



Postdoc Day 2026

9u30 - 12u: WORKSHOPS

Workshops	
Self-insight as cornerstone of your career management. <i>Talent Center</i>	Willem Elsschotzaal
Perfectly driven or (Im)perfect? <i>The Human Link</i>	Prentenkabinet
A rapid framework for Interdisciplinary alignment and mutual understanding. <i>Grants office</i>	Greshamzaal



12u00-13u00: NETWORKING LUNCH



Postdoc Day 2026

Prof. Maarten Weyn
Vice-rector research and impact

Impact

$$I_{total} = \alpha P + \beta R + \gamma C + \delta G + \varepsilon S + \zeta V + \eta M + \theta E + \vartheta I$$

$$P = \sum_{i=1}^n (w_i \cdot \log(1 + c_i))$$

$$P(t) = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \sum_{i=1}^{n(t)} (w_i(t) \cdot \log(1 + c_i(t))) dt$$

$$R = r_j + r_p$$

$$G = \sum_{g=1}^l (s_g \cdot f_g)$$

$$C = \sum_{k=1}^m (x_k \cdot y_k)$$

$$S = \sum_{j=1}^t (d_j \cdot o_j)$$

$$V = \sum (v_t \cdot q_t)$$

$$M = \sum_{k=1}^h (m_k \cdot g_k)$$

Impact

$$I_{total} = \alpha P + \beta R + \gamma C + \delta G + \varepsilon S + \zeta V + \eta M + \theta E + \vartheta I$$

$$E = \phi_1 \cdot S_o + \phi_2 \cdot E_c + \phi_3 \cdot C_u$$

$$I = \sum_{k=1}^n (i_k \cdot d_k \cdot \Delta t_k) + U$$



Postdoc Day 2026

Dr. Pieter Spooren
Head Research Affairs Office (RIVA)

University of Antwerp

The University of Antwerp is a young, dynamic and research-intensive university in which scientific research with international scientific and social impact is conducted.

It is the mission of the university to provide its researchers with a research environment in which new insights and ideas emerge and are made public.

The realisation of this mission requires funding, support and infrastructure so that creative processes can receive full attention and ideas can be translated into high-quality achievements and collaboration.





Research policy 2023-2028 @UAntwerp

- Primary objective

‘To deliver high-quality scientific research across the full spectrum from ground-breaking and curiosity-driven research to application-based and applied research’

- Strategic objectives

- Striving for excellence
- A stimulating research policy
- The BOF as leverage (explicit stepping stone to FWO and Horizon funding)
- **Investing in researchers is investing in the future**
- Responsible research & innovation
- Quality assurance of research

Strategic priorities – Research Board



Support for researchers

Attracting, developing, and retaining talent



Research infrastructure policy

Inventory, strategy, guidance in the international infrastructure landscape, collaboration, and leveraging



Funding and research management

Strengthening internal and external funding strategies

Promoting best practices in research management



Innovation and interdisciplinarity

Encouraging collaboration

Innovative research practices



Societal impact

Motivating researchers to create societal impact

Communication and dissemination
Collaboration with partners (governments, organizations, companies)



Evaluation and recognition

Evaluating assessments, looking ahead

Continuous improvement

Embracing diversity

Research Policy @UAntwerp 2023-2028: priorities (*selection*)

1. Our researchers

1. PhD-researchers

- Further alignment of competence profile of PhD training programme to the needs of the labour market
- Expansion of the training offer for PhD candidates, both in content and in the number of courses and activities

2. **Postdoctoral researchers**

- **UAntwerp as an attractive partner for promising postdocs (website, short term mandates to compete for external funding, focus on employability and employment of postdocs)**

3. Research support staff

- Central and decentralised services for researchers are permanently aligned (Expert groups of Research and Valorisation)
- Strategy to build post-award support for large-scale research projects

4. (Research) professors

- Maximise the (TT)ZAPBOF contingent in the BOF budget by 2026
- (TT)ZAPBOF contingent in ZAP population (now 12-13%) remains stable
- Incentive policy for ERC Grant applications



Postdoc Policy @UAntwerp 2023-2028

- **UAntwerp as an attractive partner for postdoc-researchers**
 - Construction of an external website
 - Communication campaigns (both internal and external)
- **Strengthening internal communications on existing initiatives**
 - Annual Postdoc Day (since 2023)
 - Post-doctoral scholarships
 - The university's Talent Center offer for postdocs (career development)
- **A stimulating and supporting environment for postdocs**
 - Development & training (Dive into Projects, Dive into Business, Talent Center, teaching courses, ...)
 - New BAP career policy - new BAP structure
- **Attracting external postdocs, and empowering internal postdocs to acquire external research funding**
 - Small projects (BOF-call, €250k/year) + 'Seal of Excellence' grants (for FWO or MSCA applications)
 - BOF seed funding: trajectories for postdoc researchers (up to 2 years) and research managers (6 years)

UAntwerp postdoc policy & EU postdoc policy

UAntwerp chaired the EUA-CDE Thematic Peer Group on “Profiles and institutional support for postdoctoral researchers” (28 institutions involved)

- to discuss the position and status of postdoctoral researchers at European universities
- to reflect on the existing support in place for the postdoctoral community
- to develop and enhance new strategies and activities in order to create a more appropriate environment and opportunities for this population



- ~ support for postdoctoral researchers is in the centre of current European research policies
- ~ UAntwerp plays a leading role in developing this topic
- ~ UAntwerp is already working on several state of the art initiatives to empower its own postdoctoral researchers

- Report is available on the [website](#) of EUA-CDE



Charter for postdoctoral researchers @UAntwerp

- Roles & responsibilities
 - Of postdoctoral researchers, professors, and heads of research units
 - With regards to research, teaching, training, collaboration, leadership development and more

UAntwerp is here to support you as a postdoctoral researcher



Vision & strategy



Funding support



Teaching & outreach



Training & development



Associations, courses and initiatives for postdocs

UAntwerp postdoc community



Postdoc site

- <https://www.uantwerpen.be/postdoc>



Funding

Are you looking for information on how to get your research funded? This section offers an overview of the various funding channels and opportunities.



Training offer & Activities

Discover the wide range of training opportunities and activities to sharpen your skills or acquire new ones.



Career Paths for Postdocs

Explore career options, job events and support for careers both beyond and in academia.



Wellbeing

The University of Antwerp offers a range of tools and training opportunities to support your well-being. Let's build a caring UAntwerp together!



Going abroad or coming to Antwerp

Find out the opportunities and support for research stays abroad or coming to Antwerp.



Regulations and documents

Consult the key regulations and documents for postdocs at UAntwerp.

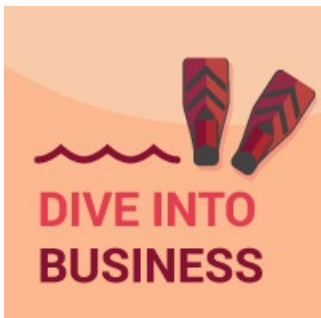
- Dive-into-Projects: generic project proposal writing, specific grant writing
- Dive-into-Business: valorisation, intellectual property
- Hands-on workshops, expert guidance & tailored support
- Self-development



[Dive-into-Projects](#)



research@uantwerpen.be - Grants Office & Research Affairs Office



[Dive-into-Business](#)



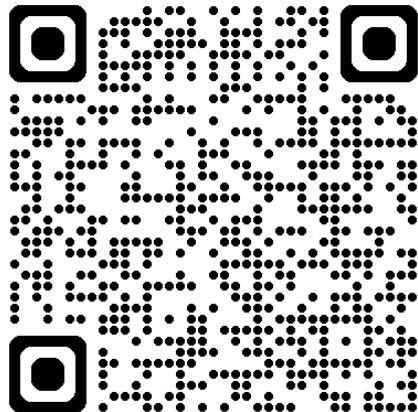
valorisatie@uantwerpen.be - Valorisation Office



Talent Center

We aim to encourage and support early-career researchers in a pro-active management of their (future) career.

- **Training offer:**
[selfservice PeopleSoft](#)
- Stay up-to-date via LinkedIn
UAntwerp Talent Center



Networking initiatives

To build your professional network



Training

To make your career future proof



Individual career coaching

To guide you in making informed career decisions

PhD Talent Coordination Team

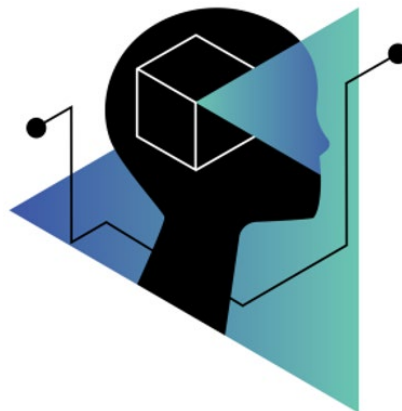
Events:

- Job Shadowing: applications will open 3 July 2026
- Job Market for Young Researchers
- PhD Winter School
- PhD Talent Stakeholder Meeting
- PhD Talent Advisory Board

vlir.be/evenementen/

Find us on:

[Linkedin.com/company/phd-talent-pool](https://www.linkedin.com/company/phd-talent-pool)



PhD Talent Pool Flanders

- Recruitment platform
- For PhD-holders and employers in search of PhD talent
- To better and faster align the supply and demand for PhD talent.

Find us on: phd-talents-be.jobteaser.com

Interuniversity training offer for young researchers

- Interuniversity training offer of all the five Flemish universities
- Specifically for early career researchers

Find us on: phd.vlir.be



Beheer en Administratie

Diversiteit en Sociaal beleid

Internationalisering

Onderwijs en Kwaliteitszorg

Onderzoek en Innovatie

Ontwikkelingssamenwerking

Onderzoek en Innovatie

Binnen de VLIR toetsen de universiteiten hun onderzoeks- en innovatiebeleid met elkaar af, formuleren ze gemeenschappelijke standpunten en bereiden ze adviezen voor over het beleid van de Vlaamse en Europese overheden.

Enkele van de agendatopics zijn: de financieringskanalen, de afstemming van de onderzoeks- en innovatieparameters in verdeelsleutels, de statuten van onderzoekers, de mogelijkheden om gezamenlijke doctoraten af te leveren, de maatschappelijke valorisatie van onderzoek, onderzoekscommunicatie.

