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The InspireOne Newsletter

December 2025

The Art of Aligning
Power & Purpose
to Elevate People



LEADERSHIP

A Crown of Thorns?

FEATURED

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VITAL LEADERS, SAFE CULTURES, A FUTURE WORTH LEADING FOR

Being a leader has always carried a strange duality. From the outside, it looks desirable, celebrated and romanticised. Inside, it can feel like a crown of thorns, heavy with responsibility and quiet in its loneliness. As we listened to stories of overwhelmed junior and mid level leaders, we began to ask a different question. If it feels this hard here, what must it feel like for the person at the very top.

We thought of Arjun on the battlefield, frozen by the weight of choice, with Krishna by his side to steady his mind. Most modern leaders do not have that counsel. They must make the toughest calls and live with every consequence. This is where *Leadership Vitality* matters most, because only a vital leader has both the capability and the capacity to carry this crown well.

Our article on **Leadership Vitality** introduces four foundations that fuel such a leader: *emotional* energy to stay steady, *mental* energy to cut through noise, *physical* energy to sustain effort and a *deep sense of purpose* that anchors difficult decisions. Without this inner battery, even the most experienced leader will struggle to show up in the way their people need.

Two pieces then explore how a vital leader turns this inner steadiness into psychological safety. In the **Mahindra & Mahindra safe2express** story, we see how a senior leader can hold high performance and openness together by inviting hard questions, sharing personal missteps and shifting the focus from "Who is at fault" to "What did we learn." In **When Your Brightest Voices Go Quiet**, the perspectives from across industries remind us that safety is a shared responsibility, yet it is the behaviour of the leader that gives everyone else permission to speak honestly.

Developing Future Ready Leaders at Scale turns the focus to the ecosystem around the person at the top. It asks what kind of learning, feedback and community this leader needs, so they do not become the most isolated person in the room but the most connected, supported by data, dialogue and peers rather than carrying the burden alone. In **How AI Augments the Capacity of Leaders**, we explore how a leader can use generative AI as a thinking partner that declutters work, handles low judgment tasks and frees precious attention for reflection, judgment and one to one conversations. Here, technology is not a replacement for the leader, but a way to protect their capacity.

Gen Z in Focus then asks this same leader to listen differently to a generation that insists on purpose, learning and wellbeing, while **Our Cities Need Sustainability Leaders** reminds them that air quality and climate are no longer distant issues but part of their responsibility to employees, customers and communities.

Taken together, these pieces paint one picture. The person at the top is not an unshakable symbol. They are human beings who must remain vital to remain effective. When a leader has energy and purpose, they can create psychological safety, use technology wisely, welcome new voices and act for the greater good, not just the next quarter. At InspireOne, we think of these as *islands of excellence*. Where energy is renewed, not only spent. Where the next generation is invited in as a partner, not a problem to solve.

The crown will always carry weight. Our work, together, is to ensure it also carries hope and the promise of a better future.



Leadership Begins with Listening

A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT THEY ARE DOING DIFFERENTLY

As organizations navigate an increasingly complex and dynamic world, creating environments where people feel safe to speak up, take risks, and learn openly has become core to effective leadership. In this conversation with **Rohit Thakur, CHRO** of **Mahindra & Mahindra AFS**, shares how his organisation is redefining its leadership culture through *safe2express* - a movement designed to embed and nurture psychological safety at every level. He reflects on what it takes to balance performance with openness, transforming leadership mindsets, and embedding trust into a lasting organizational capability.

Safety Starts With Leaders

Q: Mahindra has always been known for excellence and precision, how did you balance that high-performance DNA with a new message that it's okay to experiment, speak up, or even fail while learning?

At Mahindra, precision and performance excellence have always been non-negotiable—they've earned us the trust of millions and continue to define our reputation. Alongside this, we've consistently nurtured a culture of experimentation, open dialogue, and learning from failure. These principles have been instrumental in shaping our success story in recent years. Today, we stand at a pivotal moment. With our rapid scale-up in volumes, an expanding product portfolio, and bold global ambitions, it's time to reaffirm these principles to prepare ourselves for the future.

