



# Rewired Leadership

five leadership change  
imperatives...and the three  
critical strategies for meeting  
them

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**LEADING HUMANS**

*Michelle Loch*

# leaders are expiring

This is what I am hearing consistently from my clients amidst the wreckage of restructures, constant change, and the demands of a 'do more with less, fast- paced world'.

My clients tell me that their greatest challenges are:

- Managing, direction and handling other people
- Getting the communication right
- Time management and productivity

If you are also feeling this way (or observing it in your organisation), you may not have armed yourself with the knowledge and mental tools necessary to navigate the modern work world.

And it's going to get harder.

The World Health Organisation predicts that 'stress' will be our greatest challenge into the 21st century. Our 'busyness' has led to an increase in stress levels of 45% in the last 30 years.

Fortune 500 companies suggest that their greatest future challenge will be enabling creativity in this stressed environment.

Stress related absenteeism and presenteeism is costing Australian employers \$10.11 billion a year.

Wendy Montague, from the Hay Group Pacific reports that:

*"Tomorrow's leaders may need to abandon much of the thinking and behaviour that propelled them to the top of their organisations, and adopt a completely new leadership style if they are to meet the challenges facing them in the coming decades."*

While today's business environment is increasingly complex and requires leaders have broad range of skills and talents to match, the coming years will see our leaders face even more challenges at a cognitive, emotional and behavioural level."



*"I have too much to do, and not enough time or resources."*

*"I feel like I am spinning my wheels!"*

*"Sometimes it's just easier to do it myself!"*

**Sound familiar?**



# challenges

## Challenge No 1: Leaders are expiring through exhaustion, overwhelm and irrelevance

**EXHAUSTION:** Working long hours, pushing yourself without taking time to recover and nourish, ignoring the basics like good sleep, good nutrition and regular exercise all contribute to a feeling of exhaustion – both mental and physical.

Anyone I talk to knows this, but unbelievably, this is still often seen as a sign of an impressive, dedicated leader (it's subtle but still true) – the knowledge is there but the mental tools necessary to change behaviour have not yet been WIRED. Many leaders and workers still push themselves to the limit to achieve great outcomes for themselves or their organisation...except that never happens!

Exhausted leaders fall over before they reach the finish line.

**OVERWHELM:** Globalisation, digitization, individualism, the rise and rise of social media, and the emergence of the 'peer to peer' economy are just a few of the environmental shifts that characterise our modern world. A sense of overwhelm can pervade, and the feeling of being on an emotional roller-coaster is not uncommon.

We don't seem to have worked out how to cope with these shifts and the consequent overwhelm in terms of our own self-management.

**IRRELEVANCE:** Additionally, our social, technology and professional worlds are evolving faster than the evolution of our human brain. We are in danger of becoming irrelevant if we continue to use our traditional, HARDWIRED modes of motivation and management with ourselves and our people. The old ways don't seem to work anymore.

### **Imperative 1**

Leaders must *REWIRE* the way they manage themselves.

### **Imperative 2**

Leaders must *REWIRE* the way they deal with emotion, volume, distraction and the demands of their teams, customers and organisations.

### **Imperative 3**

Leaders must *REWIRE* the way they deal with humans – yes they are humans that we lead!



# challenges

## Challenge No 2 Accountability and execution seems elusive

Missed deadlines, projects going off on tangents, excuses and explanations....why do we find it so hard to keep others and ourselves accountable to outcomes.

Ram Charan in his article 'Conquering a Culture of Indecision' suggests that

***"The single greatest cause of corporate under-performance is the failure to execute"***

There are a number of factors involved in this challenge:

- Leaders are failing to hold themselves, their colleagues and their teams accountable for delivery. (I find my clients are highly motivated to avoid conflict, or are afraid of crossing legal barriers, or simply aren't confident in knowing HOW to hold others and themselves accountable.)
- Poor or slow decision-making processes
- The failure of senior leadership to deliver long term clarity on direction and strategy...not to mention simplicity
- Unempowered middle management (where the work actually happens)
- The evolution of cultures of mediocrity – and the belief that it is someone else's job to rise above it or fix it.

