

*Rita  
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# **DELIBERATE LEADERSHIP**

## **ON PURPOSE WITH INTENTION**

[www.ritacincotta.com](http://www.ritacincotta.com)



# Why Deliberate Leadership?

- When leaders are deliberate, organisations benefit from greater productivity, profitability and engagement
- Teams benefit from an increase in engagement and connection
- Overall this results in more successful and sustainable organisations

## What is Deliberate Leadership?

Deliberate Leadership is an intentional and strategic approach to leadership that emphasises thoughtful decision-making, clear vision, and a focus on long-term goals.

Deliberate leaders exhibit a keen sense of self-awareness, an understanding of their own and their team's strengths and a commitment to ongoing self-improvement. They prioritise effective communication, encourage collaboration, and foster a culture of accountability.



"The best leaders are clear. They continually light the way, and in the process, let each person know that what they do makes a difference."

John C. Maxwell



# The Challenges Facing Leaders Today

“Many leaders are overwhelmed and exhausted by constant change, new information and shifting directions. Between work and personal challenges, there isn’t much left in the tank. But somehow, they pull it together to navigate these uncharted waters. There isn’t a playbook, as it’s all quite new.”

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## Lack of Engagement

Leadership is without a doubt increasing in challenge and complexity. With 59% of employees globally disengaged with their roles (Gallup 2023) giving rise to the notion of quiet quitting, this presents significant risks to organisations and teams in being able to provide products and services to customers and in being able to attract the right talent into their organisations. Having a disengaged workforce contributes to what is estimated to be 9% of global GDP (Gallup 2023).

## Trust in Leaders

The Institute of Leadership (2023) tell us that Line managers are marginally less trusted today than they were over a decade ago! Findings of the new research by The Institute of Leadership, are from a survey where over 1,000 people across a range of organisations and sectors were polled. The trust rating for line managers in 2023 stands at 67, a fall from 71 in 2018, and down from 69 in 2009.

A focus on building trust in leaders, can result in a:

- 15% drop in stress levels
- 3% drop in sick days
- 10% increase in productivity
- 15% increase in employee engagement

## Levels of Stress

Employees globally are reporting increasing levels of daily stress, that is stress that is felt on a consistent basis, not just in peak periods. This is resulting in more claims of mental health impacts at work, and leaders are struggling to cope with the levels of stress for themselves and their teams, notwithstanding their own increasing levels of stress and burnout.

Poor mental health costs the Australian economy from \$12.2 to 22.5 billion each year (according to the Australian Government Productivity Commission).

- A total of 3.2 days per worker are lost each year through workplace stress
- Stress-related workers' compensation claims have doubled in recent years, costing over \$10 billion each year
- A survey of over 5000 workers indicated that 25% of workers took time off each year for stress-related reasons
- In relation to psychological injury claims, work pressure accounts for around half of all claims and harassment and bullying for around a quarter of claims
- Preliminary research shows that Australian businesses lose over \$6.5 billion each year by failing to provide early intervention/treatment for employees with mental health conditions.

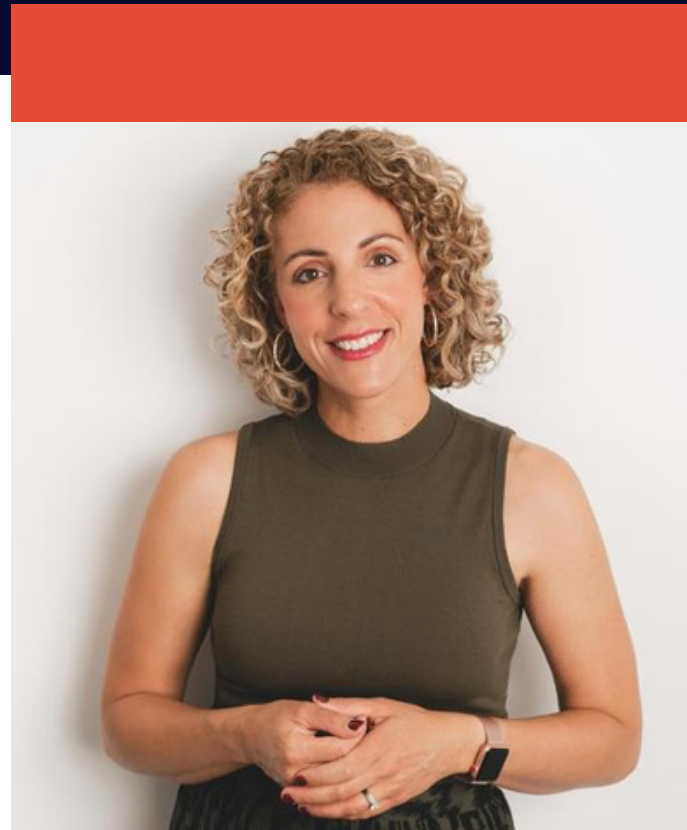


# What are Leaders concerned about?

As we face into complexity confidence can wane for leaders. If we lack confidence, we may become defensive, or elusive, preferring to retract from our teams.

