

LEADING FROM THE HEART

BY WES FRIESEN

Experience and evidence show that the most effective leaders have learned how to lead from their hearts. Heart leaders are great at making people feel special, giving them a sense of purpose and making them feel appreciated for who they are and what they do. Leading from the heart is consistent with the servant leader philosophy that results in positive relationships and better results. Leading from the head by getting tasks done via planning, organizing systems and processes, and holding people accountable is needed. But for maximum results, we need to follow the John Maxwell advice that we “go to touch a heart before asking for a hand”:

How Can We Lead from Our Hearts?

I appreciate this quote from Chick-fil-A CEO Mark Miller, “The heart is a muscle, and you strengthen muscles by using them. The more I lead with my heart, the stronger it gets.” So, how do we strengthen our heart muscle and lead well from it? Here are 10 practical ideas to consider:

1. Show People That You Care About Them. People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care. If we treat people as a means to an end, we’ll never have their loyalty. Instead, we can show people we care by being sensitive to their interests, wishes, needs, and challenges and getting to know them personally. We can make time for people and demonstrate support when “life happens” — including sickness for employees or their loved ones, doctor appointments, and other sources of stress. We can encourage people by

saying kind words; sending cards, notes, texts, and emails; and being flexible with work schedules and allowing people time off when needed. I would suggest that, in a nutshell, showing people we care is about consistently practicing the Golden Rule: proactively treating people positively like we would like to be.

2. Put People First. As leaders, we are ultimately paid to get things done (results). But *how* we get results is important, and prioritizing people and treating them well will help us get better results in the short term and the long term. Putting people first includes recognizing and appreciating their efforts. Recent research by Globoforce found 78% of workers said they would work harder if their efforts were better recognized and appreciated. And when we put people first we reap what we sow. Entrepreneur and CEO Mary Kay Ash built her business around the concept of putting people first. She wrote, “We treat our people like royalty. If you honor and serve the people that work for you, they will honor and serve you.”

3. Be More Empathetic. One survey found that the number-one characteristic that people wanted in their manager was empathy. In order to develop our empathy, we need to learn to listen, understand, and respect others’ points of view instead of forcing our own perspective on them every time. Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald once advised, “To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times, what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens.”

4. Communicate Carefully. Our verbal and written words can either build people up or tear them down. I aspire to follow the advice of Saint Paul who wrote, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29). Our words count, but so does our non-verbal communication. We can show support by our nods, smiles, and appropriate touching (e.g., fist bumps, high fives). Speaking of smiles — I like this quote from author Anthony J. D’Angelo, “Smile, it is the key that fits the lock of everybody’s heart.”

5. Focus on the Positives. The reality is that we all make mistakes. Instead of punishing mistakes, we can take the opportunity to turn them into learning and growth opportunities. We can also look for opportunities to praise people when they do well. Noted leadership and management guru Ken Blanchard has been writing, speaking, and consulting for 50 years. He was recently asked what the single most important lesson was that he has learned to help managers and their teams be successful. His answer? Catch people doing something right and then thank them and express appreciation. Another idea is to strive to consistently give people our BEST. BEST is an acronym where B = Believe in people, E = Empower them, S = Support them, and T = Trust them. When we give people our BEST, that will bring out the best in them.

6. Be Transparent and Authentic. We need to model being transparent and authentic. This includes owning our mistakes and being vulnerable and admitting our weaknesses and when we are struggling. Setting this kind of an example creates a healthy environment of psychological safety for our teams. Popular speaker and writer Brené Brown admonishes, “Vulnerability is not weakness. And that myth is profoundly dangerous.”

We can also include some appropriate sharing about our personal lives so people get to know us as fellow human beings with families and with interests outside work. It is also important to walk our talk and set a positive example of integrity and follow through on commitments.

7. Insist on Work-Life Balance. In the past, employers and bosses often demanded that employees work consistently long hours and sacrifice personal and family time. Those days are largely over as Millennials and Generation Z workers value a work-life balance and are willing to leave organizations if a respect for balance is not present. Evidence shows that helping workers have a balance in their lives on and off the job results in a healthy environment with less stress, higher productivity, and lower employee turnover.

8. Establish Long-Term Relationships. We can choose to make a long-term commitment to building relationships with people. When people know that we value our relationship with them over the long term (not just to get their support in the short run), their trust and partnership with us escalates. Another benefit of building long-term relationships is they can continue after we no longer are teammates — one of my joys is the ongoing friendships and relationships I have with former teammates and students.

