. It is to anticipate the customer's emerging needs. It is to uncover why the customer chose you. It is to respond with not just a solution, but with the best possible solution. It is to create and not simply add value.

To care is to act on the belief that the customer's success is always more important than the sellers. It's to always deliver a little more than that agreed upon. To care is to question conventional wisdom, to embrace new ideas and to provide space and freedom in order that the imagination of those who serve the customer can transcend what is assumed to be possible. To care is to support those who have the courage and daring to go where others have not walked. To care is to bring the customer's voice to every key decision. It is to stand behind the brand. It is to make the brand live not just in the customer's eyes, but in the hearts and minds of everyone in the seller's organization. It is to act on the belief that serving is more important than service. Service describes how the seller responds. Serving determines how the customer feels about it.

To care is to have pride in the product and share that pride with others. To care is to know that product reliability is sacrosanct. It is to bring truthfulness to the sales process and to honour the spirit, not just the letter, of any and all promises made. It is to continuously explore ways to enhance the utility of the company's product and/or service. To care is to act with the knowledge that reputation is hard won but easily lost.

To care is to strip out the barriers between supplier and customer. It is to recognise that in some situations collaborating with the competition (co-opetition) is the best way forward. To care is to know that to be a partner is to share not only "the how" but "why you do what you do." It is to keep any and all partners fully informed and to provide "the extended team" real-time access to information that is critical for winning the next contract/assignment.

To care is to build organizational capability that focuses on the knowledge of knowledge. It is to ensure that when seasoned performers move on or retire, hard-won insights about the business are not lost. To care is to be committed to the belief that the efforts of people working together far outweigh the value of any individual.



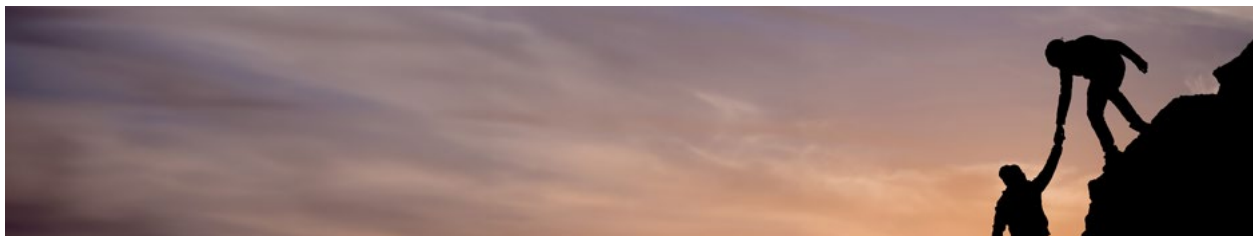
To care is thus to work collaboratively with partners, to share ongoing learning and to actively communicate experiences (best practices) with partners in order to better enrich the customer's experience. No less important, "it is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."⁷

In that the creativity of the human mind can always find ways to circumvent the unnecessary and the unwanted, to care is to know that even well-meaning attempts to control others are always self-defeating. To care is to eschew the trappings of proclaimed self-importance. It is to know that "status" is a state of mind that insecure leaders seek in order for them to maintain the illusion of being in charge.

To care is to constantly seek ways to simplify. For those who care, simplicity is found in unambiguous goals; policies and procedures that prescribe only that which is absolutely essential; and feedback that focuses on issues that the receiver can influence. Simplicity is realised when the customer finds the product/service easy to access and straightforward to use. To care is to understand that simplicity is, in the first instance, a state of mind. It is also to know that there is a world of difference



⁷ This quote has been attributed to Harry S. Truman. It is included in the Truman Library Institute collection of quotes. <https://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/truman/truman-quotes/page/5/>



between simplicity and simplistic. One is to strive for elegant solutions. The other is to create a simple product/service but in doing so forgo fitness for purpose.

