



Ethical Leadership

The New Zealand story



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Professor Karin Lasthuizen
Brian Picot Chair in Ethical Leadership
Victoria University of Wellington

www.victoria.ac.nz/ethical-leadership

New Zealand 

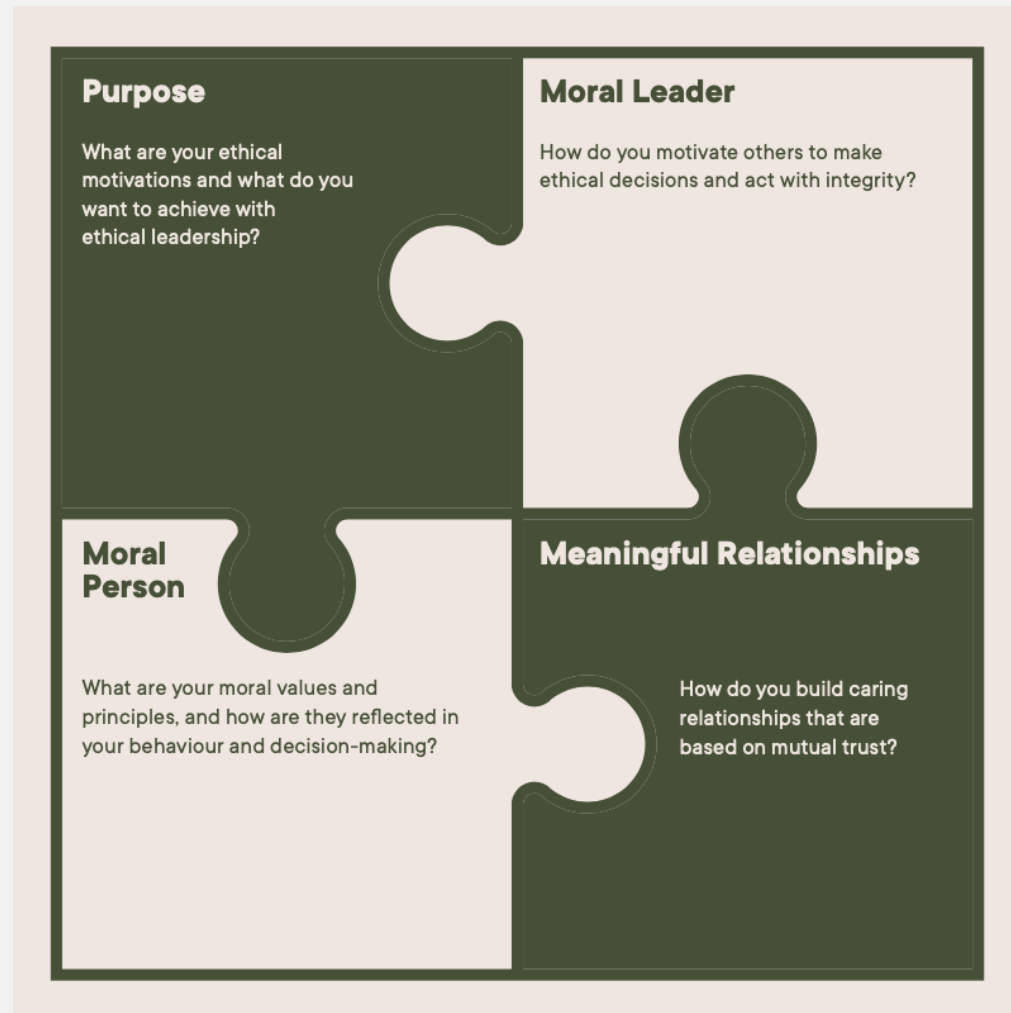
Capital thinking. Globally minded.

Ethical leadership:

“the character, behaviour and decision-making that a leader demonstrates by means of role modelling, reinforcement and communication to motivate employees to make decisions and act in accordance with relevant moral values, norms and rules”

Textbooks often promote a one-size-fits-all style of leadership.

But for *ethical* leadership, the cultural context—the moral values, norms, and practices of a society—is crucial for our understanding.



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP - ROLE MODEL



CHRISTCHURCH SHOOTING, 15-03-2019



Sanam Saeed
@sanammodysaeed

Banning assault rifles and semi automatic weapons, ammending gun laws... That's [#change](#)

He sought many things from his act of terror, but one was notoriety.

And that is why you will never hear me mention his name.

He is a terrorist. He is a criminal. He is an extremist.

