

11 LEADERSHIP LESSONS

*FROM THE HUMAN
PERFORMANCE EXPERTS*



Once upon a time, a manager's job was simple: produce results at whatever cost. In the following quarter, produce slightly better results. And on and on until the shareholders lived happily ever after.

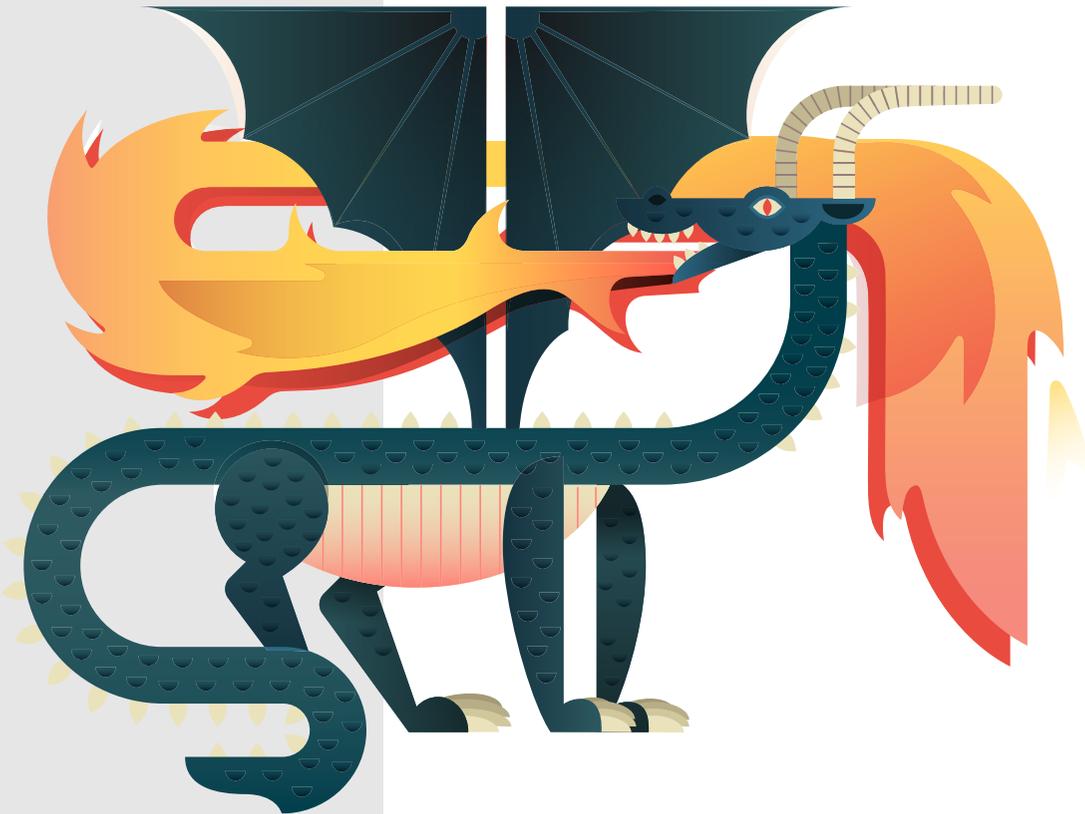
Today's leaders have an opportunity to experience a much deeper and more complex style of people management, where they

actually care for the humans doing the work. Instead of just pointing at the assembly line and cracking the whip, managers are engaging in conversations, learning what employees want, and doing their best to provide it.

At the same time, a new generation of employees is entering the workplace, looking for opportunities to learn, grow, and evolve. Leaders are also adapting to these needs with skills like emotional intelligence, active listening, and mentorship.

To help you develop the leadership skills you need for today's workplace, BambooHR and 15Five have compiled advice from some of today's top thought leaders on leadership, culture building, emotional intelligence, and managing millennials.

Together, we will give you the tools to navigate every level of the employee lifecycle, from recruiting and hiring to ongoing development conversations and performance reviews. We hope that this advice will help you take your leadership to the next level for the benefit of your people and your company.



01

LEADERSHIP





SIMON SINEK

*Author, Motivational Speaker,
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CEOs say “Our people matter,” but they don’t follow through. CEOs will say, “Our number one priority is growth. Of course our people are important because if we don’t take care of them we’ll never grow.” Or they can say, “Our number one priority is our people. If we take care of our people, we will achieve all of our financial goals.” Which company would you rather work for?

