




**Confirm Humanity**

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## Confirm Humanity

(Written in June 2021 and revised in July 2024)

In 2021, I was asked to verify that I was not a robot while confirming an email subscription. I was presented with the image above and was required to tick the box to confirm my humanity.

It suddenly dawned on me just how relevant it was to where we were in our workplaces during the UK lockdown. I wrote this article about all needing to stop being robots at work and saying that our organisations can make this happen if they work hard to achieve that.

During the lockdown in the UK, I attended many webinars and informal open chats, and I enjoyed many informal conversations with clients who kindly gave their time to chat about my thinking. We discussed how they had navigated the many people challenges during the lockdown and, most importantly, their hopes for what was being introduced as the "new normal". There was a theme of hope for a better working world out there.

I was surprised by how much I was affected by these discussions because we all seemed to realise that we needed this new kindness and consideration we'd found in lockdown to continue into that "New normal". It was clear to me that we needed to consider what I believe we are all "quietly" crying out for before lockdown: for our organisations to let us be "US", to speak freely and to feel **no fear** in speaking out. I was concerned that if we did not, we may lose the freedom that liberates innovation and that freedom to express our emotions!

There was a massive surge of hope that we would connect with each other in a far better way in the future (post-lockdown). I also believed that the darkness of COVID had ironically offered an unexpected light at the end of our tunnelled vision. I said, "Given the suffering this pandemic has brought to so many, we **MUST** help that light grow brighter and do it now."



Over the years, we have focused far too much on targets and KPIs, appeasing others, proving our commitment to our organisation, and protecting our progression, **even** at the cost of others. We became focused on everything else except that much-needed human connection. The rise in self-interest and self-protection has replaced mutual trust, which is only achieved through the consistency of excellent cultural behaviour. We have lost our humanity!

Even before the lockdown, people's lives were significantly affected because work dominated our lives. Our families suffered all manner of unhappiness due to the loss of time together! We may have noticed this impact on our family and friends, but this was just how things "were." The pressure from work meant we just had to accept it. But at what cost?

From those conversations and discussions with leaders and managers, most of us had felt a new conscious effort to connect with others because caring had become imperative. We recognised the need to overhaul the work/life balance because, in truth, it just wasn't working, no matter what we or others were saying. Ironically, it took lockdown to realise this.

During the lockdowns, we experienced more empathy and sympathy, welcomed it, and recognised that change was needed.

The lockdowns made us realise that we needed to modify how we managed our people and ask that our working environments adapt to us rather than us adapt to them. We needed to be true to ourselves and others, not just our organisations.



During one of my conversations with people, I discovered the word "Sawubona". I believe it's a South African greeting that means "I see you", and by saying I see you, I am saying I am accepting you. This means I accept who you are, and I accept that you are different to me and that I shall care about you and how you are. A response can be "Ngikhona", which is "I see you too", so you will do the same for me. I loved that thinking and said, "Let's all do that."

The many discussions I participated in inspired and motivated me. They made me believe that there was a genuine desire and a newfound fundamental need for us to adopt a less robotic and more human approach and, at the same time, look out for each other far more.

We had a superb opportunity to improve people's working lives. I said that to do this, "we need to significantly improve our working environments to cultivate openness, honesty, psychological safety, and authenticity. Our organisations must encourage us to speak up and demand that we do. We need to do this now."

As I look around in 2024, I find that, like many well-intended efforts (diets, gym, etc), many, though not all, have let it slide back to where it was before and, some, to an even worse state.

To me, it is really simple. You either care enough to invest in your people and prove to them that you care, or you risk waking up one morning to the reality that your organisational culture is toxic and driving people away from your organisation to organisations that **actively** care.

YOUR people make or break organisational success. And that is down to how YOU treat them.

So, be **ACE** (Approach with Care and Empathy), and your people will carry you forward.

*"The happiness of our people reflects the health of our organisational culture."*

~ Mac Macdonald ~

Read about our Moccasin Approach and how it can help your organisation by [clicking here](#)