

ACROSS MARKETS AND BORDERS

Enterprise, Trade and Leadership with Purpose and Integrity

PART II | CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP AND ENTERPRISE

CHAPTER 6

CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP, TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Leading Self, Serving Others and Building Effective Organizations

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Abstract

Leadership turns judgment into coordinated human action, but formal authority alone cannot create character, trust or organizational effectiveness. This chapter integrates character formation, self-leadership, interpersonal leadership, team dynamics and organizational behaviour as a multilevel system. It examines identity, conscience, emotional intelligence, self-regulation, motivation, resilience and learning agility; critically compares trait, behavioural, contingency, relational, transformational, transactional, servant, ethical, authentic and responsible leadership perspectives; and develops evidence-based approaches to delegation, coaching, teams, psychological safety, power, conflict, culture, structure and change. African evidence is analytically central through Equity Group Holdings and scholarship on African leadership, while a randomized hybrid-work study at Trip.com provides a comparative global case. Current engagement evidence is interpreted cautiously rather than treated as a leadership scorecard. Christian moral reasoning frames authority as accountable stewardship and service, integrating humility, courage, justice, truthfulness and fidelity with rigorous organizational analysis. The chapter concludes with a practical character-to-culture leadership protocol, cases and evidence exercises.

Keywords: character; leadership; organizational behaviour; motivation; teams; psychological safety; power; organizational culture; organizational change; servant leadership

Learning Outcomes

1	Distinguish character, personality, values, identity, purpose, vocation, conscience and self-regulation, and explain how these concepts shape leadership without treating any of them as deterministic.
2	Use evidence-based self-awareness and reflective practices to identify strengths, blind spots, emotional patterns, habits and development priorities while distinguishing reflection from rumination.
3	Compare trait, behavioural, contingency, relational, transformational, transactional, servant, ethical, authentic and responsible leadership perspectives, including their assumptions, empirical support, construct overlap and limitations.
4	Diagnose a leadership situation by considering task demands, follower capability, uncertainty, relationship quality, authority, time horizon and moral constraints rather than applying a single preferred style.
5	Apply major motivation theories to work design, goals, incentives, engagement and wellbeing, including expectancy, self-determination, goal-setting, job characteristics, justice and job demands-resources perspectives.
6	Design responsible delegation, empowerment, coaching, mentoring and feedback practices that transfer genuine decision rights while preserving clarity, capability, accountability and appropriate controls.
7	Analyze personality, perception, attribution, attitudes and individual differences at work without stereotyping people or converting probabilistic tendencies into fixed labels.
8	Design and diagnose teams using role clarity, complementary capability, interdependence, coordination, trust, psychological safety, shared understanding, voice, accountability and learning processes.
9	Distinguish legitimate authority, power, influence and organizational politics; identify common bases of power and assess how asymmetry changes voice, conflict, consent and responsibility.
10	Diagnose task, relationship and process conflict; prepare for integrative and distributive negotiation using interests, alternatives, reservation points, procedural fairness and disciplined communication.
11	Distinguish organizational culture, climate and structure; explain how leadership, metrics, routines, incentives, communication and informal norms interact to shape repeated behaviour.
12	Lead change and ambiguity through sensemaking, participation, learning, experimentation and review, while evaluating hybrid work and organizational resilience from evidence rather than managerial fashion.
13	Apply Christian moral reasoning and serious alternative ethical perspectives to authority, service, justice, courage, truth, power, employee dignity and responsibility for foreseeable organizational consequences.

Concept Map and Chapter Roadmap

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR AS A MULTILEVEL SYSTEM



Figure 6.1. Leadership and organizational behaviour as a multilevel system.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis. The sequence reflects the approved progression from self-government to organizational effectiveness.

The chapter moves from the person outward. Sections 6.1-6.3 establish why leadership begins with character, identity, self-awareness and self-regulation. Sections 6.4-6.6 examine the major leadership traditions and show why no single style explains every situation. Sections 6.7-6.9 develop motivation, engagement, delegation and individual differences. Sections 6.10-6.13 move to teams, psychological safety, power, conflict and negotiation. Sections 6.14-6.15 explain organizational culture, climate, structure, change, ambiguity, hybrid work and resilience. Sections 6.16-6.17 return to the opening African case and compare it with causal evidence from a global hybrid-work experiment. Section 6.18 integrates Christian moral reasoning. The final sections provide a professional leadership protocol, identify recurrent errors and hand the reader to Chapter 7, where cross-cultural management, talent systems and organizational knowledge are developed in depth.

SCOPE BOUNDARY | This chapter owns general leadership and organizational behaviour. It does not teach national-culture frameworks, expatriation, recruitment, reward systems, succession architecture or knowledge management, which belong to Chapter 7. It uses communication skills from Chapter 2 without reteaching professional genres; it uses decision discipline from Chapter 5 without repeating analytics; and it introduces ethical responsibilities of leadership without replacing the comprehensive ethics and governance framework in Chapter 13.

Opening Case: Equity Group Holdings and the Leadership Problem of Scaling Purpose, Control and Human Capability

By the end of 2025, Equity Group Holdings reported 22.4 million customer accounts across six operating countries, supported by a representative office in Ethiopia, 409 branches and 13,370 employees. More than 98% of customer transactions occurred outside branches and 88.4% were processed through digital channels. The Group also reported KSh75.5 billion in profit after tax, a 55% increase from 2024. These figures show scale and financial performance, but they do not by themselves explain the leadership system required to coordinate a regional financial institution whose work is increasingly digital, regulated, data-intensive and distributed (Equity Group Holdings Plc, 2026a, 2026b).

The human-capability challenge is substantial. Equity's 2025 integrated reporting presents employees not merely as headcount but as one of the capitals through which the organization creates value. It reports a learning-management system with 97% uptake and describes continuing investment in staff development, technology capability, performance management and succession. In early 2026, the Group further reported large-scale generative-AI training across staff. Such disclosures are relevant evidence of management priorities. They are not independent proof that training caused profitability, that every employee experienced the culture similarly, or that digitization improved every dimension of service. A responsible analyst therefore separates company-reported actions from causal claims about outcomes.

The deeper managerial problem is the relationship between scale and authority. A highly centralized leader can move quickly when an organization is small, but regional expansion creates too many decisions for one centre to make well. Delegation becomes necessary, yet delegation without capability, clear decision rights or accountability can weaken control. Strong performance standards can focus effort, yet metrics can also invite gaming. A strong organizational identity can coordinate behaviour, yet slogans about culture can conceal local variation or suppress legitimate dissent. Digital transformation can reduce transaction cost, yet it can

also make work more abstract, change roles and increase dependence on systems that frontline employees did not design. Leadership at scale is therefore not simply the charisma of a chief executive. It is the design and moral use of a human system.

Table 6.1. *Equity Group Holdings: selected 2025 signals and the organizational-behaviour questions they raise*

Signal	Reported 2025 value	Leadership and OB question
Operating footprint	6 countries + 1 representative office	How much authority should be standardized and how much delegated across different operating contexts?
Customer accounts	22.4 million	How can service, trust and accountability be maintained when interactions occur at scale?
Employees	13,370	How are purpose, expectations, capability, voice and performance coordinated through layers of leadership?
Branches	409	How do structure and local discretion interact with central controls and digital channels?
Transaction migration	>98% outside branches; 88.4% digital	How should leaders redesign roles, learning and accountability as routine work moves to technology?
Profit after tax	KSh75.5 billion; +55% year on year	What evidence is needed before attributing financial outcomes to leadership, culture or transformation claims?

Source/Note: Equity Group Holdings Plc (2026a, 2026b). Figures are company-reported and should be interpreted with normal reporting and causal-inference caveats.

MANAGERIAL INSIGHT | A growing organization eventually encounters a leadership bottleneck: authority must move outward faster than accountability can disappear. The answer is neither permanent centralization nor indiscriminate empowerment. Effective leadership builds capability, clarifies decision rights, creates trustworthy information flows, protects principled dissent and establishes boundaries within which people can act responsibly.

The case gives the chapter its central question: **How can leaders govern themselves, serve others and design organizations in which people can exercise judgment, coordinate work, tell the truth upward, resolve conflict and adapt without losing moral responsibility or performance discipline?**

6.1 Why Character, Leadership, Teams and Organizational Behaviour Matter

Chapter 5 ended with a limit that analytics cannot cross. Models can reveal that a decision is fragile, estimate risk, expose inconsistency and recommend a threshold, but they cannot make a manager courageous enough to stop a favoured project, humble enough to revise a public commitment, trustworthy enough to invite criticism or disciplined enough to execute a difficult choice. Chapter 6 begins at that boundary. The problem is no longer only whether the evidence is sound. It is whether persons and organizations can act on sound judgment when status, fear, incentives, habit, power and group dynamics pull in another direction.

Organizational behaviour is the systematic study of how individuals, relationships, groups and organizational systems influence behaviour and outcomes at work. Leadership is a social influence process through which direction, alignment and commitment are created or sustained around collective work. Management and leadership overlap, but they are not synonyms. Management includes planning, organizing, staffing, control and resource coordination. Leadership becomes especially visible where people must interpret uncertainty, choose among competing claims, mobilize effort, exercise authority or change established patterns. Neither label confers moral legitimacy. A person can manage efficiently toward a destructive end, and a persuasive leader can mobilize followers toward deception. The chapter therefore treats competence and character as analytically distinct but practically inseparable.

The contemporary workplace makes this integration economically significant. Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report*, based on data collected during 2025, reported that 20% of employees worldwide were engaged at work. Manager engagement fell from 31% in 2022 to 22% in 2025, while non-manager engagement was 19% in 2025 (Gallup, 2026). In Sub-Saharan Africa, regional engagement was reported at 19%. These figures should not be treated as objective scores of leadership quality. They rely on a proprietary engagement measure, reflect self-reported experience, and can be affected by labour markets, occupations, institutions and economic conditions. They do, however, reinforce a practical point: organizations cannot assume that formal employment automatically produces commitment, meaning or discretionary effort.

Employer expectations point in the same direction from another data source. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* reported that 61% of surveyed employers considered leadership and social influence core skills for their workforces; 52% named motivation and self-awareness, 50% empathy and active listening, and 50% curiosity and lifelong learning (World Economic Forum, 2025). Employer surveys represent anticipated skill demand rather than experimental evidence that a specific leadership intervention improves performance. Their value lies in showing that human judgment, influence and learning remain central even as AI and automation expand.

EVIDENCE CHECK | Engagement, culture scores and leadership ratings are indicators, not diagnoses. A low score can arise from leadership, work design, pay, staffing, technology, market shocks or measurement choices. A high score can coexist with conformity, overwork or weak challenge. Treat organizational surveys as evidence to investigate, not verdicts to announce.

6.1.1 Levels of analysis: why organizational behaviour is not individual psychology writ large

Leadership and organizational behaviour operate at multiple levels. Individual-level constructs include personality, motivation and attitudes. Dyadic processes include leader-member relationships, coaching and conflict. Team-level phenomena include norms, trust, coordination and psychological safety. Organizational phenomena include structure, climate, culture, routines and power systems. Some properties emerge from interactions rather than existing as simple averages. A team can have highly competent members and still perform poorly because coordination fails; an organization can employ ethical people and still create corrupt behaviour through incentives, silence and normalized practices.

Table 6.2. Levels of analysis and characteristic leadership questions

Level	Primary unit	Characteristic question	Common analytical error
Self	Individual leader or contributor	What governs attention, emotion, judgment, habit and integrity?	Treating self-report as complete self-knowledge.
Dyad	Leader-follower or peer relationship	How are trust, authority, exchange, feedback and influence enacted?	Assuming one leader style is experienced identically by everyone.
Team	Interdependent group	How do roles, coordination, voice and norms combine member capability?	Attributing team outcomes only to the formal leader.
Organization	Whole system or subunit	How do culture, climate, structure, incentives and routines shape repeated behaviour?	Explaining systemic outcomes with personality labels.
Change over time	Events and trajectories	How do interpretation, learning and adaptation alter the system?	Taking a cross-sectional snapshot as evidence of a stable causal process.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, informed by multilevel leadership and organizational-behaviour research (Gardner et al., 2024; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

6.1.2 Historical foundations: from task control to human systems

Organizational behaviour did not emerge from one unified theory. Early industrial management placed strong emphasis on task decomposition, standardization, measurement and managerial control. Taylor's (1911) scientific management made important contributions to systematic work analysis and productivity, but its strongest formulations treated the worker too narrowly as an object of optimization. That limitation still matters. Contemporary digital monitoring can reproduce the same reductionism when managers infer motivation, capability or commitment from activity traces without understanding the work, the person or the social system in which the data were produced.

The human-relations tradition redirected attention toward informal groups, social meaning and the experience of workers, associated prominently with Mayo (1933) and the Hawthorne research programme. Later work on group dynamics and change, including Lewin (1947), helped move the field toward interaction, context and systems. The historical lesson is not that one school simply replaced another. Organizations still need efficiency, role clarity and control, but they also depend on motivation, identity, relationships, power, learning and institutions. Modern organizational behaviour is therefore strongest when it treats people neither as isolated personalities nor as interchangeable inputs, but as moral agents embedded in interdependent systems.

6.2 Character, Identity, Values, Vocation and Ethical Self-Governance

6.2.1 Character is not reputation

Character concerns relatively enduring moral and behavioural dispositions through which a person tends to perceive, choose and act, especially when incentives conflict or consequences are costly. Reputation concerns how others perceive a person. The two can coincide, but they need not. A leader can maintain a reputation for integrity while using information asymmetry to conceal self-serving decisions; another can be misjudged while consistently acting faithfully. Leadership development that focuses only on image management therefore misses the deeper question of who the person is becoming through repeated choices.

Character should also be distinguished from personality. Personality describes relatively stable patterns of thought, affect and behaviour, commonly organized through the Big Five dimensions. Character is normatively evaluative: courage, honesty, justice, temperance, humility and fidelity are not simply stylistic differences. The distinction matters because no personality profile guarantees virtue. Extraversion may help leadership emergence on average, but it does not make an extravert truthful. Conscientiousness can support dependability but can also serve an unjust objective. Leadership competence is morally underdetermined until purpose and means are examined.

6.2.2 Identity, values and personal mission

Identity answers, in part, 'Who am I in relation to this work and these people?' Professional identity can organize attention and standards. A physician, auditor, engineer, lecturer or public servant may understand certain duties as constitutive of the role rather than optional preferences. Leadership identity can likewise motivate responsibility, but it becomes dangerous when the role consumes the person. Leaders who interpret disagreement as an attack on self may become defensive, centralize information and protect status rather than seek truth. Healthy identity therefore combines commitment with the ability to distinguish one's dignity from one's current decision, title or performance.

Values are enduring beliefs about desirable ends or modes of conduct. They influence priorities but can remain abstract until translated into decision rules and habits. 'Integrity' on a wall is not yet an organizational practice. A personal mission is useful when

it connects enduring purposes with concrete responsibilities and constraints. It should be short enough to guide trade-offs but specific enough to exclude attractive alternatives. A mission that says 'I want to be successful and make impact' excludes almost nothing. A stronger mission names whom one serves, what kinds of contribution matter, what responsibilities cannot be delegated and which means are unacceptable even if profitable.

