

Emiliano Maria Cappuccitti

THE



NAKED

LEADER

ESTE
libri

The background features a dark blue field with a white polka-dot pattern. Overlaid on this are stylized, light blue line-art illustrations of several open books, some showing their pages and spines. A large, white, rounded rectangular shape is centered on the page, containing the text.

following
AN EXTRACT
from the book
THE NAKED LEADER

ESTE BOOKS

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The Naked Leader

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“But the Emperor has nothing at all on!”
 said a little child.
“But he has nothing at all on!”
 at last cried out all the people.
 The Emperor was upset,
 for he knew that the people were right.
However, he thought the procession must go on now!
 The lords of the bedchamber
 took greater pains than ever,
 to appear holding up a train,
although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

Hans Christian Andersen
The Emperor's New Clothes

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<i>by Ilaria Resta</i>	

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FOREWORD

For a Brave, Humane Leadership

I held in my pocket a degree in Economics and many dreams when I left Naples, a city with beautiful streets and dangerous alleys. I was headed to Rome to start working at what would be my employer for the next 23 years, Procter&Gamble. I brought along the most typical luggage, but also a whole set of other stuff. Long-term goals, with all the hard-won opportunities I had pursued for so long, and that had allowed me to grow and learn. It was a top priority, as it was laying the foundations for my future. A vision that was just emerging, but was already quite strategic, and that could be my sextant in the subtle art of sailing on the waves of a career yet to come.

Yet, my life would not have been the same at all if I had limited myself to only pursuing those things. However, by chance or by luck, something else accompanied me in the back seat of my parents' car as we ground kilometres northward together, setting the stage for my 'Future, Season One'. Above all, I had a hunch that a long, intense adventure was about to begin, a journey so overwhelming that it went beyond our ability to plan. As I look back, I must say unexpected events and coincidences played equally decisive roles in my journey to come this far today, far beyond all I had prepared for. Most of all, there was a mixture of passion (for what I was doing), curiosity (to learn), ambition (to do well and leave a mark, a legacy, in the world).

From Naples to Rome, Rome to Geneva, Geneva to London, and finally London to Cincinnati. I have seen and experienced so much in 23 years, learning countless lessons I proudly carry with me now. Among them, a prominent place is reserved for leadership, which is a cornerstone of the essay you have in your hands right now. In the States, I discovered people would follow you, really follow you, under one condition: if you show them you are truly worthy. Being a humanist by nature, I have a tendency and a need to name things. I called this one “*earned* leadership”, the kind you achieve in the field, the one talking straightforwardly about your results and the clarity of your strategic direction.

You must strive, and especially strive to stay down-to-earth, to become a leader of that kind. It means staying tuned to what’s happening, to new trends, to changing styles, and to emerging generations. It means being able to communicate. It means you get rid of hierarchy and lay everything on a horizontal axis, where the leader can be close, accessible, and approachable. My intuition tells me a leader always runs the risk of being alone. My heart tells me not to believe in pyramidal models, with the boss at the top and distant from the younger ones. The experience of facing invisible, insidious, difficult-to-overcome hurdles suggests to me it is time for everyone to look beyond.

We need to move beyond the tropes of ‘testosterone-driven’, authoritarian leadership – a model that has been the most common, popular, and acclaimed for endless eras, the strong and unmistakably successful one. I believe in something else. I believe in an authentic and generous leadership, dedicated to creating working conditions that foster the development of new leaders. This kind of leadership is driven by heart and passion, creating an environment where there is latitude for impact. It is an approachable leadership,

breaking down hierarchical barriers. A courageous leadership, where you can take risks, make mistakes, learn, offer your opinion, and leave a legacy.

I feel deeply committed to a humane leadership. It is the only valid form of leadership in the current context, where certainties and convictions often take a back seat, and a broad vision and flexible management are required, both in business and in life. I strive to embody agile leadership, driven by intuition as it works on reading the signs and adapting to changes, anticipating future moves. It incorporates self-criticism, why not, and it can also be humble, whenever possible. In my view, change and survival are achieved only to the extent we stop seeing a ‘boss’ in a leader and rediscover as much as possible of ourselves.

That’s why I was glad and excited to accept the task of writing these lines, disentangling them from the web of countries where I had my own experiences. A naked leader, as Emiliano envisions and ‘draws’ them, has much in common with what I myself have seen, lived, and discovered. Above all, ‘his’ naked leader resonates with what I want to continue to be tomorrow and with the growth I wish for each one of you, readers, in the first place. Ladies and Gentlemen, the time has come to start reading and find out.

Ilaria Resta

CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES
IN THE BEAUTY AND LUXURY INDUSTRIES



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