

# RMC White Paper

## Trust in the Workplace

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**Rob Moors**

Founder & Coach



**Learn. Lead. Perform.**

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## 1.0 Let's get started

### **"So, what the hell has trust got to do with Superman?"**

No, this isn't a silly joke to which belongs an equally cringeworthy punchline; there is a link...

Superman, or Kal-El as he was known as he crashed down to Earth, was thrust into an environment with new powers that he didn't know how to control nor how to introduce and show them to others; and there was no one around to teach him.

WOW! Sounds like my first day in my first role as a leader!

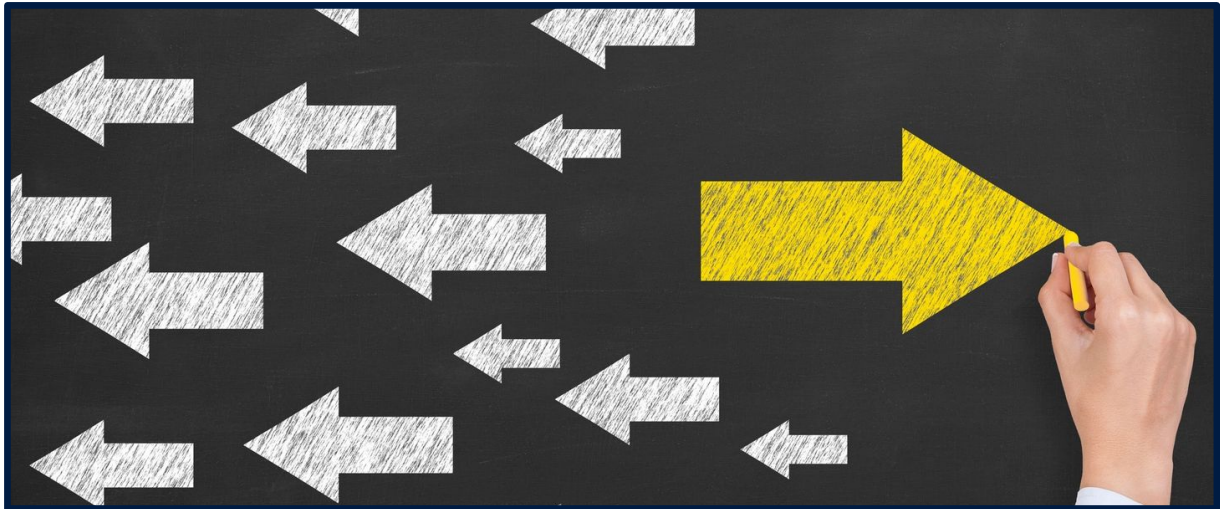
What the 2013 'Man of Steel' movie does really well is magnify this distrust of this alien; an extra-terrestrial who has the power to destroy all human life, if he chose to do so. Not only that, but he seems reluctant to be controlled and is the reason that other aliens have come to Earth.

Talk about a tough first day!

This paper explores what it means to be human, and what it means to trust. With those in place and explicit, what more can be achieved together? In addition, you can find a list of all the cited sources at the end of this document.

I hope you enjoy reading this paper as much as I have writing it.

## 2.0 The workplace challenge



What's more important? Results or People?

Being a leader can be tough; there, I said it. Leadership can also be immensely fulfilling; but often it's seen as an either/or dilemma; can you have great performance without results?

The world has changed enormously over the last 100 years; particularly over the last 20. More workers now see work as a part of life, rather than something to balance against it; and they want values, purpose and fulfilment to be consistent across the two.

Many leadership positions are now held by the so-called 'Millennial' generation, tarnished with the brush of entitlement and snowflake emotions. The truth is that they merely want more fulfilment from their lives and work, and that's something to admire.

Looking to lead in a new way, new Leaders are looking to break the cycle of 'command and control' leadership, focused solely on results, instead of leading people towards potential and performance, through trusting and coaching leadership. But, it's never easy to maintain, and often the 'status quo' bites back during times of business pressure.

So, what's at play? What's getting in the way? What's missing?

Let's explore...

## 3.0 Taking a step back

### 3.1 Simpler times

The modern workplace is far removed from its more traditional ancestor.