9. Have More Fun. Employees who have fun at work are happy, and happy employees are more productive. Research shows that having fun makes us physically and emotionally healthier, elevates endorphins, and reduces diseases and work absences. There are lots of ways to have fun. My teams have gone bowling, played miniature golf, watched movies, had dress up days, played games like Family Feud — the list goes on. Need ideas? Get input from your team members.

10. Embrace Being a Servant Leader. Servant leaders don't lead using traditional "command and control" methods (i.e., I tell you what to do, and with the attitude that you are there to serve me). In contrast, the servant leadership approach is about the leader focusing on serving others and treating people with dignity and respect. Author Sheri Dew speaks to this when she wrote, "True leaders understand that leadership is not about them but those they serve. It is not about exalting themselves but about lifting others up." Leading from the heart

is a key component of what servant leadership is all about.

Closing thought: People yearn for good managers. A recent study found that 56% of employees would turn down a 10% raise to stay with a great manager! Let's be great managers that lead from the heart, and in doing so add value to our team members and the stakeholders we serve. ■

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TWELVE HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MANAGERS

BY WES FRIESEN

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “Sow a thought and you reap an act; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.” Right in the middle of the quotation is the importance of our habits. A habit is “an acquired mode of behavior that has become our common practice.” Our habits mold our character and ultimately determine our destiny in the world. Want to further develop your character and transform into a highly effective person and manager? Intentionally pursuing and building worthwhile habits is the key.

Here are 12 habits of highly effective managers. This is not an exhaustive list — but these will build a strong foundation on your road to increased management and personal effectiveness:

Habit #1: Expanding Self-Awareness Having a high level of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is essential to being an effective manager — and EQ starts with having accurate self-awareness. Self-awareness can help us gain self-control and be helpful to people around us — not hurtful. Some tools to help expand our self-awareness include: getting feedback from others, such as using 360 degree surveys; having a mentor to speak to; and constantly seeking feedback from others on how we are doing.

Habit #2: Pursue Continuous Learning and Continuous Improvement Are you a perfect manager and person? Me neither! What we can do is commit ourselves to being lifelong learners and seek to continuously improve ourselves

as managers and as human beings. This includes being open to new ideas from our team members and others. I have been inspired by this quote from Dr. Martin Luther King: “I may not be the man I want to be; I may not be the man I ought to be; I may not be the man I can be; but praise God, I’m not the man I once was.”

Habit #3: Always Do the Right Thing Too many people have been victimized by the unethical behavior of those in leadership roles. Remember Enron? My co-workers and I at Portland General will never forget — we were owned by Enron at time of their bankruptcy and our retirement savings were decimated. You may have your own story of being victimized by unethical behavior. Mark Twain said, “Always do what is right. It will gratify half of mankind and astound the other.” My former Pastor Loren Fischer taught, “It’s always right to do right” — and I agree.

Habit #4: Be Results AND Relationship Oriented As leaders we are expected to get results — and we should. At the same time, building positive relationships is the right thing to do — and it leads to great results. One tool to help build relationships is to consistently practice the 3 Rs with people. Recognize people for who they are and what they do; Reward people for individual and team achievements; and show people Respect — everybody wants to be respected (as the classic Aretha Franklin song emphasizes!)

Habit #5: Admit and Accept Mistakes I sometimes make mistakes; how about you? The reality is that we are all human,

and sometimes we mess up. When we try to hide or rationalize our mistakes, we lose respect. When we own up to our mistakes, we gain respect. We also model a behavior that supports a psychologically safe environment where our team members can own their mistakes — then we can all learn from them and improve in the future. After all, perhaps the best learning experience is to make a mistake and then learn and grow from it.

Habit #6: Communicate Well One important aspect of communicating well is to always communicate the reason why. We know that nearly every organization is going through changes for a variety of causes (e.g., technological disruptions, increased competition, financial challenges, etc.) And only four in 10 US employees strongly agree that the mission or purpose of their company makes them feel their job is important. This means that most employees are at least a little unsure about how their work fits into the “big picture.” So, when big changes are required, many employees lack motivation. It’s the manager who is ultimately responsible for making that connection and explaining the why and the big picture fit.

We also need to communicate frequently — to share information, ask questions, and listen and show people we care about them. Sadly, Gallup finds that only 20% of US employees strongly agree that they have had a conversation with their manager in the last six months about the steps they can take to reach their goals.