**AS A RESULT... we have become amateur leaders...!!**

**Imperative 4**  
Leaders must REWIRE how they connect, collaborate and self-lead for accountability and execution.



# challenges

Companies are majoring in mediocrity. We are allowing ourselves to be Amateur Leaders because the alternative feels too hard, or quite frankly we are just not sure any more what to try next. Leadership is still often seen as the 'add-on' activity that has to be done in conjunction with the 'real' job.

It would be unacceptable for an engineer to describe herself as an Amateur Engineer. Let's not allow leaders to be described as Amateur Leaders.

Of course there are many valid reasons for this...

limited or short term investment in leadership development  
younger and less experienced individuals climbing the ladder faster  
or simply the lack of mental capacity (from overwhelm or pressure) to give the art of leadership the attention it deserves.

The problem is that both leaders and workers are buying in to 'First World Work Myths'.

- I have to work 15 hours a day to get things done.
- I have too much to do with not enough time.
- It's easier to just do it myself.
- Generation X, Y, Z are useless and unmotivated.
- Multi-tasking will get me there faster.
- People aren't interested or committed anymore.
- I can't leave this job would mean my life is over.
- More money means more happiness.

**Imperative 5**  
*Leaders must REWIRE the way they mentally manage in the modern world. It is time for us to take leadership seriously, for it to become scientific – to become Professional Leaders. Time to up the game, to 'level up' and to use our uniquely human intelligence to reinvent the way we lead and manage.*



# challenges

Buying in to these beliefs (a belief being a possibility that we hold to be true), HARDWIRES them into our thinking and behaviour. They become real.

They are not true. They don't help.

And we don't challenge them because they provide us with explanations (excuses) for our missed deadlines and less than appropriate workplace behaviour. They indicate poor levels of mental management in terms of navigating the modern world of work. And the more we do this, the more HARDWIRED it becomes. We are WIRING ourselves for failure.

## **In summary....**

Leadership can feel hard, and productivity can be a major challenge. We need to create a SHIFT in the way leaders manage themselves and others to create a more productive, focused and satisfying work environment.

