



SAFETY, It's about leadership

Compiled and delivered
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RESPECT, CARE
AND DELIVER

IS SAFETY ABOUT SAFETY?

1. For anyone who chooses to assume the mantle of 'leader', whether in work or in life, there is one common priority. We must all have an unrelenting passion and drive, to grow and develop people. One could argue that this is the number one priority above all others, and that **the true measure of our leadership success should be the way in which we have enabled people to become the best they can be.**

Of course, leaders have responsibility for a number of deliverables, but it has been my experience that if our focus is exclusively on the metrics; the direct measurables; the outputs, so to speak, we lose focus on what is really important which is **how we improve our people** and from that will come extraordinary results.

Since nothing happens without people being engaged, one could further argue that stellar outputs are nothing but a result of great work practices, great mindsets and great attitudes, **enabled by an environment in which people feel they can contribute and are valued.**

This of course doesn't stop at the mine gates, since our influence as leaders extends well beyond; what we do inside the gates enables our people to create better futures for themselves, their families and the community at large ... or it could prevent them.

To illustrate what I believe is a required mindset for today's leader, I'd like to discuss the topic of safety.



2. It goes without saying that safety is constantly on the minds of anyone in a mining leadership position, and it's been something of a conundrum to me over the years, that despite it being always on the agenda at every shaft, every day, and on every shift, we still find ourselves having to double down, re-focus and remind our people of its importance.

What occurred to me as I battled with this, is that perhaps we have become used to thinking about safety in an unhelpful way. We have always considered safety as a process or a set of rules, or perhaps more aptly, as the outcome of following a set of rules, and at the same time we've had to remain ever vigilant that it is effective in a sustainable way.

If we've understood it in all its nuances, I think getting the outcomes we desire should be easier than that. In fact, it has become increasingly clear to me over the years that when things go right, when we see great achievements, and noteworthy results, it isn't because people have followed rules that have been laid down for them externally, but rather **because those rules or those outcomes make sense to them internally.**

That realization has fundamentally transformed much of how I think and much of how I believe we should lead in order to be the most effective leaders we can be.

Being a leader of purpose is about more than being a leader of people, a leader of production, a leader of industry or a leader of your mine.

It's about **servicing leadership**, which compels people to behave in desirable ways.

You must know that while everyone on **your team is obliged by the terms of their contracts, to come to work, and to do the tasks set out for them, none of them are obliged to care, or to go the extra mile.**

Nobody is even obliged to have a positive attitude.

People get to choose that. As much as we may try to demand it of them, it can only be real when it is their fundamental intent in life to care.

Our role as leaders therefore is to:

- 2.1 Create an environment where people will take ownership and accountability,
- 2.2 Be less about leading people to achieve targets and more about leading people to understand their greater purpose and the contribution they add to society and,
- 2.3 Get people to clearly understand how they play a part in creating a better future.

This isn't to suggest that we suddenly stop speaking about safety in a direct sense, or that it should assume a lesser importance on our daily agendas. Far from it.

But in many ways, I think **we may be prone to underestimate or even misunderstand entirely, the impact of our intent as leaders** when it comes to something such as safety.

Because in order for us to be truly safe every day, and to mine safely, with consistency, we must strive for significantly more than the external focus or compliance – the mere adherence to rules and procedures.

I share this with you because, since it took me so much of my own career to realise where my focus needed to be, perhaps other readers are beset with the same challenges.

Over the last few years, through the adoption of a new leadership philosophy at Impala, called Care and Growth, we have been able to rewrite the language of our person-to-person engagements, and **redefined the leadership model** as we know it

- 2.4 Specifically, looking at how we value our people and what value means to us.
- 2.5 The directionality of leadership. That we are not here just to issue instructions and achieve objectives, but our key role is to set people up for success.
- 2.6 That we must contribute more than we expect back, knowing that if we all do that, success will be beyond our wildest dreams.
- 2.7 That it is fundamentally not about **what you GET but about what you GIVE**



Figure 1 – Care and Growth Leadership Model

The Care and Growth leadership mindset impacts our culture in significant ways and enables us to **focus much more on a higher purpose and how we all contribute to the development of our people which will directly impact society.**

Rather than treating outputs such as safety as standalone concepts, our focus is on changing mindsets and attitudes with the goal that safety becomes a normal thought process even beyond the workplace. In this view, safety becomes a natural product of intent.

Personal intent therefore is the ultimate driving force when it comes to any form of achievement. If I believe it and I want it, and I can see a way to achieve it, I can be absolutely unstoppable.