To do this, we anchor key behaviors through our

initiative called '*safe2express*'. This is our effort to build greater awareness and recall around the importance of psychological safety. *safe2express* is designed to foster an environment where speaking up and experimenting are seen not as risks, but as catalysts for growth. When people feel safe, they share ideas early, challenge assumptions, and embrace failures as learning opportunities—accelerating innovation across the board.

Importantly, we haven't compromised on accountability. Instead, we've set clear expectations: experiment responsibly, learn quickly, and apply insights to improve outcomes. Our leaders focus on recognizing and rewarding candor and curiosity, while staying focused on results.

Q: When you began embedding psychological safety as a value, what were some of the early narratives or signals you used to help leaders understand that this wasn't just another HR initiative but a shift in how Mahindra leads?

When we introduced psychological safety as one of our inclusion principles, we knew it had to feel authentic and business-linked—not just another HR program. The intent was clear: enable innovation, collaboration, and speed in a rapidly changing environment.

We encouraged senior leaders to share personal stories of learning from mistakes. When leaders admit, '*Here's what I learned when things didn't go as planned,*' it signals that candor is valued.

We started Peer Reflection sessions where senior

leaders could come together and share their learnings from implementing the concepts from the safe2express workshops in their respective teams.

We began recognizing teams and individuals who voiced challenging questions or proposed bold ideas even when those ideas didn't lead to immediate success. We celebrated smart failures - knowingly pursuing high-risk initiatives that had uncertainty or ambiguity and choosing to discontinue them at the correct time.

We embedded inclusion score into leadership scorecards to show this was a business priority.

By making psychological safety part of leadership capability—not an HR checklist—we created a compelling narrative that trust and openness are essential for Mahindra's future readiness.

Making Participation Truly Possible

Q: What practices or behaviors have you seen senior leaders adopt that truly open up dialogue, especially in rooms where hierarchy or expertise might otherwise silence new voices?

At Mahindra, we've equipped our leaders with a clear behavioral compass through the **HEARTS** framework—*Humility, Exploration, Architecture, Recognition, Transformation, and Standards*. This framework has helped establish a shared language and code that guides how leaders show up for their teams.

These behaviours are not abstract ideals—they're lived practices. Leaders ask questions like *"What am I missing?"* or *"Who sees this differently?"*—signalling that diverse viewpoints and dissent are not just accepted but actively valued. They express appreciation when team members surface bad news or offer contrarian perspectives, reinforcing that honesty and courage are respected.

When a team takes a calculated risk and it doesn't work out, leaders stand by their people. They share their own uncertainties and lessons from past

mistakes, creating a psychologically safe space where others feel free to speak without fear of judgment.

Q: What are any surprising insights or stories that emerged when leaders started having more open, vulnerable conversations through initiatives like safe2express?

One of the most powerful insights we've uncovered is how quickly vulnerability becomes a catalyst for trust. When leaders share personal stories—about missed opportunities or tough decisions—it didn't weaken their authority; it amplified their credibility.

In one of the safe2express sessions, a senior leader openly acknowledged a decision that didn't go as planned and shared what he learned. The ripple effect was almost immediate—team members began sharing their own challenges without fear.

We've seen leaders shift from asking *'Why did this fail?'* to *'What did we learn?'*—a small change in language that dramatically reshaped the tone of conversations.

In another instance, a junior engineer spoke up about a design tweak during an open forum, sparking a cost-saving idea that might never have surfaced in a traditional meeting. We are seeing many such examples happening across different functions. These stories showed us that psychological safety isn't about comfort—it's about unlocking ideas, accelerating problem-solving, and creating space for bold thinking. Vulnerability at the top creates courage at every level.



Embedding Candor Into Performance

Q: Leaders are often tested in moments of failure or disagreement. How have you seen Mahindra's leaders evolve in how they respond to risk-taking or honest feedback?

We're seeing a quiet transformation in how we lead and collaborate. What once felt uncomfortable—risk-taking, disagreement, tough feedback—is now viewed as a catalyst for growth and innovation.

Leaders respond with curiosity, asking 'Tell me more' or 'What's your perspective?' to turn critique into dialogue.

Recognition is evolving too—not just for perfect outcomes, but for bold attempts and courageous honesty.

