

# Derek Sloan

## Transforming Organizations through Leadership Coaching and Therapeutic Insight

“Build resiliency in yourself and those around you.”

That’s the mantra **Derek Sloan**, LPCC, NCC, lives by — it’s also become the guiding principle for his work as a Licensed Therapist and Certified Master Life Coach.

As a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) and a National Certified Counselor (NCC), Derek provides mental health and behavioral health services to individuals, couples, and groups. He specializes in cognitive, existential, and a humanistic approach that helps clients find meaning and purpose in their lives, ultimately improving their mental health and quality of life.

His company **Derek Leads, LLC** helps executive leaders in top-level and industry-leading organizations, helping them enhance their emotional intelligence, communication skills, and decision-making abilities.

In addition to his counseling work, Derek hosts a popular podcast, “**Mental Stillness**,” available on Apple, Spotify, and YouTube, where he shares insights on mental health and leadership. He is also the author of “**The Resilience Playbook**,” a guide for prioritizing the psychological needs of every individual in the organization to maximize results and well-being.

Mirror Review recently interviewed Derek, who says, “My mission is to help organizations achieve their goals by prioritizing both leadership and mental health.”

**Mirror Review: Tell us about your background and career journey. What inspired you to step into leadership coaching?**

**Derek:** I spent 15 years of leadership in the nonprofit sector. Over time, I’ve built, sold, and founded multiple businesses. I found my way into coaching because I started noticing how rewarding it was to help empower people to solve complex problems in the marketplace. The opportunity to accompany someone on their journey, witnessing their growth and overcoming leadership and complex organizational challenges, is incredibly rewarding.



### Key Points

- Derek Sloan, LPCC, NCC, is dedicated to enhancing leadership dynamics and fostering personal growth through his roles as a Licensed Therapist and Certified Master Life Coach.
- With 15 years of experience in nonprofit leadership and degrees in Youth and Family Studies, Leadership, and Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Sloan offers a unique mix of skills in his coaching work.
- At Derek Leads, LLC, he helps top-level leaders improve their emotional intelligence, communication, and decision-making skills, focusing on the link between leadership and mental health.

Let's take a look at my academic qualifications:

I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Youth and Family Studies, a Master of Arts in Leadership, and a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

As for my licenses and credentials, I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, a National Certified Counselor, and a Certified Master Life Coach.

**Mirror Review: Based on your experience, what are the top 3 most pressing leadership challenges businesses face today? How have these challenges impacted overall business success?**

**Derek:** In my view, the first major challenge is engagement. We are in the midst of an engagement crisis. As leaders, we need to gauge our team's engagement levels. Questions like 'Are we attracting talent?' and 'Are we retaining that talent?' become crucial. Equally important is whether we're able to articulate a compelling vision.

The second challenge is empowerment, which always follows trust. Employees are at their best when they're given a part of the business to take ownership of and steward. I've observed that people tend to disengage or "quiet quit" when they can't link their role to the broader impact of the business.

As leaders, we must help our team connect their day-to-day to the broader vision/mission of the organization. We need to do this ALL the time. It's not just about onboarding new employees but also about keeping our seasoned employees inspired and engaged.

The third challenge is empathy. Maintaining a fresh perspective is key. It is quite remarkable to see how productive people can be, even when faced with the most daunting challenges if they feel understood and valued.

**Mirror Review: Could you please tell us about the leadership problems that Derek Leads, LLC helps to solve? What makes your coaching different?**

**Derek:** Derek Leads, LLC helps with many leadership problems. These include fixing unhealthy organizational culture, helping leaders avoid burnout, identifying blind spots in leadership or teams, and providing guidance when there are too many problems or when it's hard to know where to start.

We offer one-on-one coaching for leaders, workshops, training sessions, personal assessments, and assessments for whole organizations.

Evidence-based approaches are necessary in therapy, and in my opinion coaching as well. I've greatly benefited in this field due to my career in high-level leadership and as a clinician. This gives me a unique understanding that helps me connect with my clients on a deeper level.

**Mirror Review: Can you please let us know what type of clients approach you? What are their most common pain points?**

**Derek:** The clients who typically approach me are business owners who find themselves stuck due to various reasons. Often, these are individuals leading teams, facing specific issues, or have reached a plateau. I also work with clients who are grappling with engagement and culture issues within their organizations.

