

Welcome! I'm so glad you've chosen to explore a chapter of *The Leadership Shift*.

To give you a deeper understanding of the book's purpose and structure, I've included the preface. It explains the "why" and "how" behind the creation of this work, which I believe is essential context for fully appreciating its content.

Each chapter of *The Leadership Shift* follows a clear and consistent format:

- **A brief definition** of the specific leadership shift being explored.
- **Five key qualities** that define this shift.
- For each quality, you'll find:
 - A positive example.
 - A negative example.
 - An explanation of **why this quality matters**.
- **A personal story** where I share my own experience with the shift.
- **Practical tips** on how to develop this particular leadership shift in your life or organization.

I hope you enjoy this preview and find it valuable. If it resonates with you, I encourage you to dive deeper by purchasing the full book.

Preface

Leadership has always been an important part of my life. For as long as I can remember, I've found myself in leadership roles. A quick disclaimer—this doesn't mean I've always been a good leader, it just means I've never shied away from leading.

On leaving school, I felt called to enter Christian ministry, and at the age of 24, I started a church in a small town on the east coast of South Africa called Empangeni. Leading was exciting and challenging. The church grew, and after a few years, I started the Empangeni Christian School. Forty-two years later, both the church and the school are still thriving.

In 1992, ten years later, my wife and I started another church, Grace Family Church, in the coastal city of Durban, South Africa. From small beginnings, the church grew to several thousand people. We became a multi-campus church, meeting in four locations.

During my last five years as Visionary Leader, I helped transition the church into a Co-Senior Leadership model, where two of us served as Co-Senior Pastors. We adopted this model after I completed a paper on the theology of Co-Leadership.

All of this is to say that leadership has consumed a great deal of my passion and life. During my ten years in Empangeni, my leadership was primarily instinctual, drawing on whatever talent I had.

However, once we moved to Durban, I realized that leadership was more than instinct, more than gifting, and more than experience. It's potentially the most important subject for society to function well. As one of my mentors often said, "When leaders lead well, people live. When leaders lead poorly, people suffer." He would add, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."

I realized that if I wanted to fulfil my ambitions, I needed to become a better leader. I started reading books on leadership, attending conferences, and studying what great leaders do.

A pivotal moment in my leadership journey came when I realized that my life's ambitions were greater than my leadership abilities. For my birthday, my daughter gave me a card with a photograph of the 1995 Springbok rugby team, who had just won the World Cup. The photo included all the players, coaches, and support staff.

In a playful twist, she cut out the face of the captain, Francois Pienaar, and glued a picture of my face in its place (before the days of photoshop). There I was, holding the Webb-Ellis Rugby World Cup.

The story of that team became a movie called *Invictus*. It was South Africa's debut in the Rugby World Cup, as the country had been previously excluded due to Apartheid.

No one expected South Africa to win its first tournament, but through the great leadership of coach Kitch Christie and captain Francois Pienaar, the team exceeded expectations.

As I looked at that birthday card, I felt a small voice inside me say, “If you want to achieve beyond your ability, build a match-winning team.” From that day forward, my approach to leadership changed completely.

Today, after successfully transitioning out of my role as Co-Senior Pastor and into semi-retirement, I enjoy helping others reach their potential, writing, riding my adventure motorbike, and surfing.

In this new stage of life, I’ve had time to reflect on 40 years of leadership—not just leading, but also journeying alongside leaders from all walks of life. I’ve realized that my approach to leadership has evolved significantly over time.

When I first started, leadership was very much a “command and control” approach. Often, charismatic, larger-than-life personalities blazed the leadership trail. But over time, cracks began to appear in this model, and leadership began to change for a variety of reasons.

As I continued in senior leadership, I noticed a new generation of leaders emerging, challenging the status quo. The rise of women in leadership, the importance of consultation, and the integration of cultural differences all came to the forefront. Leaders who didn’t adapt to these changes found themselves struggling in their industries.

As I reflected on this leadership evolution, I knew I wanted to say something about it. But I also knew my limitations. Reading all the relevant books and articles would have been a lengthy process, and sifting through the information was a bit beyond me. I’m not an academic, but I was curious to understand what had changed between how leaders led 45 years ago and how they lead today.

That’s where ChatGPT came in. I’ve always been curious about AI, and I was an early adopter of ChatGPT. At the same time, I began a course on AI. It occurred to me that this new innovation had already read all the books and articles on leadership.

So, I started experimenting. I asked questions, and when the answers came back, I was excited. Each aspect of this journey was articulated in a well-structured, ordered way, confirming what I knew to be true about how leadership has changed. The things you’ll find in this book reflect real-life experiences I’ve had. In some ways, this book is clearer than it would have been if I had done all the research myself.

I’m not the author of this book. I imagine hundreds of people have contributed to it. I’m more of a curator, arranging simple prompts into what I hope is an informative and challenging narrative.

Each chapter of this book follows the same format. There are eight leadership shifts I believe are important for leaders to understand.

For each shift, I've outlined five characteristics of leaders who embody these changes. I've also provided a positive and negative example for each shift, along with a "why this is important" comment at the end of each section.

I've also included suggestions for how you can develop each of these leadership shifts.

Finally, at the end of each chapter, I share some of my personal experience around that particular chapter.

When I first read what ChatGPT offered me, it felt somewhat generic. But as I pondered these ideas, I realized they were true. I've lived these examples—both positive and negative—throughout my years of leadership.

I suggest you skim through the eight shifts, then take the time to focus on the one or two that resonate most with you. As I've done this, I've come to realize that each of these shifts deserves a deep dive, a workshop, or an evaluation.