Habit #7: Achieve Big Goals One Small Step at a Time I remember a grade school friend telling me the following riddle: “Question: how do you eat an elephant? Answer: one bite at a time.” Get the point? We need to set long-term visions and big goals for ourselves and our teams. And we need to break down the journey towards the vision and goals into manageable steps that inspire others to move forward.

Habit #8: See the Glass as Half-Full Are you normally a pessimist or an optimist? Studies have shown that the most effective leaders are strong optimists. Being optimistic does not mean that we ignore the half of the glass that is empty. It does mean we are thankful for the half that is full, and we work together to fill the rest of the glass as best we can.

Habit #9: Look for the Win-Win Effective managers don’t get locked into

specific positions, but rather look for ways to meet interests of themselves and others so everybody gets something (a “win-win” versus a “win-lose”).

Habit #10: Spend Much Time in Quadrant 2 Stephen Covey popularized the importance of intentionally spending significant time doing “Important, Not Urgent” items. These include things like building relationships, reading and other learning activities, planning and thinking, exercise, etc. To spend more time in Quadrant 2, we need to spend less time in Quadrants 3 & 4 (i.e. “Urgent, Not Important” and “Not Urgent, Not Important”) activities like watching TV, social media, playing video games, and spending time doing things that add no value to our lives or the lives of others.

Habit #11: Enjoy the Journey Management (and life!) is a journey — filled with both positive and negative experiences. The journey will be much more pleasant and we will go farther if we learn to laugh and be thankful. A Yiddish proverb says, “What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul.” Studies have

shown that laughter makes us physically and emotionally healthier — and more fun to be around, too. Find a funny friend, enjoy a funny TV show or movie — and just laugh! Being thankful is also important. The reality is that we all have much to be thankful for, and our lives will be more joyful and productive if we learn to develop an “attitude of gratitude.”

Habit #12: Remember — Your Health Is Your Wealth Gandhi said, “It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.” Living a healthy lifestyle will increase your energy, stamina, and emotional well-being — and help us be more effective in all that we do. A holistic healthy lifestyle includes developing and using our mental capabilities (read a good book lately or taken a class just for the learning?). We are also spiritual beings, and finding faith and serving others can nourish our spiritual health.

Let me leave you with a challenge to not settle for mediocrity, but to get in the game and go for management excellence. Listen to this classic President Teddy Roosevelt quote: “It is not

the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doers of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly... who spends himself in a worthy cause.” ■

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CONFLICT: A POTENTIAL BLESSING IN DISGUISE!

BY WES FRIESEN

"We can work it out. Life is very short, and there's no time for fussing and fighting my friends." John Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote and sang those words many years ago. But these words are still relevant today, aren't they? Conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships and exists in every organization and team. The good news is, conflict handled well can be healthy and lead to greater successes. The bad news is that conflict handled poorly can result in employee dissatisfaction, lower productivity, poor customer service, increased employee absenteeism and turnover, increased stress, and, in the worst case, litigation based on claims of harassment or hostile work environment. Author Thomas Isgar warned, "Conflict can destroy a team, which hasn't spent time learning to deal with it." I agree.

Let's start with a discussion of when conflict can be healthy. Healthy conflict occurs when there is a work environment where people can voice disagreements and have candid conversations about the important issues at hand. A healthy exchange of ideas and different viewpoints can result in sharper analysis, more creativity, and well-crafted initiatives moving forward. This type of healthy conflict creates a psychologically safe environment where teams can thrive.

Consultant Steve Goodier speaks to the value of different perspectives: "We don't get harmony when everybody sings the same note. Only notes that are different can harmonize. The same is

true with people." The key is to disagree without being disagreeable, and once decisions are made, to have everybody support them. Since there is potential for conflict to bring benefits when handled well, let's look at some keys to positively resolving conflict.

1. View Conflict as an Opportunity. Leadership guru Warren Bennis cut to the chase by saying, "Leaders do not avoid, repress, or deny conflict, but rather see it as an opportunity." Healthy conflict resolution can improve the quality of our processes, initiatives, and relationships — and make our teams stronger.

2. Pick Your Battles. Some conflicts are minor and will resolve themselves without our intervention. Sometimes the best action we can take is no action.

3. Hit Conflict Head On. If a conflict is important enough to be addressed, let's not avoid it but take it on and drive to a peaceful resolution. Unresolved conflicts can escalate and become harder to resolve as time drags on, so we are wise to resolve sooner versus later.

