

MyPeople[®] **MEETS**

Manley Hopkinson

**Founder and passionate advocate of
The Compassionate Leadership Acedemy**

As an explorer, author, accomplished keynote speaker, director, senior advisor and the leading voice in the field of compassionate leadership, Manley's strength lies in creating and developing the transformational leadership behaviours, which lead to commitment and sustained high performance.



Tell us a bit about who you are and what you do...

Tricky question to open with to be honest! Not the first part - I am me! - Manley Charles Grant Hopkinson, near the prime of my life (I say it in such a way that it can be interpreted, optimistically, that I am nearing my future prime, or possibly more realistically, that my prime is now in my past - but not too far away). I have been fortunate to have had quite a variety of experiences over the years - Royal Navy (twice), Royal Hong Kong police (back in the '80's - a very different Hong Kong than today), professional sailor for 9 years culminating in skippering in the world's toughest yacht race, the BT Global Challenge - 9 months, 32,000 miles sailing around the world the wrong way (west about) - with a crew of amateur volunteers. That was a life changing experience in so many ways, and they were all positive! I learnt so much about leadership, teamwork, performance and of course, myself. Since 2000, I have been on the same path of helping individuals and teams be the best version of themselves through my talks, my cultural alignment work and my Compassionate Leadership Academy. Throw in a regular cadence of adventures and expeditions and, I guess, that's about me, with my biggest joy and the best tutors I have ever had being my family - Cate, Frey and Bella - love 'em.



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What was the driving force behind founding Manley Talks, was there anywhere or anyone you took inspiration from?

Accident! And good fortune! The talking bit was by accident. On the yacht race there was a big banquet at each port of call. In Wellington, New Zealand I was on the top table as I had done quite well on that leg of the race. The speakers that night to a rowdy 500 or so were to be the Sports Minister of New Zealand, The Mayor of Wellington, the Commodore of the local yacht club, the Royal Port Nicholson, and Sir Chay Blythe the inspirational founder of the BT Global Challenge. I was sat by Sir Chay, who, as they were clearing the dishes in preparation for the speakers, lent over to me and slurred "Hey laddie, you do it, I'm a bit drunk". WHAT!!! Talk about being thrown in at the deep end. Anyway, my talk went down so well that I was asked to speak to some local business leaders, so I thought "Well, I can obviously tell stories then"! The leadership and performance culture side of my work came

from how much I had learnt during the race, the amazing stories I had, the videos from the documentary and the fact that I was part of the subject matter in a massive leadership study of all the skippers in the race. In fact, a book (Inspiring Leadership) detailing all our leadership failings and development was written about the experience. You could say it was a perfect storm!

Personal growth and learning are vital for well-being, self-esteem, and to develop our emotional intelligence. How do you measure your accomplishments?

I don't in the traditional sense of badges, medals and possibly income. I believe strongly, and have led my whole life around, the premise that motivation is an intrinsic driver, driven by a sense of self-worth and purpose. I have done what I did because I wanted to, it excited and challenged me, and I felt good doing it. I have never done anything for any external motivations - money, status, or material things. I do not



believe they drive true happiness. I measure what I have done by what I have learnt, the joy I have had, the challenges I have overcome, the failures I have learnt from and the joy and learning I have given to others. I'll ski some mountains in Kamchatka because it will be a blast, I will be way outside my comfort zone with some good chums whose company I value and I know that I will learn a shed load more about me, the world and fear! In my work, I measure my accomplishments by how much I have guided people to have the courage to live their own lives, and so, become who they always should have been (and were) - to be compassionate.

In 2000, you were selected as a skipper for the BT global round the world yacht race, what was the biggest challenge you faced?

The challenges were many and varied - physical, psychological, leadership - and fast flowing. The biggest physical shoe-ing we got was as we entered the Cook Straits - the sea between the North and South islands of New Zealand. It was even worse than when we attacked Hurricane Michael or the storms

of the deep Southern oceans. Being shallow, the seas in the Cook Straits are massive, and just as we crossed the continental shelf, we were hit by incredible winds and seas. Our foresail exploded and was caught in the rigging, and we lost all momentum. Four times we were knocked flat, the mast in the water, boat over at more than 100 degrees, and everyone hanging on. I had to stay focused, recover the boat, keep everyone safe and try to regain control. The hardest part was that it was the end of a 6000-mile leg around Cape Horn. With 30 miles to go we held a 12-mile lead - we were about to win and then we got smashed to pieces. The second placed boat managed to squeeze past us and claim victory. Without a doubt, that was the toughest moment. There was a lot of emotion attached to that win too, as we were one crew down - the win was to be for our absent crew member! It really hurt. But, to put it all in perspective, our sick crew member was there in Wellington to welcome us in.

