

SEVEN

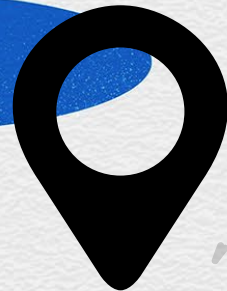
ATTRIBUTES

OF HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP



MAKING AN IMPACT
IN BUSINESS TODAY

“HOW DO I BE A BETTER LEADER NOW?”



As I sit in discussions with leaders these days, I inevitably get some version of this question. We may be meeting about communication, discussing how to navigate change or working to define a new strategy, and inevitably the conversation evolves to this critical point. Leaders want to know how to lead so employees feel compelled to follow. They want to know the secrets behind motivating employees—through all forms of communication and action—to be “all in.”

In my decades of advising leaders at top companies, the answer comes down to one core concept, what I refer to as **“Heart First”** leadership. In a nutshell, this is simply about being more human as you lead, understanding that nothing really important gets done without genuine relationships, buy-in, trust and support from your full team.

Naturally, the concept has existed for decades, but the pandemic and the dramatic period of societal and organizational change that followed brought the idea into clearer focus. It is what inspired my latest leadership book, “Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from the Year that Changed Everything.”



HEART FIRST
**GREAT
GIVEBACK
GIVEAWAY**

As a way to give back, we want to pay it forward by giving copies of Heart First to those who want to make the workplace better. Get a copy for yourself or for your team today. It's on us!



WHAT IS HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP?

HEART /härt/ noun **FIRST** /ferst/ number **LEADERSHIP** /lēdrSHip/ noun



Championing empathy, humanity and authenticity to build stronger, more trusting relationships and a thriving, purpose-driven organization.

One of the first things that come to mind when I think about Heart First is many of the frank conversations I had with CEOs and other leaders for my last book. Just after the pandemic began, leaders shared that their understanding of what it took to be a great leader was clearly put to the test. Not just during the pandemic, but

in the ensuing social and political unrest that followed it. Leaders said that until that period, there was a sense they always needed to have the answers and put on a strong face no matter what challenges came their way. They began to see the power in being more authentic, sharing what they **didn't** know, and being ok

with asking for help in solving big challenges. Many leaders also grew a deep appreciation for employees doing the same. In the end, this push for more humanity was seen by many as uniquely powerful in building more solid, genuine relationships, the kind that can make a lasting difference in the culture of any organization.

WHY IS HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP SO IMPORTANT?

Heart First Leadership doesn't just help you build better connections with your teams, it also is a great way to tackle the unique challenges of today's social and business climate. Through a Heart First approach, you'll gain far greater engagement, retention and business results.

That's because when you lead in this way, you help people be their best selves, bring a greater sense of purpose and meaning to every member of your team, and inspire them to achieve much more for themselves and their organizations. Of course, research supports that there are very practical reasons for adopting this type of leadership philosophy. Here are my top three research highlights...

1

CEOs of the future will lead with heart

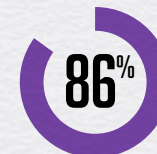
Consider this headline from a 2020 Korn Ferry summary of interviews with more than 100 board directors and CEOs about leadership characteristics necessary for success, saying:



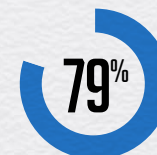
The CEO of the future must be radically human, focusing on leading with authenticity, humanity and heart.

2

Real empathy has an impact



of employees were better able to navigate the demands of work when their leaders were empathetic.¹



of U.S. workers agree empathetic leadership decreases employee turnover.²



of U.S. workers believe empathetic leadership leads to higher job satisfaction. When employee experience is prioritized, job satisfaction improves.³

3

Heart First Leadership is good for the overall business

Leaders who practice empathy have been shown to have a more engaged and higher-performing team, as well as a more profitable business overall.⁴



¹Catalyst research study, "The Power of Empathy in Times of Crisis and Beyond," Sept. 2021

²EY Consulting Group Survey, Oct. 2021

³EY Consulting Group Survey, Oct. 2021

⁴Catalyst research study, "The Power of Empathy in Times of Crisis and Beyond," Sept. 2021



SEVEN

ATTRIBUTES

OF HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP



1
Self-care



2
Listen



3
Demonstrate
humanity and
vulnerability



4
Create a
psychologically
safe culture



5
Communicate
effectively



6
Communicate
authentically



7
Tell great
stories





ONE

Understand the importance of self-care so you can bring your best self to work.