As a leader therefore, if I can create belief, and an internal expectance of accountability, I am likely to see far better outcomes than if I bark out commands, or wear people down with constant instructions.

Creating belief is a driver of attitude. If people believe, their attitudes will change because they can visualize and understand the importance of doing things in specific ways. Belief and understanding develops into personal acceptance of accountability and pride.

Authentic care is the key. If we are authentic in our care about our people and their safety and we are visible as leaders and visibly showing this care, people will practice safety everywhere they go, and it will become a way of life.

On the other hand, if we are only doing it to comply with the rules while we are on site, it will be obvious that we don't really care, and we will lose the ability to inspire.

Of course, **our fallback positions remain important.** Having in place strong policies and procedures, which have been clearly communicated and are clearly understood, robust standards, **an unrelenting focus on operational discipline** and the ability to enforce transgressions will always be critical.

But where these were once our only points of focus, today they play both a supportive and a supporting role in the achievement of a strong safety culture alongside some additional key building blocks such as:

- 2.8 Recognition:** the process of making sure our people feel seen for what they bring to the team.
- 2.9 Actions:** these always speak louder than words. What we do as leaders will carry significantly more weight than what we say.
- 2.10 Collaboration:** and within that, co-creation, which means we recognize how much we need one another to achieve success.
- 2.11 Communication:** this will always be our greatest strength when we get it right, and our biggest Achilles Heel when we get it wrong.

2.12 Credibility: absolutely key to being an inspiring leader and makes any of the other building blocks worth anything to our team.



3. In summary, I believe the following four challenges and compelling ideas demand our attention on our journey into the future:

3.1 CHALLENGE YOUR PERSONAL INTENT

We will do well when we take the time to really understand what it is we want to achieve. We can't have things both ways.

3.2 WHAT IS AUTHENTIC CARING?

Care can easily be misinterpreted and can best be explained as the relationship between parent and child – there are times for soft and times for hard care – they are equally important and valuable in setting people up for success and they both show authentic care.

3.3 DON'T FALL BACK TO WHAT WE KNOW

Our old ways of thinking were reflective of our knowledge and our understanding in years gone by. But new thinking leads to new ideas, which helps us to see things differently. We must resist the comfort of old ways of thinking, because they cannot serve us any longer in a changing world. Leadership in the future will demand different things from us.

3.4 IT'S NOT WHAT YOU CAN GET BUT WHAT YOU GIVE

Ultimately, the transactional way of thinking that served us to a greater or lesser extent in years gone by, is something of a relic. Today, enthusiastic followers are those who feel led by leaders who practice what they preach, who serve as much as they lead and who understand people offer their best contributions when they feel inherently motivated to do so, from an internal perspective.

As I said at the beginning, we know that we cannot demand mindsets and attitudes. We can only encourage them by creating an environment and the kinds

of nurturing and supportive relationships, **which compel people to see value in choosing to strive for a higher purpose as a way of life.**

Before we can set high standards for others, we must be able to lead our people to **create verifiable change** within themselves and their intent towards others.

We can set targets of 'zero harm' and we can put up a thousand posters, hold a hundred meetings, and do all the communications we like, all declaring that this is our goal. But just because we say we want it, doesn't make people believe we care about them while striving to achieve it.

Institutional memory leads to habits and pre-set expectations, and we have to break through these barriers if we are to be able to create a belief within the thousands of people we lead that, the impossible is in fact achievable.

Our role as leaders can no longer be merely a practical one.

We know that when we focus leaders on doing one thing each day – make their people and their peoples' lives better – they can impact people far beyond the day-to-day transactional interactions of the workplace.

We can enable them to become well-rounded human beings who can **positively contribute to society**. And while we have a long way to go on this, once we realised it and started acting on it, things began to fall into place.

That is a **change driven by leaders but carried forward by our people**. It's one we have all carried the responsibility for and all worked together to achieve.

Rather than just aiming for our measurable result, **our purpose as leaders is to create fundamentally different people**, who are safe on the roads, safe when they make decisions and mindful about doing the right things. Their mindset, as they embrace doing things right and **elevating safety as a personal matter**.

All of this leads me to a single conclusion.

A true leader's role is never to achieve results through people but to achieve the growth of people through results.

This implies that your duty is to **set people up for success** – growing and developing them to achieve their personal potential – to be the best version of themselves.

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Credit given to Etsko Schuitema, CEO and Founder of the Schuitema Group (Care and Growth Leadership)