How did this experience shape your Compassionate Leadership ethos?

Compassionate Leadership was a whole life learning. Wherever I experienced great leadership there was a common denominator - it was one of trust. But trust is an outcome, an outcome of commitment, and commitment comes from tapping into people's self-worth. You can only do that by understanding a person and then acting on that knowledge with positive intent. That is the definition of compassion that the Dalai Lama uses - "empathy with positive action" - with the definition of empathy being to deeply understand. I prefer this definition rather than the more emotional, and less useful, interpretation of "feeling another's pain". So, the big learning in my life as a leader has been that I generally get it more right when I understand first. I believe I do always try to act with positive intent, but you cannot do that without the understanding first. As a skipper of a boat of 17 amateur crew who have invested in me the most precious gift they can give, their time, I had a duty to ensure that I deeply understood their needs, wants, fears, motivations, life's journey and preferences. The more I knew about them, the more I could serve them, guide them, motivate them and gain their commitment. Whenever I misunderstood, it caused tension and doubt. Mixing these extraordinary life experiences with some of the great philosophies of the Dalai Lama and Compassionate Leadership was born, being defined as to "secure the best for all" - and all includes you, all those you touch and the planet too. My book was published in 2014 and my online Compassionate Leadership Academy in 2018. My life's work purpose is to spread the understanding and adoption of Compassionate Leadership, to create a global movement of compassion.

Another adventure, this time part of a 3-man team that won the inaugural race to the Magnetic North Pole, facing polar bear attacks and sub-zero temperatures. What lessons did you learn about surviving and competing in

difficult circumstances?

A shed load more - mainly about me! Great lessons in what it actually takes to deliver peak performance - physically, psychologically and practically. To trust yourself and be happy that doubt and uncertainty are OK; it's OK not to know if you can do something, just back yourself and give it your best shot.

I learnt that success, in whatever field you wish it to be in, comes down to your own inner discipline. If you do not have the discipline to do what you know you need to do, then, guess what, nothing happens.

I learnt about the power of an excellent team. Chris and Phil were bloody brilliant, and I learnt so much from them, as they did from me. I learnt that ignorance is a great power; not to know established ways of working is the root of innovation - I was not stuck in an old pattern, I could and did challenge, I brought my universe to play in another.

I learnt that I love the peace and beauty of the high latitudes, that we are trespassers in most of this planet and that we have a responsibility through the consciousness of our actions to become better guardians.

I experienced the beauty and majesty of the polar bear and was captivated by the scale of nature and, as you learn at sea too, our own insignificance as an individual but our potential as a collective - both good and bad.

You continued to partake in expeditions across the globe, what drives you do these challenges?

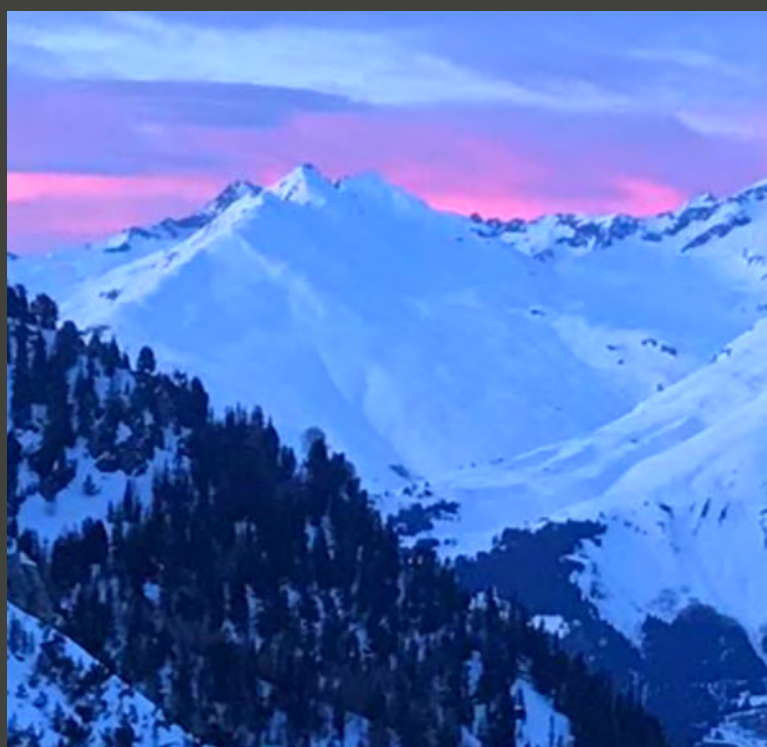
Why stop? I've only just started!! There is so much more to explore, so much more to learn, so much more to see. As a perceived leadership and performance guru I also want to keep being a leader in learning - my development journey does not stop until I draw my last breath - and who knows it may not even stop then!!