The best leaders understand that if they don't care for themselves, they can't bring the energy needed to meet the demands of the job. This is about having the courage and foresight to manage stress so you can build your resilience and coping skills. Leaders who don't do this often end up with change fatigue due to the high demands of leading effectively today.

TWO

Listen intently to employees and others in all kinds of ways, and help employees prioritize what matters.

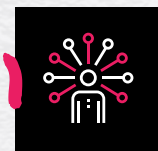


This is where the famous phrase “Know your audience” comes into play—and it’s an extremely important concept. Leaders need to commit to doing the work necessary to listen to the real needs of employees, and then balance those needs against the needs of the business. Remember that no matter what you may see as an urgent priority, employees are still going to be asking “What’s in it for me?” That’s why listening is so important. Charging ahead with programs or initiatives that employees don’t embrace—or even understand—is a sure way to fail.

FIVE STEPS FOR LEADING WITH HEART



Leading with heart in today's business climate comes in many forms, but here are some of the tips we've found to be most helpful for the organizations we've advised:



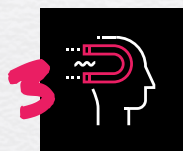
1 LISTEN AND RESPOND

Take the time to understand what's on your team's minds. What questions and concerns do they have? What do they need to make their work experience better? Ask for their feedback—and show them you're listening by acting on what you hear. You won't be able to fix every problem, but do what you can and explain when you can't, providing the context they need to understand the situation.



2 BE VULNERABLE

Share your own life story and life experiences, your challenges and the things that matter most to you. Doing so will make your team members more likely to share their stories and journeys—what has made them who they are and what their hopes and dreams are for the future, both in their careers and in their personal lives. It's critically important for you to be relatable and build trusting and meaningful connections with your team.



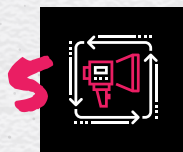
3 SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW WHEN YOU KNOW IT

Easier said than done, I know. And sometimes, you're bound by confidentiality of the information that you have. But often, you can share information about what's going on and what the vision is for the future. You can also provide context for company decisions and help your team members see what it means for them. If you don't know the answer to a question, find the answer and share it. Candor builds credibility and trust.



4 RECOGNIZE YOUR TEAM MEMBERS

You should definitely take advantage of your corporate recognition programs and the points and perks they offer, but that's not enough. Make a goal to send three thank you notes a week to different members of your team (hand-written notes are even better). To the degree that you have leeway to purchase modest thank you gifts, pick something that matches the interests of the individual, such as dinner or tickets to a ball game. Show them that you care enough to know what's important to them.

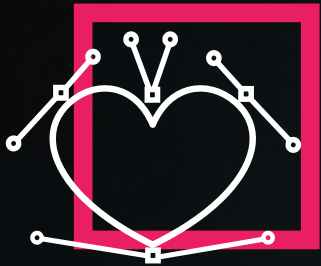


5 BUILD REGULAR RECOGNITION INTO YOUR TEAM MEETINGS

Set aside a few minutes at the start or end of every team meeting for a shout-out to a team member. You can do it yourself or set it up where team members recognize a peer for something they did. By making it a regular part of your team meetings, you'll make it a regular part of your gratitude and recognition.



Bring humanity and vulnerability to leadership, with a genuine desire to build connections.



Leaders who are willing to be real with their teams, sharing personal reflections and aspirations for the business and the culture they're trying to bring, inevitably draw people in. Employees need to know and feel connected to their leaders to be motivated to actually follow them.

THREE

FOUR

Create a psychologically safe culture where people feel invited to take risks and speak their truths.