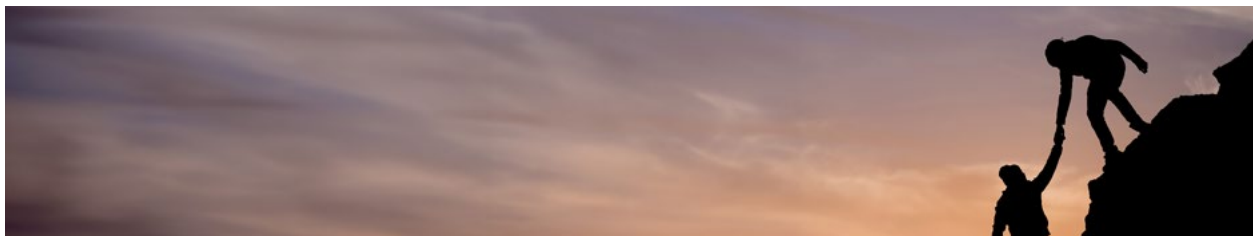
To care is to know that it takes the capacity for self-critique to wear the demands of leadership with humility. To care is to exploit a teachable point of view. It is to work on the assumption that how people learn is more important than what they learn. To care is to coach. It is to be open to being coached. To care is to find the time to be available and to have the state of mind to be present. It is to ask questions that allow others to see the world through a new lens. To care is to create the context such that people on the team coach each other.

To care is to be a mentor. It is to develop a successor who will be more successful in the role than you are. To care is to act on the belief that leadership is about building community. Community, in turn, speaks to how people share ideas; how groups with a common interest build on each other's success; and how the collective spirit of competition propels people to the next plateau of performance. Caring is to emphasise that community is not about everyone being the same, but the coming together of those who share a compelling purpose.

It is to recognise that even where diversity isn't necessary a legal requirement, it's the smart thing to do. If everyone on the team sees the business in the same way, you don't need most of them! To care is to know that the organization cannot thrive in a vacuum and that the road to societal and customer rejection is littered with those who attempted to gain competitive advantage by riding roughshod over the public good.

To care is to know that any and all shortfalls in the talent management system are multiplied many times over. It is to strive to identify world-class talent management partners. Caring is manifest in the passion to hire and promote the best. Caring is found in the knowledge that every hire decision is central to the legacy that a leader leaves behind. It is to work from the belief that anything less than best-in-class expertise on the part of the hiring manager, in defining and orchestrating leadership "fit," amounts to a breach of fiduciary responsibility. To care is to provide best-in-class support in order that those who are new to the organization land without breaking stride. It is to recognise that if they *don't* land, they won't stay!

To care is to communicate not simply what people need to know, but what they have a right to know. It is to ask people how they feel. It is, when appropriate, to share personal feelings. It is to find the time to listen. It is to listen for and not to listen to. It is to see the world through the eyes of others. To care is also to be vulnerable. It is to