Additionally, I assist those who have achieved significant success but find themselves at a career crossroads. This could be due to a shift in the organization's direction or the leader's attempt to strategize for the latter half of their career.

**Mirror Review: As the leader of the company, could you share your primary roles and responsibilities? We'd also love to hear about your notable awards and achievements.**

**Derek:** My primary responsibility at the company is to provide leadership coaching and consulting. When I'm not engaged in coaching, I spend my time visiting organizations and interacting directly with leaders. This allows me to gain a deeper understanding of them and the challenges they face.

As for my awards and achievements, I was invited to speak at the state conference for the Kentucky Counseling Association on the topic of complex grief in 2021.

Additionally, in 2024, I was interviewed by another publication as a leading voice to discuss the current trends in coaching.

**Mirror Review: Could you share some examples of how your coaching has benefited your current or past clients?**

**Derek:** I have had the opportunity to help several leaders at crucial junctures in their careers. My approach involves helping individuals identify the obstacles hindering their personal or professional progress. I work closely with my

clients to unearth these barriers. Together, we dig deep, assess, and eliminate these obstacles, paving the way for them to move forward.

I believe that sometimes, people just need someone to share the load with them. When you acknowledge the immense talent and creativity in people, problem-solving becomes a rewarding process.

**Mirror Review: In your experience, what common mistakes do leaders often make when trying to motivate their teams, and how can they avoid them?**

**Derek:** I believe the term 'inspiration' is more fitting than 'motivation' in this context. In my interactions, I've found that people possess amazing talent. These individuals have years of experience and typically have a desire to grow. I suggest that supervisors, bosses, or managers need a shift in mindset. They should ask themselves, "*What if I stopped worrying about 'motivating' and spent more time 'inspiring'?*"

In practical terms, individuals feel inspired when they see their supervisor demonstrate the vision and values of the organization. They feel inspired when their supervisor dares to show vulnerability. They feel inspired when they are trusted with a significant part of the business and understand that their work has real-world implications.

Lastly, individuals feel inspired when their supervisor is observant and notices when they are actively living out the vision/values.

**Mirror Review: How do you manage to have a perfect work-life balance? What are your hobbies/interests beyond the cabin?**

**Derek:** The concept of work-life balance has often been criticized and even deemed impossible. However, I think this comes down to a weak definition or misunderstanding of the concept.

Work-life balance isn't about a perfectly balanced scale of 50% work and 50% life. I don't think this idea resonates with people, and it's practically impossible to measure or evaluate.

Instead, I believe the goal should be to eliminate distractions and strive for efficiency. It's easy for your mind to wander when you're at work, leading to

inefficient behaviors. The same can happen at home, where your body is present, but your mind is still at your desk. My advice is not to settle. Remind yourself that you're always on the clock, whether at work or at home.

Your boss wouldn't be thrilled if you were on the clock at two places at once, and your family shouldn't have to accept that either.

As for my hobbies, I enjoy playing in the driveway with my kids, traveling with my family, and going on golf trips with my friends.

**Mirror Review: As a renowned leadership coach, could you share three tips for today's business leaders?**

**Derek: Tip #1: Understand the basics of psychology** - This doesn't necessarily require formal education or certification, although that can be tremendously helpful. A basic understanding of psychology can broaden your impact as a coach. It also helps you stay grounded and humble, recognizing that human beings are dynamic and complex. The field of psychology takes you on a wild adventure with so many different perspectives and explanations for human behavior.

**Tip #2: Become curious before you become convinced** - We often make judgments or decisions in a fraction of a second. There are some situations where this can work in our favor. However, I think this can impair our judgment. We must fight against this when we are working with people because they are complex, and their lived experience is so different than ours. Force yourself to lead with curiosity before you settle into a decision or judgment.

**Tip #3: Establish a way to measure progress** - As a coach, you need to define your success metrics. Similarly, you should encourage your client to determine their own success metrics. These may sometimes align, and other times differ. It's beneficial to discuss these metrics together to ensure mutual understanding. This will allow you, as the coach, to challenge and encourage more easily. The client will understand the WHY behind your coaching guidance. There is also accountability when these are verbalized.

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