4. Stay Calm and Avoid Arguing. Conflicts escalate when we get angry. And we tend to stop listening to understand as we get angry. To remain calm, it's helpful to look at the big picture and realize that most disputes eventually get resolved, and very few have long-lasting consequences. Also, realize that arguing only makes things worse. Dale Carnegie, author of the all-time classic book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, wrote, "You can't win an argument. You can't

because if you lose it, you lose it; and if you win it, you lose it."

5. Listen to Understand. One of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective people is to "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Dean Rusk counseled, "One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears — by listening to them." By active listening, we dignify people and give them a chance to fully share their perspectives. We also build the foundation that can lead to acceptable resolutions.

6. Ask Good Questions and Gather Information. Few conflict situations are clear cut, so we need to ask good questions and gather information before jumping to conclusions. Good questions focus on asking what happened and soliciting relevant information. Open-ended questions such as, "Can you tell me what happened?" can draw out useful information in a non-judgmental manner.

7. Attack the Problem, not the Person. Personal attacks backfire, as Abigail Van Buren emphasized when she said, "people who fight fire with fire usually end up with ashes." And Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind." Remember the goal is to resolve the conflict and underlying problems, not to punish the people who are involved in the conflict.

8. Practice the Power of the Apology. There have been times in my life where I said or did something that I later regretted — what about you? Since we are all human and will occasionally mess up, the wise thing to do is fess up and apologize. I appreciate this quote from author Lynn Johnson, "An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything." Demonstrating humility and admitting our mistakes is good for us and sets a positive example for our team members.

9. Identify Points of Agreement and Disagreement. Henry Ford observed, "If there is any secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as your own." Author Harper Lee wrote, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view."

10. Look for the Win-Win. W. Edwards Deming encouraged us, "To adopt a new philosophy of cooperation (win-win) in which everybody wins." Greg Anderson explains, "The Law of Win/Win says, 'Let's not do it your way or my way; let's do it the best way.'"

11. Be Creative. Try brainstorming and thinking outside the box to find creative resolutions. Being creative with resolutions takes longer, but can yield a true win-win solution. Sometimes it can be helpful to look for ideas from others outside the team — such as from other teams inside or outside the organization, consultants, trade journals, conferences, books, webinars, etc.

12. Focus on the Future, not the Past. The secret to conflict resolution is to treat it like problem solving and focus on what can be done to resolve the immediate problem at hand. Once that is done, look at the past to analyze what went wrong, and then identify improvements so that future results meet expectations.

13. Celebrate Agreement. Reaching mutual agreement on what we will do to resolve the conflict is often stressful and hard work! Reaching agreement is also valuable and worth taking the time to celebrate — which may be as simple as a handshake, fist bump, or high five.

14. Develop a Resolution Plan. Once we have mutually agreed upon the resolution to the conflict, we need to document a resolution plan so there are clear action steps and assignment of responsibilities. Having a plan will increase the probability of the resolution being implemented as agreed upon.

15. Execute the Plan and Follow Through. Plans by themselves have little or no value unless they are executed. This is an extremely important step, where we sometimes fall short. We need to diligently “plan the work, then work the plan” as my former boss and mentor Bruce Carpenter emphasized.

16. Reflect and Derive Lessons Learned. After the resolution plan is executed and the dust settles, there is great value in taking time to reflect and identify lessons learned. Much of the value that comes from conflicts is the after-the-fact reflection and identification of lessons learned that can help us be better managers and improve the success of our teams in the future.

Author Thomas Crum once said, “The quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them.” Most of us don’t like when conflict happens, but when it does, let’s look for the hidden blessings and use it as an opportunity to make ourselves and our teams stronger for the future! ■

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LEADING WITH GRATITUDE!

BY WES FRIESEN

Research shows there is a staggering lack of gratitude in the work world. One recent study found that “people are less likely to express gratitude at work than anyplace else.” Retention of quality employees is still a huge problem in our organizations. Why do most employees leave? According to research by the U.S. Department of Labor (based on third-party exit interviews), the number-one reason people leave is they “don’t feel appreciated” by their manager for their contributions. One study found that frequent, genuine gratitude at work reduces employee turnover by up to 50%. There are additional benefits to consistently leading with gratitude, including:

Build Stronger Relationships. When we take the time to express appreciation and gratitude to our team members, we are creating a more personal connection with them and helping to meet a heartfelt need. Prominent psychologist William James summarized years of research by saying, “The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.”

