This Is Empowering and Passing the Torch—Leadership

Leadership:
The position of a leader or the person heading a group;
the capacity to lead—that is, to guide on a way; direct
the activity of; go at the head of.

Managing is *not* leading

Leadership plays a huge role in empowering employees and keeping the structural foundations of the corporate Culture in place. If leadership is handled properly, employees can bring the Culture to life . . . and then help pass the torch to the next generation.

A note of caution, though. Leadership comes from within management, yet many times no one within management is truly leading—only managing. There is a difference between leadership and management. As the saying goes: lead people and manage things (like numbers and processes).

This may seem like splitting hairs, but it is important to make the distinction between leaders and managers and between leadership and management. They are related, but each has distinct characteristics.

Imagine the leader of a call center. This leader is within management because he *manages* all the processes, such as call volume, answer time, metrics, and so on. He is also within the leadership because he *leads* the employees to best arrive at the metrics that are desired. Many companies don't understand this simple difference.

And some companies compound the problem with managers nicknamed "Boss" who micromanage employees. I have never met anyone who liked to be managed or bossed. I'm appalled when employees tell me they have to do this or can't do that because their boss won't let them.

Are you a boss or a leader?

I have had weekend golf games spoiled because a friend's boss threw a week's worth of work on my friend's desk on a Friday afternoon and told him that the assignment needed to be ready for a presentation first thing Monday morning.

I have been self-employed my entire adult life—with the exception of the Zappos assignment—and I find it extremely odd to hear adults refer to a boss who tells them what to do. Is this the Soviet Union in the 1940s?

> **Leaders don't tell people what to do; they let them know what needs to be done and help them if necessary.**

> **Managers have power *over* people, and leaders have power *with* people; as I've noted, you can manage money but you cannot manage people.**

Does the management in your company foster a "chain of command" or a "chain of empowerment"?

I believe that most people would choose a leader who empowers them instead of having a manager or boss. What do you have in your company: someone telling you to what to do all day? Or someone who is inspiring and empowering your employees?

GREAT LEADERS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON ANY TEAM

Companies that have weathered economic storms and stood the test of time have done so because of great leaders. They are the ones who direct the activity of the staff and company. Just as in a jungle expedition, there may be many obstacles along the way; it is up to the leader to keep everyone safe until the end of the trip.

A great leader is a steward of the people being led. A captain of a plane or ship makes sure all the passengers are safe before leaving the craft. That's what they signed up for. The leaders of a company should do the same: guide their people safely and empower them to be the best they can be. As we discussed in the first half of this book, thanks to the shift to the Information Age and the course of recent events, people today have had enough of being ripped off. Above all, they want to be treated like they matter. In a company, that means that leaders have to treat employees well.

Happy employees lead to happy customers, which develops into a happy business. That's the cycle, in a nutshell.

And this cycle starts with the leadership of the company.

Unfortunately, you don't have to look far to find poor leadership. Countless companies from the recent past have provided great examples. At energy giant Enron, for example, the leaders knowingly made choices that ultimately brought down the company. In the 1980s the decisions of Charles H. Keating, chairman of Lincoln Savings & Loan, led to the collapse of the savings and loan industry. More recently the mistakes of executives of Lehman Brothers, a global financial services firm, affected the stability of the global economy.

Most failed companies have one thing in common: it was the choices and actions of their leadership—not the employees—that caused the firms to implode. Tens of thousands of employees made up the workforce of these giant failed corporations, but it was usually the deeds of only a handful that brought about their downfall.

The results are heartbreaking. Not only are those employees out of work (and many times out of their retirement savings), but also ten times that many investors in public companies have seen their nest eggs vanish.

The repercussions of the decisions of corporate leaders have affected entire nations. Therefore, leaders have a very real and serious duty to perform wisely, for the effects of their decisions are far-reaching indeed.

> **If employees are engaged, empowered, and directed by their leaders, future generations of employees and leadership will be able to maintain the corporate Culture that underlies its success. Leadership is the crucial starting point or foundation of this cycle.**

We have all seen great leadership in action. Take professional sports, which is a business. The teams with the best leadership are the teams that win. Leaders pick the players, empower the players, and coach players winning ways. And year after year, you can see the results in the win column.