PRACTICE TOOL | Write a one-paragraph personal leadership constitution with five elements: the purpose you serve; the persons and institutions toward whom you hold duties; three non-negotiable character commitments; the recurring temptations or pressures most likely to compromise them; and the practices by which you will seek correction. Revisit it after consequential decisions, not only during annual planning.

6.2.3 Vocation and conscience

Vocation frames work as a calling to faithful contribution rather than merely a platform for status. In Christian moral reasoning, vocation does not imply that every career choice is directly revealed or that paid employment is the whole of calling. It places work within broader responsibilities to God, neighbour, family, community and truthful stewardship. Conscience is the faculty through which persons judge the moral quality of contemplated or completed action. Conscience must be formed and corrected; sincerity alone does not make a judgment right. Leaders therefore need both moral conviction and epistemic humility, especially where rules, incentives and institutional customs normalize conduct that should be questioned.

Self-government is the practical bridge from values to action. A leader who cannot govern anger, vanity, appetite, fear or the desire for approval is vulnerable to using organizational authority to manage personal insecurity. Ethical self-governance includes accepting limits, delaying gratification, disclosing conflicts of interest, keeping commitments, resisting retaliatory impulses and creating conditions in which others can challenge one's judgment. This is not private spirituality detached from management. It affects information quality, risk escalation, employee voice and the distribution of organizational harm.

6.3 Self-Awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Regulation, Habits and Learning Agility

6.3.1 Self-awareness: data about the self, not fascination with the self

Self-awareness is knowledge of one's patterns, strengths, limitations, motives, emotions and effects on others. It is not achieved by introspection alone. Kross et al. (2023) show that reflection can support learning but can also become rumination, especially when people repeatedly rehearse negative experience without gaining psychological distance. Effective reflection therefore combines internal observation with external evidence: behaviour, outcomes, feedback, decision records and the reactions of people with enough safety to tell the truth.

A useful distinction is between internal self-awareness and external self-awareness. The first asks whether leaders understand their own motives and reactions. The second asks whether they understand how others experience them. Both are vulnerable to bias. A leader may explain impatience as 'high standards' while subordinates experience unpredictability. Conversely, popularity is not proof of good leadership. External feedback should be triangulated against legitimate objectives and evidence rather than becoming a referendum on whether difficult decisions are pleasant.

6.3.2 Emotional intelligence: useful construct, contested measurement

Emotional intelligence refers, in its ability-based form, to capacities for perceiving, understanding and regulating emotion-related information. Organizational research has produced several competing measurement streams, including ability tests, self-report measures and broader 'mixed' competency models. This distinction matters because similarly named instruments may measure different constructs. Côté (2014) concludes that emotional abilities can matter in organizations, particularly where work is emotionally demanding, but their value depends on context and measurement. O'Boyle et al. (2011) reported corrected correlations between three EI streams and job performance of roughly .24 to .30, while later meta-analytic work cautions that mixed EI measures overlap substantially with personality and self-perceptions (Joseph et al., 2015).

The managerial implication is neither to dismiss emotion nor to market EI as a universal leadership superpower. Emotion carries information about threat, attachment, justice, uncertainty and motivation. Leaders need to recognize affect without assuming it is infallible. Anger can reveal perceived injustice and still produce distorted attribution. Anxiety can signal risk and still exaggerate probability. Empathy can improve understanding and still be selectively directed toward familiar groups. Emotional competence therefore requires regulation and moral judgment, not merely accurate reading of social cues.

6.3.3 Self-regulation and habit

Self-regulation is the capacity to align attention and behaviour with endorsed goals and standards despite competing impulses. Leaders rarely fail only because they lack values; they often fail because immediate pressures repeatedly defeat long-term commitments. Habits reduce the cognitive cost of recurring action by linking cues with practiced responses. The same mechanism can support integrity or normalize shortcuts. A meeting habit of asking for disconfirming evidence before approval can protect judgment. A habit of privately deciding before consultation can turn every subsequent meeting into ceremonial participation.

Development therefore requires environmental design as well as willpower. If a leader wants to respond less defensively to bad news, the intervention can include a scripted first response, a pause before attribution, a standing request for evidence and a trusted colleague authorized to signal when defensiveness appears. If a team wants to learn from errors, the process can require short after-action reviews with explicit separation of facts, interpretations, decisions and lessons. Character is strengthened by repeated practice

under ordinary pressure, not by occasional declarations under ideal conditions. Self-regulation also includes stewardship of attention and time. A calendar is a behavioural record of priorities: recurring space for deep work, preparation, recovery, family or community obligations, and difficult conversations often reveals more than aspirational statements about what matters. Effective time management is therefore not maximal activity. It is deliberate allocation of finite attention to responsibilities that should actually govern the leader's work, with enough margin to avoid making urgency the permanent excuse for poor judgment.

6.3.4 Resilience and learning agility

Resilience is the capacity to maintain or recover functioning under adversity while adapting to changed conditions. It should not be reduced to asking employees to tolerate structurally avoidable overload. Job demands-resources theory distinguishes demands that consume sustained effort from resources that support goal achievement, learning and wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023). Resilience can be personal, but it is also organizational: staffing, role clarity, autonomy, supportive relationships, recovery time and realistic workload shape whether adversity becomes learning or exhaustion.

Learning agility concerns the willingness and ability to extract lessons from experience and apply them in novel situations. It requires feedback, experimentation and revision of identity-protective beliefs. The leader who repeatedly says 'I already knew that' after every outcome cannot learn because every event is assimilated into a story of prior competence. The disciplined alternative is to record predictions and assumptions before action, compare them with outcomes and ask which observations genuinely changed belief. Chapter 5 introduced post-decision review analytically; here the emphasis is behavioural: leaders must be willing to be corrected by reality and by other people.

6.4 Leadership as a Field: From Traits and Behaviours to Relationships, Context and Moral Purpose

MAJOR LEADERSHIP LENSES: DIFFERENT QUESTIONS, NOT COMPETING SLOGANS



Strong leadership practice combines evidence across lenses while avoiding construct overlap and one-size-fits-all claims.

Figure 6.2. Major leadership lenses: different questions, not competing slogans.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, drawing on trait, behavioural, contingency, relational and values-based leadership traditions.

Leadership research has repeatedly shifted its focal question. Early work asked which traits distinguish leaders. Behavioural research asked what leaders do. Contingency theories asked which behaviours fit which situations. Relational theories moved the unit of analysis toward leader-follower exchanges. Transformational and charismatic traditions examined meaning, identification and extra effort. Ethical, servant and responsible leadership literatures placed values and stakeholder responsibility more explicitly inside the construct. Contemporary scholarship increasingly treats leadership as dynamic and multilevel, asking how it emerges across events, relationships and groups rather than assuming that leadership is a fixed property of a heroic individual (Carton, 2022; Gardner et al., 2024).

These traditions should not be taught as a parade of branded styles. Each highlights a real part of the leadership problem and carries a characteristic blind spot. Trait research can predict tendencies while neglecting development and context. Behavioural lists can become generic prescriptions. Contingency models can create false precision about matching styles to situations. Transformational leadership can blur inspiration with charisma and overlap empirically with contingent reward. Values-based approaches can become conceptually positive by definition, making it difficult to distinguish moral aspiration from measured behaviour. A mature leader therefore uses theory diagnostically, not devotionally.

6.4.1 Trait perspectives: dispositions shape probabilities, not destinies

Trait approaches regained credibility when personality research became more coherent. The meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2002) of 222 correlations from 73 samples found that extraversion, conscientiousness, openness and lower neuroticism were positively related to leadership, while agreeableness had a much smaller relation. The Big Five jointly related substantially to leadership criteria. Yet the effect is probabilistic. Extraversion can increase visibility and leader emergence, but quiet experts can lead effectively in contexts where listening, technical judgment or deliberation matter. Personality should inform development and team composition without becoming an excuse for deterministic labelling.

Trait research also raises an important distinction between leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness. The person who is readily perceived as leader is not necessarily the person who produces the best long-term outcomes. Confidence, talkativeness and status cues can influence emergence before competence is known. Gardner et al. (2024) emphasize that leadership emergence unfolds dynamically across levels and interactions. Organizations should therefore avoid selecting leaders solely because they look leader-like in short assessment settings. Evidence about judgment, learning, ethics, results and how others perform under their leadership is more informative than charisma alone.

6.4.2 Behavioural perspectives: task, relationship and change behaviours

Behavioural theories shifted attention from who the leader is to what the leader does. Across many frameworks, useful categories recur: task-oriented behaviour clarifies goals, standards, roles and coordination; relationship-oriented behaviour supports trust, development and cooperation; change-oriented behaviour helps interpret the environment, challenge obsolete assumptions and mobilize adaptation. These categories are not mutually exclusive. A leader can set a demanding quality standard while inviting concerns and developing capability. The practical question is whether the behaviour fits the work, the people and the consequences.

Behavioural models are attractive because behaviour can be observed and developed. Their limitation is context. 'Listen more' is not universally superior to 'decide quickly.' During an acute safety incident, delay can be irresponsible. During a strategic decision with ambiguous evidence, premature command can silence expertise. Good leadership development therefore moves beyond a checklist toward conditional reasoning: what problem is this behaviour intended to solve, what evidence would show that it is working, and what harms could arise if it is overused?

6.4.3 Leadership, management and followership

Leadership does not occur without people who respond, resist, reinterpret or refuse. The term 'follower' can sound passive, but in strong organizations contributors exercise professional judgment rather than personal submission. Leadership is therefore partly a property of relationships and collective processes. Formal managers hold delegated authority; informal leaders can shape interpretation and coordination without title. Employees can support legitimate direction while maintaining duties to law, profession, conscience and truth. Responsible followership is especially important when formal leaders are wrong.

CRITICAL DEBATE | Does an organization need more leaders or better management? The opposition is often false. Stable operations require planning, controls, technical competence and disciplined execution. Uncertain environments require interpretation, adaptation and mobilization. Organizations fail when leadership rhetoric substitutes for management discipline, and they fail when control systems suppress learning and initiative. The relevant design question is which managerial and leadership processes the work actually requires.

6.5 Contingency, Situational, Relational and Adaptive Leadership

6.5.1 Contingency logic: leadership effectiveness depends on fit

Contingency approaches reject the idea that one style is universally effective. Fiedler's (1964) contingency model, path-goal theory and normative decision models differ in mechanism, but each directs attention to fit among leader behaviour, task structure, follower needs, uncertainty and decision requirements. House's path-goal theory, for example, argues that leaders can clarify the route to valued outcomes by adapting directive, supportive, participative or achievement-oriented behaviour to situational conditions (House, 1971, 1996). The enduring contribution is conditional thinking: leadership behaviour has effects through a context rather than in a vacuum.

Popular situational leadership prescriptions deserve caution. Hersey-Blanchard style models are widely taught because they are memorable, but empirical tests have provided limited support for precise style-by-development matching. Thompson and Vecchio (2009), using data from Norwegian financial institutions, found that the 2007 revised formulation performed more poorly than the original and that alternative interactions added little explanatory power. The professional lesson is not that adaptation is wrong. It is that leaders should not treat a convenient four-quadrant diagram as a validated law of human behaviour.

6.5.2 Normative decision participation

Vroom and Yetton's (1973) normative decision framework asks a narrower but powerful question: how participative should a leader be for a particular decision? Relevant conditions include decision quality requirements, whether the leader possesses sufficient information, problem structure, the importance of subordinate commitment, likely acceptance of an autocratic decision and conflict among team members. The model reminds leaders that participation is instrumental in some cases and morally relevant in others. Consultation can improve information and commitment, but inviting participation after the decision is effectively fixed can be manipulative.

A practical decision ladder can range from 'leader decides and informs' through 'leader consults individuals,' 'leader consults the group,' 'leader facilitates group decision' and 'authority is delegated within boundaries.' Movement up the ladder should reflect the need for distributed knowledge, commitment, development, speed and accountability. Participation is not synonymous with democracy in every managerial choice. The accountable executive may still need to decide, especially where legal duty or urgent risk cannot be transferred.

6.5.3 Leader-member exchange and the danger of unequal relationships

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory locates leadership partly in the quality of dyadic relationships. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) describe an evolution from differentiated vertical dyads toward mature leadership relationships characterized by reciprocal influence, trust and respect. This lens corrects a hidden assumption in many leadership theories: a manager does not necessarily have the same relationship with every employee. Access, communication quality and mutual obligation can differ within one team.

The insight has an ethical edge. Relationship differentiation may arise legitimately from role needs, expertise or proven reliability, but it can also create insider-outsider dynamics. If high-quality exchange gives some employees better information, sponsorship and developmental assignments, early differences can compound over time. Leaders should therefore distinguish earned task-based differentiation from favouritism, make opportunity criteria visible and monitor whether informal access is becoming a substitute for fair process. Chapter 7 later addresses formal talent systems; the concern here is the everyday relational conduct through which opportunity is distributed.

6.5.4 Adaptive leadership without permanent improvisation

Adaptive leadership in a broad sense means adjusting behaviour and organizing processes when conditions change. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) emphasize flexible and adaptive leadership as a response to changing task demands and external conditions. Adaptation should not be confused with inconsistency. Employees cannot coordinate if priorities, ethical boundaries and decision rights change unpredictably. A useful distinction is between **stable principles and adaptive practices**. Purpose, truthfulness, safety obligations and legitimate moral constraints should remain stable; methods, roles and resource allocations can change as evidence changes.

PRACTICE TOOL | Before changing your leadership approach, specify: What changed in the task or environment? Which existing behaviour is now mismatched? What alternative behaviour is proposed? What principle or boundary remains fixed? What indicator will show whether the adaptation helped? This converts 'be agile' from a slogan into a testable leadership adjustment.

6.6 Transformational, Transactional, Servant, Ethical, Authentic and Responsible Leadership

6.6.1 Transformational and transactional leadership

Transformational leadership describes behaviours that articulate meaningful direction, intellectually stimulate followers, model commitment and attend to individual development. Transactional leadership focuses more directly on clarifying expectations and contingent exchange. The traditions are often presented as opposites, but empirical evidence shows substantial overlap and value in both. Judge and Piccolo's (2004) meta-analysis of 626 correlations from 87 sources found an overall validity of .44 for transformational leadership and .39 for contingent reward, with laissez-faire leadership negatively related to criteria. Transformational and contingent reward were themselves strongly correlated, underscoring that effective leadership can combine inspiration with clear exchange and accountability.

The danger lies in moralizing 'transformational' as inherently good. A leader can mobilize identity and extraordinary effort toward destructive ends. Transformation answers how motivation and meaning are changed, not whether the purpose is just. Similarly, transactional clarity is not morally inferior; people deserve to know what is expected and how performance will be evaluated. The relevant questions are whether goals are legitimate, promises are truthful, rewards are fair, dissent is possible and the relationship treats persons as more than instruments.

