WHITE PAPER

# Developing Your Leadership Manifesto

*A Framework for Authentic Leadership Grounded in Enterprise Excellence and Deep Culture*

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SA Partners | World's Largest Shingo Institute Affiliate
Grounded in the Shingo Model™ and the Deep Excellence® Framework

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## Executive Summary

Leadership is not a role. It is a commitment — to values, to people, and to a future worth building. In a world of accelerating disruption, where the physics of climate, resource constraint, and systemic complexity are already locked in, the organisations that will survive and ultimately thrive are those led by people who know precisely who they are and why they lead.

This white paper presents a practical, rigorous framework for developing a personal Leadership Manifesto. It draws on three interlocking bodies of work: the accumulated wisdom of experienced leadership practice; the Shingo Model™ — the globally recognised standard for enterprise excellence developed by the Shingo Institute at Utah State University; and the Deep Excellence® framework, which recognises that sustainable organisational performance is inseparable from the depth and authenticity of its culture.

A Leadership Manifesto is not a mission statement. It is not a values poster. It is a living, personal document that answers the hardest questions a leader must face: Why do I lead? What do I stand for when no one is watching? What kind of organisation am I trying to build? And crucially — am I behaving in a way that is consistent with the answers?

The framework is structured around six disciplines and fourteen manifesto dimensions. Each dimension is mapped to the Shingo Model's guiding principles and to the cultural indicators that characterise a Deep Excellence organisation. This is not a soft-skills exercise. It is a rigorous act of organisational leadership.

## 1. Why Now? The Leadership Imperative in an Age of Constraints

We are operating in what the book Deep Excellence terms the 'Age of Constraints.' The environmental physics is locked in. Supply chains are fragile. Talent is scarce. Societal trust in institutions is eroding. The organisations that survive this era will not do so through strategy documents alone. They will do so because their leaders built cultures capable of absorbing shock, adapting with integrity, and sustaining performance under pressure.

> *"What we do in life echoes in eternity."* — Maximus Decimus Meridius — as appropriate today as it was in the Colosseum

The Shingo Institute's research into enterprise excellence reveals a consistent finding: the organisations that achieve and sustain the highest levels of performance do so because of leadership behaviour, not leadership titles. The Shingo Model places 'Results' at the outer ring — but the engine that drives those results is a culture shaped by principles, and that culture is shaped, day by day, by leaders who model it.

Deep Excellence deepens this insight. It is not enough for leaders to know the right principles. They must be seen and heard operating by them. A Deep Excellence culture is one where the gap between espoused values and enacted values is vanishingly small. That gap begins to close only when leaders have done the hard inner work of knowing what they actually stand for.

**DEEP EXCELLENCE INSIGHT**

The most common failure mode in organisational culture change is not a lack of strategy or investment — it is leaders who have never subjected their own beliefs and behaviours to the same rigour they apply to their processes. A Leadership Manifesto is the tool that closes this gap.

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## 2. What Is a Leadership Manifesto?

A Leadership Manifesto is a carefully crafted, written portrait of who you are as a leader and what you stand for. It is personal, specific, and grounded in honest self-examination. It is not a generic set of aspirational statements. It is not borrowed language from a competency framework. It is yours.

It serves three practical functions:

- A compass — orienting decisions when circumstances are ambiguous and pressure is high.
- A contract — a commitment to your team about how you will behave, especially when it is difficult.
- A mirror — a tool for periodic, honest self-assessment against your own stated standards.

A Leadership Manifesto is also, in the Shingo sense, a vehicle for 'creating constancy of purpose.' It aligns your personal 'why' with your organisation's direction of travel. And in the Deep Excellence sense, it is the foundation of authentic, visible cultural leadership.

The process of writing it requires focus and honest inquiry. It is not a task to complete in an afternoon. It is a reflective discipline — and it will surface uncomfortable truths as well as clarifying strengths. That discomfort is productive. It is where the real leadership work happens.

## 3. The Shingo Model™ and the Leadership Manifesto

The Shingo Model™ is built on ten guiding principles organised across four dimensions: Cultural Enablers, Continuous Improvement, Enterprise Alignment, and Results. The model's central insight — that ideal results require ideal behaviours, that ideal behaviours require the right principles, and that principles must be deeply understood and internalised — maps precisely onto what a Leadership Manifesto is designed to achieve.