Improved Employee Engagement, Motivation, and Focus. Gratitude is a powerful motivator. When we express appreciation for our team members’ efforts and achievements, it can increase their sense of purpose and job satisfaction. It also creates a sense of belonging and camaraderie within the team and builds a positive and caring culture. As a result, team members are more likely to be engaged, committed, loyal — and focused on the positives. Extensive research by Robert Emmons has found that people who feel grateful and appreciated are more likely to focus on personal and organiza-

tional growth and less likely to spend time engaged in “destructive impulses such as envy, resentment, greed and bitterness.”

Increased Productivity and Performance. When employees feel appreciated and valued, they are more likely to put in extra effort and go the extra mile to achieve their goals. Author Bridgette Hyacinth speaks to this when she wrote, “When employees have a boss who truly cares and appreciates them, they are willing to go the extra mile.” And a survey by Glassdoor found that 81% of people say they’re motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation of their work (versus only 38% saying they work harder when their boss is demanding).

Enhanced Collaboration and Teamwork. Gratitude can break down barriers and foster a sense of community and collaboration. When we express appreciation for the contributions of our team members and business partners, it can create a sense of mutual respect and trust. It also encourages people to work together, share ideas, and support each other in achieving their goals.

Improved Health and Well-being. Gratitude has been shown to have a positive impact on mental and physical health of both the givers AND receivers of gratitude. I appreciate this quote from CEO Eric Schurenberg, “The best way to warm your heart is to warm the heart of somebody else.” Studies have shown that when we practice gratitude, we and the recipients are more likely to experience positive emotions, reduce stress and depression, sleep better, and improve overall well-being. When we cultivate a culture of gratitude, we can create a positive and supportive work environment

that promotes the health and happiness of our team members (and us!).

Improved Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty. Leading with gratitude has benefits for us and our team members. But the benefits of gratitude are not limited to the relationship between us and our team members. It can also extend to the relationship between our teams and our customers. One study found that grateful managers lead teams that have an average 20% higher customer satisfaction! We can directly express gratitude to our customers, which shows that we value them and are committed to providing excellent service. This, in turn, leads to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

How Can We Lead With Gratitude?

I love this classic quote from Maya Angelou, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Here are 10 practical ideas to help make people feel our gratitude towards them:

1. Tap into the power of “thank you”.

Recent research by Harvard and Wharton Universities found that thanking people more than doubles their likelihood to want to help us again. The research shows that thanking people helps them feel more “socially valued” — more connected to other people around them and their community as a whole.

2. Verbally express gratitude.

Expressing sincere gratitude verbally is powerful — it’s encouraging, motivating, and much appreciated. I like it when people express gratitude to me; how about you? In a recent survey, “I appreciate you” was voted the most emotionally intelligent phrase at work. We can express gratitude for a person’s hard work, creativity, and their accomplishments. One tip to make gratitude even more powerful is to be specific. “Thank you for your help” is good; even better is, “Thank you for the help you gave with XYZ task this morning. It turned out great and you shared great insights and really went above and beyond to help it turn out so well.”

3. Communicate gratitude in writing.

In addition to verbal expressions of gratitude, we can thank people via email, texts, social media channels, and other digital means. Digital is good; that being said, there is something powerful about expressing gratitude to someone via a handwritten note. Several years ago, I invited our CEO, Peggy, to visit the

print and mail center and meet the team members and see firsthand the recent significant equipment and technology upgrades we had accomplished. The next day I received in intercompany mail a handwritten note from her expressing appreciation for the team and our accomplishments. A copy of that note was posted in our front desk area for years. The original? I have it framed and it is one of my cherished mementos from my career residing in my man room.

4. Dole out meaningful gifts and rewards. Gifts and rewards can be a welcome way to express gratitude. We can consider bonuses, promotions, or other financial incentives. Providing opportunities for growth and development via training, mentoring, or working on special projects can be a much appreciated way to show gratitude, especially with the Millennial and Generation Z employees. There are also a wide range of gifts that we could potentially provide: certificates of appreciation, gift cards, company swag, or other tokens of appreciation. We can also consider acts of service, such as getting ice cream on a hot day and dishing up to our teams (yum!).