A century ago, work used to be a means to an end; a way of earning money to feed the family and put a roof over their heads. People went to 'the grind', waiting to be told what to do by a manager who just needed it done. Everyone had their job and just got on with it until they went home to prepare for the next shift.

Let's not forget that back then home was a place of work too; cooking, washing, cleaning, ironing and washing up were all much more manual and physical jobs without the luxury of today's automated mod-cons... and that's before we consider growing your own food and the need to walk miles to get basic shopping and supplies; you couldn't jump into the 'Chelsea tractor' or 'tap the Uber app' back then.

And the kids weren't much different. They went to school to be taught stuff, by teachers who were there to drill it into them, either through chalk or cane; talk led to pain. Get your head down, do what you're told so you too can work hard to provide for your family, end of! The thought of taking a gap year to travel the world during your Media Studies degree, funded by student loans, was far down the line.

And finally, parenting. Well, by the time the kids, the Mum and the Dad had respectfully worked themselves to the bone all day, there wasn't much left by way of energy or patience, especially with another early morning in the offing; so everything was task driven, everyone had a job and a role in making the home run. You couldn't sit and relax watching Netflix, waiting for the 'Two for Tuesdays' Dominos order to arrive; nor could you Facetime your friends while comparing skin packs on Fortnite, while your Nintendo Switch charged.



Today's youth might wonder where the fun was in all of that... and what the point was; and they'd be right to. After all, what's the point in working hard if there isn't even the latest iPhone to save up for?

But that is the point... The home WAS the iPhone, the car WAS the latest Nike Trainers... the family WAS the Nintendo, the TV and the holiday abroad. That was their purpose; providing for them, putting clothes on their backs and food on the table.

However, despite there being none of the modern luxuries we rely on so heavily today, we often 'yearn' for those simpler times; around family connection and home.

Why? PURPOSE.

That purpose might simply have been survival... or family... or to have a home; but that shared purpose got people through some incredibly tough times, such as two World Wars and The Great Depression... often with a smile on their faces.



### 3.2 The modern-day gap



Fast-forward to the modern day; much of this has been forgotten... but at the same time has evolved into something much more potent.

Technology is regularly blamed for a growing disconnection in our society, with world travel as easy as walking to the shop and talking to someone on the other side of the planet as simple as phoning your friend in the same town. In one way this feels more connected than ever; but ask the older generation and they often feel the world has never be so disconnected. Why is that? Despite all the wonderful advancements that time, technology and relative peace has given us, what's missing?

It's that genuine human connection.

As part of this disconnection something has bubbled-up over the last 20 years... 'purpose' has hit a renaissance. Those entering university and work during this time; the much maligned 'Millennial' generation; don't view work in the same way. It's no longer the 'means to an end' it was for their grandparents and great grandparents; it's part of the equation for overall fulfilment. The modern worker wants that feeling of family, human connection and purpose in every aspect of their lives, not just at home.

That not to say that money and results are not important to them; they are. However, the road to them must now be paved with as much purpose as the life outside of work is. To that end, the notion of work-life balance is no more; work is part of life, and so must provide the same enrichment as the rest of the ride.

Part of that purpose is for their work to contribute to something bigger than themselves, often with a human connection... it's no coincidence that #MeToo, #BeKind, #SaveTheNHS #ClimateChange and @captaintommoore really hit the emotions of the younger technically savvy generation; they want to make a difference.

Maybe replace the 100-year-old concept of family with that of work and global family.

Maybe replace the 100-year-old concept of home with that of workplace and the world.

Maybe we've not changed that much after all; though, work hasn't evolved with us. Don't get me wrong... modern workplaces have never done nor spent more in their pursuit of vision, mission and values, as well as making their work practices as

connected and human as possible. But if we look back again, one key ingredient is still missing; the bedfellow of purpose and family... TRUST.

Trust and purpose weren't part of work, but we're abundant outside of it... how many times have you heard the older generation say, "back in my day you could leave your door open all day long". Society and community were built upon purpose and human connection and fuelled by trust.

Just look at the effect that COVID-19 had on the planet in 2020.

Almost overnight, the UK regressed to many of the simple values of yesterday; focusing on family, health, and putting food on the table; but, at the same time has laid all the modern technological advancements over the top of it.

