

CARE

WHY THERE IS NO LEADING

TO

WITHOUT CARING

LEAD



BY

SUMIT GUPTA

A DEPLOY YOURSELF REPORT

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CARE TO LEAD

Why There Is No Leading Without Caring?

By Sumit Gupta

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Why There Is No Leading Without Caring?

There Is No Leading Without Caring

Leadership begins with caring - for an ambitious future, for a just cause, and for people around you. In this report you will find out why there is no leading without caring, and why you will not go far if you don't care for your people?

As managers and leaders, very often we end up giving secondary importance to the people involved – customers, employees, and other stakeholders. However, empowering our people might be our most important job as leaders to produce the results we desire.

Focusing on the people involved can help us simplify the complicated, and strip out the necessary from the superfluous. So ask yourself - Do you know your people? Do you know what makes them tick? Do you know what they care about?

Caring begins by taking care of what your people “care” about. What are their strengths, values, long term ambitions and desires? What makes them happy and proud? What frustrates and annoys them?

Knowing the above will help you detect (via body language, tone of voice) any negative emotion (frustration, cynicism, etc) and address it before it becomes contagious and a problem. It will also help you to match your people with the right opportunities so that their cares are taken care of.

Manage people with the aim to give back to them (via their growth, learnings) rather than just utilising their skills for maximum business output. Doing the former will take care of the latter by itself.

This report is divided into 3 parts :

Part 1 - Do You Know The People Behind Your Colleagues?

Part 2 - 7 Empathetic Questions To Understand And Support Your Colleagues

Part 3 - The Key Conversations To Care For Your People?

Let's start with **Part 1 - Do You Know The People Behind Your Colleagues?**

Do You Know The People Behind Your Colleagues?

5 Reasons You Should Know The People Behind Your Colleagues

No matter where you work, you spend most of your time with your colleagues.

We all know what a difference a good and a bad culture make in the workplace. The general mood at work affects people's productivity, happiness and health.

There are many reasons people leave their current place of work, and one of the most important of them is because of their managers. People leave when they are not appreciated and recognised for who they are.

When people feel they are treated like resources and not human beings, they don't like it very much. Isn't it strange so many managers treat people like tools, and still expect them to be engaged and motivated?

Tools or People?

Irrespective of where we work and the kind of work we do, we all live very parallel lives. We are all someone's children, siblings, parents, spouses, employees, colleagues, and friends. This is true for everybody, no matter what their position at work.

Being treated like tools doesn't make for a happy mood in the office. Modern workplaces are often designed to treat humans as resources or machines to get the maximum out of them, but all of us are more than a tool to be used for a purpose.

Why Should You Know Your Colleagues Better?

Well, you don't have to. But if you do, it will help you make better decisions, create a happier working environment, and be more productive at whatever you do. This is especially important if you manage a team of people, as you can have a massive jump in productivity by simply knowing your colleagues better.

Team dynamics are important, and once you understand that each person's productivity is tied into everyone else's productivity, you'll start to realize how important it is to know them a little deeper – as human beings and not just as cogs of a machine.

Why Is Digging Deeper Important?

Would you be able to tell if one of your colleagues was having a bad day? And do you know that just asking that can make a big difference?

The dynamics of the team you work in are often complex. Everyone has their own likes and dislikes, work ethics, different ways of doing things, and opinions about all kinds of topics. By understanding the people you work with a little deeper, you'll find it easier to connect and work with your team members.

Apart from the productivity gain, it's also great to have friends at work, so that you can discuss things other than work.

Humanizing Colleagues

Research today shows that your job becomes more fun and satisfying if you know your colleagues on a personal level.

We often forget that our team members are human as well and that they have other things going on in their lives. A colleague may, for example, be going through a divorce, or dealing with a sick family member, which would have a massive impact on their work.

We all have different ways of coping with tragedies, break-ups, and life's other frustrations. You may have noticed some of the following signs with one of your colleagues:

- They seem to be distracted, and there's a sudden increase in errors in their work.
- They may be unable to focus on tasks, which leads to poor decision-making.
- They may be taking more time off work.
- Their health seems to be suffering.
- They look stressed.

When you see any of these signs, think about how you would feel if you were in their situation? What type of support would you want? If you know your colleagues well, it will

be easier for you to be supportive. It will also be easier for them to open up and find a safe space to share.

You are working in a company and doing business. But you are doing it with people (employees), and for people (customers). If you do not know the people working with you, it becomes all abstract. What is the point of doing business or work, if you can't connect with the people working alongside you?