Please note, that you will notice that sometimes certain points will be repeated from one Leadership shift to another. That's because different aspects do overlap.

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Umdloti, South Africa

Chapter 6. Data-Driven Decision Making

“Without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.” — W. Edwards Deming

Introduction.

Data-driven decision-making (DDDM) involves using data analysis and interpretation to guide business decisions. Leaders in this area prioritize objective insights over intuition, improving accuracy and accountability.

Here is a definition of Data-Driven Decision Making.

Data-driven decision making is the process of using data, analytics, and facts to inform decisions rather than relying on intuition or personal experience alone. This ensures that decisions are based on empirical evidence, leading to better outcomes, improved efficiency, and reduced risk.

Below are five key qualities that Data-Driven Decision Leaders have, along with examples to bring each to life.

1. Analytical Thinking.

A data-driven leader excels at analysing complex datasets and extracting actionable insights to make informed decisions. By leveraging data analytics, they can identify trends, opportunities, and areas for improvement that may not be immediately apparent.

Positive Example.

A marketing director uses data from customer feedback and purchase patterns to tailor future marketing campaigns, leading to a 20% increase in conversion rates.

Negative Example.

A manager reviews a large dataset without proper analysis and overlooks a critical trend that could have saved the company from a financial loss.

Why It Matter.

Analytical thinking ensures that decisions are grounded in evidence rather than intuition, which leads to more reliable and strategic outcomes.

2. Objectivity.

Data-driven leaders prioritize facts over personal biases or emotional influences. They let the data guide their decisions, ensuring that choices are fair, transparent, and justifiable.

Positive Example.

A product development manager uses data from user testing to select a feature for the next app update, even though it wasn't their personal favourite.

Negative Example.

A leader ignores clear data that contradicts their opinion and pushes forward with a project, resulting in a product that fails to meet user needs.

Why It Matter.

Objectivity ensures that leaders make rational decisions that are more likely to achieve the best outcomes for the organization, eliminating favouritism or emotional influence.

3. Curiosity.

Great data-driven leaders are naturally curious and continually seek new data sources to enhance their understanding. They ask thoughtful questions and challenge assumptions, looking for ways to improve processes.

Positive Example.

A CEO regularly asks for new data on market trends and customer behaviour, leading the company to pivot to a new market segment and achieve growth.

Negative Example.

A leader relies on outdated data and fails to ask relevant questions, resulting in decisions that don't reflect current realities.

Why It Matter.

Curiosity drives innovation. Leaders who actively seek fresh data and question the status quo can identify emerging trends and adapt more effectively to changing environments.

4. Critical Thinking.

Data-driven leaders critically assess the quality and relevance of the data they encounter. They don't take information at face value but instead question the methodology, sources, and context to ensure that decisions are based on reliable data.

Positive Example.

A finance leader notices discrepancies in a dataset used to forecast sales and requests further analysis, preventing a costly budgeting error.

Negative Example.

A leader uses unverified data from an unreliable source to justify a major decision, resulting in a failed strategy.

Why It Matter. Critical thinking prevents leaders from making hasty or misinformed decisions. It ensures that they base their actions on data that is both accurate and applicable to the situation.

5. Accountability.

Data-driven leaders hold themselves and their teams accountable by measuring success through data. They use metrics to track performance and are open to changing direction if the data shows a strategy isn't working.

Positive Example.

A project manager tracks KPIs throughout a project and, when the data shows progress is below expectations, adjusts the team's approach to get back on track.

Negative Example.

A leader refuses to change a failing strategy despite clear data indicating the need for a shift, leading to wasted resources.

Why It Matter.

Accountability fosters a culture of continuous improvement. By regularly measuring success against data, leaders can quickly identify areas for improvement and take action to correct course.

Conclusion.

Leaders who rely on data make informed, strategic decisions that reduce risk and increase accountability. This approach allows for continuous improvement and adaptability in a competitive business landscape.

My Leadership Experience of Data-Driven Decision Making

I'll never forget the first time I heard the phrase, "facts are your friends." It was at a leadership conference, and the speaker was addressing how organizational decisions are often based on instinct, intuition, and personal experience.

I realized that people often make generalizations based on their own biases or personal preferences. For example, I would hear comments like, "Mark, the people are unhappy with the music in the church." But when I dug deeper and gathered the facts, that wasn't always the case. We conducted surveys and found that 85% of the congregation was satisfied with the music, even when we were ready to make a change based on a false perception.

After that conference, we began measuring as much as possible. We understood that we needed empirical data before making decisions, ensuring that we were guided by facts rather than assumptions.

Practical Ideas for Development.

1. Invest in Data Literacy.

Make sure you understand how to interpret and use data effectively. This involves learning how to analyse data, understand key metrics, and recognize trends. Take time to familiarize yourself with the tools and software your organization uses for data analysis, or even consider taking courses on data science fundamentals.

2. Foster a Data-Driven Culture

Encourage your team to use data in their daily decision-making by setting the example. Create an environment where data is valued, and employees are encouraged to back up their decisions with evidence. Set clear expectations that data will be a key part of discussions, evaluations, and strategies.

3. Ask for Data and Insights Regularly

Develop the habit of asking for data to support decisions. Whether it's evaluating a new initiative or reviewing a project's performance, make it a point to ask for metrics, reports, and relevant data before making judgments. This will help ensure your decisions are objective and informed.

4. Track and Measure Success with Data

Set clear, data-driven goals for your team and measure performance regularly using key performance indicators (KPIs). Use this data to evaluate progress and adjust strategies when necessary. Make it a practice to review results and adjust based on the insights provided by the data.

