

## Q and A on Leadership Development with Marianne Roux

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### Marianne Roux answers questions about leadership development

Memory Nguwi (MN) had a conversation with Marianne Roux (MR) about Leadership Development.

This is a transcription of a Zoom video interview

#### Work Experience and Introductions

**MN:** I appreciate you agreeing to speak with me about this important subject.

**MR:** Thank you very much, Memory. It's a pleasure.

**MN:** Memory Nguwi is my name. I work as an Industrial Psychologist and am stationed in Zimbabwe. I've been consulting for quite some time. Currently, I work as a Managing Consultant for an organization in Zimbabwe called Industrial Psychology Consultants. I've been in charge of this company for the past 15 years.

**MR:** That's fantastic. I have 28 years of experience and was born in South Africa. I'm also a Psychologist. My Ph.D. in Leadership in the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions is soon to be completed. I'm researching what it takes to lead in today's workplace. In my career, I've worked with Accenture, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Deloitte, and Mercer, as well as running my own firm. As a Professor of Practice in Executive Development and MBAs, I lectured in business schools. I've also served as an HR Director on two occasions.

#### Leadership Development Q & A

**MN:** If you could begin by defining leadership in the context of organizations for us? What are your thoughts on leadership?

**MR:** So, Memory, I've been working in it for 28 years, but for my Ph.D., I went through everything

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written about leadership and leadership development in the last five years. I am confident that nothing else exists, and if it does, I have yet to discover it. I can tell you what leadership isn't, which is crucial to know because so many people continue to follow things that aren't right:

- The first thing to remember about leadership is that it is not a collection of skills.
- The second point is that leadership is not about being a hero leader who saves everyone by himself.
- Finally, it is not a set of characteristics and personality characteristics that you are born with.

I see these beliefs all everywhere, and in my research, I finally came up with a term after five years of hard work. It's a challenging term, but I believe that leaders in the modern world of work or organizations recognize that organizations and governments are human-centered. They don't consider organizations and employees as systems and processes, but rather as machines. They recognize the complexity of human beings and purposefully share authority with them.

They collaborate with others to build products, soliciting their opinion and implementing the best and brightest ideas. They work with others and build ecosystems in which people may respond to emergent difficulties in a very flexible manner as a group. So, I believe they are truly ethical and constantly improve and transform their own and others' abilities in order to have the correct capability in the organization in whatever capacity they operate. They are purpose-driven, values-driven, and ethical because trust is earned, and if leaders aren't trusted, they can't lead. They can bully and force others to do things, but they won't gain long-term commitment or extra effort. I believe this is something about which we've had a major crisis.

Finally, I believe they are resilient and manage their energy well. They recognize the need of keeping themselves and their employees healthy in order to perform well at work. Memory, that's exactly how I perceive leadership.

**MN:** Thank you for such a thorough explanation; it covers the majority of the questions I'm going to ask, but I ask them anyhow. Yes, you argue that leadership isn't about skills; nevertheless, before I go there, can a leader be born or developed?

**MR:** Without a doubt, they can be developed. My caveat is that development necessitates four factors. The first is that people must choose to be leaders, and I believe that if people do not have an inner desire to lead, it will be difficult for them to do so. They must next learn the leadership practices and mindsets, which are a collection of practices and mindsets. Finally, they must demonstrate guts since being a successful leader is not easy. So, it can be developed, but I doubt it will be simple. It's a commitment for the rest of your life; you'll never stop learning and progressing.

**MN:** You mentioned that leadership is not a set of skills, yet in fact, most businesses that wish to train leaders go through some competency profiling before implementing a leadership development program. Is that correct? What has your experience?

**MR:** It doesn't work, and three or five or short-term leadership immersions don't work either. This isn't how people learn, and it's certainly not how they work. Competencies vary all the time, which is something we overlook. Leaders, for example, must now be technologically literate. So, digital literacy is a competency for me, and I want to make sure that all of our leaders are digitally literate. That is a skill that we will continue to require, but things change all the time. They require expertise in human-centered design. But this is not what leadership is about; according to the model I developed for my Ph.D. and that David Day has as well. Leadership is defined by a leader's purpose, values, and ethics. You can't teach that to individuals who aren't prepared to put in the effort of ethical thought and consideration.

