

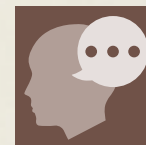
# CAMINO

LEADERSHIP NOTES ON THE ROAD

LEANDRO HERRERO



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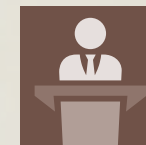
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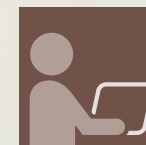
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# CAMINO

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# BASE CAMP

**Philosopher Martin Heidegger requested before his death that the collection of his writings be called 'paths, not works'. He had used the word 'paths' several times. It provides, according to some interpreters of his 'works', an image of 'leading' but not necessarily to anywhere in particular; like many paths do in the woods.**

The great Spanish poet Antonio Machado said it well in one of his most acclaimed poems. It would read in English something like this: 'Walker, there is no path, you make the path by walking'.

The allegory of the path, whether Machado's path making or Heidegger's 'paths, not works', is a good metaphor for leadership. I really believe that cartography and leadership are twin sisters.

Pilgrimage is also another good metaphor for the leadership journey, a journey that can be done in solitude but also accompanied by followers. The pilgrimage has both the personal and the collective, all in one. The journey contains all sorts of challenges and discoveries for the pilgrim, as it does for the leader. The difference in the pilgrimage is that it has a fixed destination. But arriving is never landing by helicopter. You have to walk, to go, to move, bit by bit, and then sense, learn, live.

Every year, about 300,000 people walk the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St James) a network of routes starting in France or Portugal, or Spain itself, and that ends in Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, Spain. Probably a minority will walk the 'required' last 100 km on pure religious grounds. But most will talk later about the transformative effects of the Camino, the route, the pilgrimage.

Constantine P. Cavafy is one of my favourite poets, and *Ithaca* my favourite one. He describes the perils of the journey to the mythical Ithaca. A destination. 'Keep Ithaca always in your mind. Arriving there is what you're destined for'. But he says that most of those perils may be in your head. And then he recommends to take your time, not to rush, go slowly, stop in all the ports, learn from the locals, and buy their perfumes. And he warns, maybe when you finally get to Ithaca, you'll be disappointed. It has nothing to offer compared with all you've learnt and lived and changed. 'Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithacas mean'.

Good leaders are good path makers. Sometimes the journey is not clear. The destination may still be ambiguous. Again, it's all about cartography. For me, a leader is the cartographer in chief who, whilst walking with others, also becomes an architect and a builder. If this is about journeys, and maps, and building, and Cavafy's 'enter (ing) harbours you're seeing for the first time and stopping at Phoenician trading stations, to buy fine things', then there is almost no end to it.