When leaders ask, 'What did we learn?' instead of 'Who's at fault?', it changes the tone of every conversation. Open sessions where leaders share their own missteps first are modelling vulnerability and making it safe for others to follow. And when we spotlight employees who raise tough questions or challenge assumptions, we reinforce that honesty isn't just accepted—it's valued. These shifts aren't just cultural—they're driving better decisions, stronger teams, and a more resilient Mahindra.

Q: As you look ahead, what's next for Mahindra's journey? How do you further plan to deepen this culture of psychological safety beyond the momentum of the safe2express initiative?

Psychological safety is not a one-time campaign. It's a culture we're committed to embedding deeply into the way Mahindra leads, collaborates, and innovates. *safe2express* is a powerful launchpad. To sustain momentum, we've continued Peer Reflection sessions, where leaders share real stories, challenges, and learnings with one another. We're also conducting pulse checks to understand how employees are experiencing candor and openness in their day-to-day work.

As we scale, it's essential that middle management begins to role model these behaviours, ensuring the culture reaches every corner of the organization. We've initiated a series of cascading sessions, led by internal leaders trained in the *safe2express* methodology—adding authenticity and credibility to the movement.

We're also driving customized, on-ground actions through unit-level commitments, where each business entity defines its own path to fostering psychological safety. These localized efforts make the initiative real and relevant.

We'll continue to spotlight stories where candor leads to breakthroughs, reinforcing that psychological safety is not just a value—it's a visible, everyday practice.

Our goal is clear: to hardwire trust and openness into Mahindra's DNA—fuelling smarter innovation, deeper collaboration, and long-term resilience.

If building a psychologically safe culture is your priority-

[Click here to know how](#)

When Your Brightest Voices Go Quiet



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AS AN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

When high performers or previously vocal employees become silent, and stop contributing ideas, it's not a sign of contentment. It's a red flag for disengagement – it is psychological withdrawal that often precedes disengagement or eventual exit. This phenomenon is termed as *'The Silent Resignation'*.

In one organization we worked with, a top-performing regional manager who was once the loudest voice in strategic discussions gradually stopped challenging ideas. When asked why, she said, *'I realised no one was really listening and it was easier to agree than to be labelled difficult.'*

Psychological safety is a belief that individuals can speak up their ideas, express opinions, ask questions and admit their mistakes, without fear of punishment or humiliation.

It is an empowering concept with a strong impact on engagement, retention, and productivity. Therefore, there is increasing curiosity about how this concept can be applied for a sustainable and strong organisational development proposition.

We spoke to a few leaders across industries about their directions and efforts on Psychological Safety. A common theme that emerged was that psychological safety needs to be imagined and applied from two essential lenses- *trans-generational and diversity*.



Sourav Dasgupta, Chief Information Officer at **Allcargo Terminals Ltd. & TransIndia Real Estate Ltd.**, explained how the organisation has built a culture of shared ownership



in speaking up and contributing ideas across all levels. While leadership must create an environment where people feel safe and encouraged to voice their views, employees also play a crucial role.

They are expected to stay diligent, continuously upskill, and remain informed about the business landscape so their ideas are well-grounded and add real value.

This dual commitment transforms a mere open-door policy into a truly productive, progressive environment; thus achieving the CI/CD pipeline, which enables growth, fuel innovation along with employee engagement, and maniacal customer obsession.



Varun Chhibber, *Chief Executive Officer Hotel Division at Phoenix Mills*, reflects that leaders today engage with teams spanning generations, geographies, and diverse

lived experiences. *“What feels safe for one generation or demographic may feel unsafe for another,”* he notes, adding that organisations that succeed will be those that create ecosystems where every voice - regardless of age, background, or identity - feels invited and valued.

To further humanise the application of psychological safety, Varun emphasises the need to celebrate leaders for their authenticity.

Authentic leaders, he believes, are better placed to recognise the varied motivators and dissuaders of their teams and to create opportunities for people to apply themselves in areas aligned with their interests - unlocking their best potential in the process.



Shailja Singh, *Chief Human Resources Officer at The Oberoi Group*, shared an insightful perspective on the subject at two distinct levels. For Oberoi Hotels- that every employee feels not just safe

and secure but is engaged and excited to contribute to the growth of the organisations that has been a legacy built over the decades where even the top echelons of the organisation - the CEO, Chairman, CHRO, Dean of Oberoi Centre as a practice visit the hotels every quarter and conduct open townhalls, skip-level meetings, etc.