Adult development theory is the second layer, which I believe most HR and leadership practitioners are unaware of. For example, I will never be an effective leader if my ego is connected to being the smartest person in the room and an expert. I need to learn over time, and adult growth, which comes out of education, is a very long period of development. It's a sensemaking capability, not a talent. We need to teach leaders how to make sense of things, how to solve complex problems, how to dissolve them, how to collaborate, and how to consider many perspectives.

It will take some time. It's not a one-hit-wonder, nor is it a set of skills. Competencies are only a minor portion of this. Emotional intelligence and other factors are also important. For me, behaviors and competencies are just the tip of the iceberg. It's the things that are more straightforward. It's the things you can instruct on. The things that are considerably more difficult to change are my worldview, my ethics and beliefs, and the required consistency; here is where true leadership lies. It's in that perilous region.

Most HR professionals and organizational psychologists prefer to focus on the easy-to-see and easy-to-fix issues. They are hesitant to put in the effort required for leaders to learn for the rest of their lives.

**MN:** That's right, it's quite intriguing. You mentioned being ethical and making sense. I'll return to them later. Can we develop ethical behavior in people if ethics is at the heart of leadership? Is it possible to teach people to be ethical, or is this more of a personality trait?

**MR:** It has nothing to do with personality. What we can do is assist people understand their values and the values of the organization, search for alignment between those that are critical, reflect on their behaviors, and provide feedback on whether they are consistent or not, and whether those behaviors are

upright. That isn't to say they won't do it; they still have to make a decision. The second thing we can do, and I completed a program at the International Leadership Association in Belgium, which was, of all things, administered by the American Army.

On the subject of ethical reasoning Few leadership courses, in my experience, involve ethical reasoning, moral maturity, and ethical maturity. You know, we had to go through multiple scenarios in which we had to play various parts and determine whether something was a moral issue or a clear ethical option. We will never improve unless we begin to nurture those qualities in our leaders. But it all starts in school. It isn't something that happens later in life. We need to start developing leaders much sooner.

**MN:** Okay, that's quite intriguing. You mentioned sensemaking; could you provide me additional information about that? What exactly is it? Is it something to do with one's intelligence?

**MR:** Absolutely not. Contextual intelligence is the ability to make sense of things. As a result, it is critical to begin with ethics. For the first six months, I focus on personal agility techniques and mindsets, as well as sense-making and contextual intelligence. That's the only thing I work with. What's essential about sensemaking is that it involves people who aren't solely concerned with themselves. Leaders are the ones who make sense of the environment and its complexity for their clients and employees. That is exactly what leaders do. In other words, they read, listen, study, watch the news, read their economists, figure out what's going on in their field, figure out what's going on politically, economically, and socially, and explain it to others.

They consider what this means for our sector, for my employees, and for the skills we have. That is what we mean when we say "making sense." We must do so for our people because the world is changing at such a rapid pace that we must constantly make sense of it. People get so focused on themselves that you'd be amazed at how few people read. It's fascinating when I question a group of leaders who have just finished reading the economist in the room. My father, who was a CEO, gave us all the economists and the Time magazine to read every week of our lives, and we had to watch the news and read the newspaper because he would quiz us on the world at lunch and supper.

**MN:** That's a fascinating viewpoint, and I believe it was shared by many senior executives. You walk into a room and bring up a topic that you believe is vital to their business, but they have no understanding of what is going on. They have no idea of a number of contemporary concerns.

**MR:** Definitely, and it's quite frightening, isn't it?

**MN:** You're right. In the framework of leadership development, you stated emotional intelligence. Could you please provide me with further information about that?

**MR:** You know, I've got a personal agility program with six practices and mindsets. When I first started 28 years ago, I focused on the seven habits of highly effective people and had the great opportunity to work with Stephen Covey. But, as you are aware, those events occurred 28 years ago. Before the fourth and fifth Industrial Revolutions, it was still applicable 28 years ago. Then came emotional intelligence, which was extremely relevant in the 1990s and possibly even the early 2000s. However, a lot of progress has been made since then in terms of the brain's ability to evolve and how we may rewire our brains.

The brain can modify itself, which is one of the main reasons I believe people can change their behavior and work on their values. Right, we can rewire the brain and modify our habits.' It's quite crucial. I don't believe emotional intelligence was developed enough at the time to comprehend brain theory. It omitted traits such as growth mindset, grit, and emotional agility, which are required to keep your models improving. You can't stay stuck in models that are ten, fifteen, or twenty years old. In this fast-changing and highly uncertain environment, you must keep an eye on what is required.