“Too many companies believe people are interchangeable. Truly gifted people never are. They have unique talents. Such people cannot be forced into roles they are not suited for, nor should they be. Effective leaders allow great people to do the work they were born to do.” – Warren Bennis

5 Reasons Knowing The People Behind Your Colleagues Matters

Getting to know your colleagues personally provides the following benefits:

1. Makes It Easier to Learn From Others

Knowing the people behind your colleagues leads to better teamwork. And better teamwork increases the opportunity to learn from each other, as well as coming up with creative solutions.

2. Decreased Stress At Work

If you are hating every moment at work, you will be stressed and it will impact your happiness and productivity. The same applies to your colleagues.

Knowing your colleagues better allows you to support each other and offer a helping hand or a shoulder to lean on. If you are going into the office knowing that you have a supportive team and can have a cup of coffee and talk about what's bothering you, your stress levels will decrease.

Less stress at work means more productivity and fun. Which in turn leads to people staying in companies longer.

3. Increased Sense of Responsibility & Quality of Work

Having a deeper connection with the people you work with increases our sense of responsibility towards each other and commitment towards the business.

When you have a closer relationship with your colleagues, you make decisions taking into account the bigger picture. Improved decision making leads to better work quality, which is a win-win for everyone.

4. Aliveness and Joy

If we are treated like machines in the workplace, we lose our sense of aliveness. Making an effort to get to know people better gives everyone space to be themselves.

This affects not only office dynamics, but it spills over to how you deal with people in your lives. Everyone feels better when there's joy and fun in the office.

5. Increased Well Being In and Out of the Office

When one area of life is difficult, everything else feels worse. Similarly, if you can improve the quality of your life at work, it spills over into your home life too.

You are healthier, happier, and more productive if you work with friends and not just colleagues. Despite the hardships or challenges you face at work, you will remember and cherish these moments as you were in the company of friends

Conclusion

If you don't know the people behind our colleagues, what are you working for? Economic growth, profits, revenues, market share? All those terms become very abstract and disconnected when you don't work with people you enjoy spending time with.

With your work, you serve the clients and customers of your business. By knowing your colleagues better, you can directly serve the very people in your office, which leads to all the benefits listed above.

Are you being treated like a resource or a machine? Are you treating others in your office that way? Now is the time to rethink that and get to know your colleagues as human

beings. You will be surprised at the difference it can make – both inside and outside of work.

This brings us to the end of **Part 1 - Do You Know The People Behind Your Colleagues?** In part 2 we will look at **7 simple questions** we can ask in different situations to connect and care for our people.

7 Empathetic Questions To Understand And Support Your Colleagues

7 Empathetic Questions To Ask At Work to Understand And Support Your Colleagues

One of the most important tasks of a leader is to support her people with the challenges they face. However, in the pressure-filled and fast-paced routine of everyday work, the challenges each one of us face might not be easily identifiable.

Due to workplace culture and social taboos, people might be struggling with some very important issues but never bring them to your notice. I have often been surprised by how much we can hide beneath our fake smiles and phony appearances.

How Can You Uncover The Hidden?

As a leader, the ability to uncover the hidden and provide support can be the difference between success and failure – both for individuals on your team and also for the business. So, how do you uncover these difficult topics?

One way to uncover important issues is to ask powerful questions regularly. These questions require original answers which often leads to introspection and being vulnerable. I have found that asking powerful questions is a very important skill to develop as a leader.

The key is to be completely present while interacting with others, and then being brave enough to ask the question. These questions can be asked in formal or informal settings, in regular 1-on-1s, or while walking to and from meetings.

“Stop taking care of your career. Start taking care of your people. And if you do that, they won’t let you fail.” – Jim Collins

Below are 7 such Empathetic Questions which you can ask to understand others and provide any support they might need:-

1. “You don’t seem yourself today. Would you like to take a break and chat?” Ask this question when you notice sadness or sudden quietness from someone. Invite them to take a walk around the office, or to have a chat over coffee. A single conversation at the right time can make a world of difference to another person. Often you will discover a

minor issue, which if quickly acted upon, can prevent major problems down the road (both for the people involved and the business).

2. If you notice someone angry or frustrated, you can calmly say – **“You sound upset. Is that because of something I did? Let me know if I can help anyway.”** Pent up emotions can lead to cynicism which can easily spread to other people. Emotions are contagious, and hence it is important to offer help and support when you notice emotional build-up. Showing a little care can go a long way in making people feel that they are not alone and they can share what they feel.

3. **“What can I do to help? How can I (or the organization) support you?”** You can ask this question when you see a person sad or dejected. Stressful situations can often lead to feelings of helplessness. However, if addressed in time, these feelings can help the person to understand themselves better. As a leader, you can use these moments as coaching opportunities.

4. If you know someone is going through a personal crisis, you can politely ask. **“I know you are going through a tough time. If you want to talk about it, I am willing to hear you out and help in any way possible?”** We all go through tough times at times, and as a leader, it is important to show people that you care for them as human beings, and your interest in them is not only limited to the work they produce.

