

The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint: Integrating Vulnerability, Structure, and Purpose for Lasting Impact

By

Akilah Byron-Nisbett, University of South Florida

This article presents an in-depth qualitative analysis of Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership, offering a practical and theory-informed blueprint for effective leadership in today's dynamic environments. The nature of this phenomenological research is an inductive theory-building approach. The study examines Dr. Morejon's lived leadership experiences through three interrelated themes: Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact.

By integrating key leadership theories, Authentic Leadership, Path-Goal Theory, and Transformational Leadership, the article demonstrates how these frameworks are not merely academic constructs but actionable models for practice. Dr. Morejon's story illustrates how vulnerability, operational clarity, and purpose-driven action combine to create impactful leadership.

The analysis reveals that:

- Leading with Humanity fosters trust, empathy, and psychological safety through authentic leadership.

- Empowering Through Structure enables clarity, autonomy, and confidence by aligning routines and systems with empowerment-focused leadership practices.
- Purpose and Impact provide a guiding vision, fostering mentorship, inclusion, and long-term organizational and community legacy.

These themes are synthesized into a unified leadership model, the Triad of Purposeful Human-Centered Leadership, offering a replicable framework for leaders seeking to balance authenticity, structure, and purpose.

While the study is based on a single case and limited to one organizational context, its findings offer valuable insights for leaders across industries. Future research is encouraged to explore the model's broader applicability through comparative or longitudinal studies.

Ultimately, this article delivers both practical and theoretical contributions by showing how leaders can integrate humanity, structure, and purpose to drive personal growth, team resilience, and meaningful organizational impact.

A deep exploration of Dr. Shirley N. Morejon's leadership approach, demonstrating how authenticity, structure, and purpose can drive meaningful change.

Keywords: Dr. Shirley N. Morejon, Human-Centered Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Path-Goal Theory, Transformational Leadership, Mentorship, Leadership Case Study

In an era where leadership is increasingly expected to balance performance with vision and strategy with authenticity, the search for actionable, human-centered leadership models has gained momentum. Today's leaders are navigating unprecedented complexities, from organizational change and market volatility to workforce opportunity and evolving societal expectations. Yet, amidst these challenges, a critical question persists: What does effective leadership look like in practice, and how can it be sustained in real-world contexts?

This article addresses this question through an in-depth qualitative exploration of Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership journey. As an accomplished executive known for her commitment to mentorship, inclusion, and operational excellence, Dr. Morejon offers a compelling case study of how leaders can integrate personal authenticity, structured empowerment, and purposeful action into their daily practice.

Grounded in established leadership theories, Authentic Leadership, Path-Goal Theory, and Transformational Leadership, this study investigates how these frameworks intersect in practice. More importantly, it seeks to uncover how the integration of these approaches can provide a replicable leadership model for others to follow.

The guiding research question for this study is: In what ways does Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership experience illustrate a blueprint for effective leadership through the integration of humanity, structure, and purpose?

To provide a clear and comprehensive analysis, the article is organized into the following sections:

1. Interviewee: Dr. Shirley Morejon

This section introduces Dr. Morejon, providing background on her professional experience and leadership roles. It offers context for the interview and highlights why her leadership journey is a meaningful subject of study.

2. The Interview

This section outlines the research design and methodology, including the interview approach, research questions, data collection process, and analytical procedures. It details how the study was conducted and explains the steps taken to analyze the interview data, ensuring methodological transparency.

3. Discussion

This core section presents an overview of the leadership theories that guide the analysis. It then offers a detailed, thematic discussion of Dr. Morejon's leadership in practice, examining how she embodies the three central themes, Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact, demonstrating how her actions reflect key theoretical concepts.

4. Integrating the Themes for Impactful Leadership

This section synthesizes the findings from the discussion to present a unified leadership model derived from Dr. Morejon's example. It introduces a visual framework that illustrates how the three themes work together to create a holistic, actionable blueprint for effective leadership.

5. Conclusion

The article concludes with a reflection on the significance of the findings, an acknowledgment of the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research. It also highlights opportunities for further exploration of the leadership blueprint across diverse contexts.

Through this analysis, the article aims to bridge theory and practice, offering a leadership model that is not only academically sound but also practically actionable for leaders across industries.

Interviewee: Dr. Shirley Morejon, DBA

Dr. Shirley N. Morejon, DBA, is a distinguished executive and seasoned leader who serves as Senior Vice President and Market Executive in Bank of America's Global Commercial Banking division, overseeing the Mid-South region. With a career spanning over two decades, she has established herself as a leader committed to fostering growth, advocating for inclusion, and driving meaningful impact across her organization and community.

Throughout her career, Dr. Morejon has demonstrated a deep commitment to leading with authenticity and emotional intelligence. She is known for her openness, vulnerability, and ability to build trust within her teams. By sharing her personal experiences, she fosters an environment where others feel safe to bring their whole selves to work. Her mentorship of underrepresented professionals, particularly within Hispanic and Latino communities, is a testament to her dedication to advancing others. Through her involvement in initiatives such as Bank of America's Hispanic/Latino employee network (HOLA) and local Hispanic Business Councils, as well as her participation in conferences and mentoring events, she has consistently championed personal connection, empathy, and honest dialogue.