This kind of culture is especially important in today's business environment. Without a level of calculated risks, there's little opportunity for creative solutions that drive innovation and breakthroughs. Further, if people of different cultures, backgrounds, sexual orientations and ethnicities don't feel they are respected and appreciated for who they are, you simply can't build a truly connected and engaged team.

FIVE



Increase leader communication effectiveness.

The most effective leaders understand that communication is a critically powerful tool for engagement, which leads to positive business outcomes. There's a lot that goes into great communication, but it's highlighted by the following:

Communicate the right messages at the right time and talk openly about what's happening. Understand that transparency is key to building trust.

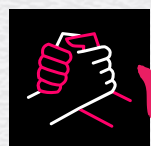
Frame the context and answer employee questions directly and honestly, demonstrating that you're genuinely listening.

Determine the right channels to communicate with impact—giving employees information in the way they want to get it.



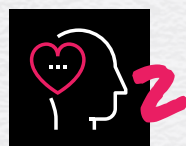
THREE EXAMPLES OF HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP

The idea of leading with more heart and championing empathy, humanity and authenticity has definitely taken root with many of the leaders we've worked with over the past several years. Many leaders share that they feel more effective and more connected to their teams as a result. Here are some examples of Heart First Leadership that stand out for me:



EMPATHY

Leaders of a prominent hospital group recognized the growing signs of strain and burnout among their healthcare professionals and started spending more time listening to employees. They then identified the top needs and responded with an array of new efforts to combat employee turnover and increase retention. Top hospital leaders also spent more time communicating with their teams in more personal and authentic ways, sharing their own stories about the challenges they faced and their vision for the future of the organization. In that process, employees were also invited to share their hopes and dreams for their *own* careers, as well as for the organization as a whole.



HUMANITY

At a time when many employees were feeling stressed and uncertain about a new strategic direction for the company, a leading healthcare organization took a break from the normal routine to pause and reset. Leaders held a well-planned, all-associate meeting that celebrated team wins and individual employees, codified the business strategy and candidly addressed pressing employee questions and concerns. The meeting concluded with a presentation from an inspirational speaker who offered guidance for tackling the specific challenges and needs of the team, helping to motivate the organization for the path forward.



AUTHENTICITY

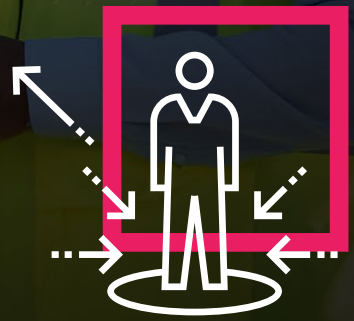
The CHRO of a medical device company we've worked with now looks at leadership in a new and completely different way. Today, she takes more time to listen to each employee's "story" because, as she puts it, "everyone has a story... a story that helps define who they are, what they hope to accomplish, and what truly matters to them when it comes to work and life." Similarly, she has taken more time to share her own story as a black woman leader in corporate America, and her passion for meaningful DEI initiatives. In the past, she tended to be much more private, separating her work and family life to such an extreme degree that it held her back from more meaningful working relationships.



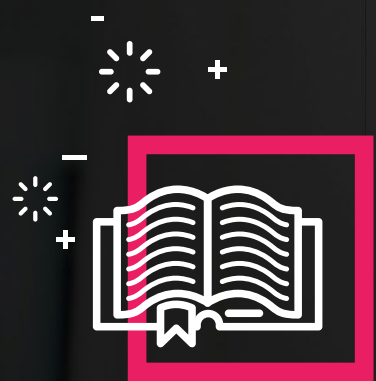


SIX

Communicate authentically and with your heart, not just your head.



Often leaders feel it's a sign of weakness to share personal thoughts or feelings, when in fact that kind of self-disclosure at the right moments actually helps make communication more relatable and powerful. This is not about sharing personal feelings with every communication, but it's important to simply recognize that certain moments call for more "real" and relatable thought starters. It's not only okay but preferable that teams get to know leaders and what they're passionate about.



SEVEN

Become an expert storyteller.

