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*The principal of [Executive Mandala](#) says leaders need to reframe their roles to be more effective in the new normality.*

Planes back in the sky, traffic on the roads, people having picnics in parks, kids back at school. It looks to be mostly “normal” again after almost two years of stop, start, stop in just about all areas of life. What a time it’s been for us all.

The big question on the minds of business leaders across the country, across the world, has been what’s next? What will facing this uncertainty and complexity mean for leaders who are charged with steering corporations and the people in them? There will be a need for a very different kind of leadership, at least initially, as these many elements of the fallout from COVID-19 are confronted.

Leaders naturally have a lot to think about as this new world of work comes into view. The mastery of leadership has always required effort being put into developing and strengthening both the relationship and task elements of the role, and getting the balance right. However, key themes emerging in conversations with leaders identify two areas where focus will be needed — our own self-awareness as leaders and our leadership of others.

Leading in this context is going to require a high degree of psychological insight by leaders. For executives to develop this as a core strength is the key to expanded development and success — and sustainability. Building this proficiency is a critical feature for gaining the perspicacity that is the foundation upon which deep and sustainable change can occur. This forms the bedrock for psychological resilience.

Developing this insight will enable leaders to build the individual development strategies necessary to achieve long-lasting, highly effective leadership behaviour. This in turn will support their ongoing ability to support their workforces now and in the future.

In this more blended work platform, a leader's ability to build trust across the workforce will be just as important as it ever has been, yet more challenging to achieve and sustain. Reliability, openness, and congruence are the rudiments that make up trust and are fundamental to achieving the primary and secondary goals of business. In the uncertain context of these past two years, some trust has been fractured, not just in business, but in broader national and international realms.

The ongoing sustaining of trust is an everyday thing, and along with getting that balance in leadership mastery right — between getting the operational task done and keeping all key stakeholder relationships from falling — leading with empathy will be beneficial. Empathy is one precursor to behaviour that is beneficial to others. We've often paid lip service to pro-social behaviour and some get it right, some don't. Artificial empathy won't do it, either. Authenticity is vital.

There have always been questions about if, how, and should this capability be built. Caring connection, in some quarters, has a reputation of being on the "too soft" side of leadership. There are also questions as to whether it's more easily achieved in men or women. Generally speaking, being a caring leader can simply mean people feel supported in their presence because they are open to high-quality, trusting relationships. Vulnerability also plays a part. They admit their mistakes and confront others supportively.

Part of that good leadership will be the ability to flex and adapt to what's in front of us, be it pandemic, cybersecurity, correction in equity markets or just everyday ups and downs. When executives can regulate their emotions, build and strengthen their mental capacity and make long-lasting changes to how they operate in this high-pressure, complex world, the ripple effect will be wholly felt.