5. Give time off and provide flexibility. Time off and flexibility are well received ways to express gratitude. For hourly employees, time off with pay (such as a half day off on a Friday afternoon) always seems to be a hit. And giving salaried employees extra paid "comp time" so they can take time off without using PTO is appreciated. When possible, expressing gratitude by offering flexible work schedules, as well as hybrid and work from home options, are not only appreciated but necessary to help us attract and retain the quality employees we need.

6. Codify gratitude into our platforms. The concept here is to make it easy to express gratitude on an ongoing basis. One idea is to have a standing item on team meeting agendas for appreciation (shoutouts). We may also consider peer-to-peer recognition programs in addition to management recognition programs. I found it helpful to keep a supply of gift cards and blank note cards for myself and other team leaders to have easy access to use and give out.

Leading with gratitude can have a very positive impact on team morale,

and overall performance. By taking the time to express our appreciation to our team members and other key business partners, we are creating a positive work environment that should lead to improved productivity and better outcomes. So let's work at intentionally incorporating gratitude into our management practices — we'll feel better and so will the others we work with! ■

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THE POWER OF COLLABORATION!

BY WES FRIESEN

Collaboration in business refers to the process of working together with others to achieve a common goal or objective. It is a key component of teamwork and involves sharing knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve success. As we know, collaboration within and among work teams is crucial in today's workplace environment. As work becomes more challenging, complex, and competitive, we must find even better ways to work together to achieve common goals. There is real power when we collaborate well. As soccer great Pelé said, "No individual can win a game by himself." Some of the benefits of collaboration include:

Improved performance. A Stanford study found that people who acted collaboratively stuck at their tasks 64% longer than their solitary peers, while also reporting higher engagement levels, lower fatigue levels, and a higher success rate. Another study by the Institute for Corporate Productivity and Babson College found that companies that promote collaborative working were five times as likely to be high-performing!

Helps build resilience. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now." Collaboration helps our teams be more dynamic and comfortable with change and challenges that come our way. Team members gain experience working with different personality types/styles and learn how to tackle problems together as they arise. We end up with more adaptable and resilient teams, which is key to serving our stakeholders well.

It supports transparency. Building a culture of teamwork and collaboration reduces the number of blind spots in our

organization. If everyone works toward similar goals and shares deadlines and milestones to hit, transparency is required to ensure everyone is in the loop and set up for success. This transparency can make people feel plugged into what's going on in the business and why their roles are essential. In turn, they'll feel more committed to accomplishing the team's objectives.

It encourages accountability. When we work as a team, we share the wins — and the losses. Our team members recognize that others depend on them and don't want to be the reason the team fails to reach a certain goal. People are accountable not just to themselves but to the team and the organization as a whole. As a result, team members take more pride in their work and embrace their share of the responsibilities.

Increased productivity and creativity. I appreciate this quote from President Franklin Roosevelt: "I'm not the smartest fellow in the world, but I can sure pick smart colleagues." Collaboration can lead to increased productivity by bringing together individuals with different skill sets and expertise to work on challenging problems. By working together, individuals can share knowledge and expertise, identify solutions, and develop innovative approaches to problem-solving, leading to more efficient and effective business processes.

Improved employee retention. Collaboration can lead to improved employee retention by fostering a sense of teamwork and collaboration within our teams. When individuals feel like they are part of a team working towards a common goal, they are more likely to be engaged and satisfied in their work, leading to improved retention rates.

Teamwork makes the dream work.

I appreciate this quote from leadership expert John Maxwell: "Teams are incredible things. No task is too great, no accomplishment too grand, no dream too far-fetched for a team. It takes teamwork to make the dream work."

How Can We Develop Greater Collaboration?

Here are 10 practical ideas to help develop greater collaboration within our teams:

1. Be Intentional. A good starting place is to intentionally make a decision to pursue greater collaboration, and then adopt some of the ideas presented below.

2. Set Clear Expectations, Rules, and Roles. One recent study examined the conditions that enabled the most collaborative teams. A key finding was collaboration improved when individual roles were clearly defined (which leads to less envy and protection of turf, and more focus on the tasks). Clarifying expectations and rules also helps our team members know that collaboration is valued and that there are no rules that get in the way of collaborating well.

3. Collaboratively Set Shared Team Goals. Author Idowu Koyenikan wrote, "There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work towards the same goals." One of the most effective ways to promote collaboration among work teams is to establish clear and shared goals. By defining common objectives, people can work together more effectively and stay focused on achieving the desired outcomes. We should also provide our team members with the necessary resources and support to achieve their goals, including access to training, technology, and information.