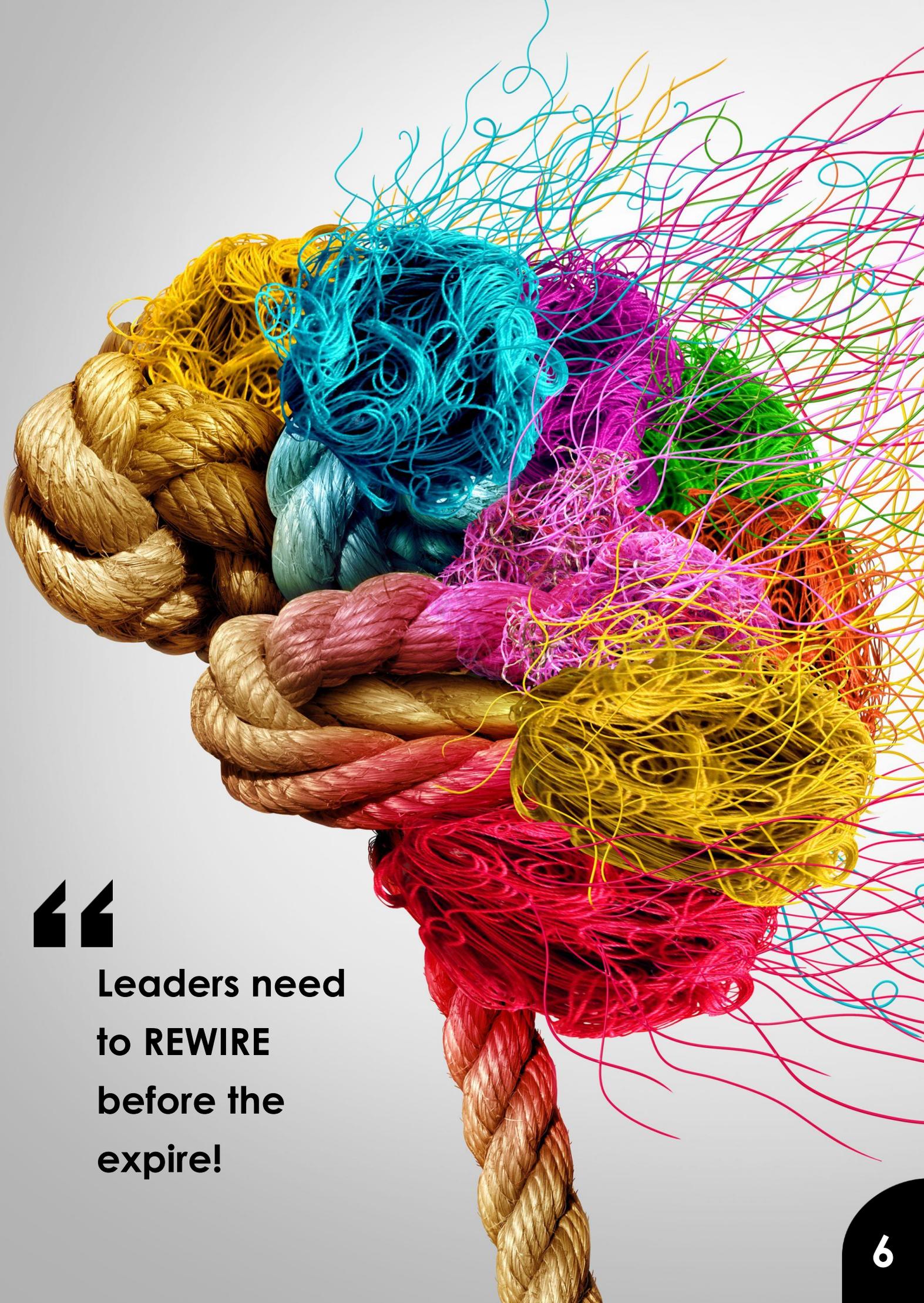
## **This insights paper...**

...provides a fresh perspective on 21st Century leadership challenges, and the mental shifts required for leader to take back control and thrive. It outlines the three key areas of focus required to move Amateur Leadership into the sphere of Professional Leadership.

***“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.”***

***(William James)***





“

**Leaders need  
to REWIRE  
before the  
expire!**

If we accept we may be amateur in our leadership approach, what should we be aspiring to?

Let's take a quick, and somewhat tongue-in-cheek detour to establish the pathway from amateur to professional leadership and how the placement on that pathway influences the potential of the leader to leverage the potential of their people.

## Professional Leadership

		Your MO	You get...	Leveraged Potential
RESPONDING	Facilitator of Awesomeness	Enabling	Creative Execution	100%
	Architect	Strategic	Solid Performance	80 %
REACTING	Salesman	Persuasive	Reluctant Buy-in	60 %
	Spruiker	Energetic	Short term action	40 %
	Apprentice	Operational	Project management	20 %
DESTROYING	Arsonist	Set off fires	Shut down	-20%

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## 1 Are you an ARSONIST?

At the bottom of the ladder, below the 'below the line' (aka, not a good place to be!) lives the **Arsonist**.

Arsonists inadvertently, or deliberately, **set off fires** and have the impact of **shutting people down!** You can tell there is an Arsonist in a meeting because no-one else wants to speak or put forward their ideas for fear of humiliation, or rejection. Arsonists are adept at making people feel inadequate, they are dismissive, and they are 'always right' or the 'only one' who gets what's going on (according to them).

Arsonists create a 'threat or defensive state' in those around them, and whilst they are mostly well-intentioned, it is their impact that matters and this impact is driven by a lack of self-awareness or awareness of their behaviour on others.

We have all been Arsonists, particularly when we ourselves are under pressure or feeling disempowered and we feel we need to defend, push back, avenge, or simply find some sense of empowerment or status.