Werkgroepen

- domeinwerkgroep Onderzoek en Innovatie
- gezaghebbende panel VABB-SHW
- werkgroep Doctoral Schools
 - subwerkgroep Doctoral Schools, overleg externe arbeidsmarkt (zie de [webpagina van het PhD Talent Coordination Team](#))
- werkgroep EU Research
- werkgroep EU Research, VLIR & CRef
- werkgroep RDM (Research Data Management) en OS (Open Science)
- werkgroep TTO (Tech Transfer Offices)
- werkgroep Wetenschap, Ethiek en Integriteit (WE & I)
- werkgroep Academisch erfgoed
- ad hoc werkgroep iBOF
- ad hoc werkgroep Wetgeving dierproeven



Mats Van Delen
PhD
Representative



Charlotte Adams
Postdoc
Representative

YUFE: Young Universities for the Future of Europe

- Vision: a student-centered, open and inclusive European university model
- Postdoctoral Training & Development
 - 2024-2025 | Pilot phase
 - YUFE-wide & local offer of courses, initiatives
 - Examples: peer support groups, transferable skills training, career coaching
 - From 2027 | A new YUFE postdoctoral programme
- YUFE4Postdocs 
 - Horizon Europe MSCA Cofund – Two calls
 - 55 positions (10@UAntwerp)
 - Training programme included



> Well-being: we care

■ ■ Nederlands

Setting boundaries Feeling good mentally Feeling good physically Feeling accepted Feeling good in your job Feeling good with colleagues

Start > Mijn Subsites > Well-being: we care

We care

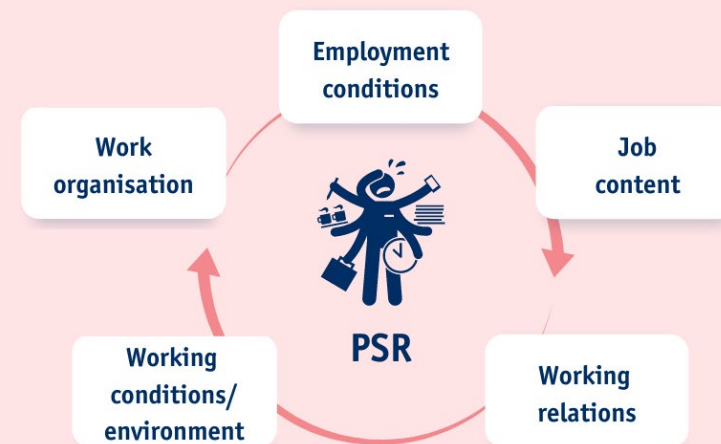
Well-being – that means feeling good **mentally** and **physically**, but also feeling **accepted**, being able to do your **job well** and feeling good **with your colleagues**. As an employer, that's what UAntwerp is committed to. It's something we take care of together, and it's something you can contribute to yourself.

On this subsite, we give you an overview of how we work together on your well-being and that of your colleagues, and what you can do yourself. This is how we build a caring University of Antwerp together.



Jump to

- [Learn more about inappropriate behaviour](#)
- [Reach out to a support channel](#)
- [Increase resilience](#)
- [Learn more](#)



Contact:
[Support channels](#)

[Health & Safety at Work Department](#) – [HR Management & Support team](#) - [Team Diversity and inclusion](#)

Team Diversity & Inclusion

- provides support within these domains:
 - Inclusive Student well-being
 - Inclusive teaching
 - Inclusive research
 - Inclusive HR-policies and staff well-being
- focuses primarily – but not exclusively – on gender, ethnicity, disability, ideology, sexual orientation, nationality and socio-economic background.
- More information: [Policy | Diversity and inclusion | University of Antwerp](#)
- Contact: Quentin.callens@uantwerpen.be or edith.piqueray@uantwerpen.be

- Grants for group activities that support PhD researchers & postdocs
- Four **categories**
 1. Interuniversity initiatives (organised by ≥ 3 Flemish universities including UAntwerp) - €4000
 2. Domain-specific trainings - €4000
 3. Career development initiatives - €4000
 4. Faculty initiatives (at the level of a department, faculty, ...) - €500
- Yearly OJO call in autumn for activities that take place in the following calendar year

 OJOcall@uantwerp.be

INTERNATIONAL STAFF OFFICE

HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

- Welcome and practical guidance for international staff
- Help with arrival formalities (registration, insurance, etc.)
- Info on living and working in Belgium
- Welcome sessions and practical resources
- Support during your stay in Belgium and for research stays abroad

More information?

[Pintra International Staff Office](#)

[Quickguide new staff](#)

[Website University of Antwerp](#)

Contact us!

int.staff@uantwerpen.be

or [book an online appointment](#)

Department of Marketing and Communication



Press

- Press releases
- Earned media
- Media collaborations

pers@uantwerpen.be



Stroom.uantwerpen.be

- University storytelling
- Research, human interest, university milestones

stroom@uantwerpen.be



Social media training

- Tips and tricks
- Workshops through faculty
- Social media toolbox

social.media@uantwerpen.be

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION



CHILDREN



BROAD AUDIENCE



RESEARCHERS



What can we do for you?

- Platform: lectures, events (Science Day), STEM academy, Universiteit van Vlaanderen, etc
- Help & support: advice, promotion, applications for awards
- Training: [Let's Talk Science](#), activities for children, [PRESS>SPEAK](#)
- Inspiration: PRESS>SPEAK>Inspire, newsletter, Teams channel

wetenschapscommunicatie@uantwerpen.be



'The Incredible Art of Making Science Public'

Antwerp Summer & Winter University (ASWU)



Postdocs as participants or organisers

- ❖ Short-term academic programmes in a dynamic & *international setting* (1-2 weeks)
- ❖ Participate
 - Opportunity to deepen your knowledge, gain hands-on experience & network with international experts
- ❖ Organise
 - Work within ASWU framework & support
 - Transferable skills: communication, administration, logistics, education, academic supervision

Highlighted courses for postdocs in summer 2026

- [Inter- and Transdisciplinary Research](#) (29 June - 3 July)
- [Energy Transitioning: Purpose, Path and Process](#) (29 June – 10 July)
- [ALGAR 2026: Semi-Global Fields and their Valuations](#) (1 – 10 July)
- [Qualitative Research Methods in Health Care](#) (24 - 28 August)
- [Smart Writing for Researchers and Professionals: Human Expertise and AI for better Academic English](#) (24 – 28 August)
- [INSPIRE: Cardiovascular Safety Pharmacology and Cardio-Oncology](#) (27 August - 2 September)
- [Modelling infectious diseases and health economics](#) (31 August - 4 September)



summeruniversity@uantwerpen.be



uantwerpen.be/aswu

KLIMAATACTIE PLAN

2025 - 2030



Who we are:

- **environmental office (internal office, operational)**
- **climate team (interdisciplinary voluntary network of committed researchers, policy staff, students)**

UAntwerp Ambitions:

- **2030: climate neutral**
- **2050: fossilfree and circular**
- **Climate resilient and climate just**

10 Key focus areas:

- Education
- Research
- Circularity, procurement and waste
- Infrastructure and energy
- Commuting to and in-between campuses
- International travelling
- Catering on campus
- Nature and green management
- Sustainable finance
- Financing climate action

Questions: climate@uantwerpen.be

Global Engagement

- Power relations in general & North-South relations in particular
- Available funding:
 - Open Call students and staff (organise an activity and receive up to €3,000)
 - Strengthening Partnerships via Incoming Mobility
 - Two-Way Guest Lectureships
 - Global Minds Research Scholarship
 - Small Research Projects
 - AUHA Seed Funding
- Get involved:
 - Paul Panda Fernana Prize (Award for research and partnerships)
 - Yearly Global Engagement Conference
 - Koen De Feyter Solidarity fund
 - Keep an eye out for upcoming activities next year via www.uantwerpen.be/globalengagement



globalengagement@uantwerpen.be



- **Academic English** courses
- **Individual** Academic English coaching
- **15 language courses:** incl. Dutch, English, French, Arabic, Korean & Swahili
- **Proofreading/translations** of academic papers, articles, questionnaires, reports, etc.
- Interuniversity **Test** of Academic English (ITACE)



linguapolis.be / itace.be



zoe.teuwen@uantwerpen.be

STATISTICAL COURSES

STATISTICAL CONSULTANCY

- StatUa offers flexible statistical advice during any stage of your study



uantwerpen.be/statua



statua@uantwerpen.be





- Core facility for text mining services: using AI to automatically process any text
- Apply state-of-the-art Large Language Models such as ChatGPT for intelligent information extraction & advanced analysis of text from any scientific discipline
- Offer consultation, software development, trainings, data collection & annotation
- Participate in larger research projects



uantwerpen.be/textua



pieter.fivez@uantwerpen.be

VAIA – Flanders AI Academy

VAIA - a collaboration between all Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences & arts

- **Lifelong learning** about **artificial intelligence**
- For professionals and **researchers** (all levels and disciplines)
- Collect and promote **hundreds of courses**, events, learning materials, ...
- Organise **new trainings**



vaia.be



info@vaia.be



MONDO

- Social network for international staff, researchers and students and their family
- Joint initiative of the International Staff Office, the International Students Office and the Antwerp Doctoral School
- Monthly activities free of charge / bi-monthly we send out our newsletter.
- MONDO WhatsApp communities Marketplace (buy & sell), chat & events and Announcements



Monthly activities
Bi-monthly newsletter



mondo@uantwerpen.be



www.uantwerpen.be/mondo



Mondo by UAntwerp



14u05-14u45: BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

Workshops	
▪ Life after postdocs: exchanging career stories inside & outside academia	F. De Tassiszaal
▪ How to valorise your research: insights from entrepreneurial (former) postdocs	Willem Elsschotzaal
▪ Science communication	Prentenkabinet

14u45-15u15: COFFEE BREAK (Albert Dürerzaal)