Our ability to be self aware may be impacted as we move into leader survival mode, dealing with fires, rather than working to prevent them.

Leaders are challenged with having stakeholders that sit above, below and to the side of them. These stakeholders have differing needs and require careful and strategic influencing for healthy and sustainable relationships.



Leaders often come into a role, still needing to learn more than what they need to effectively do the role. Leaders are learning and leading, and there is seldom time to pause and learn, then do, rather we are learning and doing concurrently.

This creates a sense of vulnerability, which can bring about feelings of shame, embarrassment and even thoughts of, "Am I good enough to do this role".

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# The Pathway to becoming a Deliberate Leader

Becoming a deliberate leader can feel like a journey as we evolve in the role of a leader. When we step up into different levels of leadership, we may find ourselves, starting back at the beginning of the journey, even if we are an experienced and capable leader. This is because every leadership level, brings about the same opportunities as we move into deliberate leadership.

Pathway to Deliberate Leadership	Focus	Engagement
Deliberate	Action	100%
Intentional	Influence	75%
Reflective	Trust	50%
Hesitant	Confidence	25%
Reluctant	Decision	0%

Using this model, we commence at the bottom and work our way up to the top.

## Reluctant

A reluctant leader is someone who assumes a leadership role with reservation, uncertainty, or a lack of enthusiasm. They may have not fully made the decision to lead yet. Often at this level leaders have a strong technical background, and they inherit a team, or are given a team, based on strong technical performance. They may or may not have leadership experience. If they stay at this level, they are likely to have very little if any engagement from their team. Their team may feel that they are disconnected to their leader. They also may feel lost, if goals have not been adequately set and if performance is not managed proactively. Business results may also be impacted if the leader is reluctant as there may be a lack of direction and even inertia in actively leading.



## Hesitant

A hesitant leader often feels some uncertainty or doubt in their ability to lead, often stemming from a lack of confidence. At this stage the leader is likely to have made an active decision to lead, however, they may feel a lack of confidence with decision-making and their ability to influence people and outcomes across the organisations. As there may be a sense of one step forward, two steps back and even indecisiveness in leading, team's led by a hesitant leader may feel a sense of confusion and at times experience inconsistency from their leader. Engagement within the team starts to increase slightly, as the leader accepts their authority and decision making ability.

## Reflective

As a leader moves through the path to more deliberate leadership, they are likely to be reflective, as they progress from reluctance and hesitancy. A reflective leader regularly reviews their past decisions and experiences to make more informed and thoughtful choices in the future. At this stage, self awareness is evolved, and leaders have a deeper sense of their strengths and what can derail their leadership. Leaders sense of trust in themselves increases as they achieve more with their team. As a result, engagement within the team also increases here, creating a greater connection across team. If psychological safety has been low within the team, as the leader moves to being more reflective, this safety increases as ideas are debated with consideration, care and empathy.



# The Pathway to becoming a Deliberate Leader

## **Intentional**

An intentional leader acts with a clear purpose and plan, aligning with the deliberate approach to leadership. At this stage the leader is well on their way to being more deliberate, and acts thoughtfully and strategically bringing about a sense of deeper fulfilment in the leadership role. Team members are likely to be more highly engaged as the leader demonstrates a greater level of influence across all stakeholders.

## **Deliberate**

A deliberate leader is a purposeful and thoughtful individual who takes intentional, well-considered actions and decisions to achieve specific goals and guide their team or organisation effectively. The focus for the leader at this level is action. Executing plans, delivering strategies and keeping the team motivated and engaged. At this level we see the highest possible levels of employee engagement and also a strong connection to the purpose of the organisation. There is a strong sense of achievement and fulfilment for the leader. These teams are commonly referred to as high performing with a strong sense of purpose demonstrated in outstanding organisational results.