When you are an Arsonist you may be impacting the potential of those around you in a negative way. Not a place to be or dwell as a leader as you are potentially **DESTROYING** the potential within your people.

## 2 Or are you an APPRENTICE?

You might be an **Apprentice** Leader if you are inexperienced, or exhausted, or under pressure. Apprentices are well-intentioned leaders but tend to be more **operational** in style and focus, following the instructions or culture of the organization and doing what they are supposed to do or what they see other leaders do.

## 2 Or are you an APPRENTICE?

Apprentices often take on the work of others because it's 'easier to just do it themselves'. They are exceptional technical experts who have yet to appreciate (or have forgotten to appreciate) that their role in motivating and developing others is just as crucial as their role in ensuring technical quality. Apprentices still get their 'brain reward' from 'doing stuff', rather than 'facilitating others to do stuff'.

Apprentices are great **project managers**. They are people who can clearly outline the steps from A to B and focus on instructing and training others to follow instructions.

When you are an apprentices you can drive a team to get a project done, but you are only leveraging about **20%** of the unique potential of your people. You are in the way!

## 3 Perhaps you are a SPRUIKER?

You know those people who stand at the front of retail stores with microphones and motivate passers-by to come in and buy? They are spruikers and we have them in our organisations and teams.

Spruikers are really good at the 'rah rah'. They lead through extrinsic motivation and energy: "Come on! You can do it! Yay, it's going to be fantastic!" "You are doing a GREAT job – keep it up". They are enthusiastic and lively, and have lots of great ideas – a contagious cocktail that is hard to resist, as long as it is ever-present.

When you are a spruikers you can elicit short-term action from your team and your people, but you are still only leveraging about **40%** of your team's potential. Unfortunately, when the Spruiker turns off the microphone and goes home, the motivation shuts down and the action also stops.



## 4 Ahh...the SALESMAN?

**Salesmen** (or saleswomen) are your leadership sales gurus. They are **persuasive**.

They know how to strongly influence people and can sell the benefits of a desired course of action or change. They are masters at getting people involved in an activity that the organization or the team requires. They offer benefits and 'carrots' to motivate and engage. And that certainly works in terms of getting things done.

Ultimately what you get from your Salesman approach is a reluctant buy-in. On the surface the employee may appear keen, but under the surface the reluctance can thrive.

When you are a Salesman, you will get a level of **reluctant buy-in** from your people, there is about a **60%** leverage in terms of the potential of employee, but it's hard work - the Salesman still has to do all the work for a relatively passive audience! As a Salesman, you are still in the way of your people!

### You are still below the line...

Now if you're an Arsonist, or an Apprentice...a Spruiker or a Salesman, you are still in a place of 'reaction' rather than a place of 'response'. You probably don't quite feel in control of what's going on. You are still an Amateur Leader on the Professional Leadership Ladder.

Your leadership style requires effort and constant surveillance. It's still being driven very much by you and is sucking your mental energy.

Your goal is to be working above the line – to REWIRE your leadership approach and step up to a professional and sustainable approach.

## 5 You need to be an ARCHITECT

An **Architect** is somebody who has the knowledge, skill and self-leadership to respond to the needs of their team in a **strategic** way. They understand that helping people to think for themselves, to create and to motivate themselves is the only way to engage and empower. Architects get solid performance from their people, and don't 'kill' themselves (expire) in the process.

When you are an Architect, you can leverage around **80%** of the potential of your people. You are starting to get out of the way!

## 6 Facilitating 'AWESOMENESS' is the key!

At the top of the Professional Leadership Ladder, though, are what I like to call the **Facilitators of Awesomeness** (FOAs). I admit, not a particularly professional sounding label, but one that really captures the essence of what I am proposing!

FOAs are **enablers**, they are masters at human motivation...masters at having really powerful conversations that challenge and enable and empower their people, and they are masters at self-leadership.

FOA's are dedicated to, and have the knowledge, skill and commitment to finding and amplifying the 'awesomeness' in others.



# facilitating awesome

They give people 100% opportunity to reach their potential. Congratulations! You are out of the way, and they can show you what they are capable of, and they can grow!