Corporations that keep growing and remain on *Fortune's* "Best Places to Work" list also are the beneficiaries of great leadership. Many companies don't understand this. Creating a better work environment is the first step in creating a business that will stand the test of time. It all begins with leaders guided by a great Vision and Purpose, leading people and managing things.

There is no one best way to lead

As Zappos grew, we wanted to make sure the management-level staff had all the necessary tools to help them be the best they could be. We also wanted to nurture leaders from within the company and to develop a consistent style of leadership, while recognizing that there are different ways to lead.

I was tapped to create leadership training, and I created a three-hour workshop, which I delivered to every management-level employee we had at the time. Of course, I titled it "Dr. Vik's Leadership Essentials."

Before we started each workshop, I asked all the attendees to identify themselves and let everyone know what they considered their best leadership skill. One by one, these future Zappos leaders stood up and gave their names and what they did. Some described their best leadership quality as "listening"; others said "being involved in the process." The list went on: they "asked questions," "were empathetic," "set goals," or "got to know every team member personally." In each workshop, once we had gone all around the room, we had a list of at least 20 different leadership qualities.

Through this exercise everyone understood that there is no one way to lead or empower others. People are free to choose their best leadership style as long as they empower the people they work with and guide them to be the best they can be.

Below is a list of great leadership qualities. You can add your own definitions as well.

1. Trustworthiness
2. Takes ownership
3. Listening

4. Sincerity
5. Caring

(Notice that there is no mention on the list of gossiping, choosing sides, or raising your voice.)

A leadership hall of horrors

Before we learn more about what makes a great leader, perhaps we'd do well to know what enemies we might encounter in workplaces where employees, not processes, are being managed. I'll never forget what one Leadership Essentials Workshop attendee told me when I asked, "What did your worst manager do to make him- or herself the worst?" The answer? "My old boss threw a lamp at me."

IVORY TOWER LEADERSHIP

I have seen this type of "managing," as opposed to leading, time and time again. It occurs when leaders think they are better than their employees, or they just don't care to be bothered. They simply don't make time for those they view as minions.

You know the ivory tower leaders: they have separate and secluded offices. I've even heard stories of executive offices that required a special access key. That certainly keeps all the riffraff (otherwise known as employees) out. You can't get to see the leaders, let alone have a conversation with them. They just lock themselves away from employees, when in truth employees are the heart and soul of a business—especially when it comes to creation and invention. What a joke!

> If those at the top in your company want only to manage employees, instead of leading and empowering them, you will be powerless to change things unless there is a coup!

If the top decision-makers never communicate with employees, you can't do much about transforming their management style. If top

executives are sequestered from everyone else, they won't even be able to hear your voice.

THE LEADERSHIP BULLY

I have firsthand experience with a CEO who's a bully. I'm not saying these leaders push people around physically, but their speech and body language bully staff members all the same. Haven't you ever heard someone say, "If you don't do what I say, there will be consequences," or "It's my way or the highway"? That's a bully.

Bullies are everywhere. In fact, this behavior has become so prevalent that there's now a national campaign against bullying. Most of us have probably encountered bullies during our school days. They're also in the workplace, but *the most dangerous place a bully can be is in the top spot in the company*.

Various types of leaders exist. Which type are you?

At one big firm I was working with, I met with an executive team to discuss corporate Culture. Before the meeting, one of the execs asked me to say to the CEO, when he joined the meeting, that being late was not good for the Culture. When the CEO came in 15 minutes late—as expected—nobody confronted him. That was his style: to arrive late and run overtime. It was sad to see those managers so afraid of the repercussions if they spoke up.

With a bully at the top, you have a Culture where little gets done. Meetings function poorly and there's a lack of collaboration. I'm not saying that a corporate dictatorship can't succeed, but it's far from a nice place to work—unless you are at the top.

I've heard "old school" leaders lament the fact that "work ethic is just not the same anymore." You've probably heard similar comments, like "when I was 25, I used to lift 100 bags up eight flights of stairs, and if I didn't move fast enough my boss would hit me." I always respond, "It doesn't look like you work there anymore." And the usual answer to

that is, "Yeah, it was awful. I quit." Exactly! It wasn't right then, and it isn't right now.