**MN:** You also brought up the topic of adult development and how those who work in leadership development are unlikely to use this theory frequently. Can you tell us more about this and how we've used it for leadership development?

**MR:** This is critical; I believe one of our issues has been, as a university professor, that the faculty at universities are so quiet that they seldom speak to one another. We need to combine psychology, education, social work, anthropology, and philosophy in order to develop a transdisciplinary approach to leadership. Adult development is a result of schooling, and according to Harvard's Robert Keegan, the most influential writer on adult development, "we traditionally considered that people's brains matured until they were around 18 and 21 years old."

Then we discovered that this is not true; people continue to evolve and learn as long as they expose themselves to new experiences and work in a consistent manner, which is what adult growth is all about, right? There are two types of adult development: soft adult development and hard adult development. Ego theory is a term used to describe soft adult development. We assess people and observe that 60% of leaders are what we call socialized minds, which is quite interesting. They're either diplomats or folks who don't enjoy conflict, so keep in mind that you'll see them while I speak. As leaders, they dislike confrontation and try to avoid it at all costs because they want everyone to get along.

Then there's the expert in the socialized mind who wants to know everything in minute detail, which is why they don't make sense because they're too busy micromanaging, right? They want to be the expert, but they don't realize that they can't be. People who are specialists or who are determined to reach high levels of success are overachievers. Those are the three socialized mindsets, and the problem with them is that they're all about what other people think of me and comparing myself to others. Self-authoring mindsets, as described by Rob Kegan, are the mindsets of future leaders.

So, I'm aware of my own viewpoint, as well as the viewpoints of others, and I'm able to deal with both. When something no longer fits, I'm willing to adjust my mind. I understand, some individuals do that, and then people become strategists, no matter how hard I clung to that picture, that model, whatever it is, that plan. This is extremely difficult job, and you will require developmental guidance. We also teach people how to become systems thinkers by teaching them seven thoughtful, analytical skills. Right, you become a systems thinker rather than a linear thinker.

As a result, instead of employing linear analytical problem-solving, you begin to solve complex problems using complex problem-solving. So there you have it: the hard theory, or rather, the soft theory. The hard theory is comprised of the seven reflecting, analytical skills I mentioned earlier. That's where we learnt what it takes for leaders to shift their thinking from linear to systemic, which we know is necessary for a more complicated environment. As technology takes over the planet, there will be more people.

So, I'm trained in both theory and development. Suzanne Cook Reuters' work has trained me, and I'm a coach in her soft ego development practice. I've also been trained in Theo Dawson's Lectica work. This is how I evaluate people before appointing them to senior positions. Personal agility is also something I evaluate. I want to see that they are interested, that they have growth mindsets, that they have tenacity, and that they are systems thinkers. I'm less interested with their level of experience or understanding. Of course, I'd like some, but I'm confident they'll figure it out. But, for me, those qualities are far more important in good leaders than the others.

**MN:** Yes, you mentioned coaching. In terms of building leaders, how helpful has coaching been in your experience?

**MR:** There's a lot of rubbish coaching out there, in my opinion. It works best when it's done as part of a bigger organization's transformation and leadership development program, and the coaches are all on the same page. It is ineffective when every second person becomes a coach and has their own coach, and the coach has their own coach.

**MN:** That's exactly what's going on.

**MR:** I know, and they spend a lot of money on these people, but they have no influence at all, Memory. I have to tell you that I had the privilege of meeting the most incredible human being, Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer, who was my father's Stanford professor. Literally is the title of a book he wrote.

**MN:** I'm always following him.

**MR:** Oh, yeah, that Leadership BS. I had the pleasure of sharing a glass of wine with him a few years ago in Melbourne. As a result, he is a remarkable human being. He told me, Marianne, that you wouldn't let a surgeon operate on you unless he or she had a substantial qualification, years of experience, and a set of expertise that someone recognized, but anyone can be a coach, a leadership developer, or build a leadership model. They go ahead and do it, taking a two-week online course before putting themselves out there as a coach. Do you get what I'm saying?

**MN:** That's right. Another question I had for you was concerning leaders derailing even if they are intelligent, as I read somewhere. Can you speak to us briefly about the topic of derailment?

