LAMDA Solutions

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

The LAMDA Leadership Newsletter

Month 3: Integrity and Creating a Culture

What becomes normal because of me?

In the last two month's newsletters we built from self-leadership, through to our influence and how we lead others:

- How others feel from us – Psychological Safety
- How much ownership we provide – Challenge & Support
- What people hear from us – Communication
- Who people become under us – Leadership Environment

We asked ourselves: *"What do others experience because of us?"*

In this newsletter we move from how others experience us within moments, to what becomes normal because of us.

From individuals and relationships.
To the culture that emerges around us over time.

Leadership does not occur in moments; but those moments have lasting consequences.

One in two employees have left a job to get away from their manager.

- Gallup

Google's Project Aristotle found that psychological safety was the single most important factor in high-performing teams.

- Google

Psychological safety improves engagement, learning behaviour, and willingness to speak up.

- HBR

If our first month helped to build awareness of self…
…and our second helped to build accountability…
…this month will explore our lasting impact.

We aim to help you explore the questions:
"What impact does what I tolerate have?"
"Am I the reason my people are frustrated?"

This matters because teams don't rise to what we expect…
…they fall to what you repeatedly tolerate.

In this month's newsletter we'll explore how leadership environments are created over time.

How we can shift towards a Courageous Culture:

- From Dependence → Growth
- From Avoidance → Taking Ownership
- From Protecting Ego → Speaking Honestly
- From Exerting Pressure → Collective Standards

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Personal Page and LAMDA Solutions for regular content and updates

1. Psychological Safety

"Can people still grow under pressure…under you?"

We build directly on our exploration of Psychological Safety from last month.

Psychological safety is often misunderstood as:

- Comfort
- Low pressure
- Being "nice"

But true psychological safety is not the absence of standards, challenge, or accountability.

It is the presence of:
→ Trust
→ Communication
→ Emotional Stability of the Leader
→ Supportive Challenge

The Dynamics at Play:
Leader Behaviour → Team Experience → Team Belief

Responses under pressure shape the emotional environment.
That environment shapes how safe people feel to contribute, challenge, and grow.

Over time, this becomes the culture people experience every day.

Psychological safety was associated with 19% higher productivity and 31% more innovation in Google teams.
- Google

Psychological safety is defined as: "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking".
- Leaders Performance Institute

High-performing teams are built on five dynamics, with psychological safety as the most important factor.
- Google

They Might Stay If You...	They'll Leave If You...
...trust them early and back their decisions.	...make them feel like trust must be constantly earned.
...give them ownership within clear boundaries.	...control every decision or second-guess them.
...hold high standards but provide support when it's needed.	...apply pressure without support...or support without challenge.
...absorb pressure from above and create stability.	...pass pressure down and amplify stress.
...are clear, present, and consistent in small moments.	...only communicate when something goes wrong.
...notice the small things, not just big outcomes.	...only value results and overlook effort.
...remain calm and grounded under pressure.	...react emotionally and create uncertainty.
...treat mistakes as part of learning.	...attach blame or consequences to every misstep.
...create an environment where they feel part of something.	...make work feel at odds with their life and wellbeing.
...help them see who they can become.	...keep them stuck in who they currently are.

It is not about removing pressure, but creating environments where people can still:
→ Speak honestly
→ Take ownership
→ Learn through mistakes
→ Grow into higher standards

All without fear becoming the dominant experience.

Because people don't develop through comfort…

…they develop when challenge is paired with belief, support, and trust.

Over time how we consistently lead through each moment translates to how they experience us:

- The belief we show → their confidence.
- Balancing challenge & support → shapes their growth.
- Our communication → the meaning they take.

Who we are under pressure becomes their environment!

2. Coaching & Development (vs Directing)

"Are you developing people…or just changing how tightly you control them?"

This all builds from our understanding of ownership and autonomy, and how we adapt as a leader.

Most problems within teams are not caused by a lack of care or effort…
…they're caused by an ineffective fit between the leadership behaviour and the follower's need!

Leaders often swing between two extremes:
→ Over-Directing: Control, Clarity, Dependency.
→ Over-Delegating: Freedom, Ambiguity, Abandonment.

But this is not how you build sustained ownership.

Empowerment is often framed as:

- "Step back more."
- "Give them space."
- "Let them figure it out."

