



Genuine Caring About People

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The Second Behavior is that Leaders exhibit Genuine Caring About People

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- Great leaders want to:
 - Know their employees
 - Show that they care about their employees
 - Involve their employees
 - Trust and value their employees

Great leaders want to:

- Know their people
- Show that they care about their people
- Involve their people as much as possible in decision making
- Trust and value their people

For example, when you walk around your office or workspace and greet your employees, they love it when you know their names and at least a little about their personal likes and dislikes, perhaps their favorite sports team or their kid's name or their hobbies and accomplishments. Be open to listening to what makes them proud and happy and show you care about them.

Most important is to make sure you get them to share their ideas and suggestions for solving problems and improving workflow. Allow them to try new ways of doing things—even if it leads to the decision that it's not the best way to go.

Mistakes are the best way to learn and trusting your employees enough to let them succeed or not succeed shows them that you care about them and their growth.

Genuine Caring About People



We know what it means to serve.®

How do you show genuine caring about your employees?

USAA shares some of their strategies in this area.

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- Promote from within
- Have a noble mission
- Encourage innovation through empowerment
- Show appreciation
- Thank employees

Photo Credit: Trinidad Munoz Jr

1. USAA promotes from within as much as possible. The General Manager for the Colorado Springs call center, started as a customer service rep talking to customers about auto insurance. He worked his way through the organization and became the general manager of the Colorado Springs campus in 2011.

It lends credibility when he talks to new hires about their potential career paths and shows that the company and its leaders care about people. A number of the senior managers have the same story.

2. USAA offers insurance, banking, investments and other financial services to military personnel, veterans and their families. What they call the “noble mission” — serving those who have served our country — gives extra meaning to their work, employees say.
3. They encourage innovation through empowerment. USAA earned a Special Award in **2015's** Top Workplaces survey for encouraging innovation through a program called ICE, Innovation Community for the Enterprise, in which employees submit ideas via the company intranet. They appear on a social media platform and are voted up or down by other staff members.

More than 90 percent of the workforce participates in ICE. Suggestions range from small fixes to audacious ideas such as launching drones to assess damage in disaster areas. That feeling of empowerment pervades the company. "I've never worked for a company before that makes me feel so appreciated just for doing my job," one said.

4. The appreciation ranges from major benefits — including a generous health and wellness plan and an 8 percent 401(k) match — to small human touches.
5. Colorado Springs site director Jim Hannon, a retired Air Force colonel, walks around every Friday handing out Werther's candies and thanking people, a ritual he calls "Werther's for the Worthy." "The employees love it, It's a lot of those little things that add up to big things."

"The military has taught us that if you take care of your troops, they'll take care of the mission," Fortune says. "If we take care of our employees, they'll take care of members."

How do you show genuine caring about people? Remember, you don't have to go all out to show you care. Any of the things USAA does, on a smaller scale will work for you too. The key is to create a CULTURE – where employees are appreciated for who they are and what they contribute to the organization!

Exercise

1. What new, low-cost ways can you show genuine concern?
 - Discuss them with your upper management
 - Ask your employees

What are some new, low-cost ways you can show your employees you care during the work day? Make a list of any and everything you can think of.

- Discuss your ideas with your upper management to get their buy in. Test your idea and see what kind of reaction you get and go from there.
- And if you have no idea, ask your employees! They will tell you what is important and meaningful to them if you are sincere in your interest.

Common Mistakes

- Misunderstanding your role
- Knowing every aspect of your employee's life
- Crossing the leader/employee line
- Extending your "care" to outside the office

Let's talk about some common mistakes leaders make when it comes to showing genuine care for the team:

1. Misunderstanding your role –Look, once you become a leader or manager, your responsibilities are very different from those you had before. Getting along with and caring about your team should not be misunderstood with being overly friendly.

This doesn't mean that you can't socialize with your employees. But, you do need to get the balance right between being a friend and being the boss. If you don't find that balance, it leads to the next mistake...

2. Knowing every aspect of your employee's life or getting involved in their marriage problems or other personal drama. There is No need to know every aspect of their life or to get involved in their marriage problems or other personal drama.

You don't want to encourage gossip or daily venting about non-work issues, and there IS such a thing as Too Much Information. Unless it's necessary to discuss such personal details in order to address performance issues, don't get into those discussions.

3. Crossing the leader/employee line – having the people you LEAD become the people you HANG with is a common mistake as well. Becoming buddies with your staff leads to misunderstandings and confusion—are you talking to them as their boss or as their friend? That line becomes very, very muddy which isn't fair to either of you.
4. Extending your care to outside the office such as inviting your employee to your home, to a personal outing or something similar Can lead to potential real issues or even perceived issues of
 - Discrimination
 - Claims of sexual or other types of harassment
 - Gossip
 - Mistrust/Disrespect
 - Favoritism

Of course, this doesn't always happen, but it is a very risky situation to put yourself and your employees in—the payoff is not worth the danger. As we've seen in our case studies, there are other more effective ways to express to your team that you care about them and their careers.

Exercise

1. Who do you go to lunch with?

- How often?
- Is there a pattern?
- Are you creating perception of favoritism?

Let's go through an exercise to test your tendencies to steer off course in expressing genuine care for your team:

1. Make a list of the employees that participate in the following activities with you:
 - Who do you go to lunch with? How often? List each person you've gone to lunch with over the past 2 weeks
 - Do you see a pattern? Do you go every day or so with the same person? Is this person your peer or a direct report? If this person is not a peer, think about the perception that you may be creating amongst the other staff. Is it possible that they feel you are showing favoritism to this person? Be absolutely honest with yourself on this issue. It's extremely common for the other team members to perceive favoritism, and it's also common for the leader to actually be granting favoritism without realizing it.
 - Talk to your manager, a trusted peer or a mentor about any concerns you have about your behaviors in this area. Sometimes it takes an objective outsider to help you see clearly and take the appropriate actions to correct misconceptions.

Exercise

2. Do you hang out with your employees after hours?
 - List out the types of activities that take place and the environment
 - What issues might this create with your team?
3. Are you anti-social?

2. Think about the people you hang out with from work after hours. Do you have after hours drinks with them? If so, how long do you stay? How many drinks do you have? Who buys?
 - List out the types of activities that take place and the environment
 - What issues might this create with your team?
 - Consider the implications if someone is an alcoholic and you don't know it. Inviting your team to after hours drinks can become problematic if someone is an alcoholic or a recovering alcoholic. An alcoholic may lose control and end up in an accident. A recovering alcoholic may resist the temptation and decline to participate, but feel left out of the team.
3. **Now on the flip side**, maybe you don't go to lunch with anyone or do any after hours activities-- why is that? Are you withholding yourself from others? What other ways are you showing genuine caring for your team?

As you can imagine, there is a fine balance between interacting too often with the same people and creating an atmosphere of perceived favoritism AND being perceived as an uncaring, cold, antisocial person who can not be considered a GREAT Leader. It's your responsibility to strive for that fine balance.