Politics, disagreements, and non-purposeful activity largely went by the wayside; making way for family and purpose; with trust bring the glue that makes it all possible.

- We placed TRUST in our 'Government' to take the best actions and lead us through this.
- We placed TRUST in our 'NHS' and 'Key Workers' to keep us healthy and alive, while they trust us to not endanger themselves and their families.
- We TRUSTED each other to follow the guidance and protect us; so, we can come out of this crisis together with limited human cost.
- We TRUSTED volunteers to help the most vulnerable in society, who can't help themselves or would seriously endanger themselves by trying to do so.

Now, I know there are plenty of exceptions in the above statements... however, the key is that trust has largely been given first and is then sometimes lost, as opposed to having to be earned before we think about giving it. That's a BIG mindset shift.



How surreal and yet how stimulating and heart-warming to see, at a time of such global threat and disruption that many are telling stories of how grateful they are to be reconnected to their families and homes.



Which brings me back to the world of business and leadership.

The 'Employee Outlook Focus on trust in leaders' research (CIPD, 2013) concluded that in business, trust in Senior Leadership was weak, but stronger between colleagues and line managers.

More recently, The Institute of Leadership and Management research report (The Institute of Leadership & Management, 2019) reaches similar conclusions; reiterating the 'status quo' in the modern day by summarising that "Line Managers are more trusted than CEOs," and that levels of trust in line managers has remained stable since 2011." (The Institute of Leadership & Management, 2019, p. 6)

Finally, Stephen Covey's research (Covey, 2016) identifies trust as not only a human emotion but also as "the one thing that changes everything... (and) has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life." (Covey, 2016, p. 1), yet it is misunderstood and neglected, especially in business.

So, why is it so low in business, when it's obviously important to purpose, connection and ultimately results.

Hmmm, let's explore...

### 3.3 What we learn from the past and leadership training

There is a strong case that Trust, other than leadership itself, is the single most important raw material in business today; capable of making the improbable, possible.

Without it, however, organisations will struggle to unleash the full potential of its people, that is, without the all too evident human cost associated with so many modern corporates, i.e. cyclical restructures, regular redundancies, costly recruitment processes, relaunches, refreshes and rebuilds; all symptomatic of the 'boom and bust' people cycle within organisations that don't have high levels of trust running through their leadership veins.

I defy anyone to say that they haven't had trust issues with a performance review process at some time in their career and mean it.

With technology, flexible working methods and easy global travel, and now with the impact of COVID-19, work and workers have never been so remote and unsupervised. Those who have built these environments with trust at its heart, such as Google, Netflix and Coca-Cola, are reaping the benefits from an engaged, conscientious workforce; however, companies that lack a trusting culture are struggling with these new HR-driven 'right thing to do' policies.

Do you 100% trust everyone that is working from home? Sadly, the answer to that is all too often 'NO!'. Doubt creeps in.

Research reports highlight that in Human Resources Development (HRD), "the #1 area of spending is management and leadership (35%)" (Bersin, 2014), and "that companies spent more than \$24 billion on leadership and management training worldwide in 2013." (Ashkenas & Hausmann, 2016).

The driver is clear, people and employees are changing (Ashkenas & Hausmann, 2016), and those entering leadership have faster and higher demands of the development they wish to receive (Bersin, 2013). Why is it then:

- "only 7 percent of CEOs believe their companies are building effective global leaders, and just 10 percent said that their leadership-development initiatives have a clear business impact" (Feser, et al., 2017)
- "50% of organisations say that their leaders are not skilled to effectively lead their organizations today, and a startling 71% said their leaders are not ready to lead their organizations into the future" (Brandon Hall Group, 2015)?

Perhaps, "The question, then, is whether the mammoth investment in management training, academic research and popular theory... is any closer to helping us develop effective managers, or whether more drastic thinking is required." (Whitehouse, 2019)

The bottom line? Training of human relationships and trust, directly or indirectly, just doesn't work.

So, what is the answer? Well first, let's be clear on what TRUST actually is.

