



CONFERENCE IN A BOOK™

*presents*

CONNECT

LEAD

SUCCEED

*Authors Excerpt*

FROM HANDS TO HEAD  
TO HEART

by Antoni Lacina





# Welcome

BY DIXIE MARIA CARLTON

**H**ave you ever attended a truly transformative business conference? The kind where you leave not just with notes but with new perspectives, renewed energy, and a stack of ideas ready to implement?

Now imagine capturing that experience—all the insight, inspiration, and impact—from the comfort of your own space, at your own pace.

That's exactly what this book delivers.

**Connect, Lead, Succeed** is not just a book. It's a curated, global event in written form. A "Conference in a Book." Within these pages, you'll meet world-class thought leaders, keynote speakers, and transformational coaches from around the world—each bringing their best ideas to the stage, one chapter at a time.

Each section opens with the same spirit as if you were sitting in the front row, listening to a brilliant speaker walk onto stage, ready to deliver their keynote. As you turn the page, it's as if you're hearing them speak directly to you—on leadership, teams, culture, technology, mindset, communication, and the future of business.

This book was created to serve not just as a collection of ideas but as a powerful platform for those who live to share their expertise and guide others through change. Whether you're a CEO, entrepreneur, educator, or conference organizer looking for the next generation of keynote speakers, these are the people you'll want to know.

So, take your time. Dog-ear the pages. Highlight the insights. Share the quotes. Refer back as often as you need.

And if you're in the business of events and transformation, let this be your backstage pass to some of the best minds in the speaking world—right here, ready to help you and your teams connect more deeply, lead more authentically, and succeed more meaningfully.

Welcome to the conference. You're already in the front row.

And here is a special excerpt from this special book featuring your keynote speaker and author:

**Antoni Lacina**

— *Dixie Carlton*

Founder, Indie Experts Publishing

Global Speaker Coach & Strategist

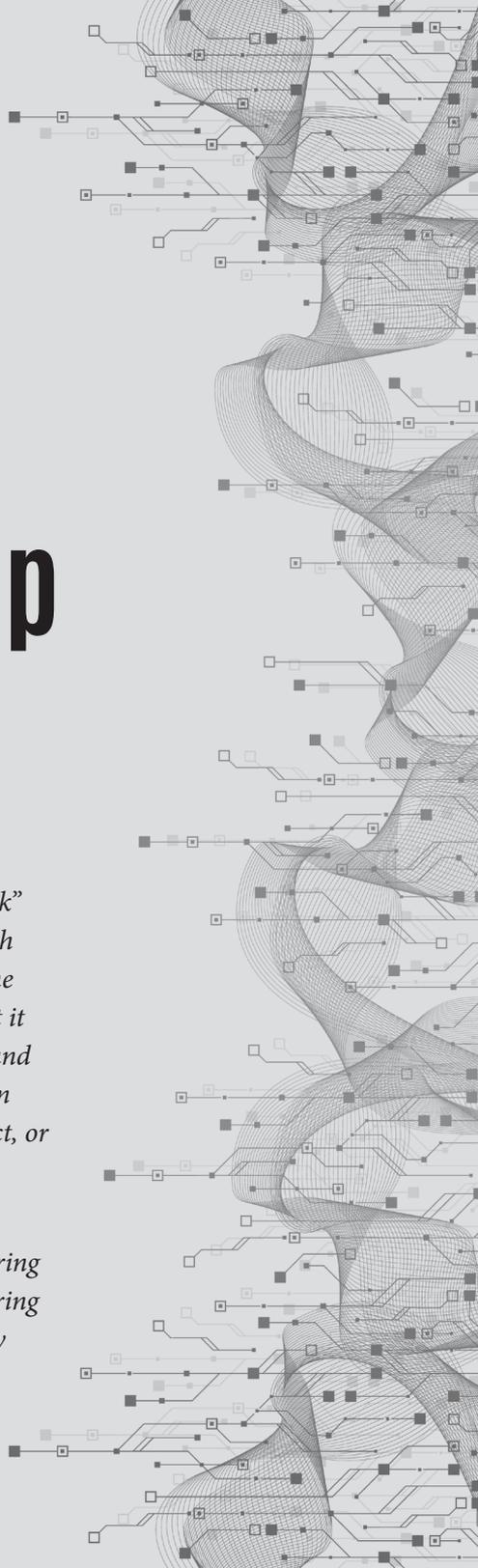
Creator of the “Conference in a Book”™ Series

