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LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Leaders Eat Last: Building a Team That Trusts You

Leadership is not a rank that entitles you to be served. It is a responsibility to serve. The strongest teams are built by leaders who put their people first.

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Simon Sinek took the title of one of his books from the military, where the most junior eat first and the leaders eat last. It is a small ritual with a profound meaning: real leadership is not a privilege that entitles you to be served. It is a responsibility to serve. Get that backwards, and no title will earn you a team that truly trusts you.

> **“Leadership is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge.”**
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> **— Simon Sinek, Leaders Eat Last**

Trust is built by safety

Sinek talks about a circle of safety — when people feel protected by their leaders, they stop spending energy defending themselves from each other and turn it outward, toward the work and the competition. When they feel unsafe, they hoard, hide mistakes, and play politics. The leader's first job is to make people feel safe enough to do their best work.

What it looks like in a small business

You do not need an army to live this out. In a team of two or twenty, leaders eat last means taking the blame and sharing the credit; making sure your people are paid, supported and developed before you take your reward; and being the one who stays calm and carries the weight when things go wrong. People will follow that kind of leader through hard seasons.

- Take the blame publicly; give the credit away generously.
- Look after your people's wellbeing before your own comfort.
- Make it safe to admit mistakes — fear kills honesty and learning.
- Serve first; authority that is earned outlasts authority that is demanded.

> **A QUIETER THOUGHT**
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> This is one of the oldest leadership teachings there is. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, said Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:43–45). Servant leadership is not weakness — it is the kind of strength that builds loyalty money cannot buy.

The bottom line

If you want a team that trusts you, stop leading from status and start leading from service. Make people safe, put them first, carry the weight. Leaders who eat last build the kind of loyalty and resilience that no incentive scheme ever could.

Sources

- Simon Sinek, Leaders Eat Last — the circle of safety.

- Mark 10:43–45 — whoever would be great must be a servant.

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