LAZY-LOAF LEADERSHIP

It's usually up to an entire team to get things done, but if a leader doesn't set the tone and help execute the plan, nothing will happen.

We see this pattern all too often—from doctor's offices to Internet companies. There are people in management who won't initiate anything or even act on their company's plan. They know what needs to be done, but they just don't do much about it. Forget them. You need to model yourself after the leaders who not only do what needs to be done but who think and act one step ahead. They are the ones who will succeed.

Before you read any further, take a moment to ask yourself honestly: Am I a leader who shuns staff, bullies them, or fails to get the ball rolling? If you have ever resorted to these leadership styles, read on and see how you can change your behavior and grow your business.

Thanks for the day!

Sad to say, there are, in fact, some horrible leaders in the business world. To ensure that none of these negative behaviors creep into your organization, here are some important questions for you and your leadership team:

- Have you consistently demonstrated leadership skills?
- Have you always acknowledged and recognized your staff or have you told them how to do things?
- Do you compliment or criticize?
- Who was your best leader or mentor? Why?

I have asked many people who their most memorable mentor was. Not surprisingly, it's usually someone who helped them at school or at work, or a family member or friend. The interesting part, though, is that most people I talk to say their mentors didn't even know they had that role. They just did what they did, and it had a positive effect.

Are you guiding people by example so that they consider you their mentor? Here's one simple way to start: Thank your employees for giving their day to you. Yes, the employees are getting paid, but increasingly people have a choice of where they want to spend most of their waking hours. When they choose your company, they should be thanked for it. After all, they set alarms in the morning and plan their entire life—kids' activities, get-togethers, health appointments, and everything else—around their work.

Thanks for the day!

When I "retired" from my clinic, my staff gave me a trophy engraved with the words "Thanks for the Day." It choked me up when they presented it to me, even more when they said they wanted to thank me because

at the end of every day, I had thanked them for coming to work and giving their day to the clinic and to our patients.

I believe most companies would have a much better Culture if the leaders simply thanked their employees every day. Just because workers get paid, it doesn't negate the fact that they want to be thanked for their contribution.

Here are some other points to get you thinking about great leadership:

· Have you taken sole responsibility for your employees' growth?
· Are you a caring authority figure?
· Do you motivate by your own actions? Or do you sit on the sidelines and bark orders?
· Are you creating leaders or managing employees?
· Does your leadership elevate your employees' lives and the lives of their families?
· Would you rather have leaders or employees work for you?
· Do you walk the walk?
· Are you using positive vocabulary to start the empowerment process with your team? (Remember . . . thoughts drive emotions, actions, and our future.)

We want the skills, talents, and attitudes of leadership to be contagious.

When the leadership is inspiring and empowering, it sets the tone of the Culture and creates the corporate DNA for future generations of employees.

Great leaders treat employees like they matter—because they do!

A friend and mentor of mine is Tom Mendoza, Vice Chairman at NetApp. Tom's a big reason the company vaulted to the top spot on *Fortune*'s list of "Best Companies to Work For." His staff enjoys the perks that progressive companies offer, but just as importantly, they are engaged by his leadership and attitude. Tom is a people person. He started as a company salesman in 1992, but his focus on taking care of employees and customers soon gained notice, and he eventually rose to be president. Now he is Vice Chairman.

Even though Tom gave $37 million to his alma mater, Notre Dame, to open up the Tom Mendoza College of Business, he knows how to connect with everyone. He tells jokes and always asks about you. He is a major reason why people like to work at NetApp.

Tom says, "People don't really care what you know, unless they know you care, and we try to show them we care a lot." All leaders should treat every employee, customer, and stakeholder as though they care, because people matter; they always have and always will.

Tom started a process at work called "Catch somebody doing something right." Whenever any employee sees someone else doing something extraordinary, they e-mail Tom and tell him. Tom calls that special staffer, wherever he or she may be in the world, and says, "I heard what you did and want to thank you for it." He makes as many as 10 to 15 calls a day to his employees around the world.

Tom has helped create quite an empowering Culture at NetApp, and he is a role model for all of us.

FOCUS ON YOUR EMPLOYEES' GREATNESS

People usually know their shortcomings, and they don't appreciate it when someone points out mistakes. At NetApp, the Culture focuses on the greatness of its people, not their challenges. As a result, employees are inspired to reach their potential. And guess what? Not only does the company benefit when it invests in its people, so do the employees.

