

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



### CYNTHIA MILLS

**Cynthia Mills, FASAE, CAE, CMC, CPC, CCRC** is Founder, President & CEO of The Leaders' Haven. Mills' consultancy partners with clients to align for impact and exceed expectations. Nicknamed "The Board Whisperer" by several clients, Cynthia relishes transformational journeys.

**Transformation Architect:** An award-winning national and international CEO, she designs transformational and sustainable impact as business strategist, succession planning & transition facilitator, board consultant, leadership development catalyst, executive coach, change management guide, and speaker. Serving a diverse client portfolio, Mills brings depth and unique perspective to each engagement, matching culture and enhancing corporate soul to deliver relevance in the business, industry, philanthropy, and faith sectors.

**Leader Cultivator:** Mills parlayed her expertise building strategy, people, and teams into lauded designer of leadership programs and executive coach. As New England College adjunct faculty, she developed curricula and taught strategic planning and policy, the dynamics of governance, and thesis preparation to master's degree candidates.

**World Citizen:** A small town girl, Mills has been blessed to live and speak abroad, lead diverse teams, and represent organizations in Asia, Europe, Scandinavia, the UK, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, the Caribbean, and the U.S.

**Eternal Student:** Mills holds an MA from the University of York, England, earned as a Rotary International Ambassador Scholar, and a dual BA from Queens College while a Presidential Scholar. She is a member of the Institute of Management Consultants, International Coach Federation, American Society of Association Executives, and Strathmore Who's Who Worldwide, which named her "Professional of the Year in Consulting, Coaching, and Professional Development." Mills is certified as a Master, Professional, and Christian Coach, and Association Executive and is an ASAE Fellow.

**Author:** *Leading from the Heart* is Mills' sixth book, following *CEOs First 90 Days: Breathing Tips for the Other End of the Fire Hose*, *The Empty Front Porch: Soul Sittin' to Design Your porch to Porch Plan*, *The Female Factor: A Confidence Guide for Women*, *Breaking the Concrete Ceiling: Empowerment Tools for Women*, and *The Big Secret*, a best seller as a co-author with Jack Canfield.

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## FIVE

# Heart, Mind, and Soul

Cynthia Mills

*“Leadership is a moment by moment earned position,  
granted to you by others, because of their belief, trust, &  
evidence gathered that you have their best interests at heart.”*

—Cynthia Mills

The alarm blasts into your quiet zone, and you rise for another day of productive employment. At 6:30 am, you must decide, “Do I fully engage my mind or dial it in, going through the motions?” “Do I take my heart with me today, open to everyone and everything that may cross my path?” “Maybe I should leave my soul behind – but just for today, as I’m not sure who will be up for encountering all of me.”

We are not compartmentalized beings, but integrated masters of living, with multiple internal influences that fluidly impact our days. If we’re fortunate, we are careful stewards of our gifts and self-aware

about what allows us to flourish; having chosen a workplace that has a tangible corporate soul with which we align.

When human beings cross the threshold of their work lives every day, most don't arrive wondering, "How can I be heartless, give as many colleagues as possible a tough time, and deliver poor customer service?" In fact, googling "meaning at work research" leads to a long list of studies that validate how important meaning at work is to everyone. This is very good news for leaders. If we can connect every person we employ to the mission of our businesses and organizations; engaging the heart, mind and soul, we have a chance of slaying the statistic that says over 85% of the workforce is unengaged.<sup>1</sup>

Why is our workforce today full of heartaches, headaches, and soul pain? Some will remember the promises of the last century – that technology was going to create a leisure society. Instead, we're caught in a world of constant data flow, information bloat, soulless engagement, and ask after request after ask – enough to make us want to change our names and email addresses hourly! Genuinely inquire of anyone about how they're doing, and you'll get one answer – "busy." Nobody actually tells you how they're doing. All you learn is that they're in motion – whether the motion generates anything that is value-added, fills their soul, or creates meaning for customers is beside the point. Today, it's treated as a professional crime in our society to not "be busy." Perish the thought that anyone has set aside time to think or innovate.

