
PALAZZO

Course Syllabus

Master Class - Great Leaders Great Teams Great Results

Where Great Leaders Ignite Extraordinary Performance.

20 Credit Hours - This program is designed to be facilitated in an academic setting, virtually, or in a hybrid format.

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I. Course Description

Great Teams – Great Leaders – Great Results © is an executive leadership masterclass designed to equip leaders to excel in complex, fast-changing environments. It challenges participants to move beyond traditional mindsets, develop the courage and clarity to lead with purpose, and translate vision into measurable action.

The program's central imperative is to cultivate thought leadership and organizational excellence by aligning an organization's strongest talent, shared values, and daily decisions with its strategic objectives. Through this alignment, leaders build high-performing teams, strengthen accountability, and create the conditions for sustained results.

Experienced leaders will learn to move beyond incremental improvement and intentionally architect high-performing cultures where trust, emotional intelligence, and shared purpose are non-negotiable norms. "Visionary leaders will inspire teams that are deeply engaged, and relentlessly focused on evidence-based best practices, and united around a standard of organizational excellence that continually raises the bar for what is possible." The result is a culture of high trust, operational excellence, and measurable impact that benefits the organization and the communities it serves.

By integrating high levels of (EQ) emotional and cultural intelligence, strategic talent alignment, and generative AI-enhanced communication, participants will learn to transform how they lead, coach, and design their teams for sustainable excellence rather than short-term wins. This process begins with active listening for all stakeholders,

Key academic outcomes

Participants will engage in a reflective process to clearly identify and articulate their personal leadership style, using the four fit factors as a framework to reassess and better understand their impact on those they lead.

Course participants will learn that functional teams are those in which members perform their roles adequately and contribute to day-to-day operations, while high-performing teams consistently demonstrate trust, accountability, collaboration, and exceptional results. Viewed through the academic constructs of psychological safety, engagement, and transformational leadership, the behaviors that distinguish these teams reveal a clear pathway to organizational excellence.

Participants will also examine the four components of transformational leadership. Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration and apply them to their own leadership experiences to strengthen self-awareness, improve performance, and foster more effective team outcomes.

Participants learn to reimagine how human judgment and AI-powered insight work together, using cutting-edge tools to diagnose culture, elevate communication, and make faster, better decisions that keep teams agile and future-ready. Through immersive case work, and AI-enabled simulations, this masterclass equips leaders to inspire engagement, personalize developmental feedback at scale, and remove friction from daily workflows so people can focus on high-value, mission-critical work.

Participants will establish a clear blueprint and toolset for building new pathways for employee engagement, high-trust, and high-performance teams by maximizing employee engagement, accelerated results, and sustaining a culture of innovation and excellence.

Great Leadership Redefined

Great leaders use every appropriate resource, including Generative AI, to anticipate challenges, sharpen priorities, improve communication, reduce unproductive conflict, and enable people to do their best work. They intentionally build high-performance environments where engagement, innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning become everyday expectations.

Ultimately, great leadership is measured not only by what a leader achieves personally, but by how effectively they develop others, strengthen the team, and create the conditions for people to rise, contribute, and sustain exceptional results.

Clearly Identifying The Role of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership begins with leaders who genuinely care for those they lead. They invest in the lives of others with intention, compassion, and purpose. Rather than seeing themselves as simply “in charge” of people, they embrace the responsibility of caring for those in their charge. This powerful shift fosters loyalty, strengthens belonging, and deepens commitment to the organization’s vision. One of the most significant aspects of authentic leadership truly hearing others when they speak.

Active Listening - Active listening is the disciplined practice of hearing not only the words being spoken, but also the meaning, emotion, and human need beneath them. From a spiritual perspective, it reflects humility, presence, and reverence for the dignity of another person; from an emotional perspective, it creates safety, trust, and empathy; and from a practical perspective, it improves understanding, reduces miscommunication, and strengthens relationships.

At its core, active listening empowers people to connect deeply because it communicates, “You matter, and I am fully present with you.” When someone feels truly heard without interruption or judgment, they are more likely to open up, build trust, and engage honestly. In that sense, active listening is not just a communication technique—it is a meaningful expression of care that strengthens both personal and professional relationships.

Active listening is the intentional practice of fully attending to another person with humility, empathy, and understanding. Spiritually, it reflects a posture of reverence and compassion; emotionally, it fosters trust, validation, and belonging; and practically, it strengthens clarity, reduces conflict, and deepens connection. When practiced with sincerity, active listening becomes a powerful bridge to meaningful human relationships, allowing people to feel seen, valued, and understood.

Inspired Employees, Increased Engagement

Organizations inspire top performance by clearly articulating a compelling shared vision of high performance, then aligning roles, goals, and resources so every person can see exactly how their work advances that vision. They invest in knowing their people deeply, a value that strengthens, inspires and fosters collaboration turning individual talent into collective momentum. Generative AI amplifies this process by automating repetitive administrative tasks and freeing leaders to focus on strategic coaching, personalized development, and meaningful human connection, while also providing data-driven insights that reveal individual and team strengths, predict engagement patterns, and optimize talent alignment in real time.