In a sense, employers buy relationships, because companies make money with the help of others. Therefore it makes sense not to use employees for our own gain, giving little in return. Think how much more effectively those employees win over customers when their company has already won them over with recognition, acknowledgment, empowerment, and rewards?

Once again, it comes down to taking the time to get to know employees and treating them as we should.

> **When you shine a light on what someone is doing right, you will see more of what you like.**

There is no reason to highlight mistakes or focus on what you *don't* want done. Whatever we shine a light on stays in the forefront of people's minds, so choose wisely. Do you want employees dwelling on their mistakes or trying to replicate their successes?

For a service vibe and Culture to stay strong, it must be part of a company's DNA and be passed on to future generations. The duty, responsibility, and opportunity for that lie directly with its leaders.

Teams mirror management

"Teams mirror management" is a concept similar to "Customers mirror employees." They both rely on the process of reciprocation.

If your manager agreed to speak to you in confidence, and you later found out that she had shared your private conversation, would you lose trust in her? Yes, but your reaction is really a reflection of the manager who broke the trust first.

The same goes for caring. If you have an employee who doesn't care about you, it's undoubtedly because you don't care about them.

I once coached a manager who was facing a challenge with her team. She was frustrated and at the end of her rope. "My team doesn't show up on time," she said. "They gossip about me, and they don't care what I have to say."

Then I had a talk with her team members. They said that their manager didn't listen to what they had to say, gossiped about them, and never was on time.

Unfortunately, she got what she gave.

Everything stays on course with proper leadership.

I had several discussions with this manager about where her challenges were coming from and suggested that she needed to take a good look in the mirror. Everything she was getting from her employees was a reflection of her own actions.

She needed to care more about her employees, stop her gossiping, and listen to what the team had to say to expect the same in return. She was resistant to the suggestions, however, and eventually left the company. She had reached the point of no return with her employees, and the sad thing was that she created the situation herself.

When leaders or managers are having problems with their team, they need to ask if the problems are a reflection of their own behavior.

If leaders keep taking their knowledge to the Next Level, it will spread throughout the team. Conversely, if the leaders' caring attitude starts to falter, that will show up within the team as well. Treating your employees as if they don't matter means that your customers are, essentially, getting kicked.

How can employees who are abused take care of customers any differently? The answer is *they can't*. Businesses that mistreat their employees end up chasing new customers because the old ones fire them. And with the ever-rising costs associated with the acquisition of new customers, this leads to an inevitable decline. Take care of the employees, and their success will translate to the customers.

Criticism vs. feedback—there is a difference

It is important to know the difference between criticism and feedback. Criticism is subjective and passes judgment by pointing out faults or shortcomings. It is usually received negatively because no one likes to be judged. Criticism is a de-motivator. It does not encourage anyone to perform better. Generally when people do the wrong thing, they do not need to be reprimanded. What they need is for someone to explain how to do the job correctly. This usually means, by the way, someone who is in a leadership position.

If someone didn't do something correctly, we shouldn't say, "You did this wrong, and if you do it again, we'll need to find someone else to do it." Criticism not only offends individuals but may also be interpreted as disparaging their character, especially if it includes threats and no suggestions for improvement.

Feedback, on the other hand, concentrates on what people are doing right and what needs to be done; it includes praise, approval, kindness, compliments, and support. If someone is not making their "numbers," for instance, a wise leader will say, "I can see you haven't been making your numbers. What can I do to help?"

Here's an example of how an effective leader can balance feedback so it includes an offer of help to improve a situation and acknowledgment of the employee's value.

> "Jim, I know you've been with us for three years now. You've been a great employee for all that time. You come to work on time, you do what needs to be done, you are a great team player, and you are always willing to chip in. But this last project didn't

quite seem to be from the real expert that you are. How do you think I can help you on this project so we can see the work that you are so famous for?"

This compliments, praises, and approves of Jim's work and his character and work ethic, and it allows Jim to look good and receive help if he wants it.