As my profile grows so I also realise that I can do more good with my expeditions. The world is truly magnificent, but we are damaging and hurting the one thing that keeps us alive. Our society is full of opportunity, but what we have created is truly broken - the inequity is disgusting. We should be ashamed on both accounts; our disregard for the planet and our disregard for each other. My next expedition will create an opportunity for continued scientific environmental research and technological testing as well as a platform to challenge social injustices - compassion is, of course, "for all".

We are in a time of unprecedented change, how does Compassionate Leadership drive organisations forward?

I believe that the economy has stopped working for most people and that most people are now working for the economy. I also believe that the next generation are looking for more meaning and purpose with their work, and good on them for that. Surely a workplace driven through commitment has got to be better, more productive and more enjoyable than one where we force compliance? The society we have created, driven by perpetual growth and consumer demand, clearly does not work. We can see that everywhere.

Without compassion we are doomed. Without compassion misery will only get worse in its depth and reach. Understanding with positive action. Now we understand, if we are to be compassionate, we are compelled to act. To understand and not act is to be an anarchist, to be cruel, callous, merciless, indifferent. How can we look at ourselves in the mirror if we do not embrace compassion, what other type of leadership is there? Any type must be used compassionately. In essence, the future must be compassionate leadership.



Monolithic ways of working reduce any potential for growth and development, do you think 'diversity' is the key to unlocking collective brilliance?

Yes, diversity in motivation, diversity in thought and diversity in experience. Without diversity there can't be any innovation. Einstein once said that "you cannot solve the problems of today with the thinking of today; that's what got you there". Difference is so powerful when you have the mindset to recognise it, value it and tap into it.

There is seemingly an imbalance in the behavioural acceptance around diversity in the workplace, 'we know best' prejudices that are limiting success. How do people and organisations transition from these 'old ways' to trusting and enabling others to take the reins?

I believe it is about dropping judgement. We tend to view difference critically - "Oh they don't do it the way I do", or "Why the detail, I'm more interested in the big picture". We need to stop our own prejudices and realise that difference is not about right or wrong, it is just about difference. To drop judgement means to drop our own ego. But before we can drop our ego, we must be aware of it. We need to help people raise their own self-awareness, and through that the awareness of others, and then foster a culture that recognises and rewards difference - reward innovative thinking and not just successful outcomes, enable cross-functional working and openly ask for challenge to the status quo. Leaders must drop any notion that their role is to provide solutions; it is to facilitate solutions. We can facilitate deeper conversations within the workplace and recognise that the time to build relationships is when we are together. Create a pause in just doing stuff and spend time in thinking, ideas, conversation and, dare I say it, nothing!!

How do you build trust in team relationships – what is the critical factor?

Dropping your own ego, your own self-interest is the only way to start. We trust others when they understand us and work with that knowledge positively, when they give us their time, when they do what they say they will do and when they are being authentically themselves. Likewise, others will trust us if we do the same. I don't just mean at a superficial level. I need to know what happens to you when you are stressed or angry. I need to know what you are like when things are not going well. When we sailed into Hurricane Michael, we needed to know that we could trust each other - then was not the time to find out. We need to invest the time to develop understanding of ourselves and others. I mean proper time, scheduled, treasured, and applied to raise our levels of awareness. Remember that trust is an outcome, it cannot be demanded or expected, and teams don't automatically have it. You need to work on it, and it needs to be earned.

Do you think leaders need to see beyond their internal biases and think decisively about the type of workforce they want to create?

Two parts to the question. Yes most definitely to the first part. Leaders need to firstly be hugely conscious of their internal biases and make sure that they don't interfere. A leader with low self-awareness and low emotional intelligence will be driven by hard-wired subconscious patterns of behaviour; driven by the past and not the present or future. So, absolutely yes to the first part.

