

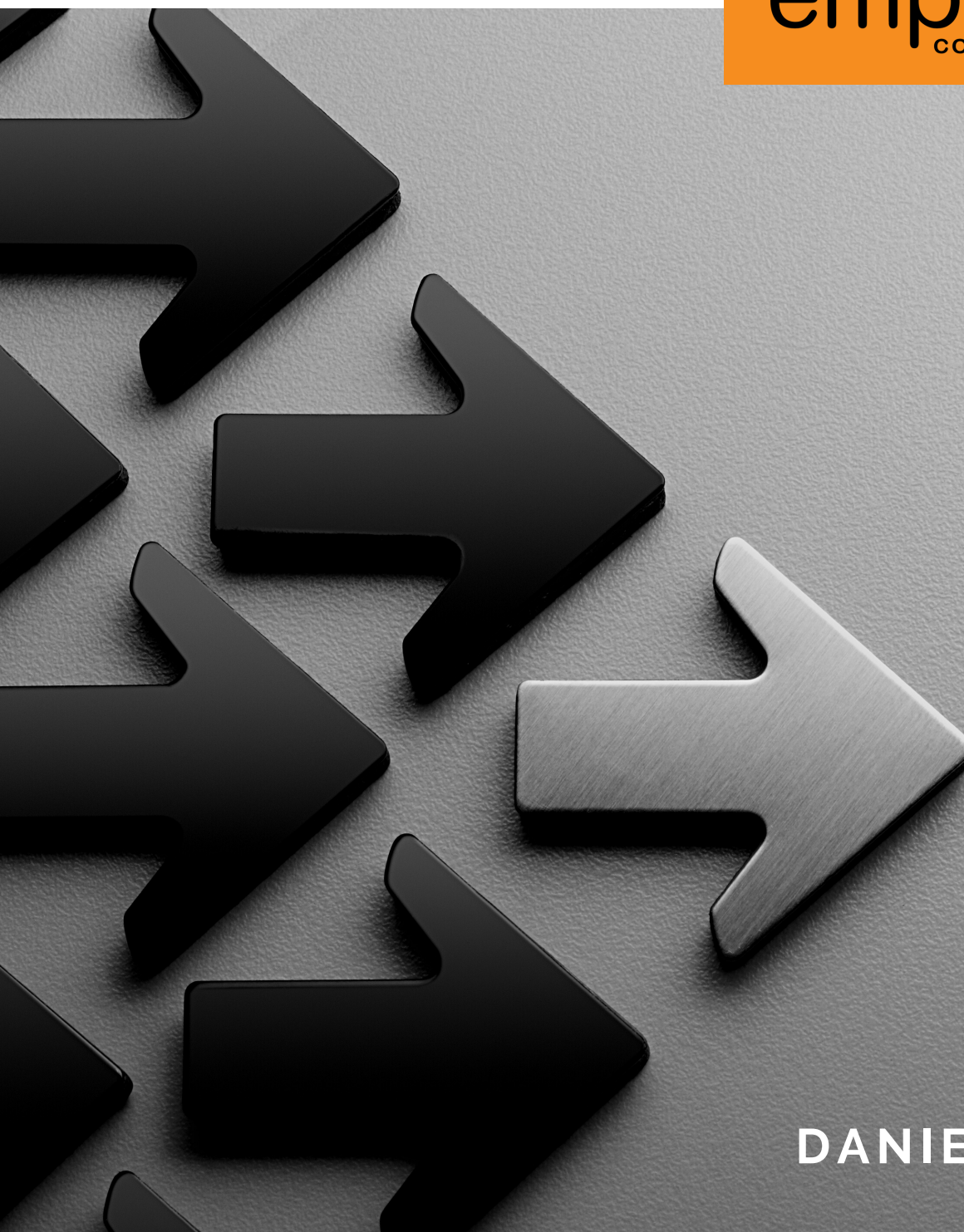
REFLECTION TOOL

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

DESIGNING THE TYPE OF
LEADER YOU WANT TO BE
AND HOW TO DELIVER



empathic
CONSULTING



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SETTING THE VALUES & INTENT OF LEADERSHIP



If you are a leader, you have no doubt had to make decisions that other people have not agreed with. You would have had to deal with the complex and challenging world of making a call that others will not like, that may disappoint or even anger people. Leadership is a tough business at times and those who try to make sure everyone is happy with every decision will find this an untenable strategy over time.