In my leadership workshops at Zappos, I asked attendees to take back to their team just one word that was positive and empowering. They were to use that word for 30 days. One of the outcomes was that the most of the teams started to use those positive words. Simply taking some vocabulary to the Next Level got things moving in a positive direction.

The greatest leaders in the world can create the greatest company in the world if they know how to spread their knowledge through the company. How?

First, they can do it by acting as role models and mentors, which will have both a direct and indirect impact on others.

Leaders don't have to "teach" in order for the team to learn; all team members have to do is watch and follow suit.

Second, true leaders will always focus their attention on the positive, using feedback and encouragement in place of criticism. A leader sets an example and allows others to act accordingly. Forced effort cannot be sustained and only leads to resistance. A leader allows his or her employees to make mistakes and to learn from them. You can't expect the best at the beginning. We are not born with perfect judgment; that's learned from experience.

Remember, most things are difficult before they become easy. If you are right-handed, for instance, try to draw with your left hand. On your first attempt, most likely, the results will be poor, but with practice, over time, the pictures will improve. A good leader understands this process.

Are we building this company for our grandchildren?

Without leaders there would be chaos, but a leader's most important job is actually to help others develop their full potential. Leaders lead by example, getting people and teams to rise to any task. Leaders are the organization's catalysts, and it is they who show other how things are done:

> **Which of your leaders are ensuring that the corporate DNA is passed down to future generations?**

> **And what exactly is being passed down?**

A great leader empowers employees to want to do something rather than be required to do something. Occasionally, of course, people need convincing, and that is where proper leadership skills come in.

> **A leader has to empower employees and inspire them to duplicate the leader's example.**

Whatever the Culture is within the company, the leader should be a model for the next generation of leaders to follow. Otherwise a firm's accumulated knowledge will be lost. And the Vision, Purpose, Values, and other keys to the company's Culture will disappear.

MOST PEOPLE WANT TO LEARN, BUT DON'T WANT TO BE TAUGHT

It is important for a leader to keep in mind that people generally are eager to learn, but they're not looking for the rote memorization we may have

experienced in school. Adults want to learn in a creative, empowering, and inspiring way, and providing that is the responsibility, duty and opportunity of every leader within every organization.

When leaders act as positive role models and get involved in some task, employees are much less resistant to the work. That doesn't mean that a leader has to be there every step of the way; allowing employees to do it themselves will still produce the best results. Involvement can mean checking on progress at regular intervals and being available to answer questions. It's that simple. No one likes to take orders from someone on the sidelines.

"But, as a leader," you might argue, "sometimes I don't have the time to get that involved." Leaders cannot lead anyone or anything by staying in their offices. They must be part of the process and out in front, and their skills are revealed by the way they guide others. What I have heard over and over again is that a person is a great leader because he or she would never ask someone to do something they wouldn't do themselves.

> **If you empower people to take responsibility for their own growth and allow them to reach their potential, you are truly a leader.**

Leaders need to empower their employees to be creative.

Here's a great example: An employee of a national pizza company invented his own dish at one of the restaurants in Ohio. After it became a favorite with the local customers, he submitted his idea to management, and now it is part of the chain's menu nationally. Empowerment for the employee equals more profits for the company. Win–win.

Leadership follows from a clear compelling Vision and Purpose. In those cases, as we've noted, you don't need to tell employees what to do because they know what needs to be done. It's the workers, after all, who have their fingers on the pulse of the business. And if they are allowed to do so, employees are really good at figuring things out, trust me. If they're free to create, they may come up with something better than you

hoped for, and they have a stake in its success. And if they swerve a little off track, you can suggest things to help them get back on course with a gentle nudge.

UPS provides a terrific illustration of employees figuring out how to become more efficient, save resources, and decrease the world carbon footprint, almost 100 years after the company was founded as the American Messenger Company in 1907.

UPS—NO LEFT TURNS

In 2004, after evaluating its CO_2 emissions, UPS announced that its drivers would avoid making left turns. The company calculated that reducing the amount of time spent idling while waiting to make left turns would save millions of dollars in fuel costs every year.

They were right. In 2006, UPS trucks drove 2.5 billion miles. The company estimated that, thanks to its unique package-flow technology combined with the right-turn routes, they'd also saved 28.5 million miles, and three million gallons of fuel. Talk about improving the bottom line!