At the same time, Dr. Morejon has excelled in creating structured, high-performing teams. In her leadership roles, she has emphasized the importance of operational clarity, consistent communication, and systems that enable autonomy. Her leadership of banking teams across four states is rooted in setting clear expectations and minimizing administrative burdens, allowing her teams to focus on building strong client relationships and delivering results. Her professional journey, from Small Business Specialist to Senior Treasury Officer and beyond, demon-

strates her exceptional ability to balance operational discipline with team empowerment.

Beyond her corporate achievements, Dr. Morejon's career is driven by a strong sense of purpose. She consistently leverages her professional platform to create lasting impact, both within her organization and the broader community. Her advocacy for opportunity, commitment to mentorship, and involvement with community organizations such as the Children's Cancer Center and YWCA Nashville highlight her passion for leaving a positive legacy. Her dedication to service has been recognized through numerous awards, including Tampa Bay Business Journal's Businesswoman of the Year and HACR's Young Hispanic Corporate Achiever Award, underscoring her leadership excellence and societal contributions.

Dr. Morejon's leadership reflects a rare and inspiring combination of authenticity, structured empowerment, and purpose-driven impact. She is the kind of leader who not only achieves organizational success but also uplifts others, leaving a meaningful imprint on every individual and community she engages.

The Interview

A phenomenological interview approach was utilized to explore the leadership experiences of Dr. Shirley Morejon, following the three-interview model outlined by Irving Seidman (2006) in *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. This approach is designed to help participants reconstruct and reflect on their lived experiences in depth.

Three separate interviews, each approximately 45 minutes in length, were conducted using a semi-structured, open-ended approach to encourage detailed, reflective responses. The interviews were structured as follows:

1. Interview One focused on Dr. Morejon's focused life history. She was invited to share her personal and professional background, beginning with her early life and continuing through to her present career.
2. Interview Two explored the details of her current lived experiences, emphasizing her present leadership roles and professional responsibilities.
3. Interview Three centered on reflection and meaning-making, allowing Dr. Morejon to reflect on the significance of the experiences discussed in the previous interviews and their broader implications for her leadership philosophy.

A team of two interviewers conducted each interview to foster a collaborative, conversational environment while ensuring depth and accuracy in the data collection process.

The questions can be found in Appendix D.

Data Collection

Prior to conducting the interviews, the research team gathered publicly available biographical information on Dr. Shirley Morejon from various online sources. This background research served as the foundation for developing a structured interview guide tailored to each of the three interviews. The interview guide was designed to provide a flexible yet focused structure for the semi-structured interviews, helping both the interviewers and the interviewee remain aligned with the key themes throughout the process.

The interviews were conducted during scheduled class sessions using Microsoft Teams. Each session was recorded and automatically transcribed using the platform's built-in recording and transcription tools. Following the completion of the interviews, the team decided to conduct the analysis and interpretation individually and to present their own findings in individual articles. As such, the author carefully reviewed the transcripts alongside the video recordings to ensure their accuracy and completeness. This review process also served as an initial stage of data immersion, allowing the author to become more familiar with the content.

The collected data were subsequently analyzed and coded, as detailed in the analysis section that follows.

Analysis

The analysis of Dr. Shirley Morejon's interview followed a rigorous qualitative coding process guided by Saldaña's (2021) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. The analysis began with an initial review of the interview transcripts to allow for immersion in the data and to begin developing preliminary insights for coding. This immersion stage was essential for familiarizing the author with the interview content and initiating early reflections on potential codes and themes.

Following the immersion process, the first cycle of coding was conducted using initial coding, also referred to as open coding, as described by Saldaña (2021). Initial coding involves breaking down the data into discrete segments, closely examining each segment, and identifying similarities, differences, and emerging patterns. This process enables the researcher to explore the underlying meanings within the data and begin making analytic sense of the participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2021).

To facilitate this process, the author utilized Copilot AI to assist with the organization and generation of initial codes. The compiled transcripts from all three interviews were uploaded to Copilot, where open coding was performed according to the guidelines outlined by Saldaña (2021). The AI-assisted codes were then carefully reviewed by the author and compared with the initial codes identified during the manual data immersion process. This step ensured

consistency, accuracy, and alignment between the researcher's analytic perspective and the AI-generated codes.

Once the initial codes were finalized, the author proceeded to the second cycle of coding, which involved axial coding. Axial coding, as defined by Saldaña (2021), involves grouping initial codes into broader categories and subcategories based on their relationships and conceptual connections. This process organizes the data in a way that highlights the connections between different elements of the participant's experiences. Copilot AI was again used to assist with this process, and the results were thoroughly reviewed by the author to ensure the identified categories accurately reflected the data.

After establishing axial codes, the author conducted a thematic analysis to identify overarching themes that captured the essence of the participant's leadership experiences. Copilot AI was used to aid in organizing and refining themes, resulting in the identification of eight key themes within the data. The author further analyzed these themes to examine how they aligned with established leadership theories. Following this process, the author identified three major themes that were most prominent throughout the interview and data analysis process, these themes became the central focus of the article.