# The Deliberate Leader

**Deliberate leadership results in an increase in clarity, conviction, commitment, and confidence in the leader.**

**Clarity** – Deep understanding of problems

**Conviction** – Decisions with impact

**Commitment** – Sustainable growth initiatives

**Confidence** – Awareness of capabilities

**The leader's team and organisation benefit from an increase in empowerment, vision, experience, influence.**

**Increased empowerment** – Accountability is shared

**Clearer vision** – Understanding business purpose

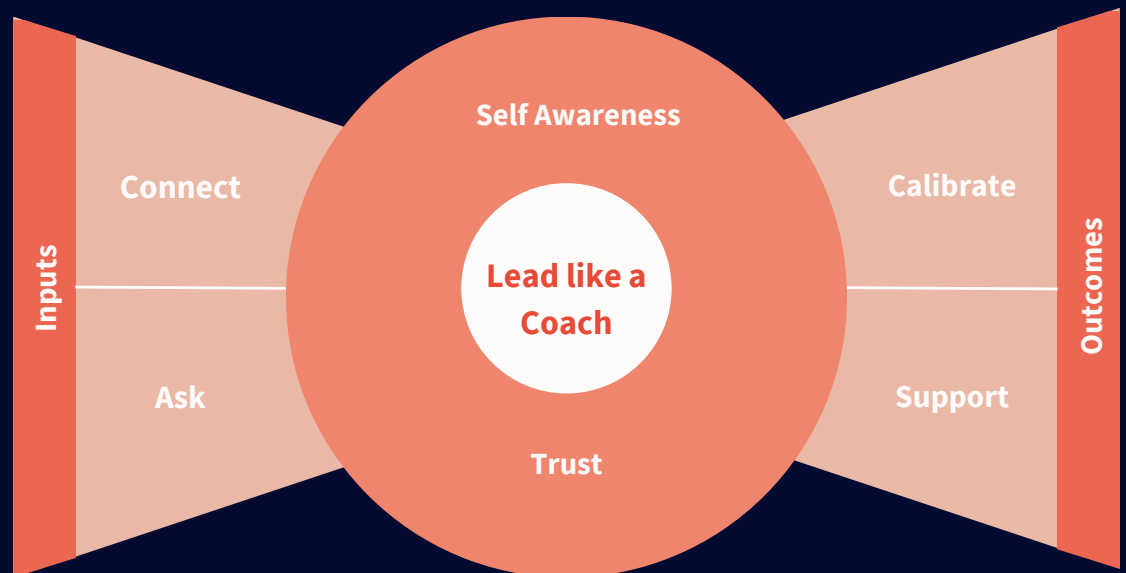
**Greater experience** – Building capability is evolutionary

**Enhanced influence** – Stronger relationships and partnerships



# Coaching in Leadership

The method to achieve deliberate leadership is through coaching where the prime focus of leadership is to build relationships and to better understand what motivates and drives your team.



When a leader adopts this style, trust, authenticity and connection grow between the leader and their team, individually and collectively; defensiveness, hierarchy and judgment decrease, promoting stronger team relationships.

By utilising a coaching style, leadership is more collaborative. You'll see from the model that it is based on the inputs of connect and ask that drive the outcomes of calibration and support.

Self-awareness and trust are at the heart of the model as they facilitate the inputs and outcomes.

Now let's deep dive into the elements of this model.

"Leaders who coach are like scaffolding. It's important to recognise the important role you play in scaffolding. If you try to build without providing support, the integrity of the building process is compromised."

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# Lead like a Coach

## Connect

The focus of the relationship is connection. When we connect deeply, we develop a deeper understanding of each other, our motivations and limitations, enabling the coach to better support the employee to improve performance. Empathy limits judgment and helps to view the situation from an alternative perspective. Connection is essential in leadership because it builds trust, fosters collaboration and inspires others. When leaders establish genuine connections with their team members, it creates a positive and supportive work environment, promoting trust and open communication. Taking time to connect personally, listen actively and show genuine care and empathy creates a safe space for open communication. Team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, concerns and ideas, leading to better understanding and collaboration.



Employee engagement and motivation grow when leaders focus on establishing and maintaining connections with team members. It demonstrates that they value and respect them as individuals, meaning team members are more likely to be committed to their work, go the extra mile, and actively contribute to the team's success.