Businesses today are suffering from the unintended consequences of decisions made in the 80s and 90s that have set us on this path. Shareholder supremacy, a theory proposed in the late 1970s, has now become standardized. Using mass layoffs to balance the books did not exist in the United States prior to the 1980s. Practices like this have become so normal that nobody thinks they’re wrong.

Can you imagine sending someone home unable to provide for their family because the company did not make its yearly numbers?

And the people who keep their jobs still have to come to work knowing that it’s not a meritocracy. No matter how hard you work, if you don’t hit your numbers, you’re toast.

In this system, when a company has mass layoffs, the stock price goes up. So companies incentivize and reward senior managers not on how the company performs, but how the equity performs. When the equity performs well in response to something that’s necessarily bad for the company, that behavior will continue.

I believe that one of the things that will have the system tip is when employees know that they don’t have to put up with negative, fearful environments. When they have the option to work at companies that get it, others will have no choice but to adapt.



JENNY SAUER KLEIN

*Founder & Director,
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Be comfortable taking people to uncomfortable places. For facilitators, managers, and really anyone who leads others and wants to inspire change in an employee or colleague, or even someone above them, they have to know there's going to be some discomfort between points A and B. We have to let go of something we know in order to change and become something new.

That process of letting go is scary because we can't yet see what's on the other side. The leader's job is to hook into the future reality of what they know is on the other side of that person's challenge.

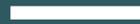
I see this process as a bullseye with three concentric circles. The innermost circle is the comfort zone, where everything is easy and stable, but also old and stagnant. The outermost circle is the panic zone. This is where we get overwhelmed or hysterical and drop out altogether because we just can't handle it. The middle circle is the stretch zone, your place of growth and learning.

When I lead events or do workshops for clients, my goal is to meet people in their comfort zone and as quickly as possible get them into the stretch zone. This is the place where they are slightly uncomfortable, but feeling relaxed about it.

If you push people too far, too fast, then they're in the panic zone. Once there, it's very hard to work with them. Some people facilitate transformational work by creating a crisis, but I think that approach is messy and emotional, and it can be traumatic. My approach is that transformation can be easy and enjoyable if you take small enough steps and you help people feel safe along the way.

02

CULTURE-BUILDING





ANESE CAVANAUGH

Founder of the IEP Method, Executive Advisor, Author & Speaker

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With intention, the people who SHOW UP create the culture. Without intention, the people who don't show up often create another kind of culture by default. If we release any "shoulds" or "recipes" or "formulas" for creating culture and simply apply curiosity for what (and who) is actually showing up, we have a different viewpoint to look from. If we consider our criteria for what an amazing culture actually consists of, and then we reflect on if we are actually showing up that way, we're tapping into some gold.

When we apply the energy of wonder and even magic to the culture that's unfolding, and add a bit of intentionality into it, we have a new starting line. And if we simply understand that culture is about serving people on our teams even better, holding the biggest and most contributory container to step into, and bringing out the absolute best in our already phenomenal peers, and ourselves, we're 80% there.



TONY VIGORITO, PH.D.

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In a work culture, management has supreme control over the resources of their employees. Despite any pretense about a company being a tribe, family, or team, management can always fire any family member, and if any tribesman can be banished during a temporary resource shortage then it's not actually a tribe. One need look no further than the unfortunate term "human resources" to see the truth behind the mask. Essentially, management imposes an interpretation of experience intended to inspire the group identity and loyalty present in more traditional forms of social relating on social structures that typically bear little resemblance to them.

But if people feel like they are dealing with a calculating and impersonal management, they are likely to resist it. As individuals we all want to feel like we are participating in a community which is larger and more meaningful than the self. However, around 2-300 years ago, the great social transformation from communal to associational structures gained traction and has left us in a state of alienation that we seek to remedy by changing how we think of these structures without actually changing them.

In the ideal workplace we still create friendships, loyalties, and something resembling community within that. In fact, this is the ideal cultural design within a company. When we begin to identify with one another as friends, we're no longer associating with one another strictly on the basis of social role, which by itself is inherently alienating.

There will be deeper considerations other than the barren rules of social role that will determine our behavior. We begin to interact, participate, and fulfill responsibilities on the basis of an intrinsic sense of obligation to one another rather than conforming to an extrinsic and coercive structure. The point, however, is that this has to be genuine, and it's in everyone's interest that it is. Feigning family, team, and tribe without actually satisfying any of these needs can only breed indignation and resentment among employees.

