
Back to Basics: The “WHY” Question

Why (Influential) Leadership?

The “why leadership” question is never put to bed—it is like an insomniac who never quite achieves deep sleep.

The “why” question I most frequently face is along the following lines:

α “**Why** should I be bothered with or interested in leadership—**what is the value** of leadership to me, my business, my team, my country?”

Great question!

Questions are the foundation of curiosity, even if they are tinged with scepticism. I too am a sceptic if it means looking forwards, towards how things **could be, ought to be**, rather than accepting what we have. This is a feature of Leadership. After all, every productive change in human existence comes about because of productive scepticism, and Leadership.

I reckon that if more people asked this question, there would be more proper leadership and less misleadership—there’d be people creating hope and inclusion, people being ethical, kind and caring, and fewer autocrats, bullies, dictators, narcissists and sociopaths reigning free to retard human progress, and make life miserable for the rest of humanity!

So, never stop asking these sorts of questions—whether you are a seasoned Leadership Activist or newly exploring the practice.

BTW: We could, and should also ask the same question about every other human practice: What is the value of:

α Accountancy | Beliefs | Consumerism | Engineering | Management | Mathematics | Music | Sport...

However, let us leave those for the moment to focus on Leadership.

A Response

You will notice that I offer **a response, not an answer**—they are not the same thing.

In the domain of Leadership, **we encourage responses** rather than answers, although there are instances when an answer is right.

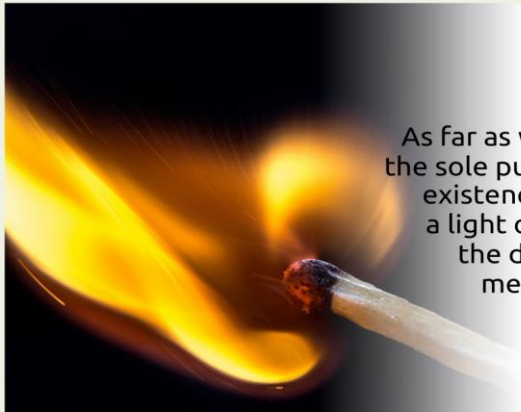
So, let us digress for a moment to examine these two creatures—response and answer.

Response vs Answer

The difference between a response and an answer lies in *intent, scope, and relationship to the question*.

Refer to the table below.

Response: open and relational	Answer: closed and conclusive
Engages: It engages with the question, but also with the context, assumptions, and implications behind it.	Resolves: It aims to resolve a specific question by supplying the correct or expected information.
Opens understanding: It may clarify, challenge, or reframe the question itself.	Closes inquiry: It assumes the question is well-formed and finite.
Focuses on meaning: It acknowledges complexity or ambiguity.	Focuses on correctness: It prioritises accuracy and completion.
Treats the question as part of a larger context: It often invites further reflection or dialogue.	Treats the question as fixed: Once given, the exchange is effectively finished.
A response deepens curiosity by <i>extending</i> inquiry.	An answer satisfies curiosity by <i>ending</i> inquiry.



“
As far as we can discern,
the sole purpose of human
existence is to kindle
a light of meaning in
the darkness of
mere being.”

Carl Gustav Jung

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Men [people] make history and not the other way around.
In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still.
Progress occurs when courageous, skilful leaders [people] seize the
opportunity to **change things** for the better.

Harry S. Truman

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The Practice of Influential Leadership is—
An individual's application of their agency to influence and shape events, conditions and circumstances in ways that intentionally advance the betterment of their own and others' lived lives and life trajectories.

“Why should I be bothered with or interested in leadership—what is the value of leadership to me, my business, my team, my country...”

The response is contained in the three elements presented in the infographic above, namely:

- α Carl Jung's proposition on the purpose of human existence (top left),
- α Harry S. Truman's declaration on the driver of (human) progress (bottom left), and
- α The founding description of Influential Leadership that embodies both Jung's and Truman's positions.

When read together, they illuminate **why Influential Leadership matters** at every level of human organisation.

At its heart, Leadership is valuable because it sits at the intersection of **meaning and dynamics**—between why human life matters and how history is made—for better, or not.

Leadership as **Meaning**-Making (Jung)

Jung's insight that *"the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being"* speaks to the **inner dimension of leadership**, and its **human focus**.

Influential Leadership begins with the individual recognising that life is not simply something that happens to them. Meaning is not discovered passively; it is **created through conscious choice and responsible action**.

α **For the individual**, leadership is valuable because it transforms existence into purpose. Practicing leadership allows a person to move from reaction to agency, from survival to **engagement and contribution**. It gives purpose and coherence to one's actions and direction to one's life trajectory.

Without leadership, individuals drift. With leadership, they author lives that matter, that make **a productive difference** wherever they are.

Leadership as History-Shaping **Action** (Truman)

Truman's assertion that *"people make history and not the other way around"* grounds leadership in the **outer world of consequence**.

Leadership is what converts meaning into dynamism and movement. It is the mechanism through which **values, intentions, and courage become real outcomes**. Leadership sits at the **apex of skills**, pulling all the others together.

α **For businesses**, leadership is valuable because organisations do not progress automatically. In the absence of leadership, systems stagnate, cultures decay, and talent disengages. Progress occurs only when individuals apply skill and courage to shape conditions deliberately, **beyond the technical** into the realm of leadership.

α **For communities**, leadership prevents paralysis. Where leadership is absent, problems persist and trust erodes. Where leadership is practiced, people mobilise, relationships strengthen, and shared productive futures become possible.

Truman reminds us that history does not advance on its own, and that change is not necessarily better. It advances for the better when **people step forward to lead with courage**.

Leadership as **Productive** Influence

The Influential Leadership definition brings Jung and Truman together by framing leadership as **the intentional application of agency for the betterment of lives**—personally, in the home, at school, in workspaces, all over.

This emphasis on *intentional betterment* is critical.

α **For businesses, teams and countries**, leadership is valuable because power without ethical direction produces instability, injustice, and division. Leadership ensures that influence is exercised with responsibility, foresight, and concern for human dignity.

α **For society as a whole**, leadership is the difference between progress and regression. Societies do not collapse only through catastrophe; they stagnate when people stop choosing to lead. **Ethical, productive leadership** sustains social cohesion, innovation, and hope across generations.

Why Leadership Matters

Leadership is valuable because it answers two fundamental **human** questions:

- α Why does my life matter? (Jung)
- α How does the world change for the better? (Truman)

Influential Leadership responds to both by insisting that:

- α Meaning is created through agency.
- α Progress is achieved through courageous, skilful action.
- α Better lives and futures are not inherited—they are shaped.

Leadership is not a role reserved for the few. It is **a practice required of everyone**, wherever their influence touches lives.

Leadership matters because without it, life loses meaning and productive history stands still.

Leadership matters because it makes us better, and **our teams, businesses, communities and countries flourish**.

A Call to Activism

A diverse group of people receive *On Leadership* each week—leadership novices and veterans, leadership sceptics, younger and older, those busy with the Alpha Programme and others not-yet, retirees, business folk and academics, government officials and scholars...

Each person has their unique situation in which to internalise Influential Leadership and choose to practice it (or not).

Influential Leadership Activists go beyond knowing what to do—they do.

If not you and me, who?

If not now, when?

Regards,
Colin

Influential Leadership For Better

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