Connection in leadership promotes team cohesion and collaboration and a sense of unity and teamwork. It strengthens the overall cohesion and collaboration within the team, leading to better communication, cooperation and synergy, ultimately enhancing team performance and productivity.

A focus on connection enables leaders to inspire and influence their team members. When leaders genuinely connect, they become role models and sources of inspiration. They effectively convey their vision, values, and goals, rallying their team around a common purpose. Through connection, leaders can motivate and inspire their team members to achieve their best and strive for excellence.



# Lead like a Coach

## Ask

Asking is a fundamental aspect of effective leadership as it is crucial in fostering communication, encouraging critical thinking, promoting engagement, and facilitating growth. By asking meaningful and thought-provoking questions, leaders can unlock valuable insights, empower their team members, and drive positive organisational change.

Asking questions promotes communication and understanding. When leaders ask open-ended questions, it encourages team members to share their perspectives, ideas and concerns. It creates a space for active listening and promotes dialogue, offering leaders a deeper understanding of their teams' and organisations' challenges, opportunities and dynamics.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are stimulated when we ask questions, leading to innovative ways to solve problems and creative solutions. Asking questions empowers team members and promotes engagement. When leaders ask for input and involve team members in decision-making, it fosters a sense of ownership and buy-in. |



# Lead like a Coach

## Ask

Effective questioning also serves as a powerful tool for coaching and development. Leaders can ask questions that prompt self-reflection, encourage self-awareness, and help individuals uncover their strengths, areas for improvement and growth opportunities. Through targeted questioning, leaders can support their team members' professional growth, guide their learning journeys, and facilitate personal and career development.

Asking questions can spark innovation and creativity within teams. By posing thought-provoking questions that challenge the status quo, leaders can inspire their team members to explore new ideas, question existing processes, and generate fresh insights. This stimulates a culture of continuous improvement, fosters a learning mindset, and encourages experimentation and innovation.

When a leader asks questions, they become the learner rather than the knower. It takes vulnerability to ask questions more than answer them. I regularly invite leaders to consider the ratio of questions asked to questions answered.

*"When leaders ask for input and involve team members in decision-making, it fosters a sense of ownership and buy-in. It shows that their opinions and ideas matter, increasing engagement, motivation and commitment to the team's goals."*

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# Lead like a Coach

## Calibrate

Coaching requires leaders to synthesise information and identify the gaps first. The leader's ability to make sense of various data points is critical. Gaps can lead to unhelpful coaching direction, causing more issues than those addressed.

Asking and calibrating information are essential because they enable leaders to gather accurate and relevant data, make informed decisions, build credibility and foster trust within their teams and organisations.

Asking questions helps calibrate information by seeking multiple perspectives and gathering diverse viewpoints. Leaders can access a broader range of information by asking individuals for their insights, experiences and opinions. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of a situation, issue, or problem. Calibrating information through questioning allows leaders to make well-informed decisions based on a more complete and nuanced picture of the circumstances rather than relying upon judgments and first impressions.



# Lead like a Coach

## Calibrate

Calibrating information also helps validate and verify the accuracy of data. By asking probing questions and seeking evidence or supporting facts, leaders can ensure that the information they receive is reliable, factual and relevant. This is particularly important in critical decision-making processes where inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to flawed conclusions and adverse outcomes.

Synthesising information through questioning demonstrates a commitment to thoroughness and accuracy. Leaders who actively seek to verify information and clarify any uncertainties build credibility within their teams and organisations. When team members see that their leader values accurate information and takes the time to validate data, it fosters trust and confidence in the decision-making process.

Calibrating information through questioning helps identify biases, assumptions and potential blindspots. By asking probing questions that challenge preconceived notions, leaders can uncover hidden biases and potential gaps in understanding. This promotes a more objective and well-rounded assessment of situations, enabling fair and unbiased decisions.

Moreover, calibrating information through questioning creates a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement. When leaders consistently encourage team members to ask questions, seek clarification, and challenge assumptions, it encourages a learning mindset and intellectual curiosity. This leads to a more dynamic and innovative environment where new ideas can emerge, and critical thinking is something the team embrace rather than something to be fearful of.



# Lead like a Coach

## Support

Support in the coaching mode of leadership is contextual and subjective. It is not about what the leader can provide; it's what the person being coached needs. The coach's role is to serve. This is about listening attentively for whatever support they are requesting. If this is not forthcoming, the leader must ask rather than assume they know.