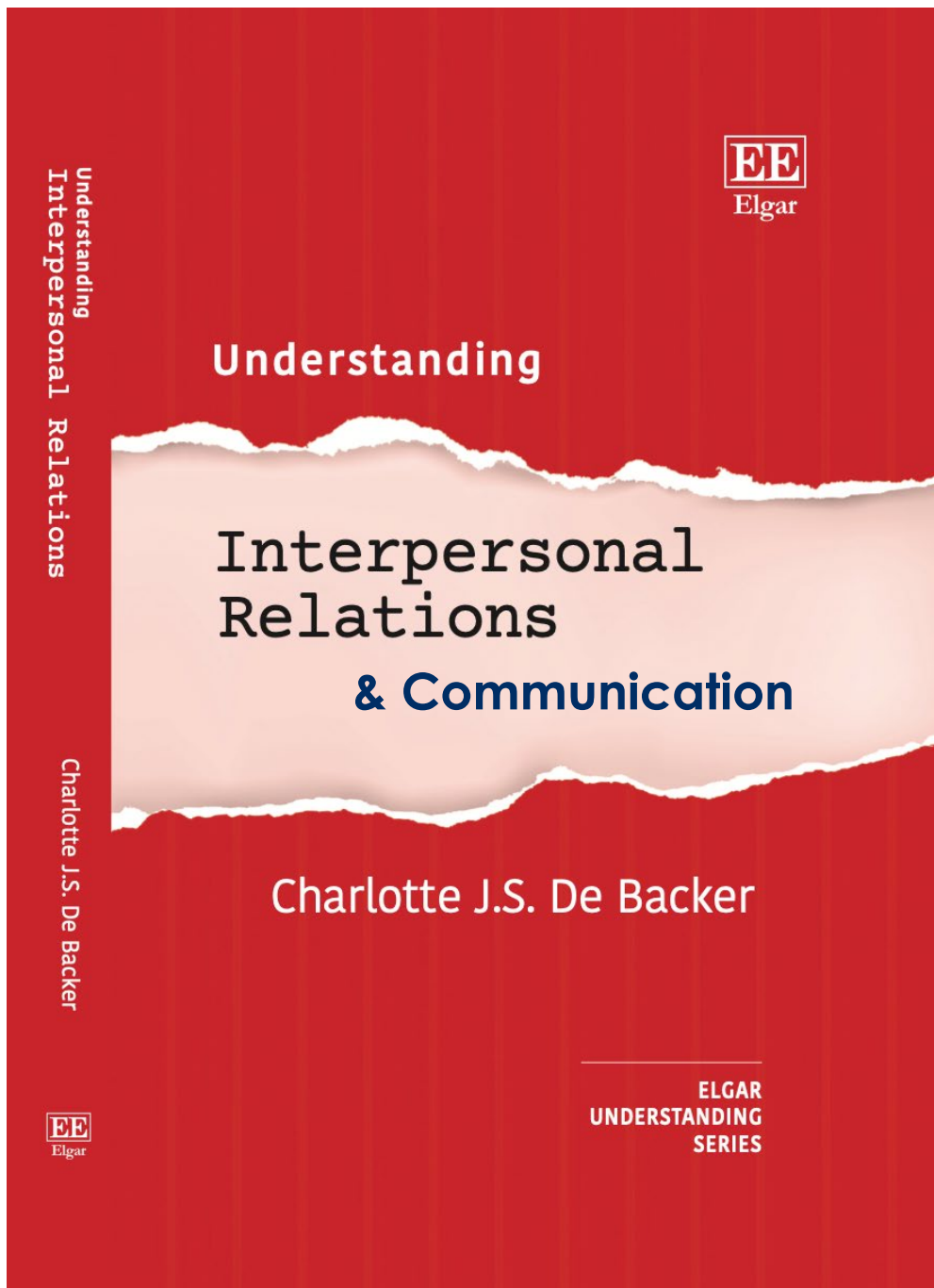


REACH ME AT
CHARLOTTE.DEBACKER@UANTWERPEN.BE

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leading Without Losing Yourself or Others in the
Academic World

DR. CHARLOTTE DE BACKER
UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP



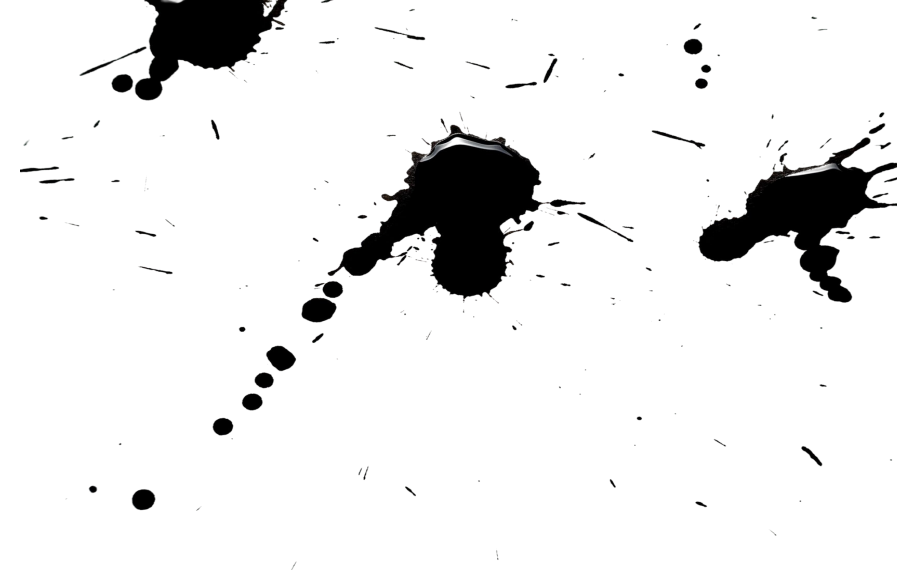
Interpersonal (& Intercultural)
Communication BA/MA

Internal Communication MA
(coaching)

Interactional Coach (almost)



EDUCATIEVE
ACADEMIE vzw



Every person is, in a sense, **the leader** of a small coalition of internal voices, needs, and goals.

SCRIPT

The internalized narrative—often shaped in childhood—that guides a person's beliefs, behaviors, and expectations throughout life.

DIRECTOR



GOAL

A deeply meaningful aspiration or desired outcome that gives direction, purpose, and motivation to a person's life choices and actions.

Life is a stage.
The more we know
how to direct
ourselves, the
better we interact
with the outside
world

INNER
AUDIENCE



ACTOR



OTHERS
AROUND
US -
EXTERNAL



PROCES

The deeper emotional layers beneath the surface—often hidden, neglected, or painful—including unprocessed emotions, shadow parts, and potentially trauma.

NOT for coaching



LEADERSHIP is MULTIDIMENSIONAL

From the perspective of the **leaders**

From the perspective of the
followers



LEADERSHIP

From the perspective of the **leaders**





DOMINANCE vs. PRESTIGE



ELSEVIER

Evolution and Human Behavior 22 (2001) 165–196

Evolution
and Human
Behavior

The evolution of prestige Freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission

Joseph Henrich^{a,*}, Francisco J. Gil-White^b

^aUniversity of Michigan Business School, 701 Tappan Drive, D3276, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1234, USA

^bDepartment of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania, 3815 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6196, USA

Received 5 December 1999; accepted 15 November 2000

Abstract

This paper advances an “information goods” theory that explains *prestige* processes as an emergent product of psychological adaptations that evolved to improve the quality of information acquired via cultural transmission. Natural selection favored social learners who could evaluate potential models and copy the most successful among them. In order to improve the fidelity and comprehensiveness of such ranked-biased copying, social learners further evolved dispositions to sycophantically ingratiate themselves with their chosen models, so as to gain close proximity to, and prolonged interaction with, these models. Once common, these dispositions created, at the group level, distributions of deference that new entrants may adaptively exploit to decide who to begin copying. This generated a preference for models who seem generally “popular.” Building on social exchange theories, we argue that a wider range of phenomena associated with prestige processes can more plausibly be explained by this simple theory than by others, and we test its predictions with data from throughout the social sciences. In addition, we distinguish carefully between *dominance* (force or force threat) and *prestige* (freely conferred deference). © 2001 Elsevier Science Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Status; Prestige; Prestige-biased transmission; Cultural transmission; Social learning; Dual inheritance theory

Dominance or Prestige

Prestige hierarchies are domain-specific

Prestige-based leadership is based on relationships rather than authority

Prestige-based leadership empowers people



EMPOWERMENT

COMPETENCE

Employees who feel competent believe in their work-related skills and are convinced that they can perform well in their jobs.

MEANING

Employees with high meaning perceptions identify with the goals of their job, meaning their ideals and standards match the values necessary to execute the job

SELF- DETERMINATION

The perceived level of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions at work

IMPACT

The belief of having the power to influence administrative, strategic, and operative goals at work.

I can do it

I want to do it

I choose to do it

What I do has an impact

Article

Leadership Styles and Psychological Empowerment: A Meta-Analysis

Carsten C. Schermuly ¹, Laura Creon¹, Philipp Gerlach², Carolin Graßmann³, and Jan Koch¹

Abstract

Psychological empowerment has become a popular construct in organizational research and practice. Leadership ranks high among the best predictors of employees' psychological empowerment, yet little is known about which leadership styles prove more effective than others. This meta-analysis investigates the effects of four leadership styles on psychological empowerment. More specifically, we test whether empowering leadership evokes more psychological empowerment than transformational leadership, servant leadership, or transactional leadership. We found that empowering, transformational and servant leadership contribute almost equally to psychological empowerment. No relationship was found with transactional leadership. In an explorative manner, we tested the effects on the different dimensions of psychological empowerment. We found that the leadership styles had a weaker influence on the competence dimension of psychological empowerment. We also investigated the effects of several moderators on the relationships with psychological empowerment: country culture (power balanced freedom (PBF)), study design (cross-sectional vs. multi-wave studies) and publication status (published vs. unpublished). We found no moderating effects of culture, which indicates the universally empowering effects of the leadership styles. The relationships between leadership and empowerment were somewhat weaker when data were collected at different measurement points, and publication bias does not seem to be an issue in this research field.



EMPOWERMENT

COMPETENCE

Employees who feel confident in their work-related skills and are convinced that they can perform well in their jobs.

MEANING

Employees with high motivation whose perceptions identify with their job, meaning their standards match the values and goals to execute the job.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The perceived level of control over initiating and regulating actions at work.

IMPACT

The belief of having the influence administrative and operative goals at work.

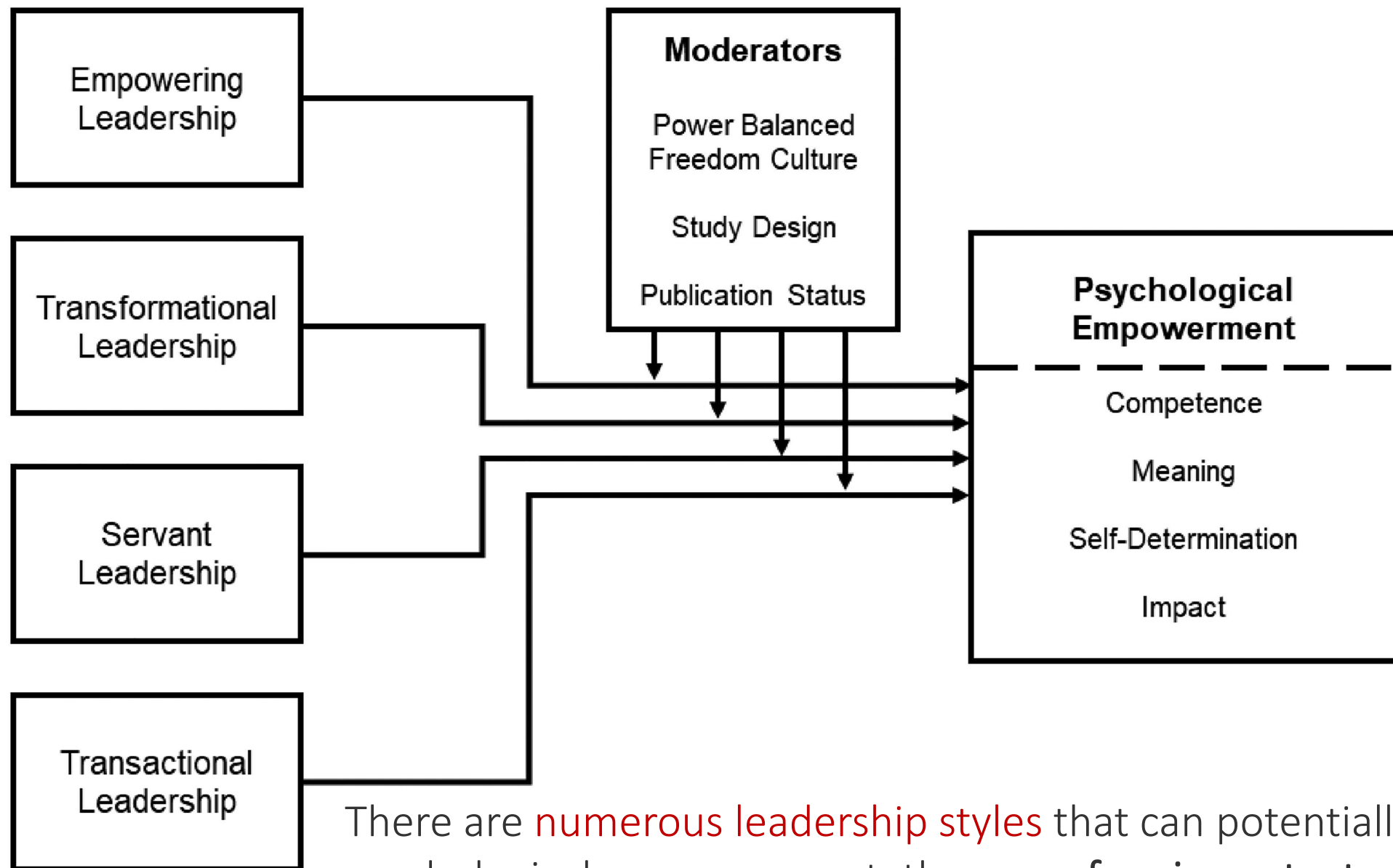
Article

Leadership Styles and Psychological Empowerment: A Meta-Analysis

Carsten C. Schermuly ¹, Laura Creon¹, Philipp Gerlach², Carolin Graßmann³, and Jan Koch¹