## SESSION ONE

# Leadership

*Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the first session of our “Conference in a Book” experience. This is where we begin—with leadership. And not just leadership in the traditional sense. Here, we explore what it means to lead with heart, with clarity, and with a deep understanding of the human experience behind every business, project, or purpose-driven mission.*

*In this powerful opening lineup, we’ve brought together some of the most inspiring voices from around the world, each offering a unique lens on leadership for a rapidly changing world.*



**Antoni Lacinai**, is a Swedish communication expert and international speaker, whose keynote *From Hands to Head to Heart* takes us on a journey through the evolution of leadership—moving away from micromanagement and command-and-control, toward trust, engagement, and human-centered performance. With humor, insight, and practical tools, Antoni lays out how soft skills deliver hard results.





## Introducing Antoni Lacinai, Sweden

Up next is a speaker who brings heart, science, and strategy into every conversation. Antoni Lacinai is an international keynote speaker, communication expert, and author based in Sweden. With a background in leadership and behavioral science, he helps teams thrive through empathy, clarity, and energy—his signature formula for high-impact communication. Whether you're leading meetings or movements, Antoni's insights will help you turn strategy into action and good intentions into great culture. With 25+ years of experience on global stages and his upcoming book CARE, he's here to remind us: when you lead with kindness, people lean in—and results follow.



## CHAPTER TWO

# From Hands to Head to Heart

### *The Future of Human-Centered Leadership*

**H**ere is a question for you: Are your team doing their daily tasks because they *want to*, or because they *have to*? Or, as one of my previous clients said after they hired me to speak to their top 200 executives, “*We have already had some of that employee engagement fluff before. But now it’s about getting shit done!*” He was somewhat taken aback when I explained that, actually, you get shit done better and faster if people are engaged. That it is about moving toward your strategies and goals by exercising a servant mindset, a positive attitude, and great communication skills—or, in short, soft skills for hard results.

We are at a crossroads right now, where some leaders will choose command-and-control, distrusting their people and treating them

like machines or spare parts. We've spent decades managing people as if they were. Add some whips and carrots (often minus the carrots), and you get a micromanaging leader and an exhausting workplace. And what do you get in return? Exactly what you ask for. People clock in, do their task, and clock out. No creativity, no initiatives, no accountability. So you add more whips, more threats, more intimidation. The team will probably perform better because it works—for a while. But it is not sustainable.

This chapter is for you who understand that if you want sustainable growth, you need to get people engaged and motivated, so that they perform willingly. **It's about moving away from clenched fists and toward helping hands.** I want you to be a world-class leader, where you meet, greet, and treat people with care and enthusiasm. I want you to serve your team, so that they serve your mission, especially if you care for them, for your clients, and for the planet. I want you to lead with your heart, cultivating a workplace of collaboration and connection and showing trust in your teams. And trust is the currency of leadership.

Let's go on a quick historical tour:

### **Managing hands - The outdated era of leadership**

If you look at human history from a couple of hundred thousand years ago up until very recently, the ideal worker was obedient, efficient, and replaceable. Just like spare parts. One breaks down? Find another. Injuries? Replace. Protests? Fire and hire new. You want more output? Add more hands. And to no one's surprise you get a disengaged workforce doing only what they have to. They stop thinking. They stop caring for anything more than getting paid. And it is very seldom their fault. This command-and-control style that we still see in a lot of places around the world is all about leading hands with hands (or fists).

