GET2LEAD

Leadership Manifesto

Uwe-Jens Karl

2026

GET2LEAD

> I have been leading people for three decades – in Germany, Russia and Romania. Today, around 400 colleagues work with me. This is not a textbook. It is what I have said over the years to journalists and in my own writing – and what has held up in everyday work. Where I quote myself, the source is given.

01

People grow when they know where they stand.

Almost every boss thinks they are a good boss. So do I. Very few of us have ever checked. The higher you sit, the less often anyone tells you, unasked, what isn't working. That's human, and it's dangerous. So I don't wait for the truth to find me. I ask – in the corridor, in meetings, sometimes uncomfortably directly. Where I can, I look at numbers rather than my gut. Only when I know where I stand can I get better. The same goes for my team.

> **I believe good leadership starts with knowing where you stand. Most of us think we lead well – few of us have ever checked.**
>
> — uwekarl.de, 2026

> **Honest feedback gets rarer the higher you climb, so I made it a habit to look for it, and to measure what I can.**
>
> — uwekarl.de, 2026

02

Name your strengths, work on your gaps openly.

Looking back over three decades, I think of the teams that grew fastest. They didn't have the best CVs. But everyone knew what they were good at – and said out loud what they still lacked. That needs a place where you can admit you don't know something without being looked at sideways. Building that place is my job. A good strategy doesn't help much if the people carrying it out can't judge themselves honestly. In the end, the work on the line decides, not the slide.

> **…the teams that grew fastest were the ones where people knew their strengths, named their gaps and worked on them openly.**
>
> — uwekarl.de, 2026

> **Strategic vision matters, but it only works when it is paired with self-knowledge and hands-on execution.**
>
> — uwekarl.de, 2026

03

Growth the team doesn't feel isn't growth.

I have been at our plant since 2009. Revenue has grown two and a half times since then, and I'm proud of that. But I'm prouder of the people who made it happen. We are one of the bigger employers in town, and I want people to like working with us. It's also plain common sense: good people aren't getting easier to find. I don't expect us to be twice as many in ten years. So growth has to come from the team we already have – and the team has to get something out of it.

> **Growth the team doesn't feel isn't growth I'm interested in.**
>
> — LinkedIn, 2026

> **The labour shortage is one of the biggest challenges we currently face. And the way things look, I do not expect us to double the number of employees in the next ten years.**
>
> — Forbes România, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

04

In a crisis, hold the long compass.

I've lived through a few crises. 2022 was one of the hardest: war next door, expensive energy, supply chains snapping. Much of our raw material comes from far away, so we feel every disruption at once. I said honestly at the time that we were more reactive than I liked. Still, we didn't send the plant on holiday; we kept working. What I took from it: a bad quarter is no reason to change direction. If you switch goals with every storm, you never arrive.

> **For me it is important not to lose my long-term compass because of temporary disruptions.**
>
> — Forbes România, 2022 · Translated from Romanian

> **We have been through many crises in the past and come out of them hardened, but the current one is far more complex.**
>
> — Forbes România, 2022 · Translated from Romanian

05

Work honestly with what you have.

Not every phase is a phase of take-off. In 2026 our costs rose, the market wasn't growing in volume, and part of the land we wanted to build on now lies in the path of a bypass. Wishful thinking doesn't help there. We absorbed the costs internally first and only adjusted prices late and moderately. And we focused on what we had: the new hall, the new lines. With them, we produce more today than before. Sometimes good leadership simply means using what's already there properly.

> **The current priorities are therefore to optimise the resources available and to make the most of the investments already under way.**
>
> — Forbes România, 2026 · Translated from Romanian

> **With this expansion we managed to increase production, even in a market that has stagnated in volume terms.**
>
> — Forbes România, 2026 · Translated from Romanian

06

Leadership takes courage.

Managing the status quo is comfortable. You make few mistakes, and you still don't move. I don't want that. For me, courage isn't about volume. It means knowing where you want to go and deciding before every question is answered. The risk is never zero. I know the moment when a new idea just won't go quiet, however many reasons speak against it. That's when it's time. If you wait another round, you leave the decision to someone else.