6.6.2 Servant leadership: service with authority, not abdication

Servant leadership, associated in modern management literature with Greenleaf (1977), reverses the image of leadership as entitlement: the leader uses authority to enable the growth, agency and legitimate good of those served. Eva et al.'s (2019) systematic review of 285 articles found rapid growth in the literature but also construct fragmentation and multiple competing measures. The review defines servant leadership as an other-oriented approach manifested through prioritizing follower needs, reorienting concern toward others and acting with moral integrity. The construct overlaps with ethical and transformational leadership, so claims of unique superiority should be made carefully.

Christian service deepens but is not identical to the management construct. Jesus rejects domination as the model of greatness and presents leadership as service in [Mark 10:42-45](#). He also washes the disciples' feet in [John 13:12-17](#), making humble service exemplary. Yet biblical servanthood does not require leaders to avoid authority, standards or correction. A servant leader who refuses to confront fraud, chronic incompetence or abuse is not serving the people harmed by that avoidance. Service concerns the purpose and moral use of authority, not the disappearance of responsibility.

6.6.3 Ethical leadership and social learning

Brown et al. (2005) conceptualize ethical leadership through social learning: leaders become salient models whose conduct, communication and reinforcement shape what employees understand as acceptable. The approach joins the 'moral person' dimension of personal integrity with the 'moral manager' dimension of actively setting ethical expectations. The distinction is useful because private decency is insufficient if organizational systems reward misconduct. Leaders teach through attention, resource allocation, promotion, sanctions and what they ignore.

Ethical leadership measures nevertheless face the wider problem of positive constructs: respondents may conflate liking, effectiveness and morality. Ethical conduct must therefore be tested against substantive standards and evidence rather than self-description. A leader who treats employees respectfully but instructs them to mislead customers is not ethically sound because interpersonal warmth is high. Chapter 13 develops ethical frameworks and governance mechanisms in depth; Chapter 6 focuses on how everyday authority and modelling shape behaviour.

6.6.4 Authentic leadership: useful disciplines, contested distinctiveness

Authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and an internalized moral perspective. Walumbwa et al. (2008) developed and validated a measure across samples from China, Kenya and the United States, making the work especially relevant to a globally comparative chapter. The model encourages leaders to examine evidence fairly and align conduct with internalized values. Yet authenticity cannot be reduced to 'being yourself.' An impulsive, prejudiced or self-deceived self does not become legitimate through sincere expression.

The authentic-leadership literature has also been criticized for construct overlap and excessive positivity. A prudent use is therefore developmental rather than devotional: seek accurate self-knowledge, disclose appropriately, invite contrary evidence and align conduct with defensible moral commitments. Do not assume that subjective authenticity proves ethical correctness or leadership effectiveness.

6.6.5 Responsible leadership and moral authority

Responsible leadership broadens the field of concern beyond the immediate leader-follower dyad to relationships with stakeholders affected by organizational power. It asks how leaders govern consequences that cross functional and institutional boundaries. In this textbook, the concept should not become a substitute for Chapter 13's full governance and ethics treatment. Its narrower role here is to remind the leader that authority creates asymmetric capacity to affect livelihoods, information, safety, opportunity and institutional trust.

Moral authority differs from positional authority. Positional authority derives from office, law or delegated organizational power. Moral authority is the credibility to influence because conduct demonstrates integrity, competence, sacrifice, fairness and fidelity to legitimate commitments. The two can coexist, but neither guarantees the other. A new manager may possess formal authority before earning trust. A respected technician may possess moral and expert influence without managerial title. Wise organizations recognize both while preserving clear decision rights.

The same distinction exposes the dark side of leadership capability. Abusive supervision, coercive charisma and retaliatory use of authority can produce short-term compliance while degrading trust, information quality and human dignity. Tepper's (2000) research on abusive supervision helped establish that sustained hostile supervisory conduct is not merely an interpersonal style problem; it is associated with consequential employee and organizational outcomes. Leaders should therefore be evaluated not only by whether people follow them or targets are reached, but also by the means through which influence is exercised, the treatment of less powerful people, the quality of dissent they permit and the institutional residue their leadership leaves behind.

Table 6.3. Comparing major leadership perspectives

Perspective	Core mechanism	Best contribution	Important limitation
Trait	Stable dispositions influence emergence and effectiveness	Highlights individual differences and selection/development clues	Traits are probabilistic and context-sensitive; emergence is not effectiveness.
Behavioural	Observable task, relationship and change behaviours shape coordination	Makes leadership developable and visible	Generic behaviour lists can ignore context.
Contingency	Effectiveness depends on fit between behaviour and situation	Forces conditional reasoning	Some popular matching models have weak empirical support.
LMX/relational	Leadership quality differs across dyadic relationships	Explains differentiated trust, access and exchange	Can normalize in-groups if fairness is ignored.
Transformational	Meaning, identification and stimulation mobilize effort and change	Explains inspiration, development and change orientation	Substantial overlap with contingent reward; transformation is not moral legitimacy.
Transactional	Clear expectations and contingent consequences guide performance	Supports accountability and role clarity	Can narrow motivation if exchange becomes the whole relationship.
Servant	Authority is oriented toward the growth and legitimate good of others	Centers service, humility and follower development	Construct fragmentation; service can be misread as avoiding authority.
Ethical	Leader modelling and reinforcement shape ethical conduct	Connects personal conduct with organizational learning	Positive ratings can blur morality, liking and effectiveness.

Perspective	Core mechanism	Best contribution	Important limitation
Authentic	Self-awareness, transparency, balanced processing and internalized values	Emphasizes self-knowledge and consistency	Authenticity alone cannot validate values; overlap concerns remain.
Responsible	Leadership considers wider stakeholder consequences	Expands accountability beyond the dyad	Can become conceptually diffuse without clear duties and decision rights.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis; see Brown et al. (2005), Eva et al. (2019), Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), Judge and Piccolo (2004), Thompson and Vecchio (2009), and Walumbwa et al. (2008).

6.7 Motivation, Engagement and the Design of Meaningful Effort

MOTIVATION IS A SYSTEM OF PURPOSE, EXPECTANCY, FAIRNESS, DESIGN AND RESOURCES



Figure 6.3. Motivation as a system of purpose, expectancy, fairness, work design and resources.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis integrating expectancy, self-determination, goal-setting, job-design and job demands-resources perspectives.

Motivation concerns the direction, intensity and persistence of effort. Engagement is a related but distinct construct referring to energetic, involved connection with work. Neither should be treated as a personality defect when absent. Motivation is jointly shaped by the person, the task, expected consequences, perceived fairness, resources, social relationships and the meaning attached to the work. Leaders therefore influence motivation partly through systems rather than speeches.

6.7.1 Need theories: useful questions, weak ladders

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs remains culturally influential because it recognizes that human motivation is plural: physiological security, belonging, esteem and self-development can all matter. Yet the familiar rigid pyramid often taught in management overstates the evidence for a universal sequential hierarchy. People pursue belonging while insecure, sacrifice comfort for vocation and value meaning under hardship. Managers should use need theories as prompts for inquiry, not diagnostic ladders that claim to know which need an employee must satisfy next.

Herzberg's motivator-hygiene framework similarly drew attention to the possibility that removing dissatisfaction is not the same as creating meaningful motivation. The original methodology and strict two-factor separation have been criticized, but the managerial intuition remains useful when applied cautiously: pay, policies and conditions can prevent avoidable dissatisfaction, while responsibility, achievement, recognition and meaningful work may contribute differently to positive motivation. Compensation matters; pretending that purpose makes fair pay unnecessary is a serious leadership error.

6.7.2 Expectancy theory: motivation depends on linked beliefs

Vroom's expectancy theory treats motivation as depending on three judgments: expectancy, the belief that effort can produce performance; instrumentality, the belief that performance will lead to outcomes; and valence, the value attached to those outcomes. In a simplified multiplicative representation:

$$\text{Motivational force} = \text{Expectancy} \times \text{Instrumentality} \times \text{Valence}$$

The expression is a decision aid, not a precise psychological law. If any component is near zero, raising another component alone may have limited effect.

Suppose a sales adviser values a performance bonus at 0.8 on a 0-1 scale, believes strong performance will actually trigger the bonus with probability-like confidence of 0.7, but believes extra effort has only a 0.4 chance of producing the required performance because the territory lacks stock. The simplified motivational product is $0.4 \times 0.7 \times 0.8 = 0.224$. Increasing the bonus may have little effect if the binding problem is expectancy. The leadership response is operational: fix stock availability, clarify the target or increase capability, not accuse the employee of low motivation.

6.7.3 Self-determination theory: autonomy is not absence of accountability

Self-determination theory distinguishes autonomous motivation from controlled motivation and highlights needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. In work settings, autonomy concerns experiencing meaningful volition rather than having no constraints. Competence concerns being able to meet challenges effectively. Relatedness concerns meaningful connection with others. Gagné and Deci (2005) show how these principles extend to work motivation. Leaders can support autonomy by explaining rationale, offering meaningful choice where possible, acknowledging concerns and avoiding unnecessary control while still defining standards and responsibilities.

The distinction matters because some incentive systems crowd out discretion while others provide useful information and recognition. The meta-analysis by Cerasoli et al. (2014) of 183 studies with more than 200,000 participants found that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentives jointly predicted performance, with patterns depending on whether performance concerned quality or quantity and on how incentives were made salient. This is more informative than the slogan 'rewards destroy motivation.' Incentive design should match the task while avoiding manipulation, metric gaming and the assumption that people work only for money.

6.7.4 Goal-setting: specificity helps only when the goal is the right one

Goal-setting research shows that specific, challenging goals can improve performance when people have capability, commitment and feedback (Locke & Latham, 2002). Goals focus attention, mobilize effort, support persistence and prompt strategy search. These mechanisms explain both the strength and the danger of goals. A target can concentrate effort on what is measured while pushing unmeasured responsibilities out of view. An aggressive sales goal can raise volume and unsuitable selling; a call-handling target can shorten calls while reducing resolution quality. The leader's task is therefore to design a goal system, not merely raise the number.

MANAGERIAL INSIGHT | A target is a claim about priority. Before setting it, ask what behaviour the metric will reward, what important work it will not see, how employees can game it, what quality or ethical guardrail is needed, and whether the people responsible possess the resources to influence the outcome.

6.7.5 Job design and job demands-resources

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model links skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback to psychological states that can support internal motivation. The framework is valuable because it locates motivation partly in the work itself. A leader cannot compensate indefinitely for badly designed work through inspiration. Roles that fragment responsibility, hide customer consequences or remove all discretion can make meaningful contribution difficult to perceive.

Job demands-resources theory extends the systems view. Demands such as workload, emotional strain or complexity consume effort, while resources such as autonomy, feedback, support, skill variety and learning opportunities can help accomplish goals and buffer some demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023). The theory does not imply that all demands are harmful or that every resource is beneficial in every context. Challenging work can support development; excessive or chronic demands can deplete capacity. Leaders should examine the demand-resource balance rather than preaching resilience to compensate for preventable dysfunction.

6.7.6 Justice, satisfaction and engagement

Motivation is also shaped by perceived fairness. Adams (1965) formalized equity theory around employees' comparisons between their own input-outcome ratios and salient referents, helping explain why perceived inequity can alter effort, attitudes or relationships even when absolute rewards appear generous. Contemporary organizational-justice research distinguishes distributive justice concerning outcome allocation, procedural justice concerning how decisions are made, and interactional justice concerning the quality and truthfulness of treatment and explanation. Employees may accept an unfavourable decision when the process is understandable, consistent and respectful; they may resist a favourable outcome when it appears arbitrary or corrupt. Fairness is not merely a technique for gaining compliance. It concerns legitimate treatment of persons with claims that cannot be reduced to productivity.

Job satisfaction is related to performance but should not be treated as its simple cause. The meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2001) of 312 samples estimated a mean true correlation of approximately .30 between overall job satisfaction and performance. The relationship is meaningful but far from deterministic, and causal direction can run both ways. Engagement measures similarly provide useful signals about experience and effort but do not replace direct measures of quality, learning, safety or customer outcomes. Leaders should resist turning employee sentiment into either an irrelevant 'soft' metric or a total score of organizational health.

Table 6.4. Motivation perspectives and their managerial use

Perspective	Primary question	Managerial use	Misuse to avoid
Needs	What human needs or concerns are salient?	Broaden diagnosis beyond pay and control.	Assuming a universal fixed hierarchy.
Expectancy	Can effort lead to performance and valued outcomes?	Locate broken links in capability, process or reward credibility.	Raising incentives when employees lack control over results.

Perspective	Primary question	Managerial use	Misuse to avoid
Self-determination	Does work support autonomy, competence and relatedness?	Design choice, rationale, development and connection.	Confusing autonomy with no standards.
Goal-setting	Are goals specific, challenging, accepted and supported by feedback?	Focus attention and persistence.	Optimizing one metric while externalizing quality or ethics.
Job characteristics	Does the job provide meaningfulness, responsibility and knowledge of results?	Redesign work rather than relying only on exhortation.	Assuming every employee prefers maximal complexity.
JD-R	How do demands and resources interact over time?	Diagnose workload, support, recovery and resource constraints.	Individualizing resilience while leaving preventable overload unchanged.
Justice	Are outcomes, procedures and treatment perceived as fair and defensible?	Improve process legitimacy, explanation and consistency.	Using procedural theatre to legitimize predetermined decisions.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis from Gagné and Deci (2005), Hackman and Oldham (1976), Locke and Latham (2002), and Bakker et al. (2023).

6.8 Delegation, Empowerment, Coaching, Mentoring and Feedback

6.8.1 Delegation transfers real authority or it is not delegation

Delegation assigns responsibility and sufficient decision authority to another person while the delegating manager retains an appropriate level of accountability for the system. Delegation fails when responsibility is transferred but authority is withheld. An employee told to 'own the customer relationship' cannot genuinely own it if every price exception, service recovery or delivery commitment requires inaccessible approval. The reverse failure occurs when authority is transferred without boundaries, information, capability or escalation rules.

Effective delegation specifies the outcome, scope, constraints, decision rights, resources, reporting cadence, escalation triggers and the degree of discretion. It also defines what the leader will *not* do, particularly whether the leader will reverse reasonable decisions simply because they would have chosen differently. Delegation should expand as capability and reliability are demonstrated, but it should not be reduced to a personality judgment about whether the subordinate seems confident. Task complexity, consequence severity and reversibility matter.

Table 6.5. A practical delegation ladder

Level	Decision arrangement	When it fits	Leadership discipline
1	Leader decides and explains	Urgent, high-risk or tightly constrained decision where consultation adds little information.	Explain rationale; do not disguise command as consultation.
2	Employee investigates and recommends; leader decides	Employee has useful access to evidence but final accountability remains concentrated.	Ask for alternatives and disconfirming evidence.
3	Employee decides within defined limits; leader reviews exceptions	Repeated decisions with clear guardrails and moderate reversibility.	Define thresholds, information and escalation conditions.
4	Employee owns decision and informs leader	Capability is established and decision is within delegated mandate.	Do not re-centralize merely because style differs.
5	Team owns domain through explicit governance	Interdependent expertise is distributed and collective coordination is needed.	Clarify who is accountable when consensus fails or risk crosses boundaries.