5. **“I can’t even imagine how hard it must be for you. I want you to know that I and the organisation appreciate the way you have responded to the situation. If there is anything else I can do to support you, let me know?”** You can say this statement to show support when a person is experiencing difficulty at home or work. An encouraging message like this can provide reassurance.

6. **“I am sorry for what you are going through right now. I know you are a fighter and will come back stronger from this. Can I be of any help?”** You can use this statement when someone is in despair or tearful. We all go through situations that can feel overwhelming. However bad the suffering, it often helps to remind people that they have what it takes in them to overcome what they are going through.

7. **“I would hate to see you burn out. Are you taking care of yourself? Is there anything I can do?”** If you notice someone is overwhelmed by work or at the risk of burnout due to a stressful project, you can use this statement to show empathy. This also serves as a “check yourself” warning before it gets too late. Because of the advantage of

distance, you can sometimes see signs of burnout which others can't, and a small intervention in such a situation can prove very timely and helpful.

The Right Words At The Right Time Can Make A World of Difference

Asking the right questions and sincerely listening will help you see things from others' points of view. Consciously expressing your care can help people understand their own emotions better and make our relationships more meaningful. Needless to say, all of this results in better engagement and higher productivity at work.

A few words, said at the right time, can make a world of difference. And we all have the power to make a difference by practicing empathetic listening and noticing emotional cues. You never know what your support at the right moment might mean for someone else.

The benefits of becoming more emotionally intelligent are very tangible and have a direct impact on your health and well being. And I can tell you that there is no better feeling than knowing that your little act of empathy made a positive difference to someone else's life and well being.

This brings us to the end of **Part 2 - 7 Empathetic Questions To Ask At Work to Understand And Support Your Colleagues**. In the **third and final part**, we will look at **Career Development Conversations** - the key conversations to take care of your people.

How To Care For Your People?

How to Have Career Development Conversations With Your Employees?

One of the most fundamental human needs we all share is to make meaningful progress in what we are doing. At the workplace this means knowing how the road ahead looks, and how we can learn and grow to the next milestone on that road.

If you lead people, you can coach and guide your people on the path of future success by having what I term as Career Development Conversations. Knowing that their career progression is being taken care of frees up mental space for people, which in turn gives them the space to do well in their current roles.

What They Are?

Career Development Conversations are a set of coaching conversations a leader can have to help people understand, prioritise and act on their long term career ambitions.

People are mostly unaware of how they can grow in their careers, and as a coach you can help them figure this out. These conversations help provide clarity on how best to make meaningful progress, within or outside the current organisation.

1. Career Development Conversations show you “Care” for your people

I believe one of the most important roles for a coach (and every manager is a coach by default) is to “care” for their people. And you do that by taking care of the “cares” of your people.

Do you know what your employees “care” about, what they value or not value in life, and why? Do you know what motivates or drives them? Do you know what frustrates them?

As a coach you can help people figure out what they “care” about. If we explore this simple yet powerful concept of “care” with our teams, it can open up a new world for them as individuals, and for us as a leader.

2. They are Deep, Meaningful and Long Term; but made Tangible with Short Term Goals and Milestones

Working with various teams across continents over the last decade and a half, I have seen that people are often not aware what they “care” about, and what matters the most to them.

Career Development Conversations are deep and meaningful to figure this out. They not only help people to be proactive in their career choices as they achieve important career milestones like promotions, but also leave them with a feeling of satisfaction and contribution.

3. They are the second best opportunity to serve your people

Leading by example is without doubt the primary way your people see and perceive your leadership. Any conversation or management practice will fall through if you don't do what you talk about.

The second best way to serve your people is to continuously have these career development conversations with your people, which will create the context and form the background of everything else people do in their day to day jobs.

These conversations can inspire people to cooperate in the face of business challenges. They help people align their own purposes with the larger collective purpose of the organisation, leading to accountability and co-operation instead of conflict and self destruction.

“Treat a man as he appears to be, and you make him worse. But treat a man as if he were what he potentially could be, and you make him what he should be.” — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

What They Are Not?

There are a lot of misconceptions around career development conversations since there are different definitions of them depending on the organisation you find yourself in. Let's clear up what I mean when I say career development conversations.

1. They are not Optional

Most managers / leaders I have seen in different companies don't have these conversations at all. Companies don't realise its importance and it often takes a backseat with the focus mostly on driving business results.

Even when they happen, they are not regularly reinforced and leaders are not held accountable for them. Nobody told me about these conversations either. I have learned them the hard way – making numerous mistakes as a leader and only later stumbling upon these conversations from numerous trainings and books.

