



EMAIL INTERVIEW LEADERSHIP

Building a Caring Company Without Losing Performance



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In this exclusive CanadianSME Small Business Magazine interview, **Dominique Tremblay**, humanistic leader, CEO & Co-Owner of **PMB** in Saint-Henri-de-Lévis, Québec, shares how trust, vulnerability, and clear values reshaped a traditional machining business into a “caring company” where autonomy and relationships come before rigid control. Drawing on his unconventional path—

from theology and ethics to entrepreneurship—Dominique explains how abandoning quote-heavy bureaucracy for trust-based pricing, empowering frontline teams to decide and improve, and redefining success beyond profit have strengthened PMB's financial performance, innovation, and resilience, while offering a practical roadmap for SME owners who feel their own way of working needs to change.

Humanistic leader, committed entrepreneur, father of three teenagers, black belt in Kenpo, and an absolute geek... Dominique Tremblay has an unusual background: a very entrepreneurial family, studies in theology, ethics, and technical drafting, and very diverse work experiences. Through these, Dominique learned that trust, vulnerability, and clarity of values are the pillars of a living and high-performing organization. He is now CEO and co-owner of PMB, in Saint-Henri-de-Lévis, Québec.

You describe PMB as a “caring company” working in a liberated enterprise mode. In practical terms, how does this philosophy change day-to-day decisions, such as pricing, quotes, or operational priorities, compared with a traditional management model?

The term “caring company” comes from the authors Isaac Getz and Laurent Marbacher. Our philosophy changes the focus of the company. Rather than having purely transactional relationships, we work to take care of our customers (who become friends most of the time), of our suppliers, our community and each other. Of course, we need money and profit to be functional, but we see profit as the consequence of the true value we create.

So all our old structures that existed to control and check on our employees have been left behind. We rebuilt structures to facilitate the autonomy of the workers and equip them to take many operational and organizational decisions on a daily basis; with the end goal to take care of our clients and the rest of our ecosystem. We trust them.

It truly changes the way we do business also. Most of our business comes from purchase orders that don't have an amount of money written on them. Our

customers just send us the plans and quantity that they need, and they will know the price around the time the parts are delivered. Traditionally, there is so much time wasted on the quotation process, for the customers and suppliers. If everyone trusts each other instead and wants the other to succeed, we can rather talk about targets and price structures, and get back to that when adjustments are necessary.

Many leaders worry that being caring might mean compromising on efficiency or profitability. From your experience, how can a company be both deeply human-focused and highly performant on production, quality and delivery?

Many leaders worry that caring for people means sacrificing efficiency or profitability, but my experience shows the opposite. When you put people first—really listen, trust, and give them space to use their talents—performance actually improves. At PMB, we chose to share information openly, involve everyone in decisions, and focus on dialogue. It wasn't always easy; sometimes it meant tough conversations or taking risks that felt uncomfortable. But over time, this approach built trust, creativity, and a sense of ownership. People who feel respected and valued don't just "punch in"—they bring their best ideas and energy. We've seen that a deeply human workplace leads to better retention, more innovation, and yes, strong results in production, quality, and delivery. It's not about being soft; it's about being coherent—aligning what we say with what we do. When you lead with heart and clarity, you don't have to choose between caring and performance. In fact, they feed each other. The real challenge isn't balancing the two—it's having the courage to believe they belong together.

PMB assumes employees are responsible, trustworthy, and closest to the work, which is quite different from command-and-control models. How do you support career development and engagement so people feel safe taking initiative and proposing creative solutions?

At PMB, we start from a simple but powerful belief: people are responsible and closest to the action, so they're best placed to improve how we work. Supporting career development and engagement isn't about adding layers of approval—it's about creating the right environment for trust and growth. We invest time in regular, honest conversations, not just annual reviews. Everyone gets feedback, coaching, and the chance to reflect on their strengths and what energizes them. We encourage people to move between roles, try new things, and even make mistakes—because that's where learning happens.

We also make sure information flows freely. When people have access to the real numbers, the challenges, and the “why” behind decisions, they feel respected and included. That's when they start proposing creative solutions, not just following orders. Safety comes from knowing you won't be punished for trying, and that your ideas matter—even if they're not perfect. Over time, this builds a culture where initiative is normal, not exceptional. The goal isn't to control every move, but to help each person grow, contribute, and feel proud of what we build together. That's how engagement and innovation become part of our DNA.

You've written a book titled “Pour arrêter de se tuer à l'ouvrage” (“To Stop Working Yourself to Death”). What pushed you to write it, and what mindset shifts do you think entrepreneurs need to make if they truly want to lead in a more caring way?

What pushed me to write “Pour arrêter de se tuer à l'ouvrage” was seeing too many talented people—myself included—burn out or lose their spark because work had become just a race for survival. I grew up watching people “punch in” every day, sacrificing their health, families, and even their sense of meaning, just to keep up. After leading PMB through its own transformation, I realized we needed to talk honestly about how work can either drain us or help us grow. Writing the book was my way of sharing both the struggles and the hope that things can be different.

For entrepreneurs who want to lead in a more caring way, the biggest mindset shift is to stop believing that performance and humanity are at odds. You have to move from control to trust, from secrecy to transparency, and from seeing

people as “resources” to seeing them as partners. It’s about letting go of the myth that you need all the answers, and instead, listening deeply and inviting others to help build the path forward. Care isn’t a weakness—it’s the foundation for real, sustainable success. Start by asking yourself: “What kind of workplace would I want for the people I love?” Then have the courage to build it.

Looking back at PMB’s transformation, what concrete business results or cultural changes convince you that this caring-company approach works, and what advice would you offer other SME owners who feel something needs to change but don’t know where to start?

Looking back, the results speak for themselves. Since embracing a caring-company approach, PMB has seen stronger financial performance, higher retention, and a workplace where people genuinely want to contribute. We’ve won industry awards—not just for production or quality, but for being a place where people thrive. The atmosphere is lighter, people smile more, and problems get solved faster because everyone feels responsible for the outcome. When you trust people and give them space, they step up. We’ve seen more innovation, better teamwork, and a resilience that helped us get through tough times, like the pandemic.

For SME owners who feel something needs to change but don’t know where to start, my advice is simple: begin with honest conversations. Ask your team what’s working, what’s not, and what would help them do their best work. Share information openly—even the tough stuff. Don’t wait for a perfect plan; take small steps, and be ready to adjust. Lead with your values, not just your targets. It takes courage, and sometimes it feels risky, but the payoff is real. When you put people first, business results follow. Start by listening, and let trust and dialogue do their work.

PMB’s story is featured in a new book *The Caring Company (Wiley)*, by Isaac Getz and Laurent Marbacher

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Cmarketing Inc
6345 Dixie Rd, Unit 202, Mississauga, ON L5T 2E6

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