4. Measure and Reward Employee Behavior. There is the management principle that what gets measured and rewarded tends to get repeated. So as leaders we can ensure that collaboration is built into our measurement systems (e.g., survey questions), and recognized and rewarded both formally and informally.

5. Build Trust and Respect Within the Team. As leaders, we can model showing trust and respect to our team members and set an example (concept of "shadow of the leader"). We can also implement team building activities, such as social events and team building exercises to help foster a stronger sense of camaraderie and teamwork. And let's not forget

the value of having some fun together as this quote from author Robert Orben suggests, "If you can laugh together, you can work together!" Need ideas for potential team building activities? Ask for ideas from our team members.

6. Ensure a Psychologically Safe Environment. Amy Edmondson from Harvard University is considered the world's leading expert on psychological safety. She explains that team psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences. As Edmondson puts it, "it's felt permission for candor."

7. Have Open and Transparent Information Flows. Freely sharing information within our teams (and with key business partners) helps build collaboration and makes people feel valued and appreciated. We can share information via team meetings, brainstorming sessions, online collaboration tools, and sharing of reports/documents.

8. Make Decisions Collaboratively as Possible. Whenever possible we

should make decisions with input from our team members. Why? The old saying that two (or more) heads is better than one means that the quality of decisions will normally be better when we get perspectives and input from multiple people. Also, when it comes time to implement decisions on the back end, our team members are more likely to have buy-in and support if they had input on the front end.

9. Use Technology Wisely. Technology can also play a crucial role in promoting collaboration among work teams. Online collaboration tools, such as shared workspaces, shared data files/directories, and video conferencing, can help to break down barriers and make it easier for employees to work together, regardless of their location. These tools can also help to increase productivity, reduce errors, and improve efficiency.

10. Celebrate Success! When things go well for the team, it is important for us to take the time to celebrate. Remember: success breeds success! There are many ways to celebrate when seeing collaboration working well and experiencing the positive results we seek. We can take pic-

tures, make videos, bring in food, have a fun team event... in addition to the basic yet important verbal and written thank you we express to our teams.

Closing thoughts: I agree with what author Mattie Stepanek once said, "Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." Let's fully tap into the power of collaboration and enjoy the positive results that follow! ■

Wes Friesen (MBA, EMCM, CMDSM, MCOM, MDC, OSPC, CCE, CBF, CBA, ICP, CMA, CFM, CM, APP, PHR, CTP) is a proven leader and developer of high-performing teams and has extensive experience in both the corporate and non-profit worlds. He is also an award-winning university instructor and speaker, and is the President of Solomon Training and Development, which provides leadership, management and team building training. He serves as the Industry Co-Chair of the Greater Portland PCC.

His book, Your Team Can Soar!, has 42 valuable lessons that will inspire you and give you practical pointers to help you — and your team — soar to new heights of performance. Wes can be contacted at wesfriesen@gmail.com or at 971.806.0812.

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THE 3 CS APPROACH TO MAXIMIZING OUR TEAMS' SUCCESS

BY WES FRIESEN

What is the most important thing we can do in our leadership and management roles? Perhaps it's to create a culture where our team members can thrive and add maximum value to our key stakeholders. I recently read and was inspired by Susan Fowler's book, *Why Motivating People Doesn't Work... and What Does* (Second Edition, 2023). Fowler summarizes extensive research that shows that people have three innate, universal needs: Choice (aka Autonomy), Connection (aka Relatedness), and Competence. When these needs are met, people experience optimal motivation, positive energy, well-being, and vitality. Let's look at these three needs and discuss what we can do to help meet them.

The Need for Choice

Choice is our human need to perceive we have choices, feel we have options within boundaries, and have a sense of control that we are the source of our actions. People prefer to *want* to than to *have* to, and we value having a healthy degree of control and autonomy. In short, we all like to be treated like adults, not children. Mika Cross (a Director at the U.S. Department of Labor) writes, "Having a choice and a suite of flexible options that employers can offer their workforce is extremely important, especially when you are considering the generational differences of five different generations in the workplace." To meet this human need, we can consider what flexibility we can offer with work hours and schedules; vacations and other paid time off; work location; dress codes; and how some of the work is

done. When possible, offering hybrid work is popular and well-received — a study by Incisiv found that 81% of employees are expected to be working in hybrid models by 2024, compared to 42% in 2021 (and fully remote workplaces are expected to recede from 56% to just 19% that same time period). If feasible, what about going on a four-day workweek, expecting the same output with the same amount of pay? A recent British pilot with 61 companies tried that and found company revenue stayed roughly the same, and employee turnover and sick days plummeted by more than half.