One of the worst examples of management by terror that I have ever heard happened in 2008. A CEO of a large company with about

150,000 employees decided to get rid of more than 20,000 of them to increase profit for the shareholders. Now, this was in France, and you cannot fire people easily. But this clever man thought long and hard until he came up with the perfect solution. He gathered his executive team and said (I am paraphrasing him) “*We will bully them out of the company! Relocate them. Give them useless tasks. Move them to locations they don’t want to live in. Make them feel worthless. Then they will quit by themselves. Mark my words: they will leave, either through the door or through the window!*”

Eleven years later, the CEO was fined and sent to prison (for only a few months). Why? More than 19 people were so broken down mentally that they chose the window...

### **From Hands to Heads: When brains matter more than muscles**

As we then moved into the knowledge economy, people went from manufacturing to marketing, and from production to PowerPoints. Leadership changed. Many went from tasks and commands (hands) to strategies and plans (heads). This is a good next step in the evolution. When you lead with your head, you are able to use the collective intelligence of your team. There is often more room for innovation in things like how to better serve clients. But with the knowledge economy comes the suffering of ineffective meetings, (many) filled with a massive number of deadly boring slides and incomprehensible Excel spreadsheets. It is a limbo state between hands and hearts, so I will not dwell here for much longer. It’s like music on CDs, filling a gap between LPs and streaming services. Let’s just agree that slides and plans and strategies very seldom *move* you or get you passionate about peak performing. There is no spark in documents with abstract language or forgotten relics called “Our Values” on a roll-up, or in the cloud, with no real meaning. And we crave meaning. We can see signs of Quiet Quitting, meaning that people make only minimum effort, or Quiet Resignation, where people just leave their jobs. And now there’s Coffee Badging, where people show up at the office just for show, do nothing meaningful, and then leave.

One old example of this is the legendary story from the harbor in Gothenburg where one man spent his days carrying a plank over his shoulder. Nobody ever saw him do any work, ever.

### **From Heads to Hearts: Inspire engagement, lead with CARE**

If the illusion of control hadn't already been exposed, 2020 is when it collapsed. We weren't in the same room anymore so we couldn't physically watch people work. We had to trust them. We had to listen more and direct less. Leadership had to grow up. That's where the "heart" comes in. Sure, there are some backlashes, hence the crossroads I mentioned in the beginning. As I am writing this, we see a shift back to leading with clenched fists instead of helping hands. This will not end well. Promoting people based on their abilities to *commute* more than their ability to contribute is dumb, and it is super easy to pretend to work in a physical location too.

### **The ABCs of psychological needs**

Leading with your heart is about leading with CARE (I'll come back to the CARE concept at the end). It is also about understanding the ABCs of psychological needs that people have (based on Self-Determination Theory, a branch within psychology).

The theory hinges on three key concepts:

- **Autonomy** – This is the sweet spot where coaching and delegating resides. People don't want you to micromanage them, but they don't want you to abdicate either. If you stop caring, they soon will too.
- **Belonging** – This is perhaps the strongest driving force of humanity. We crave being part of a tribe, a village, a community where we feel appreciated and a part of something bigger than ourselves. If you can create a WE-culture instead of a ME-culture, you will increase collaboration and output tenfold.
- **Competence** – Most of us want to grow and show our

competence, spiritually, mentally, and physically. We want to develop and learn. We want to feel significant.

I have coached thousands of leaders and teams, and, based on my experience, the best leaders always promote autonomy, belonging, and competence. Head-based leadership isn't enough. Strategy without empathy is cold. Vision without connection doesn't land. The real transformation comes when we also lead with the **heart**—with trust, empathy, and real human connection. When we care, engagement lives. When we care, people grow. And this is where performance becomes sustainable.

Let's look at four pillars of heart-based leadership.

### **1: Instill psychological safety by having a green light mindset**

Imagine a traffic light in your brain. Depending on which light is dominant, you will have different thoughts, feelings, and communication with people. Let's go through them briefly.