Success stories of employees ideas and the value their initiatives contribute are hugely celebrated as a shared learning practice, reinforcing that speaking up is both valued and impactful.



In parallel, Oberoi Hotels has institutionalised mechanisms such as an incentivised whistle-blowing policy to protect guests and the organisation from harmful practices, another layer of cultural safety.

On another dimension, the organisation is fully committed to ensuring the holistic well-being of its employees. They apply psychometric tools at hiring, following through the feedback to help people develop and grow right from an early age with the organisation.

HR and Training managers at every hotel unit are enabled to notice early signs of any mental strain and initiate a basic level counselling, backed with professional help and have full access to the corporate office to seek support in such matters. Families are often co-opted to ensure employees are fully supported through personal challenges.

When employees experience this depth of care, they trust the ecosystem organically, and with that trust comes the confidence to contribute openly, challenge situations constructively, and feel safe in bringing their authentic selves to work.



Debadarshi Sengupta, Head of L&D and OD at **Bandhan Bank**, shared how psychological safety plays out in a highly regulated and performance-intensive industry like BFSI. At an

organisation level, Bandhan Bank has adopted the **SCARF** model (Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness) to consciously influence drivers of human behaviour at work.

They work on striking a balance between task and empathy, particularly coaching managers of teams where attrition is high. The intent is to help managers build an environment where performance and psychological safety coexist.

Deb emphasises that safety is not just an organisational agenda - it is deeply manager

dependent. How safe an employee feels to admit mistakes or express ideas depends entirely on how the manager responds in the moment.

He suggested that in many situations, a parenting-style leadership approach should be considered, one that fosters rapport, encourages open sharing, and shifts the ecosystem from a threat state to a reward state.

Psychological safety is not about creating comfort, but about enabling contribution. The collective reflection across industries makes one insight clear: psychological safety is a shared responsibility - of the organisation, of the leader, and of the individual.

Further to intertwine this as a key arm of organisation development, this awareness must be applied in today's multigenerational workplaces, in a way that's both inclusive and intentional. When organisations design cultures where people feel safe and accountable to speak, they unlock not just participation, but progress.

If building a psychologically safe culture is your priority-

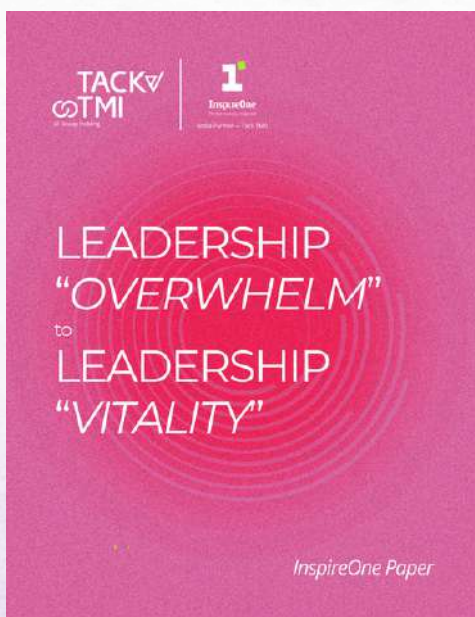
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HARNESSING ENERGY TO SUSTAIN HIGH PERFORMANCE

Leadership once meant control amid chaos. Today, it's about sustaining energy amid the chaos. Decisions need energy which is drawn from internal vitality (battery) resources, and most leaders today are running low. Research shows 71% report rising stress, 40% consider quitting for better well-being, and 80% face burnout. Leading to decision fatigue, emotional withdrawal, and declining morale.

From Capability to Capacity

Traditional leadership development focuses on capability — building competencies. It is evident that high capability can fail when the internal battery is depleted. Therefore, equally critical is the capacity - emotional stability, physical stamina, and mental clarity - that sustains performance. When capacity falters, capability loses its impact, focus is lost, decisions are compromised, and reactions replace reflective actions.



Demystifying Burnout

Burnout is fed by inner and external narratives. At an individual level, leaders' beliefs about success and failure dictate energy flow. At an organizational level, unclear strategy, ill-calibrated workload, and rewarding busyness over impact deplete the energy. This creates "manufactured overwhelm," where exhaustion becomes a badge of honor. When senior leaders model fatigue, the habit cascades through teams, shrinking engagement and productive focus.