Abstract

Psychological empowerment has become a popular construct in organizational research and practice. Leadership ranks high among the best predictors of employees' psychological empowerment, yet little is known about which leadership styles prove more effective than others. This meta-analysis investigates the effects of four leadership styles on psychological empowerment. More specifically, we test whether empowering leadership evokes more psychological empowerment than transformational leadership, servant leadership, or transactional leadership. We found that empowering, transformational and servant leadership contribute almost equally to psychological empowerment. No relationship was found with transactional leadership. In an explorative manner, we tested the effects on the different dimensions of psychological empowerment. We found that the leadership styles had a weaker influence on the competence dimension of psychological empowerment. We also investigated the effects of several moderators on the relationships with psychological empowerment: country culture (power balanced freedom (PBF)), study design (cross-sectional vs. multi-wave studies) and publication status (published vs. unpublished). We found no moderating effects of culture, which indicates the universally empowering effects of the leadership styles. The relationships between leadership and empowerment were somewhat weaker when data were collected at different measurement points, and publication bias does not seem to be an issue in this research field.



There are numerous leadership styles that can potentially impact psychological empowerment, these are four important ones



Empowering Leadership

TRUST

PEOPLE

Encourages initiative & responsibility.
Supports learning & risk-taking.

✓ Fosters **self-confidence** and independence.
✓ Leads to higher job satisfaction & creativity.

✗ Some employees **may feel overwhelmed without guidance**.
✗ May lead to inconsistencies if not balanced with accountability.

Transformational Leadership

INSPIRE

PEOPLE

Inspirational - Creates a compelling vision.
Idealized influence – leader = role model.
Intellectual stimulation
Individualized consideration

✓ Increases **innovation**.
✓ Ideal **for change**
✓ Enhances psychological empowerment by aligning work goals with personal values.

✗ Dependent on leader charisma.
✗ Lack of structure **may leave employees uncertain**.
✗ Difficult to measure effectiveness (subjective impact).

Servant Leadership

SUPPORT

PEOPLE

Focuses on **empathy and support**.
Leads by **serving** rather than directing.

✓ Builds **trust, loyalty**, and collaboration.
✓ Enhances employee **wellbeing, satisfaction and ethical culture**.

✗ Can be **slow in decision-making**.
✗ May **not work well in high-pressure, fast-moving industries**.

Transactional Leadership

REWARD

PEOPLE

Clear **expectations & goals**.
Rewards for performance.
Corrective actions for mistakes.

✓ Provides **stability**, efficiency, and accountability.
✓ Works well in **structured environments**.

✗ Less emphasis on personal growth & motivation.
✗ Employees **may feel controlled** rather than empowered.

LEADERSHIP

From the perspective of the **leaders**

From the perspective of the
followers



LEADERSHIP

From the perspective of the
followers





FOLLOWERSHIP THEORY

What do people want from leaders? And why does that change?

The same person who wants a strong protective leader during crisis may later prefer someone who is fair, visionary, or emotionally supportive

This paper argues that humans possess an evolved *followership psychology*: we follow leaders who meet specific psychological needs.



Journal Information
Journal TOC

APA PsycArticles: Journal Article

The psychology of following: Conceptualizing and validating the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory.

©REQUEST PERMISSIONS

Sheng, X., Andrews, W., & van Vugt, M. (2026). The psychology of following: Conceptualizing and validating the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 111(6), 768–801. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001347>

Humans possess an evolved followership psychology that enables them to identify and endorse different types of leaders depending on situational demands. But what fundamental needs guide these follower endorsements? Across a preliminary study and five validation studies ($N = 3,514$), we developed and validated the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory (FFNI)—a psychometrically robust measure that identifies six core follower needs: *protection*, *affiliation*, *status*, *guidance* (including *vision* and *expertise*), and *fairness*. In Studies 1 and 2, we conducted content validation, tested reliability, and confirmed the factor structure of the FFNI across three domains (general, political, and workplace), three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and China), and multiple time points. Study 3 demonstrated FFNI's convergent and discriminant validity. Studies 4 and 5 explored the nomological network, examining its antecedents, consequences, and both predictive and incremental validity. The FFNI provides a novel tool for researchers to investigate how follower needs vary across contexts and cultures and how these needs shape leader endorsements and perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Practically, the FFNI offers leaders a framework to better understand and respond to the psychological needs of those they lead. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2026 APA, all rights reserved)



The triad model of follower needs: theory and review

Wendy de Waal-Andrews and Mark van Vugt

Humans have an evolved flexible followership psychology that enables them to select different leaders in different contexts, depending on their needs. We distinguish a triad of follower needs: (i) guidance into a shared direction, (ii) active protection against threats, and (iii) judicious dispute settlement. These needs relate to critical group coordination challenges described in biology and anthropology and to different evolutionary leadership theories. We describe the contexts, in which these needs emerge, the characteristics of leaders who meet these needs, and the potential risks of following these leaders. We end by discussing the potential of our theory to aid the understanding of leadership in modern organizations, female leadership, leader manipulation of needs, and individual differences between followers.

Address

Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology & Institute for Brain and Behavior Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Corresponding author: van Vugt, Mark (m.van.vugt@vu.nl)

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Current Opinion in
Psychology

globalization, fueled support for Trump in 2016 [6], pointing at the need for a strong leader who could protect citizens from various threats. Finally, amid mass-protests following the murder of a journalist investigating political corruption [2], Caputova's call to 'fight evil' and her track-record as a lawyer met her voters' need for a leader who could settle disputes and bring justice [cf. 7].

These diverse follower needs tie into different adaptive problems faced by our ancestors in the course of human evolution, and that are still evident in both small-scale human societies and non-human societies [8–10]. Guidance into a shared direction is important in group movement, active protection against threats in aggressive between-group conflicts, and judicious dispute settlement in managing intra-group conflict (e.g. food sharing). These needs also align with the three leadership functions ('sorts of power'), distinguished by Montesquieu [11, p. 198], with guidance into a shared direction relating to the power to 'enact, amend or abrogate laws', active protection to the power to



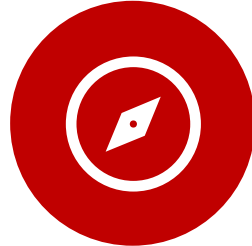
FOLLOWERSHIP THEORY



Protection

Keep me safe

Threats, danger,
insecurity,
uncertainty



Guidance

**Show me where
to go**

Direction,
meaning,
purpose



Fairness

**Treat people
justly**

Conflict
management,
equality, morality



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Current Opinion in
Psychology

The triad model of follower needs: theory and review

Wendy de Waal-Andrews and Mark van Vugt

Humans have an evolved flexible followership psychology that enables them to select different leaders in different contexts, depending on their needs. We distinguish a triad of follower needs: (i) guidance into a shared direction, (ii) active protection against threats, and (iii) judicious dispute settlement. These needs relate to critical group coordination challenges described in biology and anthropology and to different evolutionary leadership theories. We describe the contexts, in which these needs emerge, the characteristics of leaders who meet these needs, and the potential risks of following these leaders. We end by discussing the potential of our theory to aid the understanding of leadership in modern organizations, female leadership, leader manipulation of needs, and individual differences between followers.

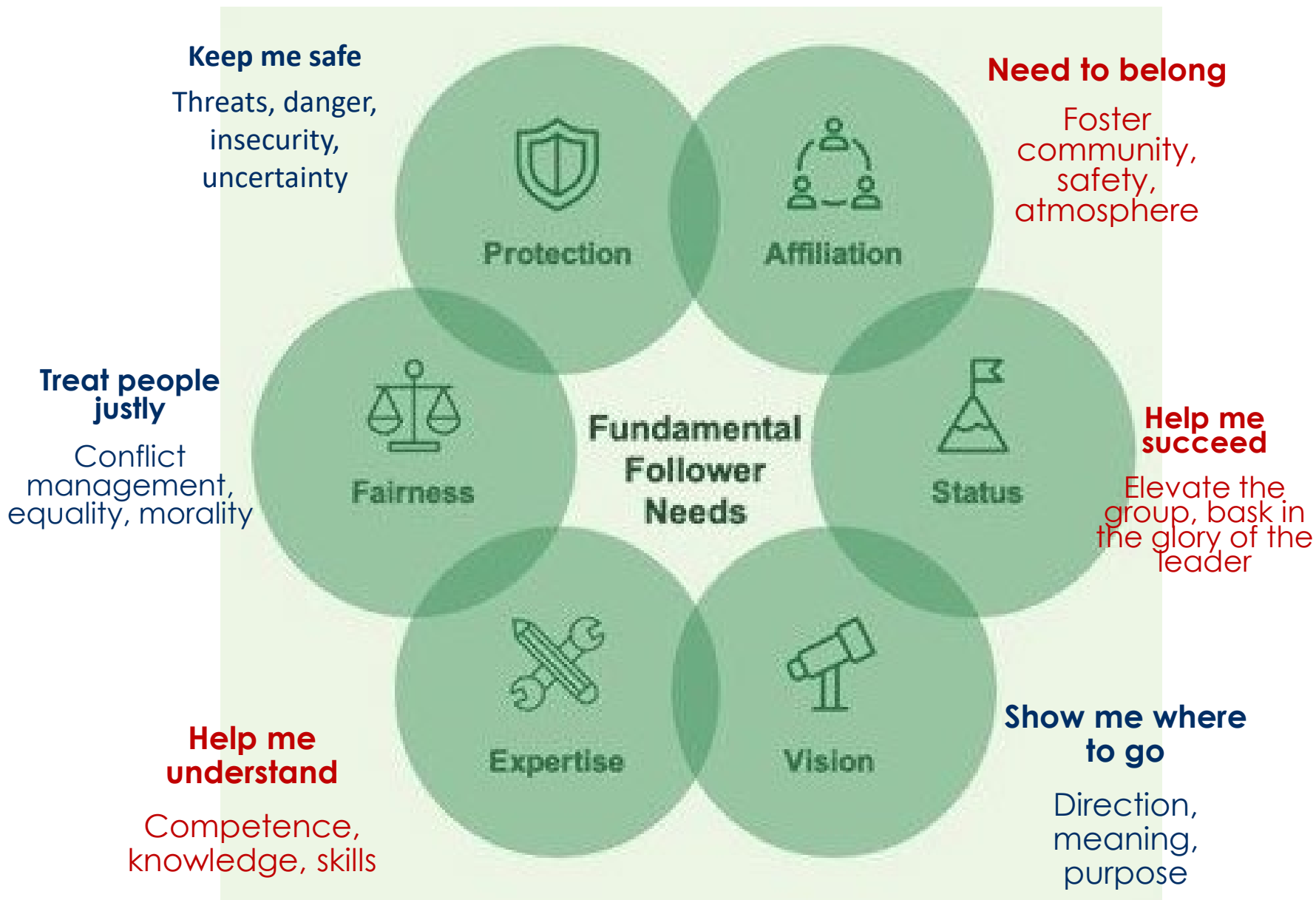
Address

Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology & Institute for Brain and Behavior Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Corresponding author: van Vugt, Mark (m.van.vugt@vu.nl)

globalization, fueled support for Trump in 2016 [6], pointing at the need for a strong leader who could protect citizens from various threats. Finally, amid mass-protests following the murder of a journalist investigating political corruption [2], Caputova's call to 'fight evil' and her track-record as a lawyer met her voters' need for a leader who could settle disputes and bring justice [cf. 7].

