



**GURU
GUIDE**
with
Vidusha and Anton

in conversation with
Ross Swan

33

**SOUL INSPIRED
LEADERSHIP**

A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO THE GURU GUIDE

The 'Guru Guide' is an attempt to refine decades of hard-earned expertise into succinct, simple and practical advice.

It is NOT meant to be an exhaustive exploration of a topic: rather, pointed areas of focus which can only be discerned by a practitioner. It is not meant to be a generic set of advice: it is advice from battle-hardened professionals who have had a lifetime of experience and proven track records.

The Guru Guide has a pre determined format:

- ✓ It aims to understand a topic/ area of focus
- ✓ It aims to give tools to help you navigate the area
- ✓ It also gives contexts and examples: so that you can customize it to suit YOU

Exploratory, intimate and insightful, the Guru Guide aims to bring to you a wealth of expertise which can only be possible through veterans whose varied and in-depth experiences offer unparalleled insights.

The brevity and simplicity is by choice, and design. Focused on Executives and Managers who want to get quick tips and techniques, who are eager to improve their craft

and trade : the Guru Guide aims to offer 'little nuggets' of advice and importantly, simple tools, which will enable practitioners to up their game and benefit from expertise which may be hard to find in a hurry.

INTRODUCING



**VIDUSHA
NATHAVITHARANA**

Vidusha is currently the Destiny Architect at High5 Consultancy and Luminary Learning and the organization's founder. His areas of expertise are with strategy facilitation, HR strategy development and Leadership Training. He has conducted assignments in 15 countries regionally and consulted for the World Bank, the UN as well as some of the top corporates in Sri Lanka and the Region. He is also a member of the board of directors for Chrysalis, a social enterprise working to empower women and youth by fostering inclusive growth in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.



**ANTON
THAYALAN**

Anton is a multi-faceted professional who has had over two decades of hands-on experience in process improvement, change management and strategic management, and currently works as the Chief Evangelist of Luminary Learning and the Transformation Therapist of High5 Consultancy. As the former AVP at HSBC DPL Anton won accolades for his superlative work there: and won the prestigious HSBC Group Service – Global Talent Management Member two years in a row. Anton currently works as a consultant focusing on efficiency and productivity improvement and process optimization for local and regional clients.

INTRODUCING ROSS SWAN

We 'e-met' Ross during our series of webinars, and thoroughly enjoyed talking to him on his podcast as well, the theme of which inspired this Guru Guide.

Ross is one of those individuals you can't help truly liking and being inspired by. Unassuming, rooted and infinitely wise, Ross brings with him years of seasoned experience which he can effortlessly blend into a conversation. What truly sets him apart is his ability to cut through the complexities, make things simple and be able to suss out character traits of whomever he is speaking with. In addition, Ross is also capable of switching between deeply technical and utterly simplistic every day!

When it comes to working with organisations to make them more effective, and working with leaders to create organisational cultures that foster sustainable management practices, Ross's expertise is sought after across the globe. Based in Singapore, Ross passionately consults for world-class corporates and NGOs' as well as fledgling startups.

Ross Swan is a perceptive, responsive, and accessible Consultant, Leadership Coach and Trainer. He possesses a plethora of experience in varied industries worldwide, including Financial Services, Construction, Energy, Logistics, Distribution, Retail, Engineering, Hospitality, Airlines, and Manufacturing. He is highly regarded for his proactive methods to capture and integrate employees' performance discretion.

Ross is also a dynamic speaker with outstanding skills in Leadership, Communication, Presentation, Training, Team-building, and Interpersonal relations.

He works globally, having presented from London, New York, Singapore, Sydney, Christchurch, Hong Kong and Chennai, as well as numerous remote webinars.