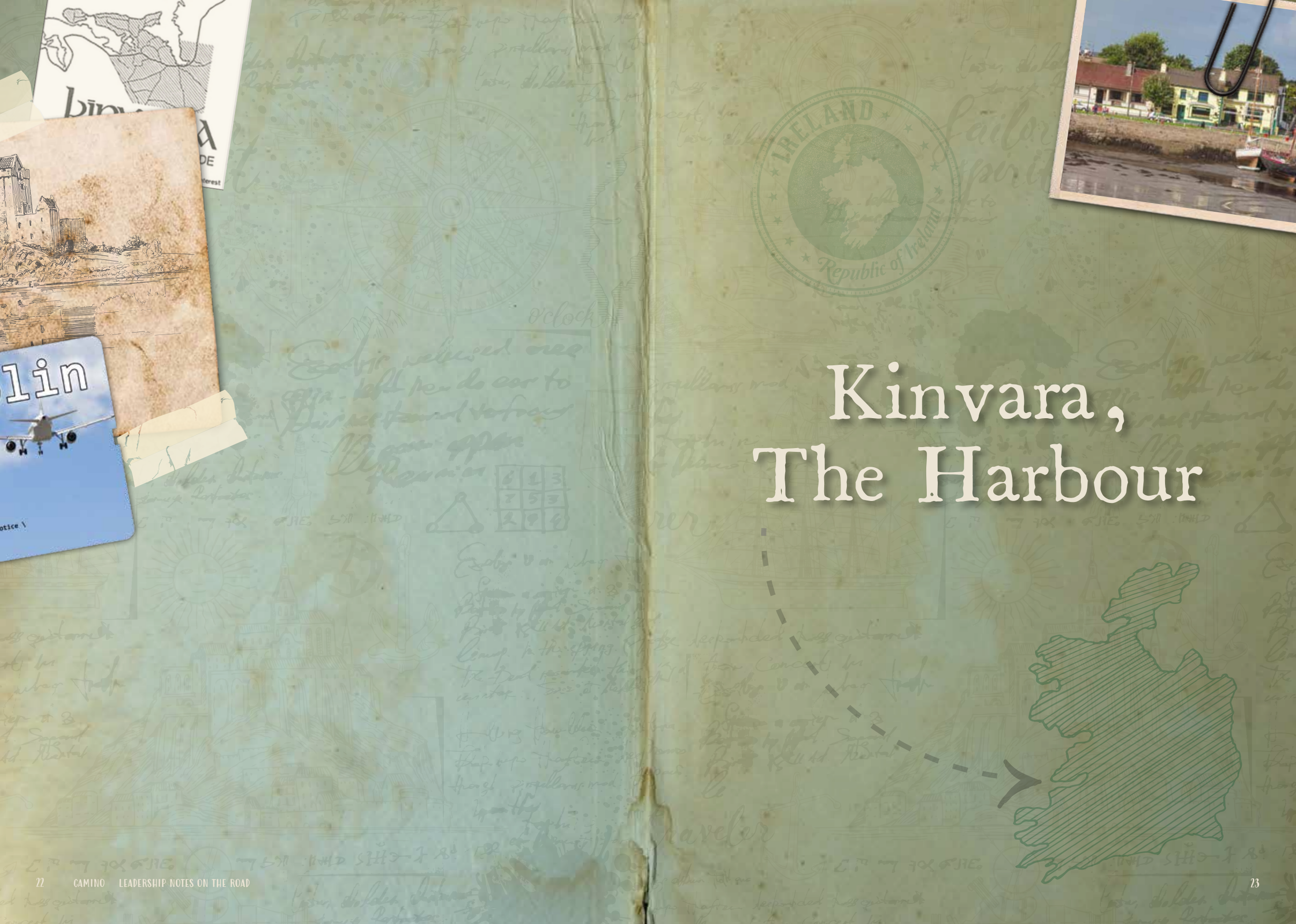
On my imaginary journey inside my head, I took notes and articulated ideas. Most became a Daily Thought, a blog I have been running for years. This is a collection of those notes. Don't look for Harvard here, there are only harbours and other places that have generously adopted the content between them.

In this Camino of mine, I have also learnt to spot the real things, the fundamentals, the rocks. These are my Rules. A small collection of warnings, strong views and discoveries that I do not intend to be transferable. After all, the journey is not transferable, nobody can walk the Camino for you. Liberated by the idea that I don't need to impart universal wisdom to end in a sterile case study and that I can share these rules like one shares a meal without having to explain the chemistry of the ingredients, here they are, still full of dust from my journey. The one I have only just begun.

1. Earn credibility all the time. Stocks deplete easily.
2. Act as if you do not have anything to lose.
3. Be unreasonable in your demands, the reasonable ones are taken.
4. Detect bullshit and become proficient at detecting it. Then, protect yourself and others.
5. Exercise provocation with panache and respect. Aim at being appreciated, not hated, for it.
6. Don't be a provocateur, rebel, maverick, contrarian or challenger for the sake of it. Have a good 'because' ready.
7. Infect others, don't do it alone.
8. Be restless, be uncomfortable (and foolish and hungry and the rest...). They're the only things that confirm that you are alive.
9. Watch your ego. Most of the time it is not your friend. Rule of thumb, most of the time it's not about you.
10. Never settle for one possibility only.
11. Don't waste your time managing the 'inevitable'. There is a lot of 'possible' waiting for a leader. Look for what would not happen without you.
12. Seek unpredictable answers. The predictable ones are already seeking you.
13. Don't be against anything. Don't create enemies. The exceptions are mediocrity and dishonesty.
14. Write down your little bit of daily legacy in a secret little book.
15. There is only one test: what will you tell the children? (that you do, you did, you didn't do).
16. More important than what you say is what people hear when you are saying it.
17. Practice 'I don't know', possibly followed by 'and I don't think you know either, so let's figure it out'.
18. Make things happen first, then clean up the process for the next time. In that order.
19. The unexamined leadership, like the unexamined life, is not worth living.
20. Play as many roles as you want, but never a victim or an enemy. Both being 'victim' or 'enemy', requires your full consent.