Architects and FOAs are the people who strategically 'respond' to events and challenges. They are flexible. They don't dwell on the past, and they pause in the present and facilitate the future. Simply put...they work with what they've got – fallible humans, challenging environments and seemingly insurmountable barriers.

FOA's are the leaders we consider to be worldly and wise, and they are easy to follow. These are our Facilitators of Awesomeness – our enabling, professional leaders!



Sometimes, the main barrier to productivity and people potential is the quality of leadership.

## A final note...

As a final note to this line of thinking...when teams are lead by Architects and Enablers, the people that DON'T have what it takes are suddenly clearly recognisable. Professional Leaders weed out the non-useful activities and the non-performing elements within a team.

Poor leadership can no longer be blamed for poor performance or behavioural inadequacy.

**Imperative**....Create Architects and Facilitators of Awesomeness in your organisation...and fast!

## OK...so how???

So how do we REWIRE for Awesome, Professional Leadership?

There are three critical 'strings' to the proverbial leadership bow as illustrated in the REWIRE-d LEADERSHIP model in Figure 2.

Firstly, Professional Leaders need to understand **Human Motivation**

Leaders lead humans. A leader's role is to support, engage and grow their people to enable organisational achievement and success. Humans are uniquely wired and evolutionarily fallible.

Human Motivation is a key **knowledge** base of the Professional leader.

Professional leaders understand  
 How humans are wired  
 How they and their people are wired  
 How to REWIRE themselves and their team  
 for innovation and execution.

Secondly, Professional Leaders need to exercise exceptional **Self- Leadership**

Professional leaders must master self-leadership before they can earn the right to lead others. They must have the emotional and mental control necessary for good decision-making and mindful presence.

They hold themselves and others accountable, and have the capacity and patience to support their teams to deliver creatively and on time.

Professional leaders can clearly articulate their unique strengths and challenges. They show vulnerability, and are confident about their personal philosophy on leadership, all of which support connection and collaboration.

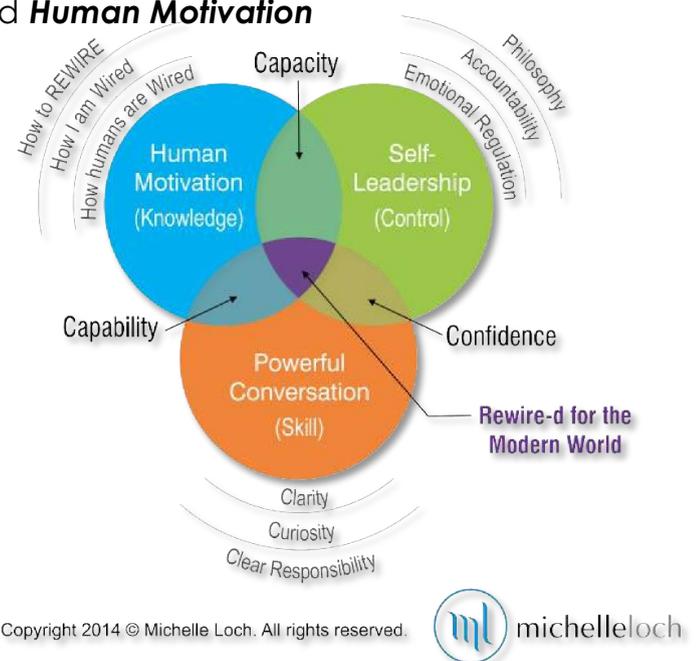


Figure 2: REWIRE-d LEADERSHIP

## **And finally, Professional Leaders need to have Powerful Conversations**

Powerful conversations are useful, not just interesting. They change behaviour. Powerful conversations challenge the thinking of others via an 'ask and enable' approach, rather than 'direct and instruct'. Powerful conversations enable insight, intrinsically motivate others, and clearly define where responsibility for thinking and action lie – more often than not with the team member.