Providing support promotes employee engagement and job satisfaction. Leaders who show genuine care demonstrate that they value their team members as individuals. This sense of support and appreciation increases employee loyalty, commitment and motivation. Team members feel invested in their work and are more likely to go the extra mile to achieve organisational goals.

Supportive leadership also contributes to the development of individuals' skills and abilities. By offering guidance, mentorship and resources, leaders empower their team members to overcome challenges, develop new competencies, and reach their full potential. Supportive leaders create a learning environment that encourages growth, continuous improvement, and professional development.



Providing support helps individuals navigate through setbacks and obstacles. That doesn't mean the leader jumps in to act on the team's or individual's behalf. When team members face difficulties, leaders who offer guidance, encouragement and problem-solving assistance help them overcome hurdles and bounce back stronger. This support instills resilience and fosters a sense of confidence, leading to increased productivity and a positive mindset.

Supportive leadership also plays a critical role in fostering teamwork and collaboration. It encourages open communication, trust and cooperation among team members. When individuals feel supported by their leader and peers, they are more likely to share knowledge, ideas and expertise, leading to better problem-solving, innovation and synergy within the team.

A focus on support, builds strong relationships based on trust and empathy. When leaders offer support, they demonstrate they are approachable, understanding, and willing to listen. This creates a sense of psychological safety and encourages individuals to seek guidance and share concerns. Strong relationships between leaders and team members facilitate effective communication, improve morale, and contribute to a positive work culture.





# Lead like a Coach

## Self-Awareness

When we choose to lead deliberately, there is no shortage of diagnostics, tests, quizzes and formal and informal feedback mechanisms that can help us to become more self-aware.

Our opportunity is to know how to tune into ourselves to enhance self-awareness and calibrate this with what we know from others. Self-awareness allows us to adapt and respond in ways that best serve the situation and those we lead.

What we learn about ourselves as we increase our self-awareness may create initial discomfort. We may not like what we learn. It may not accord with the type of leader or person we think we are. However, part of self-awareness is using what we have. Through self awareness, our appreciation for our strengths deepens, creating deeper trust in our abilities and what we can offer, and ultimately self-love. This is deliberate focus.

## Trust

Trust is the foundation for every relationship. If you choose to be a deliberate leader, on purpose and with intention, you are also choosing to focus on trust. Once trust is established, building and maintaining it is not a given. It takes continued focus.

High trust is built deliberately rather than by chance. It's about credibility, reliability and connection. It means developing a deep interest in what the business does, understanding the strategy and goals, and applying and developing expertise to achieve them.



# Next Steps

You may have already established that by having more deliberate leaders in your organisation you will be able to positively impact engagement resulting in a healthier culture and better business results.

So ask yourself the following questions:

- What are you aiming to achieve as an organisation?
- How deliberate are your leaders in leading your organisation?
- To what extent are leaders using a coaching style to build better relationships and drive higher performance?



*“As a deliberate leader, your primary goal is to lead your team to deliver your organisation’s vision, strategy and goals.”*

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# About the Author



## Rita Cincotta

### Leadership Development Specialist

Rita Cincotta is a leadership development specialist, focusing on deliberate leadership. Rita supports her clients to elevate their leadership impact through becoming more deliberate in their leadership.

As a facilitator, speaker, coach, author, and non-executive Board Director and with over two decades of experience in her career, Rita has led HR teams and held executive positions in Human Resources across various industries, including technology, healthcare, financial services, aged care, not for profit, advertising, media, FMCG, e-commerce, and higher education.

Rita's primary focus is on empowering individuals, teams, and organisations to attain peak performance, deeper fulfilment, and a profound connection to their purpose. As an accomplished facilitator, Rita has expertly crafted and delivered leadership programs tailored to different industries and businesses. Her clients have included Kogan.com., Kraft Heinz, Clemenger Group, Aware Super, University of Melbourne, GloBird Energy, Berry Street, AEMO and the Warakirri Group.

Rita boasts accreditations in Clarity 4D, Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), and the Korn Ferry Leadership Architect method.

Rita has spoken on national and international stages as a keynote speaker, addressing topics such as team performance, cultural transformation, change management, resilience, and innovative work methodologies. In 2021, she authored her debut book, "Evolve: The Business Partnering Playbook," followed by her second book, "You Are How You Lead," in 2023.

To get in touch about how Rita can support your leaders and teams in your organisation you can contact her at [rita@ritacincotta.com](mailto:rita@ritacincotta.com) or +61 409 800 557.



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