



The seven habits of compassionate leaders

By Chris Charyk | June 21, 2016

How can organizations fulfill their values, mission, and purpose? By integrating leadership and compassion. Companies like Google have managed to make compassion a core component of the workplace. And compassionate leadership is especially important in healthcare, where care and empathy are integral to the mission.

In my years of executive coaching with The Boda Group, I've found that leaders who actively cultivate compassion as a core leadership competency all share a set of notable traits.

1. Adaptability

Compassionate leaders are able to respond quickly to changing business conditions and stakeholder requirements, because they can effectively perceive, interpret, and act on their deep understanding of the emotions underlying others' actions.

2. Authenticity

The words and deeds of compassionate leaders are perceived as consistent with their stated values, creating the sense that "what you see is what you get."

3. Focus

Compassionate leaders are self-aware. That means they're able to constantly monitor what's consuming their attention and then effectively redirect their attention to their highest priorities. They can leverage this awareness to make sure that others in the organization are similarly focused on the right strategic and tactical priorities.

4. Connection and collaboration seeking

Compassionate leaders pay attention to and seek opportunities and counsel from their teams. They consistently endeavor to understand how their decisions and actions affect the people they lead.

5. Tolerance for mistakes

Compassionate leaders recognize that errors are both inevitable and human. While some leaders pay lip service to the notion of celebrating mistakes, compassionate leaders truly walk the walk. These leaders openly share their own mistakes, emphasizing the importance of errors as sources of new learning.

This openness builds trust and fosters a healthy spirit of appropriate risk-taking as part of innovation.

6. Balance

Compassionate leaders recognize the critical role that self-care plays in consistently high performance, so they make sure they're modeling a healthy approach to balancing work and the rest of life, as well as creating a broader organizational culture that supports employee well-being.

7. Humor

Despite the lack of hard scientific evidence, anecdotal evidence supports the correlation between humor and compassionate leadership. Commitment to the greater good implies not taking oneself too seriously.

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