> **That clarity is what lets me drive change instead of maintaining the status quo.**
>
> — uwekarl.de, 2026

> **You know that feeling when the new thing gets louder than the reasons to postpone it? That's the moment.**
>
> — LinkedIn, 2026

07

Invest before the market proves it.

In 2024 we almost doubled the floor space of our plant, from our own funds, with more automation. Many would have waited. I didn't, because I could see where retail was heading. A few years earlier, private labels were a side business for us. By early 2026 they made up nearly a third of our sales. Then there's export: a good share of what we make now goes to other countries. Had we waited until everyone could see it, we would have been too late.

> **We expect private labels to grow in the future, so we will invest in that direction.**
>
> — Ziarul Financiar, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

> **We also want to go to other retailers, even in other countries.**
>
> — Ziarul Financiar, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

08

Starting beats overthinking.

I've known Romania since I was eight. My parents worked in Bucharest. In 1981 I came back for a year of study, at a time when there was hardly anything to buy. In 2009 I came a third time – this time to stay. At first I commuted; today I live in Curtea de Argeș. Over the years I've learned a lot from both sides. We Germans plan thoroughly and then often let it be. Here, people just start. I try to combine the two: prepare carefully, then really get going.

> **Students lived “on ration cards”, the shops were empty.**
>
> — Business Magazin, 2023 · Translated from Romanian

> **While the average German analyses all the risks of a possible business and decides it is better not to open it, the Romanian has already got to work.**
>
> — Business Magazin, 2023 · Translated from Romanian

09

Digitalisation is a must, not an option.

For me, digitalisation isn't an IT project you tick off one day. It makes our processes better, and sometimes something entirely new comes out of it. One idea I enjoyed a lot in 2024: customers putting together their own spice blend in an app. Meanwhile, online sales in our industry keep growing strongly year after year. I don't think in quarters. Whether a trend holds often shows only after ten years. My job is to look early enough and bring my team along.

> **“Digitalisation is the result of technological evolution, and we see it as a mandatory source of more efficient business processes. Sometimes it is even the basis for developing new concepts and services.**
>
> — Revista Progresiv, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

> **“… my time horizon is longer, ten years. That is roughly the period in which trends consolidate and establish themselves – or don’t.**
>
> — Revista Progresiv, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

10

There is no such thing as “the” person.

I first put this thought into words about our customers. There is no typical buyer; everyone lives differently, wants different things, needs different things. I've come to see that the same is true of leadership. Around 400 people work with me, and none of them is an average. Some want responsibility, some want reliability, others simply want a fair boss. Treat everyone the same and you do justice to no one. So I listen before I decide what someone needs.

> **“The buyer” does not exist as a uniform, monolithic pattern.**
>
> — Revista Progresiv, 2024 · Translated from Romanian

> **About 400 people work with me. As one of the larger employers in town, I want them glad they stayed.**
>
> — LinkedIn, 2026

Leadership is not a state, it is a practice. I keep practising.

Sources and evidence

Quotes in the original language. Translations by the UJK bot, marked as such. Own website and LinkedIn: accessed 2026.

1. People grow when they know where they stand.

„I believe good leadership starts with knowing where you stand. Most of us think we lead well – few of us have ever checked.“ (EN) — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

„Honest feedback gets rarer the higher you climb, so I made it a habit to look for it, and to measure what I can.“ (EN) — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

2. Name your strengths, work on your gaps openly.

„…the teams that grew fastest were the ones where people knew their strengths, named their gaps and worked on them openly.“ (EN) — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

„Strategic vision matters, but it only works when it is paired with self-knowledge and hands-on execution.“ (EN) — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

3. Growth the team doesn't feel isn't growth.

„Growth the team doesn't feel isn't growth I'm interested in.“ (EN) — LinkedIn, 2026 · https://www.linkedin.com/in/ujkarl