Building Capacity - Movement from Overwhelm to Vitality

The Leadership Vitality Framework (**V.I.T.A.L.**) is a framework to restore and sustain energy.

- **Vision and Purpose:** Clarify why work matters. Purpose filters out pressure and builds resilience.
- **Identify Energy Gaps:** Recognize early signs of depletion- emotional, mental, or physical.
- **Target and Develop:** Address specific deficits through emotional intelligence, relaxation practices, boundaries, and simplification.
- **Activate and Assimilate:** Embed renewal habits into daily routines, making balance a norm.
- **Loop and Consolidate:** Reflect periodical to sustain vitality as a continuous skill.

This framework enables leadership discipline, and is not a wellness add-on.

Building Vitality into Leadership Development

Energy fuels learning. When leaders operate on low reserves, even the best programs fail. Effective development must respect cognitive load, through spaced learning, reflection, and coaching that attends to a leader's **state**, not just their goals.

Measurement must evolve too. Beyond satisfaction scores, tracking indicators such as perceived energy, recovery quality, and clarity of focus can reveal whether learning is sustainable.

A Development Process for Vital Leaders

Vital leadership begins with clarity of direction, followed by honest assessment of energy across mind, body, and emotion. Personalized learning plans then help strengthen weak areas, supported by organizational systems that protect recovery time. Through reflection and peer dialogue, vitality becomes a habit, not a workshop outcome.

The Future of Leadership

The next decade will reward leaders who protect their energy as fiercely as their schedules. High performance will mean clarity without burnout and renewal as a professional responsibility. When organizations make **capacity as important as capability**, they build leaders who think clearly, act decisively, and sustain excellence over time.

At **InspireOne**, we help organizations embed this principle, enabling leaders to renew their energy, lead with steadiness, and build cultures where performance and well-being thrive together.

Explore Leadership Vitality
and reach out for
collaborations.

[Click here to connect](#)



Our Cities Need Sustainability Leaders



WHY BUSINESSES MUST BUILD LEADERS WHO CAN DRIVE REAL SUSTAINABILITY

My family, friends, and millions of fellow Indians are enduring dangerously high levels of air pollution in our cities. Living with this silent killer should never be mistaken for resilience, nor should it reinforce our collective willingness to compromise.

We must move from denial to understanding, and from understanding to action, by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the primary driver of declining air quality. Sustainability is a much broader, holistic goal that refers to meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It encompasses a wide range of considerations beyond climate change, including social well-being, economic viability, water use, waste management, and biodiversity conservation, of which decarbonisation is only one part. Instead of remaining passive complainers or spectators of endless political debates, we must become sustainability evangelists and leaders.

In my view, business leaders in India are wise enough to support the education and training of thousands of in-house sustainability leaders. These leaders, in turn, can design and implement impactful programmes to reduce emissions within their organisations.

Businesses are uniquely positioned to build this cadre of sustainability champions because they already possess the resources, infrastructure, and discipline needed to launch large-scale organisational missions that create meaningful societal impact.

The benefits are clear: lowering a company's carbon footprint is rewarded by both society and investors.

Conversely, as air quality worsens and public health declines, there will be fewer healthy people to consume the very products and services businesses provide.

Educating and Training Sustainability Leaders

Drawing on studies of leading organisations already investing in this area, we propose a six-step framework to deepen commitment, engagement, and action among leaders:

- **Awareness** – Build a deep understanding of greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on climate and human health.
- **Commitment** – Frame GHG-related challenges across the organisation's value chain.
- **Innovation** – Develop creative solutions to address emissions at every stage of the value chain.
- **Collaboration** – Build teams and partnerships to foster a culture of sustainability and lead implementation efforts.
- **Transparency** – Establish clear mechanisms to evaluate the economic impact of sustainability initiatives, embedding sustainability into strategy, culture, supply chains, and operations.
- **Evangelism** – Lead the narrative within your organisation and city. Mentor younger leaders in both the science and art of sustainability.

