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# Today or never... Learn here how to Lead with Love



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## The power of love in business – Love to lead, lead with love

By Gaelle Piernikarch, February 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

*It might sound slightly bizarre, but one of the keys for effective leadership is to be madly in love with all the people you are leading.*

Ken Blanchard, leadership guru.

Lately I was running a workshop on leadership development and in the middle of the morning, there was a moment of grace. One of these moments where something happens, or someone says something that suddenly brings a time of stillness, sheds a new light on old ideas and you suddenly feel a deep connection with your fellow colleagues.

We were brainstorming and reflecting with the participants about what makes great leadership, when all of a sudden, one of them exclaimed: “Love!”. As we asked him to specify his thoughts, he said that even though it may sound naïve, he had a strong feeling that truly great leaders are the ones who love people. With renewed energy and enthusiasm, we started to explore this thought, recalling great leaders of their times and having them pass the “love test” – trying to find out what the “love factor” in their leadership style, or in their philosophy, or in their actions had been. We came up with a list of leaders who had marked their era, very different from each other yet who could all be associated with love: Mahatma Gandhi, Cleopatra, Nelson Mandela, Florence Nightingale, Richard Branson, to mention only a few.

We then realized that the great thing about love is that it produces action. As a matter of fact, love moves us, it puts us in motion. Love is action. According to some researchers in psychology and biology, love would even be the only human emotion that permanently creates smart and productive actions. So in a way, we could say that love it is not only what you say or feel, but it is

what you do. In this respect, love is a real leadership competency: it produces intelligent and constructive actions, creates empathy and thus allows us to understand others and to connect with them at a deeper level, and last but not least: love is also a source of inspiration that leads to creating compelling visions.

Nonetheless, we often feel weird talking about love in a leadership context. It seems awkward and naive to say that if you want to become a great leader, you have to love people. Maybe because we often link love with intimacy or with a soft part of ourselves? Or maybe because love doesn't seem to fit with some associations we may have about leadership: strength, rationality, power.

And yet we recognize “the power of love” not only in the private and intimate context, but in many diverse business situations. Don't we want our customers to love our products? Our employees to love their company? You might remember Steve Ballmer and his famous “I – love – this – company!” on stage. So why not recognize that love is an essential leadership skill? As important as active listening for example. By the way, active listening... couldn't we state that love also makes you a great “active listener”? Because love enhances your capacity to focus on others, as it amplifies your interest for them - their situations, ideas, solutions. Besides, love makes you such a great, eloquent speaker... able to convey your emotions to touch the most remote audience.

Further, we can even claim that the success of organizations is led by loving relationships: loving your employees or your co-workers and colleagues has a direct impact on behaviours at work such as collaboration, commitment, forgiveness and inclusiveness, and fosters a culture of appreciation, learning and growth.

Time to lead with love?

Happy Valentine day!



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