Finally, the author developed the foundational research question for the article, grounded in both the thematic analysis and the theoretical frameworks identified. A complete list of the open codes, axial codes, and themes generated during the analysis is provided in the appendix.

Discussion

This discussion section presents an in-depth analysis of the leadership approach demonstrated by Dr. Shirley N. Morejon through the lens of key leadership theories. The section is organized around the three central themes that emerged from the interview: Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact.

For each theme, this section first provides a concise summary of the most relevant leadership theory identified, offering clear, research-based definitions to ground the analysis. It then illustrates how these theories are embodied in practice through the lived experiences and leadership behaviors of Dr. Morejon, as revealed during her interview.

Beyond analyzing her leadership in context, this section also highlights how these theories offer practical value for other leaders. By connecting theory to practice, it demonstrates how the concepts discussed are not only observable in Dr. Morejon's leadership but are also highly applicable for individuals seeking to enhance their own leadership effectiveness.

Finally, this discussion shows how the combination of these three themes and their underlying theories forms a cohesive leadership model. It illustrates how humanity, structure, and purpose create a powerful blueprint for effective leadership. This integrated approach offers valuable guidance for leaders navigating today's complex, fast-changing organizational environments and serves as a model for building trust, enabling team success, and driving lasting impact.

Leading with Humanity: Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership Theory (ALT) centers on the idea that effective leaders are deeply self-aware, transparent in their relationships, guided by an internalized moral compass, and capable of objectively analyzing information before making decisions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), authentic leaders build credibility and trust by consistently acting in alignment with their core values and openly acknowledging both their strengths and limitations. The theory emphasizes four key components: self-awareness—recognizing one's emotions, motives, and impact on others; relational transparency—openly sharing one's thoughts and feelings to foster trust; balanced processing—objectively analyzing information before decision-making; and internalized moral perspective—acting consistently with one's ethical values. Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, leading with humanity is expressed primarily through vulnerability, which becomes the living manifestation of authenticity. Vulnerability allows leaders to acknowledge their imperfections, share uncertainty, and engage others from a place of honesty and empathy (Lopez, 2018). It transforms relational transparency from a behavioral trait into a moral act that builds trust, deepens connection, and strengthens team resilience. By leading with humanity through vulnerability, authentic leaders create psychologically safe environments where openness and mutual respect thrive, enabling structure and purpose to be sustained by genuine human connection rather than positional authority (Almutairi et al., 2025; Lopez; "The Critical Vulnerability," 2024).

Applying Authentic Leadership Theory: Dr. Shirley Morejon's Example

Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership approach vividly demonstrates Authentic Leadership Theory (ALT) in practice through her embodiment of self-awareness, relational transparency, and an internalized moral perspective. ALT emphasizes that authentic leaders act in alignment with their core values, cultivate openness, and model integrity through their actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Dr. Morejon exemplified these qualities when she reflected, "I had a family member that was diag-

nosed with a terminal illness... I thought to myself, do I keep that to myself... or do I show up authentically myself and share it? I chose... the latter to share... That sparked a lot of dialogue from teammates appreciating the fact that they were going through similar experiences." This act of vulnerability reflects self-awareness and relational transparency, as she consciously chose authenticity over self-protection. The significance of her statement lies in the outcome—her openness "sparked a lot of dialogue from teammates appreciating the fact that they were going through similar experiences." This demonstrates how vulnerability not only humanized her leadership but also built trust, openness, and emotional safety within the team. By inviting authentic conversation, she dismantled hierarchical barriers and created space for empathy, reinforcing the foundation of mutual respect that authentic leadership seeks to establish. Further illustrating her internalized moral perspective, Dr. Morejon shared, "My passion's always been in ensuring that the people that I do have a chance to interface with know that I authentically want to support them and that I'm actually doing so... to impart as much good as I possibly can anywhere that I'm at." Her ability to remain emotionally grounded is also reflected in her statement, "I try to lead by example in that, right? So I'm the first that's... letting them know, hey, we need to make sure we're focused on what we do best, which is control what we can control, take care of our clients, address their needs." These expressions of composure and empathy underscore self-regulation and balanced processing, reinforcing that authentic leadership is as much about moral conviction as it is about human connection. Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, Dr. Morejon's actions demonstrate that leading with humanity through vulnerability transforms leadership into a relational process of trust-building, shared understanding, and psychological safety—essential conditions for lasting impact (Almutairi et al., 2025; Lopez, 2018; "The Critical Vulnerability," n.d.).

Empowering Through Structure: Applying Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal Theory, developed by Robert House (1971), offers a human-centered approach to structure by framing leadership as a process of enabling, rather than controlling, follower performance. The theory posits that a leader's primary function is to enhance follower motivation, satisfaction, and achievement by clarifying the path toward goals, removing obstacles, and providing appropriate support and direction (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974). It identifies four key leadership behaviors—directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented—which leaders flexibly apply according to the specific needs of followers and the situational context. Grounded in expectancy theory, Path-Goal

Theory assumes that followers are motivated when they believe their effort will lead to performance and that performance will yield valued outcomes (Nort-house, 2022).

Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, structure is not rigid or authoritarian but is instead empowering—it provides clarity, predictability, and alignment while preserving the humanity and autonomy of followers. Path-Goal Theory operationalizes this by positioning the leader as a facilitator of success, one who adapts structural mechanisms to meet the evolving needs of the team. For instance, directive behaviors provide necessary structure when followers require clarity or task guidance, while supportive and participative behaviors ensure that structure remains relational and inclusive, fostering psychological safety and engagement (House, 1996; Wofford & Liska, 1993). In this sense, structure becomes a form of care—designed not to constrain but to empower—reflecting a human-centered philosophy of leadership that prioritizes both performance outcomes and the well-being of individuals. Thus, Path-Goal Theory bridges the tension between organizational order and human motivation, revealing that structure, when guided by empathy and adaptability, is a catalyst for collective growth and sustainable impact.

Applying Path-Goal Theory: Dr. Morejon's Structure as Empowerment in Practice

Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership approach provides a clear example of Path-Goal Theory in practice, illustrating how structured leadership can simultaneously offer clarity and autonomy within a human-centered framework. Path-Goal Theory posits that leaders motivate and empower followers by clarifying goals, defining roles, and removing obstacles to success (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974). Dr. Morejon embodies these principles through deliberate communication and process alignment that enhance both individual confidence and collective performance. She explained, "Historically, at the beginning of each month, I provide them an outline of exactly what I'm going to be looking for in those business reviews... That communication gets sent not only to the bankers but also to the team that supports them. This really helps us come into the conversation focused, with no surprises... It becomes a really nice consistent routine, which I think my team really does appreciate because that permits them again not to be so stressed about providing me the details I need. Everyone knows what I'm expecting." This statement exemplifies directive leadership, a core behavior of Path-Goal Theory, by clarifying expectations and standardizing communication to reduce uncertainty. Yet her structured routine does not constrain her team—it empowers them. By removing ambiguity and "no surprises," Dr. Morejon reduces anxiety and provides the psychological

stability that allows her team members to exercise autonomy and self-direction. In this way, structure becomes a vehicle for empowerment rather than control, aligning with the human-centered emphasis on clarity as compassion.

Her leadership also reflects supportive behavior, another element of Path–Goal Theory that focuses on promoting well-being and reducing barriers to performance (Northouse, 2022). She noted, *“I try to minimize as much disruption as I can. I really think the least amount of disruption we can do in any given week for our teams and for ourselves is best... Everyone can plan their day, but it also permits the team to be organized in a way where they can plan their business and help them drive their performance.”* Here, Dr. Morejon’s emphasis on minimizing disruption reflects the Path–Goal leader’s role in removing obstacles and enabling followers to work efficiently. Her supportive demeanor and respect for her team’s time reinforce trust and reduce stress—key aspects of human-centered structure. By designing processes that balance direction with flexibility, she creates conditions for both clarity and autonomy, allowing employees to feel capable, valued, and self-motivated.

In essence, Dr. Morejon demonstrates how Path–Goal Theory, when applied through a human-centered lens, transforms structure into empowerment. Her leadership style illustrates that clarity, when grounded in empathy, becomes a pathway to freedom—one that aligns organizational objectives with the holistic well-being of people (House, 1996; Wofford & Liska, 1993). Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, this represents the heart of structure as empowerment: leading with purpose, designing with intention, and guiding with care.

Purpose and Impact: Applying Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) provides a robust foundation for understanding the purpose and impact dimension of The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to transcend self-interest by aligning their personal sense of identity with a shared organizational vision and purpose (Bass, 1985). It operates through four interrelated behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2022). Through idealized influence, transformational leaders act as ethical role models who embody the values they espouse, inspiring trust and admiration. Inspirational motivation involves articulating a compelling vision that provides meaning and direction, while intellectual stimulation challenges followers to think creatively and approach problems innovatively. Finally, individualized consideration reflects gen-

uine care for followers’ growth, fostering long-term engagement and development.

Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, purpose represents the moral and visionary compass that guides action, while impact reflects the legacy that results from leading with clarity, empathy, and conviction. Transformational leaders anchor purpose in shared values and a higher collective aim—connecting daily tasks to a vision that resonates deeply with people’s intrinsic motivations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This connection transforms work into meaning and leadership into stewardship. When leaders model authenticity and integrity, they cultivate trust and mobilize followers toward common goals, ensuring that impact extends beyond short-term performance to create enduring change.

The legacy dimension of transformational leadership underscores that true impact is measured not merely by outcomes achieved but by the sustained inspiration left behind in others. Research supports that transformational leaders foster greater satisfaction, commitment, and organizational resilience by promoting a sense of belonging and higher purpose (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In human-centered terms, purpose gives structure its meaning, and legacy gives vulnerability its significance; together, they create the enduring foundation of impactful leadership. Through transformational leadership, purpose and impact become the moral horizon of the Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint—a call to lead not only for results, but also for renewal, continuity, and the lasting betterment of others.