The table below maps each Shingo principle to the corresponding Leadership Manifesto dimensions and to the cultural indicators of Deep Excellence.

| Shingo Principle | Manifesto Dimension | Deep Excellence Link |
|---|---|---|
| Respect Every Individual | On Humility / On Listening | Cultural Foundation — seeing and hearing the whole person |
| Lead with Humility | On Vulnerability / On Criticism | Leaders model learning; failure is data, not disgrace |
| Seek Perfection | On Inspiration / On Risk & Failure | A certain future demands restless improvement |
| Embrace Scientific Thinking | On Creativity / On Decision Making | Disciplined thought; evidence-based choices |
| Focus on Process | On Personal Organisation | Systems that never break free leaders to lead |
| Assure Quality at the Source | On Integrity / On Speaking | Speak truth when it is formed, not after the damage |
| Flow & Pull Value | On Collaboration | Remove friction from people as deliberately as from product |

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| Shingo Principle | Manifesto Dimension | Deep Excellence Link |
|---|---|---|
| Think Systemically | On Sustainability / On Mentorship | The enterprise as a living system; stewardship across generations |
| Create Constancy of Purpose | On Promise / On Credo | Why you lead: the anchor through every storm |

The manifesto is therefore not an add-on to Shingo-based transformation work. It is the personal foundation on which transformation rests. An organisation cannot genuinely adopt 'Respect Every Individual' as a principle if its leaders have not first done the inner work of understanding what respect costs them personally when it is inconvenient.

## 4. The Six Disciplines of the Leadership Manifesto

The framework is organised around six disciplines. Each discipline contains reflective prompts, manifesto dimensions, and practical guidance for embedding commitments into daily behaviour.

### Discipline 1 — Know Your Why

Every sustainable leadership practice begins with purpose. Simon Sinek identified the question; the Shingo Model's principle of 'Create Constancy of Purpose' operationalises it; Deep Excellence demands that it be visible in behaviour, not just articulated in a document.

#### Reflective Questions

- Why do I lead at all? What am I trying to create that would not otherwise exist?
- Why this organisation, this team, this moment?
- What do I want to be true of this place because I led it?

**Test your answers against these anchor statements:**

- I lead because I believe I have something genuinely useful to contribute to this organisation's purpose.
- I lead because I want to develop people who will eventually not need me.
- I lead because I believe in what this organisation is trying to become — and I can articulate that precisely.
- I lead because I want to build a culture of excellence that outlasts my tenure.

**DEEP EXCELLENCE PROMPT**

In a Deep Excellence organisation, purpose is not a poster on the wall. It is the answer a team member gives unprompted when asked: 'Why does this place exist?' Your manifesto must supply the leadership behaviour that makes that answer possible.

### Discipline 2 — Establish Your Personal Bottom Line

Clarity about non-negotiables is not rigidity — it is integrity. The Shingo principle of 'Assure Quality at the Source' applies to human behaviour as much as to product. A leader who has not defined their personal bottom line will make inconsistent decisions under pressure, and their team will notice.

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Your manifesto must be explicit about what you will not compromise, regardless of commercial or political pressure. These are not aspirations. They are standards — and they must hold under exactly the conditions where they are most inconvenient.

**Manifesto Dimensions: On Integrity • On Decision Making • On Risk, Success, and Failure**

- What are the three things I will not do, regardless of instruction, pressure, or apparent commercial logic?
- How do I make decisions under uncertainty? What is my process, and is it transparent to my team?
- How do I respond when I am wrong? Do I treat my own errors with the same rigor I apply to others'?

> *"In difficult situations there is always a right thing to do. You may not always know it immediately — but your manifesto should give you the orientation to find it."* — Ken Hames MBE

## Discipline 3 — Define Your Personal Credo

A credo is a statement of belief that is operational, not decorative. It shapes daily behaviour. The Shingo principle of 'Lead with Humility' finds its expression in a credo that acknowledges what you do not know, what you need from others, and where you have been wrong.

John C. Maxwell's observation that 'people buy into the leader before they buy into the vision' captures a deep truth about organisational life. Your credo is the basis on which that trust is established — and maintained.

**Sample Credo Statements — For Adaptation, Not Adoption**

- I believe that this organisation's culture is the most important strategic asset we have, and that I am its primary steward.
- I believe that respect is non-negotiable — in how I speak, in how I listen, and in decisions that affect people's lives.
- I believe that disciplined thought, honest listening, and courageous action are the three levers of great leadership.
- I believe I will learn more from my failures than my successes, and I will say so publicly.
- I believe that a psychologically safe team is a higher-performing team — and that safety starts with how I respond when I am told something I do not want to hear.