Topics covered include:

- » Executive Leadership
- » Self-leadership
- » Employee Engagement
- » Relationship Management

Ross consistently achieves measurable results in his work, examples of which include:

- » Consistent ratings of 4/5 to 5/5 for his seminars
- » Developed and delivered a Senior Leadership training/coaching programme for an industry in Singapore (in conjunction with the Singapore National Employers Federation and Singapore's Workforce Development Agency) that ran successfully for 5 years
- » Another long-term engagement with a major oil and gas enterprise saw Ross supporting a major change management initiative including coaching over 30 senior executives to develop their leadership effectiveness. Visible growth was noted in their leadership skills and overall movement towards the desired changes
- » A Fortune 500 company: "Ross dealt with issues frankly, but sensitively," wrote one of its senior executive coaches. "Everything he said, asked, or did was deliberate, and designed to expose an issue or promote a discussion. Very professional, very well-organized."

EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND

Ross holds an M.Sc. in Training and Performance Management from the University Of Leicester, UK, and received his Graduate Certificate in Business Education from the Queensland University of Technology.

Ross currently mentors students (post/under grads) at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, as well as students from the University of Leicester in the UK.

SOUL INSPIRED LEADERSHIP...

HOW DID IT ALL START?

Throughout my working years, both as a corporate executive in Financial Services, and then as an Executive Coach of some 20 years, I found that good leaders had one thing in common: they lead from within. Connecting with your inner self enables your authenticity. To promote this belief, I established a leadership podcast show with a friend, Antoinette Biehlmeier, who had similar beliefs as me. Soul Inspired Leadership was the obvious name to call it. Antoinette, who is an alternative health therapist, eventually had to take a step back to look after her rapidly growing business.

The inspiration around the podcast was to reach as many people as we could with our belief in being a soul-inspired leader. In my former corporate arena, I worked for/with some great leaders, as well as some absolute shockers. I could see on a daily basis what an effect these differing standards of leadership had on people's lives. From happiness driven by a sense of purpose and fulfillment (good leadership) to a sad day-to-day existence filled with frustration from poor leadership.

That started my journey into Executive Coaching. If I could help managers to be better leaders, then I am not only helping them to be better, but also improving the lives that come under their sphere of influence. That's what excites me to continue to coach and publish my podcasts.

I see podcasts as a great resource. Because it's a sound medium, the content must be engaging and of interest to listeners. We try to do that with our podcasts, now downloaded in 78 countries.

Many experiences we discuss on the podcasts come from my experiences as a coach as well as the experiences of my guests who are all quality leaders. It's about engaging with people. If we motivate just one person per episode to want to improve as a leader, that episode has been a success.

A good leader comes from the desire to be so. In my experience, if someone truly wants to be a leader of substance then they can be. I emphasise the word 'truly' because they need to be honest with themselves. Is it something that you really want, or are you just chasing the position, money and the status that comes with it?

When the desire is true, then the discipline and bravery to become a leader of quality manifests. I have seen this many times. In essence, good leaders have the discipline to consistently do the things that good leaders do.

AREN'T LEADERS EXPECTED TO DELIVER RESULTS? SO WHERE DOES 'SOUL' COME INTO THIS ?



I guess the crux of it lies at the very heart of leadership itself and what differentiates a leader from a mere manager. I know the difference is mostly academic, but the bottom line is that not all managers make good leaders even though they are expected to. The real difference between the two is just that: soul.

Managers can afford to take a very cold, calculated and indifferent approach to getting the results. They are apt to playing chess with people and 'using them' to ensure that what is required for the organisation is done.

However, a leader will never manipulate people. They always work on getting results by engaging, inspiring and motivating people and not just driving performance. This is where the 'soul' part comes in. If you have a soul, you will never treat people like an 'asset' to be profited from; you are more humane and appreciate that every person who works for you has a heart and a soul as much as skills and competence.

Soul-centred leadership primarily acknowledges the importance of leaders being good human beings.

GREAT PHILOSOPHY, BUT DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Depends on what you mean by 'it works'.