Perhaps the way forward is to strike a compromise between the associational and communal. The associational has its advantages in terms of efficiency but when you're dealing with your human talent, community is the primary premise because everyone instinctively wants to participate in something larger than themselves.

03

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



DR. SYDNEY FINKELSTEIN

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Emotions play a gigantic role in how decisions are made and how organizations are run. People are uncomfortable discussing emotions in the workplace, but neuroscience tells us that emotions greatly influence how we think. This includes biases that we bring to the workforce. An example of this is when people overestimate the quality of their experience and the relevance of past behavior on a present situation.

Ask yourself and those around you when making a decision, why did we choose this data to share? Why is it relevant? What is not being shown here? What example is less relevant? Even things as seemingly

obvious as data or information are subject to interpretation, and people will consciously or unconsciously choose things that will support their inherent preference.

What we're talking about is human nature, and to say that it doesn't play a role in how organizations work has got to be one of the craziest ideas I've ever heard.



JULIA LEE

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There are tremendous benefits to leveraging strengths at work. But first, we need to acknowledge that humans have a natural negativity bias (e.g. weighing negative aspects more heavily than positive ones) and experience a greater sensitivity to what's not going well versus what is.

For example, most people request feedback about their weaknesses instead of feedback about their strengths. While it's important to focus on things that can be improved, it's also important to put effort into identifying each employee's unique strengths and leveraging those strengths in their role.

However, research shows that people are notoriously bad at reflecting on their

personal strengths, so it's important to gather strengths-based feedback from others. The Reflected Best-Self Exercise enables people to gather feedback from others such as friends, coworkers, and family members.

It works particularly well during onboarding because the company immediately signals to the new hires that their leaders are interested in their whole self and how they're going to unlock their best selves at work. This starts with deep strengths discovery and continues by aligning roles with those strengths.

04

MANAGING MILLENNIALS



DARREN VIRASSAMMY

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As we navigate through the generational shift taking place in the workplace, perhaps there is an opportunity to recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate our generational differences. Instead of looking hopelessly at the gaps, let's figure out how to bridge them. Knowing that accountability, goal clarity, and prioritizing responsibilities are such critical components for driving millennial engagement and reducing turnover, what can managers do?

As a leader, how are you creating accountability consistently on your team? Is this clearly communicated? How does this align with goals? It's imperative to start with clear goals in mind, and to make sure that the people you lead have clarity around that goal. As you present what you see as clear goals, make sure that your team can articulate those goals back to you as well.

You don't have to come up with all of the goals. This can be a collaborative experience with those you lead. In fact, this process can help those you lead to take ownership of their role and the use of their talents. Some on your team may be better at coming up with goals and the big picture perspective of what the end game looks like, and others may be better at really figuring out how to execute and get there.

Others on your team may be extremely talented in keeping the team together and aligned with that goal while others still may excel at championing the goal for the team and to stakeholders on other teams. As a leader, spotting that talent can help you align your team and develop your people.



DR. PAUL WHITE, PH.D.

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While multi-generational communication poses challenges for organizations, the problem is not with millennials per se. When researchers systematically reviewed the available data on millennials, they discovered little evidence that generational differences affect organizational satisfaction, commitment, and intent to turnover. Baby boomers job-hopped in their mid-20s just as millennials do now. It's the nature of an early career, not a specific generation.

Individuals in the workplace—employees, supervisors, managers and executives—all are experiencing challenges in learning how to work together as a result of the multigenerational workforce which has

emerged. In many cases, this appears to be a byproduct of the cultural differences which have shaped the worldview of different generations.

Utilizing lessons learned from cross-cultural communication and ethnography (the study of ethnic groups) can be quite helpful in better understanding colleagues from varying generational and life-stage backgrounds. Humility, the desire to learn, and the willingness to consider that your viewpoint-background-culture may not be at the “center of the universe”—all are key to building healthy collaborative relationships with others.

05

EVALUATING PERFORMANCE



DAVID HASSELL

Founder & CEO, 15Five

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The practice of traditional annual performance evaluations is finally being abandoned, given the fact that the world of work looks very different than it did when these performance appraisals first rose to prominence in the 1940s. We humans tend to create practices designed to address the situations we face at a specific point in time, but then cling to those same practices far beyond their useful life, until they actually become counter-productive.