**MR:** Yeah, I also work with an incredible person named Bob Anderson on the leadership circle 360, which is related to Robert Keegan's work. The kinds of things that derail leaders, and one of the things

that should be taught in leadership development is what leadership is not, such as the dark triad, narcissism, and psychopathic behavior. Derailment is something you should teach them about since they need to know about it. We always tell them what excellent leadership looks like, but we never tell them what bad leadership looks like, and it's critical that they grasp the difference.

However, in both Bob Anderson's and Keegan's models, below-the-line behaviors are what primarily derail leaders, and this is crucial. I use 360s to sort this out with leaders on a regular basis, and I offer them feedback as they try to manage things, and protect themselves or their interests. It's not simply those who are in charge; it's also those who follow orders. Those who wish to be in charge are those who are authoritarian. They're ambitious, political, and perfectionists, to be sure. As a result, they micromanage their employees and drive them insane. It's something I've seen numerous times. Those who defend themselves are conceited. They are more knowledgeable than others. They can be elusive to others, withdrawing from their followers, unable to connect with them, yet relationships are crucial in leadership, if not fundamental. There's always a naysayer or a critical voice in the background.

Right, the third person is the one who wants to be liked and follows the rules, and dislikes disagreement. All of these factors derail leaders, and I see it every day.

**MN:** That's right, that's a lot of fun. So, with all of this derailment and the potential for derailment, can these things be corrected? I'm asking in response to your statement that there are certain aspects you must emphasize when training leaders, such as what is not leadership or what does not generate leadership, and, in relation to that, are there any people who should never be in a leadership role ?

**MR:** I believe there is a distinction between controlling, protecting, and compliant leaders. We can provide them with that feedback through 360s, as well as coach and work with them. We can include it in their key performance areas where we expect them to improve. So that's something we can work with. I've had a lot of luck working with people like that. The ones from the dark triad, where there are personality flaws like narcissism, are significantly more difficult to repair. There are also sociopaths and psychopaths. Too many of them, in my opinion, rise to the top of companies and ruin people, intimidate others, and engage in political maneuvering.

Those people, in my opinion, should never be in positions of leadership, and we should be explicit when it comes to succession planning that we don't choose "smart jerks." People who are high performers, you know all those things, and we always justify their behavior, but they're sexist, racist, and bullies. That

should never, ever be tolerated in a workplace.

**MN:** That's quite intriguing. So, one of the arguments I've had with folks on social media is about someone getting an MBA and the board of directors assuming that this person is now a leader. What are your thoughts on education, education levels, and leadership?

**MR:** You know the MBA class I teach; I always tell the MBAs, "Don't expect to be anything if you don't change when you leave here." Right, I haven't done my job. I don't want you to cram a lot of information and terms into your head so you can walk around shouting the latest buzzwords and appearing to be an expert on everything. You must be a different person. Yes, but there are a lot of lousy MBAs out there. In MBA world, there's also a lot of money to be made. That does not call into question who a person is or what kind of leader they are.

What are my thoughts on education? I've encountered a lot of leaders who have had no formal education, especially when I was at Horus. I recall one of my tellers in one of the grocery stores conversing with her and learning that she was the pastor of a 2,000-member church in her community. Isn't it true that you go to international conferences every year? The company never considered her for a leadership position because she was, you know, a typical age, and she was an amazing leader in my opinion. So I told her no, we needed to work on something with her, and we did. I believe we are oblivious to some facts. Do you think getting a degree, even if it's a simple degree, is a good idea? I believe that having a diverse set of abilities and continuing to develop them is beneficial. It's an issue to have an MBA or master's degree from ten years ago because your knowledge only lasts two and a half to five years.

So, if you don't keep up with current events, I'm far more interested in what habits, talents, mindsets, and evidence of personal agility, ethics, and courage leaders provide. I'm much more interested in your desire to take risks and drive change than your qualifications.

**MN:** You're right. So, in terms of leadership development. If someone were to ask, "How do we build a leadership development strategy in a small or large organization?" Is there such a strategy, or is there a specific approach?

**MR:** You're right, there is.

**MN:** Well, these people sometimes say things like, "We have ten senior managers who need to attend to this leadership development."

**MR:** The suppliers profit handsomely.

They persuade people that this is exactly what they require and that their program is the three-day miracle that you've been waiting for all your life or whatever. Basically, part of my leadership Ph.D. was to design a model for integrated leadership development, not just a leadership model. That works in the workplace of the future. That is soon to be published in a scholarly publication. But, in general, the model's components are that you and your leaders co-create lifelong adventures. You go to your leaders in the same way that you go to your boss for employee experience. I spent time with McKinsey India, where I worked with leaders at all levels to determine what competencies, mindsets, and practices they believed leaders at all levels need.

