

I. THE ESSENCE OF VIRX-LEONATUS

Virx-Leonatus, or VX Culture, embodies the union of refinement, intellect, and quiet strength. It is a way of living where culture, art, and self-mastery converge to form a life of elegance and purpose. Founded by Keenan McBride, a career learning and development leader, consultant, and speaker specializing in leadership development, Virx-Leonatus represents the belief that the exposure to art and culture, the introduction to structure and discipline, and the cultivation of empathy, *refines* the mind, *strengthens* leadership, and *deepens* respect for self and others. It does this through an expanded perspective and deepened knowledge of what “*makes us tick.*”

At its core, Virx-Leonatus is not merely a lifestyle, it itself is a discipline. It is the cultivation of grace under pressure, the pursuit of beauty in thought and form, and the command of presence that inspires respect without demand.

VX Culture does not shout. It does not chase validation. Instead, it stands calm, assured, and elevated because its foundation has been intentionally crafted, refined, and internalized. At the heart of Virx-Leonatus is a simple truth:

Human excellence is not accidental. It is curated.

VX Culture holds that an individual's mind and character are shaped by three essential exposures. Let's examine them.

1. Exposure to Art and Culture

Art sharpens perception. Culture broadens understanding. Together, they cultivate a mind that can see beyond the obvious, beyond the surface, beyond the limitations that bind lesser perspectives. In VX terms, exposure to art and culture:

- Refines emotional intelligence and expands worldview
- Strengthens appreciation for nuance and subtlety
- Embeds a sense of aesthetic discipline and discernment

Exposure to the arts—whether through music, literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, or performance—trains the mind to notice beauty, and emotional depth. As one learns to appreciate the arts, the mind becomes more observant, more patient, and more attuned to nuance. This cultivation sharpens perception and expands emotional intelligence, allowing a person to see beyond the surface of people, situations, and themselves. In Virx-Leonatus culture, this appreciation is not merely aesthetic; it is discipline. It teaches refinement, elevates one's inner world, and deepens the capacity for empathy and understanding. By engaging with art, the VX practitioner strengthens the intellect and enriches the spirit, becoming a person whose presence carries quiet sophistication, balanced judgment, and strength. A leader shaped by culture speaks with clarity, observes with precision, and influences with elegance.

2. Introduction to Structure and Discipline

Discipline is not severity. It is alignment. It is order. It is the architecture of intention, the backbone of excellence, and the quiet force that turns potential into achievement. In VX, discipline provides:

- *Reliability* of character
- *Consistency* of action
- *Poise* under pressure
- *Framework* for repeatable greatness

Discipline brings **strength**; refinement gives it **direction**. A VX leader applies discipline as both an internal compass and an external standard, shaping every interaction with **purpose** and **integrity**. In life, this discipline appears as consistency—upholding personal routines, honoring commitments, and pursuing excellence even when unobserved. In dealing with others, it manifests as measured poise: the ability to respond rather than react, to listen with intention, and to maintain character in moments that test it. A VX leader does not waver with circumstance; their steadiness becomes a source of confidence for those around them. Through disciplined thought, conduct, and respect, they embody the refined strength at the core of Virx-Leonatus culture.

“In Virx-Leonatus, the lion’s power is honor-bound—discipline is the virtue that turns presence into legacy.”

- Keenan McBride

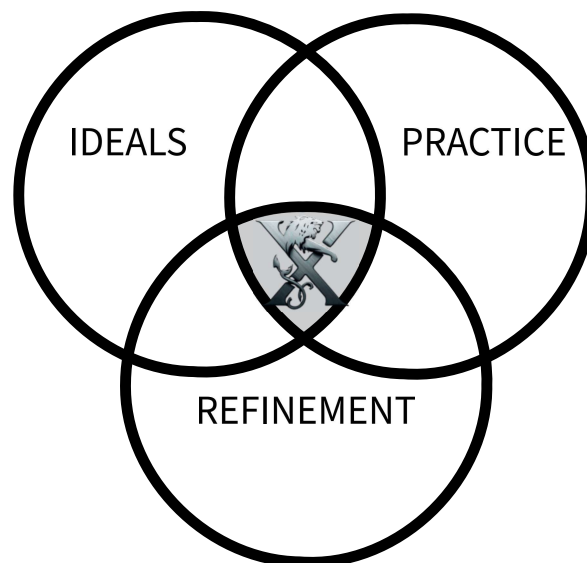
3. Cultivation of Empathy

Empathy is often misunderstood as softness. In the Virx-Leonatus philosophy, it is a strategic asset and an ethical cornerstone. Empathy:

1. Deepens respect for self and others
2. Strengthen leadership by improving influence & connection
3. Aligns ambition with humanity (*balance & regulation*)
4. Ensures that strength is always tempered by understanding

A leader without empathy is merely **authoritative**. A leader shaped by empathy becomes **transformative**.

Virx-Leonatus is not just a lifestyle, but as previously mentioned, it's a discipline. Many philosophies remain abstract, admired in thought but rarely lived. VX Culture stands apart because it is not merely a set of ideals; it is a practice. A *continuous* refinement of self. **Virx-Leonatus thrives in the intersections.** This is **SO** important, we need to see this at work.