„Lipsa forței de muncă este una dintre cele mai mari provocări cu care ne confruntăm în prezent. Și, la cum arată situația, nu mă aștept ca în următorii 10 ani să dublăm numărul angajaților.“ (RO) — Forbes România, 12.09.2024 · https://www.forbes.ro/fuchs-condimente-romania-a-finalizat-extinderea-fabricii-sale-din-curtea-de-arges-408179

Further facts in the text: Revenue up by a factor of 2.5 since the plant opened in 2009; Romanians experienced as very welcoming. — Interesul Argeșean (nach Business Magazin), 04.12.2023 · https://interesargesean.ro/uwe-jens-karl-managing-director-fuchs-romania-o-diferenta-marcanta-intre-nemti-si-romani-este-si-simtul-de-afaceri-diferit/

Further facts in the text: Expansion from 11,084 to 21,338 m², automation; c. 30% of production exported to about 20 countries; private labels 30–35% of business; temporary staffing planned due to labour shortage. — Forbes România, 12.09.2024 · https://www.forbes.ro/fuchs-condimente-romania-a-finalizat-extinderea-fabricii-sale-din-curtea-de-arges-408179

4. In a crisis, hold the long compass.

„Pentru mine este important să nu-mi pierd compasul pe termen lung din cauza unor perturbări temporare.“ (RO) — Forbes România, 04.07.2022 · https://www.forbes.ro/uwe-jens-karl-general-manager-fuchs-condimente-romania-ma-ingrijoreaza-in-mod-fundamental-incapacitatea-liderilor-politici-din-tarile-occidentale-de-a-demonstra-bold-leadership-273732

„Am trecut și am ieșit călițI din multe crize în trecut, dar cea actuală este una mult mai complexă.“ (RO) — Forbes România, 04.07.2022 · https://www.forbes.ro/uwe-jens-karl-general-manager-fuchs-condimente-romania-ma-ingrijoreaza-in-mod-fundamental-incapacitatea-liderilor-politici-din-tarile-occidentale-de-a-demonstra-bold-leadership-273732

Further facts in the text: No corporate holidays, operating all year; raw materials mostly from across the ocean; first five months of 2022 well below expectations, a year level with the last would be a success. — Forbes România, 04.07.2022 · https://www.forbes.ro/uwe-jens-karl-general-manager-fuchs-condimente-romania-ma-ingrijoreaza-in-mod-fundamental-incapacitatea-liderilor-politici-din-tarile-occidentale-de-a-demonstra-bold-leadership-273732

5. Work honestly with what you have.

„Prin urmare, prioritățile actuale sunt optimizarea resurselor disponibile și valorificarea investițiilor deja demarate.“ (RO) — Forbes România, 12.08.2026 · https://www.forbes.ro/exclusiv-fuchs-condimente-romania-mizeaza-pe-segmentul-private-label-in-primele-luni-din-2026-acesta-a-reprezentat-aproximativ-30-din-cifra-neta-din-total-vanzari-516261

„Prin această extindere, am reușit să creștem producția, chiar și într-un context de piață stagnat din punct de vedere cantitativ.“ (RO) — Forbes România, 12.08.2026 · https://www.forbes.ro/exclusiv-fuchs-condimente-romania-mizeaza-pe-segmentul-private-label-in-primele-luni-din-2026-acesta-a-reprezentat-aproximativ-30-din-cifra-neta-din-total-vanzari-516261

Further facts in the text: Costs first absorbed through internal optimisation, then a moderate 5–6% price adjustment below inflation (per company representatives); expansion land blocked by a bypass road. — Forbes România, 12.08.2026 · https://www.forbes.ro/exclusiv-fuchs-condimente-romania-mizeaza-pe-segmentul-private-label-in-primele-luni-din-2026-acesta-a-reprezentat-aproximativ-30-din-cifra-neta-din-total-vanzari-516261

6. Leadership takes courage.

„That clarity is what lets me drive change instead of maintaining the status quo.“ (EN) — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