Measuring the Economic Benefits

Our research shows that sustainability programs with genuine depth, backed by strong commitment and investment, deliver measurable economic returns:

- **Operational efficiencies** through reduced energy consumption, lower waste generation, and higher productivity
- **Revenue growth** from sustainable products and services, and stronger market differentiation
- **Risk reduction** by avoiding regulatory fines and costly supply chain liabilities
- **Brand value** through greater market share, customer loyalty, and reputation as a sustainability leader
- **Workforce benefits** such as lower employee turnover and higher engagement

The return on every rupee invested in educating sustainability leaders is significant. Not only do organisations benefit, but society as a whole breathes cleaner air

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Imagine a future where we no longer see smoke-belching trucks carrying cartons of consumer goods through our cities —because businesses have truly embraced sustainability at their core.

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About the author

Professor Lalit Johri, MSc MBA PhD is the co-author and co-editor of *Kindness in Leadership* and *Mastering the Power of You: Empowered by Leader Insights*. His work focuses on advancing leadership thinking and practice.

Developing Future-Ready Leaders at Scale



TURNING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTO AN ENGINE FOR LONG-TERM READINESS

The world of work is shifting faster than ever. From climate volatility and geopolitical flux to rapid advances in AI and changing workforce demographics, organizations today face an unprecedented leadership challenge: preparing leaders who can learn faster than change itself.

This was the central theme of InspireOne's recent Leadership Roundtable-Discussion in **Mumbai**, where senior HR and business leaders explored how to build leadership capabilities that can sustain growth and innovation in an unpredictable decade ahead.

The Urgency of Reinvention

By 2030, nearly half the world's population will experience water-stress, Generation Z dominate the workforce, and digital adoption will continue to outpace our ability to adapt. These realities call for leaders who are not only agile but also deeply grounded in purpose, empathy, and foresight.

Traditional leadership programs- episodic, exclusive, and slow to show transfer of learning- can no longer keep pace. Organizations now need scalable, personalized ecosystems that bring learning into the flow of work.

Reimagining Development through the Personal Learning Cloud (PLC)

Leaders explored the **PLC**, a digital ecosystem that personalizes and scales leadership growth through tailored pathways, social learning, contextual application, and measurable impact. Combined with Harvard Business Impact's **HBR Spark**, which offers 25,000+ resources, AI recommendations, and practice labs, it enables learning at scale. The session also highlighted *AI Rise* and *Innovation Accelerators*, 30-day **microlearning sprints** that blend collaboration and real-world application to build innovation capability.

Leading into Tomorrow

The consensus was clear: the next generation of leadership will be shaped by those who build living, learning ecosystems, where leadership is not a role but a collective capability.

At *InspireOne*, we remain committed to partnering with organizations to help them develop future-ready leaders at scale- leaders who can navigate complexity, drive innovation, and sustain growth in the decade ahead.







How AI Augments the Capacity of Leaders

A NEW ERA OF REFLECTION, CLARITY, AND BETTER DECISIONS

There is a particular look many senior leaders carry these days. It is not quite exhaustion, not quite anxiety. It is the expression of someone who is permanently “on” yet rarely has the space to think. Calendars are full, inboxes are stacked, dashboards glow through every meeting, and somewhere inside all that activity, the work of real leadership is supposed to happen.

In our conversations with organizations, leaders do not say they lack commitment. They say they lack capacity. Time and energy, the vital fuel of leadership, are spent on tasks that do not really need their judgment. What remains is rarely enough for the people and questions that matter most.

AI has arrived in this world with a very loud promise of speed. Faster reports. Faster content. Faster everything. But when we study recent work from **Harvard Business Review** and **McKinsey** and compare it with what we see in our own client work, a different story emerges.

The most meaningful contribution of AI to leadership is not simply acceleration. It is decluttering. It is *subtraction*.

Used well, AI clears away the noise that drains leaders. It helps them protect their time and attention, focus their radar on the right problems, and engage with their teams and organizations in more human ways.

It behaves less like a bolt-on tool and more like a muscle inside the organizational body, reshaping how workflows and how leadership capacity is used. The question is how to get there.

The leader’s vital fuel: time and energy

Over the last decade, a silent tax has been placed on leadership attention. Every new process, dashboard and control has taken a little more time away from the conversations that move people.

