Growth Guru Guild



A monthly newsletter for Growth Guru partners and friends January 2024



Love, Listen, Learn and Align...

The topic of this month's Guild is something I've been thinking about for a long time: What is the combination of attributes and skills necessary to lead a team? Like many of you, I have read many books and attended many conferences on leadership. I have taught and coached leaders for 30 years. In most cases, those books and conferences have provided tips and tactics, but not really a solid framework for exceptional leadership. While

all my thoughts on this topic are not totally worked out, I think I have found a framework for exceptional leadership that fits any team or industry. It all starts with the heart rather than the head.

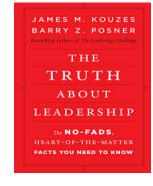
Love

It's a strong word. It's a word that can be defined very differently depending on the relationship or circumstance. In this case, I'm referring to love in the benevolent sense – characterized by kindness and the purpose of doing good. I'm also speaking to the love and commitment to a common purpose we hold true as a company. Leaders must love what they do and love who they do it with. If love isn't present, we "game" the business and others for the sake of self. Faking it fails. Faking it destroys trust. Faking it will hurt someone.

This doesn't mean you will always *like* what's happening or maybe even the people around you! Even after 43 years of marriage, my wife, Jean and I, don't always *like* each other. Life happens, communication breaks down, things get too busy, and our priorities will often get derailed. But, through it all, we choose to love. We want the best for each other and we are there to support one other. Ultimately, because of choosing love, we get back on

track. The same is true with your business. When your employees know you "love" them, they will stick with you in good and bad times.

In <u>The Truth About Leadership</u>, experts Kouzes and Posner say that leadership starts with love. Nothing ever gets done without heart. Purely and simply, exemplary leaders excel in improving performance because they pay great attention to the human heart. Leaders are in love: in love with leading, in love with the organization's products and services, and in love with the people.



Listen

If we truly love, we will take the time to listen to our teams and clients. Oh boy, this this is a tough one for me. My brain is a magnet for bright and shiny distractions. So much so that it's a growth focus for me this year--to be a better listener, to be more present, and respect other's thoughts, ideas, and sometimes hurts. Your ability to listen well to others is critical to your leadership success. Listening creates opportunities for relationship building, trust, ideas, connection and often redirection. To grow as a leader, listening has to be a priority. Better listening starts with:

- Slow Down it allows my need for urgent to focus on the important
- Turn Off turn off electronics, turn off time triggers, and turn on your desire to become a better friend, partner, peer, leader, and vendor.
- Listen We only learn when we listen. When you are talking, you are sharing what you already know.
 Stephen R. Covey: "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

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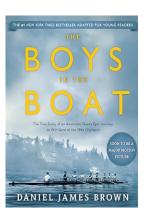
Learn

A couple of weeks ago, Dave Nelsen presented "Unleashing Productivity" to our Vistage Board. Dave gave great information and tips on Generative AI, but his introduction was the most meaningful to me when he referenced Peter Senge, the author of "The Fifth Discipline". He states that, "The future belongs to the continuous learner." What keeps us from continuous learning? I believe part of the reason is fear. If we learn, we may need to change, and change can be challenging.

This scenario reminded me of a personal story from 1995. I was leaving for a national meeting when Bruce, our I.T. Director, suggested I take three floppy discs (remember those?) with me. The tutorials were on Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Bruce strongly suggested that I watch and practice all three on my trip. He said they would be very helpful necessary skills and tools for me in the future. My actual response to him was, "Bruce, I don't think that this old dog needs to be learning new tricks. These tools may be wonderful for someone new, just coming out of school, but not really necessary for me." Bruce insisted, I listened, and I did spend a lot of time learning Excel and PowerPoint on that trip. Excel ended up being one of those tools that truly opened a whole new world for me. Back then it was Excel. Today it is Al!

Align

Unifying a team starts with a shared vision. By consistently sharing a vision and demonstrating how each team member's unique value fuels it, you can light a fire of purpose. The organization's success is always bigger than any ONE of us. When you align to a common challenge, true collaboration abounds. Like a crew rowing in unison, you become a force greater than the sum of your parts. In the book, "Boys in the Boat", it's referred to as finding "Swing". Swing is that magical moment, when rowers transcend their individual limitations. Due to the perfectly coordinated effort, the boat lifts out of the water and finds speed far greater than the normal strength necessary to achieve.



Let's Be Honest...

Many of us have felt the weight of work we aren't passionate about. Take action! Seek guidance from a professional counselor or coach. Discover your strengths. Seek out a different work environment, Do something to find purpose in your work. We all spend too much time at work to be miserable. Find a position where you can pour your passion into work you truly love. Your creativity and productivity will soar, and you'll also be a happier and more valuable contributor. It's a win-win!

If you would like more information about growing your company's Greatness, please contact our team.

Sincerely, Rick Faber, Guru, and Founder