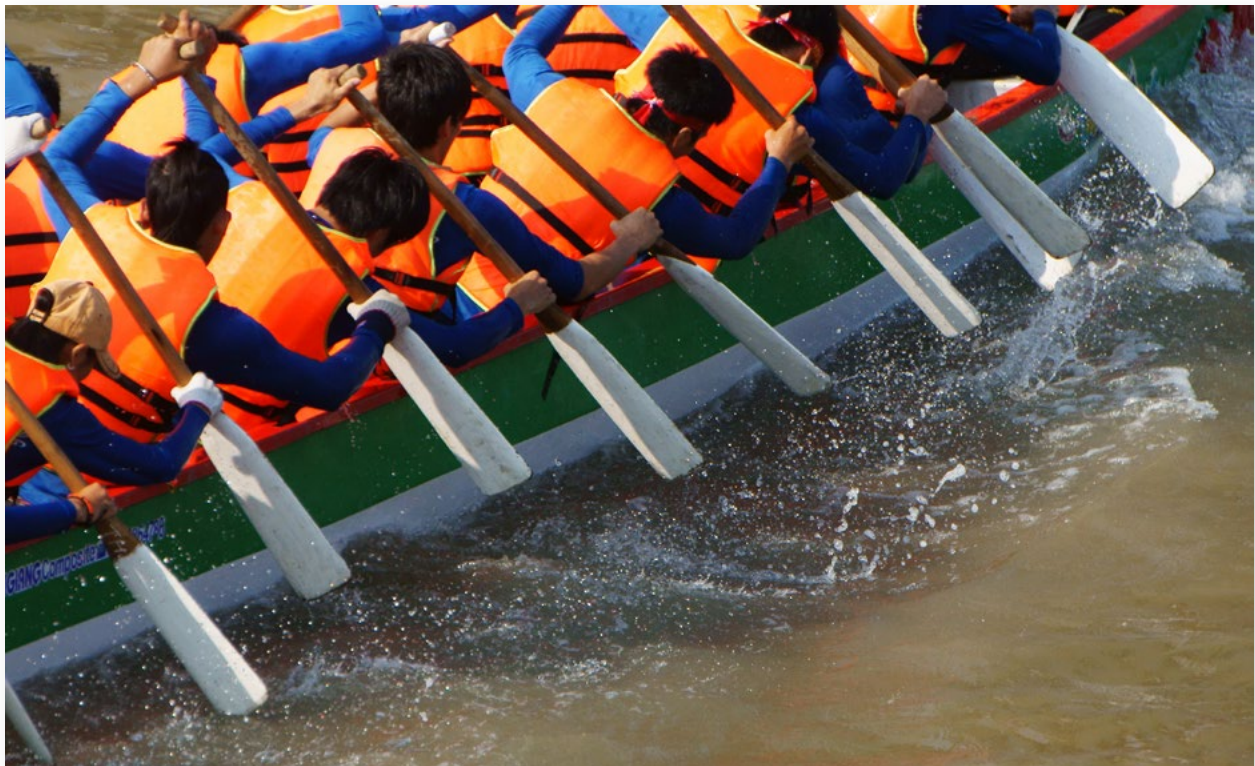


ask for help. It is to offer help. It is to be compassionate when others stumble. It is to offer advice only when it's asked for. To care is to be approachable. It is to be human. It is to be humble. Humility is stepping down from the podium that others would have you stand on. It is putting the needs of others first. It is being comfortable saying, "I don't know." It is to know how and when to say "no"!

To care is to take pride in the success of one's colleagues. It is to know that no one makes it on their own. To care is to live up to the expectations of others on the team. It is to be the first to accept accountability when things go wrong and the last to seek praise or personal reward when a successful outcome has been delivered.

To care is to realise that we live in a fragile ecosystem where every act has long-term consequences. To care is to fulfill the responsibility that goes with being a citizen of planet Earth. To care is to leave the planet cleaner than we found it. It is to build a world for our children that we can be proud of. It is to make health and safety a business priority. To care is to know that a successful leader can always point to where and in what ways they make a positive difference in other people's lives.

To care is to be fully aware that without investors there would be no organization. It is to honour that trust and make each and every decision transparent. To care is to work





diligently to create value for shareholders. It is to hold in high esteem those whose own hard work and continued support allow the organization to be sustained.

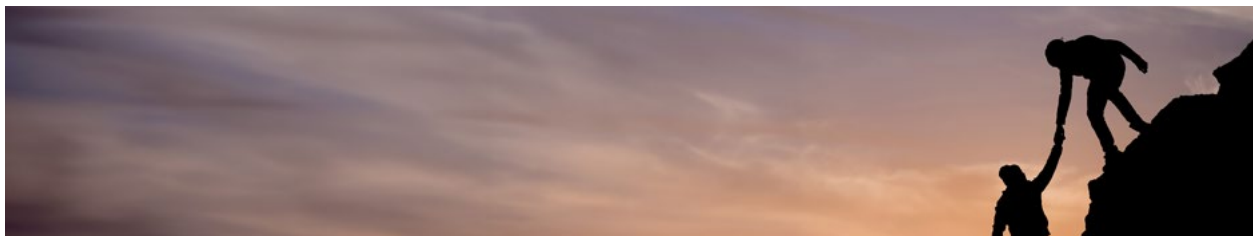
To care is to strip out boundaries that limit what is possible. It is to act in the belief that unnecessary organizational levels destroy value, that the informal organization is always more important than that implied by the formal structure, and that failure to cultivate the grapevine is to provide a soapbox for the cynics and malcontents. To care is to work from the assumption that the most effective way to organize reflects the way that people, given a choice, would organize themselves. It is to understand that merger, takeover and acquisition are exclusively financial terms and that when two (or more) enterprises combine, a new entity *always* emerges.

To care is to respect the truth. It is to live in truth. It is to be open and honest even when political expediency means that silence is the option others would choose. It is to realise that timing is everything. To care is to act on the belief that confronting a problem is the first step in overcoming it.