If you are looking at short term results, then the slave whipping, manipulative, transactional, cut-and-dry type of management practices certainly work.

However, look at the evidence and it becomes clear that in the long term, sustained performance is down to inspired leadership that is soul centred, rather than profit centred.

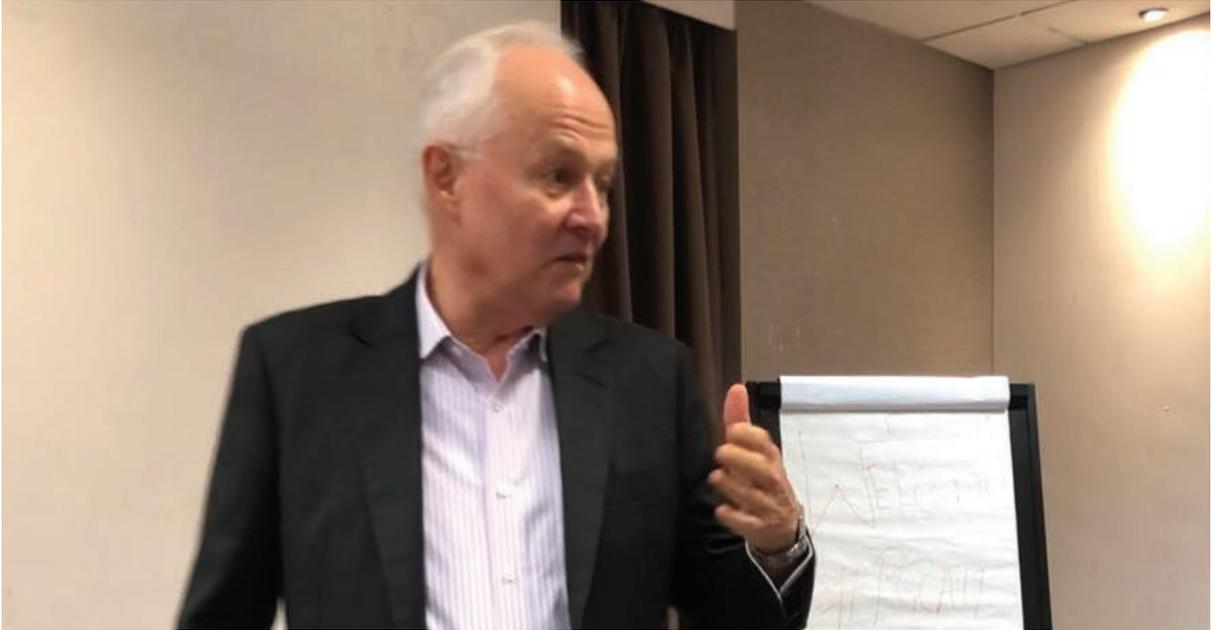
Profits are a by-product - not the end result - of passionate people working together towards something bigger than their personal egos. This makes a world of difference, especially in ensuring that values are maintained when the going gets tough. The result of the values being lived is phenomenal, and it is what makes the key difference during hard times.

This is not just one of those things that hinges on feel-good factors; it makes hardcore business sense too - it's just that it takes a little time to manifest...

It's a bit like fast food and slow-cooked soul food. Fast food is quick, easy and certainly tasty, but negative results will only manifest in the long term. Slow-cooked food takes time to prepare and can certainly be a 'pain' if you're in a hurry, but you will be far healthier in the long term.

Short term or long term? Eventually, the choice is yours.

HERE'S WHERE YOU START: A BIGGER PURPOSE THAN YOU



Want to be soul inspired? Then the starting point is finding a purpose that is bigger than your ego!

