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OVE is not a common word that is associated with leadership, more so in corporate leadership. But wait a minute, according to the Oxford Dictionary, love is defined as merely a strong feeling of affection. Hence, when we talk about leading with love, we are not referring to some sort of romantic feeling but a strong positive feeling of affection we can have towards those whom we lead.

Harvard professor and organizational behaviour expert Teresa Amabile’s research shows that the best leaders foster an emotionally nourishing relationship with their employees. That means loving leaders are relationship-focused and are always mindful in cultivating healthy emotional ties with others. Leaders can indeed show love. If you are still uncomfortable with using the word “love” and “leadership” in the same sentence, perhaps you can use the term “genuine care.” Either way, I think you get the point.

Here are five possible expressions or languages of love that leaders can show to others:

LOVE LANGUAGE #1: I BELIEVE IN YOU

The need to be affirmed by others is a basic human need. One of the most vital ways leaders can affirm others is simply by believing in their potential.

Leaders who do not believe in their people often end up sidelining them instead of coaching and providing them with the opportunity to develop and advance.

While world-famous director Steven Spielberg was still a student, he was offered an unpaid internship at Universal Studios. The people there eventually recognized his potential and gave him an opportunity to make a short film. It was a short 26-minute love story called Amblin which he wrote and directed.

The short film later won several film festival awards and he was subsequently offered a seven-year contract directing episodic television with Universal Studios. The rest is history! It all started because someone believed in him and gave him an opportunity.

Famous German playwright and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, “If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.” How true!

LOVE LANGUAGE #2: I WILL MENTOR YOU

Every leader by default is a mentor; it comes with the job. Great leaders not only can get things done but they have the heart to teach and coach others to be better at what they do.

When leaders commit to mentoring others, they are communicating their willingness to take responsibility to care, guide and develop those whom they are leading. This is the hallmark of great leadership.

Hence, leaders need to have effective mentoring skills and more so, a sincere heart to nurture others in their development process. A caring leader does not focus on what they can get out from others but rather how they can pour out their lives to help those they lead to move to the next level.

LOVE LANGUAGE #3: I HAVE YOUR BACK

I used to work for a very charismatic boss. He was someone who was very eloquent with his words and was absolutely fantastic when it came to human relations with others.

Unfortunately, I disliked him. In my three years working for him, I always felt used to get things done in order to fulfill his personal agenda.

When the team had some achievements, he would be very quick to blame us. I felt underappreciated, did not feel secure under his leadership. Good leaders must be able to stand alongside their teams in good times and in bad times. When the team goes through the storms, a good leader must be able to say, “It’s okay. I have your back. Let’s work this out together.”

LOVE LANGUAGE #4: I FORGIVE YOU

Everyone makes mistakes. When mistakes are made, all kinds of emotions can run through a person’s mind. They can feel regretful, remorseful, fearful and even guilty.

In a workplace context, the person may feel that the boss is disappointed or even angry with him or her. This can lead to demotivation and worsen one’s performance.

Some leaders focus solely on reprimanding the person for their mistakes. Some ignore addressing the real issues by giving the cold shoulder treatment. This can leave the person affected with a greater burden of guilt and insecurity.

In such situations, the person’s greatest need is to be assured that the past is the past and they can move on. Inevitably, it is the leader who can provide this crucial assurance. Leaders should not only address the mistakes and reprimand professionally if needed. More than that, loving leaders need to offer forgiveness.

Forgiveness begins with simple verbal affirmations such as, “It’s okay. Everyone makes mistakes. They are forgiven. Let’s move on.” As simple as it may sound, such words of affirmation are so powerful because it brings a closure to the episode. It also signals to the person that he or she can start with a new slate. When this happens, confidence is built and hope is restored.

LOVE LANGUAGE #5: I AM SORRY

Leaders make mistakes too, right? These mistakes can include things like misjudging their subordinates, placing unreasonable demands and even showing unhealthy bursts of emotions.

When such things happen, people are usually upset and feel that their leader has unfairly treated them. This can lead to anger, frustration, distrust, demotivation and an erosion of loyalty.

However, a leader who is truly humble and cares for his people will take responsibility for their mistakes. Some leaders find it difficult to apologize because they fear being perceived as weak and that they may lose the team’s respect. Not true.

When leaders admit their shortcomings, they actually gain more respect and are more admired by others because of their courage and humility.

THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES OF A LEADER

LEADING WITH LOVE

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To engage us for strategic influencing training modules for your organisation, email us at training@leaderonomics.com. This article was first published on Leaderonomics.com.