And most importantly a powerful conversation is one where the critical parties leaves the conversation (or meeting) with different thinking than when they came. We want new thinking, not old thinking so we can solve our new problems.

### **No longer expiring, but rewiring!**

When leaders have a deep knowledge and understanding of human motivation, exhibit the control of exceptional self-leadership, and have mastered the skill of powerful conversation, they have the perfect landscape for REWIRE-ing their leadership.

If you look at the distinctions of the REWIRE-d LEADERSHIP model in Figure 2, the combinations of these three key elements elicit three clear benefits for the Professional Leader.

The knowledge of how humans are motivated and wired, combined with the control of Self-Leadership and clearly articulated Leadership Philosophy give the leader capacity – the mental capacity to focus on others, to see the world from a higher plane, and to objectively assess the state of play when things become difficult, enabling a logical and effective response.



# capacity capability confidence

## CAPACITY

### Professional Leaders have the mental CAPACITY to lead effectively!

This same knowledge of human motivation combined with the learned skill of powerful conversation give the leader capability - the capability to develop self-motivated and engaged team members who think creatively and for themselves; the capacity to create environments that lead to accountability and execution; and the capacity to diagnose breakdowns in collaboration... or focus...or mis-interpretation, and prescribe efficient remedy to get individuals or teams back on track.

As a leader with this new capability, your technical prowess is no longer your only profession, your guidance and leadership is intricately woven into your modern leadership role.

## CAPABILITY

### Professional leaders have a new CAPABILITY to lead!

And finally, the combination of self-leadership and the skill of powerful conversation give the leader confidence. These leaders can calmly and efficiently deal with any situation or challenge thrown their way. They have confidence in their team to rise to the challenge as well and confident in their ability to help them to do that.

This leader is in control of their own emotional state, and are no longer influenced by overwhelm and exhaustion.



# capacity capability confidence

## CONFIDENCE

Professional leaders have **CONFIDENCE** in their leadership

### REWIRE

So we understand the imperative to professionalise our leadership, and we aspire to be Facilitators of Awesomeness who have the capability, capacity and confidence to lead. What's new about all this?

#### **The final piece of the puzzle!**

Take a moment to think about what colour dominates the wardrobes of most people, particularly the work wardrobe (stay with me...I am going somewhere with this!).

For most (yes, there are those wonderful colourful personalities that disrupt) it's black!

Why black?

It's foundational, it works with everything.

It's associated with stability, sophistication and professionalism. It's a fall back when you are not sure what to wear, and

It's makes most people, whatever shape or size, look good...and smart (?!?)

I love black. Professional leaders have a new black. Neuroscience!

And Professional Leaders need to be wearing it.

## Recent developments in neuroscience

Recent developments over the last 15-20 years) in FMRI technology have enabled unprecedented discoveries about the human brain. One of the most amazing ... and powerful ... and useful... is that our brains are plastic. 'Neuroplasticity' is the term we use, and it means that your brain has the ability to literally restructure itself. Every time you think something, or experience something, or make a decision or choice, or simply exist and observe, your brain changes its physical structure.

You can rewire your brain – YOU have the power to grow and evolve deliberately, not randomly, and that process has been chugging along all of your life, and will continue until the day you pass.

The question is, are you in control of that rewiring? Is your brain rewiring randomly, or with your deliberate focus?

Chances are that if you are expiring, if you have fallen prey to Amateur Leadership, your rewiring will be more non-conscious than conscious – more random than deliberate.

Deliberate rewiring occurs when you mindfully choose where you pay attention. Attention strengthens your brains wiring, so deliberate attention deliberately shapes your brain. Cool.

