



MEANING LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE

Find Meaning with Meaning Leadership

*„WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS YOUR HEART
THAT ULTIMATELY CONTRIBUTES TO A BETTER WORLD.“*

An introduction to the Meaning Leadership practice.

Laurens van Geffen | Founder Meaning Leadership Institute



Meaning Leadership

This fast moving and changing World is demanding. In more than 200 scientific studies done over the last decades it is clear and present that performance of people causal connected is to how they feel. Business of tomorrow need a fundamental change in leadership to cope with the demands of the current Millenniums and fore most with the incoming Generation-i also related as Generation-Z. Being able as a leader, to tap-in the core capabilities of your people and understand how they feel will difference failure from success. But first, the leaders of tomorrow need to be able to tap in themselves.

We believe it is our responsibility to help you abandon the elements of your life that stand in the way of your success, happiness and satisfaction. We help you ask and answer questions that many people seem to have forgotten about or have fallen into the habit of overlooking: What do I really like? How do I recognise it and change my life to allow me to live it? In which situations do I flourish? How can I make these situations a larger part of my life, private, socially, work and business wise?

Your answers to these questions help put you on the path to self-improvement by helping you connect with your inner-spirituality, your emotional intelligence, your purpose in life. This enables you to develop autonomous engagement with your tasks¹ and the world around you, allowing you to master yourself and take control of your life. Our approach leads you to define and embrace a deeper, more satisfying and enriching life. This white paper gives insight in the fundamental principles of Meaning leadership.

Find meaning with Meaning Leadership

Meaning Leadership helps you bring direction to your life. It gives meaning and meaningfulness by helping you to discover, understand and embrace your authentic self. Typically, everyone knows who they are at heart. But it is easy for this knowledge to be lost over time, through experiences and extreme, life-changing situations. Forgetting who you are is not unusual. But rediscovering it is vitally important. Without doing so, it is not possible to truly understand yourself, to feel as if you are fulfilling your desires and needs, or to find an ultimately satisfying meaning in life.

¹ Tasks not only in work, but in the vast amount of responsibilities that come when living your purpose.



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The Meaning Leadership Institute helps you to start your life from where you are now. We take a unique approach, experienced based and adopting the understanding of modern psychology. We have the insight, the belief and the understanding required to help you find meaningfulness in your life, work, family, friendships and most importantly, in yourself. You will learn to find emotional fulfilment and happiness in your surroundings, the people around you, your performance and your Purpose in life.

Develop insight into who you are, what you want and how you can achieve it. It is never too late to pursue your genuine goals and to create a life that gives you everything you truly want and need. This insight will enable you to lead towards success of yourself, your people and your business.

The Meaning Leadership principles consists of five interdisciplinary elements: Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence, Purpose, Autonomy and Mastery.



Spirituality

A word that is easily misconstrued, the Meaning Leadership Institute interprets 'Spirituality' as relating to one's personal spirit: the spirit to enjoy, the spirit to live, but also the spirit to let go of the things that truly don't matter to your deeper self. This means acknowledging the concept that there are things in life that are not for you and that will simply disrupt your peace. It is possible to develop this spiritual connection through different practices, like sports, running, athletics and of course, yoga. However, a state of meditation is comparable to the quietness in our deepest selves.

As such, spiritual, and more recently, business leaders recommend the use of meditation to connect to the true self. Bill George is a Harvard University Professor of Management Practice and co-author of the book 'True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership'. In the book, George examines discusses the qualities and effectiveness of various leadership approaches. George writes 'the pursuit of mindful leadership will help you to achieve high clarity about what happens, what is important to you and give a deeper understanding of the world around you.'² In the Quality of Life @ Works study³, conducted over 20.000 people around the world, emerged that one⁴ of the predictable core needs of work is: spirituality in which they defined to find sense of meaning and purpose.