Source/Note: Author's professional decision-rights framework. Participation logic is consistent with Vroom and Yetton (1973).

6.8.2 Empowerment is capacity plus authority plus information

Empowerment has structural and psychological dimensions. Structurally, people need access to information, resources and decision rights. Psychologically, they need a credible sense that their work is meaningful, that they possess competence, that they have discretion and that their actions can matter. Organizations often pursue only the rhetorical version: employees are told to 'act like owners' while systems punish reasonable initiative. Such contradictions teach risk avoidance rather than empowerment.

Accountability is the companion of empowerment, not its opposite. When decisions are delegated, expected outcomes, constraints and review processes should become clearer. Accountability should focus first on decision quality and faithful use of authority, not merely on whether every outcome was favourable. Chapter 5 distinguished decision quality from outcome bias. That distinction is essential for empowerment: if every adverse outcome is punished regardless of the ex ante reasoning, rational employees will stop taking prudent initiative.

6.8.3 Coaching, mentoring and sponsorship are different

Coaching is a developmental process that helps a person improve performance or learning through goals, observation, questions, practice and feedback. Mentoring is usually a broader developmental relationship through which a more experienced person offers perspective, counsel and professional learning. Sponsorship involves using one's influence to create access to opportunities. The terms are often blended, but the power implications differ. A coach can help a person think better without controlling promotion. A sponsor can materially affect career opportunity and therefore carries stronger fairness obligations.

Leaders should avoid making development dependent on informal affinity. Mentoring relationships can arise organically, but managers should ask who receives challenging assignments, honest feedback and access to decision forums. Unequal developmental attention can become a quiet mechanism through which opportunity accumulates. Formal talent architecture belongs to Chapter 7; the everyday leadership responsibility here is to make development intentional and defensible.

6.8.4 Feedback: specific, timely, evidence-based and dialogic

Useful feedback identifies observable behaviour or output, explains its consequence relative to a standard, tests the receiver's interpretation and agrees on a next step. Labels such as 'not strategic,' 'poor attitude' or 'not leadership material' compress complex judgments into identity statements. They are difficult to learn from and vulnerable to bias. Feedback should distinguish the person from the behaviour, avoid unnecessary humiliation and preserve the receiver's opportunity to provide missing context.

Positive feedback also requires precision. Generic praise can produce pleasant affect without teaching which behaviour should be repeated. In high-skill work, developmental feedback is strongest when it is close enough to the task to be actionable and credible enough to survive scrutiny. Leaders should document patterns rather than surprise employees with a year's worth of retrospective judgment. Communication mechanics were developed in Chapter 2; the leadership issue here is whether authority creates conditions for truth, learning and fair response.

WORKED EXAMPLE | A manager tells an analyst, "Your presentation lacked executive presence." The statement is vague and identity-laden. A developmentally useful version is: "In the first five minutes, the recommendation was not stated, and three key assumptions appeared only after questions. For the next briefing, lead with the decision, quantify the two largest uncertainties, and place supporting analysis in the appendix. I will review a five-minute rehearsal with you on Tuesday." The second version connects evidence, standard, action and support.

6.9 Personality, Perception, Attribution, Attitudes and Individual Differences at Work

6.9.1 Personality is relevant, but labels are cheap

People differ in relatively stable tendencies that influence how they respond to stimulation, social interaction, ambiguity, rules and stress. The Big Five model provides a more empirically grounded vocabulary than many popular type systems: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism or its reverse, emotional stability. As noted earlier, Judge et al. (2002) found meaningful but moderate relationships between several Big Five traits and leadership. Personality therefore changes probabilities and preferences; it does not define competence, morality or destiny.

Leadership use of personality information should be proportionate to evidence and purpose. A manager can adapt communication and role design when a colleague prefers preparation before discussion or gains energy from social interaction. It is far more problematic to deny high-stakes opportunity because a person was assigned a simplistic 'type.' Type labels can become self-fulfilling stories that discourage development and obscure context. Where psychometric tools are used, validity, reliability, construct relevance and decision consequences should be understood.

6.9.2 Perception and attribution

Perception is the process through which people select and interpret information. Attribution concerns explanations for behaviour: whether an outcome is assigned to ability, effort, task difficulty, luck, context or other causes. Leaders are vulnerable to the fundamental attribution error, especially when they explain another person's failure as character while explaining their own failure through circumstances. They can also show self-serving bias by claiming personal credit for success and externalizing blame for failure.

Attribution becomes organizationally consequential when it affects opportunity. A missed deadline caused by unstable systems can be recorded as unreliability; a confident presentation can be interpreted as competence despite weak analysis; quiet disagreement can be read as disengagement in one context and prudence in another. Good leadership slows attribution by asking what evidence distinguishes person, task and system explanations. Chapter 3 taught research design; the same discipline applies informally to people judgments: alternative explanations matter.

6.9.3 Attitudes: satisfaction, commitment and engagement are related but distinct

Job satisfaction reflects evaluative feelings about one's work. Organizational commitment concerns attachment to or intention to remain with an organization, often conceptualized through affective, continuance and normative components (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Engagement emphasizes energetic involvement in work. These constructs correlate but answer different questions. A highly committed employee may remain because alternatives are scarce. An engaged employee can still leave for a better opportunity. A satisfied employee may perform competently without extraordinary discretionary effort.

Managers should therefore avoid collapsing employee experience into one pulse score. A credible organizational diagnosis combines multiple indicators, including turnover patterns, absenteeism, safety, quality, customer outcomes, voice, learning and direct qualitative evidence. Survey anonymity and trust matter because employees can reasonably withhold criticism when they believe identifiable comments will affect careers. Chapter 4's data-quality principles apply directly: the meaning and provenance of an employee metric are part of the evidence.

6.10 Teams as Systems of Interdependence, Coordination and Learning

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AS A RECURSIVE INPUT-MEDIATOR-OUTCOME-LEARNING CYCLE

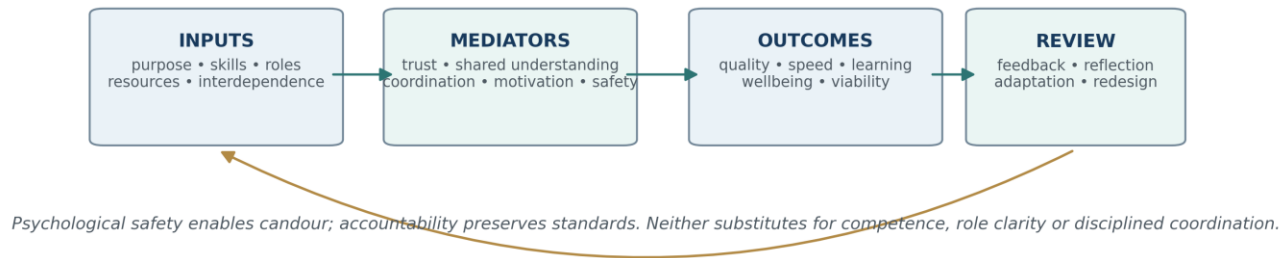


Figure 6.4. Team effectiveness as a recursive input-mediator-outcome-learning cycle.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, informed by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) and the wider science of teamwork.

6.10.1 A team is more than a group of people with the same manager

A work team is a bounded set of people whose tasks are sufficiently interdependent that members must coordinate to achieve shared outcomes. Interdependence is the key. A set of sales representatives with individual territories may be a work group if each can perform largely alone; a surgical team, product-development squad or credit committee is a team because one member's actions change the conditions under which others work. Calling every department a 'team' can hide the design question of what actually requires joint coordination.

Team effectiveness is multidimensional. Output quality matters, but so do the capacity to work together again, learning, adaptability and member wellbeing. A team can meet one deadline by exhausting people, hiding error or relying on heroic effort that cannot be repeated. A strong diagnosis therefore examines both outcomes and the process that produced them. Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) synthesize decades of evidence showing that team effectiveness depends on cognitive, motivational, affective and behavioural processes that combine individual resources into coordinated performance. Salas et al. (2018) similarly emphasize that teamwork is a science with trainable competencies rather than a matter of vague chemistry.

6.10.2 Team design: purpose, composition, roles and interdependence

Good teams begin with a consequential purpose and clear boundaries. Members need to know what the team owns, where individual responsibility remains, who can make which decisions and how success will be recognized. Composition should provide the knowledge, skills and perspectives required by the task. Diversity of expertise can improve problem-solving while increasing coordination demands. Cultural diversity and global team dynamics are developed in Chapter 7; the general principle here is that heterogeneity creates potential information value only when the team can integrate it.

Roles reduce coordination cost by clarifying responsibility, but rigid roles can impede adaptation. High-reliability teams often maintain role clarity while preserving backup behaviour: members know who leads a task and when another person must intervene. Role ambiguity creates duplication and omission; role overload creates bottlenecks; role conflict arises when expectations are incompatible. Leaders should map interfaces, not only job descriptions, because many failures occur between roles rather than inside them.

6.10.3 Team development is not always a neat sequence

Tuckman's (1965) forming-storming-norming-performing model remains memorable because teams often face orientation, conflict, norm formation and task accomplishment over time. The original work synthesized 50 studies and proposed a developmental sequence, but modern teams do not necessarily pass through fixed stages once. Membership changes, external shocks and task cycles can return mature teams to orientation or conflict. The model is best used as a language for likely developmental work, not as a timetable.

Temporal rhythms matter. A team can coordinate poorly early in a project and rapidly converge near a deadline; another can appear harmonious while postponing unresolved task disagreements. Leaders should ask what coordination problem is dominant now: role ambiguity, weak information sharing, unresolved conflict, lack of trust, poor planning or insufficient technical capability. Diagnosing the mediator is more useful than declaring that the team is 'storming.'

6.10.4 Shared mental models, transactive memory and coordination

Teams perform interdependent work more effectively when members hold sufficiently compatible expectations about goals, roles, task sequences and likely contingencies. Shared mental models do not require identical thought. They provide enough common structure for members to anticipate one another. Transactive memory is related: members know who knows what and how to access expertise. These mechanisms reduce the need to communicate every routine detail while making it easier to seek the right knowledge when novelty arises.

Leaders can strengthen these mechanisms through briefings, role clarification, cross-training, scenario rehearsal and after-action review. Over-standardization, however, can create common blind spots. A team's shared model can be wrong. Effective teams therefore combine shared understanding with routines for challenge and updating. The question is not whether the team agrees, but whether it can coordinate while remaining corrigible.

Table 6.6. Conditions for team effectiveness

Condition	What it enables	Failure signal	Leadership response
Compelling purpose	Prioritization and collective direction	Members optimize local tasks with no shared outcome.	Clarify the outcome and why interdependence is necessary.
Clear roles and decision rights	Efficient coordination and accountability	Duplication, gaps, repeated escalation.	Map ownership, interfaces and escalation thresholds.
Complementary capability	Task competence across required domains	Teamwork rituals compensate for missing expertise.	Acquire, develop or access the required capability.
Trust	Willingness to rely on others under vulnerability	Excessive checking, information hoarding.	Build reliability through kept commitments and transparent repair.
Psychological safety	Candour, questions, error reporting and learning	Silence, late escalation, performative agreement.	Model fallibility, invite challenge, protect good-faith voice.
Accountability	Standards and follow-through	Comfort without delivery or repeated norm violations.	Make commitments and consequences explicit.
Shared understanding	Prediction and coordination	People act on conflicting assumptions.	Use briefings, role maps and scenario rehearsal.
Learning loop	Adaptation after outcomes	Same failure recurs with new explanations.	Conduct evidence-based review and assign learning actions.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, informed by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006), Edmondson and Bransby (2023), and Salas et al. (2018).

6.11 Trust, Psychological Safety, Voice and Accountability

6.11.1 Trust is willingness to accept vulnerability under expectation

Trust allows people to act without verifying every move of another person. It rests on expectations of ability, benevolence, integrity or some combination (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust is domain-specific: a colleague may be trusted for technical accuracy but not confidentiality; a leader may be well intentioned but unreliable in execution. Leaders damage trust less by making every mistake than by making promises they do not keep, withholding material information, shifting standards opportunistically or punishing people for acting within previously granted authority.

Trust should not be confused with the absence of controls. Financial approvals, segregation of duties, audit trails and safety checks can protect both parties without implying personal suspicion. Mature organizations design controls proportionate to consequence while preserving dignity. The question is whether control is transparent, role-based and justified, or selectively used as a mechanism of domination.

6.11.2 Psychological safety: interpersonal candour without immunity from standards

Psychological safety is a shared perception that interpersonal risk-taking, such as asking for help, admitting uncertainty, reporting error or challenging a view, will not predictably produce humiliation or retaliation. Edmondson's (1999) early team research linked psychological safety with learning behaviour, and Frazier et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis aggregated 136 independent samples representing more than 22,000 individuals and nearly 5,000 groups. Edmondson and Bransby (2023) review the now extensive literature and identify links with getting work done, learning, work experience and leadership.

Psychological safety is frequently misunderstood as comfort, niceness or protection from performance consequences. That interpretation is analytically wrong. A safe team can conduct demanding reviews, reject weak work and hold members accountable while allowing questions and honest error reporting. In fact, safety without standards can produce pleasant underperformance, while standards without safety can produce fear, concealment and late discovery of problems. Strong teams combine candour and accountability.

EVIDENCE CHECK | Psychological safety does not mean that every idea is good, every disagreement should be prolonged or every performance failure should be consequence-free. It means that relevant interpersonal risk is low enough for people to contribute information the team needs. Voice quality still matters, and decision authority still must be clear.

6.11.3 Voice and silence are organizational information problems

Employee voice is discretionary communication of ideas, concerns or suggestions intended to improve a situation. Silence is the withholding of potentially relevant information. Morrison (2023) shows that voice and silence have distinct antecedents; psychological safety is especially relevant to reducing silence, while perceived impact influences whether people believe speaking will matter. A leader can therefore create a polite environment in which employees feel safe to speak but learn that speaking changes nothing. Over time, futility becomes a rational reason for silence.

Leaders shape voice through micro-behaviour. They can ask for dissent before revealing their own preference, thank a person who raises an inconvenient fact, separate the messenger from the problem and explain what happened to concerns that were not adopted. They can also destroy voice quickly by asking for input and then retaliating, publicly cross-examining a junior employee for reasonable uncertainty or repeatedly rewarding people who mirror the leader's view. The ethical issue is power; the performance issue is information quality. Both point in the same direction: organizations need pathways by which relevant truth can reach authority.