Leaders who can use stories and examples to illustrate what they're hoping to achieve are far more effective in engaging and inspiring others. This kind of more compelling communication helps to break through change fatigue and information overflow. Employees are tired of corporate speak and want to be drawn into real context and meaning. Stories can achieve that more than any other tool. Taking the idea

a step further, consider the importance of story listening. We talk a lot about storytelling and its power—to create an emotional connection with others—that stories are more memorable than facts. What's new here and critically important is the concept of story listening—listening and understanding the stories of others to create belonging and connections, build relationships and help others bring their best selves to work.

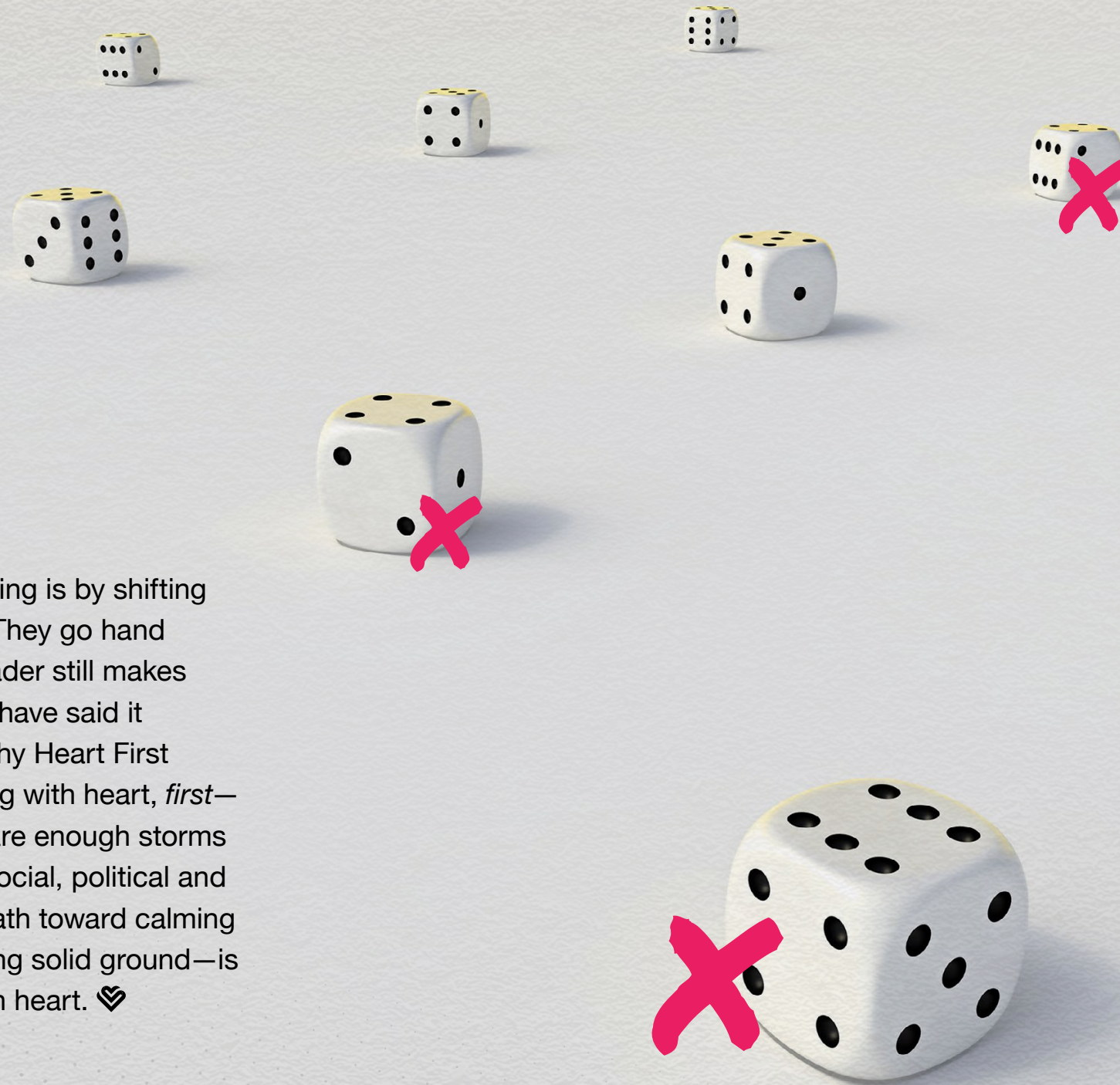


DON'T JUST ROLL THE DICE

▾ THE CHALLENGE BEFORE LEADERS

Leaders clearly need to lead differently today, yet many are wholly unprepared to do so. This isn't something that comes naturally to many, but it **can** be taught and practiced until it becomes like muscle memory. When done well, I've seen it produce remarkable leaps not only in engagement but in countless business outcomes and in the overall culture of a company. One of our global clients talks about it this way: "The key

to shifting ways of working is by shifting the ways leaders lead. They go hand in hand because the leader still makes the weather." I couldn't have said it better. This is exactly why Heart First Leadership—and leading with heart, *first*—is so important. There are enough storms already swirling in the social, political and business climate; the path toward calming the waters—and reaching solid ground—is all about navigating with heart. ♡




COMMIT TO LEADING WITH HEART

THE PLEDGE

Join the hundreds of leaders who have already taken the pledge.

SIGN



HEART  FIRST
PLEDGE

TO BE THE BEST LEADER I CAN BE, LEADING OTHERS WITH EMPATHY, HUMANITY AND AUTHENTICITY, I WILL:

Focus on my own self-care. I will build coping skills to manage my stress, and help my team do the same.

Listen intently and in all kinds of ways. I will do the work necessary to understand the needs of my team and balance their personal expectations with the needs of our organization.

Bring an element of humanity and vulnerability to my leadership, with a genuine desire to build connections.

Create a psychologically safe culture where people feel welcome to take risks and speak their truths.

Continually work to increase my communication effectiveness. I will invite the communications team to be a true partner in the business as strategic decision makers. I will take steps to ensure I am communicating the right messages at the right times, and answering employee questions directly and honestly.

Communicate authentically and with my heart, not just my head.

