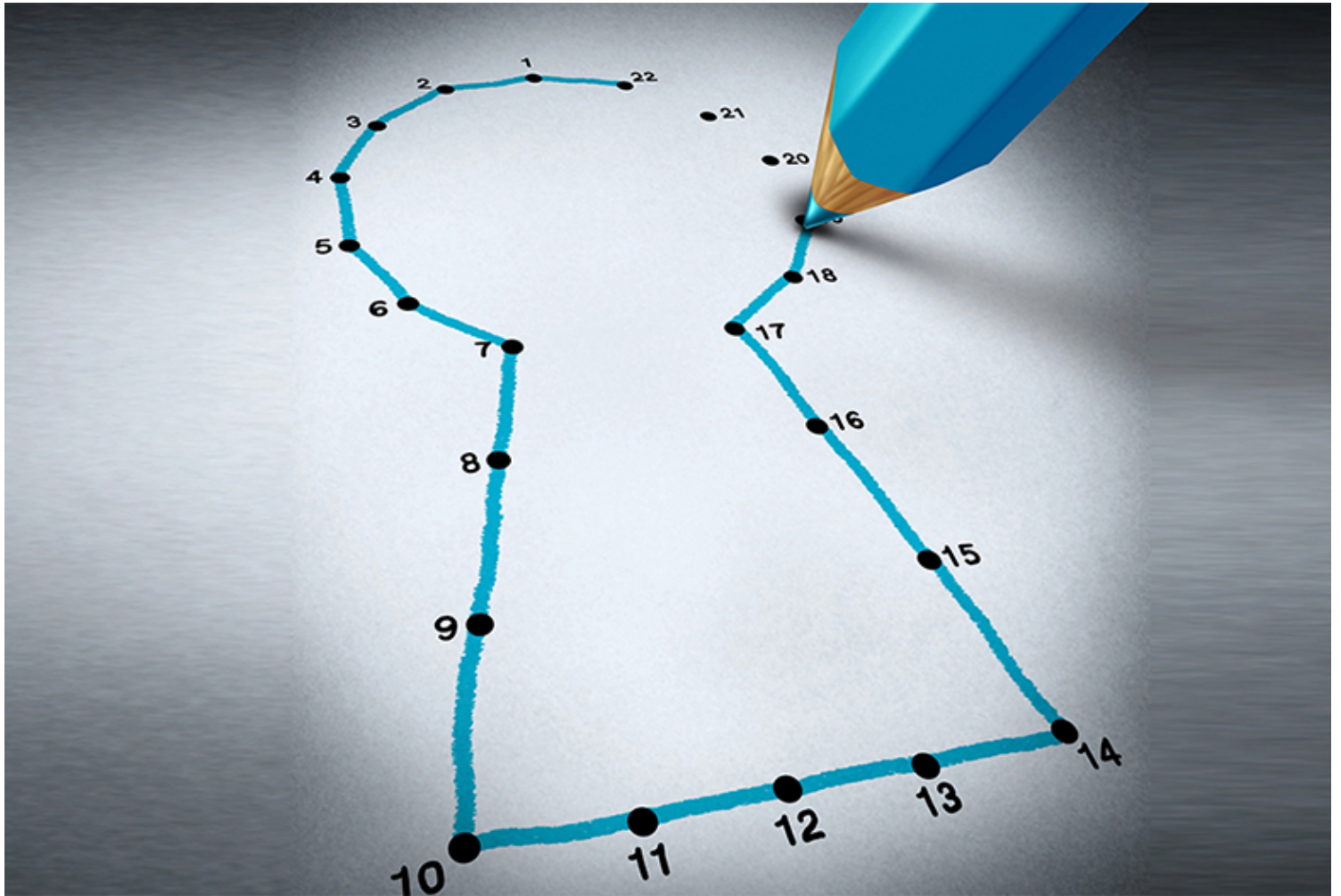


CONNECTING THE DOTS | HOW LEADERS BENEFIT FROM RELATIONSHIPS

by Glenn Williams



Leadership always occurs in the context of relationships. The key relationships in a leader's world contextualize their identity, behavior, and performance. Relationships are the key to their success and fulfillment. Equally, they enable us to weather life's storms, providing safe harbours to heal, learn, and grow.

So why are many leaders not connecting the dots and benefiting from cultivating strong relationships both in and out of work?

Our beliefs determine our behaviour

Many variables influence a leader's life and resilience. I went from one success to another, from one leadership position to the next, with bigger goals, challenges, larger budgets, more direct reports, more travel, and greater responsibility.

Each new role required a bit more of me. And truthfully, I loved it! But, at the same time, I was torn between seeking success as a leader and wanting to be a good husband and father while feeling I was constantly falling short.

The pressure is often amplified if you work in the not-for-profit sector or ministry, where you expect to give more of yourself for a worthy cause. In my case, a lack of awareness, combined with a lack of healthy boundaries, led to a significant decline in my energy levels and focus.

My emotional and intellectual bandwidth waned, leaving little to invest in my closest relationships and friendships. My busyness blinded me to the signs that my capacity was finite and fragile. If I had been honest with myself then, I might have acknowledged that being busy validated my significance, reinforcing that my identity as a leader was a driving force in my life and that success was important to me.

When Leaders are lost

Contributing to my 'lostness' was that I didn't realize I was lost, and when I did, I pushed it away, not wanting to confront the implications. I didn't want to stop seeing myself as a successful leader. More than that, I didn't want others to stop seeing me as successful. Not only would it be disheartening, but I genuinely believed it would affect my career and limit any future opportunities.

It turns out I'm not alone. Let me introduce you to Andrew and John. Andrew is a speaker on the world circuit, and John is an entrepreneur.

A high school dropout who went on to great business success, Andrew became a highly sought-after

motivational speaker, impacting thousands of people on almost every continent. He shared the platform with an array of equally successful business leaders and celebrities. However, disillusioned by the insincerity he witnessed 'behind the curtain', he finally left his financially lucrative career.

After three decades of incredible success on a global stage, Andrew ultimately found he had no one significant to share it with.

John, a 'self-made' businessman and entrepreneur, built a national financial planning franchise that became one of the most successful of its time. After almost losing his marriage and children, closely followed by a near-fatal car accident, John sold the company he founded to focus on helping others find fulfillment in life.



It's time to connect the dots

We don't lead in a vacuum. Fostering successful relationships is the key to building relationships that help to effectively manage up and down, build organizational trust, increase staff engagement, and

empower

collaboration. We are also seeing a stronger link between the quality of a leader's relationships outside of work and how this impacts key relationships at work.

As leaders, we must recognize, develop, and prioritize relationships, inside and outside the work context, to withstand the reality of high-level leadership. Failure to attend to this most basic human need inevitably leads to disaster.

Further reading

For more on navigating the gap between the expectation of leadership and lived experience, read our recent article, "[Leadership Unmasked: Navigating the Gap Between Expectation and Experience.](#)"

You can also grab a copy of "[When Leaders are Lost: Moving Beyond Disappointment, Failure, and Hurt to Redefine Success](#)" for more insights on how to succeed as a leader without sacrificing what's important to you.