

LEADING WITH COMPASSION



Human-to-human warmth – being tough-minded about problems but open-hearted about people – encourages performance without stress.

Throughout these essays, we are continually pointing to three fundamental forces at play, in life as in business: Thought (the process we use to create an original life), Consciousness (the clarity we have about the life we are creating), and Mind (our connectedness to universal intelligence and spiritual energy). And we have used words not usually heard in a business context: hope, faith, compassion, gratitude, and spirituality.

Leading with grace is, for most of us, an acquired capability. The capacity resides in all of us, but liberating it is something else. Leaders can get good results simply by relying on their knowledge and experience. There are also "how to" books that teach the techniques of leadership and tell memorable stories. They can come in handy.

But can an organization achieve and sustain greatness by relying on the "known" - that which has already been invented, experienced, or understood? Instinctively, we know the answer is "No!" What sets all great companies apart is something unique. What marks all great leaders who run such companies is their ability to say or do exactly the right thing whenever the moment requires it, bring out the best in others, and help people deepen their own capacity to lead. The passion these companies exhibit is obvious. But its source flows from an unexpected wellspring - love.

Love is the force that releases the spirit's wisdom and rekindles its energy. We are not speaking about romantic passion or parental love, but about "agape" - spiritual connectedness - or bringing to the forefront the "we-ness" of being involved with others. Nobody has to earn love, and nobody has to decide to give it. It is like a river. We cannot stop its flow, but we can dam it by turning our hearts against it. Its power is overwhelming, humbling, and breathtaking. We cannot help but feel awe, knowing that all of this power is at our fingertips.

Love is unconditional. It is a song we sing to other people when they are listening and when they are not, when they are rapt and applauding and when they are too busy to notice. It gives more to us than to our audience. Before they hear our song, we experience it. We feel its power well up; we are touched first.

That love is essential to leadership can be summed up in the saying, "They won't care about what you say until they know how much you care." Love is connection moving through us. It opens the floodgates that hold back the flow of deep feelings, such as faith, hope, and compassion. It liberates us from self-doubts, self-criticism, self-imposed limits, and isolation.

Love has many facets that can turn ordinary people into wonderful leaders. They include the gifts of:

- **Understanding**, which helps us establish the human bond in our dealings with others and to see that, at any given moment, people are doing the best they can - given their sense of what is real. It helps us see the innocence in people's actions instead of cluttering our minds with blame, suspicion, or anger. The consequence of such understanding is that people feel respected and valued and free to turn their full attention to the matters at hand.
- **Gratitude**, which makes us want to serve the best interests of others and support human accomplishment. Success comes more easily when we appreciate what we have been given, since such appreciation inspires others to go out of their way to help us. Haven't you been surprised by how appreciative customers can be when someone sincerely thanks them?
- **Kindness**, which promotes a sense of well being in everyone. It can manifest in small acts, such as words of encouragement or taking the time to help someone work through problems. Considerate acts rarely require money - just the willingness to invest one's time and attention.
- **Forgiveness**, which lets us put the past in its place and frees us to move on. It doesn't mean that we condone dumb decisions or stupid behavior. However, by holding on to anger, hurt, or resentment we bind ourselves to negativity. We all learn by making mistakes and asking dumb questions, not by criticizing the actions of others or thinking we know it all. Who among us has not made mistakes?
- **Compassion**, which is born out of awareness that suffering is part of the human experience, that "there but for the grace of God go I." Acting compassionately is not the same as covering for others who are not carrying their weight. We can be tough-minded about a problem and still be warm-hearted toward those who are causing the problem.

We are not the origin of these deep feelings, but rather their conduit. Like a pipe carrying water from a hot spring; we are warmed as deep feelings pass through us. While we do not create these feelings, we can choose to give them expression. And however much we give, there is always more because deep feelings come from the infinite well of Being.

Leading with feeling

When we lead with this warmth, this power, we encourage without effort. We guide without rules. We direct without saying much. We see with our ears and listen with our hearts. We are confident without bluster. We are certain without worry. We can be firm without being mean. We can ask people to do much without feeling guilty. We can step aside so that others can step up.

With this kind of leadership, people are inspired to give their best. They find joy in even the most onerous tasks. They are fearless in surmounting challenge. They are not afraid to be lighthearted with each other.

The graceful leader knows that it's the feelings, not the words that matter. Only the heart can see what is truly essential. Only our actions can manifest the true state of our mind. What conflict cannot be resolved if our actions are based on the warmth

that flows from an inner sense of trust? How can worry get a foothold if we feel confident and hopeful about the future? And how can selfishness gain traction where love inspires us to help others succeed?

Unlocking the mystery of becoming a great leader is as simple as seeing that whenever these profound feelings are present, we all have unfettered access to wisdom, common sense, and creative intelligence - "unfettered access" because our minds are not cluttered by busy thoughts, paralyzed by fear, defeated by jealousy, confused by analysis, or blinded by arrogance.

When we lead from deep feelings, then insights, intuition, and perspectives flow as easily as breathing in and breathing out. Don't be afraid to express deep feelings. They can be infectious. We unleash tremendous energy in our organizations when we acknowledge our profound emotions. They help people clear their minds so that they can see what obviously needs to be done and do it. They provide clarity so that our people can discover their own capacity to lead.

Illuminating culture

Imagine a company where what matters most are the presence of these deeper feelings and the harmony they promote. Sound farfetched?

Well consider Southwest Airlines, whose logo says it all - "25 Years of Luv." Or Johnson & Johnson, whose values have guided the company since they were first expressed by General Johnson in the 1950s - "Our first responsibility is to serve those who use our products." Or Shell, the "Living Company" that cares deeply about its contribution to the environmental well-being of Earth's citizens. Or FedEx with its emphasis on "people, service, profit." Or the Chicago Bulls under the coaching of Phil Jackson, who put the "we-ness into teamwork." Or even your own organization - if you look, won't you find expressions of love, gratitude, kindness, or appreciation?

Such feelings give these companies the human fuel to fulfill their purpose. They helped Southwest achieve 27 years of unbroken profitability and J&J to grow earnings at an 11.6% annual clip since its inception more than 100 years ago. Shell has been the world's most profitable corporation for a number of years; FedEx grew into a multibillion new business in just one management generation, and the Bulls won six NBA championships in 10 years.

These results demonstrate that when leaders show love, they liberate people's passion to engage fully in the enterprise's mission - to unreservedly give it their best effort. That is what gives great companies an edge for superior accomplishment - unfettered energy and enthusiasm.

Many companies are good, solid performers, but they cannot become great without leaders who make these intangibles, tangible. Great leaders share a keen awareness that what matters most are these principles, principles that are timeless, universal, even spiritual.

Then they act accordingly.

For more information email Partners@AccompliGroup.com