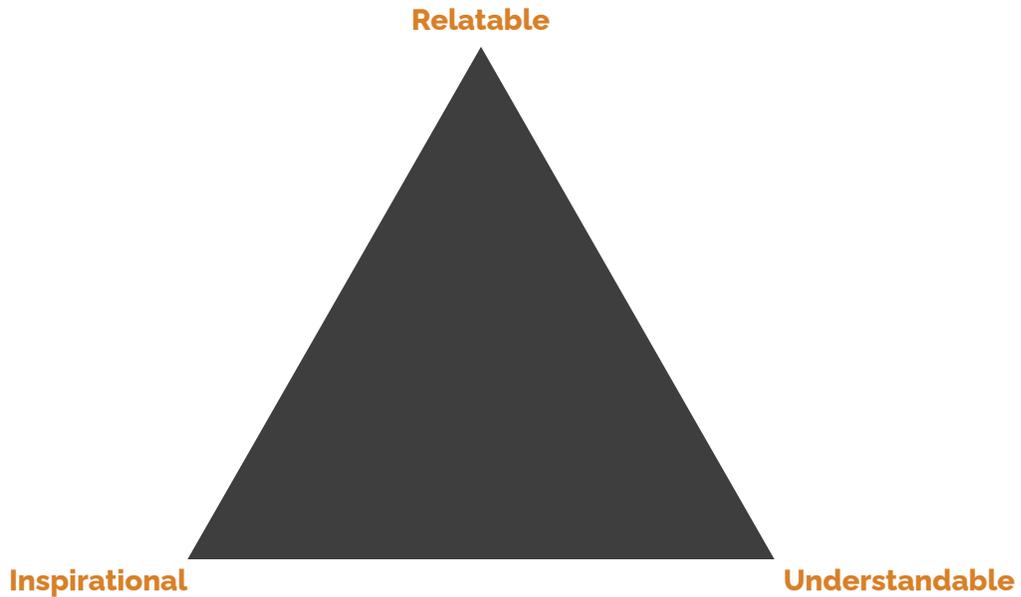
Being the best company, being number one - anything like this is always about the ego. Try and move away from this type of purpose statement and find something more soul inspiring. Something that will truly resonate with people.

An organisation that exists purely for the purpose of market dominance and profits will never stir up the true emotions and heartstrings of people. Worse, you as a leader can never fully awaken the human spirit through it.

The biggest and most potent force you will ever have working for you is the passion people bring and not their competence. Make the purpose about something that ignites passion and brings passionate people together.



TOOL 1: CREATING A PURPOSE THAT INSPIRES OTHERS



Creating a Purpose Statement isn't easy, but the key to a good one is getting everyone involved. Don't limit it to the Senior Management Team; get the entire organisation involved in the exercise. It not only makes it that much better, but it also creates a certain energy within the organisation that is hard to explain in words.

When creating the Purpose Statement, here are the 3 core triangulation points to consider:

Everyone can relate to it

Easily understandable

Fires up one's soul

If it is not relatable it will not connect with people and they won't feel it. If it is not understandable, many will simply work on it superficially, and if it is not inspirational, it will only become no more than a task.

TRULY BELIEVE IN PEOPLE



If you want to bring out the best in anyone, you need to truly believe in them first. The best analogy to offer can be derived from agriculture. Each seed you plant will bear fruit in its own time. You can't expect every papaya tree to flower and bear fruit at the same time - and in the same abundance - as a mango tree. Some will take longer than others. Some will bear sweeter fruits, but less in quantity. Others won't taste as good but have bumper harvests. There will be others which bear the sweetest fruits, and in full abundance too.

Of course, you do find a few that don't quite taste right nor have a great yield. However, the sour mangoes make great dishes too, especially if you are familiar with subcontinent cooking! The bottom line is this: when you plant the sapling, you will never know what each tree will yield! You need to water, fertilise, and take care of the entire plantation, not just the trees that show potential.

Similarly, believe in people - look after them, grow them, nurture them, and the vast majority will truly grow to being productive and great employees. A few may not really be the best fits, but even they will become invaluable in certain circumstances. Your job - as a soul inspired leader - is to simply and honestly believe and keep grooming them to be the best they can possibly be. The rest will take care of itself.