6.12 Power, Influence and Organizational Politics

6.12.1 Power is capacity to affect outcomes under interdependence

Power is the capacity to influence another person's options, resources, behaviour or outcomes. It arises from formal position, control of valued resources, expertise, information, relationships and personal credibility. French and Raven's (1959) classic framework distinguishes legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent bases of power; later work extends these categories. The categories are analytically useful because the same request feels different when it comes from a respected expert, a payroll decision maker or a person able to impose sanctions.

Power changes behaviour on both sides of a relationship. The approach-inhibition theory developed by Keltner et al. (2003) proposes that elevated power is associated with increased attention to rewards and approach tendencies, while reduced power heightens sensitivity to threat and constraint. The framework is not a universal law, but it helps explain why people with authority can become less attentive to subtle social constraints and why people with less power may monitor leaders closely and avoid risky dissent. Leadership development that ignores power asymmetry is therefore incomplete.

Table 6.7. Bases of power, legitimate use and characteristic risks

Power base	Source	Legitimate use	Characteristic risk
Legitimate	Formal role or delegated authority	Coordinate decisions within a defined mandate.	Role expansion into matters outside the mandate.
Reward	Control over valued outcomes	Recognize contribution using transparent criteria.	Compliance buying, favouritism, gaming and dependency.
Coercive	Capacity to impose adverse consequences	Enforce proportionate safety, conduct or performance boundaries.	Fear, retaliation, silence and abuse.
Expert	Credible knowledge or skill	Guide decisions where expertise is relevant.	Technocracy, jargon and overreach beyond competence.
Referent	Identification, respect or admiration	Mobilize cooperation through credibility and example.	Cult of personality and reduced critical distance.
Informational	Control or interpretation of information	Coordinate timely access and reduce ambiguity.	Gatekeeping, selective disclosure and narrative manipulation.
Network/relational	Access to people and coalitions	Connect resources and coordinate across boundaries.	Patronage, exclusion and informal veto power.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis from French and Raven (1959) and organizational power research including Keltner et al. (2003).

6.12.2 Influence is broader than authority

Influence tactics include rational persuasion, consultation, inspirational appeal, collaboration, exchange, coalition building, legitimating and pressure. Their effectiveness depends on the relationship and context, but their moral quality also differs. Rational persuasion can still mislead if evidence is selective. Consultation can be manipulative if options are already closed. Pressure can be legitimate in an urgent safety context and abusive when used to secure personal loyalty. Leaders should therefore evaluate both effectiveness and legitimacy.

Persuasion is especially vulnerable to authority effects. An employee may agree because the argument is strong, because the leader controls promotion, or because dissent appears socially costly. The leader cannot simply interpret assent as consent. The stronger the power asymmetry, the greater the responsibility to create genuine opportunity for challenge, independent review and documented alternatives where stakes are high.

6.12.3 Organizational politics: inevitable interests, not inevitable corruption

Organizational politics refers to activities through which individuals or coalitions seek to shape decisions, resources and interpretations, often outside purely formal mechanisms. Politics emerges because organizations contain scarce resources, ambiguous criteria, interdependent interests and unequal power. Not all political behaviour is corrupt. Building a coalition for a neglected safety investment can be legitimate. Concealing evidence, spreading false claims, exchanging favours that violate duty or punishing dissent are not.

Wise leaders make legitimate interests discussable and reduce the value of destructive politics by clarifying criteria, separating decision roles, documenting consequential judgments and providing review mechanisms. They also recognize that formal neutrality can conceal power. A process may appear open while one actor controls the agenda, information and appointment of participants. Political literacy is therefore not cynicism. It is awareness of how influence actually operates so that power can be governed.

6.13 Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations

6.13.1 Conflict is not one thing

Conflict occurs when parties perceive incompatible goals, interests, values, interpretations or actions. Research commonly distinguishes task conflict about ideas or content, relationship conflict involving interpersonal tension, and process conflict about how work should be accomplished or resources allocated. The old claim that task conflict is generally beneficial and relationship conflict harmful is too simple. The meta-analysis by de Wit et al. (2012) shows that effects depend on context, timing, measurement and how conflict types co-occur. Task disagreement can improve decision quality when it remains information-focused; it can also damage coordination when it becomes personal or persistent.

Leaders should diagnose the object of conflict before selecting a response. A disagreement over demand forecasts requires evidence and assumptions. A conflict over role ownership requires process clarification. A conflict rooted in disrespect may require relational repair and boundaries. Treating every conflict as a communication problem can miss structural causes; treating every conflict as structural can avoid responsibility for harmful conduct.

6.13.2 Conflict responses: avoid, accommodate, compete, compromise, collaborate

Common conflict styles can be understood through concern for one's own outcomes and concern for others. Avoidance can be prudent when issues are trivial or emotions need to cool, but harmful when safety or injustice is being buried. Accommodation can preserve relationship when the issue matters more to the other party, but repeated accommodation under power imbalance can normalize exploitation. Competition is appropriate when firm boundaries or urgent decisions are required. Compromise trades concessions. Collaboration seeks an option that addresses underlying interests more fully. No style is universally virtuous; fit and legitimacy matter.

6.13.3 Negotiation: positions, interests, alternatives and legitimacy

Negotiation is the process through which interdependent parties seek agreement. Distributive negotiation concerns how a fixed or perceived-fixed value is allocated. Integrative negotiation searches for differences in priorities, timing, risk, information or resources that can create additional joint value. The distinction should not be romanticized: some negotiations contain real scarcity, and some claimed 'win-win' solutions merely obscure who bears cost.

A disciplined negotiator identifies the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA), reservation point, aspiration, interests, possible trades, objective standards and authority to commit. The BATNA is not a threat; it is the best feasible course if agreement fails. Knowing it protects against accepting a deal simply to avoid discomfort. Procedural legitimacy matters as well. An agreement obtained through deception, coercive abuse of dependency or concealment of material facts may be economically attractive and ethically defective.

WORKED EXAMPLE | A procurement manager and supplier disagree over price. The buyer focuses on a 6% reduction; the supplier says the request would make the contract uneconomic. A positional bargain may stall. An interest analysis reveals that the buyer values working-capital reduction and reliability, while the supplier values production smoothing and payment certainty. A longer volume commitment with faster payment and a smaller unit-price reduction may create value for both. The agreement is still tested for competition rules, procurement authority, supplier dependency and honest disclosure.

Table 6.8. Diagnosing conflict before choosing an intervention

Conflict signal	Likely underlying issue	Useful first response	Do not assume
Repeated factual disagreement	Different data, definitions or causal models	Make evidence, assumptions and uncertainty explicit.	That more discussion will resolve incompatible evidence.
Role collision	Ambiguous ownership or interdependence	Clarify decision rights, interfaces and escalation.	That personalities are the main problem.
Personal hostility	Relationship history, identity threat or disrespect	Set conduct boundaries; separate issues; repair where possible.	That a team-building event can erase unresolved harm.

Conflict signal	Likely underlying issue	Useful first response	Do not assume
Resource dispute	Real scarcity or incentive misalignment	Surface interests, constraints and allocation criteria.	That every dispute has a win-win solution.
Silence despite visible risk	Power asymmetry, futility or low safety	Create protected voice and independent escalation.	That silence means agreement.
Change resistance	Perceived loss, uncertainty, process unfairness or weak case	Diagnose what is being resisted and why.	That resistance is irrational or disloyal.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, informed by de Wit et al. (2012), Morrison (2023), and change-recipient research.

6.14 Organizational Culture, Climate, Structure and Communication Architecture

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR EMERGES FROM AN INTERACTING SYSTEM



Changing one element without examining the others can create symbolic change, workarounds or unintended consequences.

Figure 6.5. Organizational behaviour emerges from an interacting system.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis. Culture, climate, structure, leadership and systems are treated as interacting explanatory lenses rather than interchangeable labels.

6.14.1 Culture: shared meaning beneath visible practice

Organizational culture concerns shared meanings, assumptions and values that help members interpret what is normal, important and legitimate. Schein (2010) distinguishes visible artifacts, espoused beliefs and deeper underlying assumptions. The levels matter because artifacts can be easy to copy while assumptions remain unchanged. A company can install open-plan offices, agile ceremonies and values posters while employees still understand that challenging senior leaders damages careers. Culture is therefore inferred from recurring patterns and interpretations, not announced into existence by branding.

Culture can coordinate behaviour by reducing the need for explicit rules. When employees share expectations about customer care, quality or ethical limits, they can act more consistently under ambiguity. The same mechanism can stabilize harmful practices. A norm such as 'we solve problems internally' can support accountability until it becomes a reason to conceal misconduct. Strong culture is not automatically good culture. Strength describes the degree of sharedness and behavioural influence; moral and performance quality require separate evaluation.

6.14.2 Climate: what people perceive is actually prioritized

Organizational climate refers to shared perceptions of policies, practices and procedures, often around a specific domain such as safety, service or inclusion. Schneider et al. (2026) review the distinct histories of climate and culture research and argue that their integration can improve understanding of organizational effectiveness and change. Climate has often been studied quantitatively through surveys, while culture research has more often investigated deeper meaning through qualitative methods. Neither method should be equated with the construct itself, but the distinction helps analysts avoid calling every employee survey a 'culture measurement.'

Climate is shaped strongly by what leaders attend to and reward. If management says safety is first but production bonuses punish stoppages, employees learn the operative priority. If leaders invite innovation but every failed experiment is treated as incompetence, a risk-avoidant climate will develop. Climate therefore provides a bridge between formal systems and employee interpretation. It asks not only what policy says, but what people infer from repeated organizational action.

6.14.3 Structure: dividing work and integrating it again

Organizational structure allocates tasks, authority, reporting relationships and coordination mechanisms. Core design dimensions include specialization, formalization, centralization, span of control and the grouping of roles into functions, products, geographies, customers or processes. Functional structures can deepen expertise but create silos. Divisional structures can increase market responsiveness but duplicate resources. Matrix structures can integrate multiple dimensions but create dual-authority conflict. Network and platform arrangements can increase flexibility while making accountability less visible.

There is no universally superior structure. Mechanistic structures with clear hierarchy and formal rules can fit stable, high-control environments; more organic structures can support adaptation under uncertainty. Even this contrast is too simple for complex firms, which often need both. A bank may require tightly controlled credit and cybersecurity processes while encouraging experimentation in customer experience. The design challenge is ambidexterity: standardize where reliability and compliance require it, and decentralize where local knowledge and adaptation create value.

6.14.4 Communication architecture: who can know what, when and with what authority

Chapter 2 developed communication competence at the message and interaction level. Here communication is treated structurally. Reporting lines, meeting cadences, dashboards, collaboration platforms, escalation channels and informal networks shape what information reaches whom. A formal organization chart can show who reports to the chief executive and still tell little about who controls critical information. Communication architecture becomes especially important when organizations are hybrid, geographically distributed or digitally mediated.

Leaders should design for upward truth, lateral coordination and downward clarity. Upward truth requires protected escalation and real response. Lateral coordination requires cross-boundary interfaces and shared definitions. Downward clarity requires context, priorities and constraints without overwhelming people with copied messages. Technology can reduce communication friction and simultaneously create information overload, surveillance or permanent interruption. Chapter 20 later treats digital transformation strategically; the leadership issue here is whether technology improves human coordination without degrading dignity, focus or accountability.

Table 6.9. Culture, climate, structure and communication: related but distinct

Construct	Primary question	Typical evidence	Leadership leverage
Culture	What meanings and assumptions are taken for granted?	Stories, routines, symbols, language, observations, interviews, recurring choices.	What leaders model, tolerate, ritualize and interpret.
Climate	What do people perceive is actually prioritized and rewarded?	Surveys, interviews, incident patterns, policy-practice consistency.	Policies, practices, rewards, resource allocation, daily supervisory behaviour.
Structure	How are work, authority and coordination formally arranged?	Org charts, roles, decision rights, process maps, spans, interfaces.	Design of units, hierarchy, decentralization, governance and coordination.
Communication architecture	How does information move across the system?	Meeting flows, channels, dashboards, escalation paths, network patterns.	Channel design, cadence, information rights, response norms and transparency.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis; culture and climate distinctions informed by Schein (2010) and Schneider et al. (2026).

6.15 Leading Change, Ambiguity, Hybrid Work and Organizational Resilience

6.15.1 Change is a process of altered behaviour and meaning, not a launch event

Organizations change when patterns of behaviour, capability, technology, structure or interpretation shift over time. Leaders often describe change as a project with a launch date, communication plan and completion milestone. That framing fits some episodic transformations but not continuous adaptation. Weick and Quinn (1999) distinguish episodic change from continuous change, emphasizing different rhythms and intervention logics. The distinction is useful because a merger integration, a core-system replacement and ongoing customer-process improvement do not require identical leadership.

Change models such as Lewin's (1947) unfreeze-change-refreeze formulation and Kotter's (1996) staged approach remain pedagogically influential because they force attention to readiness, coalition, direction and reinforcement. Their limitation is the temptation to turn descriptive heuristics into universal sequences. Contemporary organizations often change several systems simultaneously, face feedback before one phase is complete and operate in environments where 'refreezing' is temporary. Leaders need an architecture for direction, participation, experimentation, learning and stabilization rather than ritual compliance with a numbered model.

6.15.2 Reactions to change are information, not pathology

Employees can resist change because they misunderstand it, because they correctly perceive harm, because they distrust leadership, because they face capability loss, or because the proposed change is genuinely poor. The review by Oreg et al. (2011) of 79 quantitative studies of change-recipient reactions highlights the role of pre-change characteristics, organizational context, change process, perceived benefit or harm and change content. Labelling all resistance as fear of change eliminates diagnostic information.

A responsible leader asks what the resistance contains. Is there evidence about operational risk? A concern about role loss? A fairness problem in how burdens are distributed? A threat to professional standards? A vested interest threatened by accountability? Different mechanisms require different responses. Consultation is not always the answer, but hearing resistance before categorizing it reduces the chance that leadership enthusiasm will become epistemic blindness.

6.15.3 Sensemaking under ambiguity

Ambiguity differs from measurable risk. Under risk, relevant states and probabilities can sometimes be estimated. Under ambiguity, the meaning of events, relevant categories or plausible futures may themselves be uncertain. Leaders cannot eliminate such ambiguity through false precision. They help organizations make provisional sense of events, identify what is known and unknown, establish near-term priorities and create feedback that allows interpretations to change.

Sensemaking is especially important during crises, restructuring and emerging technology adoption. Leaders should communicate what is observed, what is inferred, what remains uncertain and what action is required now. Confidence should be calibrated to evidence. Repeatedly changing a position as evidence evolves is not inconsistency when the basis for revision is explicit; refusing to revise because prior certainty is reputationally costly is a more serious leadership failure.

6.15.4 Hybrid work: an evidence problem, not an ideology

Debates over office presence often become moralized into claims that remote work proves trust or that office work proves commitment. The evidence is more conditional. Task interdependence, commute cost, home conditions, managerial capability, innovation requirements, customer contact and career stage all matter. Organizations should distinguish fully remote work from hybrid arrangements and should avoid generalizing from self-selected firms or emergency pandemic conditions to every role.