So, how can leaders make sure they are comfortable in their decisions through this complex mix of opinions, facts, beliefs and emotions? The key is to be first confident in whom you want to be as a leader.

This might seem easy enough. You might have even been told before that you need to set your Leadership Values? Not too tricky right? Just come up with a set of words that best describe what type of leader you want to be. You might even come up with some of the classics:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Respectful
- Collaborative

While these are all good words and have a noble intent, they are rather pointless in helping to truly shape your leadership style and strategy. Firstly, to some extent, everyone who interacts with you expects a level of honesty, integrity, respect and collaboration. There is a large range of expectations we have of people we meet, work with and those who lead us. The devil is in the detail. The judgement in your leadership won't be determined by whether you thought you were living up to your standards, it is determined by whether you met the expectations of those around you.

If you are personally clear on how you will show up, what values and guiding principles influence your actions and can effectively communicate this with those around you, you will be in a better position to synchronise their expectations of you with your own and ultimately ensure your actions are more aligned. You must design your leadership style.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE KNOWN?

Imagine one of your direct reports is at a party with some friends. They are discussing their workplaces and someone asks your direct report what you are like as a leader. What would they say? Is it what you want? Do you even know what you would want?

This is a critical part of your design process, you need to know at least in part what the future state might look like. Start this process by putting a few of your actual direct reports into scenarios like above and write what you would like them to say.

PERSON 1:

PERSON 2:

PERSON 3:



WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

Next, we want to think about your values, the principles you stand by and use them as your guide in determining your actions and decisions. Again, you might be thinking that this will be a simple set of words, similar to those accompanying inspirational images on the walls of many corporates. This is not what we are looking for.

In order to develop strong and meaningful Guiding Principles, we need to push past the usual motherhood statements and really put our values to the test. Here are four simple activities you can consider when drafting your values:

1) Is this really a choice?

If you could never really choose the opposite of your value, it isn't really a choice, it is likely an expectation. For example, I wouldn't have a value of "Legal: I comply with the law" because, unless I was in a criminal gang, I couldn't really make the opposite choice. Similarly, when you choose "Respectful" it doesn't help create clarity on your values because most people expect it. Try to make your values a real choice. For example, I could be: Fast & Messy or Slow & Perfectionistic. These are real choices and help people know what to expect from me.

2) Does it provide clarity?

The second question on your values is about clarity. Do your people understand what you mean by them or are they vague gestures open to a realm of misinterpretation? For example, when a leader says I'm "Open and Honest", some people may interpret this as you being as transparent as possible and will share what you can in a timely manner. Others may interpret this as that you will never withhold information and you will share everything immediately. It is pretty easy to see you could have vastly different reactions from people observing the exact same behaviour.

Don't leave expectations to chance. You could imagine that a value like Respect could be interpreted as being professional and courteous. Respect could also mean never challenging people in positions of authority. You might want one of these and not the other, but your single word value doesn't make it clear which they should expect.

Clarity requires more content and context. Describing your values in situational examples and phrases is a useful way to improve this. In my experience, those values that are embedded through real-life stories work best. Give examples of how you have lived them in the past and use this as a view of what they might expect in the future.

3) Always & Never Statements

I was working with a CEO who told me he wanted to "put his people first" as one of his values. A clear choice and it seemed to me pretty clear on what he meant. I then asked him a question: Imagine you have a meeting booked with one of your people and, just as you were about to leave to attend, the phone rings and it is a big client who wants to chat with you. What do you do? He looked a little worried and said, "I guess it depends how big a client it was".

No, it doesn't. If you are going to set expectations by telling people your values and guiding principles, you need to hold yourself to account. The best way I have found to do this is to write sentences that start with the words: I will always.... and I will never...

Yes, these feel uncomfortable at first, they are constrictive and often make people a little uncomfortable. Your brain immediately worries about not giving yourself any wiggle room. We need to remember, trust is very precious and every time we say one thing and do another, we risk breaking trust with our people.

It is time to make some strong statements on how you will behave. Based on the values you described, what will you always and never do?

I will always...

I will never...





