

AAA Leadership Model – Three Golden Principles

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“The true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own. Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead, and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest.” – Simon Sinek

The pandemic continues to disrupt the lives of millions, and good leadership in these times has become more important than ever. A survey conducted recently by The Workforce Institute at Ultimate Kronos Group (UKG) and Workplace Intelligence of more than 3,900 employees and business leaders in 11 nations revealed that exhaustion and fatigue are concerns whether employees work from home (43%) or in a physical workplace (43%). Approximately 29% of the employees surveyed wish their respective organisations would act with more empathy. Burnout has always been a reality, but in times of real stress, it explodes.

Leaders must meet the different needs of the individuals working for them. The mantra used for years for being a successful leader, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, does not go far enough, though. The authentic demonstration should ideally be “Do unto others as they would have done unto themselves”. This means that leaders need to step outside of their own needs, actively listen to their people and then take action. The need of the hour is embracing radical candour by challenging directly and caring personally at the same time.

More than ever before, organisational culture has become a competitive differentiator and a key part of employee satisfaction, engagement and, ultimately, retention. Putting people first and demonstrating qualities such as humanity, happiness and trust are how leadership has to be defined and evaluated. Without them, companies would find themselves at a disadvantage, because a more connected and engaged culture reminds employees of their worth and makes them feel more committed to an organisation.

This crisis presents an opportunity for leaders to focus on creativity, teamwork and innovation in the face of adversity. We at Acuity follow the AAA Framework for Leadership – three golden principles that have helped us immeasurably to create the culture we are proud of.

Attention – catch them doing something right

Where the attention goes, energy flows. Stay connected to your people; this ensures the most influence,

and enables the leader and the team to achieve their big-picture goals together. Focus on the right things in a balanced manner. Focusing on the negative and catching someone doing something wrong makes them defensive, leading to excuses and playing the blame game. Alternatively, catching someone doing something right leads to positive reinforcement. It helps teams tap into their potential, making them want to do better. The right words can promote team cohesion. These “somethings” do not have to be big things, although, of course, you want to praise them for doing those as well. Make it part of your agenda to look for things going right.

Affirmation – secure emotional bonds

Verbal affirmation is essential to establishing secure emotional bonds. The right affirmations can build an emotional connection and bring the members of your team closer to you, enhancing performance significantly, by combining one member’s unique set of skills with another’s. For this to happen, however, each one has to give their best. This will not be possible if they are consistently ignored and taken for granted. Display the affection and admiration you have for each member. Such bonds provide trust, security and a sense of support in the face of dynamic and unpredictable circumstances, promoting forgiveness and engagement, and boosting morale

Appreciation – build trust with honest appreciation

Research shows a 33% increase in innovation when employees are shown appreciation consistently. There is something intrinsically good about honest appreciation. Ensure that your words are heartfelt and make team members feel loved, recognised, admired, secure and accepted. It is important not to make the mistake of confusing recognition with appreciation. Recognition acknowledges existence and addresses the physical self. Appreciation assigns value and addresses the emotional self.

Try adding one of these proven methods of appreciation to your daily routine:

- Add daily appreciation to your to-do list – include the accomplishments of those who report to you and cross their names off as you praise them
- Use voicemail – leave messages praising them for a job well done
- Send weekly “thank you” emails recognising the valuable contributions of your team members
- Proactively seek their guidance and experience the mutual feeling of importance and value
- Launch a mentorship programme – this says, “I am genuinely interested in you”, “You are worth my time” and “I have a vested interest in your development and success”

Nothing drives employee engagement and satisfaction more than employees knowing their leaders care about them. For years to come, employees will remember how they felt during this crisis. Step up and lead accordingly.

As Maya Angelou said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

To know more about Acuity’s leadership experience and functional expertise, visit <https://www.acuitykp.com/about-us/>

References:

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- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/hillennevins/2020/03/19/leadership-in-the-time-of-covid-19/?sh=3b9fc3a35e4e>
- Good to Great by Jim Collins
- 25 Ways to Win with People by John Maxwell
- 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell

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