We pointed out four distinct things that empathy, as an ethical cornerstone, can deliver. Let's see these in practice.

1. Deepens Respect for Self and Others

Here's an example. You have a team member that shows up late repeatedly. Instead of reacting with irritation, a VX-minded leader asks a simple, **private** question: *"Is there anything affecting your ability to arrive on time?"*

The employee reveals that they have been caring for an ill parent. The leader adjusts expectations temporarily (within reason and ability) while offering *clear structure and support*.

Why this deepens respect:

The employee feels valued rather than judged. The leader sees themselves as someone capable of balancing humanity with accountability. Both parties walk away with greater mutual regard.

I am sure you can imagine how messy this could have been if the leader decided to make a public show or example at this time especially when they find out what is really behind the frequent tardiness. You could lose respect in the eyes of others. Instead, by being discreet, you gain respect because onlookers will then feel that you would treat them with similar discretion. Even if they don't know the details. They only know that you didn't *"call the person out!"* Instead, you both helped **and** preserved the dignity of a team member.

2. Stronger Leadership by Improving Influence & Connection

Another example. A manager notices tension between two talented team members. Instead of forcing a solution, he meets individually with each person and listens—not to agree, but to understand the emotional drivers behind the conflict.

When they reconvene, he reframes their frustrations in ways they both feel heard, which lowers defensiveness and shifts the conversation toward solutions.

Why this increases influence:

People follow leaders who understand them. Connection creates trust, trust creates influence, and influence creates cooperation.

This path does a couple things. (1) It strengthens the trust of the team members in your ability to lead as you showed genuine interest in both perspectives on the issue. It shows you as a leader that isn't prone to favoritism. That word, "favoritism" can sink even the best intentioned among leaders and people in general because at its root is a question of trust in **you**. Whether you "*like*" someone or not and if that influences your decision-making is not what you want others to have to consider when dealing with you.

(2) It also makes the team **WANT** to give their best because they feel like you hear them and seek to understand their point of view as free thinking individuals and not just a collective group.

3. Aligns Ambition with Humanity

Yet another example. A high-performing employee begins to suffer burnout while trying to exceed set organizational metrics.

A VX-aligned leader recognizes this and says: “Your ambition is admirable, but *sustainability* matters. Let’s meet one on one to design a path that protects both your excellence **and** wellbeing.”

Why this aligns ambition with humanity:

Ambition becomes guided and not allowed to become reckless. The leader shows that excellence and self-care are not opposites, but partners thus turning ambition into a long-term asset rather than a short-lived blaze of glory. Excessive pressure and challenges don’t make people see their struggles in a more positive way. A magazine article I read put it this way. It said, “*You can’t change people by force.*” That is so true. You can get momentary flashes of hustle, but unless they feel differently about their task, they will burn out. You cannot impact a real mindset change with force. Use empathy to align ambition with humanity. Your team will see genuine interest in their value as a person. Not just as a cog in the wheel. You recognize that you, yourself have limitations. Even the strongest lion can only expend so much energy without recharging. Creativity in how goals are accomplished shows that you are looking more at their long-term success and don’t just see them as a flare that burns super-hot for a few seconds and then fizzles out.

4. Ensuring Strength is Tempered by Understanding

Last example. During a difficult negotiation, a leader could push aggressively for his way but instead chooses a firm-yet-measured tone. He listens carefully to the concerns of the other party and acknowledges them before asserting his terms. This diffuses tension and results in a fair deal without hostility.

Why this tempers strength:

This is strength with precision, not force. The leader maintains authority without losing composure or respect.

The Lion of VX rules by “dominion” versus “domination”. It is not your aim to “seek and destroy”. Your leadership is established by the bolstering of your presence more than destruction of your adversaries. You position yourself as “in control”, “not easily shaken”, “possessing the **potential and ability** to be both dangerous and formidable *if necessary* but does not have to broadcast this and is **slow** to lose composure.” This allows others to be able to speak truthfully around you. They can say what is really on their mind. This gives you more accurate information on which to base decisions. It also helps to create allies that see your composure and understanding as steadying influences, building confidence in the words that you do speak. Do you ever notice how in mob movies, the boss is often the nicest and most jovial person in the room? Yet he possesses the most capability of all present to cause harm. *Granted, most of that is fear.* However, the same can be accomplished by a leader learning to balance strength with understanding.

In summary, the refined and disciplined individual, the “Lion of Virx-Leonatus”, understands that empathy is not softness; it is awareness turned into strategic advantage.

In VX culture, empathy sharpens one’s charisma, steadies one’s leadership, and elevates one’s presence.

- It deepens interpersonal respect, which reinforces one’s own self-respect.
- It strengthens leadership by creating influence rooted in trust, not intimidation.
- It aligns fierce ambition with human dignity, ensuring the individual remains both driven and grounded.
- It tempers strength with understanding, ensuring power is neither wasted nor abused.

The Lion embodies stoic strength, but it is empathy that ensures that strength is purposeful, ethical, and respected. A man of the Virx-Leonatus discipline moves through the world with elegance and gravity because empathy refines his judgment, dignifies his authority, and intensifies the quiet charisma that defines the VX identity. A lot of time was spent on empathy because of how critical it is to function within the culture. Learn it. Display it. Embody it.

