

# **Affective Leadership**



Mánu Fosela

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Dedicated to my sons Daniel and Pablo.

At this moment in history, when  
automation and technology  
lead us toward depersonalization,  
affective leadership becomes  
more important than ever.



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# Prologue

Here I am, doing something I never thought I would do. It all started when I read what seemed like an innocent message, which started with “Hello Yorch!! How was the little one’s birthday yesterday?”, I kept reading and I was glad that Mánu told me that he had finished this book that you are starting to read. Unexpectedly, he offered I write a prologue, even without commitment yet my answer was “absolutely” it seemed to me an honour I could not refuse. It hasn’t been easy putting my ideas in order, and I still doubt if I succeeded. What I do know is that reading the book has made me think and writing the prologue has made me think even more. It’s made me discover new terms and give importance to things I didn’t before. The first was becoming conscious of the “metaconsciousness” and, just like Mánu, has helped me out of difficult situations, such as writing the prologue of a book.

I’ve had to reflect and go back to a day in a café, where I was having a drink with a person I had just met, a different way of conducting an interview for the position of software engineer. This person was overqualified for the technical requirements, after more than 20 years of experience, but also had an enormous human quality. Without a doubt I wanted him on my team and reciprocately he wanted to work with me. Slowly, he made room for himself in the team and in the personal lives of several colleagues. When the team became unmanageable for just one person, I had no doubt that Mánu’s human quality and concern for people made him the ideal candidate to lead the engineering team so I could move towards the technical aspect. Not long after I left the company, but our friendship endured.

Almost ten years later, we don't just share interest, like cooking, I also learn from him and reflect upon his impact on my life.

This book is a true reflection of Mánu's personality. I hope many leaders will apply the leadership philosophy you'll find in this book, because, just like Mánu says, "Although the goal of a company should not be to make money, if it doesn't, the company will die. The purpose of a company, the goal of a company must be to add to society, to its customers and most of all to its employees which will be the ones that will add to the customers and to society. And this will make the company earn money so that it may keep existing". (Quote from chapter: Goals. The reality of company goals). I would say that this is the quote that has impacted me the most, because it invited all companies from a more human and emotional perspective. I always thought that if I started a company, my goal would be the people, and if we earn money, we all do, because without the people that build it, the company doesn't exist. So I agree with Mánu completely on his vision about what a company should be.

The person I met in that café, motivated by my presence in events and social media is now a source of inspiration for me. I hope one day we may work together again, as his emotional leadership is a clear example that treating employees as people and not as human resources is highly productive. Like cooking, an interest we both share, everything we do in life is better if it's done with love and affection.

This book will invite you to reflect, and it will give you personal and professional growth. Be prepared to learn and enjoy this read, as affectionately as Mánu suggests, with love.

**Jorge del Casar**



# Preface

This book's goal is to inspire. It isn't a guide, and it has no magic formulas. If in this text you hope to find a guide or a collection of formulas to help you improve or be a better leader, you can stop reading now and ask for your money back.

What you'll find in these pages is my experience as a leader, especially in the last eight years, where I've learnt a lot, from many people, from other leaders, in many situations. I've tried to show a general vision, but the specifics of a technical leadership will inevitably shine through, since it's what I do.

You'll also find out a lot about me: the way I am and the way I think and feel, all inevitably influenced by my education and experience. Maybe you'll find nothing useful, or perhaps everything; most likely it'll be a mixture of both. I'm convinced that if you reread it in the future, some ideas that will now escape your notice will resonate with you differently, because your personal evolution will give you a different perspective.

It's not a book to read in one go, more to read a few chapters and let them sink in. You can even read the chapters in a different order depending on your interests in a particular moment. At least that's what I would do, but I know we are all different.

On the other hand, you'll notice that some chapters are longer, while others are just a few paragraphs. Some are meant to be reread and rethought; others simply to have awareness.

It's a book about people. When it comes to people there are few rules that always work, no matter the time, the place or the

people. We must be able to adapt, and experience is our safety net. Learn to build it with time, as it's directly proportional to it.

# 1. Introduction

## My journey to leadership

I was born at the end of the baby boom, the start of what's known as Generation X. The ones who studied EGB, BUP and COU<sup>1</sup>. I've been leading teams and big groups for the past eight years, but with some introspection, I realised I've been a natural leader for as long as I can remember.

