



# UMANIUS

Corporate Humanism



6

## LEADERSHIP IN THE HUMANISTIC ENTERPRISE

April 2026

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**UMANIUS** is the publication of Auren Foundation, which, as part of its founding mission, succinctly addresses topics related to corporate humanism. Its aim is to present, propose means of implementation, disseminate, and encourage the values advocated by civic humanism within private and public enterprises and organizations.



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# 01

# Conceptual Framework

## Leadership in the Humanistic Enterprise



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Leadership encompasses the set of human capabilities that enable individuals to influence the attitudes or behaviours of other people or teams. It is a complex phenomenon, as individuals may be influenced by various leaders in different contexts -at work, ideologically or socially - and may themselves influence others in different circumstances.

In the business world, leadership exists in both formal and informal or influence-based forms. In complex organisations, leadership is exercised by many. While one individual may officially hold the role of “leader of leaders,” people at different organisational levels lead their respective teams. Even top leaders are influenced by other forces such as shareholders, clients, suppliers or executive teams.

Leadership capacity may exist in individuals who do not hold formal authority, just as formal authority may exist without true leadership capacity. The key challenge for executives lies in harmonising their formal power with their personal capacity to lead and inspire.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational culture. While a change in leadership does not automatically lead to cultural transformation, a leader’s values inevitably begin to influence and reshape the organisational environment. Although organisations exhibit cultural inertia, that culture is malleable. A new leadership team must navigate this change, often encountering practices justified by “this is how it’s always been done,” even when these are misaligned with new values.

Rembrandt’s *The Syndics of the Drapers’ Guild* portrays a scene of shared leadership within a team, where authority stems from dialogue, respect, knowledge and collaboration, rather than from imposed power.



Title: *The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild* by Rembrandt, 1662

Location: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam – Gallery of Honour

Source: Wikimedia Commons

File: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/95/Rembrandt\\_-\\_De\\_Staalmeesters\\_het\\_college\\_van\\_staalmeesters\\_%28waardijns%29\\_van\\_het\\_Amsterdamse\\_lakenbereidersgilde\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/95/Rembrandt_-_De_Staalmeesters_het_college_van_staalmeesters_%28waardijns%29_van_het_Amsterdamse_lakenbereidersgilde_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

This is a faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art. This artwork is in the public domain in its country of origin and in other jurisdictions where the copyright term is the life of the author plus 100 years. The artist died in 1906.



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In today's business landscape, humanistic leadership has emerged as a compelling philosophy that prioritises human development and well-being. In contrast to traditional models focused solely on outcomes and performance, humanistic leadership emphasises empathy, authenticity and meaningful interpersonal relationships.

The core principles of humanistic leadership are based on ethical values, teamwork, respect for human rights and sustainability. These principles are essential to cultivating work environments where individuals feel valued, respected and motivated so as to realise their full potential. By embracing these ideals, humanistic leaders empower their teams towards both personal and professional growth.

A hallmark of humanistic leadership is its focus on promoting participation and individual growth. Humanistic leaders recognise that each person brings a unique set of skills, talents and experience that enrich the team and contribute to the organisation's collective success. In this regard, they foster inclusive workplaces that value collaboration and open contribution. This approach enhances team cohesion and nurtures a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

Humanistic leaders actively promote opportunities for learning and development. They support continuous education and provide constructive feedback to help employees grow. By investing in their teams, they not only increase the organisation's resilience and capabilities but also create an environment where all individuals can thrive and reach their goals.

Humanistic leadership also upholds ethical behaviour and strong values in all decisions and actions. This involves active listening, empathetic communication and the empowerment

of others by creating inclusive, growth-oriented workspaces. By embodying these values, humanistic leaders foster a culture of excellence and accountability within their organisations.

At the heart of humanistic leadership lies a deep commitment to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of team members. This includes offering support programmes, promoting a healthy work-life balance and being attentive to individual needs. By prioritising well-being, humanistic leaders build healthier, more attractive workplaces that inspire higher engagement and productivity.

Furthermore, humanistic leadership is committed to sustainable long-term success. This means making business decisions that not only yield short-term gains but are also considered based on their impact on people, society and the environment. Humanistic leaders strive to generate value ethically and responsibly, adopting business practices that foster equity, inclusion and sustainability. In doing so, they build organisations that are not only ethical and socially responsible but also help to create a fairer, more sustainable world for future generations.

