



Leadership M.O.T.: Future-proof your Leadership

IBA – Global Entrepreneurship Conference
20 May, 2025, Milan

Imagine this:

You've just achieved the biggest milestone of your career.

A result no one before you has ever accomplished.

-You put together an ambitious project.

-You convinced the right people.

-You overcame massive obstacles.

-And in the end... you did it.

Not only did you succeed —you shattered records.

Now...imagine waiting for some kind of recognition.

A word. A gesture. Something. And instead...silence.

Nothing. Zero.

How would that make you feel?

This is the real story of one of my clients

a professor at a leading German university,

director of a prestigious research institute.

A woman of extraordinary talent and determination.

In just a few months, -she secured 25 million euros (not twenty-five thousand — but twenty-five million) through an unprecedented fundraising campaign.

- She brought companies to the table.
- Built partnerships.
- Created bridges between academia and industry.
- It was a groundbreaking achievement for her university.

And yet – after all of this...she received nothing. Not even a simple “thank you” from the university president.

No recognition. No acknowledgment. Nothing.

When she shared this with me during a coaching session, she was visibly shaken. And myself?
Because this wasn’t just about ego.

I was sitting there, listening, nodding, trying to stay professional...But in my head?
I was already picturing this university president like some kind of out-of-touch, completely unaware of the damage he was doing.

And when she told me she had never received so much as a “well done,” I almost fell over backwards.

Luckily, I was already sitting down.

Because honestly...how do you not acknowledge something like that? How do you not recognize a person who just brought in millions and opened doors for the entire institution?

This wasn’t just about ego. This was about something much bigger. This... was about a failure in leadership!

This is not just a personal story. It’s a leadership blind spot.

A silent killer of engagement, performance, retention...and growth. A killer — and a mistake —that is more common than we think. And it costs organizations their best people.

In leadership, we often talk about vision, strategy, decision-making...

But what about recognition? What about gratitude? What about seeing and valuing people?

The truth is...many leaders believe they're doing a good job at this. But are they... really?

80% of leaders think they give enough recognition. Only 20% of employees actually feel recognized. There's a huge gap between what leaders think they're doing...and what their people actually experience.

And this isn't just about recognition. It's about leadership development itself. According to a McKinsey study, it takes an average of ten years before leaders receive any formal leadership training.

Ten years. That's a long time! And in those ten years? The damage can be massive.

When recognition is missing, for example:

- People—including top performers and even normal performers — start to feel invisible.
- Teams — lose trust in leadership.
- Motivation drops and later productivity does as well!

And the result?

The best talents start looking elsewhere. People don't leave organizations. They leave leaders who fail to see them.

When leaders fail to acknowledge even great performances, they're not just showing they cannot express gratitude — they're showing poor leadership.

That's exactly what happened to my client. After years of dedication, after securing 25 million euros for her university, she expected at least... acknowledgment. Instead? Silence.

And that silence made her question everything.

"Is this the kind of leader I want to work with?"

"Is this the kind of place where I want to stay?"

That's the real danger. When recognition is missing, people disengage. Or... they leave.

So, here's my real question for all of us today:

"Are we sure we're not making the same mistake?"

How do we make sure we're not falling into the same leadership blind spot?

That's why today, we're going to take a Leadership M.O.T.
a check-up to future-proof your leadership. Because assumptions can be dangerous.

Leaders assume people stay motivated because they love their work. Or because they're paid well. But that's a dangerous assumption. You might think you're doing great...but what if you're missing something?

So... what's the REAL problem here? It's *not* just about one ungrateful university president. And poor leader. No. It's something much bigger.

According to the McKinsey study I mentioned earlier, it takes — on average — ten years for people in leadership roles to receive any kind of leadership training. Ten. Years. Now, let's think about that for a second: *Can you imagine a doctor who doesn't update their skill for ten years?*

Or a lawyer who hasn't studied a single new law, a single new case, in ten years?
Someone who walks into court
completely unaware of the latest legal frameworks?

Sound absurd, right?

And yet...that's exactly what happens in leadership.

For a decade, people are leading teams, making decisions, impacting careers and lives — without any structured reflection on leadership. The result? Talents get frustrated — and leave. Workplaces become toxic. Productivity and innovation suffer. Now let me ask you something else.

Would you ever drive a car that hasn't passed its M.O.T.-test in ten years? No way, because it's illegal.

For those who don't know: M.O.T. means Ministry of Transport Test in the UK. In Italy we say Revisione Auto, in Germany it's TÜV, in France, Contrôle Technique, in Spain, Inspección técnica de vehículos.

It's mandatory to check your car regularly. *So, why isn't it mandatory to check your leadership?*

Because here, we're not dealing with engines and machines. We're dealing with people. And people are the real engine of any organization.

