

Feature

To lead others well, do it with heart

When you lead from the heart, you put people and relationships first. Work matters, but the people matter more and the results speak for themselves. Research from organizations such as Gallup, for example, consistently shows that leaders who put people first drive high levels of employee engagement and performance from all.

Effective people leadership begins with heart. Here are three ways to do it well:

1. Connect with your people.

To lead with heart, start with those you lead: build personal connections and cultivate meaningful relationships with them.

Doing it effectively means getting to know your team members and taking the time to listen and to learn. For example: Who are they? What do they care about? What are they especially good at? How and what do they most love to contribute? What causes them to struggle?

To put people and relationships first, you also need to commit the time for more personal, one-to-one connections. Team meetings and regular check-ins with everyone are naturally important, but not enough.

As you take the time and interest to get to know each member of your staff, pay close attention to what matters to them. Then, you can begin to evolve your conversations, relationships and feedback to best support each person's continued growth, development, performance and success.

The process will also enable you to acknowledge the real-world experiences your people may be encountering – whether they are meeting with resounding success you want to celebrate or needing greater clarity and insight about a challenging path ahead.

2. Be fully present, with and for your people.

When it comes to leading with heart, you must be fully present – with body, mind and heart.

Being 'fully present' is about all the ways you give people your complete, undivided attention. It is about committing to 'being there' for them – whether you are together physically or connected through technology.

While this may seem like an easy undertaking, we know from employees how frequently they find themselves struggling because they are not being seen or heard by their leaders in ways that suggest their voice matters. When that happens, there is an adverse effect on employee engagement and performance.

What do you notice about your own habits and the ways in which you are present (or not) to your people?

For example, when you dedicate time to a conversation, do you give it your full attention? Or are you more likely to be distracted by wandering thoughts, incoming messages and alerts, or the next item on your to-do list? Are you a fully present, active listener? As simple as it may sound, being present is harder than you think.

Leading with heart requires your presence and your whole-hearted attention. Challenge yourself to do it with your team members and see what happens when you do.



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Feature continued**3. Show your people how much you care.**

When it comes to leading others, your competence as a leader naturally plays a role; however, it is not enough. Team members also want to know you care about them – personally and professionally.

For example, they want to know you are prepared to invest time in getting to know your people and what they are good at (as well as allowing them to get to know you). They also want to know that you are prepared to be open, honest and real with them – and willing to invite the same in return.

'People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.'

John C. Maxwell

One of the best ways to show you care is by 'encouraging' your team members. Whether your purpose is to encourage even more success or provide words of inspiration and hope when someone may be struggling, your encouragement plays an essential role in enabling everyone to do their best.

When practiced regularly and consistently, encouragement translates to hope and courage when it is needed most. Ultimately, encouragement leads to the kind of team efforts and outcomes that are truly remarkable.

Leading from the heart is one of the most powerful ways you can inspire the best from those you lead. The key to doing it well begins with putting people first. Work still matters, but the people you lead matter more. If you are keen to lead with heart, put your emphasis on these three people-first practices: build personal connections; be fully present; and show how much you care -- for their wellbeing, as well as their work. Do it consistently and you will be sure to bring out the best in everyone you lead.

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