Caring is about balance. It means working to build alignment between strategic thinking, strategic planning and strategic doing. It also means recognising that misalignment (and the tension that results) is often the source of breakthrough ideas. Balance is reaching for the right tools. It means responding to the expectations of a new generation while avoiding a culture of “entitlement.” It means giving equal weight to short-term actions and long-term thinking. It means embracing the future that we are part of creating whilst honouring the past. It’s realising that we can’t step into new shoes until we take off the ones we are wearing. It is the wisdom to know that what isn’t said is always more important than what is. It is to bring people onto the team who act and think differently than the way we do.

Caring is to realise that the organization isn’t a homogenous blob working tirelessly to make your life difficult. It is to know that you are the organization and that armed with tenacity and a dream you can make a difference. To care is to stop expressing frustration about what you can’t do and start to focus on what you can do. It is to understand that even those in secondary roles, if truly committed to the cause, can inspire others to join them on a quest that has meaning.

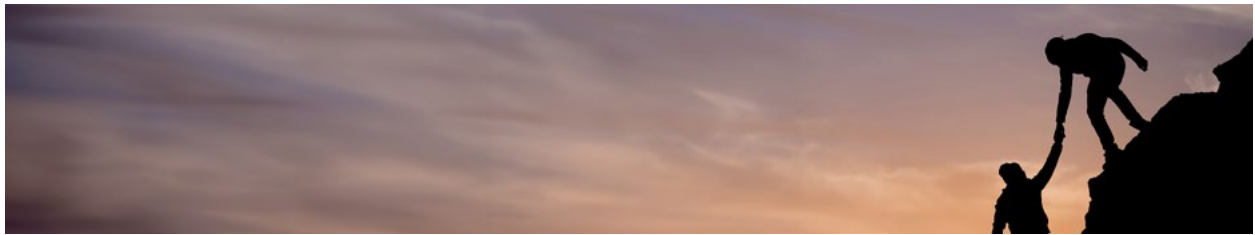
Caring is to quickly assess the differences between someone who challenges the status quo and a team member stuck in complaint mode. To care is to ask, “What are you going to do about it?” To care is to understand that an organization’s culture and marketplace competitiveness are but different sides of the same coin. To care is



to know that as a leader, if you're not managing the organization's culture, someone else is. It is to know that a successful enterprise builds two winning value positions. One answers the question, "Why buy from us?" The other, "Why work here?" To care is to realise if the latter doesn't elicit a positive response, the former cannot be sustained. To care is to know that culture is story and that great organizations have, and know how to share, that story. Great organizations always have a great story. It's central to what makes them great. When that story is shared in the market for talent we are communicating a winning hiring value proposition. A caring leader works to become a masterful storyteller. Meanwhile, negative stories inform but only positive stories inspire.

To care is to live and, to the extent possible, "magnify" the organization's guiding principles. It is to confront those who choose not to follow that path. To care is to learn to let go. It is to know when to let go. It's to fail fast and move on. To care is to strive continuously to be the best we can be. It is to ask for feedback. Not only from those who see the world the way we do, but also from those who walk a different path. Caring is to act on that feedback.





To care is to realise that leadership demands stamina. It is therefore to take health, fitness and wellness seriously. To care is to exercise and eat right. To care is to provide the opportunity for others to do likewise. To care is to take all of your vacation days. It is to make leadership of self our single, most important priority. It means having the courage to live our own story – to become our own hero/heroine. To care is to know that when we look back on a race well run, lifestyle, family and integrity will be deemed far more important than financial rewards. Leadership of self means letting the ones we care about know that we care – and to do so often.

Conclusion

To lead is to care. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” When we stop caring we stop being a leader. When we stop caring about others we stop caring about ourselves. To be a leader is to care. To be an outstanding leader is to care deeply. Caring is ultimately an extension of who we are. We only truly excel as a leader when we learn to access the full range of behaviours found in our caring pallet. New technology will make us better – but on its own it won’t make us want to be better.

*“People don’t care how much you know
until they know how much you care.”*

– Attributed to Teddy Roosevelt

50

Ways to Show You Care



The actions listed below are of necessity incomplete. They are not the product of a lengthy research project, nor are they intended to provoke hours of anxiety-ridden contemplation. The **50** suggestions given are simply a way for you to think about what it means to be a caring leader. Go through the list carefully and reflect on what you can do differently starting on Monday. Recognising that you can't address everything at once, focus on three actions you are committed to. Consider going over the list with the team.