### 3.4 What is 'Trust'?

#### 3.4.1 Predictable Trust

Predictable Trust is easy, and it's what we tend to think of each day:

| Question                                       | Prediction |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Can I trust my car to start this morning?      | Yes        |
| Can I trust my Mum to pick me up from school?  | Yes        |
| Can I trust my alarm clock to go off tomorrow? | Yes        |

While the outcome is largely still open to fate, on balance, we have experience and process memory that makes it easier to trust in these scenarios.

There is also lower significant consequences within these trust decisions; your secrets, pride and inner thoughts aren't at risk of exposure should this trust fail; and a breaking of the trust is less likely to result in a longer-lasting emotional reluctance to trust again. I'll trust my Mum again to pick me up the next day, and when she does, we're back in the groove.



### 3.4.2 Vulnerable Trust

Vulnerable trust is a completely different beast. This is where giving your trust is far less easy and has far more risk associated with it; but the rewards are far more significant and rewarding.

#### Situation

I need help from my peers

I need help from my team

I'm not sure what I should be doing

#### Vulnerability

They might laugh if I ask them

They might lose respect for me

I might lose my job if I flag it

Thoughts like these are common in the workplace, so, this is where the real wins are to be found and where real potential can be unlocked.

How can your organisation run at full performance without vulnerable trust being present; driven by courageous conversations and a people-first mentality? But, woah... how do you know you can trust someone in this way?

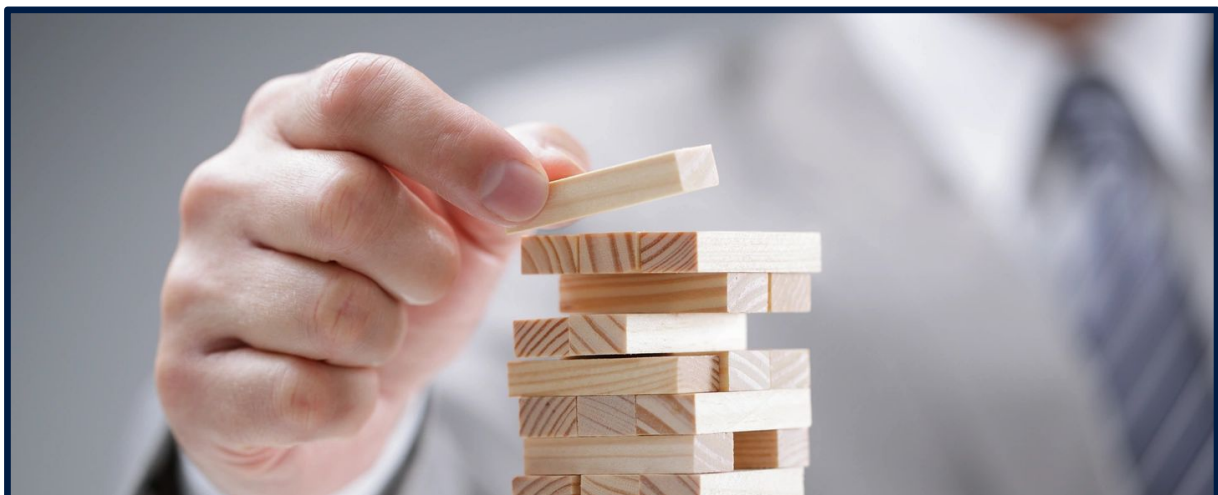
There is a significant number of leaders of the opinion that trust must be earned before it can be completely given; but this is a much slower and lonely process; a leap of faith is often required.

Ernest Hemingway perhaps put it best when he said, **"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them."**

Think about it for a moment; how often do the leaders you know ask their colleagues and their teams for help? How often do they ask those same people for feedback about what they do that gets in the way of their performance and potential?

WOW – much easier to keep your head down and avoid those conversations, eh?

But, what value could those questions, and the answers to them, provide to everyone concerned and the organisation if we opened ourselves, vulnerably and responded to it rather than reacting? How much could it improve your performance and the performance of others?



### 3.4.3 What does the research say about 'Trust'?

The Harvard Business Review article (Zak, 2017), 'The Neuroscience of Trust', knits this nicely back to high performance by confirming that culture and belonging are key to loyalty and effort; however, when done in a disingenuous way e.g. 'self-orientation', the methods used are little more than "golden handcuffs to keep good employees in place. While such efforts might boost workplace happiness in the short term, they fail to have any lasting effect on talent retention or performance." (Zak, 2017).