These diverse follower needs tie into different adaptive problems faced by our ancestors in the course of human evolution, and that are still evident in both small-scale human societies and non-human societies [8–10]. Guidance into a shared direction is important in group movement, active protection against threats in aggressive between-group conflicts, and judicious dispute settlement in managing intra-group conflict (e.g. food sharing). These needs also align with the three leadership functions ('sorts of power'), distinguished by Montesquieu [11, p. 198], with guidance into a shared direction relating to the power to 'enact, amend or abrogate laws', active protection to the power to



[Journal Information](#)
[Journal TOC](#)

APA PsycArticles: Journal Article

The psychology of following: Conceptualizing and validating the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory.

©REQUEST PERMISSIONS

Sheng, X., Andrews, W., & van Vugt, M. (2026). The psychology of following: Conceptualizing and validating the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 111(6), 768–801. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001347>

Humans possess an evolved followership psychology that enables them to identify and endorse different types of leaders depending on situational demands. But what fundamental needs guide these follower endorsements? Across a preliminary study and five validation studies ($N = 3,514$), we developed and validated the Fundamental Follower Needs Inventory (FFNI)—a psychometrically robust measure that identifies six core follower needs: *protection*, *affiliation*, *status*, *guidance* (including *vision* and *expertise*), and *fairness*. In Studies 1 and 2, we conducted content validation, tested reliability, and confirmed the factor structure of the FFNI across three domains (general, political, and workplace), three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and China), and multiple time points. Study 3 demonstrated FFNI's convergent and discriminant validity. Studies 4 and 5 explored the nomological network, examining its antecedents, consequences, and both predictive and incremental validity. The FFNI provides a novel tool for researchers to investigate how follower needs vary across contexts and cultures and how these needs shape leader endorsements and perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Practically, the FFNI offers leaders a framework to better understand and respond to the psychological needs of those they lead. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2026 APA, all rights reserved)



Dominant/Authoritarian
Leader



Empowering
Leader



Transactional
Leader



Transformational
Leader



Servant Leader

Keep me safe
Threats, danger,
insecurity,
uncertainty



Protection



Affiliation



Fairness



Status



Expertise



Vision

**Treat people
justly**
Conflict
management,
equality, morality



**Help me
understand**
Competence,
knowledge, skills

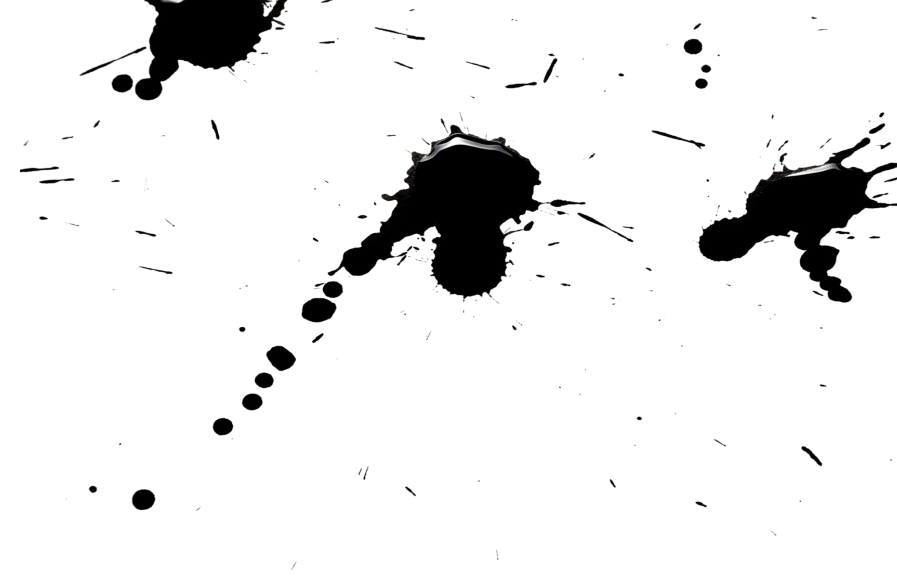
Need to belong
Foster
community,
safety,
atmosphere

**Help me
succeed**
Elevate the
group, bask in
the glory of the
leader

**Show me where
to go**
Direction,
meaning,
purpose



Antwerpen



Just as people are internally diverse, **effective leaders are not single, fixed entities but flexible collections of leadership capacities.**

Dominant/Authoritarian
Leader

Keep me safe
Threats, danger,
insecurity,
uncertainty


Protection

Need to belong
Foster
community,
safety,
atmosphere


Affiliation

Empowering
Leader

**Treat people
justly**
Conflict
management,
equality, morality


Fairness


Status

**Help me
succeed**
Elevate the
group, bask in
the glory of the
leader

Transactional
Leader

**Help me
understand**
Competence,
knowledge, skills


Expertise


Vision

**Show me where
to go**
Direction,
meaning,
purpose

Transformational
Leader

Servant Leader



RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY (RLT)

DO NOT focus on leadership as “what a single person” does, but

Focus on **patterns** of relationships and interactions.

Aligns with coaching that seeks to strengthen communication, mutual accountability, and **systemic relational quality**.



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com



The Leadership Quarterly 17 (2006) 654–676

The
Leadership
Quarterly

www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua

Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing

Mary Uhl-Bien *

Department of Management, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, NE, USA

Abstract

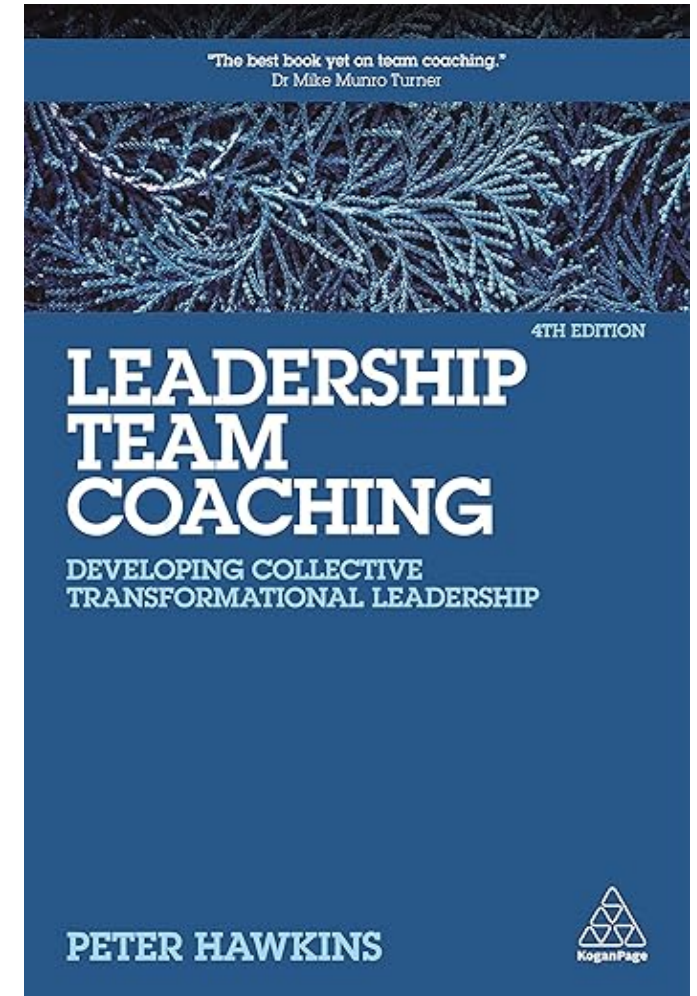
Relational leadership is a relatively new term in the leadership literature, and because of this, its meaning is open to interpretation. In the present article I describe two perspectives of relational leadership: an *entity* perspective that focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships, and a *relational* perspective that views leadership as a *process of social construction* through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology. These approaches can be complementary, but their implications for study and practice are quite different. After reviewing leadership research relative to these two perspectives I offer Relational Leadership Theory (RLT) as an overarching framework for the study of leadership as a social influence process through which emergent coordination (e.g., evolving social order) and change (e.g., new approaches, values, attitudes, behaviors, ideologies) are constructed and produced. This framework addresses relationships both as an outcome of investigation (e.g., How are leadership relationships produced?) and a context for action (e.g., How do relational dynamics contribute to structuring?). RLT draws from both entity and relational ontologies and methodologies to more fully explore the relational dynamics of leadership and organizing.

© 2006 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

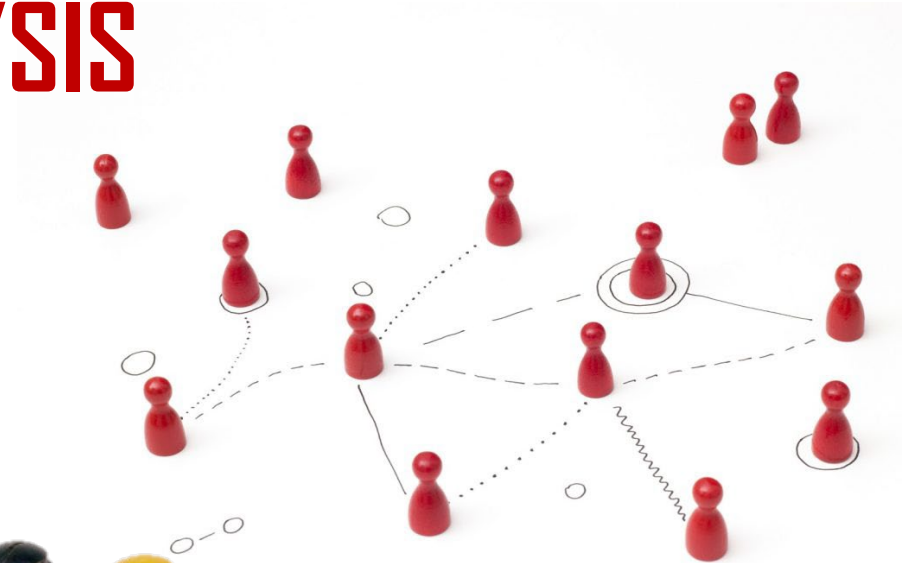
Keywords: Relational leadership; Entity perspectives; Relationality

EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

- Step 1 – The heart of the team
- Step 2 – Your place in the team
- Step 3 – Reflect about your place
- Step 4 – Moving to a different position
- Step 5 – Reframe the team
- Step 6 – If I were the team coach...