Use the power of stories to engage and empower others. Listen to their stories to understand them better.

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GET SUPPORT FROM EXPERTS WHO HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

We work with clients often to:

- **Lead and communicate with empathy, humanity and authenticity** to better connect with employees, improving engagement, retention and business results
- **Navigate and communicate through periods of change**— from layoffs and changes in leadership to broader transformation
- **Create the culture** an organization needs to be successful
- **Develop and launch organizational or functional strategies** in a way that brings leaders and employees along on the journey and engages them in the success of the organization
- **Evolve for the future of work**, with a focus on optimizing internal communications functions, systems and plans in a way that aligns to organizational priorities
- **Think bold and creatively** about how they solve their unique business challenges in a way that excites and inspires the organization

OUR GOAL IS TO MAKE YOU AND YOUR TEAM SHINE

To learn more about our approach, explore what's possible for your organization or to get started, visit these resources, or contact us today.

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HEART
LEADERSHIP
COMMUNICATION
TRUST
ENGAGEMENT
VISION
EMPATHY



DAVID GROSSMAN

David

David helps leaders drive productivity and get the results they want through authentic and courageous leadership and communication. He's a sought-after speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 leaders. A four-time author, his latest award-winning book, "Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from a Year that Changed Everything," features interviews with 30+ leaders inside a variety of organizations, each of whom share extraordinarily candid insights and unique leadership lessons. His leader**communicator**™ blog is ranked the #1 blog on communication by Feedspot seven years in a row. David is Founder & CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-

winning Chicago-based strategic leadership development and internal communications consultancy. The Grossman Group's clients include DHL, Emergent BioSolutions, General Mills, Kaiser Permanente, Lockheed Martin, Molex, Stanley Black & Decker, and more. David is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society, the Forbes Communication Council, and a Trustee to the Board of the Institute for Public Relations. In addition, he is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), an MBTI® Certified Practitioner, a Prosci Certified Change Practitioner and taught graduate-level internal communications at Columbia University in NYC.

David has been featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

TODAY

Chicago Tribune

FAST COMPANY

Los Angeles Times