



LEARNING EMPATHY FROM LOST LUGGAGES

Some business leaders lead their organizations from an ivory tower. By doing so, they become incapable of authentic connection with their employees. Leaders without empathy create gaps between them and their subordinates.

Empathy is the capacity to comprehend, understand, and relate to people's experiences. It allows leaders to see others' perspective. Empathy recognizes the circumstances that influence people's behavior.

True leaders sort out people's issues and concerns through meaningful engagement. They communicate instead of entertaining premature judgment and biases.

A lack of empathy isolates people. Subordinates wall up when misunderstood or judged by superiors. The work environment becomes volatile and conflicts arise due to resentment.

Professionalism dictates that employees remain dedicated to their duties unconditionally. But it does not justify business leaders' lack or disregard of empathy.

John Maxwell gave this account to stress a point on empathy:

American Airways, which subsequently became American Airlines, had a significant problem with misplaced luggage complaints from travelers. LaMotte Cohn, the airline's boss at the time, attempted to persuade his station managers to resolve the situation but saw little success. Finally, he came up with an idea to enable airline employees to understand things from the perspective of their consumers. Cohn invited station managers from across the nation to a meeting at the company's headquarters. Then he ensured that the luggage of every boss was misplaced in transit. Afterward, the airline made a sudden efficiency improvement in this area.



Leaders, do you know what your people are going through? Do you have a clue about their disappointments and frustrations? People start to show empathy after experiencing the experience of others.

Here are some tips for leaders on how to cultivate empathy:

Learn to listen. Absorb what your people are telling you. Be mindful of their emotions. Don't just hear them – listen. Put yourself in their shoes by experiencing what they are going through. This way, you can listen – really listen.

Withhold judgment and be open. Do not let your biases influence your engagement with people. Remove personal prejudice when you interact with your employees. Make decisions that affect people only after knowing all sides of the issue.

Initiate conversations. Initiating conversations is good and is the first step in showing empathy. You'd be surprised where simple, genuine conversations with your employees might lead. Talk about anything and check out how they are doing. One story may lead to another, and you can take it from there to learn more about the predicament of your employee.

Be with your people. If you only communicate with your employees during meetings, you will not know them as well as you should. Take the time to join them in casual, unguarded moments. You will learn about their joys, aspirations, sorrows, fears, and challenges.

