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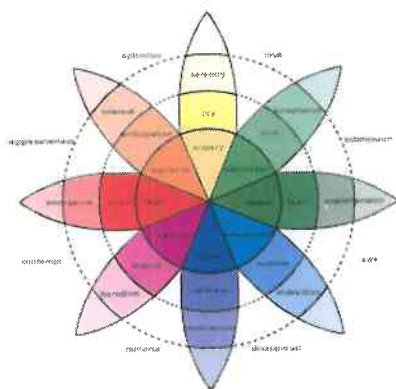
Leadership Is About Emotion

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Make a list of the 5 leaders you most admire. They can be from business, social media, politics, technology, the sciences, any field. Now ask yourself why you admire them. The chances are high that your admiration is based on more than their accomplishments, impressive as those may be. I'll bet that everyone on your list reaches you on an **emotional** level.

This ability to reach people in a way that transcends the intellectual and rational is the mark of a great leader. [They all have it. They inspire us.](#) It's as simple as that. And when we're inspired we tap into our best selves and deliver amazing work.

So, can this ability to touch and inspire people be learned? No and yes. The truth is that not everyone can lead, and there is no substitute for natural talent. Honestly, I'm more convinced of this now – I'm in reality about the world of work and employee engagement. But for those who fall somewhat short of being a natural born star (which is pretty much MANY of us), leadership skills can be acquired, honed and perfected. And when this happens your chances of engaging [your talent increases from the time they walk into your culture.](#)



English: Robert Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

Let's Take A Look At Tools That Allow For Talent To Shine:

Emotional intelligence. Great leaders understand empathy, and have the ability to read people's (sometimes unconscious, often unstated) needs and desires. This allows them to speak to these needs and, when at all possible, to

fulfill them. When people feel they are understood and empathized something, they respond PERIOD and a bond is formed.

Continuous learning. Show me a know-it-all and I'll show you someone who doesn't have a clue about being human. Curiosity and an insatiable desire to always do better is the mark of a great leader. They are rarely satisfied with the status quo, and welcome new knowledge and fresh (even if challenging) input. It's all about investing in yourself.

Contextualize. Great leaders respond to each challenge with a fresh eye. They know that what worked in one situation may be useless in another. Before you act, make sure you understand the specifics of the situation and tailor your actions accordingly.

Let Go. Too many people think leadership is about control. **In fact, great leaders inspire and then get out of the way.** They know that talented people don't need or want hovering managers. Leadership is about influence, guidance, and support, not control. Look for ways to do your job and then get out of the way so that people can do theirs.

Honesty. Not a week goes by that we don't hear about a so-called leader losing credibility because he or she was dishonest. Often this is because of pressure to try and "measure up" and it's not coming from a place of being real – often this relates to fear of not being accepted for your true self. We live in age of extraordinary transparency, which is reason enough to always be true to your core – your mission will be revealed, your motivations will show by your behaviors. But it goes way beyond this. It's an issue that sets an example and elevates an organization. If you have a reputation for honesty, it will be a lot easier to deliver bad news and face tough challenges. **Are you inspiring people from your heart?**

Kindness and respect. Nice leaders (people) don't finish last. They finish first again and again. Ignorance and arrogance are leadership killers. They're also a mark of insecurity. Treating everyone with a basic level respect is an absolute must trait of leadership. And kindness is the gift that keeps on giving back. Of course, there will be people who prove they don't deserve respect and they must be dealt with. But that job will be made much easier, and will have far less impact on your organization, if you have a reputation for kindness, honesty and respect.

Collaboration. People's jobs and careers are integral to their lives. The more your organization can make them a partner, the more they will deliver amazing results. This means, to the greatest extent possible, communicating your organization's strategies, goals and challenges. This builds buy-in, and again is a mark of respect. People won't be blindsided (which is a workplace culture killer) by setbacks if they're in the loop.

Partner with your people. As I said above, people's careers are a big part of their lives. That seems like a no-brainer, but leaders should have it front and center at all times. Find out what your employees' career goals are and then do everything you can to help them reach them. Even if it means they will eventually leave your organization. You will gain happy, productive employees who will work with passion and commitment, and tout your company far and wide. This an opportunity to brand your greatness.

Leadership is both an art and a science. These tools are guidelines, not rigid rules. Everyone has to develop his or her own individual leadership style. Make these tools a part of your arsenal and use them well as you strive to reach people on an emotional level. Be Human. This Matters.

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