Personally, I came into the world of leadership by chance. I'm a telecommunications engineer, formed as a Telematic technician, but I ended up doing an internship in a startup for a web portal. I was hired after I finished my internship and ended up developing professionally as a web programmer. At the beginning I would change companies every 2 or 3 years, changing technological stacks and languages. For the last 10 years I focused on Javascript, because nobody seemed to like it and I found it somewhat interesting, I ended up specialising in it.

In one of these career moves, after having spent 7 years in a multinational, I ended up in a small startup company again, with just about 20 employees. It was one of these companies known as software development "boutiques", very focused on the employees and technical excellence. It worked well and in a year we doubled our headcount. We did this for the first 4 or 5 years. This meant we had to start organising ourselves, since I

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the book I make many references and analogies to the family, or to being a parent. I want to make it clear that they are metaphors that have limitations within a working environment. Don't misinterpret them.

was a veteran and I'm good with people, I started co-leading the group of developers. It got to a point where I wasn't programming, just doing things for the company and most of all for my colleagues. Encouraged by the company I finally decided to lead the developers team, with the promise that, if I didn't fit into the role, I would return to programming. This didn't happen. I got to co-lead a team of over 200 people. Now I've experienced another change in my career holding the position of operations director in another small company with a lot of potential. All of this was almost 9 years ago.

## The current state of leadership

We live in a society where mediocrity is accepted as normal and is encouraged and grows endogamically overshadowing those people who really are capable of leading. Mediocrity, anger of "power" has found a way to impose itself and prevent the growth of good leaders, since this would mean uncovering the general state of mediocrity and the loss of privileges.

Another danger are charlatans or "smoke vendors", who, thanks to the Internet now have a wider and faster reach. They take advantage of human necessities and weaknesses to sell their services. What used to be a sale of hair growing tonics, it is now "How to be an agile coach in one morning reading my manual" or "Be a leader following these 10 tips". Some have no ill intentions, the mediocre think of themselves as superior and has no doubts. Others do it for their own good and take advantage of ingenuity.

We are currently led by companies more than political parties, with internal fights to become the new CEO or head of the

“Autonomous Community” department, to control the media, to find other companies that will invest money into them in return for privileges. I suppose this is nothing new if we read some history, which repeats itself over and over again.

It's the same stage with different actors.

However, I hope and wish that we are reaching a solution. I believe western society has reached rock bottom. As a society we've started having very serious problems and I speak of western society, the so-called “first world”. I'm sure this can only be saved if we start having real leaders, who's interests align with the common good and not their own benefit. Starting at the bottom and leading. And I firmly believe that emotional leadership can help solve this issue.

## Actions' three motivators and the power of affection

Affection, also known as love, but I'd rather use affection, since the world love is almost always misinterpreted as romantic or sexual love.

There are three main motivators for why we do things in this world: necessity, because we have something to gain - we have an interest, or passion. We can add an extra: affection. Most of the things we do, we do for these reasons and sometimes we can add this last extra reason.

For example, cooking. If you live alone, you probably cook out of necessity, to feed yourself, to eat healthily, because you can't afford to eat out... If you're a chef, you'll cook in exchange for

your salary at the end of the month, but if it's your passion, you cook because you're passionate, because you love to cook. And if you cook for a loved one, for whatever reason, you'll reach extraordinary happiness. And it might only be real for you, but you'll be happy.

## The concept of emotional leadership

To have a leadership role, you must at least be a person who leads with humanity. However, for me the ideal is to be an emotional leader, who feels affection for the people they work with, the people they lead. And I mean affection to the point that people matter to you, you want to know them, know about them, but maintaining the necessary balance for it not to interfere with the work. Without this balance you will not be able to lead well.

To lead emotionally, one must be able to maintain this balance constantly.

We'll slowly explore this concept in depth further on.

## Why leadership needs humanity, at the very least

Many jobs require a soul, because even if they can be done correctly and efficiently without passion and without love, the result will come out "empty". Health workers, for example. When health workers treat us and heal us, we feel satisfied and appreciative. But if on top of that they reflect their passion for their profession, they show us they care, they take us into

account and show us humanity, our healing and satisfaction will be much more effective. Even if they can't heal us.

In general, it's common for most health workers to do their job passionately, to love it and do it with humanity, even show affection for their patients. When your job requires a relationship with people, if there's no humanity, they'll be a sort of feeling of rejection. If patients have a bad experience, they'll go to the doctor out of necessity, but they won't find themselves in a comfortable position.

