The Value of Trust and Empathy

Recently I had the chance to learn about some groundbreaking research being done by my good friend and colleague Dr. Terry Flynn, faculty member at McMaster University in Hamilton, ON. Terry has been working for the past several months with some other researchers on a project sponsored by the Institute for Public Relations that is focused on how cognitive behavior and neuroscience relates to effective communications and senior leaders.

It's still early in this research, but one finding that has emerged is worth noting: Trust and Empathy have been identified as perhaps two of the most important characteristics for CEOs and other executives to possess in order to be effective in leading organizations and achieving results.

Perhaps that doesn't sound surprising, but at a time when we are being so heavily influenced by the digital revolution, global economy, and emergence of new stakeholders in our world, our ability to trust leaders and know that they sincerely care about us matters. And that seems to hold true whether we are an employee or a customer.

When I think back to my own experiences working with people to drive results, I learned a long time ago that leading is not the same as managing, and that you cannot fake having trust in co-workers or sincerely caring about them. I still hear my father's voice in my head, saying "Be as good to people on your way up, as you'd like them to be to you on your way down." Seems like good words to live by for anyone who is catapulting their way to the top or who has been asked to lead a group of people.

Look for these type of leaders and you'll do well to follow them on the great journey they guide you on. Better yet, strive to become one yourself.

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