Overwhelm is one of the greatest bi-products of our ability to generate content quickly and send it to vast numbers of people all over the world. Humans are struggling to keep up. At the very time

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<sup>1</sup> State of the Global Workplace Report, as reported in Gallup Blog, December 20, 2107, <https://bit.ly/2JH0wz5>

we are connected to more people, the depth of our interactions is leaving many with a sense of being bereft – in contact but unknown – absolutely soul crushing.

Humans want to be seen. They want to know that they matter - that their contributions are heard and valued. Never was this more so than at our places of work...whether it's using your mind and your hands at critical trades, orchestrating strategy and human dynamics, or creating beauty in music, fashion, and the arts.

We all know when our heart, mind, and soul are taking their deepest breaths, leaving us satisfied with a great day's work, a sense of mastery, and accomplishment. We can feel it when our gifts are being fully embraced, when encouragement surrounds us, when we've developed something of which others are in awe, or have taken a big risk that stretched us to new heights and paid off. We know when our leaders are leading from the heart.

If we take these assumptions as desirable to experience in work – that our entire person is welcomed, an invitation is extended to inspire our hearts and intellects, and our very beings can both contribute and be nourished by our presence together – what would it look like as leaders to create space to lead from the heart, while feeding the mind and nourishing the soul?

## **Steps to Engage the Heart, Feed the Mind, & Nourish the Soul**

### **ENGAGE THE HEART**

We've all been there – the meeting for which the agenda is untenable in its dearth of worth, during which the leader enjoys the feeling of their lips moving ad nauseam, while everyone sneaks glances

at their smartphones. How do we author a script that substitutes a magnetic desire to be present to the work that connects with our hearts?

Heart starts with the visionary's passion around the mission of the company or organization. The integrity of its implementation magnifies the attraction. Heart has a chance to live when purpose is communicated with energy and commitment, inviting employees and customers to co-create the dream. It lives when others are allowed to join the visionary and make it come alive, when their passion connects to the vision, which breeds trust, innovation, and dedication that is not born from a policy manual but from a deeply held belief that participating in this work matters.

Engaging the heart requires 6 steps:

1. **Clarity** on the impact and legacy of the intention, the ability to answer why it's important in a way that facilitates understanding, and a stated direct link communicated individually to every single person. This allows all to not just see a dream but to connect to how their own work is part of an essential creation – to feel that the end result matters. *The heart has a way to respond.*

2. **Discipline** on the part of the employer to restrain from filling vacancies with bodies; seeking the exact person with the passion and skill set to make each area of the vision come alive. Identifying people who will add value to the work culture usually includes those who take initiative, see early opportunities, and will help build a self-generating team that leverages your organization or business in perpetuity. *The heart knows that it will be dealt with fairly.*

3. **Self-awareness** by employees about what brings them joy and meaning in work, including the type of environment in which they flourish, allows them to know how to respond to “Who do you want to be?” The answer leads to fully engaging your heart and experiencing

the impact of contributing your talent every day in the workplace. This voids the definition of work and lands you in the fortunate space of living out your DNA - who you were created to be and what you are meant to do. *The heart recognizes its professional home and beats in rhythm with the work at hand.*

## WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?



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4. **Commitment** by employees not to just take a job but to find the employer who operates by #'s 1 and 2 above, allowing them to connect to the work they are trusted to complete, while taking their personal preferences into consideration. It is so tempting to take “a job,” which we all sometimes must do to relieve financial pressures. However, when we can find “the job” instead that aligns with a whole host of personal preferences, we have a much greater opportunity to engage the heart. *The heart is prevented from breaking when it aligns with the work.*