In conclusion, humanistic leadership offers a transformative approach to managing and guiding teams in today's corporate environment. By adopting humanistic principles, leaders not only enhance short-term organisational performance but also contribute to a more ethical and sustainable future for all.



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According to the Randstad Workmonitor 2025, 52% of young people aged 16–24 would refuse a job offer from a company whose social and environmental values do not align with their own.

Randstad Workmonitor 2025: A New Baseline at Work report:

Employee wellbeing has been declining since its peak at 35% in 2022. Older managers and female managers experienced the biggest decreases in the past year. Manager engagement fell from 30% to 27%. Individual contributor engagement remained flat at 18%.

No other worker category — male or female, young or old — experienced as significant a decline. However, two types of managers were particularly affected:

- Young (under 35) manager engagement fell by five percentage points.
- Female manager engagement dropped by seven points.

In the last five years, the typical organization has experienced disruption at every level:

- post-pandemic retirements and turnover
- a hiring boom and bust
- rapidly restructured teams and departments
- shrinking budgets as stimulus programs ended
- disrupted supply chains
- new customer expectations
- digital transformation and AI tools
- new employee desires regarding flexibility and remote work

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>



# 52%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16–24 WOULD REFUSE  
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### Priorities and motivators

- **83% of workers** say *work-life balance* is important, and for the first time it surpasses pay (83% vs. 82%).
- **83%** want their workplace to provide *a sense of community*.
- **36%** would be willing to *earn less money* if they had friends at work.

### Behaviors and attitudes

- **44%** have *left a job due to a toxic work environment*, an increase of more than **33% compared to last year**.
- **45%** say they have *advocated for better working conditions*.
- **29%** have quit a job because they disagreed with *leadership's values or positions*.
- **48%** would not accept a job if the company does *not align with their social and environmental values*.

### Flexibility and skills development

- **31%** have left a job due to *lack of flexibility*.
- **40% of Gen Z** have received more *location flexibility* in the last six months, compared with **17% of baby boomers**.
- The share of workers who would consider leaving a job if they *do not receive skills development opportunities* increased from **29% to 41%** year over year.
- More than **one-third (36%)** say their employer *does not offer training in future skills*.

### Hybrid work and trust

- When asked about their ideal arrangement, **26%** would prefer *working three days per week in the office*.
- **31%** of employers require *full-time office attendance*, compared with **29%** that offer hybrid models.
- **30%** do not trust that their manager has their *best interests at heart*, and **33%** do not trust that their manager *supports their career development*.

### Relevant Reports and Sources:

- The number of Europeans who expressed satisfaction with their job as low or non-existent was 7.6% but in France, Portugal and the Netherlands, this figure is double.

[https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp\\_data\\_news/The-job-satisfaction-map-these-are-the-countries-where-workers-live-best/](https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/The-job-satisfaction-map-these-are-the-countries-where-workers-live-best/)





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## Business Role



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**Encouraging** transparent open communication within the organisation fosters a sense of belonging and facilitates the exchange of ideas and suggestions, thereby building team trust.

**Implementing** 360° evaluations across various levels of leadership allows for a more comprehensive and constructive development process.

**Providing** leadership training for middle managers enhances their personal and professional growth.

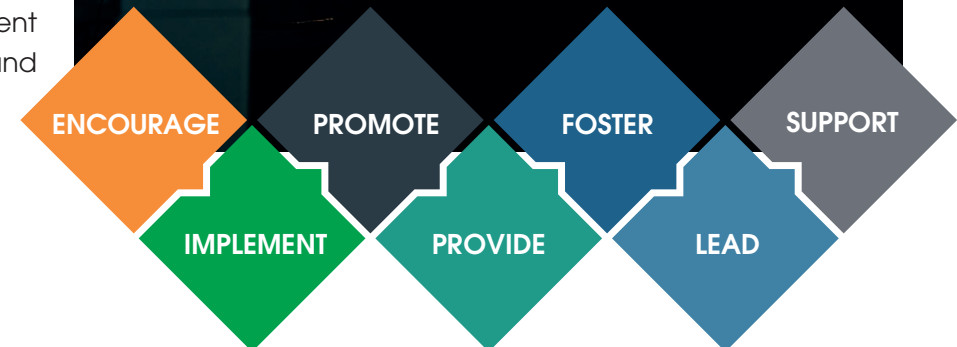
**Establishing** clear career development and/or internal promotion plans for mid-level executives, supported by the necessary training for assuming new responsibilities.