## The challenges and rewards of emotional leadership

Evidently, the beginning of leadership with a new group of people can only be addressed with humanity, but as we work with the team, we can generate this affection we speak of, which comes naturally. Always, your reach in terms of the number of people you can connect with will be limited, we cannot know and feel affection for 1.000 people. However, if you lead a thousand people, but you know and treat 100 profoundly, and at the same time they matter to you, and if this group of people apply the same philosophy to another 100, you will be indirectly caring for 10 million people.

As far as I can tell, an emotional leader is more effective than a humanist one, and much more than a merely professional leader. On the other hand, being an emotional leader has a higher cost, as everything will matter more to you and you'll have to learn to maintain a constant balance.

Those who lead professionally, lead from a business point of view, they have an obligation to the company. They might care about the people they lead but when facing a difficulty within the company or with an employee will try to be professional and solve the issue treating the people as human resources that can achieve the company's goals. And it doesn't matter whether it's one person or another, as long as they can do their job efficiently with an acceptable cost.

Those who lead with humanity are those who lead from philosophical and ethical perspective, who value human dignity and the inherent value of humanity. They are people who prioritize human rights and equality, promoting wellbeing and the development of an individual's potential. In case of a problem, they will try to help and find the best solution for the company and the individual while being ethical and fair.

Those who lead with affection will include this human aspect but will add a warm and positive emotional part towards people. They will create genuine relationships. They express affection. An emotional connection is created which reflects in the actions and gestures that show care, not only because it's the right thing, but because there is a genuine personal concern. When there is a personal implication people react better than with a simple human approach.

## About this book

As I said before, I am no expert, because to be an expert you must have failed and found every possible option, and when it comes to leadership, it's practically impossible, because the options are endless.

Teaching someone to lead is like teaching someone to be a mother or a father<sup>2</sup>. It's something very difficult to teach, because every person exists in their own reality, their day to day, they have different perceptions and fears. Everything is learnt on the way: you read books, you receive advice, you find videos, but in the end, most situations that a person experiences are not in books. This collection of trial and error can be used as inspiration.

In leadership, it's other leaders that tend to be the main inspiration and example. People who have previously led you, like parents, either because they positively inspire you or because you learnt from the potential mistakes in their leadership.

In this book I won't teach you how to find this balance, because it's really something only you can find, but I am going to share my point of view, my experience. And how I feel and perceive things, especially my passion: my job.

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<sup>2</sup> The mean gives you the average. The median gives you the central value. The mode tells you which value is the most frequent.



## 2. Basic principles – an introduction

### What is a leader?

*The function of leadership is to create more leaders, not more followers, Ralph Nader*

If I'm going to talk about leadership and being a leader, I must explain what a leader is for me, but first I'll explain what is not.

They're not managers. They're not directors. They're not parents. They're not friends. They're not "the ones who bite the bullets". They're not human resources managers, not even people managers.

We tend to use the term "lead" as a synonym for directing, ordering or being responsible for. However, even if being a leader usually implies these things, they don't define a leader. More so, responsibility and directing tend to be consequences of leadership. It's important to mention that though a leader tends to direct, not all those who direct are necessarily leaders.

It's true that "manager leaders" exist, but there are increasingly fewer.

Imposing without convincing doesn't work or works only for a short period of time. Being the one to deal with all the problems also tends not to work.

A leader for me is the person who has the responsibility to reach a goal accompanied by a group of people he must provide with

the best conditions to help achieve said goal. A reference that inspires and influences.

Normally, those who lead must make decisions that can affect people and results. They must also be the people to support, help, unlock or facilitate and support so that others can make decisions and decide actions based on an agreed goal.

They must influence other people to get to this common goal. They must prepare themselves for the unexpected and critical situations and try to keep the rest of the team unaffected.

## Can I lead as an introvert?

If you're a person who tends towards introversion, commonly understood as "the huge amount of energy that interpersonal relationships can take", I think it can be improved and minimised. Careful! We must not confuse being an introvert with being shy.

Shyness is an emotional reaction which produces discomfort or anxiety in social situations, usually caused by fear of being negatively judged. Introversion is a personality trait which implies a preference for quieter or less stimulating situations, the need for alone time after a social interaction to recharge one's energy. I'm referring to being a leader while being an introvert.

As I was saying, introversion is something that can be improved and if you train it, you may minimise it. For example, if you don't practice any sport, the beginning is the hardest part, since it exhausts one mentally and physically, but if you take the habit