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

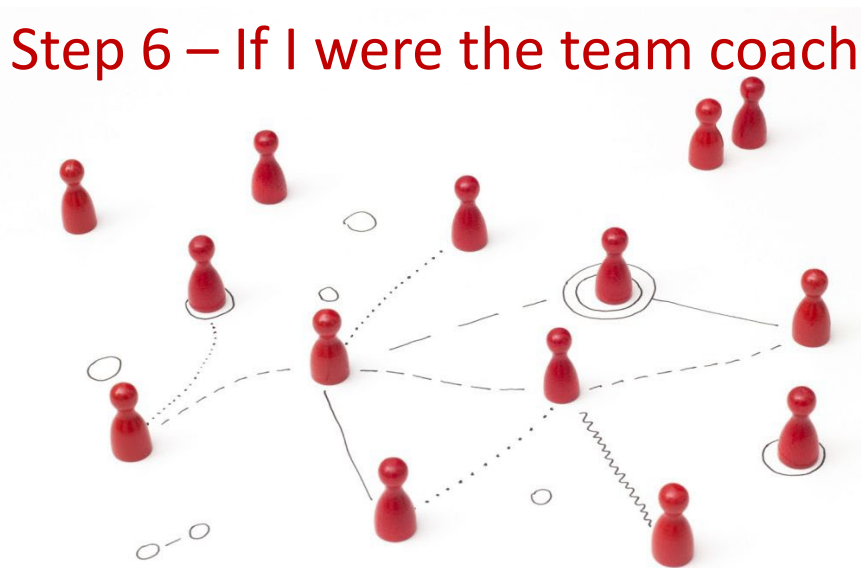
Step 2 – Your place in the team

Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

Step 5 – Reframe the team

Step 6 – If I were the team coach...



Choose objects, symbols, pictures, graphics ... that symbolize “what is at the core of your team”

Place these in the centre of the set-up



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

Step 2 – Your place in the team

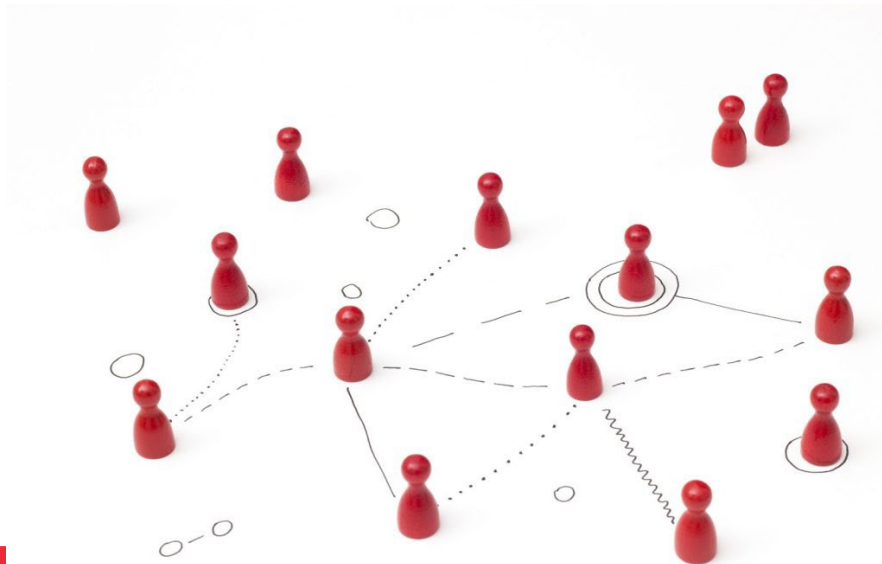
Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

Step 5 – Reframe the team

Step 6 – If I were the team coach...

- Now set out the team: use an object/puppet for each team member
- Locate yourself
- Where are you?
- Who are those close to you and who are those distant from you?



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

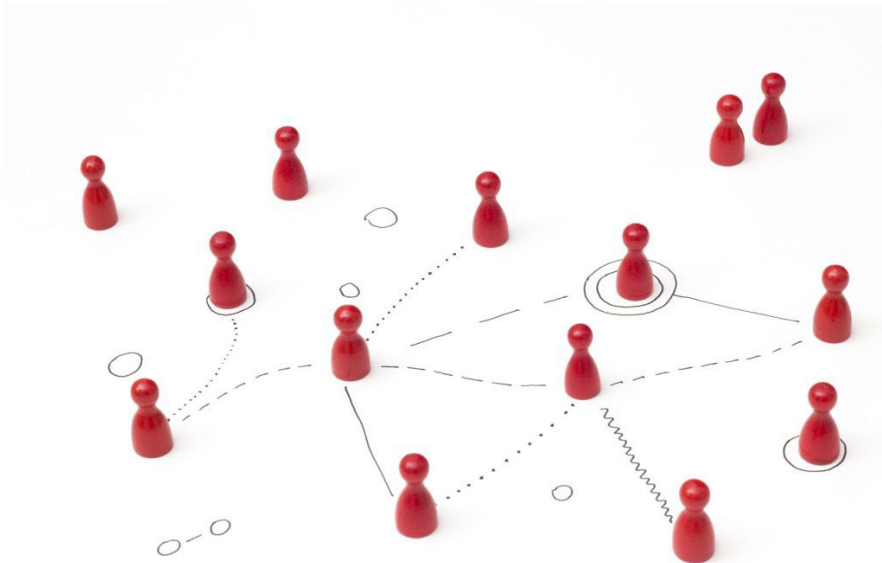
Step 2 – Your place in the team

Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

Step 5 – Reframe the team

Step 6 – If I were the team coach...



- Make statements that start with:
“In this position of the team I...”
 - I think...
 - I feel ...
 - I observe ...
 - I look at...
 - I ignore...
 - I cannot...
 - And so on
- 
- Four LEGO minifigures are standing on a light-colored, curved surface that resembles a hill or a large wheel. From left to right: a minifigure in a red jumpsuit with a black helmet, a minifigure in a teal jumpsuit with a black helmet, a minifigure in a black jumpsuit with a yellow helmet, and a minifigure in a red jumpsuit with a black helmet. The background is a solid light blue.



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

Step 2 – Your place in the team

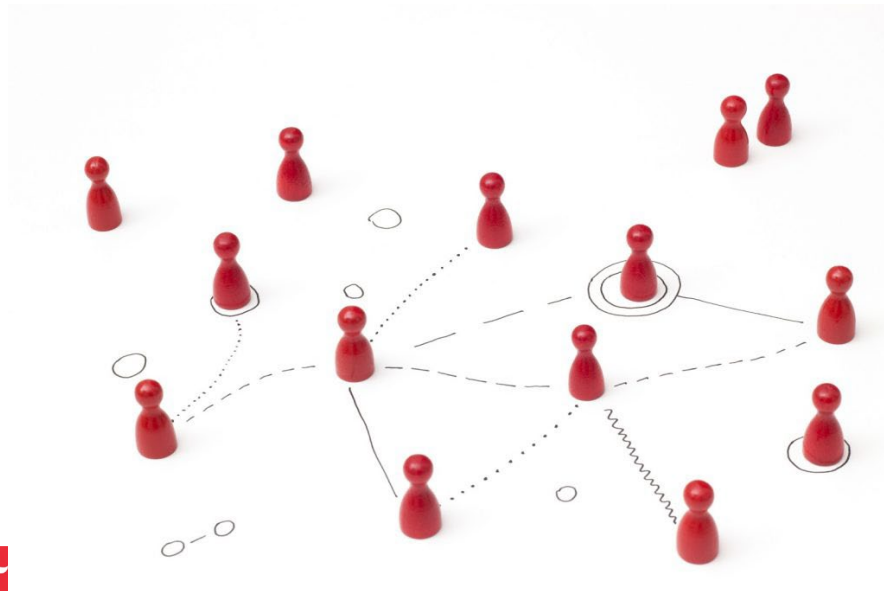
Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

Step 5 – Reframe the team

Step 6 – If I were the team coach...

- Would you like to move to a different position? Where? Why?
- How would this shift feel?
- What is needed to realize this shift?
- What is different at the different position? Reflect again.



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

Step 2 – Your place in the team

Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

Step 5 – Reframe the team

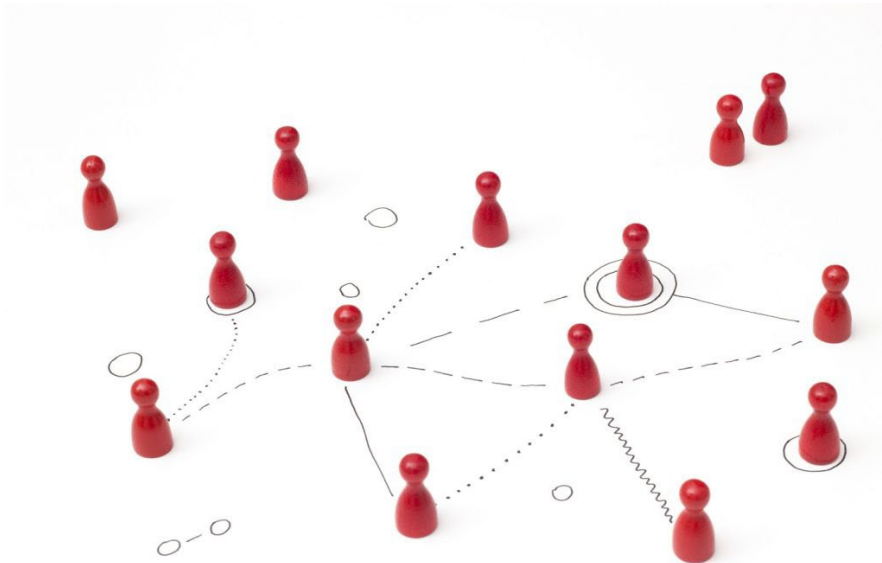
Step 6 – If I were the team coach...

If your team would be a family, what sort of family would it be? Who would take which position? What about you?

If your team were a TV-show/series/movie: which would it be? Why?

If your team was a bunch of animals, what sort of bunch would it be? And who is which animal? Why? What about you?

Be creative, think wild, out of the box...



