



Gahanath Pandithage
Group Managing Director
and CEO at DIMO

DIMO CREDITS TRUST-LED LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR DECADES-LONG PARTNERSHIPS

Transparent leadership, culture, and brand stewardship are core to sustaining global relationships.

In global business, contracts are meant to protect. They are detailed, precise, and often exhaustive. But speak to anyone who has built something that lasts, and they will tell you this: the real glue is not in the paperwork. It is in trust of the leadership.

At DIMO, trust is the invisible architecture of our leadership. It is the conviction that our leaders will prioritise the long-term health of our partnerships over short-term gains. This brand of leadership trust transforms a contract from a rigid set of rules into a living, breathing partnership. It is why global giants trust us with their legacies; they aren't just partnering with a balance sheet, they are partnering with a leadership culture that views integrity as its most liquid asset.

Gahanath Pandithage, Group Managing Director and CEO at DIMO, firmly believes in trust as the cornerstone of success, stating, "Trust is the most overlooked, misunderstood, and underutilised asset to enable performance. At DIMO, we make it our competitive advantage."

Where It All Begins

DIMO's story goes back to 1939. Today, it represents a portfolio of global World's best engineered principals Mercedes-Benz, Tata Motors, Siemens, Komatsu, Jeep, MTU, Zeiss, KSB among others. Some of these partnerships have lasted over 60 or even 80 years. That kind of longevity doesn't happen by chance.

"A contract gets you into the room, but trust keeps you there," Pandithage says, almost matter-of-factly. "From the beginning, our founders weren't just looking for

brands. They were looking for partners."

It's a subtle but important distinction. Because representing a global brand isn't just about selling products. It's about carrying its reputation into a market often far from where it was built.

"When a principal chooses you, they're asking a deeper question," he explains. "Will you protect this brand the way we would?" That responsibility sits at the heart of how DIMO operates.

What Trust Looks Like in Practice

It's easy to talk about trust when things are going well. The real test comes when they aren't.

Sri Lanka's recent economic challenges put many companies and their global relationships to the test. Markets became uncertain. Decisions slowed down. Some principals took a step back. DIMO didn't.

“We didn’t pretend everything was fine,” Pandithage says. “We shared what was happening openly. The risks, the pressures, what we were doing about it.” That openness mattered.

“When you are transparent, even in difficult times, people trust your intent. They know you are not hiding anything. And that builds confidence.”

It’s a simple idea, but not always an easy one to execute especially when the stakes are high.

● **The Tone from the Top**

At DIMO, trust isn’t managed through systems alone. It starts with leadership. “The tone of trust is set at the top,” Pandithage says. “If leadership is consistent, transparent, and accountable, that flows through the entire organisation.” It’s what turns trust from a concept into a culture.

Inside the company, this shows up in small, everyday ways. People are encouraged to speak up. Problems are addressed, not buried. Decisions are made with a longer-term view in mind.

“It becomes the default way of thinking,” he explains. “Not ‘what can we get away with?’ but ‘what is the right thing to do?’” Over time, that consistency builds something more powerful than policy — credibility.

● **Speed, Cost, and Confidence**

Pandithage refers to an idea from Stephen M.R. Covey’s “The Speed of Trust”, that when trust goes up, speed increases and costs come down.

“You see it clearly in business,” he says. “In low-trust relationships, everything slows down. More checks, more approvals, more hesitation.” Anyone who has worked in such an environment would recognise it instantly. “But when trust is high, decisions happen faster. You don’t second-guess every move. You can focus on moving forward.”

For DIMO, that trust has translated into agility — especially when working with

global principals who rely on local partners to act decisively.

● **Stewardship Over Ownership**

One word comes up repeatedly in the conversation: stewardship. “We don’t see ourselves as owners of these brands,” Pandithage says. “We are custodians.” It’s a mindset that shifts how decisions are made.

Whether it’s investing in after-sales service, maintaining genuine parts, or training teams to global standards, the focus is always on protecting the long-term value of the brand — even when the short-term gains might lie elsewhere.

“There are always easier ways to make money,” he admits. “But if you compromise on quality, you compromise trust. And once that goes, everything else follows.” This is particularly important for a company like DIMO, which operates across sectors — from automotive and engineering to healthcare, agriculture, and renewable energy. The complexity is high, but the principle remains the same.

● **Trust That Travels Across Borders**

For global principals sitting in Germany, USA, India, China, or elsewhere, the challenge is often distance. They rely on local partners to represent them with the same standards they would uphold themselves.

“That confidence doesn’t come overnight,” Pandithage says. “It’s built over years, sometimes decades of doing what you said you would do.”

Research backs this up. The Edelman Trust Barometer points to “ability” and “integrity” as the two core drivers of trust. DIMO’s approach seems to sit squarely at that intersection — technical excellence paired with a strong ethical foundation.

“You have to be good at what you do,” he says. “But you also have to be good in how you do it.”

● **In a World Moving Faster**

As businesses globally lean into AI, auto-

mation, and digital systems, there is a tendency to assume that human elements will matter less. Pandithage sees it differently. “Technology can make you more efficient,” he says. “But it cannot build relationships.”

If anything, he believes the human side of business is becoming more valuable. “Because when everything else is optimised, what remains is trust — how people feel about working with you.”

For DIMO, that trust has opened doors into new areas of growth, from agribusiness to renewable energy to healthcare. Partners are willing to explore these spaces together because there is already a foundation in place. “They know how we operate. They know what we stand for. That reduces uncertainty.”

● **The Asset You Can’t Measure**

If you look at a balance sheet, you won’t find trust listed anywhere. There is no line item for it. No valuation. And yet, for DIMO, it may be the most important asset it has.

Leadership trust is the invisible engine that drives this value. It is the currency of credibility that flows from the boardroom to the front lines.

“Trust allows us to think bigger,” Pandithage says. “It gives us the confidence to take on challenges, knowing we are not alone.”

In a country like Sri Lanka, where businesses have had to navigate volatility, that kind of confidence matters. It is a product of consistent leadership behaviour — where actions align with words even when the stakes are high. Because in the end, trust isn’t built in easy times. It is forged through leadership resilience during difficult moments — when decisions are harder, when pressure is higher, and when the easier path isn’t the right one.

For DIMO, that has been the difference. Not just in building partnerships that last, but in becoming the kind of partner the world continues to believe in. ●