**Off to the next harbour.**





# Kinvara, The Harbour



# ‘What if the problem is me?’

An uncomfortable, key question for leaders

Reflective leadership has gone into progressively short supply. In an era where prescriptive answers seem to dominate reflective ones, it has become more difficult to stop and think, to question, to wonder. After all, we have ready made 7 Habits for This and 8 Attributes for That, which seem to provide universal answers. Introspection has never been favoured by traditional management, or at least, not by ‘mass management’. Granted, some elites that have been given access to some forms of executive development may have had the opportunity. Even in that territory, however, self-reflection is rarely, if ever, at the top of the agenda.

An old psychological concept from the 60s may help to understand why leaders differ in their ability to self-reflect on their leadership and the impact of their actions. It’s called ‘external vs internal locus of control’. People with a predominant ‘external locus of control’ tend to attribute events to external forces. In the opposite extreme, people with a predominant ‘internal locus of control’ will see themselves more in charge or as protagonists of the events in their lives. It follows that the external people will end up blaming other people more, whilst internal people will look more at themselves first.

This crude distinction is particularly important in areas such as Safety. In our Viral Safety™ programmes we use this unsophisticated parameter a lot. Safety professionals, or simply employees, with high ‘external locus of control’ will tend to see safety problems as something

produced mainly by others and will focus more on somebody else’s behaviours, versus considering that the safety is of their own making.

Leadership can be seen through similar lenses. Some leaders seem to never contemplate the possibility that they are the problem, it’s always somebody else’s fault. If there is any reflection, it’s certainly outwards. You need a good dose of ‘internal locus of control’ to realise that maybe the problem is you.

In my consulting practice I find this leadership problem one of the hardest to solve. ‘Internal vs external locus of control’ is very entrenched in personality. It’s hard, but not impossible through good coaching, for example, to turn a high external individual around.

My behavioural hat however, has a clear, if not answered, guidance for this: create a habit of asking the question ‘what if (this problem, what is happening, what I see) has to do with me? What if the issue is me?’

**THE HABIT OF REPEATED QUESTIONING IS A GOOD WAY TO OPEN THE DOOR TO BETTER REFLECTION, AND, WHO KNOWS, THE DISCOVERY OF A NEW WORLD INSIDE OF YOU!**



# Emotional Ignorance needs a book

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WAS A PARAGRAPH-LENGTH CONCEPT EXPRESSED IN A LIBRARY OF PUBLICATIONS. AT THE TIME IT WAS A SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM. DO YOU REALLY MEAN EMOTIONS COUNT IN HARD MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP? WOW!

The Emotional Intelligence industry (that created subsequent sequels in the form of social intelligence, even spiritual intelligence) has continued to warn about the need for 'broader intelligences', in plural. And there is a place for this! But what really needs a book is Emotional Ignorance. Or two books, or... errr. Day after

day we see people in high places oblivious to what is happening on the human side of the enterprise: too complex, too soft (soft and hard are still used as terms), too distracting. They are the ones who think they have a high emotional score but behave like blind men in the land of people dynamics.

It's this Ignorance that worries me: robotic management, robotic processes, robotic systems managed by people who want ... innovation, entrepreneurship and risk taking.