## PROFESSIONAL PREFERENCES

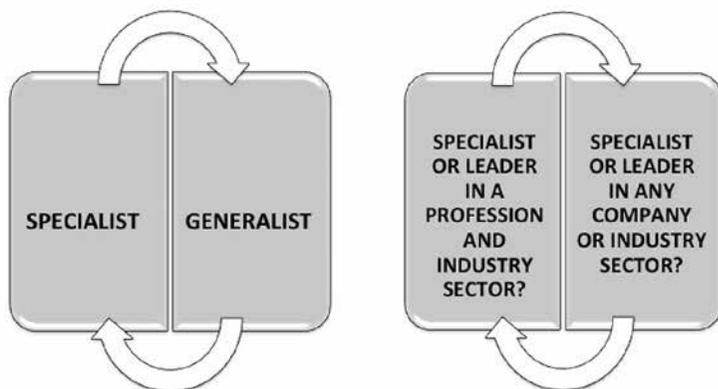
### Do you like....

Being out in front?	
Orchestrating from behind?	
Doing, leading or both?	
Politics – internal &/or government?	
Business development?	
Developing people?	
Working independently?	
Functioning as an introvert or an extrovert?	
Traveling & % of time – State, National, International?	

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5. **Discernment** regarding whether you want to be a specialist or a generalist and what the scope and impact is that you wish to leave as part of your professional legacy is a study in maturation. Trying to lead on a broad spectrum, when you really love marketing or writing or sales or human resources, can only lead to dissatisfaction. A generalist may be a great CEO but not so great at technological implementation. Being honest with yourself about what you love, and leading your professional life from that knowledge, instead of what your parents or colleagues or bosses want takes courage of convictions and connection. *Your heart will thank you.*

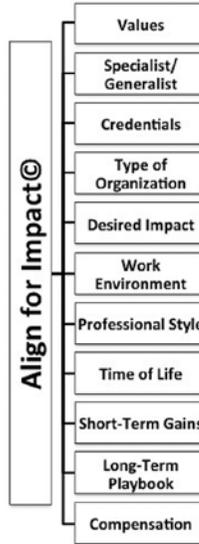
## WHAT'S YOUR PLAYBOOK?



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6. **Continuous evaluation** on the part of both employers and employees, regarding whether the fit remains intact, as new visions unfold and innovation takes place is critical. The chart below will help to determine whether you are aligned for the kind of impact that fills your heart and complements your abilities. Employers who choose to have these all-encompassing conversations with their employees create an environment in which it's normal to have a check-up dialogue. *Alignment of all hearts allows the cardiovascular system and the corporate soul to function well long-term.*

## ALIGN FOR IMPACT©



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## FEED THE MIND

While engaging the heart is critical to being able to lead from the heart, it also requires substantiating those desires with the underpinnings of knowledge, skills and understanding in order to best utilize and maximize them.

The first elimination as soon as there is a downturn is usually the professional development budget. Hunker down and watch that bottom line! Unfortunately, the message delivered to our people is that they don't need to keep up – with our competitors, with employees from other companies, with cutting edge knowledge, and worst of all – the company doesn't value me in difficult times, when those are the very moments I'm putting in even more effort to keep things going.

While all leaders have a monetary reality to meet, none of our visions come to life without the engagement, creativity, and

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community we build from the mind power of our teams. Employees and employers must be jointly accountable for feeding minds and encouraging intellectual stretching. We no longer have the excuses of the company can't afford it, or the organization doesn't have a professional development budget. Technology has brought continuous learning to our doorsteps in webinars, real-time conferences, and on-line degrees.

Further, no one can professionally afford to ignore engaging the mind, as well as the heart. That choice leaves us vulnerable to our employer's decision to remove us as our value declines – and that's not a heartless choice. That is the definition of leading from love – demonstrating a commitment to all the families dependent upon the enterprise's survival and encouragement to all employees to remain relevant for their own long-term career impact.

One of the greatest heartbreaks for a leader is to see the potential in an employee and to realize that you want it more for them than they want it for themselves, watching them choose with intention to pass up opportunities to enrich themselves. You can offer all of the conferences imaginable, support certifications and degree programs, and give time to study, travel, or take webinars during work hours. However, if they choose to disengage with their own career journey, as leaders, the most loving thing to do for our organizations and companies is to assist them in finding a new professional home.