The conclusion to the research is again that trust is the key making a culture of "meaningful difference" that is "more productive" and will "fuel stronger performance". (Zak, 2017)

What is also interesting about this work, is its intrinsic link to the research of Keller, by flagging the connection between trust, and alignment; with high performing teams showing to be "70% more aligned with their companies' purpose" (Zak, 2017).

Much research data suggests that a lack of trust in leadership is prevalent in modern organisations; take another look at what CIPD and ILM had to say earlier.

Alongside this, seems to be the absence of a people-focused coaching skillset that empowers and motivates teams to get the results, which in turn fosters, builds, strengthens and maintains trust; rather than the managers being preoccupied themselves by those results.

(Gillespie, 2004), 'Transformational leadership and shared values' focuses on leadership styles that foster team purpose and collaboration, which form the "building blocks of trust." Gillespie adds the specific context of 'teams' to the link between leadership and trust; relevant to this paper by investigating the effect of both transformational and transactional leadership styles on levels of follower trust.

The general conclusion was that transformational leadership tends to have a positive impact on trust and performance; with transactional often leading to lower levels of trust and discretionary effort.

So, relationships are important here.

In contrast, (Lin, et al., 2007) concluded that organisational support is also required for Transformational Leadership to build trust, both being high or low together. This is supported by (A & J, 2013) the disadvantages of Transformational Leadership, amongst which is a potential increased dependency on the leader and a resulting abuse of that authority; which could actually erode trust.

This White Paper is looking to ascertain what High Performing Teams are, rather than that of regular/expected performance. (Keller, 2017), asked the question, "What is it that makes the difference between a team of all stars and an all-star team?", concluding that "alignment", a "sense of renewal" and "trust" were the 3 key components in achieving this.

So, let's summarise that research:

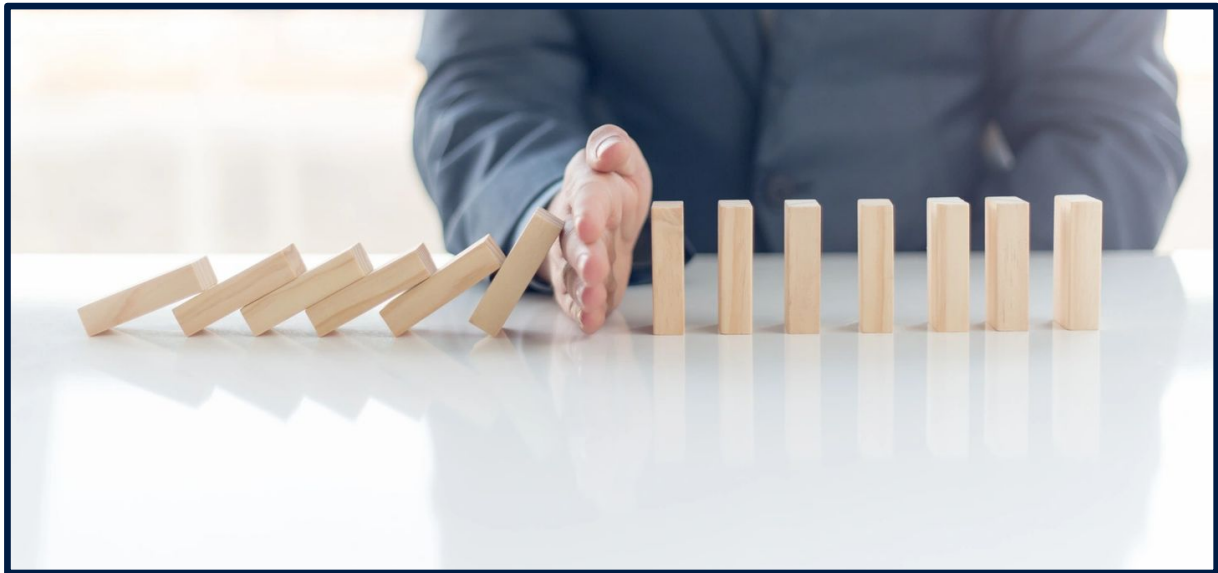
- a) Relationships seem to be important in building trust
- b) Trust is a key ingredient in the building of high performance
- c) High Performance also relies upon alignment and challenge to sustain itself
- d) An element of control is still required to guide this alignment

Ok, so how do we build more TRUST?