Demonstrating Purpose and Impact in Practice: Dr. Shirley Morejon’s Transformational Leadership

Dr. Shirley Morejon’s leadership philosophy reflects the essence of Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) through her deep sense of purpose and her enduring commitment to creating meaningful impact. Transformational leadership centers on inspiring followers to transcend self-interest by aligning their personal values and motivations with a shared vision of collective success (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Dr. Morejon articulated this visionary intent clearly when she stated, *“I hope I leave everyone better than... than I met them... My passion’s always been in ensuring that the people that I do have a chance to interface with know that I authentically want to support them and that I’m actually doing so... to impart as much good as I possibly can anywhere that I’m at.”* This statement embodies idealized influence and inspirational motivation—two key dimensions of transformational leadership—by revealing her ethical orientation, authenticity, and drive to make a positive difference in every professional relationship. Her passion for uplifting others demonstrates a moral vision that transcends transactional goals, inspiring those around her to embrace shared values of service, growth, and excellence.

Furthermore, Dr. Morejon's dedication to mentorship exemplifies individualized consideration, reflecting her belief in nurturing the potential of others. She expressed, *"Mentorship really did shape a lot of my early experience... there were people advocating for me on my behalf in rooms that I wasn't in... It became something that I wanted to repeat for others because I've been able to achieve all of my successes because other people poured into me."* This perspective illustrates how her leadership is not only transformational but also servant-hearted, grounded in empathy and stewardship. By intentionally "pouring into others" as others once did for her, she models a legacy-oriented approach that empowers emerging leaders, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to thrive.

Through her example, Dr. Morejon demonstrates that *purpose* gives leadership its direction, while *impact* gives it endurance. Her actions reveal how transformational leadership transforms purpose into practice by fusing vision, mentorship, and moral integrity. Within The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, she personifies how purpose-driven leadership, rooted in authentic care for others, creates lasting change not through authority, but through inspiration and legacy. By living her values daily, Dr. Morejon exemplifies the human-centered leader who leads not only to achieve goals, but to leave every person and every place better than she found them.

Integrating the Themes for Impactful Leadership: A Blueprint from Practice

Dr. Shirley Morejon's leadership story provides compelling, practice-based evidence that effective leadership does not emerge from isolated traits or situational actions, but from the intentional integration of complementary leadership approaches. Her lived experience demonstrates how Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact intersect to form a cohesive, actionable framework for impactful leadership in contemporary organizational contexts. These interconnected dimensions collectively reflect the essence of The Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint, a model that merges emotional authenticity, operational clarity, and visionary purpose to cultivate sustainable success.

Leading with Humanity forms the emotional and ethical foundation of this blueprint, rooted in Authentic Leadership Theory. Through vulnerability, empathy, and self-awareness, Dr. Morejon creates psychologically safe spaces where individuals feel valued, supported, and inspired to contribute meaningfully. Her ability to lead with openness demonstrates that authenticity and emotional intelligence are not ancillary traits but essential mechanisms

for trust-building, engagement, and team cohesion. This human-centered connection establishes the moral climate in which empowerment and performance can flourish.

Empowering Through Structure, informed by Path-Goal Theory, reinforces this relational foundation by providing clarity, consistency, and autonomy. Dr. Morejon's structured routines, transparent communication, and well-defined expectations exemplify how leaders can transform empathy into execution. Her leadership illustrates that empowerment does not thrive in ambiguity, but within systems designed to remove barriers, align efforts, and promote self-efficacy. In this way, structure becomes a form of empowerment, offering both stability and freedom, thereby harmonizing the human and operational dimensions of leadership.

Purpose and Impact, grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, serve as the guiding force of the model. Purpose provides direction, while impact ensures continuity and legacy. Dr. Morejon's purpose-driven approach, anchored in mentorship, service, and long-term vision, aligns individual growth with collective mission. Her focus on legacy reflects the transformational leader's call to inspire beyond the present moment, connecting people to a shared purpose that transcends performance metrics. This dimension imbues humanity and structure with deeper meaning, ensuring that leadership effectiveness is sustained through values-based action and ethical stewardship.

Taken together, these three dimensions form an integrated Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint that is operationally sound. It balances vulnerability with vision, empathy with efficiency, and purpose with process. As exemplified by Dr. Morejon's leadership, this model fosters inclusion, resilience, and meaningful engagement, demonstrating that effective leadership is not merely about achieving results but about cultivating environments where people thrive, organizations evolve, and communities benefit. Ultimately, the Human-Centered Leadership Blueprint offers a replicable and adaptive framework for leaders seeking to navigate the moral, emotional, and structural complexities of today's dynamic world with authenticity, clarity, and purpose.