What are the accountability factors for employers and employees to maintain an expectation of feeding the mind to support the heart's professional yearnings?

**Employer accountability:**

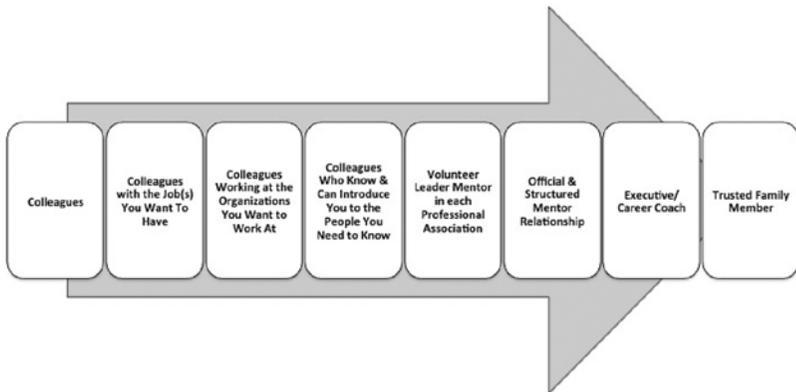
- Include continuous learning in your organization's or company's value statements.
- Create a culture document outlining how your organization thrives as a learning environment.
- During the search process, reference learning expectations in position ads. Include interview questions regarding how a candidate engages in continuous learning. Be specific about your expectations and what you offer employees for professional development.
- Celebrate employees' achievements upon completion of a certification, a degree, or earning a technical skill certificate.
- Create an internal leadership development program or make a commitment to send employees to established programs.
- Budget appropriately so that your support of feeding the mind and developing your people is known to be a funding priority. Demonstrate the depth of your leadership from the heart in your commitment to them and the vision of your company or organization.

**Employee accountability:**

- Take on the responsibility to develop your career path and consider whether that can be fulfilled at the company or organization to which you have already committed or are considering.

- Know what the scope and impact is that you want to make professionally and seek learning opportunities that continuously develop your capacity and enhance your value to an employer.
- Annually, commit to professional development goals for yourself, regardless of whether your employer funds them or not.
- Identify a career board of advisors composed of leaders, who will challenge you in how you are feeding your mind, developing professionally, and stretching to your top potential. Learn vicariously from those who have gone before you.

### **ESTABLISH YOUR CAREER BOARD OF ADVISORS**



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- Know that without remaining relevant, your workplace value will decrease, and your employer will have no choice in today's work environment but to replace you. That will be a leading from the

heart decision for both you and the company or organization at which you work.

- Set aside personal budget funds to attend conferences, pay professional dues, and take additional certifications throughout your career. Many companies and organizations are shifting the financial responsibility for continuous learning to the employee.

## **NOURISH THE SOUL**

Merriam-Webster<sup>2</sup> dictionary defines the soul as “the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life.” When we choose to join together as a community of souls, feeding our minds to learn intentionally, while leading from the heart; we can create a dynamic corporate soul that is literally tangible to our customers or our organization’s members, and our employees.

We all know what this feels like. Walk into one company and you can feel the void of energy. The molecules have hardened into a depressed fortress against action. Stride into another organization, and the energy envelopes you as a magnetic force, drawing you in by the people who greet you, evidenced by how you are cared for as a visitor - from the signage welcoming you to the coffee cup placed in your hand to the escort to the meeting room. Everyone’s soul is breathing deeply, and the corporate soul has taken on a life of its own. We all want to work there.

Leading from the heart requires paying attention to the essence of each person, honoring not just what we want them to do but how that integrates with their professional goals and talent. This alone impacts how our team members choose to show up each day. They can

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<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/soul>

exude executive presence, but if we nourish their soul, we'll see them demonstrate something much more powerful - leadership presence. It's not just how we "be," but who we "are."

Executive presence is all about how we show up – the outer layer that we put on to say, "I got this." "You made the right choice in hiring me." It's the external qualities that have others make a quick assessment that this is someone with whom I should engage.