- 1.** Demystify technology. Explain why, where, how, when and who gains. In particular, outline the ways in which the customer will benefit. Invest in technology readiness for the team. Remember, when uncertainty enters the picture ... what people don't know they will make up. It will also lean heavily towards the most negative scenario. It's called human nature.
- 2.** Make the first call of the day to the one person you would rather not talk to. Even better, go and see them. Greet them with an authentic smile. It signals that you want to be there.
- 3.** Learn the names of the children and partner of those who work directly for you. Uncover what the people who work for you are passionate about – hobbies, pets, sports team. Ensure that presentations reflect the multigenerational mix of the team or, as appropriate, the wider audience. Use metaphors and stories that resonate with their background and interests.
- 4.** Attend and start meetings on time. Close them on time. In the meeting, learn to move beyond problem solving. Put at least one “what if” question on the agenda. Shift the team culture from “power over” to “power to.” In pursuit of the latter, ask great questions. A great question is one that asks for what you want – not what you don't want. Learn to let go of the need to be in charge. If you are the leader, speak last and speak sparingly.



5. Avoid telephone tag. When you ask someone to call you back, leave a time when you will be available. Be there! There is nothing more frustrating than leaving a message telling someone to call you only for them to find you are not there.
6. Don't let people hear about it in the press first.
7. Show you care. Stop by a team member's office/workstation unsolicited and ask them how they are doing, what they take pride in, why they stay with the organization? Draw out any suggestions they might have.
8. Become a great coach. Be open to being coached. Coach members of the team in how to coach. Encourage team members to coach each other. In the impersonal world of technology, coaching puts "person" back in personality.
9. Make health and safety a priority. Fund wellness classes. Start meetings by making sure everyone in attendance knows where the fire exits are. Ensure electrical leads are taped down. Hold regular fire drills. It's not just a matter of avoiding personal risk, the underlying value is in making people aware that people's health and safety is something you care about.
10. Encourage and listen to new ideas. Work from a mindset of looking for ways to make the idea work – not digging for reasons why the suggestion is flawed.





- 11.** Be vulnerable. Admit mistakes. Share with your team the times you stumbled ... and what you learned from the experience. Ask for help. Learn to say you don't know. Admit when you are wrong. Know when and how to apologise. Learn HOW to apologise.
- 12.** Communicate from truth. Make candour and straight-talk central to how you think and act. Embrace the maverick on the team. A maverick not only challenges the status quo; they are a source of new ideas. Confront those on the team who, when new ways to act are needed, deliberately muddy the water and/or default into games playing.
- 13.** Become an extraordinary listener. Listen in the way you want to be listened to. At the end of a meeting, assess your own listening.
- 14.** Ask for feedback. Act on that feedback. Learn to let go. Know that beginnings start with endings.
- 15.** Reward extraordinary performance by asking the individual(s) in question to attend a leading-edge and relevant workshop. Upon their return, have them share the insights gained with the rest of the team.
- 16.** Read. Encourage others on the team to read. Choose an article and, as a team, review and reflect on the insights gained. Those who don't read are no better off than those who can't read.
- 17.** Help new members of the team find their way. Three issues, in particular, are important to someone joining the team: (1) the leadership point of view of the team leader one-level-up; (2) the culture the organization is seeking to create; and (3) why others, new to the organization, have stumbled.
- 18.** Organize small groups with little or no agenda – where the purpose is to ask people how they feel about (1) the organization culture; (2) the work they do; and (3) their ongoing personal growth and development.
- 19.** Take advantage of AI. Keep people up to date by developing an informative blog. Include videos, pictures and stories. Make sure the blog focuses on what people want to know – not on what you want to tell them. Remember, it's not about you!
- 20.** Learn what it's like on the front line. Regularly spend time in the trenches – serve in the retail outlet, go on sales calls, wait tables. Be humble. Go to learn. Write down what people tell you. Be seen writing it down.