„You know that feeling when the new thing gets louder than the reasons to postpone it? That's the moment.“ (EN) — LinkedIn, 2026 · https://www.linkedin.com/in/ujkarl

Further facts in the text: Clarity enables change instead of the status quo (own website). — uwekarl.de, 2026 · https://uwekarl.de/

7. Invest before the market proves it.

„Ne aşteptăm la creşterea de mărci private în viitor, ca urmare vom investi în această direcţie.“ (RO) — Ziarul Financiar, 13.09.2024 · https://www.zf.ro/companii/grupul-german-fuchs-care-a-finalizat-o-investitie-de-8-5-mil-euro-22484967

„Vrem să mergem şi către alţi retaileri, chiar şi din alte ţări.“ (RO) — Ziarul Financiar, 13.09.2024 · https://www.zf.ro/companii/grupul-german-fuchs-care-a-finalizat-o-investitie-de-8-5-mil-euro-22484967

Further facts in the text: Investment from own funds; private labels 5–10% three or four years ago, now 30–35%. — Ziarul Financiar, 13.09.2024 · https://www.zf.ro/companii/grupul-german-fuchs-care-a-finalizat-o-investitie-de-8-5-mil-euro-22484967

Further facts in the text: Capacity up c. 60%; planned solar panels; new products for Generation Z; online retail increasingly relevant. — Profit.ro, 11.09.2024 · https://www.profit.ro/insider/companii/uwe-jens-karl-fuchs-condimente-despre-extinderea-fabrici-va-creste-capacitatea-de-productie-cu-circa-60-vom-investi-si-in-panouri-fotovoltaice-planuri-pentru-intrarea-pe-noi-piete-21729755

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8. Starting beats overthinking.

„Studenţii trăiau «pe cartele», magazinele erau goale.“ (RO) — Business Magazin, 19.11.2023 · https://www.zf.ro/profesii/business-magazin-cum-a-ajuns-uwe-jens-karl-managing-director-la-22194523

„În timp ce germanul de rând analizează toate riscurile unui eventual business şi decide mai bine să nu-l deschidă, românul s-a apucat deja de treabă.“ (RO) — Business Magazin, 19.11.2023 · https://www.zf.ro/profesii/business-magazin-cum-a-ajuns-uwe-jens-karl-managing-director-la-22194523

Further facts in the text: At 8, three years in Bucharest with his parents (GDR embassy); a year of study in 1981; working in Romania since 2009, first commuting, now settled in Curtea de Argeș. — Business Magazin, 19.11.2023 · https://www.zf.ro/profesii/business-magazin-cum-a-ajuns-uwe-jens-karl-managing-director-la-22194523

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9. Digitalisation is a must, not an option.

„Digitalizarea este rezultatul evoluției tehnologice și o vedem ca pe o sursă obligatorie pentru eficientizarea proceselor de business. Uneori, chiar stă la baza dezvoltării unor noi concepte și servicii.“ (RO) — Revista Progresiv, 08.07.2024 · https://revistaprogresiv.ro/interviuri/fmcg/uwe-jens-karl-fuchs-condimente-digitalizarea-o-sursa-obligatorie-pentru-eficientizarea-proceselor-de-business/

„… orizontul meu de timp este mai lung, zece ani. Cam aceasta este perioada în care trendurile se consolidează / se afirmă sau nu.“ (RO) — Revista Progresiv, 08.07.2024 · https://revistaprogresiv.ro/interviuri/fmcg/uwe-jens-karl-fuchs-condimente-digitalizarea-o-sursa-obligatorie-pentru-eficientizarea-proceselor-de-business/

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10. There is no such thing as “the” person.

„„Cumpărătorul” nu există ca un tipar uniform, monolit.“ (RO) — Revista Progresiv, 08.07.2024 · https://revistaprogresiv.ro/interviuri/fmcg/uwe-jens-karl-fuchs-condimente-digitalizarea-o-sursa-obligatorie-pentru-eficientizarea-proceselor-de-business/

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