

"You Don't Know Your People"

Keynote Themes & Key Takeaways



Most leadership programmes teach people **what** to do. This keynote does something harder — it reveals **why leaders keep getting it wrong with the people right in front of them**. Each theme below represents a problem Brian sees in organisations every day, grounded in 31 years of leading people in environments where the cost of getting it wrong was measured in lives — not revenue.

THE ASSUMPTION TRAP

Do your leaders believe they already know what motivates their people — without ever actually asking?

Most leaders operate on assumptions they formed in the first week of knowing someone and never updated. They manage the person they think they have, not the person who actually shows up. The result is disengagement, friction, and talent quietly walking out the door — all while the leader wonders what went wrong.

"You do not know how I feel. You do not know what I need. And until you ask — you're leading a version of me that doesn't exist."

THE INTENT-IMPACT GAP

Do your leaders struggle to understand why people react badly to feedback or decisions that were genuinely well-meant?

Good intentions do not cancel bad impact. This is the hardest truth for high-performing leaders to accept — because they care deeply, work hard, and genuinely believe they are doing the right thing. But leadership is not judged by intent. It is judged by what lands. Until leaders take full ownership of impact regardless of intention, they will keep damaging relationships they thought they were building.

"I don't care about your intent. I only feel your impact. And your impact is the only thing that is real in this conversation."

THE LISTENING DEFICIT

Do people in your organisation feel unheard — even by leaders who believe they have an open-door policy?

There is a difference between waiting for someone to finish speaking and actually listening to them. Most leaders are forming their response before the other person has made their point. The result is that people stop bringing their real problems, their real ideas, and their real concerns — because experience has taught them that nobody is actually listening. The open door means nothing if the mind behind it is already closed.

"Shut up and let people finish. Not because it's polite. Because everything you need to lead them better is in the part you keep interrupting."

THE AUTONOMY PARADOX

Are your managers so focused on getting things done the right way that they've stopped trusting their people to find their own way?

The most common leadership failure Brian sees is not incompetence — it is well-intentioned micromanagement. Leaders who were promoted for being brilliant at their craft and never taught the difference between directing an outcome and dictating a method. The moment you tell someone both what to do **and** how to do it, you have stopped leading and started blocking.

"You can tell me what to do, or how to do it — but not both. The moment you choose both, you've made the decision that your way matters more than their capability."

THE ONE-SIZE ILLUSION

Are your managers applying the same leadership approach to every person on their team — and frustrated when it doesn't land equally?

Most leadership training produces leaders who are consistent — meaning they treat everyone the same. But people are not the same. What motivates one person demotivates another. What feels like support to one feels like suffocation to another. The leaders who build the highest-performing cultures are not the most consistent — they are the most curious. They lead the individual, not the archetype.

"One size fits one. The day you stop treating your people as a category and start treating them as individuals is the day your culture actually changes."

THE ANSWER INSTINCT

Are your leaders solving problems their people are perfectly capable of solving themselves — and creating dependency in the process?

Leaders are promoted for having answers. So they keep giving them — long after the moment when giving answers stopped being leadership and started being interference. Every time a leader solves a problem their team member could have solved, they send a message: **I don't trust your capability**. The most effective leaders Brian has worked with ask more, tell less, and resist the instinct to be the smartest person in the room.

"You do not have the answer to their problem. You have an answer. And yours is almost always less powerful than the one already inside them."