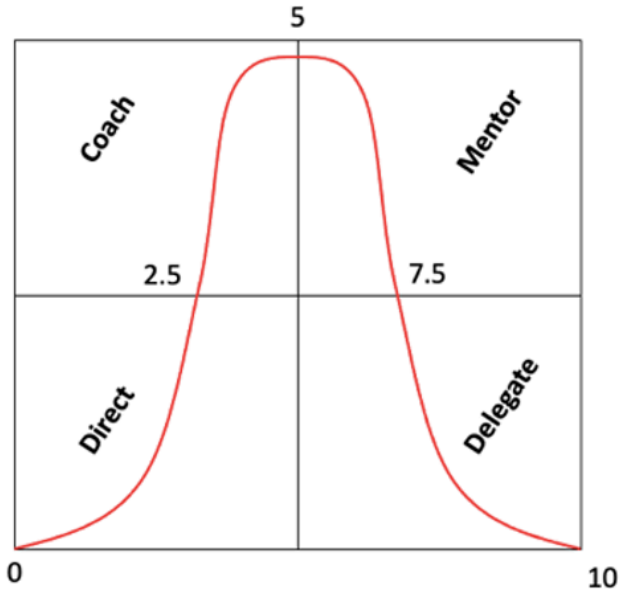
Applied too quickly and it stops being empowerment and starts being abandonment.

They don't need autonomy…
…they need appropriate autonomy!

Firms with high-trust cultures outperform low-trust companies by up to 286% in total return to shareholders.
- Harvard Business Review

The most effective leaders act as 'culture carriers', not just decision makers.
- Harvard Business Review

In high-performing cultures, accountability becomes internal rather than enforced through hierarchy.
- Harvard Business Review



Independence =

Ability & Experience & Motivation

The Leadership Spectrum

People adapt to the environment you create. Effective leadership sits on a developmental continuum:

→ Directing: High guidance, high clarity, low autonomy

→ Coaching: Guidance & questioning, builds thinking

→ Mentoring: Space & proximity, support available

→ Delegating: Full ownership & accountability

A useful way to determine which to use is to assess independence through levels of ability, experience and motivation.

- Low Independence → Needs Direction
- Developing Independence → Needs Coaching
- Establishing Independence → Needs Mentoring
- High Independence → Can be Delegated to

Importantly this score is not static, it changes with context, confidence, and the environment.

3. Authority vs Ego

"Are people following your authority…or reacting to your ego?"

This builds from our understanding of self-leadership and emotional regulation, and the impact these have on the psychological safety of our teams.

Importantly, we need to understand a distinction:

- Authority is given through trust.
- Ego is protected through control.

Under pressure, leaders reveal which one they actually operate from.

Authority within leadership is not our title or position within the hierarchy.
→ A title only explains where you sit in the organisational structure!

It does not guarantee:

- Influence.
- Trust.
- Followership.
- Respect.

People may comply due to position…but they only truly follow through choice.

People buy-in to other people who buy-in to them!

Ego-Led Leadership	People-Led Leadership
Wins the interaction.	Improves the outcome.
Protects their identity.	Protects psychological safety.
Feedback defends their own position.	Feedback develops collective performance.
Sees disagreements as challenges.	Sees disagreements as vital contributions.
Focuses on being right.	Focuses on getting it right.
Creates compliance.	Creates ownership.
Centralises success around themselves.	Distributes success across the team.
Leads to be respected by others.	Leads to grow and develop others.
Controls public perception.	Builds internal capability.
Energy goes into self-promotion.	Energy goes into team growth.

Leadership behaviour cascades through organisations, with senior leaders setting norms that are amplified at every level below them.
- McKinsey and Company

84% of executives believe that culture is critical to success, but only 12% believe their culture is driving the right behaviours.
- Deloitte

From Self to Service

When leaders are driven by Ego:
→ Feedback becomes personal.

→ Disagreement feels like threat.

→ Standards become inconsistent.

→ People shift from contribution to compliance.

However, when we lead from Service:
→ Standards stay clear without emotional charge.

→ People feel safe to speak honestly.

→ Accountability and trust coexist.

→ Performance becomes sustainable.

The environment changes based on what the leader is trying to protect: Themselves or Others.

The Deeper Leadership Responsibility

True authority is built when people want to follow a leader.

This only happens when they experience:

- Trust in the leader.
- Belief in their development.
- Consistency in the standards.
- Psychological safety in challenge.

Our leadership in every moment, and from every interaction, shapes the environment.

→ What gets said.
→ What gets avoided.
→ How safe people feel to fail.
→ Whether feedback is honest or filtered.

From this people quickly learn:
→ whether they are safe to grow.
→ or only safe when they comply.

Leadership is about:

- Protecting people whilst maintaining standards.
- Separating identity from performance outcomes.
- Creating clarity without instilling fear.
- Serving the development of others.