Now, let's do a quick check-up on your leadership.

The skills that made you successful in the past may not be enough to propel you into the future.

So, how do you know if your leadership is truly future-proof?

That's where the Leadership M.O.T. Test comes in. It's time to reflect, assess, and evaluate your leadership style, to see if it's still working for you and your team.

Just like a car needs regular check-ups, your leadership does too. But remember — this is not about engines. This is about people. And people are far more complex than any engine or gearbox.

If your leadership is not aligned with the needs of your team things start breaking down. Fast.

But the good news is: Just like with a car, you can fix things — before it's too late.

So now, I ask you: *Are you ready...to find out the real state of your leadership?* Let's take the M.O.T.-Test together.

Now, I invite you to take part in a short interactive quiz. It's anonymous, it's fun and it might surprise you.

You will be asked to answer a series of questions that will help you reflect on different aspects of your leadership.

First: I will show you the question on your phone

Second: read the question and choose your answer that best represents your current situation

Third: scroll down and push the button submit

Important: This is a safe space, here today. There are no right or wrong answers – the test is anonymous; you are not judged. This is just an opportunity to gain insights into your strengths and areas for growth. Take your time to think about each question, and once you're done, we'll briefly discuss the results together and what to do.

So please, grab your phones, and either enter the QR-code on the screen or join at [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and digit the code number on the screen.

Buckle up – it's time for a leadership M.O.T., like you've never experienced before!

Thank you for doing the MOT leadership Test.

I hope it was interesting and you learned something:-)

Now, that you've had the chance to reflect on these key areas, I invite you to take action and focus on improving one of them.

Leadership development is a continuous journey, and every step counts.

You've identified areas of strength and areas for growth — I will now offer you some suggestions on how you might begin to improve your own leadership skill, starting today:

First: to work on self-regulation and self-management, set aside time for regular self-reflection, perhaps through journaling or mindfulness exercises.

This will help you gain greater self-awareness and regulate your emotions effectively.

Second: If you want to strengthen your emotional intelligence and empathy, commit to active listening in your daily interactions.

Try practicing empathy by seeking to understand the feelings and perspectives of others — even when under pressure.

Third: In giving feedback, take time to schedule regular feedback sessions with your team. And make sure to create a safe space, an environment of trust, where feedback is both constructive and well-received.

Fourth: If you're looking to increase your positive relational energy, try to recognize and celebrate the achievements of those around you. Acknowledge small wins — and make appreciation a habit.

Remember: a small shift can make a big difference!

Fifth: To enhance your ability to pivot, stay open to feedback and remain adaptable to changes.

You could reflect on past situations where flexibility led to success —and think about how you could apply that mindset in future challenges.

Sixth: To strengthen your ethics and social impact, consider setting clear personal and professional values.

Regularly ask yourself how your decisions align with these values — and how they contribute to a larger social good.

Remember, this is not just about a quick check-up, but about creating a lasting change. So, let's all choose to start today, and take that first concrete step towards growth.

The categories we've explored today are not just theoretical concepts; they are the tools every leader has at their disposal to transform themselves — and their teams.

Today, I asked you to do an M.O.T.-Test, but now... it's time to take action. Every step forward begins today — with the decision you are making right now to commit to your growth.

Are you ready to take the next big step for your future — not just as professionals, but as individuals?

Because remember: Leadership is not just about what you do. It's about who you are. True leadership is measured by your ability to evolve continuously — and to create a lasting, positive impact on others.

Every leader who has left a lasting mark made a choice: the choice to grow, to face challenges head-on, to keep learning, and to become a guiding light for their team.

And now, it's your turn. Think of one concrete action you can take in the next three days — one step that will bring you closer to becoming the leader you aspire to be.

Maybe how you give feedback or how you offer recognition. Or perhaps how you display empathy to your team?

Let me share with you a short story:

Once I coached a team leader who, after a tough project, in which everyone has been struggling for a long period of time, finally took a few minutes to ask everyone: *"How, are you really feeling?"* At first, there was silence. Then, one by one, people started to share their stress, their fears, and even their small victories.

A simply act of empathy: asking, listening, acknowledging- radically shifted the team dynamic and created one of the most cohesive and most successful team in the company.

Leadership development is a continuous journey, and every step counts.

The future of your leadership starts today, with the awareness of who you are and the determination to become who you are meant to be!

It's not a question of 'if' — it's a question of 'when.'

Don't wait for permission. Don't wait for perfection.

And stop listening to the negative voice in your head. Step forward — as you are, because that is already enough.

The world needs your way of leading, NOW!

THANK YOU, e GRAZIE!

2025©ARETA new perspectives for leaders

Please note: Inspiration is welcome — but please cite the source and respect copyright when sharing or reusing any part of this work.