



THE EVOLVING LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The workplace has transformed at a speed few could have imagined. Teams look different. Expectations have shifted. The pace of change has accelerated. Yet the leadership models many organizations rely on were designed for a different era. This gap between new realities and legacy approaches is shaping how people feel about work today.

We are living through what many call a super cycle of change. Technology, geopolitics, climate issues, and economic forces are reshaping the world at a rapid pace. Yet these external forces only tell part of the story. The emotional landscape within organizations is just as influential.

Employees are navigating rising workloads, tighter resources, and shifting expectations. Burnout is increasing, trust is declining, and the sense of connection that supports thriving organizations is harder to maintain.

Leaders today have already done an incredible amount to support their people. This work continues with an opportunity to evolve. The shifting workplace and world invite leaders to build on what is already working and thoughtfully expand their mindset, practices, and approach. Those who embrace this evolution are helping define the future with confidence and care.

At DFA, we have designed a new leadership model. This evolving approach to leadership lives at three levels: Me, We, and Us. Each level invites reflection, responsibility, and action.

The Me Level - *How Do I Lead Myself?*

Leadership begins with the inner work. The Me Level focuses on self-awareness, self-regulation, and intentionality. It asks leaders to pause and reflect before they react, especially during times of stress or uncertainty. When leaders are overwhelmed, reactive, or depleted, it reverberates throughout a team or organization. A grounded leader creates stability. A clear leader creates confidence. A reflective leader creates trust.

At the Me Level, leaders practice centering themselves. The simple act of pausing to notice what is happening internally can shift the outcome of a conversation or decision. Leaders strengthen their resourcefulness through the ability to choose how they show up.

Curiosity is also essential at this level. Leaders do not need to have all the answers. They do benefit from asking better questions. Curiosity guides leaders toward clarity and away from defensiveness. It opens the door to new ideas, better understanding, and more thoughtful solutions.

The Me Level also invites leaders to embrace complexity through a paradox mindset. Work today involves competing priorities, hybrid environments, diverse needs, and rapid shifts. Leaders who can hold two truths at once are better equipped to create alignment, find new pathways, and navigate the grey areas with steadiness.

Evolving leadership begins here, with the individual.

The We Level - *How Do I Lead Others?*

Leadership is inherently relational. The We Level focuses on how leaders build trust, connection, and belonging. It invites leaders to see their people as whole human beings with experiences, responsibilities, and aspirations that extend beyond the workplace.

Leaders at this level understand the importance of psychological safety. Trust allows people to take risks, share ideas, and learn from missteps. Without it, organizations stagnate.

Psychological safety is created through everyday behaviors: transparent communication, consistent follow-through, empathy, and clarity of expectations.

Care is another essential quality at the We Level. Leading with care does not lower standards or soften accountability. It strengthens both. Care creates conditions where people feel valued and supported, which increases motivation, innovation, and performance. It holds space for wellbeing and ambition to coexist.

Evolving leaders at the We Level build teams where people feel known, respected, and empowered.

The Us Level - *How Do I Lead Within a System?*

The Us Level focuses on shaping culture, systems, and shared understanding. At this level, leadership influences the broader environment in which people work.

Cultural coherence is a central responsibility at the Us Level. In times of rapid change, clarity becomes a strategic anchor. Evolving leaders create a shared understanding of values, expectations, and what the organization stands for. This coherence must be visible in daily decisions and not confined to documents or statements.

Growth is another priority. Evolving leaders invest in their people by creating opportunities for development, mentorship, and skill building. These investments signal long-term commitment and build resilience across the organization.

Finally, the Us Level encourages co-creation. Sustainable change is created when people at every level participate in shaping the future. Leaders listen deeply, incorporate diverse perspectives, and build processes that invite contribution.

These three levels form the foundation of evolving leadership. They help leaders navigate complexity, support their people, and create cultures where both individuals and organizations can thrive.

Take Action

Evolving leadership is a practice that grows through intention and repetition. The steps below offer practical ways to activate the Me, We, and Us levels inside your organization. Each action is simple, repeatable, and able to create meaningful momentum when woven into your daily leadership rhythm.

1. Start with one self-leadership practice every day.

Choose a grounding activity to help you pause before reacting. This could be a two-minute breathing exercise before your first meeting, a moment of reflection at the end of the day, or a question you ask yourself before making a key decision. Small rituals build consistency.

2. Choose curiosity as your default stance.

In your next meeting or conversation, replace one assumption with a question. Ask a team member what support would make their work easier, what they are learning from a challenge, or what idea they wish they could try. Curiosity builds psychological safety and expands possibility.

3. Hold a brief alignment conversation with your team.

Invite your team to share one thing that would help them feel more grounded or supported right now. Listen for themes. This is a simple way to understand the emotional climate of your group and strengthen relational trust.

4. Make your values visible in daily decisions.

At the end of each week, reflect on two decisions you made. Identify how your values showed up and where they could have shown up more clearly. This builds the muscle of cultural coherence and strengthens your ability to model the behaviors you expect across the organization.

5. Name and share one growth opportunity.

Identify a skill, capability, or project that would help a team member stretch. A short conversation can spark motivation, build retention, and demonstrate your commitment to long-term development.

6. Invite your team into co-creation.

Choose a challenge or opportunity you are currently facing. Ask three people from different levels of the organization to share their ideas. This broadens problem-solving, increases engagement, and accelerates buy-in when change begins.

7. Begin a monthly Evolved Leadership check-in.

Set aside 30 minutes each month to reflect on what you are learning about yourself, what you are learning about your team, and what your culture is teaching you. This reinforces the mindset of evolution rather than reaction.

These steps do not require a major overhaul. They require presence, intention, and a willingness to engage with leadership as an evolving practice. When these micro-shifts happen consistently, they begin to strengthen trust, clarity, and collective alignment across your entire organization.

Want Support Putting This Into Practice?

As a DFA member, you have access to dedicated support designed to help you bring Evolved Leadership principles to life inside your organization.

Evolving Leadership Workshops

Our Evolving Leadership workshops guide leaders through the Me, We, and Us framework and equip them with practical tools to activate human-centered leadership. Led by Manar, workshops can be tailored to executive teams, people leaders, or cross-functional groups.

*DFA members receive preferred pricing on workshops.

Strategy Session

Every DFA member organization receives an annual one-hour strategy session. Use this time to explore leadership challenges, refine your approach, or map out practical ways to integrate evolving leadership practices across your teams.

Policy Review

Members can submit one policy or framework for review and feedback per membership cycle. This includes leadership models, culture roadmaps, wellbeing initiatives, talent strategies, and any material connected to leadership development or organizational culture.

Advisory Hours (Champion and Leader Members)

Champion and Leader level members receive access to advisory hours that can be used for one-on-one guidance. Whether you are piloting new leadership practices, navigating change, or identifying your next steps, our team can help you move forward with clarity.

Connect with the DFA team to explore how these resources can help you activate the Me, We, and Us framework and continue building a culture where leaders and teams can thrive.