

Leading with purpose: the essentials of Conscious Leadership

Purpose and conscious leadership are buzzwords often banded around these days, but what do they really mean for the modern-day leader and how can we embody their meaning beyond the superficiality of understanding what the words themselves mean?

Conscious leadership with purpose is more than a state of doing; it's a state of being.

What is conscious leadership and leading with purpose?

Understanding the meaning of the words does, however, give us insight into how we can be conscious leaders.

Consciousness refers to what we are aware of. It sounds simple enough. On the surface we are aware of what is going on around us. We use each of our senses, combined with our skills and experience to assess the situations that we find ourselves in. Cognitive neuroscientists believe that we are only conscious of about 5% of our cognitive activity, meaning that 95% of our

behaviour is unconscious. We can only know what we understand, and being aware gives us more choices to make the best decisions in a situation.

Conscious leadership (with purpose) is therefore leading or guiding others with awareness of our own and others' actions and motivations towards a common goal.

How is this different from other leadership styles?

A company's success is dependent on its ability to achieve its goal (e.g. to provide media services to start-ups) while maintaining a level of profitability that keeps the business sustainable. Much of a company's success relies on its leaders to skilfully navigate employees towards goals.

There are many different styles of leadership, from autocratic to servant. Conscious leadership differs from other leadership styles because a conscious leader recognises when their behaviours and the behaviour of others are ego-driven, rather than for the benefit of all.

What does conscious leadership look like?

A conscious leader needs to be aware of, or be open to being made aware of, any of their own actions or behaviours that are influencing their decision-making. Conscious leaders are therefore on a path of self-discovery. They have a curiosity that drives them to see and understand any behaviours that are born from their own limiting beliefs.

When decision-making, a conscious leader will let go of any of their own motivations for taking action. They will guide their team to understand the motivations behind their decisions. A course of action will not be guided by, for example, by internal company politics and cronyism, but by unbiased action that will move the company towards its purpose.

It's a leadership style that may act within a hierarchical structure, but that sees all team members are equally contributing. Compassion and kindness are the default. Conflict is resolved from a place of understanding of all parties' truth being valid. Team collaboration fosters creativity and productivity as opposed to competition as colleagues vie for power.

What are the benefits of conscious leadership?

Aside from conscious leadership helping to create a place of work that people want to be at, thereby creating employee loyalty, reducing recruitment costs, and improving absenteeism, it creates an environment where goals are more easily achieved through collaboration. Setbacks are seen as an opportunity to learn and grow. Productivity and therefore profitability are improved as employees waste less time ruminating over what others will think of them.

Conscious leaders guide their team, bringing out the best in all, ensuring clear succession paths and career progression. Resilient mental wellbeing, personal job satisfaction and happiness are also by-products of effective conscious leadership.

How can I learn to be a conscious leader?

Conscious leadership isn't learnt in a one-day offsite training session, or even in a week-long training. It's continuous journey towards growing awareness. Whilst many of the principles of conscious leadership can be gleaned from the wealth of books on self-development, or from dedicated training courses, it's the lived experience that makes the most difference. We can only guess how we will respond to a situation until the time we face it. Constantly reviewing our behaviours and actions can give us insight into how we can improve or respond differently in the future.

Mindfulness provides us with a tool to cultivate awareness in the moment. A regular mindfulness practice allows us to develop neural pathways that give us time and space to take a decision rather than relying on our unconscious automatic behaviours.

Importantly, it is hardest for us to "see" something about ourselves, and this is where the role of a good coach or mentor makes a big difference. From a place of non-judgement, a coach will ask us questions that will help us explore our decision-making processes and motivations. Insight gleaned from these sessions is invaluable.

Programmes like *Positive Intelligence*, offered by Certified Mental Fitness Coaches, cleverly combine these elements so that we can understand why we behave a certain way, give us the tools to be more present and allow us to take decision from a place of unattached wisdom, rather than from unconscious

fear.

Conscious leadership is the way to create sustainable, adaptable business environments where all can thrive. Imagine what could be accomplished if this became the norm.

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