4) Start, Stop and Change Behaviours

Now we are clear on the type of leader we want to be, the types of clear values that underpin this and a number of the activities we must always and never to, it is time for a little audit. Think about some of your current actions, behaviours and habits. Are there things you need to stop doing? Are there changes to the ways in which you do certain things? What could you start doing to really emphasise these values?

An example from one of my clients might bring this to life a little more. Sam wanted to increase emphasis on making sure people felt supported by their leader. One of the commitments Sam made was to "Never try to multitask when my people are speaking to me".

This lead Sam to Stop checking emails when in meetings with the team, change the time allocated in regular meeting agendas to leave more time to listen and start asking questions after people speak to clarify and demonstrate they have been understood.

What actions and behaviours will you Start, Stop and Change to embed your values into actions and commitments that shape your leadership style?

Start

Stop

Change



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Now that you are clearer on what type of leader you want to be and the types of behaviours that will help and hinder this, we now want to be able to communicate this with others to help align their expectations with your own.

This can be tricky as we have just unpacked quite a lot of nuanced and complex thought and while you may want to step through this framework in full, it is also handy to have drafted these ideas into a more succinct version. Let's call them your Guiding Principles.

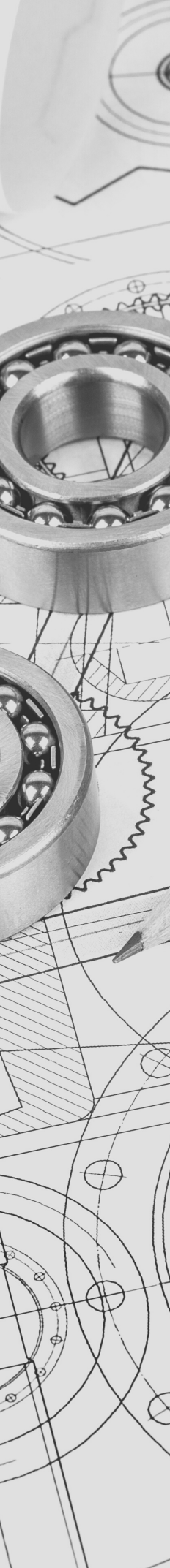
These should be relatively short statements with a brief explanation that help people understand what to expect of you. These can be expanded on and supported with examples if needed with the aim of clarifying expectations. It is not that you can control the expectations others have of you, but you do want to avoid setting expectations you have no intention of meeting.

Start by writing a statement that tries to sum up a small, aligned cluster of your values and behaviours. Then, try to give a few simple examples that are broad enough to provide clarity but not too vague or long-winded. You may end up with 3 to 5 Guiding Principles you can share with people to provide clarity.

Here are some examples of my clients and my own guiding principles to give you an idea of what we are looking for:

- I will challenge with curiosity to build understanding:
 - I will ask questions, even when they seem silly
 - Asking questions doesn't mean I disagree
- I want to make a measurable change on the world
 - I work towards clear objectives and ensure we can measure success
 - I won't work with people unless they are clear on what they want to achieve
- I will share as much as I can with you when I can
 - I'll provide all the information I can in a timely way to my team
 - When I can't share something, I will tell you I can't so you know
- I will put the needs of my team first
 - All my decisions will consider what is best for the whole team
 - No individual is more important to than the health of the group

As you can see, these are clear and direct ways of communicating complex ideas and you may need to review and edit these many times over time.



Draft your Guiding Principles

PAST CLIENTS

Hear from our

"Thought inspiring, provoking and interesting. Took you through the emotional journey of using empathy in your business"
Robbie Cooke, CEO, Tyro Payments

"Fantastic both in content and delivery. I was looking for someone to open up other ways of approaching leadership and looking at our business environment and they delivered!- Michaela Flanagan, Head of Branch Operations, Swiss Re

"I can honestly say it was one of the best sessions I have been a part of. The content was unique & very interactive. I highly recommend Empathic Consulting to build empathy & understanding to drive performance." - Daniel Markovski, Group Sales Manager, Nova

"They engaged people who I didn't think would ever respond, let alone take-away actions. Post this session, I observed genuine behaviour changes. This was one of the best things I have done for the team." - Rochelle Eldridge, Executive Manager, CBA



For more information on how Empathic Consulting can support with specific programs and the key steps to implementation, contact:

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