> **If we just keep telling employees what to do, they are trained to do only what we tell them.**

Three keys to great leadership

Why become a leader? When I ask that question, most people respond that they want to help people, just the way they've been helped in their past. So if you are a leader, helping and empowering people are the primary goals.

A leader can raise the employees' expectations of themselves, reinforcing their abilities and getting them closer to their full potential. Leaders also embrace the positive, which allows them to be effective and inspirational role models.

Like a great coach, a great leader allows people to empower themselves with a positive mind-set about their abilities.

There are three important keys to becoming a successful leader: self-improvement, communication, and relationships.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Employees can match a leader's knowledge and capabilities, but it may be difficult for them to surpass them. So to keep the company advancing, a leader should be working on self-improvement, too.

When leaders take the initiative to better themselves, they can pass along their new knowledge and wisdom to the entire team. As we said before, teams mirror management, so to ensure your team is taking things to the Next Level, the leader has to take the first step.

> **Leaders must rely on their own self-improvement in order to keep the team moving forward.**

> **Figure out what you need to do to empower yourself, then, in turn, empower your team. Your team is a reflection of you, and you want that reflection to shine as bright as the sun.**

COMMUNICATION

As we've said in the Culture section, proper communication is crucial to any organization. It can unite a team and help it accomplish great things, but a disconnect in communication can actually lead to the downfall of a company.

Unfortunately, fast-growing companies frequently experience problems in communication. It's a common scenario. Communication starts out great at a company's beginning, when everyone can hear the message directly from the leader. As the firm grows, however, the voice of the leader becomes fainter, and employees can misinterpret it. A solid blueprint that details the company's Culture helps tremendously, but too often no one takes the time to see that the blueprint is in place.

Great leaders create relationships that focus on the success of others.

And once an organization begins to be organized into teams or divisions, it's easy for them isolate themselves, breaking down communication and relationships even more.

As we've noted, weekly executive meetings are an effective way to keep communication open and the Culture intact.

Communication is a two-way street

A little small talk can create big results. Great leaders ask their employees about family, life, goals, and interests. If they really care, employees understand that the leaders are concerned not just about work but about really knowing them. That's what leaders do. Ask about spouses, children, and hobbies. Call employees by name. (Our names are the sweetest words we can hear!) In turn, employees will to get to know their leader. Of course, if a leader doesn't care about the people in the company, don't expect the workers to care about their leader—or their customers, for that matter.

Personalizing communication is important. When you say, "Nice job,"

it may sound good to you, but that's a rather broad statement. Something more personalized would better empower an employee. Why not, "Mary, I noticed that report you wrote. It was one of the most detailed and professional reports I have ever seen. Thank you so much, I am very proud of you, and you should be very proud of yourself too." That kind of praise will be much more effective, and chances are your employees will repeat the comment and spread the love.

People, especially leaders, should listen twice as much as they speak; that's why, as the old adage says, we were born with two ears and one mouth. In listening we not only learn others' points of view, we show that we are interested in what they have to say. People love to talk about themselves, but leaders not only have to listen, they also have to hear what people say. There is a difference.

Leaders listen more than they talk and they hear what is said.

Here are some other great communication tips:

- Use "we," "ours," and "us" more than "me" or "I." Words like these emphasize a team spirit and indicate that we're all in this together.
- Use employees' names. Believe me, one's name sounds 10,000 times better than anything else. And don't forget salutations: Say "Hello" and "Good-bye."
- Communicate promptly—inside and outside the company—whether by e-mail, phone calls, or one-on-one chats.
- Be interested. People are flattered when you show them attention.
- Listen without distraction.

It doesn't always have to be personal

Yes, you should personalize acknowledgment and recognition, but when it comes to giving direction, it's better to be impersonal. That way, a remark can be heard more objectively.

For instance, if you say to an employee, "I want you to do it this way," the person will probably react with resistance, because there's a tinge of "do it my way or take the highway."

Why not say, "We usually do it this way. What do you think?" The employee is less likely to take offense at that. The nudging and the direction come across as objective, with the undertone of "This is the way the company does it. It's not just all about me."

Leaders don't argue to try to make their point. They know that no one ever truly wins an argument. Even though you might think you came out on top, you haven't. Buddha said it best: "Hatred is never ended by hatred, but by love."