The six-month randomized controlled trial by Bloom et al. (2024) at Trip.com provides unusually strong causal evidence for one hybrid arrangement. Among 1,612 employees in a Chinese technology company, working from home two days per week reduced quit rates by about one-third and improved job satisfaction, with no evidence of harm to performance ratings, promotions or lines of code written. Managers also revised their beliefs about productivity upward after experiencing the policy. The finding is important precisely because it is bounded: one company, one hybrid design and particular occupations. It does not prove that every remote-work policy is productive.

6.15.5 Organizational resilience: anticipation, absorption, adaptation and learning

Organizational resilience is the capacity to prepare for disruption, absorb shocks, adapt operations and learn without losing core purpose or violating critical responsibilities. Resilience is not mere survival. An organization can survive by shifting intolerable cost to employees, suppliers or communities. Nor is redundancy always waste: spare capacity, backup suppliers, cross-trained staff and liquidity buffers can look inefficient until a disruption arrives. Chapter 11 develops supply-chain resilience; here the focus is human and organizational capability.

Leadership for resilience combines distributed sensing with clear escalation. Frontline employees need enough voice and authority to report weak signals; leaders need mechanisms to aggregate and interpret them. Cross-training reduces dependency on individuals. Scenario rehearsals expose ambiguous decision rights. After-action reviews convert incidents into updated routines. Moral resilience also matters: pressure should not suspend truthfulness, safety or justice. Crisis is precisely when character and culture become visible because normal reputational management becomes harder to sustain.

6.15.6 AI-mediated management: automation does not dissolve leadership responsibility

AI-supported tools can now summarize performance, recommend schedules, screen information, draft feedback and route work. These capabilities can reduce administrative friction, but they also alter power, visibility and voice. An employee may experience an algorithmic recommendation not as neutral analytics but as managerial authority, particularly when the basis of a score is unclear or when challenging it appears futile. Chapter 5 owns model governance and Chapter 20 owns technology strategy. The narrower leadership question here is how managers preserve human accountability when analytical systems enter relationships of supervision.

Leaders should therefore distinguish assistance from delegation of moral responsibility. A manager may use AI to surface patterns, but consequential judgments about performance, discipline, workload, development and opportunity require contextual review, proportionate explanation and a real route for correction. Surveillance should not be normalized simply because data collection is technically possible. Managers also need to watch for automation bias, where apparently precise outputs receive more deference than their evidential quality deserves, and for the opposite error of rejecting useful tools after visible mistakes. Responsible leadership keeps the human decision owner, evidence standard and appeal path explicit.

MANAGERIAL INSIGHT | Do not ask only whether an AI tool improves managerial efficiency. Ask what authority the tool effectively exercises, what information it makes visible or invisible, who can challenge its output, what happens when it is wrong, and which relational duties remain non-delegable.

Table 6.10. Change and resilience: leadership questions across the cycle

Phase	Leadership question	Evidence to seek	Failure mode
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Phase	Leadership question	Evidence to seek	Failure mode
Sense	What has changed, and which assumptions are no longer reliable?	Operational data, frontline signals, external evidence, dissenting interpretations.	Narrative certainty before evidence.
Frame	What problem are we actually solving, for whom and under which constraints?	Decision charter, stakeholder effects, dependencies, risk boundaries.	Solution-first change driven by fashion.
Mobilize	Who must understand, contribute, decide and execute?	Capability, authority, readiness, affected interests.	Participation theatre or unexplained command.
Experiment	What can be tested reversibly before full commitment?	Pilots, leading indicators, comparison groups where feasible.	Scaling before learning.
Stabilize	Which new behaviours and controls must become reliable?	Process performance, role clarity, exceptions, training needs.	Declaring victory while workarounds persist.
Learn	What should be retained, revised or reversed?	Outcome review, near misses, unanticipated effects, feedback.	Outcome bias and retrospective storytelling.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis, informed by Weick and Quinn (1999), Oreg et al. (2011), and Chapter 5 decision-review principles.

6.16 African Case: Equity Group Holdings as a Character-to-System Leadership Challenge

6.16.1 Why the case matters

The opening Equity Group case can now be read with a richer framework. The organization combines regional scale, financial regulation, digital migration, workforce development and a publicly articulated social purpose. Its 2025 integrated report identifies human capital, organizational knowledge, digital infrastructure and regional distribution as resources that must work together. The leadership problem is therefore multilevel: self-government at the top, credible relationships across layers, team coordination inside functions and countries, and organizational systems that reproduce desired behaviour when senior leaders are absent.

Africa should not be treated as one leadership context. Equity operates in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, each with different institutions, languages, labour markets and business conditions. The chapter's scope prevents a full cross-cultural analysis, which belongs to Chapter 7. The immediate point is structural: regional growth increases the number of contexts in which general leadership processes must operate, raising the importance of delegated authority, local information, common standards and credible escalation.

6.16.2 Scaling culture beyond founder-centred leadership

Organizations that grew under visible founder or long-tenured executive leadership face a succession problem even before a formal leadership transition occurs. If employees rely on proximity to the chief executive to interpret purpose, resolve ambiguity or secure decisions, scale will outgrow the person. A durable culture must therefore be carried by selection, development, routines, decision rights, incentives, stories, systems and a wider cadre of leaders. This does not make senior example unimportant; it means the organization should not confuse leadership visibility with institutionalization.

Equity's public reporting emphasizes values such as integrity, professionalism, innovation and teamwork and describes learning, performance systems and technology transformation. Those claims can be tested behaviourally. Do promotion and recognition reinforce those values? Can employees report material concerns without retaliation? Do local leaders have sufficient discretion to resolve customer problems? Are performance metrics consistent with service and control? When commercial and conduct objectives conflict, which one wins in practice? These questions translate culture from aspiration into observable organization design.

6.16.3 Digital migration changes leadership work

When 88.4% of transactions move through digital channels, frontline work changes. Branch staff may handle fewer routine transactions and more complex exceptions, advice and relationship issues. Technology specialists and risk teams gain influence because system reliability becomes central to customer experience. Leaders must therefore manage role identity, skill development and interfaces between technical and customer-facing units. Digital performance can also make activity more measurable, increasing the temptation to govern by dashboard rather than dialogue.

Equity's half-year 2026 release provides a more current view of this capability-building effort. The Group reported that 82% of staff had completed a business-focused generative-AI course and that staff had accumulated 119,980 hours of guided AI instruction by 19 August 2026 (Equity Group Holdings Plc, 2026c). These are company-reported learning inputs, not independent evidence that capability or productivity improved. A leadership audit therefore asks whether employees can apply new skills, whether roles and processes permit responsible use, whether managers reinforce learning, whether data and decision rights are properly governed, and whether performance improves without creating new risks. This mirrors Chapter 4's data-quality principle: the metric must fit the claim. Counting training hours does not establish transformation any more than counting meetings establishes collaboration.

6.16.4 African leadership scholarship: relational insights without romanticization

African management scholarship adds an important critical lens. Nkomo (2011) warns that organization studies have often oscillated between colonial stereotypes of African management and counter-images that romanticize cultural difference. This caution

is crucial. An 'African leadership style' is too broad to be analytically credible across 54 countries, multiple languages, institutions, sectors and histories. Local concepts can enrich theory without becoming deterministic national character claims.

Ubuntu-oriented leadership literature illustrates both promise and limitation. Powell and Grobler's (2026) systematic review of 74 articles describes organizational Ubuntu leadership as generally relational, participatory and values-based, while concluding that robust empirical evidence remains limited and that scholars increasingly call for blended approaches. Ubuntu can help foreground relational personhood, mutuality and community, but it should not be used to deny legitimate individual rights, excuse hierarchy or imply that communal values are unique to one continent. Nkomo and Kriek's (2011) study of change leadership in 14 South African organizations similarly shows how leaders' life stories, hope, African values and diversity shaped interpretations of change in a specific historical context rather than establishing a universal model.

AFRICAN CONTEXT | African leadership scholarship is strongest when it expands the questions that mainstream theory asks and tests them in real organizational settings. It is weakest when "Africa" becomes a single personality type. Context should be specified at the level that actually explains behaviour: institution, sector, organization, profession, community and concrete cultural practice.

6.16.5 A disciplined interpretation of Equity's 2025 performance

Equity's reported 55% increase in profit after tax, growth in customer accounts and digital migration are important organizational outcomes. It would nevertheless be methodologically weak to attribute them directly to culture, leadership development or employee training. Financial performance can change because of interest rates, credit quality, country performance, cost structure, portfolio mix, technology investment and prior strategic decisions. Company narratives naturally connect results to transformation initiatives, but causal confidence requires stronger designs than annual-report association.

The case should therefore be used as an organizational diagnosis rather than a leadership success story. It gives learners a real institution in which to ask: What must be centralized? What can be delegated? Which metrics could distort behaviour? How does a bank maintain voice under compliance pressure? How should leaders govern AI-enabled work? What routines make integrity visible when commercial targets are demanding? How can a regional organization preserve common purpose while allowing local adaptation? These are leadership and organizational-behaviour questions even when the answers require later chapters on talent, strategy, finance, governance and technology.

6.17 Comparative Global Case: Trip.com and the Leadership Value of Testing Managerial Beliefs

6.17.1 The managerial controversy

Hybrid work provides a useful comparison because leaders across industries formed strong opinions from incomplete evidence. Some argued that work from home would reduce collaboration, effort and promotion opportunities; others treated flexibility as an unqualified employee benefit. Trip.com created a rare opportunity to test one policy experimentally. The company randomized 1,612 graduate employees into a hybrid arrangement, with two days per week at home, or the existing office arrangement over six months (Bloom et al., 2024).

The experiment found that hybrid work improved job satisfaction and reduced quit rates by approximately one-third, from 7.2% in the control group to 4.8% in the hybrid group over the experimental period. Researchers found no evidence of negative effects on performance reviews over the next two years, promotion rates or lines of code for engineer employees. Effects on attrition were stronger for some groups, including non-managers and employees with longer commutes. The design is important because randomization strengthens causal inference relative to a simple comparison of firms that chose different policies.

6.17.2 Leaders changed their beliefs

One of the most instructive findings concerns managers. Before the experiment, the 395 managers surveyed expected hybrid work to reduce productivity by an average of 2.6%. After the trial, their average belief shifted to a positive 1.0%. This is a leadership lesson about learning, not only remote work. Managers held an ex ante judgment, exposed it to a structured test and revised belief when evidence changed. Such revision should be treated as competence rather than embarrassment.

The case also illustrates limits. The trial did not compare every possible remote configuration, and the organization was a large Chinese technology company with graduate employees. It does not establish effects for factories, hospitals, retail branches, fully remote teams or organizations with weak digital infrastructure. Nor does a neutral average performance effect answer every question about innovation, socialization or career development over longer horizons. Good leadership learns the correct scope of evidence.

6.17.3 From policy to organizational design

Hybrid work changes coordination, not merely location. Teams need norms for synchronous and asynchronous work, documentation, meeting purpose, availability and escalation. Managers need to evaluate output without substituting surveillance for trust. New employees may require more deliberate socialization. Offices may become coordination spaces rather than mandatory symbols of effort. The policy therefore interacts with culture, technology, work design and leadership capability.

The moral issue is also balanced. Flexibility can reduce commuting burdens and widen opportunity, but home-working conditions are unequal. Constant digital availability can invade rest and family life. Surveillance tools can turn remote work into intrusive monitoring. Leaders should evaluate hybrid systems through performance evidence, employee dignity, role requirements, customer service, fairness, data privacy and the right to genuine recovery. The choice is not 'trust employees' versus 'control employees'; it is how to design accountable work without unnecessary domination.

MANAGERIAL INSIGHT | The Trip.com experiment models a leadership virtue that is easy to praise and difficult to practice: **corrigibility**. Strong leaders can state a prior belief, test it fairly and update it publicly. Organizations should reward evidence-based revision more than confident persistence in a disproven position.

6.18 Faith, Ethics and Moral Reasoning: Authority as Stewardship, Service and Accountable Power

6.18.1 The moral questions are inside the leadership task

Leadership raises moral questions before a separate ethics committee becomes involved. Who may command whom, and within what limits? When is persuasion legitimate and when does it become manipulation? What duties accompany the power to hire, evaluate, reward or dismiss? How should leaders respond when commercial success depends on silence, exploitation or technically legal deception? What does a leader owe to a person whose performance is inadequate? When does loyalty become complicity? These are not peripheral questions. They shape the information that reaches decision makers, the distribution of opportunity and harm, and the kind of organization repeated behaviour creates.

Christian moral reasoning begins from a view of persons as bearing dignity that does not depend on rank, market value or managerial usefulness. Authority is real but accountable. Scripture presents human beings as created in the image of God, with responsibility to exercise dominion under God rather than as autonomous owners of other persons ([Genesis 1:26-28](#)). Faithfulness is required of stewards because entrusted authority belongs to another ([1 Corinthians 4:2](#)). The leader therefore asks not merely 'What can my office compel?' but 'For what purpose was this authority entrusted, whom can it affect, and before whom am I accountable?'

6.18.2 Service does not erase authority; it reorders its purpose

Jesus contrasts Gentile rulers who 'lord it over' others with leadership expressed through service ([Mark 10:42-45](#)). The passage does not deny differentiated roles; it rejects domination as the moral logic of greatness. The washing of the disciples' feet similarly makes humility visible in the exercise of recognized authority ([John 13:12-17](#)). For organizational leadership, service means that authority exists to advance legitimate collective purposes and the good of persons under one's responsibility, not to protect ego, extract deference or turn employees into extensions of the leader's identity.

Service therefore includes hard duties. A leader who permits bullying because confrontation is uncomfortable abandons those harmed. A manager who retains an employee in a role for which the person is persistently unable to meet essential standards can burden customers, colleagues and the employee. Compassion requires truthful diagnosis, support, fair process and proportionate action. Biblical gentleness is not moral passivity, and organizational courage is not harshness.

6.18.3 Humility as accurate self-location

Humility is often misread as low self-confidence. Christian humility is better understood as truthful self-location before God and others: neither self-exaltation nor self-erasure. [Philippians 2:3-8](#) connects humility with looking to the interests of others and with Christ's self-giving pattern. In leadership, humility supports corrigibility, listening, credit-sharing and willingness to use expertise outside the leader's own competence. It reduces the need to convert every disagreement into a contest of status.

Humility also has an epistemic dimension. The more authority a leader holds, the easier it becomes for surrounding information to be filtered. People anticipate preferences, soften bad news and select what they think will be rewarded. A humble leader therefore builds structural correctives: independent review, direct contact with operations, pre-mortems, dissent roles and protected escalation. Personal virtue and organization design reinforce each other.

6.18.4 Justice, impartiality and the distribution of opportunity

Leaders distribute scarce goods: attention, developmental assignments, pay recommendations, information, flexibility and tolerance for error. Justice requires criteria that can be defended beyond personal affinity. Scripture repeatedly rejects partiality, including distinctions based on status ([James 2:1-9](#)), and commends honest judgment and fair dealing. The organizational implication is not that every person receives the same outcome. Equity can require relevant distinctions in responsibility, contribution and need. The moral requirement is that distinctions be related to legitimate purposes rather than favouritism, prejudice or patronage.