## 20 Reasons why I trust you

1. I trust you because I can say 'I haven't got a clue' and you don't think I am an idiot
2. I can be vulnerable and won't be penalised
3. I can be emotional and you won't think I am weak
4. I made a mistake and you said you did as well
5. I opened my heart and I did not regret it
6. I told you something in confidence and you kept it private
7. I shared my doubts and I did not go down the ranking
8. I showed you my tiredness and you didn't think I wasn't capable
9. I am not as strong as you think, but you could see strengths in me that I didn't
10. You said that you'll help me and you did
11. You said I could call you and you meant it
12. I felt overwhelmed and you did not broadcast it
13. When I screwed up, you could have avoided me, but you gave me your public hand
14. You knew how much I depended on that piece of work and you delivered it to me earlier
15. I got mad and you didn't
16. You always keep your promises
17. You represent me and I can sleep
18. You protected me and did not send the bill
19. You always tell me the truth even when I don't want to hear it
20. You never grow at the expense of my shrinking



# Bring 'character' back

We call it character assassination for a reason. It's the ultimate attack. The attack on the uniqueness of an individual, to the moral scaffolding of the person, to the sum of his qualities, a sum which has a unique blend of components that makes that character so distinctive. Stripped from anything else, character remains. The Greek and Latin etymology of the word links character to a set of qualities, which mark or design (like the characters of a text), 'an imprint on the soul'.

When politicians run out of policy arguments against opponents, they may resort to character. In fact, this is always a flag, a sign of desperation and weakness, not a strength, on the part of the assassin.

Character is often translated into a set of words including trust, courage, honesty, respect, moral integrity etc. A solid set of values seem to be at the core of the DNA of character.

We need to bring character back to the table of Leadership. Why back? I seem to imply it has gone. Not quite, but it's gone for long sabbaticals. The organizational airtime for character has been taken over by other more prosaic and often neon-like visible flashes of 'what the leader does', and even more, by 'the 10 things successful leaders do' and the 'so many habits'. This is not bad in itself. Mirrors and examples and models are welcome, provided they are taken with a pinch of salt. However, these are shortcuts that avoid a deeper discussion.

But, it's easier to talk about how good leaders empower, delegate, communicate well and set expectations, than to get down to the cave and look for the soul. In the choice between soul and the '10 traits of

successful leaders', the latter sells much more. Also, we are told, C level business people don't do soul.

I believe that the ultimate discussion about leadership is about character. Not even about personality. After all, personality has to do with the persona, the exterior, the mask, still not deep enough. Abraham Lincoln said that 'Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing'. Instead of reputation we could also say the visible persona, the external behavioural 'presentations in everyday life', as Erving Goffman would have said.

The main challenge I see is that, as I said before, character has been evicted from the organizational/business/people conversation and now we tend to find it dwelling in the Self Help, New Age or Spiritual shelves. Even Western educational systems seem to be shy of the word these days.

I could picture an entire Leadership Development Programme devoted to Character, including its corrosion, to use Richard Sennett's 1998 title of his book.

**THOSE OF US WHO OCCUPY THIS TERRITORY  
(YOU, ME, MANAGERS, PRACTITIONERS, CONSULTANTS)  
SHOULD BE BOLD ENOUGH TO UNAPOLOGETICALLY  
RESCUE CHARACTER FROM ITS TRAVELS TO OTHER  
LANDS, SO THAT IT OCCUPIES AGAIN THE CENTRE OF  
THE DIALOGUE, A CENTRE THAT IT SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT.**



# Pilot or pastor ?

## From the No Nonsense Francis School of Leadership

**POPE FRANCIS HAS DONE IT AGAIN. I MEAN, HIS PROBABLY  
WEEKLY, PLAIN ENGLISH (WELL, ITALIAN OR SPANISH),  
BIT OF NUDGING TO HIS TROOPS. AND, AS IT IS NOW NORMAL,  
A NEW PIECE OF WISDOM AND UNSOPHISTICATED,  
UNCOMPLICATED GUIDANCE, IS OUT FOR COLLECTION.**

This plain, off-the-cuff talking drives his holy apparatus nuts and is often seen (mostly heard) with horror by the ones who expect the Catholic Pope to speak nothing other than extremely complicated and theologically unintelligible language. But many people, even those not close to the Catholic Church, also systematically receive it as fresh air.

Francis' authenticity is such raw material that many people think of it as calculated spin of a 'super-skilled politician'. We have come to believe that authenticity is suspicious. Who could blame the thinkers? After all, we are short of that authenticity, so seeing a real Endangered Species live next to us, shocks us.