In the case of annual employee reviews, they're not only an ineffective holdover of a bygone age, but in many situations they're also actually detrimental to the teams, individuals, and organizational cultures that utilize them.

There is great benefit to the practice of reflection, both self-reflection as well as the reflection we receive from others. Reflecting weekly during something like a check-in is wonderful for making sure that we and the

people who work for us are staying on track, are able to course correct when need be, and are able to give and get the continuous feedback necessary to perform at our best.

But weekly is far too frequent an interval to conduct a self-review on how we're growing and developing over time. Given the pace and nature of business today combined with the pitfalls of recency bias (i.e. we give far more weight and credence to our recent memories), annually is far too infrequent. If we're going to create a structure to support someone in growing and developing over time, we need something in between.

So, I've wondered, if we were starting with an absolutely clean slate, what performance management strategy might we create for the times we find ourselves in today?



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Performance Management 1.0 (PM 1.0) is shorthand for last generation (traditional) performance management, which I would say most companies are doing now. It is designed mainly for administrative reasons, and involves setting goals at the beginning of the year, evaluating performance, and distributing rewards at the end of the year. The center of the universe for PM 1.0 is evaluation, ratings, and differentiation.

In PM 1.0, ratings are tied to rewards, which generally include pay for performance (ratings) and bonuses. A lot of what ratings do for HR is risk mitigation so they don't overspend on the budget. That's why we put in place calibration and forced distribution systems—so we know what percentage of people are going to get the top rating and how much money is associated with that so we can budget.

Research shows that competition and differentiation aren't good for people and organizations. Extremely high goals

combined with economic incentives lead to unethical behavior, since tying rewards to goal achievement can create a “results at all costs” mentality. Additionally, people assume they will benefit from these programs, yet only 10-15% of them actually benefit. This is the nature of a fixed-pie and a zero-sum game mentality.

People want things that aren't good for them—like fried chicken—all the time. But just because they want it doesn't mean you should give it to them. Unfortunately, over time we've taught people to be competitive and want differentiation. We need to train people differently. If you lose competitive people in the process, so be it. You would lose them anyway, and they probably aren't your best long-term contributors. If people join for the money, they will leave for the money.



COLLEEN MCCREARY

People & Culture Expert

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360° reviews are a great development tool for people when they are being used appropriately, but I don't like them to be used in compensation and promotion decisions. In those contexts, they are ineffective and a waste of time, and people feel bitter about them.

Depending on how you set up the 360° review, in terms of how employees fill them out, you may not be able to use them as a true measuring tool. I worked at a company where this type of peer review was a huge factor in the compensation decision. My first instinct was to always choose the people who would say nice things about me. Who wouldn't do that?

So then it's not a super useful tool for anybody—I'm not getting the developmental feedback that I need to improve. My manager is hung out on the limb because he or she is trying to give me developmental feedback, but I've selected out the people who are going to be critical. So there's no feedback that shows areas that need improvement.

In circumstances when the manager forces you to get feedback from certain people, depending on your relationship with them and the pay structure of the company, you may be more likely to ding them for performance. That would likely occur in circumstances where there is a competitive pay structure in place, and for you to get a raise, someone else won't.

When you use peer reviews for development purposes, you must frame it to say, "I am asking for this feedback so I can be better." Then, the respondents give you really quality feedback about where you do well, where your needs lie, and what their concerns are. People provide feedback with the best interest of the person in mind.

You also have to teach people how to give and receive feedback in general. If you do 360° reviews on your team, as a manager you have to coach people through the parts that sting and the parts that they get excited about. People need to pay attention to the stuff that sticks.



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The logo for 15Five, consisting of the text "15Five" in a white, sans-serif font centered within a dark gray rectangular background.

15Five is a continuous performance management solution that helps employees grow and develop, in just 15 minutes each week. Through a lightweight weekly check-in, 15Five delivers everything a manager needs to impact employee performance, including continuous feedback, objectives (OKR) tracking, recognition, 1-on-1s, and 360° reviews. 15Five is the #1 performance management software out of 185 vendors on G2Crowd, with over 1,600 forward-thinking companies using the solution to bring out the best in their people.

You can learn more at www.15Five.com.

These quotes are excerpts from interviews conducted by 15Five, to read these in their entirety please visit the 15Five Blog.