Visual Blueprint: The Triad of Purposeful Human-Centered Leadership

The diagram below visually represents this leadership framework. It shows how Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact intersect to create Impactful Leadership. Each theme strengthens the others, connected by key leadership outcomes:

- Trust & Empathy (between Humanity and Impact)

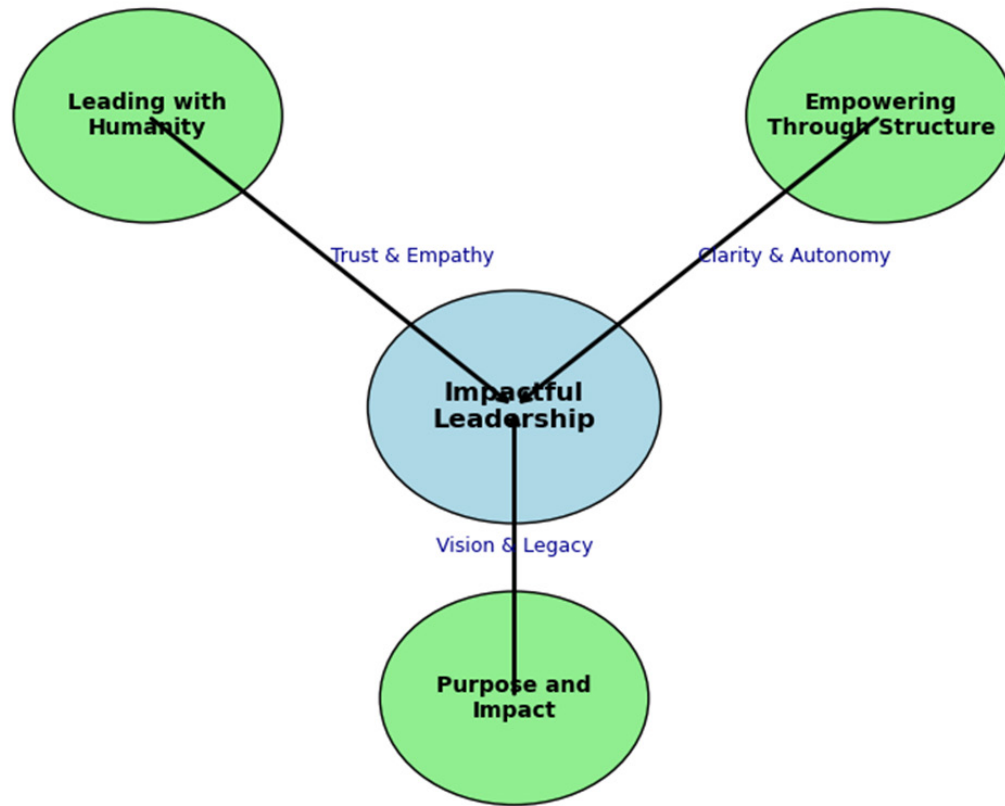


Figure 1: Dimensions of Impactful Leadership

- Clarity & Autonomy (between Structure and Impact)
- Vision & Legacy (between Purpose and Impact)

Together, as Figure 1 shows, these dimensions form a unified, adaptable leadership model designed to foster resilient teams, inspire innovation, and drive sustained positive change.

Conclusions

This article has explored the leadership of Dr. Shirley Morejon as a compelling case study of how leadership theories can move beyond abstract frameworks and be applied in practice. Through the themes of Leading with Humanity, Empowering Through Structure, and Purpose and Impact, her story demonstrates the real-world effectiveness of Authentic Leadership, Path-Goal Theory, and Transformational Leadership.

Dr. Morejon's leadership shows that impactful leadership is not defined by singular traits or isolated strategies but by the intentional integration of authenticity, operational clarity, and purpose-driven

action. Her ability to align vulnerability with structure and vision offers a clear, practical blueprint for human-centered leadership, one that fosters trust, enables autonomy, and inspires lasting change.

The leadership blueprint developed through this analysis offers a model that is operationally effective and purpose-oriented. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. As a single-participant, qualitative, phenomenological case study, the findings are based solely on Dr. Morejon's experiences and may not fully capture the complexities of leadership across different industries, cultural contexts, or organizational sizes.

Future research could build upon this study by examining how this leadership blueprint applies across different sectors, demographics, and leadership levels. Comparative case studies involving leaders from diverse backgrounds could provide broader insights into the adaptability and applicability of this integrated model. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore how leaders sustain this balance of hu-

manity, structure, and purpose over time and under varying organizational pressures.

Ultimately, this article contributes to the growing body of leadership research by presenting an actionable, real-world example of how leaders can effectively merge relational, structural, and purpose-driven leadership approaches. It invites current and aspiring leaders to reflect on their own leadership practices and to consider how they, too, can cultivate Impactful Leadership through a balanced integration of these essential themes.

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Review

This article was accepted under the **constructive peer review** option. For further details, see the descriptions at:

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Authors



Akilah Byron-Nisbett is a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) student at the University of South Florida, where her research focuses on leadership and governance reform within small island developing states. A seasoned business consultant, she brings extensive expertise in strategic planning, organizational execution, and leadership development—helping institutions align vision with results through effective strategy, communication, and team empowerment. In addition to her consulting work, Byron-Nisbett has held prominent public leadership roles, including Senator, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, and Minister of Health. During her tenure, she played a pivotal role in shaping national health policy and leading the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating her commitment to ethical, people-centered governance. Byron-Nisbett holds a master's degree in Computer Information Systems from Quinnipiac University and a bachelor's degree in Information Systems from the University of South Florida. Her career reflects a deep commitment to transformative leadership, public service, and sustainable national development.