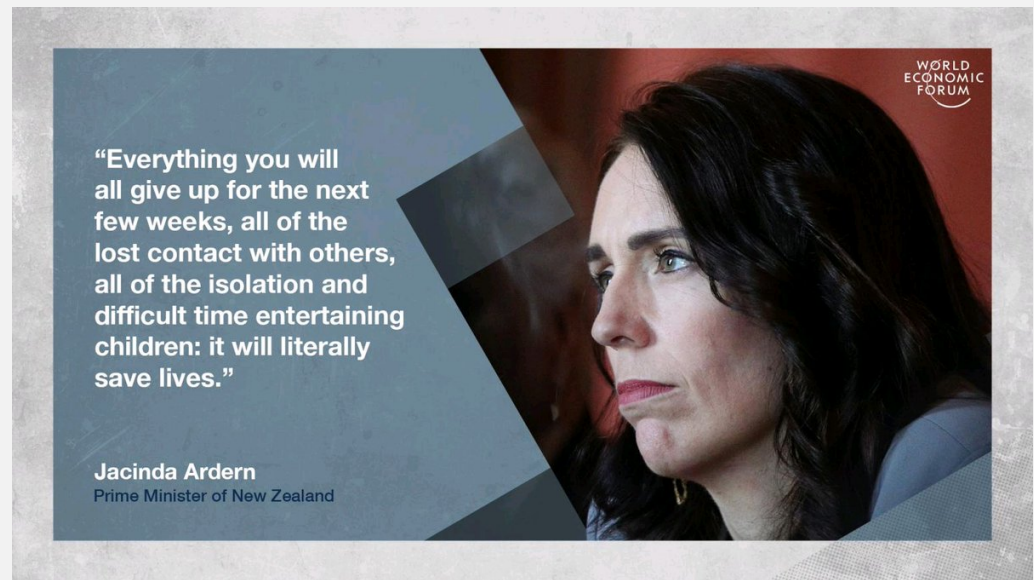
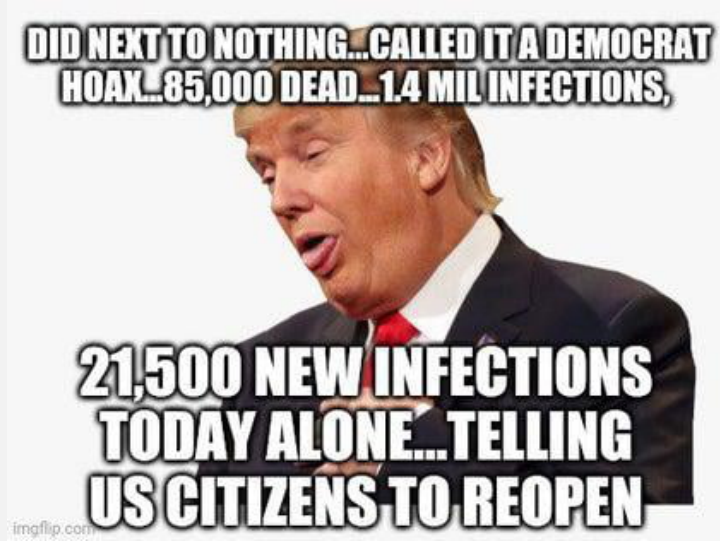
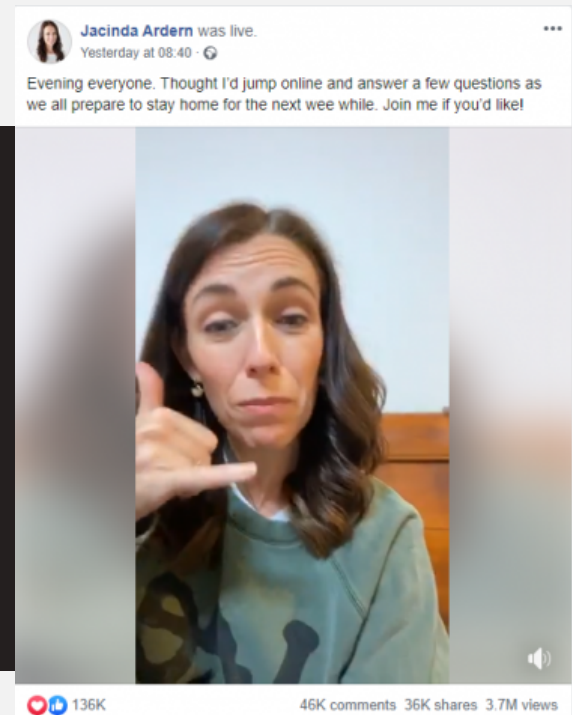
But he will, when I speak, be nameless.