#### 3.4.4 What gets in the way, becomes the way

'What's in the way, becomes the way.' Consider that, then reframe it. It has a negative connotation; stuff that gets in the way of the good work will end up taking over. What if the good stuff got in the way of the bad stuff?



Ask yourself today; what one thing could I block for the better?

For an improvement to become 'the way', what could you do, or stop doing, to help create that positive block?

Well, from the thoughts outlined above, corporate and leader selfishness seriously detracts from all the great work that's done from a place of positive intent. It's worthy of note here, that selfishness isn't to be confused with focusing on yourself; leading yourself before you lead others is crucial when looking to lead with trust, as well as for maintaining mental and physical health and wellbeing. What we're talking about here is driving one's own agenda, potentially to manipulate people into doing what you need them to do; purely for your own and/or the company gain.

Does anyone else think it's off that we're attempting to retro-fit human thoughts and emotions back into business through an avalanche of 'Emotional Intelligence' training, when the people it's aimed at are emotional human beings? Hmmm, something doesn't add up. We can't look to lead in a human trusting way if the underlying intent is to simply get people to do what we need them to do; which has essentially been at the heart of Leadership theory and training for the last 100 years.

Nope! Not happening! Time to change!

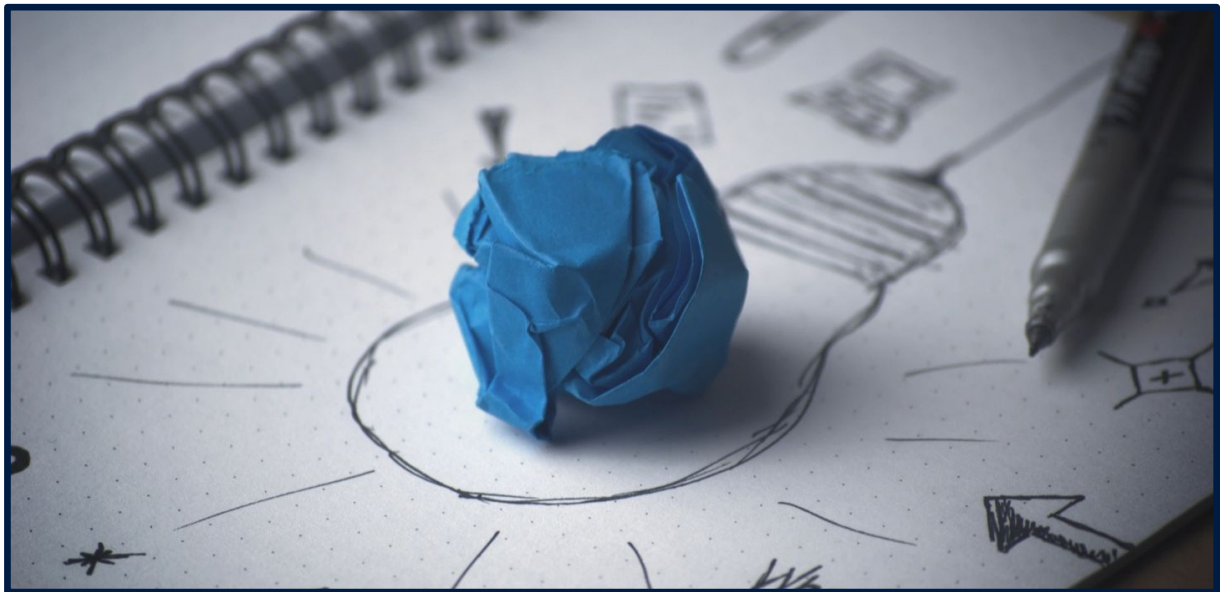
Results focus rarely leads to human engagement and trust; but human engagement and trust often leads to results. Even more true is that the pressure to hit those results is often the thing that triggers the distrust; so, wouldn't it be great if leaders didn't need to be pre-occupied with them?