Not to downplay executive presence, it is essential for success, and yet, it only gets us so far. Executive presence is a skill set that also can be faked. One can appear to be confident, have on the correct attire for their work environment, and display confidence. That does not mean that they will operate from true willingness to be inclusive or follow through with the same energy that is displayed at the kickoff of a new initiative.

## EXECUTIVE PRESENCE HOW YOU "BE"



On the other hand, leadership presence is where the soul kicks in. It's much harder to hide who you really are when you take ethics, transparency, accountability, vulnerability, and authenticity into account. Those around us watch us at all times, collecting evidence that we are who we say we are, that we are modeling preferred behaviors, and are equitable in how we deal with others. Our consistency builds trust, a key variable in nourishing the soul of others, allowing a positive corporate soul to flourish.

## LEADERSHIP PRESENCE – Who You Are



At this point in this chapter, some want to lay this book down and declare that nourishing the soul is not the responsibility of the company owners, corporate leaders, staff, or board members. Before you do, let's consider the deflated, the unmotivated, the employee who has always heard that they are worthless throughout their lives

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from their teachers and parents. Perhaps, they have learned how to ace an interview and hold their executive presence together for just long enough for you to hire them with all the intent and excitement that new talent brings to the table.

Unfortunately, what you don't know is that your new employee has a threshold for how long they can cover what's underneath, and now that's showing up on your team every day. You have a choice. You can hire slow and fire fast, or you can consider "the why." Either you come from the perspective that every human being has value and their daily experiences will both nourish their soul and bring out the best in them, or you view human beings as expendable cogs, take no responsibility for creating an environment in which they can thrive, and leave them to sink or swim.

Yes, accountability on their part is critical. They must meet us at least halfway, and now stop to think about how you can transform a life when you bother to look beyond the position description and the deadlines to the opportunity you have to impact a shift in the internal messages that your employees sends to themselves. Believing in someone is one of the most powerful tools that leaders can invest in. Hope born from the encouragement to risk stepping beyond the limitations others have repeated to you for years is like fertilizer on a barren field.

Deciding to lead is an ambitious undertaking in itself. Recognizing that even while protecting the overall health of the company or organization is essential, we all have disposable time and energy that can be well invested in others, if we choose to make it a priority. Pouring into one employee at a time creates a corporate soul that is undeniable. We see it in how employees talk about working for a company. They light up. They state they know how fortunate they are

to work with their colleagues on this mission or product. It's magnetic and tangible.

When corporate soul becomes self-sustaining, that allows our organizations and businesses to flourish, attracting employees, customers, and members who want to experience what we have and the buzz that's been created about it. FOMO becomes compelling! We have a responsibility to display leadership presence in action individually and then to impact the endeavors of others in a positive way. Leadership soul and corporate soul go hand in hand. As goes the leader, so goes the corporate soul.

Sometimes it can be very difficult for the soul to balance the heart and the mind in difficult leadership positions. The heart wants to give a third, fourth, or fifth chance to the employee who doesn't step up. The knowledge that a customer has hit on hard times for an extended period of time has the heart want to offer credit beyond the company's policy limitations. How do we nourish the soul so that discernment becomes a well-developed muscle in our leadership anatomy?

❖ **Consider whether you are operating from fear or possibility.**

If you're afraid, you are most likely not taking corporate soul into account. Your actions will come from a limiting place instead of an expansive and open perspective. Others can feel your dread, which drains the soul, and purges creativity. *Carry a mind-set of possibility to feed the soul.*

❖ **Create redundancies and margin in time lines and skill sets.**

You can then take measured risks, investing in employees by showing belief in their capability, while ensuring a soft landing for them and the organization. Innovation then becomes a part of corporate soul. *Give their souls a place to try and to fly.*

- ❖ **Eliminate the word failure from your vocabulary.** If employees know that a.) the culture is pilot and test on a small scale b.) that they're part of a learning organization, c.) it's all about what they've learned together, and d.) you've bet on them; they're much more likely to go for it and land something in a big way. *Fuel the positivity of corporate soul.*