EXERCISE 1: ME & MY TEAM ANALYSIS

Step 1 – The heart of the team

Step 2 – Your place in the team

Step 3 – Reflect about your place

Step 4 – Moving to a different position

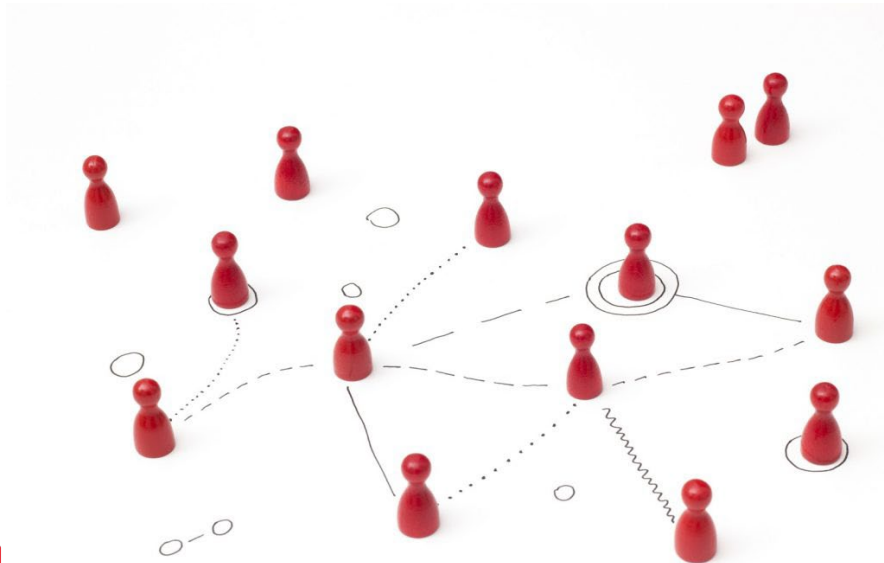
Step 5 – Reframe the team

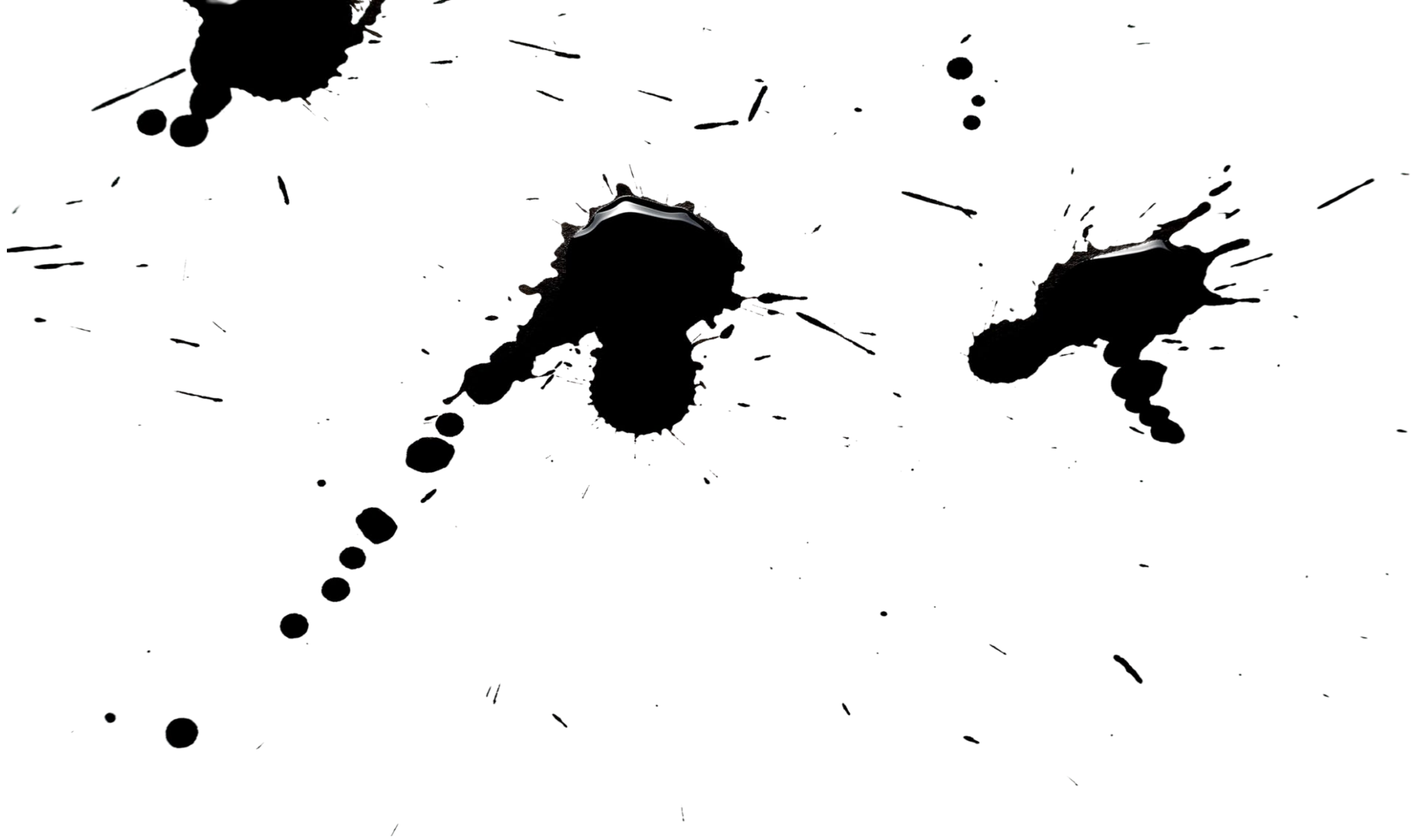
Step 6 – If I were the team coach...

Now look back at the constellation you made.

Look at it from different perspectives, from close by and further away.

If YOU were the coach of this team, what would be your approach? And why?





EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY'S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?

Why This Exercise? To lead AND to follow with purpose—we must understand the goals we pursue and whether these goals truly align with our skills, beliefs, identity, and deeper mission. Leadership AND follower-behaviour begins with self-awareness.

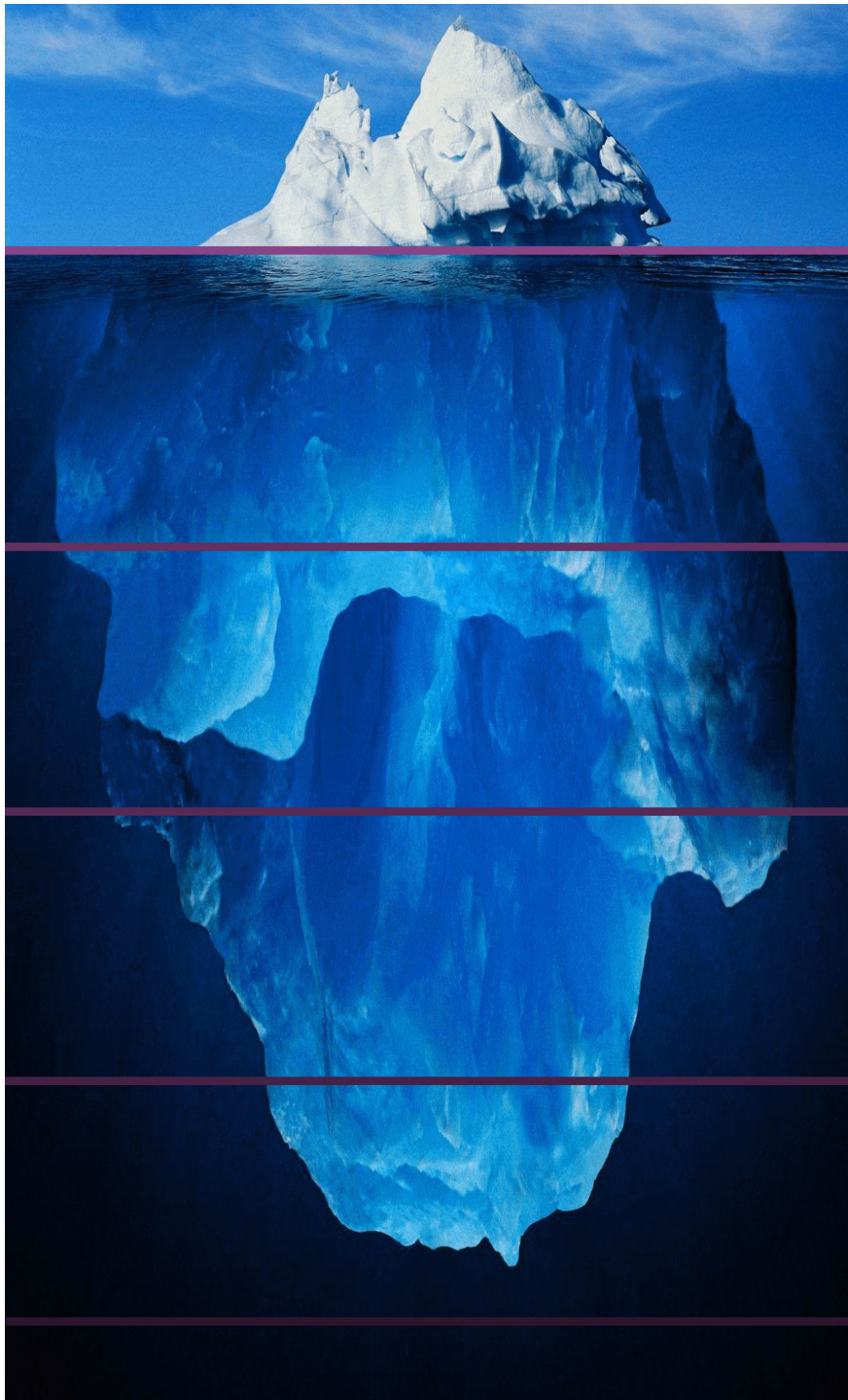
Instructions (4 Steps)

Step 1: Clarify the Goals (Above the Surface)

Step 2: Dive Below the Surface – The Underwater Iceberg Layers

Step 3: Context and Leadership

Step 4: Reflecting on the Bigger Picture



GOAL **COMPANY GOALS**

BEHAVIOUR

in CONTEXT/ENVIRONMENT

SKILLS

BELIEFS

&

VALUES

IDENTITY

MISSION

WHY

EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY'S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?