Procedural fairness also matters. A decision can be substantively difficult and still be carried out with truthful explanation, opportunity to respond and respect for dignity. Leaders should be especially cautious where subordinates depend on them economically. 'Consent' under employment authority may not carry the same meaning as agreement among equals. The moral burden increases with asymmetry because the stronger party can more easily externalize cost.

6.18.5 Truth, courage and fidelity under pressure

Leadership pressure often creates incentives to reinterpret truth as a communication problem. Bad numbers can be framed away, material uncertainty buried in an appendix, or dissent recoded as lack of commitment. Christian ethics does not permit usefulness to redefine truthfulness. Honest weights are a recurring biblical image of justice in exchange ([Proverbs 11:1](#)), while integrity is treated as a guide rather than a tactic ([Proverbs 11:3](#)). The leader's obligation includes ensuring that organizational systems do not reward strategic misrepresentation.

Moral courage is the capacity to act on warranted conviction despite real cost. It may involve stopping an unsafe process, reporting corruption, defending an unfairly blamed subordinate or admitting a strategic error. Courage without prudence can become recklessness; prudence without courage can become sophisticated cowardice. Leaders need both. [Luke 12:48](#) connects greater entrustment with greater accountability, a principle directly relevant to senior authority: discretion and power increase responsibility rather than excusing conduct.

6.18.6 Work, dignity and meaningful contribution

A Christian account of work treats productive labour as capable of service, cultivation and provision rather than merely a commodity transaction. [Colossians 3:23-24](#) calls for wholehearted work oriented ultimately to the Lord, while [Ephesians 4:28](#) links labour with the capacity to share with those in need. These texts should not be used to demand endless effort from employees or spiritualize managerial exploitation. The fact that work can be vocational makes abusive work more, not less, morally serious.

Meaningful work includes the possibility of exercising competence toward legitimate ends, understanding how one's contribution matters, receiving fair treatment and maintaining appropriate boundaries around life. Leaders should resist two opposite errors: treating employees as interchangeable cost units and assuming that organizational mission can substitute for compensation, rest or respectful conditions. Vocation is not a discount on justice.

6.18.7 Alternative ethical and philosophical perspectives

Christian moral reasoning can be articulated confidently while engaging alternative traditions fairly. Aristotelian virtue ethics emphasizes formation of character through habituated virtues oriented toward human flourishing (Aristotle, trans. 1999). Deontological ethics emphasizes duties and respect for persons independent of aggregate outcomes. Consequentialist approaches evaluate the outcomes of actions and can sharpen attention to foreseeable benefits and harms. Care ethics emphasizes relationships, dependency and responsiveness. Ubuntu-oriented thought highlights relational personhood and mutuality, while contemporary stakeholder approaches emphasize responsibilities beyond owners alone. These traditions differ in foundations and can disagree in hard cases, but each exposes leadership questions that a purely instrumental model can miss.

The differences should not be flattened into a generic values list. A consequentialist may permit a burden if overall benefit is sufficiently large; a rights-based approach may treat some burdens as impermissible even under aggregate gain. Christian ethics also contains side constraints: one may not lie, exploit or dehumanize merely because doing so appears efficient. At the same time, Christian leaders must consider consequences because love of neighbour includes foreseeable effects. Moral reasoning therefore integrates duties, character and consequences under a theological account of human dignity and accountability rather than choosing whichever principle rationalizes a preferred outcome.

Table 6.11. Moral lenses applied to a leadership decision

Lens	Leadership question	Strength	Characteristic caution
Christian stewardship and neighbour-love	Is this use of authority faithful, truthful, just and genuinely ordered to service under accountability to God?	Integrates character, duties, purpose, power and human dignity.	Requires careful biblical reasoning; religious language must not be used to bypass evidence or accountability.
Virtue ethics	What kind of leader and organization will this repeated practice form?	Emphasizes character and habituation over isolated acts.	Virtues require interpretation when goods conflict.
Deontological / rights-based	What duties and rights constrain what may be done to persons?	Protects persons from being reduced to aggregate utility.	Can be indeterminate when duties conflict.
Consequentialist	What benefits, harms, probabilities and distributional effects are foreseeable?	Forces attention to real-world effects and trade-offs.	Aggregate benefit can obscure rights and unequal burden.
Care ethics	Who is vulnerable or dependent, and what does responsible relationship require?	Makes dependency and relational context visible.	Partial relationships can conflict with impartial institutional duties.
Ubuntu / relational	How does the decision affect mutual recognition, community and relational personhood?	Challenges atomistic accounts of organization.	Must not romanticize community or suppress legitimate individual conscience.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis. Ubuntu-related caution is informed by Nkomo (2011) and Powell and Grobler (2026). The fuller business-ethics framework is developed in Chapter 13.

6.18.8 A leadership moral test

FAITH AND VOCATION | Before exercising consequential authority, ask: Is the purpose legitimate? Are the facts represented truthfully? Does the action respect the dignity of affected persons? Is the power being used within its proper mandate? Are benefits and burdens distributed justly? Have those with relevant knowledge had a real opportunity to speak? Is there a less harmful means? Can the decision be explained without deception to a fair-minded third party? Have I confused loyalty to the organization with loyalty to wrongdoing? What would faithful stewardship require if the decision becomes costly to me personally?

The test does not automate morality. It creates friction against self-serving speed. In easy cases, law, policy, economic interest and moral duty may align. Leadership character becomes most visible when they diverge: when a profitable practice is misleading, when a legal minimum is insufficient for safety, when a senior sponsor pressures the team to suppress inconvenient evidence, or when a loyal colleague must be held accountable. Such moments are not interruptions to leadership. They are leadership.

6.19 Professional Toolkit: The Character-to-Culture Leadership Protocol

The chapter's concepts can be integrated into a repeatable professional protocol. The purpose is not to reduce leadership to a checklist; it is to preserve the sequence of reasoning that consequential situations often compress. The protocol starts with self-government, then moves through the task, relationships, team system and organization before closing with learning. It can be used for a new leadership role, a deteriorating team, a change initiative or a recurring performance problem.

Table 6.12. The Character-to-Culture Leadership Protocol

Step	Diagnostic questions	Minimum professional output
1. Govern self	What emotion, interest, fear, status concern or prior commitment could distort my judgment? What moral boundary applies?	A short self-audit: interests, biases, non-negotiable duties and correction source.
2. Clarify purpose	What legitimate outcome are we trying to create, for whom, and over what horizon?	One-sentence purpose plus success and harm criteria.
3. Read the situation	What task, uncertainty, time pressure, interdependence and capability conditions matter?	Context map separating facts, assumptions and unknowns.
4. Choose authority level	What should I decide, consult, delegate or escalate? Who has the information and who bears accountability?	Decision-rights map and delegation boundary.
5. Design motivation and work	Are goals controllable? Are resources adequate? Are incentives, meaning, autonomy and fairness aligned?	Goal-resource-incentive check with guardrails.
6. Build team conditions	Are roles, capability, trust, safety, accountability and coordination sufficient?	Team operating agreement and escalation rules.
7. Govern power and conflict	Whose voice is constrained? What interests and alternatives are hidden? Is politics distorting evidence?	Stakeholder/power map and conflict diagnosis.
8. Align organization	Do culture, climate, structure, metrics and communication reinforce or contradict the desired behaviour?	System alignment map with two or three high-leverage changes.
9. Lead change experimentally	What can be piloted, what must be standardized, and what evidence would trigger revision?	Change hypothesis, leading indicators and review date.
10. Learn and repair	What happened, why, who was affected, what should change, and what harm requires repair?	After-action review with owners, dates and explicit lesson updates.

Source/Note: Author's integrative practice framework. It carries forward decision discipline from Chapter 5 and hands later people-system questions to Chapter 7.

PRACTICE TOOL | Use the protocol in writing for decisions with high human consequence. The act of writing exposes vague purpose, hidden power, unexamined assumptions and responsibility gaps. For routine decisions, the same logic can become a mental discipline.

6.19.1 A 90-Day Reflective Leadership Development Plan

Leadership development becomes credible when broad intentions are translated into observable practice, feedback and review. A development plan should target one or two behaviours that matter for the leader's actual context, not a catalogue of aspirational traits. The leader states the behaviour, identifies situations that trigger old patterns, chooses repeated practice, secures evidence from people who experience the behaviour and schedules a review. Reflection then becomes disciplined learning rather than private self-description.

Table 6.13. A 90-day reflective leadership development plan

Field	Question	Illustrative entry
Development target	Which observable behaviour would most improve my leadership?	Invite disconfirming evidence before announcing a preferred option.
Trigger situation	When is the old pattern most likely to appear?	Time pressure during monthly performance reviews.

Field	Question	Illustrative entry
Practice	What will I repeatedly do differently?	Ask two team members to state the strongest case against the proposed decision before I summarize my view.
Evidence source	Who can credibly observe whether behaviour changed?	Direct reports, meeting notes and one peer observer.
Progress indicator	What would count as meaningful improvement?	More material risks raised before decisions; fewer reversals caused by previously unspoken information.
Feedback cadence	When will I seek corrective feedback?	Brief fortnightly check-in plus day-45 review.
Moral guardrail	What must remain true even if the new behaviour is uncomfortable?	Do not punish dissent offered in good faith; do not outsource final accountability.
Day-90 review	What will be retained, revised or stopped?	Compare baseline and follow-up evidence, name remaining gaps and set the next practice cycle.

Source/Note: Author's practice template, informed by reflective-practice and deliberate-learning principles discussed in this chapter.

For example, a leader who discovers a tendency to close discussion too early should not set the vague goal 'be more humble.' A stronger plan specifies the meeting situations in which premature closure occurs, the behaviour that will change, who will observe it and what evidence would show improvement. Kross et al. (2023) emphasize that self-reflection at work can help learning when it moves beyond rumination toward psychologically distanced, constructive interpretation. The development cycle should therefore combine reflection with behavioural evidence and external feedback.

6.20 Common Misconceptions, Analytical Errors and Professional Pitfalls

Leadership language is unusually vulnerable to attractive simplifications. The following errors recur because they reduce difficult organizational problems to memorable slogans. Each should trigger a more disciplined diagnosis.

Table 6.14. Common leadership and organizational-behaviour errors

Misconception	Why it fails	Professional correction
"Leaders are born, not made."	Traits influence probabilities, but behaviours, judgment, relationships and context also matter.	Treat traits as one evidence stream; develop observable capabilities and character.
"There is one best leadership style."	Task, uncertainty, capability, power and time change what behaviour fits.	Use contingency reasoning and specify scope conditions.
"Servant leadership means saying yes to people."	Service concerns the purpose of authority, not avoidance of standards.	Combine humility with truthful correction and protection of those harmed by poor conduct.
"High emotional intelligence guarantees good leadership."	EI measures differ; emotional skill can be used manipulatively and overlaps other constructs.	Evaluate ability, purpose, evidence and ethical use separately.
"More motivation requires more incentives."	The binding constraint may be expectancy, resources, justice, autonomy or work design.	Diagnose the motivational mechanism before changing rewards.
"Empowerment means less accountability."	Authority without boundaries and review creates ambiguity and risk.	Transfer decision rights together with information, capability and explicit accountability.
"Psychological safety means everyone should feel comfortable."	Safety concerns interpersonal risk for candour and learning, not immunity from standards.	Pair safety with high expectations and fair consequences.
"Good teams avoid conflict."	Relevant task disagreement can improve reasoning; hidden conflict can corrupt decisions.	Diagnose conflict type and manage escalation.
"Strong culture is always good."	Strong shared norms can coordinate misconduct as effectively as excellence.	Evaluate what the culture actually normalizes and with what consequences.
"Resistance to change is irrational."	Resistance can contain evidence about harm, unfairness, capability or weak design.	Diagnose the source before choosing participation, correction or boundary-setting.
"Hybrid work is either the future or a failure."	Effects depend on arrangement, role, coordination and context.	Use bounded evidence and test local assumptions.
"If results were good, leadership was good."	Luck can reward weak process; delayed harms can be hidden.	Evaluate ex ante judgment and ex post outcomes separately.
"African leadership is one relational style."	The continent is institutionally and culturally diverse; essentialism obscures real mechanisms.	Specify context and use local concepts critically without romanticization.
"Faith makes technical leadership theory unnecessary."	Moral conviction cannot substitute for competence or evidence.	Integrate biblical moral reasoning with rigorous organizational analysis.

Source/Note: Author's synthesis of chapter evidence and the book's anti-duplication and moral-reasoning principles.

6.21 Chapter Synthesis: From Accountable Judgment to Human and Organizational Capability

Chapter 5 showed that a defensible decision requires explicit objectives, evidence, uncertainty, alternatives, constraints and accountability. Chapter 6 has shown why even an analytically excellent decision can fail when the human and organizational system

cannot carry it. Leadership begins with self-government because authority amplifies the consequences of fear, vanity, habit and integrity. It then becomes relational because influence is experienced through trust, feedback, power and differentiated exchanges. It becomes collective through teams that must combine capability, coordination, psychological safety and accountability. Finally, leadership becomes institutional through culture, climate, structure, communication, routines and change processes that shape behaviour beyond the direct reach of any one manager.

No single leadership theory owns this whole system. Traits help explain tendencies and emergence; behaviours make practice observable; contingency theories emphasize fit; LMX locates leadership in relationships; transformational and transactional perspectives illuminate meaning and exchange; servant, ethical and authentic approaches bring service, modelling and self-awareness into sharper focus. Each contributes insight and carries limits. Leadership scholarship is strongest when constructs are treated as testable lenses rather than identities that leaders adopt.

Motivation likewise cannot be reduced to incentives. People act under beliefs about whether effort can succeed, whether outcomes are credible and valuable, whether work supports competence and agency, whether goals are meaningful and whether demands are proportionate to resources. Teams convert individual capability into collective output only through coordination. Psychological safety improves the probability that relevant truth is spoken, but standards preserve accountability. Power is unavoidable in organizations; its legitimacy depends on mandate, purpose, process and restraint.

The moral conclusion is equally concrete. Leadership authority is never morally self-validating. Christian reasoning treats authority as stewardship under God, persons as bearers of dignity, service as the proper orientation of power, humility as truthful self-location, justice as a constraint on partiality and courage as faithfulness when pressure makes integrity costly. These claims do not replace evidence; they govern what evidence is used for and which means remain impermissible. The leader remains responsible for what organizational systems predictably reward, silence or harm.

6.21.1 Hand-off to Chapter 7

Chapter 6 has deliberately remained at the level of general leadership and organizational behaviour. The next chapter asks what changes when people systems cross cultural, institutional and geographic contexts and when organizations must deliberately acquire, develop, retain and transfer capability. Chapter 7, **Cross-Cultural, Knowledge and Talent Management: Managing People, Learning and Capability Across Contexts**, therefore develops national-culture frameworks and their limitations, cultural intelligence, global and virtual teams, workforce planning, recruitment, selection, performance, reward, mobility, learning systems, knowledge creation and transfer, talent analytics and the future of work. The hand-off is intentional: Chapter 6 establishes how persons, teams, power and organizations work in general; Chapter 7 specializes that foundation for cultural diversity, global talent and organizational knowledge.