When leaders integrate AI tools to enhance clarity in communication, refine feedback quality, streamline decision-making, and personalize learning pathways, they create conditions where contributions are both expected and elevated, building a culture of psychological safety in which people can take risks, offer ideas, and confront problems without fear, allowing their strengths to

shine brighter than the obstacles they face. Through consistent modeling of high standards, AI-enhanced feedback mechanisms, visible recognition of growth and collaboration, and continuous iteration enabled by human-AI partnership, organizations turn leadership's commitment to excellence into an everyday experience for employees, embedding continuous development, shared ownership, and sustained success into the fabric of the culture

II. RATIONALE

The question of **WHY** is the deeper purpose, cause, or belief that explains why a person or organization exists beyond just what they do. It matters because people are more inspired by purpose than by tasks alone, and organizations that lead with **WHY** tend to build stronger trust, loyalty, and commitment.

The question of **WHY**

Effective leaders begin with why: they clarify what they believe, establish consistent actions that reflect those beliefs, and allow results to demonstrate credibility. People are often more committed to a mission rooted in meaning than to a set of tasks or performance metrics.

Application to Public Safety

In public safety organizations, this framework helps connect policy, training, and daily conduct to a larger service mission centered on integrity, protection, and community trust. When leaders create that alignment, they strengthen buy-in, culture, and commitment.

Reflection Question

How can a leader ensure that organizational policies and daily practices consistently reflect the mission rather than simply measuring compliance?

Why it matters for individuals

For individuals, a clear **WHY** provides direction, motivation, and meaning in daily decisions. It helps people stay focused when work is hard because they are connected to something bigger than money or status.

Why it matters for organizations

For organizations, **WHY** creates alignment: employees understand the mission, leaders make more consistent decisions, and culture becomes more coherent. It also helps organizations inspire rather than merely manage, which can improve engagement, retention, and long-term performance.

Simply Stated

WHAT you do is the result, HOW you do it is the method, but **WHY** you do it is the purpose that gives everything meaning. In leadership terms, **WHY** is the anchor that keeps individuals and organizations grounded, authentic, and resilient.

Organizational Agility

Organizational excellence today is driven by thought leaders with a high level of business acumen who are agile and adaptable, especially when operational tempos are high and conditions are in constant flux. These leaders read shifting stakeholder needs quickly, adjust priorities and execution in real time, and keep teams focused, informed, and aligned. By modeling flexibility, resilient decision-making, and a bias for timely action, they turn relentless change into a strategic advantage rather than conflict.

Leading Across Generations and Cultures

Understanding differences. Why? Today's workforce is diverse in age, culture, and values. Without intentional leadership, these differences can lead to conflict or exclusion. Collaborative leadership reduces misunderstandings, improves communication, and builds trust across demographic lines. It also ensures all team members feel seen, valued, and inspired to contribute to the future of the organization

Action Oriented and Results Focused - Organizational Alignment

This master class provides a rigorous, evidence-based framework for aligning individuals with organizational roles that correspond to their natural and adaptive capabilities as high performers.

Cohorts do not just receive content—they learn with, and from one another. In doing so, they examine how to define and benchmark key positions, then apply structured assessment methodologies to identify candidates whose intrinsic strengths, behavioral tendencies, and learned competencies most closely fit those role demands. In doing so, they will develop the capacity to cultivate exceptional leaders, empower individuals, and enhance the effectiveness of high-performing teams.

This curriculum further equips participants with practical strategies to expand leadership capacity through heightened self-awareness, emotional agility, and systematic staff coaching, with particular attention to the complexities of contemporary, multicultural organizational contexts.

III. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learn - Aligning the right people to the right roles begins with clearly defining what high performance looks like, then matching individuals whose natural and adaptive competencies not only meet but exceed those role benchmarks. Through targeted employee assessments and rigorous role benchmarking, leaders can identify people whose behaviors, motivations, and skill sets are innately aligned for the demands of critical positions, rather than forcing a fit.

This allows you to place high-potential, high-alignment individuals where they can do their best work, accelerate results, and model excellence for others. At the same time, strengthening your ability to lead across generations and cultures ensures these top performers are understood, supported, and fully engaged, while embracing transformational leadership principles that create an inclusive, resilient culture that attracts, grows, and retains this caliber of talent for long-term organizational success.

Develop a proven system to identify the best people to serve in key roles within your organization who have the natural and adaptive skill sets to be top performers. Course participants will learn the skills to build exceptional leaders, empower individuals, and strengthen high-performing teams. This course equips participants with practical strategies to grow leadership capacity through self-awareness, emotional agility, and effective staff coaching especially in complex, multi-cultural environments.