A number of major organisations, such as Google, Genentech and the United States Marines Corps⁵, have incorporated meditation practices into their development programmes. Major academic institutions, ranging from the IMD Business School in Lausanne, Switzerland to the University of Cape Town, South Africa⁶ have incorporated Mindfulness in their MBA curricula. The reason why is perhaps best highlighted by Bill George, who states stated that 'the practice of Mindfulness Meditation will

² George, Bill, and Sims, Peter: (2007) *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

³ This study, with over 20.000 respondents around the World, was done by the Energy Project, www.theenergyproject.com, and Harvard Business Review in 2014

⁴ The study defined four core needs: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

⁵ Trisoglio, Alex (2013) Mindful Leadership; ref: Hruby, Patrick, (2012), 'Marines Expanding Use of Meditation Training', *Washington Times*, 5 December 2012.

⁶ Gardiner, Beth: (2012) 'Business Skills and Buddhist Mindfulness.' Wall Street Journal, www.wsj.com. Retrieved 3 April 2012.



reduce stress⁷, open up the path of engagement, Emotional Intelligence and individual effectiveness⁸, all of which the Meaning Leadership Institute believe to be vital to successful leadership practices and mastering your own Purpose in life.

Emotional Intelligence

Many of the spiritual developments you encounter relate to the way in which your emotions are influenced by your environment; the planet, the people around you, the events and tasks that make up your life. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the discipline of understanding these emotions and having the awareness and ability to manage them in a healthy manner. Daniel Goleman, an expert on brain sciences, human psychology and EI, suggests you lead your life more effectively and have a more positive impact on the lives of others when you have a high level of Emotional Intelligence. Goleman has described EI as consisting of five layers: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills and empathy. All five layers of EI are integrated throughout Meaning Leadership practices; our leaders know, actively encounter and respond to all elements of Emotional Intelligence throughout life and their leadership development sessions with others.

EI is often tested in stressful and challenging situations. Examples include circumstances in which you watch your own goals become more and more distant, or situation where you, or the people you are interacting with, treat each other in a manner lacking in empathy and social skills.

Life often places us in these circumstances and will always do so. Thus, it is vitally important that your visions, attitudes and leadership skills are able to withstand the challenges to which they are submitted.⁹ Without a high level of EI, it is easy to lose control of your emotions and fall victim to them. This results in the aggression, greed, and a lack of courage and long-term thinking. With strong EI, it is possible to maintain quality leadership practices and pursue your Purpose, even in the face of adversity.

⁷ Harvard Business Review (2014) 'The Hard Data on Being a Nice Boss' www.s.hbr.org/1y5zKVjon Retrieved 15 November 2014.

⁸ Goleman, Daniel: (1995) *Emotional Intelligence: Why It can Matter More Than IQ*, New York: Bantam Books.

⁹ Craig, Nick and Snook, Scott, (2014) 'From Purpose to Impact: Figure Out Your Passion and Put It to Work'. Harvard Business Review, May 2014.



Purpose

One of the most beneficial tools in maintaining empathy, awareness and understanding comes from realising and accepting the different Purposes. This means you need to acknowledge and see the path by which you pursue your Purpose as well as the ways in which others are working on theirs.

A Purpose is a higher aspirational belief that captures hearts and minds, and above all, the outside world. A Purpose can be nurtured by an individual, a team or a company as a whole. There are good examples of companies that focus on the Purposes of their employees ranging from consumer goods giant Unilever, to flight-booking-software producer Amadeus. There are also companies that focus on a Purpose at a team or company level. However, successful businesses of today, such as Google, the Whole Foods Market supermarket chain and shoe and clothing giant [zappos.com](https://www.zappos.com), have demonstrated the best approach is to establish a point at which the individual and the team or company find Purposes that are in alignment with each other.

This raises effectiveness and efficiency to a higher level; employees work as a community, pursuing a shared vision. Everyone shares the same goal and works together determinedly to see it realised. The concept of a community is further encouraged with low-level hierarchies that do away with the concept of graded success and the feelings of 'us and them'. This leads to a greater sense of involvement, employee and even client satisfaction.