2. They are not Performance Reviews.

Many people and companies equate career development conversations with performance reviews, which happen on a quarterly or half yearly basis. However, what I mean by career development conversations is the total opposite of performance reviews.

Performance reviews focus on the past. Career development conversations focus on the future. Performance reviews focus on putting you in a box (of job expectations) and measuring you against the expectations of that box. Career development conversations encourage you to get out of any defined boxes (or job roles) and define for yourself the meaning of success and contribution.

3. They are not Short Term.

Career Development Conversations are long term. Think 5 to 10 years or even longer if you can. They help people envision what their career is (or can be) all about. They go beyond material milestones and successes; and empower each person to find their own meaning at work, and define the legacy they want to leave behind.

Having said that, and keeping the long term view as the background context, Career Development Conversations then drop back to shorter time frames of one year and less. By working on tasks aligned with the long term context, people can find new meaning and joy in their current work which wasn't available before. Needless to say, all of this results in better business results too.

4. They are not about the next Promotion or Job Titles.

Career Development Conversations can also be confused with promotions and the usual benefits that come along. I believe that while that might happen as an outcome of these conversations, they are not the end goal in themselves.

The focus is on the continuous development of people and their progression as professionals. The emphasis of these conversations is on doing work which not only challenges people professionally but also leaves them with a deep sense of pride and purpose in your work.

5. They are not just one of many “tasks” to be done

Career Development Conversations should not be taken lightly by managers / leaders. They are not just one of many tasks in your role. Infact, they are your ROLE. If you are not having these conversations, you are leaving huge potential in people and your team untapped. When done well, they can cause careers to take off.

Career development conversations should not be taken lightly. I believe every task your team member does should revolve around these conversations. These conversations will set the context of everything the team member does or does not achieve. They are to careers what oxygen is to life.

Key Career Development Conversations

Having gone over what career development conversations are and what they are not, let's go over some of the key conversations :-

1. Understand Your People

The intent of this conversation is to understand your people beyond their job descriptions. You can do so by asking and answering the below questions.

- What is your story?
- How did you come to where you are today?
- What are the key moments in your life – ups and downs, successes and failures, and how each of these events have shaped you?

If you think this can be hard, then you are absolutely right. Getting people to open up about their life can be a slow and gradual process as you build trust and go beyond personal barriers.

2. Help them figure out their True North / Lighthouse

- How do you stand out in the world that makes you different?
- What are you good at doing? What do you believe you are the best at? What have you gotten noticed for throughout your career?
- What feels most useful? What kind of work makes you proud? Which of your tasks are most critical?
- What bugs you? What makes you angry or frustrated?
- What are your highest priorities in life? Where does work fit in?

By asking some powerful questions like the above, you will help people identify their strengths and weaknesses, values and motivations, and what makes them unique and special. For me, knowing someone as a human being is such a wonderful experience as I get connected to the personality of the person which is normally hidden in workplace conversations.

Helping people figure out their True North can help clear the fog of uncertainty and clearly distinguish the path, or at least the direction, that they want to pursue in the future. This True North can be a lighthouse (of values) that can serve as a compass in difficult times.

3. Empower Them by Preparing a Plan

The next type of conversation is to build upon the above conversations and make it concrete in the form of a plan for where they want to go. Present them opportunities for future growth in the organisation based on their values and motivations, and not just on their talent and skills.

Once you have identified opportunities which they can pursue with purpose and commitment, support them to find training to acquire any skills they need, or in reaching the right people. Work with them to create SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable

Relevant Timely) objectives, which are impactful for both the organisation and the individual personally.

Having clear objectives to achieve in the future, and also clarity about how it will help them individually as well as the organisation will empower them as they build up confidence and momentum once they start. Once they grow their wings and build up speed, get out of the way and give them space to fly. (which can be very difficult, especially in big organisations)

Conclusion

I would also like to add that all the 3 kinds of conversations above never happen chronologically. You can jump between them as you feel fit, and it is a gradual process as you discover more and more about your people, and guide / support them on their way.

As you discuss these questions, you also open up and answer these same questions for yourself too. These conversations are not a monologue but a dialogue. I have always found having these conversations very useful to me too, and you also end up building deeper relationships and friendships at work. And working with friends is always a breeze, while working with strangers can be painful.

To recall, in **Part 1 we looked at Knowing The People Behind Your Colleagues?**

In **Part 2 we discovered 7 empathetic questions** to ask in different situations to care and support our people.

And in **Part 3 we got to the key conversations to develop our people** for future success.

What's Next?

Did you find this report useful?

If yes, then forward this report to someone who you think would benefit from it. You can send it via email, or share it on social media. The report itself can be found at

<https://www.deployyourself.com/r/care-to-lead-report.pdf>

Are you ready to Deploy Yourself?

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