## 4.0 The Mindset Shift

If you're still reading... that means you're likely interested in this way of leading; and that's the crucial first step. In doing so, you yourself essentially trust (or are attempting to) that:

- You don't have all the answers, nor should you have as eventually you will run out of them. Your real power is helping your team find the answers.
- Your people want a purpose to work for, and a vision to care about. Their intentions will mirror the existence of both; so, it's not their positive intention that needs to be questioned.
- Your team are a reflection of you; if they succeed, so do you; if they fail, so do you. You get the team you deserve; your team is your fault.

OOMPH! That last one is a biggy! Still in? Then it's time to move forward...



## 5.0 The role of the leader

### 5.1 OK, so what about Superman?

So, back to the start... what the hell does all this have to do with Superman?

In 2013, the 'Man of Steel' had his first movie reboot for a generation; and provided some interesting thoughts...

Superman was thrust into an environment with new powers that he didn't know how to control nor how to introduce and show them to others; and there was no one around to teach him. Sure, he had two Fathers to advise him, but neither with the skill nor experience to help or understand his new challenge.

Jonathan Kent tells Kal-El, "You have to decide what kind of man you want to be."

Jor-El tells his son: "Give the people of earth an ideal to strive for" and believes in "the potential for every person to be a force for good" ... "In time they will join you in the sun," ... "You will help them accomplish wonders."

His adopted Father feared that this was a concern for the world, as this power meant he might have a target on his back because of his elevated position; heightened by the belief that not every human could be trusted.

WOW! That's some pressure to burden, especially when no one is helping you with the 'how the hell do I do that?' piece.

Does it sound familiar? Like the first time you became a leader... or maybe a Leader of Leaders? Just like Superman, "thrust into an environment with new powers that he didn't know how to control nor how to introduce and show them to others; and there was no one around to teach him."

The words of his Fathers stayed with Clark on his journey to donning the red cape; which, by then, left him untrusting of the humans around him, and them of him. With the arrival of General Zod to Earth, Superman was trying to decide whether to save humanity or not as he still worries that "they can't be trusted".

It's at this moment that the Priest he's speaking with says,

**"Sometimes, you have to take a leap of faith first;  
the trust part comes later."**

In other words, if Superman can be the better person and treat humanity as trustworthy, then maybe it will be inspired to live up to his expectations and trust him.

It was his ensuing consistent treading of this path that began to change everything... leading to Colonel Hardy and later, Alfred the Butler, both claiming that Superman "is not our enemy", eventually converting the most untrusting of souls, Batman, towards the power of collective trust and performance; The Justice League.



## 5.2 Trust & performance



Simon Sinek has written extensively about the link between Leadership and High Performing Teams, (Sinek, 2014), and also about the role of communication in inspiring people to follow (Sinek, 2011). His work with an elite Navy Seals team (Sinek, 2019) led him to two major realisations:

- 1) In leadership, it's the people that matter - not the result.
- 2) High Performance without trust - is toxic.

Sinek's theme is one of workplaces becoming a more democratic environment, where, as a leader, "You are not responsible for the results. You are responsible for the people who are responsible for the results." Read that again.

WOW! There; you said it. Now breathe. What are you thinking?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I speak to my team as often as I would like?
- Do I speak to my team as often as THEY would like?
- Do I know what the full potential of EACH member of my team looks like?
- Have I ever asked THEM that question?
- Do I think EVERY member of my team has reached that potential?
- What have I done to help THEM unlock that potential?
- What impact would it have IF every team member operated at full potential?

Take a moment to look over your answers.

Of course, this is hard to do, especially when your own leaders and managers don't share the same mindset or inclination to change from above. Equally, don't just dive into coaching your people on the back this; it needs to be joined-up for your people to believe it and buy into it. How do you link it to you visions, values and behaviours; remember they respond to having a purpose and being part of a family; which will breed human connection and trust.

### 5.3 Consistency & communication



In her seminal TED Talk titled “10 ways to have a better conversation”, Celeste Headlee focused on the importance of ‘listening’ to others; highlighting that we often listen with the intent to reply.

Think about that for a moment... Be honest, how often do you see this in yourself and others in the meetings you have at work; people focusing on the value of their next contribution at the expense of learning something from the current one? I’ve even seen the same points repeated because of this.

