advice chief

Embrace your humanity

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Some people think being a tough guy or gal is a requirement to successfully lead. That kicking the door down, telling people to stop crying, or giving monster stares is going to motivate them into action. Perhaps there are times when toughness and grit are necessary, but not all the time. A leader will get much further if he or she takes a more humanistic approach to leadership. It is better to consistently lead through personal relationships rather than by positional power because it creates an environment for open, honest communication where people support and learn from each other. Bringing your humanity to work is essential for effective leadership in today's world.

The best and most effective leaders believe that long-term success is built on inclusiveness and respect, and on the cultivation of healthy relationships with and among people. Constant attention is given to discovering better and more valuable ways of working together. Humanistic leaders believe in the inherent value of conversation and its capacity to help people be successful. They are always concerned about employee development and they aim for a mix of hard work and serious play. They relish the challenge of finding ways to stimulate people to go beyond their personal preconceived limitations.

Feedback and coaching become very important with the humanistic approach to leading. Direct reports can often feel misunderstood, fear being judged, or feel insecure when they don't know what is expected of them or when communication is weak or nonexistent. No one wants to disappoint a boss and people typically want to put their best foot forward. Therefore, feedback and coaching are essential for diminishing the fear of making mistakes and for exploring and learning in the workplace.

Humanistic leaders create environments where individuals are honored and valued, communicate that it's okay to be human (to be who you are), and encourage people to not be afraid to use their personal strengths for the betterment of themselves and the organization. When leaders relate purely through position, people become fearful of being judged, fearful of retribution and blame, and fearful of being wrong. Most of all, they become fearful of putting their tough business challenges on the table or sharing their concerns for fear that they will be looked upon as too weak to be on the team.

Humanizing leaders make extra efforts to create environments where people are respected for who they are, where business is personal, where listening is nonjudgmental, where communication is open and honest, and where people feel motivated to work through tough issues with others. No one has all the answers, and gaining the perspectives of others is vital to see the way to new insights.

So if you want to build and maintain an environment where people feel safe to be who they are and grow into who they can become, then create and sustain an environment that thrives on the humanity that's in everyone.

~ The End ~