## STEWARDSHIP FROM THE HEART

*“Leaders’ stewardship is the outcome of respecting that something has been placed in your care and trust has been freely extended, with the understanding you will honor the intention of nurturing, protecting, and maximizing the expected results.”* —Cynthia Mills

Stewardship from the heart requires special discernment. In the moment, our stewardship may not feel great to the person we have just fired. The employee may view us as heartless, call us names, and post social media rants. Yet, when we know that the train has left the station on the right track, that we have articulated a clear vision of how the person needs to perform, and that they are no longer the right fit for the changing environment, it is our responsibility to do what is right for the organization and to assist them on their journey to a new professional home.

The most remarkable moments can follow – the day when they come back and thank you for helping them to have a new vision for themselves or for assisting them in finding the perfect job for where they are in their career, or encouraging them to go back and get that

degree. Heart is not about ignoring what matters and hard truths. It is about stewarding people and organizations in a moment in time with the best intentions and an understanding of how delicate and precious a healthy, corporate soul is to everyone involved.

Some want to view heart as a consistent, collaborative effort by everyone on every situation in order for a democratic leadership style to prevail. However, when a leader is confronted with a crisis for which the team's capacity is not developed, and chooses not to take hold of the situation and lead through the crisis - that's not showing heart if the ship goes down and all lose their jobs. Heart is about a willingness to endure a short-term heartache for a long-term robustly functioning cardiovascular system.

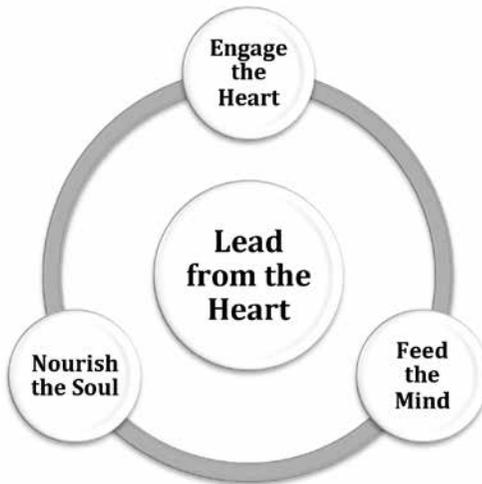
Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where the corporate soul we have enjoyed is altering. New leadership, unexpected shifts in the environment, changes in laws, and economic impacts are but a few of the things that can permanently alter how we experience our work environment. If leaders choose to be heartless in these circumstances and corporate soul evaporates, we may have to make our own exits. Aside from matching our skill sets to positions, the most important interview questions we can ask uncover corporate soul. We want to avoid heartless leadership at all costs. It can impact our health, long-term compensation, and therefore quality of retirement, our career arc, our legacy's impact, and wear down our own ability to lead from the heart.

One of the most amazing moments of leading from the heart that I have ever experienced occurred early in my career when my mother-in-law passed away. My husband and I had just returned from vacation only to learn that his mother had died. I had to go into my boss' office and say, "I know I've just returned from vacation, but I

have to go to England for two weeks for the funeral and to manage the family affairs.”

I was a young professional and really nervous about what my boss would say. He never flinched, sighed, or rolled his eyes. He said, “I’m so sorry to hear that, Cynthia. You and John go and take care of what you need to take care of.” My boss never docked me a vacation day, a personal day, a sick day, or a bereavement day. The loyalty he created and my commitment to do everything I could to do a great job in return was impermeable. He taught me more about leading from the heart, and really seeing the people you count on, in that one moment than any degree could have ever imparted.

When we lead from the heart, those for whom we are charged to be good stewards – our customers, our members, our staffs, our boards, our families - will join us on the journey. When we say, “Yes!” to leadership, we are not being handed the key to power, control, and others’ destiny. We are being invited to shepherd others, to co-create



their dreams, to partner in success, and to do so by knowing those with whom and for whom we lead. There is no need for our workplaces to be full of heartaches, headaches, and soul pain. When we engage our hearts, feed our minds, and nourish our souls, we have mastered leading from the heart.