



## Altrocentric Leadership

This text was written by Georg Vielmetter and Yvonne Sell

The good old days when employees just knew their CEO's name, face and business reputation are a thing of the past. Today, they also know their CEO's salary, hometown, connections on LinkedIn and how much their house is worth. Along with this increasing transparency comes growing pressure to be accountable. Good leaders have always stepped out of their comfort zones, but converging global megatrends are putting more pressure on those at the top to navigate a faster, more complex, more integrated, and more transparent business world.

In a recent book by George Vielmetter and Yvonne Sell entitled *Leadership 2030: The six megatrends you need to understand to lead your company into the future*, the two authors examined the repercussions of the convergence of major forces such as:

- Globalisation
- Climate change
- Increased individualism
- Accelerating digitisation



Some of their findings suggest that leadership in the future will involve increased personal and professional discomfort. Leaders will have to cope with the blurring of private and public life, and they will have to forge new relationships with competitors and employees. This will require new skills and mindsets.

### Leadership is the single most important thing an organisation can get right

While organisational leadership is the most spoken about concept in the business world, it's also the most misunderstood.

What no one is formally taught is the crucial part role modelling plays in organisational leadership. A leader's assumptions, beliefs and values also greatly impact behaviour and their resulting ability to lead an organisation successfully.

### The way that role modelling and engagement happens is also changing

As Vielmetter and Sell point out, connectivity-enabling technology and virtual workplaces change how people interact. Leaders must now learn to engage employees across cultures and business roles through new mediums. They must acquire digital wisdom, even if they lack digital knowledge.

Possibly the biggest adjustment for leaders of today is a power shift that requires major changes to how they think and work. Many are accustomed to command-and-control, to fear over love, and to "lead, follow, or get out of the way." But hierarchies are flattening as power moves away from top internal management and toward employees and a proliferation of external stakeholders. Companies must now appeal to a multitude of global consumer markets, each with distinctive attitudes and desires.

"What this essentially means," says Vielmetter, "is that leaders motivated by power over others will not thrive in this new world. We will see more "altrocentric" leaders, who understand that leadership is a relationship and will therefore focus primarily on others rather than themselves."



### These new leaders will be far more adept at engaging rather than commanding

They will have the ability to see themselves as just one integral part of the whole. Altrocentric leaders will be capable of long-term vision encompassing both global and local perspectives. She says this is a far cry from the old traditional egocentric leaders who were more concerned with personalised power. Altrocentric leaders, on the other hand, derive power from motivating - not controlling - others.

The altrocentric leader who is intrinsically motivated by socialised power will be able to handle the increased pressure of tomorrow's business environment. This is why there needs to be a greater consciousness around the leadership role. You will cultivate an engaged workforce by having healthy functional leaders who:

- Give a clear directive,
- On a daily basis they should help employees towards that directive, and
- Then display behaviour consistent with where the organisation intends to go

All leaders will see life become more chaotic and overwhelming, and their struggles and management will be more visible than ever. Egocentric leaders will have a difficult time evolving, if they even can, and will be unable to thrive in such discomfort.

### Organisations need to develop leaders who are motivated by altrocentric leadership

The truth is people don't stay with companies - they stay with leaders. And when people stay with leaders who inspire them, who make sense to them and who are true to the values that the organisation has articulated, the workforce will give what's called 'discretionary or extra effort' and companies will be better prepared to succeed in the future. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Ask some of the people you work closely with "What's the one thing you would like me to do differently?"
- Leave people feeling stronger and more capable as a result of every interaction they have with you.
- Let capability development be the yardstick by which you measure your own performance as a leader and that of other leaders in your organisation.
- Challenge what you value and how you see yourself – your self-image. Start to see yourself as 'someone who brings out the best in others' rather than the expert, the high achiever, the doer or the fixer.
- Ask more questions rather than simply providing the answers, to allow others the space to think and solve issues for themselves.
- Create more meaning for people by helping them to link what they do every day to a higher purpose.

Featured in the book "Leadership 2030: The six megatrends you need to understand to lead your company into the future" by Georg Vielmetter and Yvonne Sell.