In a political environment, this is often the norm; people shuffling themselves into the eyeline of Senior Leaders to demonstrate their own knowledge and usefulness, using the long-laboured words of the Precise Corporate Dictionary... but, at what cost?

Would you trust a leader who did that to you? Probably not. So, what impact do you think it has on others, and those in your team, when they see you or other leaders do it? How often do you hear people using such rigid corporate language that you doubt that they even know what they are saying?

As leaders, we are very important and highly visible role models for others within our organisation, especially those directly within our charge. What would you like those people to say about you when you’re not there? Or, even in years to come, as they reflect on the leaders they’ve had?

When you stop and listen, great things happen. Watching a film, playing music, sitting round the baby monitor as your new born giggles and gaggles in their cot... you have set aside yourself in favour of what someone else has to say... how impactful would that be if you and leaders did that consistently at work?

## 5.4 A coaching style

The theme of people and trust continues when looking at research on coaching in the workplace; where (Wotruba, 2016) concludes that “coaches considered it important to develop a trust-based relational connection with teams at both an individual and a collective level, but that establishing and maintaining that connection was, at times, both complex and challenging”. (Wotruba, 2016, p. 98)

What is interesting here, is the notion that it isn't easy, leading to the thought that this may be the reason why it's rarely done, or done well; it's far easier to focus on a result, as that has no human needs or emotions to deal with.

Jennifer Britton, “From One to Many”, defined a team coaching process as being “designed to produce enhanced performance,” (Britton, 2013, p. 168), while John Whitmore, “Coaching for Performance” asserts that “coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance. (Whitmore, 2009, p. 10); which further validates a coaching approach being essential.

Coaching, therefore, seems to have an undeniable link to both good Leadership and Trust; which themselves have their own connection to high-performance teams.

But coaching can be a long and arduous skill to learn, and there are people out there who spend years learning to become accredited as a coach for them to feel able to coach others; where are you supposed to get the time and money to invest in that process?

Herein lies a pearl of wisdom... It's not about being a 'Coach'.

- You don't have to be a Comedian to be 'funny'.
- You don't have to be a Dr to 'diagnose' when your kids are ill and need medicine.
- You don't have to be a Professional sportsperson to 'play' the game.

So, you don't have to be 'a Coach'; it's about taking your role as a Leader and adopting a coaching style into it. This means:

- Listening to your people
- Asking them questions
- Understanding their motivations
- Inviting them into conversations and decisions
- Empowering and supporting them to solve their own challenges and achieve their own goals
- Helping them unlock their potential and fulfil your shared purpose

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but I think you can see the pattern here.

it's about being more human - giving trust and empowering purpose.

## 5.5 Your immediate next steps



We've covered a number of key things in this White Paper:

- In order for performance to become high performance, Leaders need to play a key role in unlocking dormant potential, purpose and discretionary effort in their people.
- Key to this is the building and strengthening of genuine two-way trust at all levels, which currently seems to be lacking, the further up an organisation you look.
- Key to building trust is leading with a coaching style, which seeks to empower your people, unlocking their potential and marrying it to a clear, shared purpose.

Now, you must look to bring it into the way you lead, and there are no 'silver bullets' or shortcuts. You need to be your 'own best case-study' while doing this:

- 1) If you believe in coaching to unlock the potential in your people, you too, should look at your getting your own Coach to unlock your potential.
- 2) If you believe in the power of working together to unearth answers, you should build a strong network of peers to share and compare challenges, failures, opportunities and successes with.
- 3) You need to explore this mindset further, to really understand it fully and set the foundations for what will be a hard, but rewarding journey.

## 5.0 How to Contact Me

If you would like to know more about leading this way, or about how I can help; get in touch.

Please, take a look at my website, LinkedIn page, or email me to get in touch to find out more:

Website: [www.robmoors.com](http://www.robmoors.com)  
LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/rob-moors-consulting](http://www.linkedin.com/company/rob-moors-consulting)  
[www.linkedin.com/in/bobbymoors](http://www.linkedin.com/in/bobbymoors)  
Email: [rob@robmoors.com](mailto:rob@robmoors.com)

Thanks for reading,

Rob.

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