- 21.** Delegate. Show people that you trust them. Encourage team members to make decisions. If a team member comes to you with a problem, insist that they also bring a solution. Whenever possible, go with the way forward being suggested.
- 22.** Actively promote talented members of your team to other leaders in the organization. Find ways to cameo your high performers. Accelerate the career of high-potential employees. Look for meaningful ways to “test” a potential successor(s). If they get into difficulty, don’t come to their rescue too quickly.
- 23.** Sharpen your saw when it comes to the hiring process. Get trained in how to interview. Doing something often doesn’t necessarily make you good at it. What amounts to a poor hiring decision for the organization is often a life changing (negative) event for a candidate who stumbles. Make diversity central to who you hire. Make the team an integral part of the hiring process. Listen to the input the team provides.
- 24.** Go out of your way to find out why your best people stay. With retention in mind, have the team suggest (1) what the organization should stop doing; (2) take pride in; and (3) start to do.
- 25.** Challenge those who don’t live the organization’s guiding principles. Part company with – regardless of the results delivered – a subordinate who continues to act with self-interest in mind.





26. If you are a leader, you live in a goldfish bowl. Know that you are a role model. Emphasise, exaggerate and reinforce through example the behaviour needed to succeed tomorrow. Model the change you want to bring about.
27. Stress work-life balance. Be a good example to the team. Don't work ridiculous hours. Take all of your maternity leave. Enjoy a lunch break. In personally orchestrating work-life balance, you give each member of the team permission to orchestrate their own approach.
28. Stay in touch with employees who have retired.
29. Know that when someone comes into your office, most of the time, they already know the answer. Insist that when someone does come looking for an answer to a question that hasn't come up before that they have also thought through at least one potential solution. Assume that given the chance to act, the individual in question will get it right.
30. Delegate. Stop making decisions that aren't yours to make. Allow the people who work for you to do all of their job. Spend additional time with any member of the team who works from home.
31. Know that what you believe is what those who work for you will perceive. Believe in your team. Let them know you believe in them.
32. Don't duck the tough conversation. To do so is to signal to the team's high performers that you don't care.
33. Go to bat for the people who work for you. They will love you for it. Throw them under the bus and you will **never** regain their trust.
34. If you are the team leader, think about yourself as first amongst equals. You work **for** the team ... every day in every way!
35. If you are the team leader, let people know (with as much clarity as possible) where the team is headed. Through imagery and compelling language, make tomorrow come alive today. Introduce that conversation with the word "imagine."
36. Become a great storyteller. Share positive stories. Encourage others on the team to share positive stories. Create a book of team stories.
37. Work to reduce the time people spend travelling to and from work. Support hybrid employment and use video conferencing and the other "connectability" tools to keep in touch whenever possible.



- 38.** Build 10% into everyone's role such that they can pursue (without boundaries and/or constraints) new ideas and/or better ways of doing things.
- 39.** Understand what people on the team are struggling with. Attend appropriate workshops and/or courses on the issue. Run your own workshop.
- 40.** Work with the team to build the team's story. That "story" should answer four key questions: (1) why do we do what we do? (2) where are we headed? (3) what do we believe in? (4) what makes us special?
- 41.** Strip away the boundaries between the work people do and how their contribution makes a difference. Work to find ways to bring meaning to those in support roles. Invite support members of the team on sales calls, have them attend meetings they otherwise would not go to. Know that everyone's life quest is, in no small measure, all about the search for meaning.
- 42.** Adopt a cause where the team can make a difference. For example, teach a class at a local vocational college, support a seniors home, build a kids playground, attend a tree planting day as a group. Start with saplings but dream of a forest.
- 43.** Respect people's downtime. Call a team member at home as a last resort.
- 44.** Creatively find ways to catch members of the team "doing it right"! Catch yourself doing it right. Without reflection there is no learning.





- 45. Make courtesy a foundation competency. Go out of your way to say “thank you.” Insist that everyone who meets the customer also goes out of their way to say “thank you.” The late Peter Drucker was fond of reminding us that “courtesy is the lubricant of leadership.”
- 46. Go the extra mile when a team (or a member of their family) is dealing with serious health issues. An act of generosity today is rewarded by emotional commitment and loyalty far into the future.
- 47. Constantly look for ways to ensure that the work people do is (1) unambiguously defined by way of goals and responsibilities; (2) matches capability with opportunity; and (3) encapsulates the contribution each member makes to the team.
- 48. Be authentic. Make sure the real you turns up – every day. Be consistent. Know that the only thing you can’t fake is authenticity. Know also that if people perceive you as being anything less than 100% authentic, it’s a matter of “let the games begin.”
- 49. Change the patterns of play. Hold the next team meeting somewhere unusual. Have different team members facilitate a typical team meeting. From time to time bring in an external facilitator. Introduce experiential learning as a way for the team to explore new horizons.
- 50. Recognise that the basic currency of organization success is the team. Measure team success – results and relationships. Take time out as a team to reflect on how both team performance and the relationships on the team can move the team to the next level. Remember that motivation is intrinsic; it has to come from within. As a result, “telling” and even “telling and selling” is counterproductive.

