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Versatility in Leadership: The Balance Between Adaptation and Overload

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MidJourney

How to stay everything for everyone

We've been talking a lot with our clients about versatility in leadership. Rather than ascribing to static ways of leading or being in the workplace, a focus on versatile leadership acknowledges that our approach often needs to vary depending on the situation. The sooner we embrace this truth, the better for our leadership practice.

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At one moment we may need to take a clear and commanding stance on an important issue of values, while in another instance we are called to be highly consultative and empower group consensus-making. The skills and mindsets that might support you in each of these situations can vary. The versatile leader is able to flow with these challenges, bringing to bear their diverse toolkit, in the moment.

But with versatility also comes greater risk for leaders. The capacity to move with your environment and adapt your approach with ease can easily see a leader getting caught up in increasingly complex and numerous demands. Unfortunately, being known for your capacity to meet any moment with style, can lead both yourself and others to place an unworkable load on you.

Versatile Leader's Checklist

Resilience and a focus on well-being are even more important for the versatile leader who is frequently stretched out of their routines and comfort zone. While part of this might be what energises the versatile leader — it needs to be balanced and the costs consciously examined.

So, how can you be versatile while also staying resilient and balanced?

- **Set boundaries** — being versatile doesn't mean doing everything! Be clear with yourself and your work colleagues about what is OK and what isn't. Sometimes it really is better to say 'no' to a request rather than burn out or hold resentment around doing it. We love Brené Brown's BIG model when it comes to establishing boundaries.
- **Find your rhythm** — within the chaos of modern organisational life, there are certain structures we can still put around ourselves to support us and strengthen us. Small rituals and habits built into your day (such as a morning coffee in a quiet space each day) provide the

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space for a quick recharge and create stability.
- **Don’t be afraid to share the load** — drawing in the expertise, energy, and support of others is part of leading well and our connections can make all the difference in challenging moments. Versatile leaders know that most of the things in life that are important require us to work with others to achieve them.

Versatile leadership is a powerful way to think about how to create the greatest impact as a leader — but just like any leadership style, staying resilient is step one.

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