Talent Optimization, Staff Development and Retention:

The process aligning talent with the needs of an organization requires each individual to answer one powerful and significant question **WHY?** This question applies most significantly to the individual motivation that inspires great performance, and also, how we serve others.

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Succession Planning: From new employees to senior staff the incorporation of Ask Aura (AI Software) offers predictable outcomes when coaching and preparing staff members to assume responsibilities within your organization. This application is dynamic and adaptive, thereby applying proven methods of intelligent design to the process of succession planning.

Business Strategy: Effective leadership fosters synergy within the organization by encouraging collaboration across generations. This approach emphasizes creating an environment where employees of all ages and experience levels can work together cohesively, utilizing their unique perspectives and strengths to drive collective success and achieve shared goals.

Resolving Conflict and Mistrust: When conflicts are left unresolved and mistrust builds, it can create a toxic work environment that undermines both employee morale and the organization's

ability to achieve its mission. By addressing issues proactively and fostering a culture of high trust and collaboration, leaders lay the foundation for a thriving, positive workplace that drives success and helps the organization reach its fullest potential.

Promoting Ethical Conduct: Ethical conduct stands as a cornerstone of any organization, especially within the public sector, where the responsibility to serve with honor, integrity, and valor is paramount. Leaders must not only embody these virtues but also model the behaviors of great leadership - inspiring those they serve to act with unwavering commitment to what is morally right and just.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS

This Master Class will be presented as a graduate level cohort. Course participants must have at least 5 years of leadership experience with direct reports. Prior to the commencement of this course, individuals will be required to submit an overview (one paragraph (250-300 words) describing their individual leadership style including the challenges they face in leading others. The term "I lead by example" as a descriptive example of your leadership style an incomplete statement and cannot be used. See sample below as a vivid example:

The follow information must be on the bottom of all submissions - Participant name, title, years of service in a leadership role, name of employer, date.

(SAMPLE)

Michael Palazzo Leadership Style Defined - June 26, 2026

My leadership style is rooted in my faith and anchored in my core values. It begins with a simple, defining truth: "Greater love has no one than this—that one lays down his life for his friends." This is the standard I strive to live and lead by each day.

With more than 30 years of formal and informal leadership experience, I embrace the calling of a servant leader. I serve others. I care for others. I provide professional, practical, and spiritual support to those entrusted to me. Leadership is not about position—it is about responsibility. While I hold the authority to guide and develop others, I see my role as that of a shepherd: to lead with purpose, protect with conviction, and serve with humility.

I am committed to ensuring that those I lead are equipped to succeed. I support, I correct, and I invest in their growth so they can reach their full potential. I lead with honesty, integrity, and clarity. I communicate truthfully and directly, without compromise, regardless of how the message may be received. I hold myself accountable to continual self-evaluation and refinement.

I am a lifelong learner, dedicated to growth through reflection, study, and intentional change. As I grow, I help others grow—guiding, challenging, and inspiring them to achieve their goals and fulfill their purpose. I am far less concerned with how people "feel" and more focused on the growth of others. Inspiring people to be daring, and to challenge themselves to become their personal best.

This is my commitment. This is my leadership

Additionally, the written overview (see course requirements) must be submitted no later than one week prior to the first session. All written documentation must be submitted in Times New Roman 12 point double spaced format with the following information. Pre-class requirements must be submitted to the course facilitator no later than 10 days prior to course commencement date @ michael@palazzolc.org.

V. Ethical Rules Governing the application of AI/ Guidelines for Leadership Statement

Ethical guideline: When defining and writing a personal leadership style, the statement must reflect the leader's authentic moral and ethical values, including any faith-based convictions that shape character, decision-making, and service to others. It should be written with honesty, humility, and self-awareness, (EQ) and should describe how those values guide effective leadership in practice. Using AI to define or create a leadership style primarily for self-advancement may be considered unethical and disingenuous, particularly when it misrepresents the individual's true beliefs, character, or intentions.

VI. MATERIALS LIST

The Way of the Shepherd, Kevin Lehman and Bill Pentak, Zondervan Publishers, 2004. (required reading). **Good to Great**, Jim Collins, Harper Collins, 2001 (Optional but recommended). All course materials are available at www.amazon.com

Individual Behavioral and Cultural Assessment - **Must be completed NLT 10 days prior to course commencement.**

VII. COURSE FORMAT AND FACILITATION

This course will be facilitated in a hybrid format. Participants will work in a collaborative cohort that includes multiple (virtual) video sessions, throughout the course. Participants will be required to read the course materials and participate in the cultural assessment prior to the first of class.

VII. Rubric

Pass/Fail Rubric Requirements

To receive a passing evaluation, all participants must meet or exceed the guidelines and expectations established in this course. All assignments must be completed and submitted within the stated time frame and in accordance with the instructions provided. Failure to meet these requirements may result in