And to others I implore you: speak the names of those who were lost, rather than name of the man who took them.

He may have sought notoriety, but we in New Zealand will give him nothing. Not even his name.



COVID-19 OUTBREAK





“

ONE OF THE CRITICISMS
I'VE FACED OVER THE
YEARS IS THAT I'M NOT
AGGRESSIVE ENOUGH OR
ASSERTIVE ENOUGH, OR
MAYBE SOMEHOW,
BECAUSE I'M EMPATHETIC,
IT MEANS I'M WEAK. I
TOTALLY REBEL AGAINST
THAT. I REFUSE TO
BELIEVE THAT YOU
CANNOT BE BOTH
COMPASSIONATE AND
STRONG.

Jacinda Ardern



HUMAN GOOD.

A FIELD GUIDE
TO ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

We always strive for convergence and consensus – which again comes down to leading with humility, and being prepared to listen and change your mind.

Confidentiality vs public health

How much private information we shared had other considerations and created the biggest ethical dilemma. An effective contact tracing measure required us to share publicly a lot of information. Where a COVID-19 patient went and when, and if they were an NHS worker, when were they tested, and if not, why not? The media went very hard on these points.

While we had to be open with the information people needed to know to protect themselves, we didn't want to create a media and social media pile on. These individuals were already going through a heck of a time and didn't need their movements scrutinised, or glibbed about whether they were reporting or not reporting. That tension creates a bigger ethical issue as people might not come forward and might not get tested if they fear their lives will be aired on television.

There's a trade-off between the individual and the public's safety, and potential commercial consequences. Coming from a health background, where patient confidentiality and building trust with the individuals and their whishes is so important, that's been one of the most challenging parts of the communications aspect of the role.

Listening to others – seeking for consensus

As Director General it was my job to decide what advice to offer to Cabinet. In reaching those decisions, central to my own leadership style is listening to my colleagues and advisors, who all have their ideas without having the need to tell me what I might want to hear. We always strive for convergence and consensus – which again comes down to leading with humility, and being prepared to listen and change your mind.

It's rare we don't reach a consensus, but sometimes I might see, "Okay well, thank you for the advice, but we're going to do it the way I think of leadership is situated, but you need to listen those muscles. Leadership is a set of skills you must have and practice, as there are no train leaders. The most successful leaders are the ones who do the basics really well. Why are I heard those do that exactly? How do I lead others? How do I lead the country? And then it strips down to: What are the guiding values I operate under as a leader?"

Caring for others – and for yourself

Part of leadership is realising when you have reached the limits of your resilience. I've had some pretty severe rashes, but for the first time in my career I reached mine. Luckily, I've managed to get back on my feet – it's a relief. A holiday for me, that's often going for a time in the house. Realising people know where their physical, mental, and emotional boundaries are, and they take steps if they build up against them. They realise there's going to be no one to blame if they don't take time out, and so on.

Leaders can become used to and energised by the pace and adrenaline of operating at full speed. I know I'm in the right job when I come home with more energy at the end of the day than at the start. So that's a good thing. It's a good fit. But you can't let the adrenaline of being that fit drive you to not think if it's worth it. You need to second guess that. Is it a good trade-off, given the pressure is great, but you can't let it go. No matter what you do, there's always a trade-off in a big wheel. Understanding that is a good way to understand how to get your sense of self- importance back to where it should be.

I'm good at compartmentalising, so it doesn't take me long to develop an on-track. Then I can look back and see how stressed I was. Remembering to focus on what I can control – that I'll present – focus on the advice and focus on the people. If we keep doing what we're doing for the right reasons, we will do the ethical thing. And for me, that comes down to always doing what's right for the people.



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Editor: Nicky Burt-Phillips

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Excerpt: "By its very nature, an ethical issue rarely has one right answer. In relation to COVID, we faced many ethical dilemmas. Much debated was the trade-off between public health and the economy – in that we can only protect one to the detriment of the other. But I see the two as inextricably linked."

- Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director General of Health

Ethics – It's About the People

Covid-19 Convoy Protest - Day 22



Thank you!

The Brian Picot Chair in Ethical Leadership at the Wellington School of Business and Government (N works towards facilitating transparent and ethically sound business, government and civil society organisations in New Zealand.



Connect with us

www.wgtn.ac.nz/ethical-leadership

ethical-leadership@vuw.ac.nz

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Brian Picot Chair in Ethical Leadership