## A few surprises...

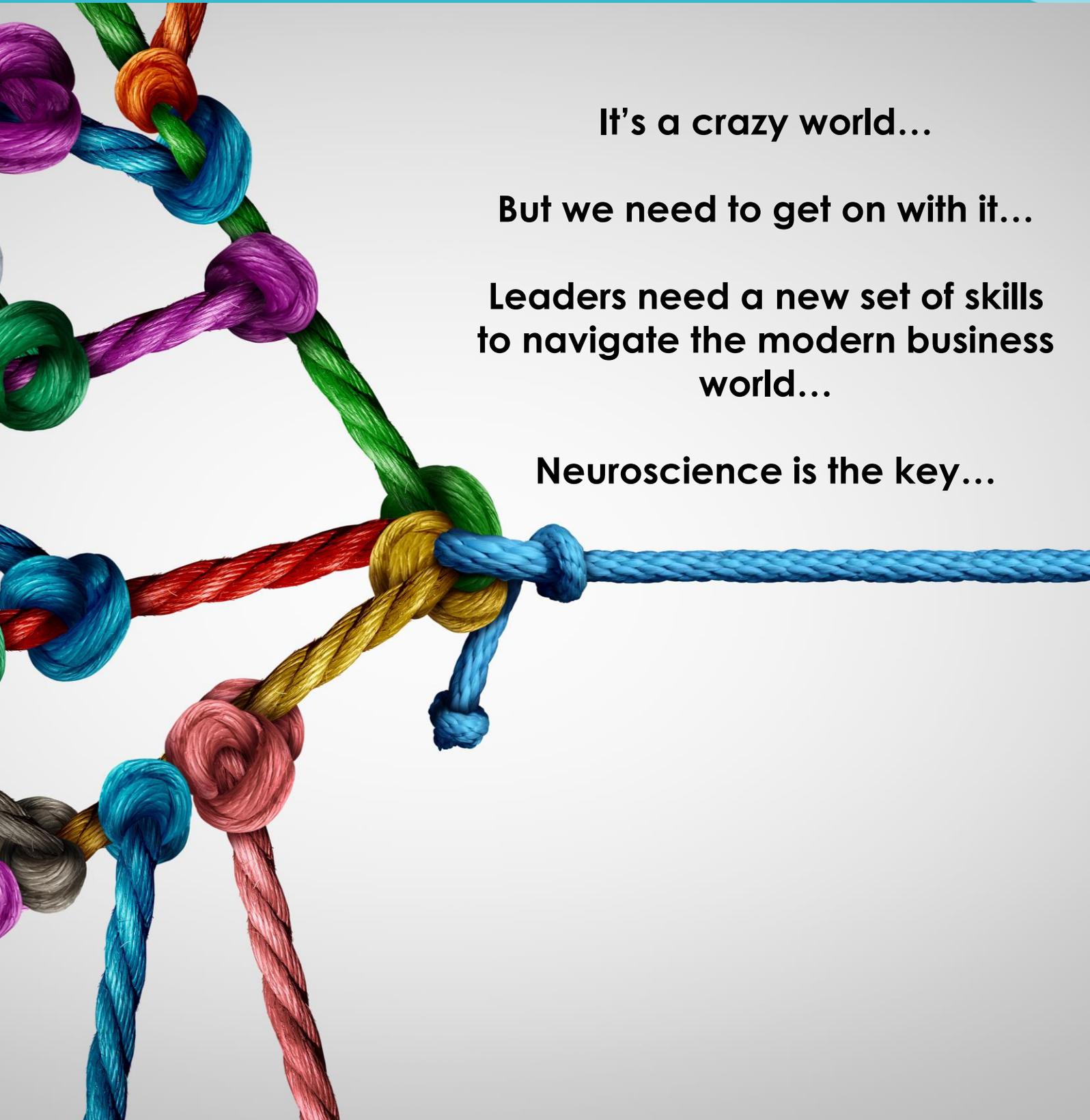
What is really interesting about this new science is that a number of things we intuitively knew were effective in terms of self-management, motivation, engagement and effective communication have been proven to be true. However, a number have been turned upside down.

The thing is, not only is our world changing and needing a different mental approach, we now have new science to help us do that effectively.

As a leader, you need to be across this, and as a leader of leaders, your people need to be across this.



# summary



**It's a crazy world...**

**But we need to get on with it...**

**Leaders need a new set of skills  
to navigate the modern business  
world...**

**Neuroscience is the key...**





# LEADING HUMANS

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