**Promoting** diversity and inclusion through inclusive policies that ensure equal opportunities and a comfortable and respectful work environment.

**Fostering** teamwork and interdepartmental collaboration, as well as the exchange of skills and knowledge.

**Leading** by example, positively reinforcing behaviours that promote ethical decision-making, respect and employee appreciation, while actively discouraging conduct that undermines these values.

**Supporting** awareness and the implementation of the Protocol for Prevention and Action in Cases of Discriminatory Harassment based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, and Sexual Characteristics.



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## Purpose-Driven Narratives

### A Promising Career



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Carlos arrived at the job interview feeling nervous. He had finished his degree in Economics almost a year earlier, and no longer felt particularly young. Completing his studies hadn't been easy. His mother, divorced and without the financial support of her former partner, had made great sacrifices so he could continue to study. In addition to his academic efforts, Carlos had spent years delivering food for a Chinese restaurant every Friday and Saturday night. The owner, Tao Li, would give him several servings of mixed veg rice at the end of each shift, which he, his mother and his younger sister (three years his junior) ate during the week.

There were no luxuries at home. Still, his mother never once suggested that he should quit his studies to get a full-time job. She regretted that Carlos had to work when his university friends were out partying, but she admired his tenacity and sense of responsibility.

Once he completed his degree, Carlos started looking for a job. It wasn't too hard to get hired, as he had good grades and a sound level of English. He had a natural aptitude for languages and music. However, his first professional experience as a university graduate was disappointing. He was eager to learn and grow, but he soon realised that working at Suministros Martínez, S.L. wouldn't provide him with many learning opportunities.

He had been drawn to the idea of joining a small company, thinking it would offer exposure to various aspects of business operations. He was hired to work under Mr Andrés Llop, the trusted right-hand man of the company's owner and managing director, Manuel Martínez, who was nearing retirement age. Carlos thought this would be a chance to learn closely from someone experienced, although he couldn't imagine spending his entire career in that small company, as Mr Llop had.

Only a week into the job, Carlos was startled by raised voices coming from the director's office. Manuel was arguing with his son, Nacho, who had been appointed Marketing Director three years earlier, reportedly to eventually succeed his father. The previous Head of Sales (how job titles evolve!) had only lasted a year before moving on.

Nacho, just a bit older than Carlos, had studied Marketing and Communication at a private university and had completed his degree three years earlier. It had taken him a while, and he had no interest in pursuing a master's degree or any other further studies. He had good ideas for modernising his father's business model.

Manuel and Nacho had very different views on how to manage the company. Manuel always arrived before anyone else and was the last to leave. He believed in leading by example. He had worked hard to build the company up after leaving his previous job in the same sector. He was proud of what he had achieved - an established company with 30 employees.

Nacho, however, didn't see the point in arriving before 10 a.m., believing it was inappropriate to contact clients earlier. Likewise, he never stayed beyond 5 or 5:30 p.m., although he required his team to finish all their tasks, often asking them to stay until 7:30 or 8 p.m. Once the last employee had left, Manuel would finally go home, often arriving around 9.

Manuel understood that times had changed, but he wasn't convinced that Nacho was managing his team well. Yes, perhaps he himself had a paternalistic style, but employees saw him as fair. In contrast, they often complained that Nacho was unpredictable, never took responsibility when things went wrong and claimed successes even when he hadn't contributed to



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them. Manuel hoped it was just a matter of age and experience and tried not to dwell on the complaints, although he was concerned about the toxic atmosphere within the company.

Mr Llop also felt uncomfortable with Nacho, though the latter avoided conflict with him, aware of his loyalty to Manuel. Protective of his position, Mr Llop had no intention of stepping aside and saw Carlos's arrival as an intrusion. He had no university degree, didn't speak English, and did not believe either was necessary to manage the company loyally and properly.

Yes, the company had been suffering losses in recent years, but prices weren't what they used to be. Some product lines (or

perhaps some clients) were no longer profitable. Still, he trusted Manuel's intuition to steer them back on track.

He couldn't bear Carlos suggesting they review cost breakdowns, keep accounting records up to date or produce monthly or at least quarterly balance sheets and income statements. "We've got until next July to close the books!" he scoffed. Who did this kid think he was, trying to embarrass a veteran employee like him? Let him reconcile the bank accounts - there was enough backlog already!