GOAL COMPANY GOALS

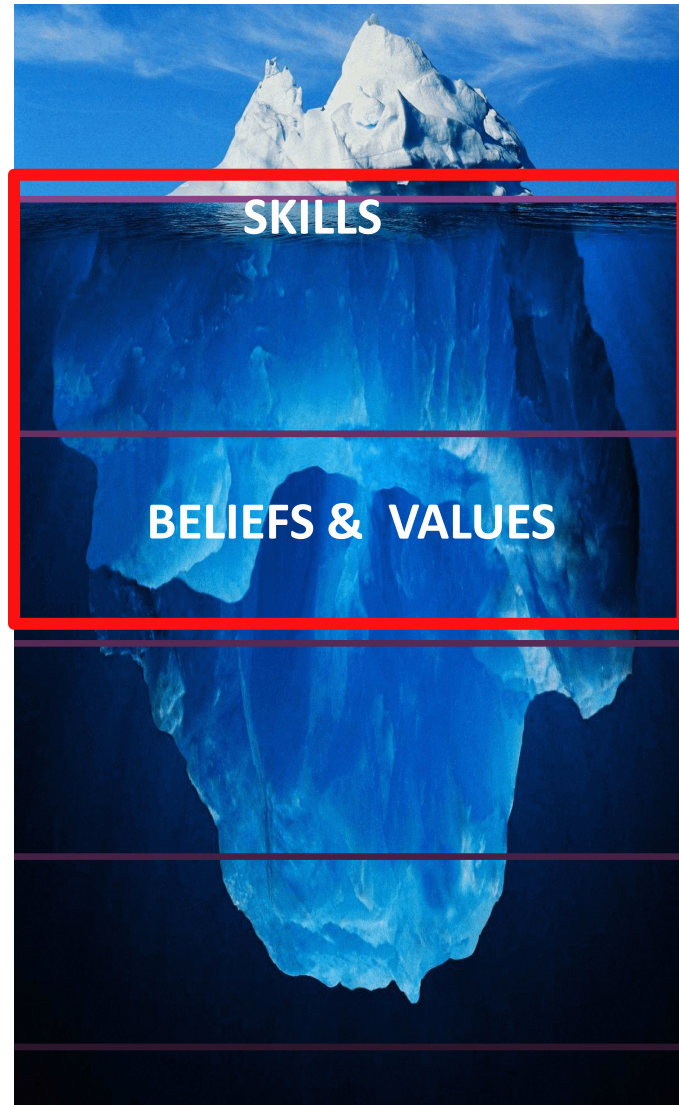
Step 1: Clarify the Goals (Above the Surface)

“What are we aiming for?”

Company Goals: What are the official, stated goals of your company or team?
(e.g., growth, innovation, customer satisfaction, efficiency...)

Your Personal Goals: In this context, what are **your own professional goals**?
(e.g., learning a skill, contributing to change, better balance, promotion,...)

EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY'S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?



Step 2: Dive Below the Surface – The Underwater Iceberg Layers

“Do my goals fit with who I am?”

At the Waterline: SKILLS

What skills are needed to reach these goals?

Do you have them already? Which are visible, and which are unnoticed or underused?

Which skills would you love to develop further?

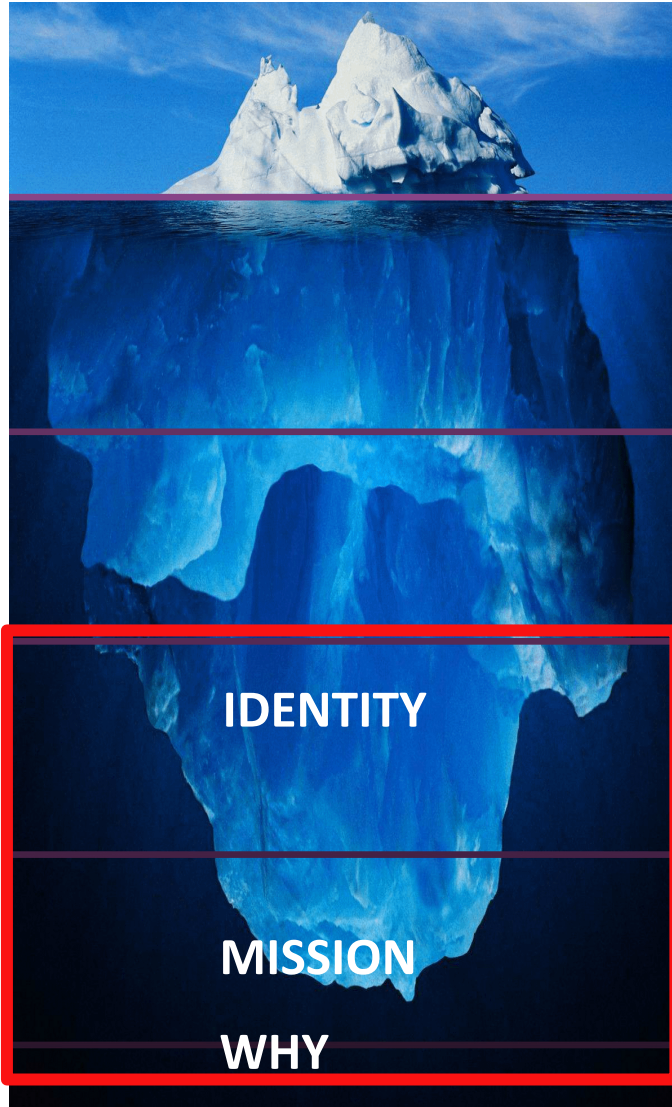
Just Below the Surface: BELIEFS & VALUES

What do you believe in strongly?

What values are non-negotiable for you?

Do your current goals honor or contradict these values?

EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY'S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?



Step 2: Dive Below the Surface – The Underwater Iceberg Layers

“Do my goals fit with who I am?”

Deeper: IDENTITY

Who are you (professionally/personally)?

What roles matter to you (e.g., coach, learner, creative, team player...)?

Are your goals aligned with your sense of self?

Or do they feel externally imposed?

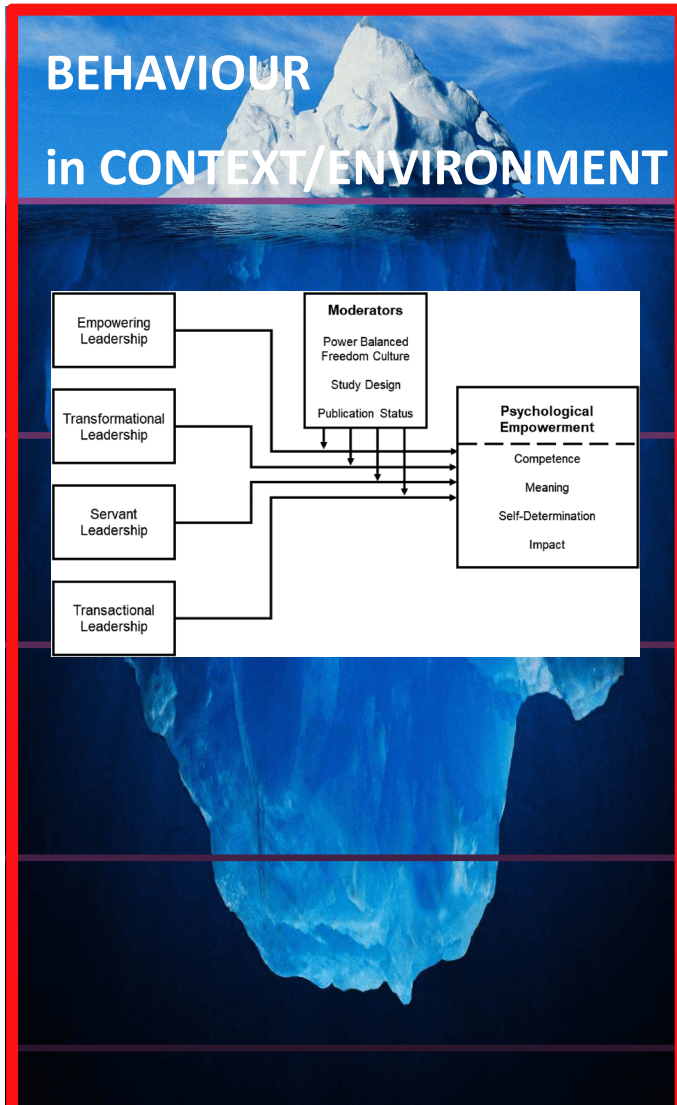
At the Deepest Level: MISSION

Why do you do what you do? What gives your work meaning?

Can you trace a line from your current goals to your deeper mission?

If not, where is the disconnect?

EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY'S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?



Step 3: Context and Leadership

“What kind of leadership environment am I in—and what do I need to thrive?”

1. Current Leadership Style:

How would you describe the dominant leadership style in your workplace?

-

How does this style affect your motivation and ability to reach your goals?

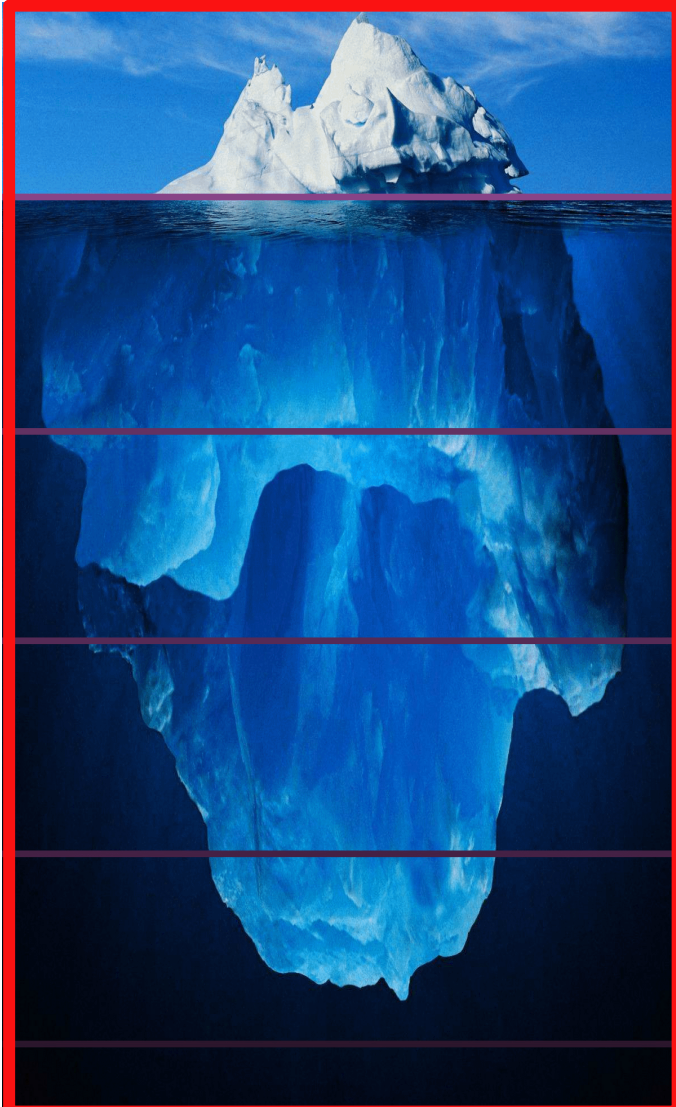
2. Needed Leadership Style:

What kind of leadership would help your skills grow and flourish?

What style would best align with your deeper values, identity, and mission?

3. **Reflect on the fit** (or mismatch) between the leadership you experience and the support you need.

EXERCISE 2: DIVING DEEP – DO YOUR (COMPANY’S) GOALS ALIGN WITH WHO YOU ARE?



Step 4: Reflecting on the Bigger Picture

“What can I take from this?”

What have you learned about your **own alignment (or misalignment)** between goals and who you are?

What would need to change in your context—or in your approach—to improve that alignment?

What kind of leadership do you want/need (to offer) based on this insight?

How can this reflection make you better communicate what you need?

THUS: KNOW YOURSELF & OTHERS around you

What can you offer as a **leader**?

What do you need as a **follower**?



What do you need from a **leader**?

What do your **followers** need?



REACH ME AT
CHARLOTTE.DEBACKER@UANTWERPEN.BE

Quiz & wrap-up

Wrap-up



Quiz