TOOL 2: UNDERSTANDING WHO GOES WHERE



Not everyone is a star performer. Michael Jordan could never have won championships without the absolutely steadfast Scottie Pippen and the rather iconoclastic Dennis Rodman.

For every great star, you need the support cast to bring the brilliance of the individual to fruition. Without them, even the most dazzling individual never becomes the star they can be.

Remember, there is a place for everyone in a team; no role is 'less important'. Never make the mistake of focusing only on the 'stars'. Focus on building a great team, and not brilliant individual performers.

BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND FINDING COMMON GROUND



On a day-to-day basis, merely having a great purpose and a vision isn't enough. Make sure you keep finding common ground for people to come together as one. Ensure your team is built around common values, common understanding, a common purpose, and an honest appreciation for the fact that we are all better when we come together.

It's easy to segregate people into departmental silos for functional ease; it is very difficult to break these silos in order to create synergies. As important as it is to look at functional specialisation, ensure there is a commonality that enables true collaboration and synergies across the organisation.

Efficiency at the cost of effectiveness is a mistake. Don't overlook the importance of bringing a team together through concerted effort and focus. Human beings are social creatures and will come together instinctively if the organisational culture promotes it.

TOOL 3: 4 WAYS TO BIND PEOPLE TOGETHER

Focus on the real enemy, not an internal one

It's absolutely counterproductive to have 'competition' internally. make the competition about the 'real enemy' in the form of a competitor or the target set. If there isn't an 'external' enemy to focus on, it is quite common to have in fighting internally!

Make it fun to collaborate

Collaborating must be enjoyable, and something that is promoted constantly. Rather than trying to win 'brownie' points for an individual or department, make success about the collective effort! Make collaborative events something everyone really looks forward to.

Do things together:
UNITED WE STAND

Create the opportunity to come together, both for official and social events. Create multiple events for people with varied interests to truly work, play and socialise together. Create a culture where it is impossible not to have met your colleagues at least a few times during the year!

Celebrate wins and share the glory

Create a culture of celebrating 'collective wins' rather than individual achievements. Make the KPIs, rewards and also celebrations about the collective effort: not the individual brilliance!

THE ULTIMATE LITMUS TEST: HOW PEOPLE RALLY IN TIMES OF CRISIS



Soul inspired leadership really comes to the fore when there is true tragedy, when the chips are down, and there just doesn't seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel.

If you bring in soul inspired leadership to the centre, then teams rally when the going gets tough rather than abandoning ship. If you really want to know if you're the kind of leader who inspires the soul, then look at how your teams react to crisis.

Remember, if you are clear that leadership is about the soul rather than just the bottom line, then your words and deeds need to demonstrate it. You certainly can't play lip service to this - you truly need to live it. A word of caution: there is no bigger let-down than preaching about soul inspired leadership and not living it. Let the team down once in this way, and you can rest assured that you will never be believed in again!

SOME FINAL TIPS:



- » Leadership is about desire. One of the things I do when coaching is to ask an executive how they want to be described as a leader. It doesn't need to be a novel, but four or five sentences will suffice. We then identify the behaviours they need to consistently perform in order for their description to be realised. Then it comes down to having the discipline to live those behaviours consistently on a day-to-day basis.
- » Another question I often ask executives is, 'What legacy do you want to leave here as a leader?' Once again, we follow a similar exercise centred around the behaviours required to achieve the desired legacy.
- » The key with the exercises is that it stimulates thoughts and feelings about what the executive wants. Within a short time period, we then see how serious they are about their leadership aspirations. Not only to me as a coach, but more importantly to themselves.
- » The clients who succeed in this exercise passionately feel their legacy/description.
- » If you can do this one exercise and stick to the behaviours, then you are on the way to being the leader you want to be.

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