Francis was this time talking to the Italian Bishops about the importance of the laity. Read normal people not in the church hierarchy. He told them that they did not need a bishop-pilot ('to assume their responsibilities at all levels, political, social, economic or legislative') but a bishop-pastor. The implication was: you are piloting too much. So, pilot or pastor?

Everybody knows what a pilot is. The ones who do the job, take you to places, whilst you sit behind in comfortable seats (of some sort), often going off to sleep. Pilot-leadership style is similar. 'They' at the top will do, decide, will tell us what to do. The CEO is the pilot, the COO the co-pilot, the CFO the second co-pilot and so on.

Pastor and pastoral care not only has a religious connotation in itself, but a broader meaning of 'emotional and spiritual support'. In the UK, in particular, the term 'pastoral care' is used in education in a non-religious way, to refer to 'the practice of looking after the personal and social well-being of children or students under the care of a teacher or rabbi'. It can encompass a wide variety of issues including health, social and moral education, behaviour management and emotional support.

Pastor-leadership is therefore more about creating the conditions, the environment, the space. It's about care (same root as cure, and in other languages as dear or loved).

**MANY WELL-MEANING LEADERSHIP TEAMS EMBRACE  
PROGRESSIVELY INCREASING LEVELS OF PILOTING  
WITHOUT EVEN BEING CONSCIOUS OF IT. THE PILOT MODEL  
IS VERY VISIBLE IN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES WHERE  
TOP LEADERSHIP OR TOP MANAGEMENT TEAMS HAVE  
A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF TOPICS TO 'APPROVE  
AND DECIDE' ON THEIR AGENDA. THESE GROUPS AND  
TEAMS ARE SO BUSY PILOTING FROM THE FIFTH OR TENTH  
FLOOR HQ COCKPIT THEY HAVE NO TIME TO COME DOWN  
TO THE PASTURES AND DO SOME PASTORAL STUFF.**





## His greatest success was not to fail

Many people, many of them in high managerial positions, succeed by avoiding failure. They become unmemorable by design. A new head teacher was appointed in an important school. The press went back to past pupils and asked what they remembered of him: 'he fell downstairs once'. A new pharma R&D leader is nicknamed 'The Chronic Survivor' because everybody else in his top team has left or been fired but he managed to survive unscathed from all the storms. People can't remember any mistake he has ever made. People can't remember anything, period, other than the fact that he survives.

THESE TWO VIGNETTES ARE REAL AND PART OF MY PAST EXPERIENCE. MANY LEADERS MAY REMAIN UNNOTICED AND IN THE UNMEMORABLE CATEGORY. THEY ARE SQUATTERS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART. 'WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR?' IS A CRUCIAL QUESTION WE DON'T ASK OFTEN ENOUGH.

## Do visionary leaders nominate non-visionary successors ?

HARDLY A QUESTION I CAN ANSWER WITH STATISTICS, BUT I WOULD TEND TO AGREE. AN ARTICLE WRITTEN BY STEVE BLANK ON QUARTZ.COM POINTS IN THAT DIRECTION ALTHOUGH ONLY CITING TWO ICONIC COMPANIES.

This is how it goes:

Apple. Visionary Jobs innovates and innovates. Followed by Cook, non-visionary, not really new products, certainly not à la Jobs.

Microsoft. Visionary and innovator Gates is followed by non-visionary not innovating, revenue super boosting Ballmer. Here's the good news: followed by Nadella, visionary again and new innovations coming out.

Hardly a scientific experiment, but it made me think. I've seen these alternations in small scale again and again, more of the Apple type than the Microsoft, that in fact has gone back to the core and soul of the company as Nadella puts it in his book *Hit Refresh*.

I think the article is harsh with

Cook and Ballmer, The Great Successors, but there is something there.

For whatever it's worth I think that visionary leaders should be followed by visionary leaders. It is not true, for example, that there isn't another Jobs. There is, they're just called something else.

What the organization needs is a simple and healthy internal balance between vision and execution, the latter not at the expense of compromising the former.

Are we following here too much a form of the Great Man Theory of History? Perhaps. But the observations by Steve Blank made me think.

Rambling, yet it makes me think.