

## What is Existential Leadership?

Existential Leadership is based on a philosophy that focuses on individual freedom, responsibility and authenticity. This means that leaders act first and foremost **consciously** and **authentically**, putting their own existence, values and the meaning of life in the foreground.

At its core, it is about shaping **leadership from the inside** out and paying attention to one's own being instead of just following external measures of success or expectations.



## Here are some core elements of Existential Leadership:

### 1. Self-knowledge and authenticity

Existential leadership challenges leaders to reflect deeply on themselves and understand their own **values, goals,** and **beliefs**. This is the only way they can lead **authentically** and offer their employees real **orientation**.

### 2. Freedom and responsibility

In the approach of existential leadership, people always have the **freedom** to make their own decisions. With this freedom comes a great **responsibility**. Existential leadership fosters a culture in which leaders and employees are aware of their responsibility – both for themselves and for the greater good.

### 3. Creation of meaning

Leaders who lead according to the existentialist approach help their teams to find **meaning/purpose** in their work and their lives and to develop their **potential**. It's about giving employees space to discover their own purpose and integrate it into their professional tasks.

## 4. Embrace uncertainty and fear

Life and leadership are characterized by uncertainty, by difficult decisions. Existential leadership encourages leaders to acknowledge this **uncertainty** instead of ignoring it. They learn to deal with the **fear** and **complexity** that comes with freedom and responsibility.

## 5. Interpersonal relations

Relationships are at the heart of leadership. Existential leadership emphasizes that **authentic leadership** is based on real, deep human connections. Managers recognize the personal perception and individuality of each person and meet their employees as unique individuals.



At its core, existential leadership is about developing a leader who puts people first, is deeply connected to themselves and their environment, and inspires through authenticity, purpose, and responsibility.

## Why is Existential Leadership a real game changer and guarantor of economic success?

New forms of work require adapted leadership approaches and a new leadership awareness. The following points show why existential leadership is the right answer to the changed work environment.

### 1. Employee retention through a sense of purpose

In today's world of work, people are not just looking for a job, but for work that offers meaning and fulfillment. Existential leadership focuses on just that by helping employees find a connection between their own values and goals and the tasks in the company. Meaningful work leads to higher **motivation**, **lower fluctuation** and **stronger employee loyalty** – all important factors for long-term economic success.

## 2. **Authenticity creates trust**

Existential leadership promotes authentic action, both in the manager and in the employees. Authentic leaders gain the trust of their teams, which leads to **better collaboration, open communication,** and **higher motivation.** **Trust** is not only the basis for a healthy working atmosphere, but also for efficient, result-oriented cooperation.

## 3. **Freedom and responsibility lead to more innovation**

Existential leadership emphasizes individual freedom and responsibility. When employees have the freedom to make their own decisions and contribute their creativity, **more innovation** is created. Employees are ready **to develop their potential.** Companies that embrace this freedom and responsibility create a culture that fosters new ideas and approaches – critical to **staying ahead in dynamic markets** and securing **competitive advantage.**

## 4. **Embracing Uncertainty as a Competitive Advantage**

In a complex, rapidly changing world, uncertainty is normal<sup>1</sup>. Many traditional leadership approaches try to control or avoid this uncertainty. Existential leadership, on the other hand, accepts that uncertainty is part of life and work. These leaders develop **resilience** that enables them and their teams **to act calmly and reflectively in crises and difficult times.** This allows them **to react more flexibly to changes** and better steer the company through turbulent times.

## 5. **Long-term relationships and loyal customers**

A company that leads existentially fosters authentic, sincere relationships – both internally with employees and externally with customers. Customers notice when a company acts authentically and value-based, and this connection creates **long-term loyalty.** Companies that operate with authenticity and purpose not only attract customers, but also create true **brand loyalty.**

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<sup>1</sup> VUCA - volatile, **u**nsecure, **c**omplex, ambiguous

## 6. Sustainability and social responsibility

Existential leadership is often focused on the long-term, larger purpose – and that often includes ethical considerations and sustainability. Companies that are managed in an existentialist manner have a stronger **commitment to the environment and society**. This not only attracts conscious consumers, but can also **attract investors and business partners** looking for sustainable and responsible business practices.

## 7. Emotional intelligence and interpersonal strength

Leaders who work according to the existentialist approach place a high value on interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence. They recognize that every person is unique, creating a culture based on collaboration and respect. Such teams work more efficiently, creatively, and without conflict, which directly affects the productivity and success of the company.

## Conclusion: Why Existential Leadership Is Economically Successful

Existential Leadership ist ein Gamechanger, weil das **menschliche Potenzial** im Mittelpunkt steht. Und das nicht nur oberflächlich, sondern auf einer tiefen, existenziellen Ebene.

By **fostering purpose, authenticity, and accountability**, teams become not only **more efficient and creative**, but also **more resilient and adaptable**.

Das schafft eine dynamische und starke Unternehmenskultur, die nicht nur kurzfristigen Erfolg ermöglicht, sondern **langfristig für nachhaltiges Wachstum** sorgt.



Existential leadership is therefore leadership that **combines profitability with meaning** – a combination that is becoming increasingly important, especially in today's world.

## When is existential leadership particularly useful?

To say it in advance: Existential leadership makes sense in almost all companies and situations. However, we strongly recommend it in the starting points mentioned below.

- **Start-Ups**

A start-up is characterized by a high level of pioneering energy and power. In the growth phase, the organizational structures are often still of a transitional nature. One of the success factors in this initial phase is the people and the way they interact with each other. Existential Leadership supports growing as a team and economic growth.

- **In agile organizations and projects**

In agile phases or organizational forms, dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty, but above all with innovation plays a major role. People need orientation and structure in order to lead themselves safely. Existential leadership can give back this security and orientation in an agile environment.

- **New forms of organisation (holacracy, sociocracy, circle organisations etc)**

In organizational forms such as holacracy, sociocracy, circle organizations, etc., one element is missing with which Generation X and Y grew up – hierarchy. All of these new forms of organization are highly structured approaches, but leadership can no longer be guided by hierarchical structures. Here, existential leadership performs particularly well, and is even a prerequisite to a certain extent.

- **AI-powered organizations**

Artificial intelligence AI in various forms is rapidly increasing in organizations. It is not yet foreseeable how far the development can and will go. We simply lack empirical values for this. That's why, in an AI-affected / AI-shaped environment, existential leadership is the element that gives back orientation and stability.

**Do you have any questions about Existential Leadership by Mindtrain? Then contact us for an informational meeting.**

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