Key Terms

Table 6.15. Key terms and definitions

Term	Definition
Accountability	Answerability for the proper exercise of entrusted responsibility, including explanation, review and proportionate consequence.
Attribution	An explanation assigned to the causes of another person's or one's own behaviour or outcome.
Authentic leadership	A leadership construct emphasizing self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and an internalized moral perspective.
Character	Relatively enduring moral and behavioural dispositions that shape how a person tends to choose and act.
Climate	Shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, procedures and what is actually prioritized.
Coaching	A developmental process using goals, observation, questioning, practice and feedback to improve performance or learning.
Conflict	Perceived incompatibility in goals, interests, values, interpretations or actions among interdependent parties.
Culture	Shared meanings, assumptions and values through which members interpret what is normal, important and legitimate.
Delegation	Transfer of defined responsibility and sufficient decision authority within explicit boundaries while preserving appropriate accountability.
Emotional intelligence	Abilities or self-perceived capacities related to perceiving, understanding and regulating emotion-related information; measures differ substantially.
Employee voice	Discretionary communication of ideas, concerns or suggestions intended to improve a work-related situation.
Empowerment	Structural and psychological conditions through which people possess meaningful authority, information, resources and sense of agency.
Engagement	Energetic, involved connection with work; operational definitions vary across research and practice.
Expectancy	Belief that effort can produce required performance under specified conditions.
Instrumentality	Belief that performance will lead to a particular outcome.

Term	Definition
Leader-member exchange	Relationship-based leadership perspective focused on the quality and development of leader-follower dyads.
Leadership	Social influence processes through which direction, alignment and commitment are created or sustained around collective work.
Moral authority	Credibility to influence because conduct demonstrates integrity, competence, justice and fidelity to legitimate commitments.
Organizational behaviour	Systematic study of how individuals, relationships, groups and organizational systems influence behaviour and outcomes at work.
Organizational politics	Activities through which actors seek to shape decisions, resources and interpretations, often beyond purely formal mechanisms.
Organizational resilience	Capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to and learn from disruption without losing critical purpose or responsibilities.
Power	Capacity to affect another person's options, resources, behaviour or outcomes under conditions of interdependence.
Psychological safety	Shared perception that relevant interpersonal risk-taking, such as questions, concerns or error reporting, will not predictably produce humiliation or retaliation.
Self-determination theory	Motivation theory emphasizing differentiated forms of motivation and the roles of autonomy, competence and relatedness.
Self-government	Disciplined alignment of one's own attention, emotion and behaviour with legitimate standards and moral commitments.
Servant leadership	Other-oriented leadership approach that uses authority to prioritize service, follower growth and the legitimate good of others.
Structure	Formal allocation of work, authority, reporting relationships and coordination mechanisms in an organization.
Team	Bounded set of people whose tasks are sufficiently interdependent that coordinated action is required for shared outcomes.
Transformational leadership	Leadership approach emphasizing meaningful direction, stimulation, modelling and development that can mobilize effort and change.
Trust	Willingness to accept vulnerability based on sufficiently positive expectations about another party's ability, intentions or integrity.
Valence	Value or desirability attached to an anticipated outcome in expectancy theory.
Vocation	Understanding of work and responsibility as situated within a larger calling to faithful service and contribution.

Source/Note: Definitions are synthesized from the chapter and cited foundational literature.

Concept-Check Questions

1. Distinguish character from personality and reputation. Why can a person possess leadership-relevant traits without possessing moral character?
2. Why should leadership be analyzed at individual, dyadic, team and organizational levels rather than only through the formal leader?
3. What is the difference between internal and external self-awareness, and why can either be misleading when used alone?
4. What does the emotional-intelligence literature imply about the danger of treating all EI measures as equivalent?
5. Why does contingency thinking not justify using a popular situational-leadership diagram as a universal law?
6. How do transformational and transactional leadership relate empirically, and why is transactional clarity not inherently inferior?
7. Explain why servant leadership does not require avoidance of standards, correction or authority.
8. Use expectancy theory to explain why raising a bonus may fail to increase effort.
9. What is the difference between delegation and abdication?
10. Why is psychological safety compatible with high accountability?
11. Distinguish legitimate, reward, coercive, expert and referent power. Which risks attach to each?
12. Distinguish task, relationship and process conflict. Why is the claim that task conflict is always beneficial too strong?
13. Distinguish organizational culture, climate and structure using one example for each.
14. Why should resistance to organizational change be treated as diagnostic information before it is treated as disloyalty?
15. What did the Trip.com hybrid-work experiment establish causally, and what did it not establish?
16. Why is it methodologically weak to infer that Equity Group's 2025 financial performance was caused by leadership or culture initiatives simply because the company reported both?

Higher-Order Analytical and Critical-Thinking Questions

1. A leader is highly trusted, charismatic and effective at mobilizing effort but routinely suppresses evidence that could weaken strategic initiatives. Compare how transformational, ethical, servant and Christian stewardship perspectives would diagnose this leader.
2. When can centralization be ethically preferable to empowerment? Develop criteria that incorporate expertise, urgency, reversibility, rights and accountability rather than merely employee preference.
3. An organization reports very high psychological-safety scores but recurring quality failures. Develop at least three competing explanations and specify what evidence would distinguish them.
4. Critically evaluate the statement: "Strong culture substitutes for formal controls." Under what conditions might shared norms reduce the need for rules, and when could strong culture make controls more important?
5. Use self-determination theory, expectancy theory and job demands-resources theory to diagnose the same case of declining employee effort. What different interventions would each theory suggest?
6. How can a leader invite dissent without turning every decision into consensus? Design a decision process that protects voice while preserving accountable authority.
7. Compare Ubuntu-oriented leadership with servant leadership. Identify areas of overlap, distinctive intellectual foundations and risks of cultural or theological overgeneralization.
8. If managers revise their view after an experiment disproves their prior belief, should that be treated as inconsistency or competence? Develop a theory of leadership credibility that includes corrigibility.
9. Can an organization be highly resilient and morally irresponsible? Construct an example and explain why survival or adaptability alone is an incomplete standard.
10. Develop a Christian moral argument for why leader power should increase, rather than reduce, duties of transparency and restraint. Then articulate a serious non-Christian ethical argument that could reach a similar practical conclusion.

Applied Case: Kivu Fresh Foods and the Growth Trap

Kivu Fresh Foods is a fictional East African food-processing company used here for analytical practice. It began with 35 employees and now employs 620 people across Rwanda, Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The founding managing director remains the public face of the company and approves almost every significant pricing exception, hiring decision, supplier dispute and capital request. The firm has grown quickly through reliable delivery and strong relationships with regional retailers. Growth is now exposing organizational strain.

Managers report that decisions take too long, but they also hesitate to act without approval because the managing director sometimes reverses delegated decisions in front of clients. Sales staff are paid primarily on monthly revenue. Customer complaints about unsuitable product substitutions have increased, while the operations team says sales promises delivery dates without checking production constraints. A new digital dashboard ranks branches by revenue, stock loss and complaint volume, but branch managers dispute data definitions and increasingly keep local spreadsheets.

An employee survey reports high pride in the company's mission but low confidence that raising concerns changes decisions. In two recent meetings, junior quality staff noticed risks in a proposed packaging change but remained silent after a senior manager said the launch deadline was 'non-negotiable.' Turnover among supervisors has risen. The managing director interprets the pattern as a shortage of loyal leaders and proposes a leadership retreat built around company values. The board is considering whether the deeper problem is organization design rather than motivation.

Case Questions

1. Using the character-to-culture protocol, diagnose the case at self, dyadic, team and organizational levels. Do not begin with a proposed solution.
2. Which problems are primarily about motivation, which about decision rights, which about power, and which about information quality? Justify each classification.
3. Design a delegation architecture for pricing exceptions, supplier disputes and branch decisions. What should remain centralized and why?
4. Redesign the sales incentive so that revenue remains important without encouraging promises that operations cannot fulfil or unsuitable substitutions.
5. What evidence would you collect to determine whether employees are silent because of fear, futility, lack of expertise or disagreement with the survey interpretation?
6. Propose a 90-day intervention that changes organizational systems as well as leader behaviour. Identify leading indicators and review points.
7. What should the board do if the managing director publicly endorses empowerment but continues reversing reasonable delegated decisions? Address both governance and developmental options without pre-empting Chapter 13.

Ethical and Faith-Informed Dilemma: Loyalty, Truth and a High-Performing Executive

You lead a regional business unit. One of your highest-performing country directors consistently exceeds revenue targets and has built strong relationships with key customers. Several employees privately report that the director humiliates staff who challenge forecasts and has instructed teams to delay logging complaints until the following month so the current scorecard remains favourable. No allegation yet shows direct financial fraud, and the director argues that complaint timing is an administrative detail. Removing the director immediately could disrupt a major renewal and weaken quarterly results.

Your chief executive asks you to 'handle this quietly' because the director is commercially valuable. The director is also a long-standing colleague who supported your own promotion. You have incomplete evidence, real duties of fairness toward the accused person, and equally real duties toward employees, customers and the integrity of reporting. Scripture warns against partiality ([James 2:1-9](#)), requires faithfulness in stewardship ([1 Corinthians 4:2](#)) and rejects dishonest measures ([Proverbs 11:1](#)). Those moral claims do not remove the need for evidence and fair process; they make evidence and fair process more important.

Dilemma Questions

1. What facts must be established before disciplinary action is justified, and how should evidence be protected from influence by the director or senior sponsors?
2. Which conflicts of interest do you personally hold, and what safeguards are needed because of them?
3. How should commercial consequences affect the timing and design of the response without becoming a reason to suppress truth?
4. What would procedural justice require for the director, reporting employees and customers?
5. Apply Christian stewardship, deontological, consequentialist and care-ethics reasoning. Where do the frameworks converge, and where might they differ?
6. At what point would obeying an instruction to "handle this quietly" become unethical complicity rather than prudent confidentiality?

Data and Evidence Exercise: Interpreting Employee Engagement Without Overclaiming

Gallup's 2026 global workplace release reports the following 2025 engagement estimates. These data are useful for practicing disciplined interpretation, but they are not experimental estimates of leadership effects. Engagement is based on Gallup's survey methodology and proprietary items; regional labour-market conditions, occupation mix, institutions and sampling all matter (Gallup, 2026).

Table 6.16. Selected employee-engagement estimates, 2025

Region	Engaged (%)	Not engaged (%)	Actively disengaged (%)
Global	20	64	16
United States & Canada	31	52	17
Latin America & Caribbean	30	59	11
Southeast Asia	25	65	10
Post-Soviet Eurasia	25	62	13
Australia & New Zealand	21	63	16
South Asia	21	64	15
Sub-Saharan Africa	19	63	18
East Asia	18	66	16
Middle East & North Africa	14	66	20
Europe	12	71	17

Source/Note: Gallup (2026). *State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report*. Percentages are regional survey estimates, not causal measures of leadership quality.

Exercise Tasks

1. Rank the regions by engagement. Calculate the percentage-point difference between the highest and lowest regional estimates.
2. Explain why it would be invalid to conclude that leadership quality causes the entire regional difference. Identify at least six plausible confounders or measurement considerations.
3. Gallup reports global manager engagement of 22% in 2025 compared with 31% in 2022, while non-manager engagement was 19% in 2025. What additional data would you need before claiming that declining manager engagement caused the global engagement decline?

4. Design a multilevel study that could examine whether team-level leadership practices predict engagement after accounting for occupation, country, organization and work design. Specify unit of analysis, main variables, major confounders and a plausible longitudinal component.
5. Suppose a company in Rwanda reports employee engagement of 55%. Explain why comparing that number directly with the Gallup Sub-Saharan African average could still be misleading even if both percentages are numerically correct.
6. Develop a one-paragraph executive interpretation that is accurate, useful and appropriately cautious. It should distinguish description from causation and explain what management should investigate next.

Annotated Further Reading

The following works are especially valuable for readers who want to move beyond the chapter's synthesis. They are selected for conceptual importance, evidential breadth, African relevance or unusually strong research design rather than because they represent one preferred school of leadership.

Carton, A. M. (2022). The science of leadership: A theoretical model and research agenda. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 9, 61-93. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-091227>

Why read it: A high-level synthesis of leadership science that helps readers distinguish leader characteristics, leadership processes and outcomes while seeing where the field still lacks integration.

Gardner, W. L., Hanna, A. A., Noghani, F., & Cogliser, C. C. (2024). Leadership emergence: Answering the 'how' and 'why' questions by considering levels of analysis and form of emergence. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11, 139-164. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-110721-040430>

Why read it: Useful for moving beyond static leader traits toward the dynamic, multilevel processes through which people come to be recognized and accepted as leaders.

Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(1), 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004>

Why read it: The most useful starting point for servant-leadership scholarship because it defines the construct, reviews 285 articles and is candid about fragmentation, measurement and the need for stronger research.

Edmondson, A. C., & Bransby, D. P. (2023). Psychological safety comes of age: Observed themes in an established literature. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 55-78. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-055217>

Why read it: A mature review of psychological safety that is particularly useful for separating the evidence-based construct from the popular misconception that safety means comfort or low standards.

Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2026). Organizational climate and culture: History, current status, integration, and change. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 13, 309-335. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-020924-070545>

Why read it: A current integrative review clarifying the overlapping but distinct traditions of organizational climate and culture and their relevance for organizational change.

Nkomo, S. M. (2011). A postcolonial and anti-colonial reading of 'African' leadership and management in organisation studies: Tensions, contradictions and possibilities. *Organization*, 18(3), 365-386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508411398731>

Why read it: Essential critical reading for avoiding both deficit narratives and romanticized claims about a single African leadership model. It invites contextual and historically literate scholarship.

Powell, L., & Grobler, S. (2026). Ubuntu leadership in organisational contexts: A review of the literature and suggestions for further research. *Southern African Business Review*, 30, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.25159/1998-8125/19704>

Why read it: A recent systematic review of 74 publications that maps organizational Ubuntu leadership while explicitly noting the limited depth of robust empirical evidence and the need for blended approaches.

Bloom, N., Han, R., & Liang, J. (2024). Hybrid working from home improves retention without damaging performance. *Nature*, 630, 920-925. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07500-2>

Why read it: An unusually valuable organizational field experiment because random assignment permits stronger causal conclusions about a specific hybrid-work design while also illustrating the importance of bounded generalization.

Kross, E., Ong, M., & Ayduk, O. (2023). Self-reflection at work: Why it matters and how to harness its potential and avoid its pitfalls. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 441-464. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031921-024406>

Why read it: A practical research review for leaders who want reflection to produce learning rather than rumination, self-justification or unstructured introspection.

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