Appendix A: Open Codes

Category Number	Open Code
1	Harmony not balance
2	Flexing roles daily
3	Parent and executive
4	Caregiver responsibilities
5	Outsourcing to reduce friction
6	Win in spite of
7	Pivoting during disruption
8	Leading through uncertainty
9	Strategic planning
10	Casting vision
11	Removing roadblocks
12	Mentors saw something in me
13	Sponsoring others
14	Power of 10
15	Mentorship as duty
16	Advocating in rooms I wasn't in
17	Showing up authentically
18	Sharing personal struggles
19	Modeling vulnerability
20	Grace in mistakes
21	Building trust through honesty
22	First in the room
23	Latina leadership
24	Employee resource groups
25	Supporting Hispanic community
26	Bilingual advantage
27	Minimizing disruption
28	Structured routines
29	Clear expectations
30	Delegating to support teams
31	Prioritizing behaviors over deliverables
32	Father's illness
33	Caregiving while working
34	Loss as catalyst
35	Living in the present
36	Grit and perseverance
37	Leave people better
38	Career as a platform for good
39	Impacting change
40	Strategic planning for nonprofits
41	Creating good in the world
42	Doctoral program as promise
43	Internal leadership development
44	Complex credit training
45	Learning from lived experience
46	Children's Cancer Center
47	Mentor Monday
48	Financial literacy
49	Career advancement events
50	Serving the community

Figure A1. Open Codes

Appendix B: Axial Codes

Axial Code Theme	Open Codes
Integrated Identity Management	Harmony not balance
	Parent and executive
	Caregiver responsibilities
	Latina leadership
	First in the room
	Bilingual advantage
Authentic and Vulnerable Leadership	Showing up authentically
	Sharing personal struggles
	Modeling vulnerability
	Grace in mistakes
	Building trust through honesty
Strategic Empowerment and Team Enablement	Structured routines
	Clear expectations
	Delegating to support teams
	Minimizing disruption
	Prioritizing behaviors over deliverables
	Removing roadblocks
Mentorship as Legacy	Mentors saw something in me
	Sponsoring others
	Power of 10
	Mentorship as duty
	Advocating in rooms I wasn't in
Resilience Through Adversity	Father's illness
	Caregiving while working
	Loss as catalyst
	Living in the present
	Grit and perseverance
Purpose-Driven Leadership and Legacy	Leave people better
	Career as a platform for good
	Impacting change
	Creating good in the world
	Serving the community
Continuous Learning and Growth Orientation	Doctoral program as promise
	Internal leadership development
	Complex credit training
	Learning from lived experience
Community-Centered Engagement	Children's Cancer Center
	Mentor Monday
	Financial literacy
	Career advancement events
	Employee resource groups
	Supporting Hispanic community

Figure B1. Axial Codes

Appendix C: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Theme Description	Related Axial Codes	Theoretical Framework
Navigating Complex Identities	Captures how Shirley integrates her personal, cultural, and professional identities.	Integrated Identity Management	Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009): Explains how individuals manage multiple role identities and seek consistency across them.
			Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989): Highlights how overlapping social identities create unique experiences of privilege and constraint.
Leading with Humanity	Highlights the emotional intelligence and vulnerability Shirley brings to leadership.	Authentic and Vulnerable Leadership	Authentic Leadership Theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005): Emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, and balanced processing in leadership.
			Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995): Suggests that emotionally attuned leaders foster trust and team cohesion.
Empowering Through Structure	Centers on how Shirley uses systems and routines to empower her team and drive performance.	Strategic Empowerment and Team Enablement	Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 1995): Focuses on how individuals and teams gain control through access to resources and support.
			Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House, 1971): Leaders clarify paths to goals and provide support to enhance performance.
The Power of Mentorship	Reflects Shirley's belief in mentorship as a transformative and reciprocal process.	Mentorship as Legacy	Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977): Individuals learn behaviors and norms through observation and modeling.
			Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995): Highlights the importance of high-quality dyadic relationships in mentorship.
Growth Through Adversity	Explores how personal loss and hardship have shaped Shirley's values and leadership.	Resilience Through Adversity	Post-Traumatic Growth Theory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996): Positive psychological change can result from struggling with adversity.
			Resilience Theory (Masten, 2001): Focuses on the capacity to recover and adapt positively in the face of stress.
Purpose and Impact	Captures Shirley's drive to create meaningful change through her work and leadership.	Purpose-Driven Leadership and Legacy	Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985): Leaders inspire and motivate followers by articulating a compelling vision.
			Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 1977): Emphasizes the leader's role in serving others and promoting community.
Lifelong Learning	Reflects Shirley's commitment to continuous personal and professional development.	Continuous Learning and Growth Orientation	Self-Directed Learning Theory (Knowles, 1975): Adults take initiative in diagnosing their learning needs and pursuing knowledge.
			Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984): Learning is created through the transformation of experience.
Community and Belonging	Emphasizes Shirley's dedication to community engagement and inclusion.	Community-Centered Engagement	Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000): Emphasizes the value of social networks, trust, and reciprocity in building communities.
			Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998): Learning and identity are shaped through participation in shared practices.