- **Red light** – This is what psychologist Paul Gilbert calls the Threat System. If this goes bananas, we want to escape from a dangerous environment, so we will either attack or run away. Massive volumes of cortisol are pumped out, and we cannot think clearly. This is where toxic cultures and workplaces exist with management leading by terror and intimidation (leading with clenched fists).
- **Yellow light** – This is where we find the drive to explore. We search for opportunities, and we seek ways to reach our goals. When we succeed, we are rewarded with dopamine and feel good for a short while, until we start hunting for more. Too much of this might lead to burnout and high frustration, especially when roles, goals, and mandates are unclear (management by reorganization), so be careful of leading teams with this as the only motivator.
- **Green light** – Here you are at ease. You are not threatened,

you enjoy your job, and life is just good and restful. There is a high flow of oxytocin all over. Be careful, though. Too much of this and the team will lose energy and courage. You might end up in a managing-by-not-rocking-the-boat scenario. It could quickly lead to stagnation.

A green light mindset and culture creates psychological safety, and it is the **#1 predictor** of high-performing teams. Why? Because when people feel safe, they speak up. They solve problems. They admit errors and fix them. Creativity goes up. Accidents go down. Innovation increases. Absenteeism decreases. Without safety, workers follow rules and commands instead of sharing ideas. And that's dangerous. You don't need to be perfect to build safety. You just need to be **available** and **kind**—asking questions and listening to understand, not to respond.

## **2: Build trust by focusing on empathy**

Trust is the oxygen of leadership. It doesn't mean agreement. It means believing that people have your back—and that you have theirs. That requires empathy and emotional intelligence: the ability to notice what's going on beneath the surface and respond with care, not control.

Studies have shown that if you have executives with perceived high levels of empathy, you get around 70% of the workforce being engaged or highly engaged, compared with only 15%–30% if they are not. And engagement is the key that unlocks performance and great results.

Utilizing soft skills is not about being soft. Because business runs on relationships. Soft skills, therefore, equal hard results.

## **3: Increase engagement with praise, purpose, and fun**

Job satisfaction means you don't hate your job. Engagement means you **love** contributing. It's active. It's emotional. It's energetic. Engaged employees use their initiative. They bring ideas. They

care about the higher purpose and outcomes. Gallup's global data shows that highly engaged teams are 21% more profitable and 59% less likely to leave. Some reports also show that less than one quarter of the workforce are what they call actively engaged, meaning that people go above and beyond. Let's agree that there is potential for improvement here.

How do you spark engagement? Praise people when they do well. According to an IBM study, high performing teams attract six times more positive recognition than the average teams, while low-performing teams attract twice the negative recognition.

Ping-pong tables (as a metaphor) is another way. It's fun, and fun at work has all sorts of positive effects. You can also increase engagement with communicating a clear purpose and by involving people more than you inform them. People want to feel valued. I also want to add that the real problem is not the people who are "merely satisfied." They might enjoy their boss, their colleagues, and their work, but still, it's a job and they have other interests too. Your real worry are the saboteurs, the ones who create hate, fear, and polarization. They make the team as a whole about 30% less productive, and people around a saboteur will suffer greatly.

#### **4: Leverage the three communication superpowers**

In my keynotes, masterclasses, and coaching programs, I always speak about the three communication superpowers. If you master them, you have a shot at being nothing less than a world-class leader. Fun fact: you will also come across as more charismatic, thus increasing your influence and impact!

The superpowers are:

- **Energy** – so that people believe that you believe (why should they believe if you don't?), and this is mostly visible in your non-verbal communication; i.e., how you look and how you sound when you communicate. Energy is like a magnet. If you have it, people gravitate towards you.

- **Empathy** – so that people connect with you and feel that you get them, that you are present, and that you are interested instead of interesting. It is here that real trust and loyalty is created. It is here you win people—and business.
- **Clarity** – so that they get you and remember what you said. It's about being simple but still having substance. This is not easy. Most people complicate the shit out of things with abbreviations and buzz words, which just makes people feel stupid. Make them feel smart and they will follow you anywhere.