**SHINGO APPLICATION**

The Shingo Guiding Principle 'Respect Every Individual' cannot be installed by procedure. It must be modelled by leaders whose credo makes respect a lived standard, not a stated aspiration. Your credo is the mechanism by which the principle becomes behaviour.

## Discipline 4 — Build the Infrastructure of Leadership

Authentic leadership requires more than good intentions. It requires systems — personal systems that protect your time for the work that only you can do, and support systems that ensure you are not navigating your most difficult challenges alone.

The Shingo principle of 'Focus on Process' applies to the leader's own operating system. A leader who is consumed by administrative noise cannot lead. A leader who has no support structure will eventually fail, not from lack of ability, but from lack of resource.

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### Personal Operating System

- What are the activities that only I can do? Am I protecting time for those activities?
- What am I doing that others could and should be doing? What does that cost me?
- What are the systems I rely on that must never fail? Are they robust?

### Personal Support Network

The Shingo Model's emphasis on 'Seek Perfection' requires continuous learning. No leader learns effectively in isolation. Build deliberately:

- A mentor — someone who has navigated the terrain you are entering, and will tell you the truth about it.
- A coach — who will challenge your thinking, surface your blind spots, and help you develop new strategic approaches.
- A peer support network — colleagues who share enough context to understand your challenges without sharing enough interest to be uncandid about them.
- Expert facilitation — for moments when your team needs to hear from someone other than you.

**DEEP EXCELLENCE NOTE**

In a Deep Excellence culture, leaders are learners. The willingness to seek help — from a mentor, a coach, or a peer — is not a sign of weakness. It is a visible demonstration of the humility and scientific thinking the Shingo Model requires. Make your learning visible to your team. It gives them permission to learn too.

## Discipline 5 — Lead the Culture Deliberately

Culture is not what an organisation says it values. Culture is the pattern of behaviours that are actually rewarded, tolerated, and corrected. Peter Drucker's observation that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast' remains the most important sentence in management. Deep Excellence takes this further: culture is not the context for performance — culture is the performance.

Your Leadership Manifesto must include explicit commitments to cultural leadership. That means commitments about how you will behave in meetings, how you will respond to failure, how you will create the conditions for psychological safety, and how you will ensure that the values you espouse are visible in the decisions you make.

### Manifesto Dimensions: On Collaboration • On Speaking • On Listening • On Mentorship

- How do I create conditions in which people can tell me things I do not want to hear?
- How do I respond when someone challenges my thinking in public? Is that response consistent with my stated values?
- Am I genuinely developing the people around me, or am I managing them?
- How do I handle failure — in myself and in my team — in a way that drives learning rather than concealment?

> *"Participation in any story has no value if it is forced. The power comes from the wanting — wanting to be part of this future."* — Leadership Manifesto Framework

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### Discipline 6 — Lead for the Long Term

The final discipline is the most demanding and, in the current operating environment, the most urgent. Deep Excellence is explicit: the role of the leader is not only to deliver results in the current quarter. It is to build an organisation capable of thriving across decades — through disruption, constraint, and complexity.

This requires sustainability in its fullest sense: environmental responsibility embedded in operational decisions; supply chain resilience designed for a world of chronic resource constraint; and a long-horizon view of what the organisation is for and who it serves.

The Shingo principle of 'Think Systemically' is the bridge. A leader who thinks systemically does not optimise one part of the system at the cost of another. They see the whole — including the external environment in which the organisation operates, and the natural systems on which all economic activity ultimately depends.

**Manifesto Dimensions: On Sustainability • On Promise • On Humility**

- What is the long-term impact I want my leadership to have on this organisation's relationship with its environment?
- What promises am I making to people who do not yet have a seat at the table — future employees, communities, ecosystems?
- What does humility about my own limitations require of me in the face of systemic risk I cannot individually resolve?

**SHINGO + DEEP EXCELLENCE INTEGRATION**

The intersection of the Shingo principle 'Think Systemically' and Deep Excellence's concept of the 'Factory for the Planet' is where leadership becomes stewardship. Your manifesto should contain at least one explicit commitment in this dimension — because the organisations that will be trusted and viable in 2035 are being shaped by the decisions their leaders make today.