Figure C1. Thematic Analysis

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview one:

Q1: Where did you grow up?

Q2: Well, tell me more about your family. What was your home like, home life like?

Q3: That's really impressive. And you talked about how both your parents were entrepreneurs. So how did those values shape how you grew up?

Q4: That's awesome. So tell me more about your school life. What did you imagine for your future as like a child or a teen?

Q5: That's so awesome. I'd love to hear more about this friend group. What are some of the earliest memories you have with meeting them and engaging with them?

Q6: That's awesome. So how did you go from being enemies to friends?

Q7: That's awesome. Oh, man, I'd love to go down that path and talk more about the kinds of animals and things you'd have there. But you did talk about how mentors were a big part of your education. Can you tell me more about some specific teachers or the mentors that helped you along your path?

Q8: Well, now that we've kind of gone through your early foundation and you kind of actually ended off with your business degree in international business, can you walk us through the steps or decisions that led to you pursuing an MBA and later a DBA?

Q9: Thank you. I really appreciate that. You kind of mentioned going into the bank industry. While we're on that subject, what was your earlier years at Bank of America? What did they look like and how did you enter the organization? And you kind of briefly touched on it, but if you could dive a little deeper into.

Q10: Thank you for that. Now that we've kind of gone through your earlier work experience, you're also really involved in community and also influence. So can you talk about when did you first become involved in mentoring or community work?

Interview two:

Q11: So what I would like to start with is to ask you to just walk us through like a 1st 90 minutes of a typical work day in your current role.

Q12: OK, perfect. So you spoke about looking at metrics to help determine where to next, what type of systems or tools do you have in place to look at the performance even of your teams and the client engagements that you have?

Q13: Yes, you certainly have. You certainly have. But I would like to get even more detailed because listening to your life history, you seem to be an individual who loves to be able to set goals and know this is the path that I'm going on.

So I understand that daily you would check all of these metrics and you determine with your team where you go from there. But I want to know very specifically what are the tasks or responsibilities that you prioritize on the Monday mornings.

Q14: OK. So can you explain to me then in terms of those strategic meetings, can you describe how you'd conduct your team strategic meetings to make sure you're keeping track and abreast of all of the areas that you are involved in?

Q15: Great, great. So let's talk about those disruptions though, because disruptions do happen. So how do you deal with disruptions with your teams?

Q16: So when your team faces these difficulties, is there any point and I want you to describe for me.

Q17: Overall difficult decisions that you had to make in your current role in your DEI work, can you describe, you know what your last major community engagement was like?

Q18: Yeah. How do you really track, you know, the progress of these initiatives that you're involved in?

Q19: Can you tell me about um your most recent experience serving on an external panel or an external summit?

Q20: Can you describe like your most recent, like within the last quarter leadership, personal leadership development that you've taken on to kind of continue to expand, you know? Your arsenal of knowledge and

your arsenal being able to support all these different things.

Q21: Can you walk me through a more detailed recent experience where you had to deal with the performance concern on your team, either your, you know, your close team or kind of that stakeholder group that you mentioned where you've really had to deal with a very difficult performance?

Q22: When you were dealing with those performance concerns, and I think a lot of companies were kind of going through that same thing, who did you involve in that process for how you dealt with that, you know, within your circle of trust, so to speak?

Q23: Can you really describe in the last 30 days where you personally had to make a very high stakes decision, you know, based on your circle of trust and the environment? But where you had to really make a high stakes decision in the last 30 days?

Interview three:

Q24: Can you reflect on how you balance your role as a parent and your role as a senior executive?

Q25: So what tensions do you live with between, like, your personal and professional responsibilities? Like how do you navigate them? Because I know that like you mentioned, there's a lot of different dynamics like in your role and you're managing a team that is not even like a local team. You're managing teams that are in other states and that also it's, you know, very difficult.

Q26: Can you like just provide some insights on how you feel you have evolved like in dealing with the intersection of personal and professional life and what are like some of your strategies?

Q27: As far as working remotely, how do you feel that it has like reshaped you like to like lead and connect with your team?

Q28: Oh, that's really great. As far as modeling vulnerability, do you feel like there's been moments where? It has opened up like your team to like be more trusting to open up more about like their challenges without having to like conceal like you know they made a mistake here and there and you know like what have been like some of. Some examples of what you've seen that have come up as like a ripple of you showing vulnerability in your approach.

Q29: Wow, that's really amazing. So I, you know, and in light of some of the earlier things that you mentioned, can you reflect on how your early mentorship program has helped shape your leadership style like overall? All like you know who you have, who you've become today? Like where you think you were before and then where do you think you are now?

Q30: To that extension, our last question, what legacies do you want to leave behind through like your work and personal experiences? How do you want like your friends to? I'll remember you, your colleagues to remember you and you know, just basically how what do you envision doing ahead or what projects are you working ahead?

Q31: What piece of advice would you give your younger self, both professionally and non-professionally?