My advice: start with empathy so that you know who you are talking to. Then craft a compelling message with clarity. Finally, deliver it with the right energy to boost inspiration. And don't think that one of the superpowers is enough. Clarity without empathy makes you a dominant asshole. Energy without clarity makes you a clown. Empathy without energy makes you a therapist. It is only together that they create magic.

Here is an example of what can happen when you use empathy in your business. I was giving a one-day masterclass in the three communication superpowers to a real estate company who had issues with their tenants. There were lots of complaints and an overall bad atmosphere. We put a lot of focus on empathy. I got an email from the client after a few weeks. It went something like this: *"It's amazing. Our tenants seem to like us now! All we did was to listen more. And the cool thing is: Now we like them too!"*

Knowing how to meet, greet, and treat your colleagues in a positive way will impact your bottom line. As I said: soft skills get hard results.

## Leadership That Lasts

Leadership isn't about keeping a machine running. It's about growing people. Helping them become more than they were yes-

terday. Creating spaces where clarity, connection, and care are the norm. You don't need to be perfect. Just present. Curious. Clear. Using a green light mindset and communication. Being willing to lead from both the head and the heart.

*This is how you build trust.*

*This is how you shape culture.*

*This is how you leave people better than you found them.*

And it doesn't stop with your team. It extends forward—to the teams they'll lead, the people they'll mentor, the families they'll go home to. Your leadership will affect not only your own team, but also people you haven't even met. It's called emotional contagion. You are like a rock that plummets into the ocean. The wave is your influence and the emotions you stir up. So why not be a superspreader of joy, care, and connection? Why not be a large rock instead of a grain of sand? Foster new leaders in a CARE-centric culture and you will have a legacy. This is generativity in action.

When we lead well today, we invest in generations ahead. Let's be the kind of leaders they'll thank—even if they never know your name.

### **Want to go deeper?**

As I am writing this for you, I am also co-writing a whole book together with Daniela Landherr, an awesome human being and leadership development expert. Our working title is *CARE*, and it is a strategic leadership book about what you gain when you lead with care and with the heart. It is about building trust, engagement, and impact through the right attitude and great communication. In it, you'll discover a new blueprint called the CARE concept and how to utilize:

- **Connect** – so that you create a real relationship, not just transactions
- **Amplify** – so that you celebrate progress, effort, and growth

- **Reflect** – so that you dare to take a step back and together find your way forward
- **Energize** – to light the spark that keeps people moving with meaning

Thank you for reading my mind. Keep leading with your heart.  
The world will be a better place when you do.

*Antoni*

## Special Bonus

Scan the QR code to access your exclusive bonus material



## About Antoni Lacinai

**Antoni Lacinai** is an international keynote speaker, author, and communication expert based in Sweden. With a background in leadership and behavioral science, he helps leaders and teams communicate with more empathy, clarity, and energy—three words that have become the foundation of his work. Or as his tagline goes: Communication made easy, so that your strategies become reality.

His clients are often ambitious, caring leaders in HR or other executive roles who want to improve collaboration, trust, and engagement in their teams. Through keynotes, masterclasses, and hands-on training, he shows how better conversations can lead to better results.

Antoni is often interviewed in the media and contributes regularly as a columnist, sharing insights on conscious leadership, motivation, and workplace culture. Audiences appreciate his ability to make complex ideas simple, relatable, and actionable.

With over 25 years of experience on stages around the world, he has developed tools and stories that move people—from knowing to doing, and from doing to caring. His upcoming book *CARE* introduces a new model for modern leadership: Connect, Attract, Recognize, Energize.

Whether in a boardroom or on a big stage, his message is clear: *You have nothing to lose by being kind.*

Get more inspiration on [www.antonilacinai.com](http://www.antonilacinai.com) and [linkedin.com/in/Lacinai](https://www.linkedin.com/in/Lacinai) and get templates, books, and checklists here to elevate yourself even more: [antonilacinai.com/downloadable-material](http://antonilacinai.com/downloadable-material).

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