



Emergence

“

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

— Albert Einstein

”

Being a Modern Leader

A Practical Guide

9 Questions These Types Of Leaders Ask Themselves

Introduction

Being a modern leader extends beyond merely managing change; it encompasses cultivating an environment where trust, collaboration, and meaningful innovation can thrive. Transforming and evolving organisations necessitate leaders who are self-aware and dedicated to fostering a culture of openness and continuous learning. This assessment aims to help you reflect on your strengths, pinpoint areas for development, and enhance your ability to lead change effectively.

Change and innovation can be intricate and daunting, but supportive and pioneering leadership cultivates teams to be empowered, engaged and resourceful. By concentrating on key leadership dimensions—such as integrity, communication, and psychological safety—you can cultivate resilient teams that embrace change rather than resist it. Use this guide to delve into your leadership style, motivations, and development opportunities.

Are You Asking the Right Questions?

Great leaders don't just manage—they reflect, adapt, and challenge themselves with the right questions. These nine areas help you navigate complexity, inspire trust, and cultivate a forward-thinking approach to leadership.

1. The Personal Journey

How does my personal transformation impact my ability to lead change?

Leadership is an evolving process that requires continuous self-reflection and growth. Leaders who commit to personal transformation build resilience, adaptability, and stronger connections with their teams. By embracing challenges and new perspectives, they create an environment where innovation and meaningful change can thrive. Change begins within—how are you shaping yourself to inspire and lead others?

2. The Why for Change

Am I clear on the purpose of the change, and can I communicate it effectively to my team?

A strong sense of "why" provides clarity and direction. Leaders who articulate the purpose behind transformations inspire confidence and alignment. Consider how your team perceives the rationale for change and how you can reinforce its significance.

3. What Supports Us to Uphold Our Integrity

What frameworks or practices support my team and I to act with integrity during challenging times?

Maintaining integrity requires intentional actions and clear systems. Reflect on the tools, behaviours, and guiding principles that help uphold honesty and fairness, even under pressure. Consider team check-ins, establishing codes of conduct, or using reflective practices like journaling or peer feedback to foster alignment with core values. Strong integrity fosters a culture of trust and accountability.

4. Becoming Fearless

How do I confront fears and uncertainties in myself and my team to take bold actions?

Fear is a natural response to uncertainty, but courage enables leaders to act decisively. Reflect on moments when you or your team overcame hesitation to achieve success. Fostering a fearless mindset encourages innovation and growth, even when the path ahead is unclear. Leaders can nurture this by creating psychological safety, promoting open dialogue, modelling vulnerability, and practising resilience techniques such as reframing challenges as learning opportunities.

5. Readiness for Change

How do I assess and prepare myself and others for upcoming changes?

Readiness for change hinges on awareness and preparation. Evaluate how well you understand the needs of your team and the challenges they encounter. Are you providing the appropriate support, resources, and communication to empower them to embrace change with confidence?

6. Holding the Destination and Journey

How do I maintain focus on the long-term goal while managing the immediate steps?

Balancing vision and execution is vital for successful leadership. Reflect on how you maintain perspective while addressing daily priorities. Acknowledging progress and celebrating small victories can sustain motivation and momentum over time.

7. Language Shapes Our Reality

How does the way I communicate influence my team's mindset and collaboration?

Words shape perceptions and drive outcomes. Contemplate how your language fosters positivity, collaboration, and alignment within your team. What adjustments to your communication style could enhance trust and engagement?

8. What Are My Preferences

What aspects of my natural leadership style support or hinder change initiatives and positive action taking?

Understanding your preferences allows you to adapt to different situations. Reflect on how your natural tendencies impact your leadership effectiveness. Do I have preference towards more structured/directive leadership or more emergent, a leader who thrives in chaos?

Are there areas where you need to step outside your comfort zone to better serve your team and organisation? Either stepping forward or stepping back?

9. Holding the Space and Getting the Support You Need

How do I create an environment where my team feels supported and safe whilst at the same how I access the support I need?

Psychological safety is crucial for nurturing trust and collaboration. Reflect on how you encourage openness and inclusion within your team. Simultaneously, consider how you prioritise your own well-being and seek support to sustain your leadership.

Case Studies of Organisations Leading with These Mindsets

The following organisations exemplify trust-based leadership, collaboration, and meaningful innovation through their structures, cultures, and values. Their leaders have demonstrated that such approaches are not only feasible but also highly effective across various industries:

- **Patagonia (Outdoor Apparel)** – A purpose-driven company prioritising sustainability, employee well-being, and social responsibility.

- **Southwest Airlines (Aviation)** – A people-first company that nurtures a strong workplace culture and excellence in customer service.
- **Buurtzorg (Healthcare)** – A decentralised model of nursing that empowers self-managed teams to deliver superior patient care.
- **Haier (Manufacturing)** – An innovative and decentralised organisation that operates as an ecosystem of micro-enterprises.
- **Morning Star (Food Processing)** – A company with a self-management model where employees assume full responsibility for their roles.
- **Gore-Tex (W.L. Gore & Associates) (Textile Innovation)** – A flat, non-hierarchical culture that promotes collaboration and initiative.
- **Spotify (Technology & Entertainment)** – Utilises an agile squad model to drive innovation and responsiveness in product development.
- **FAVI (Metal Manufacturing)** – A French factory with a self-managed workforce that delivers outstanding quality and performance.
- **Zappos (Retail)** – A customer-obsessed company with a unique workplace culture centred on employee empowerment.
- **NER Group (Engineering & Industrial)** – A network of cooperative enterprises that flourish through shared purpose and participatory decision-making.

These organisations illustrate that trust, autonomy, and purpose-driven leadership can create high-performing, engaged, and innovative workplaces.

Reflection and Why These Questions Matter

Each of these areas represents a critical aspect of leading change effectively. By reflecting on these dimensions, leaders can:

- Develop greater self-awareness to align their actions with their values and vision.
- Build stronger connections with their teams by addressing fears, motivations, and communication.
- Balance strategy and empathy, by prioritising both organisational goals and team well-being.
- Enhance adaptability and responsiveness by recognising areas for improvement and growth.
- Strengthen their ability to inspire trust, collaboration, and innovation across their teams and organisation.

Leading change and innovation is not a solitary journey. It requires ongoing reflection, intentional action, and a commitment to both personal and professional growth. Seeking collaboration and external support—such as mentorship, peer networks, or professional coaching—can further enhance a leader's capacity to navigate change successfully. Use this assessment as a foundation for meaningful conversations, targeted development, and impactful leadership practices.

Next Steps

For tailored support or to explore needs, goals and aspirations , contact us:

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