Realising a Purpose requires self-regulation and self-awareness. Knowing *yourself*. You need to understand how you act at the critical and most challenging moments in your life. And how you approach and learn from situations in life. Do you make the same mistakes twice? Do you let yourself down? Or are you aware and able to regulate and trust yourself to perform when needed? If you're working with others, it's important to recognise and understand what their abilities and Purposes are. You need to know how to engage them to pursue their Purposes. This may mean identifying the tasks that engage them and encourage them to work autonomously. But it also means understanding how you can use or develop tasks that enable them to fulfil a shared Purpose.



This awareness and sense of trust needs to extend to other people and even the environment around you. In effect, to realise a Purpose, you need to know exactly what can be done and how to produce the motivation to make sure it is done. Whether it is your Purpose as an individual, that of your team or that of your company.

We know from experience that focusing on a well-defined Purpose has strong links to business success. When your Purpose is synonymous with that of your team or your company, you take it to heart and perform for yourself, your team and your company. You don't do your best because you need to. You perform at extremely high levels because you have a strong desire to do so. It gives you satisfaction, as well as the motivation and commitment to do whatever is needed to overcome the challenges you encounter along the way.

Autonomy

When you are following your Purpose, you will become engaged, or committed to it. There is no need for external reward, because performing the task is enjoyable and rewarding in itself. You know you are on *your* path, pursuing and living *your* Purpose. It makes you more motivated, engaged and committed to what you are doing. This level of engagement is called 'Autonomy'. This is not because you do not need or even think about rewards to perform, but because the enjoyment and satisfaction you derive from the pursuit of the Purpose motivates you, inevitably creating self-sustaining motivation.

This does not mean you do not work with or rely on other people. Just as you are able to recognise your strengths and weaknesses, you are able to recognise those of others. An obvious example? You go to the Meaning Leadership Institute for help with developing your spiritual and emotional self and the ability to pursue your goals in life. Just as we seek the help of website designers for creating our website, and rely on others to provide electricity, police our cities, repair our vehicles or perform other tasks we are simply not skilled in.

But knowing who to rely on for which task is not always simple, especially in company life. Would you rely on someone to repair the brakes on your car if they seemed to be disinterested?



As a leader, it is important that you inspire engagement in other people by asking questions like 'What makes you really happy and successful?', 'What are you really good at?' and 'When are you fully focused on your work?'¹⁰ It inspires them to perform because it enables them – and you – to see whether they are pursuing a Purpose.

But how do you know which questions to ask?

Empathy and social skills, both important elements of Emotional Intelligence, enable you to define and ask these questions and focus on the needs of others. By inspiring engagement in the people around you, including your professional team members, you give them the drive to deliver better results. Highly engaged people perform well because the desire to perform comes from the inner-self, the heart. In a master survey of 1,600 leaders within one of the largest retail companies in Europe, there was causal evidence demonstrating much better sales results in teams with a high level of engagement.¹¹ They were able to sell the products to others because they believed in what they were doing and satisfied a sense of Purpose by doing it.

Mastery

The final element of Meaning Leadership is Mastery. By doing what your are good at, your life will flourish and reach its optimal state. A point where you have the feeling you are doing the right things at the right place at the right time, and you are happy to devote yourself to it to the greatest extent possible. The only difficulty is in knowing exactly what you are good, better or best at doing. Being able to define your Mastery in your own words, also means being able to recognise when it is absent.

Finding out what your Mastery is requires you to go through the different elements already explained. From experience, we know that fulfilling the defined five elements brings better business, private and social results. The Meaning Leadership journey is inspiring, energising and life-changing. It is not, however, an easy ride. This is not about a quick fix, or a one-time exercise. True Meaning Leadership development is about focus, determination, belief and a disciplined will to understand and inevitably recognise what is at your core, in your heart.

¹⁰ Daniel Pink (2009): *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Riverheads Books, New York.

¹¹ Voorn, Bart and Stoker, Walter (2014): *Mechanisms for a Trickle-Down Effect of Transformational Leadership: The Role of Emotions and Justice*. Ph.D thesis currently under review.



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What better way to start with the leaders of our future. The Meaning Leadership Institute focuses on improving the lives of business leaders, their teams, individuals and students. We strongly believe it is your heart that ultimately contributes to a better world.