## 5. Writing Your Manifesto — The Fourteen Dimensions

Once you have worked through the six disciplines, the manifesto itself is structured around fourteen dimensions. Each dimension is a heading under which you write — in your own voice — your commitments, beliefs, and standards. These are not answers to a questionnaire. They are statements you must be prepared to speak aloud, defend under pressure, and be held accountable to.

| Dimension | The Central Question |
|---|---|
| **My Promise** | *What have I unconditionally committed to? To whom, and what does that cost me?* |
| **On Inspiration** | *What calls people to their best? How do I create the conditions for it?* |
| **On Creativity** | *How do I respond when an idea challenges my existing mental model?* |
| **On Humility** | *What do I genuinely not know? Who should I be listening to more?* |
| **On Integrity** | *What would I refuse to do regardless of the instruction or the incentive?* |
| **On Curiosity** | *What am I actively learning? What assumptions am I currently testing?* |

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| Dimension | The Central Question |
|---|---|
| **On Collaboration** | *How do I break down the silos I have built, however inadvertently?* |
| **On Risk, Success, and Failure** | *What does failure in my team tell me about my leadership? What is my honest answer?* |
| **On Listening** | *Not hearing — listening. What do I do differently when I genuinely do not agree?* |
| **On Speaking** | *When I speak, does it clarify, invite, or close? How would my team answer that?* |
| **On Mentorship** | *Am I actively developing others to be better than me in the areas that matter most?* |
| **On Vulnerability** | *What am I afraid to say? To whom? And what is the cost of that silence?* |
| **On Criticism** | *How do I receive feedback that is accurate but uncomfortable? What happens to the messenger?* |
| **On Sustainability** | *What will be true of this organisation's relationship with its world because of how I led it?* |

*The mirror test is simple: stand in front of a mirror and read what you have written aloud. If you cannot do that without feeling that you are performing rather than speaking, rewrite it until you can.*

## 6. The Manifesto and the Organisational Vision

A Leadership Manifesto that exists only for its author has limited value. The Shingo Model's principle of 'Enterprise Alignment' makes the requirement explicit: individual purpose must align with organisational direction, and both must be coherent with the operating principles that drive daily behaviour.

Your Leadership Manifesto is therefore the mechanism through which your personal commitments connect to, and amplify, the organisation's vision. They are not separate documents. They are a single story of the future, told at two levels: the personal and the collective.

For leadership teams, the process of developing individual manifestos — and then sharing them with each other — is one of the most powerful alignment exercises available. It surfaces misalignment that strategy workshops never reach: misalignment about what 'excellence' actually means, about how failure should be treated, about what is and is not acceptable behaviour at the top of the organisation.

**SA PARTNERS APPLICATION**

In SA Partners' enterprise excellence engagements, Leadership Manifesto development is used as a precursor to full Shingo assessment work. The reason is straightforward: a Shingo assessment reveals the gap between where an organisation is and where it could be. A Leadership Manifesto reveals whether the senior leadership team has the personal foundation to close that gap. Without that foundation, improvement programmes stall at the cultural layer — precisely where the work is hardest and most necessary.

## 7. Sustaining the Manifesto — The Living Document

A Leadership Manifesto written once and filed is not a manifesto. It is a monument. The Shingo principle of 'Seek Perfection' requires continuous improvement — and that applies as directly to the

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leader as to the process. Your manifesto should be revisited at minimum annually, and whenever you enter a significantly new context: a new role, a crisis, a period of major organisational change.

### Questions for Annual Review

- Where am I demonstrably living my manifesto? What evidence do I have?
- Where is the gap between what I have written and how I have actually behaved this year?
- What has changed in my context that requires me to revisit a commitment or add a new one?
- What would my team say if they read this manifesto and scored me against it honestly?

The final discipline of Deep Excellence is honesty about the gap. Not defensive dismissal of it, and not paralysing guilt about it — but honest, rigorous, constructive confrontation with the distance between aspiration and practice. That confrontation, repeated year after year, is what builds a leader who can genuinely be trusted.

## 8. Conclusion — The Physics of Leadership

The operating environment facing organisations today is not forgiving of leadership that is vague about its values, inconsistent in its behaviour, or short-term in its horizon. The physics of our world — ecological, economic, geopolitical — demands something more. It demands leaders who have done the foundational work: who know why they lead, what they stand for, and how they intend to behave when it is most difficult.

The Leadership Manifesto is not a soft tool. It is one of the hardest things a leader will write — because writing it honestly requires confronting the distance between who you are and who you intend to be. That confrontation, done with rigour and humility, is the beginning of leadership that earns genuine trust.

The Shingo Model™ gives us the principles. Deep Excellence gives us the cultural diagnostic. The Leadership Manifesto gives us the personal foundation. Together, they constitute a complete framework for leadership in a world that is asking more of its leaders than it ever has before.

> *"When you are successful and winning and the pipeline is full, it is the best time to take action. Doing nothing is not an option."* — Ron Dennis, McLaren


### About the Authors

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