If the leader needs to win, the team will always lose.

So, we must ask ourselves:

In this moment, am I protecting my ego…

…or am I protecting the environment my team needs to grow?

Only 30% of U.S. employees and 13% globally are engaged at work.

- Gallup

Companies with strong cultures saw 4x higher revenue than companies with weak cultures.

- McKinsey & Company

Culture is not what we say, it is what we do and tolerate every day.

- Harvard Business Review

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4. Performance & Accountability

"Does your team perform because of you…or because of the culture you've built?"

Pressure can drive performance temporarily.
→ But only culture sustains it.

If you want your team to be accountable, don't confuse it with pressure.

They are not the same.

- Pressure is external: "I have to…"
- Accountability is internal: "I own this…"

When a leader relies too heavily on pressure:
→ Performance rises in the short term.
→ But it collapses then the leader is absent.

It creates in the short term what looks like a high performing team…
…but it's actually a compliance culture.

This is a culture that is easy to spot:
✓ Standards increase when the leader is present.
✓ Urgency disappears when scrutiny is removed.
✓ Performance is driven by fear or consequences.

But it is fragile as compliance only lasts whilst the force creating it is present.

A Courageous Culture

When people have ownership:

→ Standards remain consistent without supervision.
→ Accountability becomes self-generated.
→ Performance is stable under pressure and absence.

Pressure is not the problem!

It's pressure with the absence of support.

Leaders are accountable for the environment, not just the outcomes.

This includes:

- Clarity of expectations.
- Consistency of standards.
- Emotional safety.
- Communication quality.
- Resourcing and support.
- Behavioural modelling.

You cannot demand performance, whilst ignoring the conditions required to produce it.

Sustainable performance cultures require two things in balance: psychological safety and standards.

- Without safety → people withdraw.
- Without standards → people drift.

Courageous Culture	Compliant Culture
Clear standards → Shared ownership.	**Inconsistent standards** → Reactive behaviour.
Leads with calm under pressure → Stability and trust.	**Leads emotionally under pressure** → Anxiety and avoidance.
Invites challenge and ideas → Innovation and contribution.	**Shuts down disagreement** → Silence and compliance.
Coaches through mistakes → Growth and accountability.	**Punishes mistakes** → Fear and blame-shifting.
Builds belief in people → Confidence and initiative.	**Questions capability publicly** → Self-protection and withdrawal.
Communicates with people → Buy-in and alignment.	**Communicates at people** → Resistance and disengagement.
Balances challenge and support → Sustainable growth.	**Applies pressure without support** → Burnout and resentment.
Creates psychological safety → Courage under pressure.	**Creates fear of failure** → Risk aversion and hiding.
Develops independence → Ownership in your absence.	**Creates dependency** → Reliance on your presence.
Empowers decision-making → Faster problem solving.	**Controls every decision** → Bottlenecks and hesitation.
Recognises contribution consistently → Discretionary effort.	**Only notices failure** → Minimum effort culture.
Protects standards consistently → Cultural accountability.	**Only enforces standards when watching** → Performative compliance.
Encourages learning and reflection → Adaptability and resilience.	**Demands perfection** → Defensive behaviour.
Leads from service → Team-first mentality.	**Leads from ego** → Self-preservation culture.
Creates shared purpose → Collective accountability.	**Creates pressure through authority** → Short-term obedience.
Stays present without micromanaging → Confidence and autonomy.	**Micromanages constantly** → Learned helplessness.
Celebrates team success → Shared pride and momentum.	**Claims success personally** → Disconnection and cynicism.
Builds trust before crisis → Clarity under pressure.	**Uses pressure to force performance** → Panic under pressure.
Encourages ownership of problems → Solution-focused teams	**Solves everything personally** → Passive teams
Develops leaders beneath them → Sustainable culture	**Keeps control at the top** → Fragile culture

The strongest cultures are not the ones where the leader gets results by exerting more pressure…
…they are the ones where pressure is no longer needed to sustain performance.

By that point:
→ Standards are shared.
→ Accountability is internal.
→ Trust is established.
→ Ownership is cultural.

It all comes from shifting leadership from enforcing performance…
…to sustaining the environment where performance becomes inevitable..

Partner with LAMDA Solutions

At LAMDA Solutions, we work with organisations to develop confident, capable middle leaders who can drive performance and shape culture.

We offer:

- Targeted leadership development programmes for middle leaders.
- One-to-one coaching to support individual growth and performance.

If you're looking to invest in your leaders…or your own development…reach out via LinkedIn (either directly to me or through LAMDA Solutions).