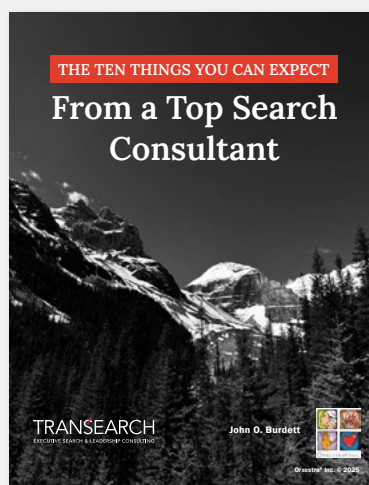
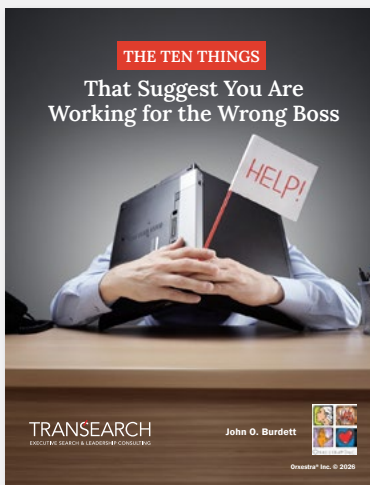
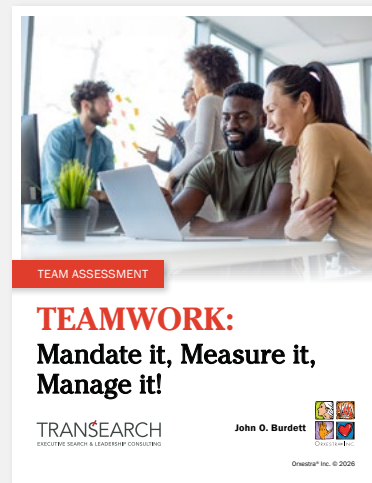
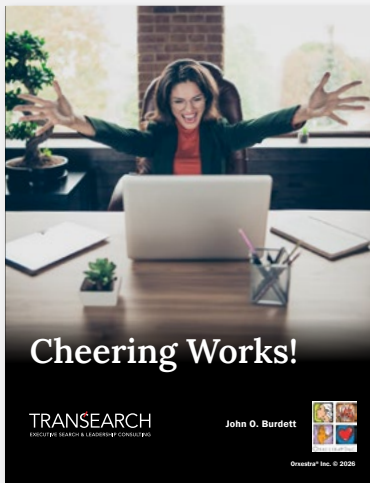
“Don’t tell me what you believe, show me how you treat other people and I will tell you what you believe.”

– James Talarico

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John O. Burdett

*“If you wear
the mantle
of leadership,
people need
to KNOW
that you care.”*

- John O. Burdett

JOHN O. BURDETT has worked in over 40 countries as an executive and as a consultant for businesses that are household names. He continues to work on leadership development and organization culture for some of the world's largest corporations.

In 2019, his work with ABB's top 240 executives received a major international award for the most innovative leadership development initiative of that year. His ongoing partnership with TRANSEARCH International means that his proprietary work on talent acquisition, in any one year, successfully supports many hundreds of top leadership appointments on six continents.

He has written extensively on executive coaching and was awarded international coach of the year by the Finnish Institute of International Trade. Business graduates at the University of Texas indicated that his material on coaching was the single most valuable learning source they took away from their undergraduate degree. He has also coached numerous executive teams

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Apart from a range of corporate leadership workshops, he has taught at business schools on both sides of the Atlantic. His work on the MBA program at the University of Toronto received a teaching excellence award. John holds a doctorate in management development and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

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