

# leader6

## ASCEND DISCOVERY PROGRAM

### My Sources of Professional Pride

Before beginning the main exercise, let's take a moment to understand why this identity transition represents one of the most important challenges in your leadership journey.

#### IDENTITY TRANSITION: A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE

Becoming a leader after being an expert is more than a simple change of function—it's a profound identity transformation. A study by the University of Stanford reveals that 67% of new technical managers experience significant difficulties moving away from their area of expertise, which significantly limits their effectiveness in their new role.

This resistance is not entirely rational because it involves letting go of a professional identity built over years, which has forged your reputation and confidence in yourself. Your promotion recognizes your technical excellence, but paradoxically, it requires significant progressive improvement in this expertise to develop new competencies.

#### WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO LET GO?

Several powerful psychological mechanisms come into play in this resistance to identity change:

##### The search for certainty

In your expert role, you had:

- Responsibilities clearly defined and limited
- Tangible and measurable success criteria
- The ability to solve problems yourself

As a leader, you enter a more ambiguous domain where:

- Skills are relational and less tangible
- Success depends largely on others
- Problems often require collaborative approaches

This transition from a structured environment to a more ambiguous one can generate legitimate insecurity.

##### The fear of losing your perceived value

Your promotion creates an identity paradox: it rewards your technical expertise while asking you to set it aside progressively. This contradiction can create anxiety that manifests in statements such as:

- "If I'm no longer the expert, what is my added value?"
- "How can I stand out if I'm not the one solving technical problems?"
- "How can I retain my partnership when I'm moving away from operations?"

##### The comfort of competence versus the discomfort of learning

Being a novice at something is uncomfortable, especially after having been an expert:

- You'll lose some mastery in learning
- You'll make mistakes in your new responsibilities
- You'll need to develop new skills from scratch

This return to a learner status can be destabilizing for your self-esteem.

#### THE REVEALING SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT TO YOUR EXPERT ROLE

How do you know if you're too attached to your former identity? Here are the signs to watch for:

- Micromanagement: You constantly check the work of your collaborators and feel obligated to correct it
- Task overload: You continue to take on technical tasks in addition to your leadership responsibilities
- Conflict resolution: Faced with a technical problem, you prefer to solve it yourself rather than coach a team member
- Technical valuation: In meetings, you primarily intervene on technical aspects rather than on strategic questions
- Leadership tasks avoidance: You postpone responsibilities like people management, strategic planning, etc., in favor of technical tasks

If you recognize several of these behaviors, it's time to work consciously on your identity transition.

#### HOW TO EVOLVE TOWARD A NEW LEADER IDENTITY

The transition to a leader identity is a process, not an event. Here's how to approach it:

##### 1. Redefine your value

Your value no longer comes from what you personally accomplish, but from what your team accomplishes through:

- Impact on the value and direction you provide
- Impact through the development of your team members' skills
- Impact on creating an environment conducive to performance

This redefinition implies learning to take pride in collective successes rather than individual achievements.

## 2. Value Your Achievements Differently

Learn to celebrate new types of successes:

- An effective team meeting where everyone contributed
- A team member who solved a problem after your coaching
- A process improvement that increased efficiency for the entire team
- Better coordination between different parts of the organization

These successes may seem less tangible at first, but their impact is often deeper and more lasting.

## 3. Use Your Expertise Strategically

Your technical expertise remains valuable, but its application changes:

- For coaching and developing rather than for doing
- For evaluating and validating rather than for executing
- For connecting technical aspects to the overall strategy

This involves shifting from the role of “best player” to that of “coach.”

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## EXERCISE: MY SOURCES OF PROFESSIONAL PRIDE

### Exercise Objective

This exercise will help you become aware of your attachment to your former identity and begin to value your new contributions as a leader. It will allow you to specifically identify how to transfer your sources of professional satisfaction to your new role.

### Detailed Instructions

1. In the first column of the table below, list the 5 professional achievements that made you most proud as an expert. Be specific and concrete.
2. In the second column, for each achievement, identify precisely what made you proud. Was it the technical mastery demonstrated? Solving a particularly complex problem? The innovation contributed? The recognition received?
3. In the third column, imagine an equivalent achievement in your role as a leader. How could you obtain the same type of satisfaction, but through your team rather than by yourself?
4. After completing the table, take a moment to reflect on the emotions these different sources of pride evoke in you. Note your observations below the table.

#### Professional Achievement #1

Describe my professional achievement

My sources of pride

Equivalent achievement in my leadership role

#### Professional Achievement #2

Describe my professional achievement

My sources of pride

Equivalent achievement in my leadership role

#### Professional Achievement #3

Describe my professional achievement

My sources of pride

Equivalent achievement in my leadership role

#### Professional Achievement #4

Describe my professional achievement

My sources of pride

Equivalent achievement in my leadership role

#### Professional Achievement #5

Describe my professional achievement

My sources of pride

Equivalent achievement in my leadership role

## PERSONAL NOTES AND REFLECTIONS