Look in a person's left eye while you talk and listen

We see with our eyes, but most of our neural pathways don't go to the same side of our brains. The nerves cross over to the opposite side. So most of the left eye's information goes to our right brain; most of our right eye's information heads to the left side of the brain.

Now, the left brain is logical, analytical, rational, and objective—basically, it judges. The right brain, however, is intuitive, subjective. It's the creative side.

So when we look into someone's left eye, the person receives the information in the nonjudgmental part of the brain. That suggests that you are communicating from the heart. People feel it and know it, even if they can't explain it.

The next time you want to really communicate with someone, focus your attention on the left eye. The person will almost always lock onto what you're saying, and you will connect as you've never connected before. This works extremely well with kids, when you focus on their left eyes; it is amazing what happens.

RELATIONSHIPS

If leaders need employees to care about the company, leaders must start by caring about their employees. Think of it as paying it forward. A relationship goes both ways; there has to be give-and-take. You help me and I'll help you. I care about you and you care about me.

> **Relationships are fostered by focusing on what we can do for others. Over time, they'll reciprocate.**

How do you feel about people who call or communicate only when they want or need something? Do you go the extra mile for them? No, not usually.

Relationships thrive on acknowledgment and recognition. We've all heard that employees don't quit their company, they quit their boss. Why? Usually because acknowledgment and recognition were nowhere to be had, so the employee feels there is no real purpose or reason for him or her to be there. Showing your gratitude to employees will not only fulfill their needs, it will demonstrate to others what kind of work earns accolades; it's another win–win.

> **Taking a sincere and genuine interest in others creates rapport and builds leadership.**

People matter, and when you show them that you care who they are and what they have to say, you will energize them. Leaders are not afraid to give out praise or to pass along a compliment. Even small talk shows that you recognize someone as an individual and an asset to the company.

It's all a matter of perspective

With the exponential expansion of choices at everyone's fingertips, the old way of doing business just won't do. People no longer settle for the traditional boss–employee dynamic in which grown men and women are told what to do by an executive who tries to manage rather than lead them. No more "powerful and powerless." No need to enter a workplace filled with orders, rules, and restrictions. No more being told what to do and when to do it. Those days are over.

When it comes to assessing performance, however, everyone has a slightly different point of view.

FROM AN EMPLOYEE'S PERSPECTIVE

Employees usually view their leader as the one in control of advancement. A leader's approval is needed to receive a raise, for example, which may mean a newer car, an upgrade in living arrangements, that dreamed-of vacation. The only thing in the way of those perks is the leader. So employees don't take the review process lightly, and neither should the leader.

It's the leaders' duty to develop the people in their charge, and if employees do not improve, leaders bear responsibility for that.

An employee may also see a leader's assessment as subjective and not as helpful for advancement as it might be.

FROM THE LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

Other managers have told me that "Employees should just do as they are told," or more succinctly, they should "shut up and get to work." Those attitudes are a relic of days gone by.

In my younger years, I worked in construction as a framer. My boss would yell, "I want to see asses and elbows," which meant that if we were doing our jobs properly, we'd be bending over and nailing the studs to the bottom and top plate. All he would see would be our asses in the air and our elbows swinging the hammer. But that was the old way.

Leaders understand that their point of view may differ from that of employees, and that they should make an effort to bridge the gap.

They should also understand that they're responsible for giving the employees support and empowerment so they can advance. If no one is improving, that is partly the leader's fault. How a team is doing is a reflection of the leader.

A leader understands that everyone is someone's child, brother, sister, father, or mother and that they need to be objective and avoid even the perception of subjectivity.

And objectivity is paramount in all interactions with employees to promote a high level of trust and to counteract any perception of favoritism.

Great leaders can have a positive impact on someone's life at work and at home.

FROM AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

A leader will be judged by outsiders on the team's result, because that's mostly what outsiders see. But leaders also have to realize that what they say has far-reaching consequences. We have all been reprimanded by someone at work, and taken that comment home. Family and friends all got a piece of our resentment. So, too, compliments or approval reach beyond the company, spreading good will to those at home.

All these elements go into producing great leadership. But others in the company—those responsible for human empowerment—also have a tremendous impact in achieving success.