Carlos realised he had made the wrong choice. Suministros Martínez wasn't the place to build his future. Now he was sitting nervously in a new job interview, hopeful for a better fit.



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"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."

PETER FERDINAND DRUCKER

"If a ruler himself is upright, all will go well without orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders they will not be obeyed."

CONFUCIUS

"The best executive is one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

"True leadership lies in guiding others to success."

BILL OWENS

"There is no nobler work than that which contributes to human happiness."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

INDIGENOUS PROVERB

"Passion is different from interest. Those who are just interested in things have the "wish", but passionate people have the "will"."

ISRAELMORE AYIVOR

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

RALPH NADER

"Great leaders are willing to sacrifice their own personal interests for the good of the team."

JOHN WOODEN



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<https://globalgoals.org/goals/8-decent-work-and-economic-growth/>
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Steve Jobs Talks About Managing People



Principles for Success – Ray Dalio



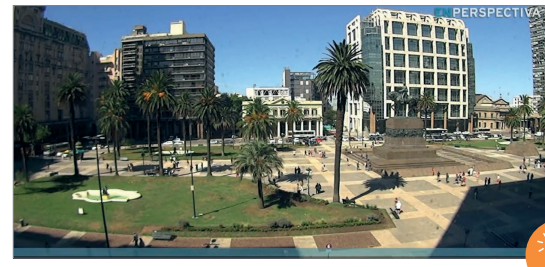
Interview with Henry Mintzberg



Great Leadership Begins with Three Commitments | Pete Rogers | TEDxSoongChingLingSchool



Tom Peters on the Attributes of Great Leaders



Bob Chapman – “Truly Human Leadership” (TEDxScottAFB)



Simon Sinek – “How Great Leaders Inspire Action” (TED)



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# Change in Marketing Leadership



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I HAVE A MEETING WITH MR GARCÍA FROM PROMOCIONES GARCÍA.

EXCELLENT. EDURNE, THIS IS PERFECT FOR YOU - YOUR BACKGROUND IN PSYCHOLOGY MAKES YOU IDEAL FOR THIS.

AT PROMOCIONES GARCÍA...

LEADERSHIP MUST BE ALIGNED WITH THE COMPANY'S VALUES.

I'D LIKE TO SEE IF THERE ARE SUITABLE INTERNAL CANDIDATES FIRST. IF NOT, WE'LL LOOK EXTERNALLY.

I HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER WORKING THERE WHO IS WELL-PREPARED, BUT THE POSITION MUST GO TO THE RIGHT PERSON.

A GOOD LEADER SHOULD NOT ONLY BRING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, BUT ALSO EMPATHY, ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS AND THE ABILITY TO MOTIVATE THEIR TEAM.

THEIR MARKETING DIRECTOR IS NEARING RETIREMENT, AND THEY WANT TO CHOOSE A STRONG LEADER TO TAKE OVER.

I HAVE WELL-ESTABLISHED CORPORATE VALUES THAT MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE SELECTION PROCESS.

THEY MUST PROMOTE TEAMWORK AND FOSTER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.

POWER CAN BE ASSIGNED, BUT AUTHORITY MUST BE EARNED THROUGH THE RESPECT AND RECOGNITION OF OTHERS.

WE HAVE WELL-ESTABLISHED CORPORATE VALUES THAT MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE SELECTION PROCESS.

CAN YOU REALLY DISCOVER ALL THAT?

THIS IS ACHIEVED BY GENUINELY CARING ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES AND COLLABORATORS.

IN RECRUITMENT PROCESSES, MANY ASPECTS ARE ANALYSED: THE COMPANY PROFILE, PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING, INTERVIEWS, THIRD-PARTY INSIGHTS...

AND BY MAINTAINING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIRD PARTIES.

YES, AND THEY MUST ALSO KNOW HOW TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY.

AN OBJECTIVE SELECTION PROCESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR A RESPONSIBLE COMPANY.

MR GARCÍA, THE PROPOSAL IS READY.

WE MAKE A GREAT TEAM!

DIVERSITY MAKES US STRONGER.

I'M CURRENTLY PREPARING THE PROPOSAL FOR PROMOCIONES GARCÍA.

EXCELLENT. LET'S SET A DATE TO MEET.

**Key Stages:**

- Understanding the company's philosophy.
- Analysis and definition of the role.
- Presentation of the competency profile.
- Assessment of internal candidates and, if necessary, external search.





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