The second part is more complex, as I don't believe the leader can create that in isolation. There is a dynamic at play here. The teams I have worked in that have been the greatest, most productive, most fun and most rewarding have been where the team and the leader have co-created the culture around an agreed common purpose and goal. The leader should set the context and then inspire the team to create the culture

that all can commit too. This then becomes the filter for recruitment and growth too. If a leader is too prescriptive in the style and type of workforce, and the culture then there is a danger that they do so “in their own image” and bang, there goes diversity, innovation, growth and commitment.

In 2014, you published your [book](#) ‘Compassionate Leadership: How to Create and Maintain Engaged, Committed and High-Performing Teams’. Within it, you place a significant focus on one’s self and increasing your “peripheral vision” so that you can see more of people’s needs. Are these key considerations when evaluating team dynamics?

Yes, it all starts with self-awareness. How can you understand others if you cannot understand yourself first? How can you be compassionate with others if you cannot be compassionate with yourself first? You can’t.

As a leader, forcing compliance from your team is easy. Anyone can ‘make’ another do a task. It will get done, but when, and to what standard?

Many leaders focus so much on outcomes and objectives that they forget about the investment in getting the best for and out of the individuals in their teams which will lead to higher standards of performance.

In *Compassionate Leadership*, Manley Hopkinson combines the two worlds of business and adventure to encourage leaders everywhere – at work, at home, in sports and mid-ocean – to take a new approach to creating teams of engaged, developed, self-aware and committed individuals.

Drawing on his experiences in business, inspirational speaking and coaching, as a skipper in the BT Global Challenge round-the-world yacht race and participant in the Polar Race to the magnetic North Pole, Manley provides you with the tools you need to start the exciting journey to sustainable high performance for you and your team, and better relationships across all spheres of life.

‘A personal and most readable introduction to the fundamentals of good leadership, enlivened by the author’s rich and varied experience. Anyone who aspires to be a leader will find in its pages both guidance and encouragement’

John Adair,
author of the bestselling *Effective Leadership*



ISBN 978-0-349-60322-0

How to create and maintain
engaged, committed and
high-performing
teams

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

**MANLEY
HOPKINSON**

Once you are comfortable in your own skin, so your peripheral vision truly comes into play. Your selfish self-focus becomes less important, so you are free to see others. Think of a silent order of monks at the dinner table? How do you ask for the salt? You can’t. But it is not a problem, as they live with compassion and have developed a sense of the other. If I want the salt, I shall use it, and also recognise that my fellow diner may want it to. So rather than just planting it down on the table in front of me, I will pass it, and they the same. Peripheral vision is to see the other and is the beginning of understanding the other, which, becomes the foundation to act on that knowledge with positive intent - compassion!

Your book focuses on relationships - get the relationships right between the team, and the team performs at a greater level. A lot of emphasis is needed for individuals to be on the

same page for any relationship to work, be that personal or business. How do you ensure everyone is committed to the same goal?

Commitment comes from self-worth. If I can see my life's journey within or through the organisation I am with, then I can commit. If I cannot, then the best I can do is comply. If I am ignorant of my life's journey, my values, my beliefs, the inner me, then, again, I find myself in a place of emotional compliance. For a team to commit to a single goal, then we need to align individual goals. Teams are transitory; they only exist for relatively short moments in time. The leader's role is to allow each member of the team to fulfil their own goals through the common goal, to align. If I cannot align my goals, my needs to the team's goals or needs, I and the team would be far better served if I was not there. To force me to comply to the team goal when my heart is elsewhere is pointless and damaging to all. So, for this to happen, once again we come down to self-awareness for all members of the team and then the conscious mapping of individual goals to the common goal; team commitment is in reality just the alignment of individual commitment.

What's your next BIG adventure?

The first ski descent of Big Ben early in 2022! Crazy huh? Big Ben is the ice covered volcanic peak of Heard Island deep in the Southern Ocean, some 4000 miles from Cape Town and the same from Melbourne. It has never been done before, and whilst there we will also position the Magnetic South Pole, currently somewhere off the coast of Antarctica. A great sailing, climbing and ski challenge for me with both magnetic poles in the bag too. It is a scientific expedition focusing on ocean plastics and climatology and through our partnership with the Positive Transformation Initiative (PTI) we will use the expedition to serve the 3 communities of the young who have had a tough start to life, returning citizens leaving our prison systems and veterans struggling to re-join society. We will make a documentary too. We are going to have to develop huge levels of trust out there; know anyone who could help me measure it?

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YOUR WORKPLACE INTERVENTIONS AND
HOW YOU BUILD TRUST IN YOUR TEAMS!**

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