This is where AI must start. When generative tools take over low judgment work in processes such as promotions, performance reviews or reporting, leaders can complete the mechanics faster and reinvest that time in explaining decisions, talking about growth and preparing for high stakes conversations. The shift is not only about efficiency. It is about reclaiming mental bandwidth.

When time and energy are consciously redirected into reflection and one to one connections, leaders feel less reactive and more intentional. Their radar is less cluttered. They can sit with complex issues without twelve other tasks competing for attention.

From our lens, if AI does not give leaders back meaningful blocks of time and cognitive energy, the rest of the promise stays cosmetic. Capacity begins with how a leader’s vital fuel is spent.

From self to team: AI as a second lens

Once leaders have a little more space, the next question is how they use it. Most leadership teams already drown in data. The problem does not lie in accessing it. It is clarity.

Here, AI begins to act as what we at *InspireOne* call a

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AI is not a **black box** replacing judgment; it acts as a second lens, sharpening tradeoffs and strengthening decision quality.

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‘thinking partner for the leader and the team’, or to simply put, a second lens. Used as a researcher and simulator, AI can pull together internal data and external signals into concise decision briefs, model scenarios and surface tradeoffs that would otherwise stay buried. In learning contexts, AI tutors can help leaders frame problems more sharply and challenge their assumptions, so the quality of dialogue improves.

In our experience, when leaders treat AI as a thinking partner rather than as an oracle, meetings change. Less time is spent summarising information. More time is spent interpreting, prioritising and deciding. The conversation moves from *“What is going on”* to *“What should we do about what we now see more clearly.”*

At this stage, AI is no longer just protecting the leader’s time. It is amplifying the collective capacity of the leadership team to think together.

Integrating AI as a muscle in the organisational body

The deepest impact of AI is not in isolated tools. It is in how the organisation’s ‘body’ is designed and how leadership energy moves through it.

Organisations that move beyond pilots and create real value treat AI as part of strategy and design. Leaders act as shapers. They align AI with clear goals, redesign workflows and decide how people and machines will work together. As predictive and transactional work shifts into AI enabled systems, human roles tilt towards meaning, direction, creativity and trust.

From InspireOne’s vantage point, this is what it means to say AI augments leadership capacity. It is not about becoming superhuman. It is about removing the friction that keeps very human leaders from using their best judgment, empathy and imagination where they are most needed.

Whether that potential is realised is not mainly a technical question. It is a leadership choice.



in Focus

HOW A NEW GENERATION IS SHAPING WORK, CULTURE, AND LEADERSHIP

The world view and work ethic of Gen Z have been shaped by the environmental conditions they have grown up in. As has been the case for past generations and will be for future generations. Why then is Gen Z vilified as “the entitled, casual, self-focused” generation? Headlines such as “Why Gen Z Is the Most Unemployable Generation” amplify the mistrust and skepticism. It’s time that Gen Z is acknowledged for the unique value they bring to the table. A deeper look at Gen X reveals a generation redefining productivity, purpose, and performance, - in today’s context.

Rethinking Work and Values

Gen Z’s defining traits stem from a desire for purpose, balance and authenticity. Unlike earlier generations that equated long hours with loyalty and effectiveness, they view boundaries as essential to sustaining performance. The Deloitte 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey found that learning, development, and well-being outweigh hierarchical ambition for this generation.

Having grown up digitally native, Gen Z is 40% more likely than millennials to use AI-driven tools to enhance performance (McKinsey, 2023). This fluency enables organizations to evolve faster toward tech-enabled and hybrid models. Just as vital is their pursuit of purpose- 70% prefer working for companies aligned with their personal values (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2024). For them, meaning and identity matter more than titles or tenure.

Their boundaries indicate recalibration not

resistance. Recognition that resilience in today’s ‘always-on’ world requires sustainability, not sacrifice. For older generations, especially those shaped by hustle culture, this shift is unsettling. Gen Z does not lack resilience; they are redefining what resilience should mean in a world that never switches off.

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“It is our obligation and opportunity to meet them (GenZ) with the tools they need to succeed and thrive in the current workforce and the ones to come.”

(Forbes, 2025)

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Redefining the Workplace

Gen Z's influence is transforming workplace culture. Their openness around mental health and need for flexibility have normalized conversations once secondary to productivity.