So I provided them with some thought leadership, and then I talked to them about how they felt about it, as well as their own experiences as leaders in Indian culture, and we did some empathy mapping to see how they wanted to experience the journey. For three-year leadership journeys at every leadership level, we co-created their leadership journeys with them. " ' That's how you do it, that's how you get buy-in, that's how you get the design correct for the situation, so that's where you start. Your participants should never be the sole ones at the top of the hierarchy. You should create ways to develop all leaders at all levels and at an early age, as well as collectively rather than individually. You should employ a combination of digital, social experience, and reflective learning methods so that people may learn in small, manageable pieces anywhere.

The learning should be based on adult development theory, so make sure you include essential concepts like personal agility and contextual intelligence at the back. That's what it has to be based on. As I already stated, the subject is transdisciplinary. As a result, they must comprehend transformative learning as well as performance support, as learning does not occur within the course. According to Godfredson's studies, learning occurs when a person uses a skill for the first time. So, let's pretend I've figured out how to have productive conversations. 'I'm only going to have my first challenging talk two or four weeks after I finish the learning, and that's when I'm going to learn.' So, what kind of performance assistance is available to me? Is it possible for me to call a coach and discuss this with

them? Is there a video I can see?

As a result, most of what we do now in terms of learning tools must be extremely different. Finally, you must monitor and assess your results in real-time, as well as make adjustments to your program. The majority of my programs now change as we go along. We have a strategy; we start with a plan that we've co-created, then go over it with the participants and evaluate it using Kirk Patrick's four levels. We will continue to adjust and evolve the curriculum because there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. Nobody can convince me that there is a single-size-fits-all solution. The background is far too diverse, it is changing far too quickly, and there is far too much fresh material being released. So, we need a leadership development model that is lifetime, constantly evolves, includes all leaders, is blended, and is correctly integrated.

**MN:** What you bout training decay. You will never have the opportunity to practice if you enroll in a leadership development training program. It essentially vanishes after a few months.

**MR:** Without a doubt. We squander a lot of money.

**MN:** You're right. So, what can businesses do to address the most pressing issue? Last but not least, given the amount of money spent by these groups, how do we determine how beneficial the training has been?

**MR:** I believe the first step is to discard all you own. Simply take a step back and consider what leadership means in the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, as well as in your industry. Examine whether you're basing your leadership on what leadership is or the right method. Throw aside your competency models and present development programs, and then work with your team to co-create a model that works for your company and industry, as well as a development program that fits your model and industry, and then begin your design from there.

Simply start reading from the beginning. I'm really pleased, Memory, and if anyone wants to follow me on LinkedIn, I update it frequently. So, if they want to learn more, they can connect with me on LinkedIn. But my first paper is in a leadership book called *Maturing Leadership*, and the next one will be published soon. I'll inform you of the academic journal in which the leadership development model will be published. Once you've figured out what kind of leader you are, there's a ton of great stuff out there, most of it free, that you can use to keep your team learning and upskilling.

**MN:** Yes, that is correct.

**MR:** When it comes to evaluating it, I look at actual results, I look at business results, I look at sales and profit. I use a mesh to measure and alter real-time feedback on programs. But, in the end, I always look at genuine business results and if we've been able to change it over the course of 18 to 24 months.

**MN:** That's fantastic. Many organizations, in my opinion, are wasting money.

**MR:** That's right.

**MN:** Because the people who provide the training persuade them to do so, and they end up getting nothing out of it. So, Marianne, what advice would you provide to any organization looking to improve leadership?

**MR:** First and foremost, disregard the competencies. I believe you should begin with recruitment. Who are you promoting and recruiting for leadership positions? Do they have a growth attitude, are they human, and do they collaborate? I believe you should take great care in who you hire and promote, and then you should reward performance and behavior, as well as what you know affects business performance. So, do you have a system in place to reward those who work together? Do you incentivize them for their psychological well-being? Then you may enroll them in ongoing training, set up a leadership development program, and begin with all of your leaders early.

Finally, and most importantly, get rid of toxic and ineffective leaders to make room for new leaders to develop.

**MN:** You're right. Thank you very much, and I believe we've covered most of the topics I wanted to discuss.

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/q-and-a-on-leadership-with-marianne-roux->