As leaders, there is a place to give up our choices to benefit our team members. This fits into the Servant Leadership philosophy, which leads to optimal long-term success. Earlier this year, I heard an inspiring example from my friend Betsy Shortell, who is the Director of Mail & Distribution Services at Harvard University. During the pandemic period, Shortell could have done all her work remotely, which was what the other managers at Harvard and many other places typically chose to do. But Shortell chose to physically go into work every day! Why? Because her team members had to be physically present to do their work and she wanted to be there to show her care and support. What an example!

The Need for Connection

Connection is our need to feel a sense of belonging and genuine connection to others without concerns about ulterior motives, to align goals and actions to meaningful values and a sense of purpose, and to contribute to something greater than ourselves. Author Atul Gawande explains,

"Human beings are social creatures. We are social not just in the trivial sense that we like company, and not just in the obvious sense that we each depend on others. We are social in a more elemental way: simply to exist as a normal human being requires interaction with other people."

I appreciate this insight from the Dalai Lama: "We humans are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others' actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment in our lives when we do not benefit from others' activities. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others." Professor and author Brené Brown shared her perspective, "I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."

The Surgeon General recently issued a detailed report entitled "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community." This report pulls in extensive recent research and is a sobering wake-up call to the dangers of the lack of social connection and community. The report iterates the leading causes of illness and premature death among American adults, including the usual suspects of physical inactivity, obesity, and excessive alcohol consumption. Surprisingly, the number one health risk today is the lack of social connection and community. The lack of connection is a higher risk of premature death than smoking 15 cigarettes per day!

Inadequate social connection results in a 29% higher risk of heart disease; 32% higher risk of stroke; higher anxiety, depression, and dementia; worse performance at work; and costs businesses an estimated \$154 billion per year due to stress-related absences and health costs. The problem of inadequate social connection and community is rampant. One large survey found that only 39% of people feel very connected to others; another survey found that 58% feel lonely on a regular basis. Following are the report's recommendations of what we can do in workplaces to help encourage and facilitate social connection:

- ▶ Make social connection a strategic priority in the workplace at all levels (administration, management, and employees).

- ▶ Train and empower leaders and managers to promote connections in the workplace and implement programs that foster connection.
- ▶ Leverage existing leadership and employee training, orientation, and wellness resources to educate the workforce about the importance of social connection for workforce well-being, health, productivity, performance, retention, and other markers of success.
- ▶ Create practices and a workplace culture that allow people to connect to one another as whole people, not just as skill sets, and in a way that fosters inclusion and belonging.
- ▶ Put in place policies that protect workers' ability to nurture their relationships outside work including respecting boundaries between work and non-work time, supporting caregiving responsibilities, and creating a culture of norms and practices that support these policies.
- ▶ Consider the opportunities and challenges posed by flexible work hours and arrangements (including remote, hybrid, and in-person work), which may impact workers' abilities to

connect with others both within and outside of work. Evaluate how these policies can be applied equitably across the workforce.

Here are a few practical ideas that I, along with other leaders, have implemented to help build connection and community: have common break rooms; implement workout areas; offer common break times to take walks or play games; celebrate birthdays, marriages, births, and other special events in people's lives; have regular team building times (e.g., events like miniature golf, attending a movie or sporting event; fun competitions, etc.).

The Need for Competence

Competence is our need to feel effective at meeting everyday situations, demonstrate skills over time, and feel a sense of growth and flourishing. Author Mary Jo Putney speaks to a benefit of competence when she says, "Competence is a great creator of confidence." People are created for mastery; we want to develop our skills and learn to manage everyday situations more effectively. As leaders, we should help close gaps between what we ask people

to do and the skills required to accomplish these tasks by providing ongoing training and development. There are many opportunities to help train and develop our team members. Of course, on-the-job training is essential. As a long-time university professor, I suggest encouraging and supporting people that want to finish undergraduate or graduate degrees — or support those that want to take selected classes. Many companies offer training, and there are numerous webinars, seminars, and conferences available. We can encourage involvement with professional organizations, support relevant certification programs, and share relevant books and great trade journals like this one. ■

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