Their feedback-driven mindset is also changing how teams operate. 76% consider continuous learning vital to success (LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report, 2024), expecting mentorship, real-time feedback, and transparent communication. Leaders today must therefore shift from evaluators to coaches- listening, guiding, and adapting to sustain engagement and retention.

Gen Z values social and environmental responsibility, showing stronger loyalty to organizations that demonstrate integrity and inclusivity (Stanford Center for Work and Well-Being, 2024). Companies are therefore rethinking culture design, moving from control and compliance to flexibility, psychological safety, and shared purpose.

The InspireOne Perspective

At InspireOne, we believe true cultural transformation begins with understanding the constituents who drive it. Our work with organizations across industries focuses on building adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and purpose-driven cultures that resonate with today's workforce.

With strong Gen Z representation within our own teams, we see how their values fuel resilience and innovation. Through leadership development, employee engagement, and culture transformation programs, InspireOne helps organizations bridge generational gaps and translate shared values into sustained performance.

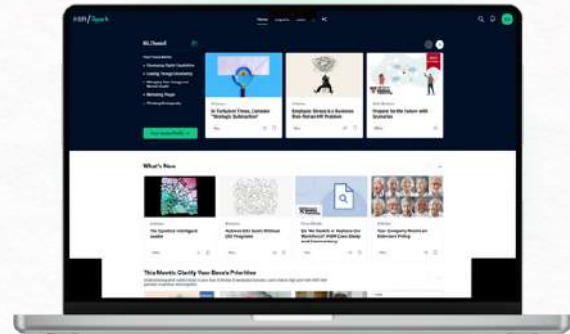
In a world often divided by generational labels, we believe in reimagining management styles that are aligned with the evolving expectations of a learning workforce.



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- AI that answers real leadership questions instantly
- Curated pathways aligned to performance goals
- Dynamic reporting that shows learning impact and adoption trends
- Scales across levels to strengthen organisational culture and readiness

RISE COACHING

What makes RISE Coaching powerful

- **Scales seamlessly** across teams, functions, and geographies
- **Aligns coaching journeys** with real business priorities
- Backed by a curated network of **experienced leadership coaches**
- **Senior-level oversight** for consistency and depth
- Digital platform for ease, structure, and **real-time tracking**
- Enriched with tools and insights from **Harvard Business Publishing Collection**

Coaching for leaders who shape the future

RISE Coaching gives mid to senior level leaders the space to reflect, recalibrate, and rise. In a world where *78 percent* of leaders say the pace of change has outpaced their ability to adapt, RISE brings structure, depth, and global insights to help them lead with clarity and impact.



[Click here to explore more](#)

Latest in Leadership Development



Psychological Safety at Workplace



First Time Managers Program



Capability Acceleration Program



Development Program for Frontline Leaders



People and Business Management



Senior Leadership Development Program



New Manager Development Program



High Potential Leadership Development



High Potential Leadership Development



Performance Conversations

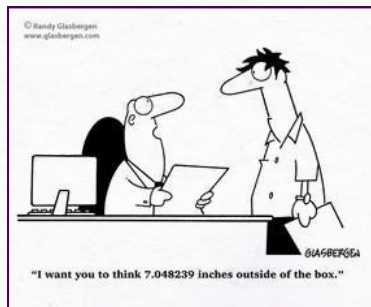
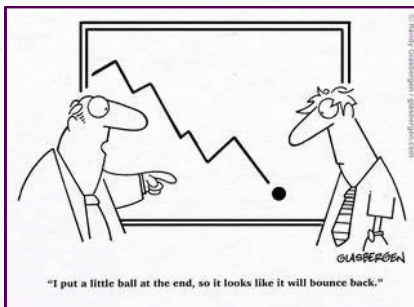


Leadership Development Program



Senior Leaders Developmental Journey

On a lighter note



U&I Ambassador Wish to contribute to future issues? Write to us at marketing@inspireone.in



About InspireOne

We are India's leading consulting firm offering organizational and leadership development solutions. With over 25 years of experience in the consulting domain, we help organizations convert their people and organizational capabilities into corporate value. Our solutions are developed on the global and researched know-how of our partners - **Tack TMI**. We are partners to **Harvard Business Impact Enterprise** to bring their flagship digital learning solutions to clients across India.



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