



If You Just Don't Care Then You Just Can't Lead

I get asked often what the most important characteristic of leadership is. I determined that most people who asked that had already determined what it was. They wanted confirmation that the one of the characteristics they possessed was the most important.

Many of the people asking were hoping humility wasn't the most important.

My answers to those questions put integrity at the top with judgement a very close second. I put integrity first because in my experience it was a lack of integrity that often caused otherwise sound judgement to go off the rails. But there are other almost as important characteristics for a leader to possess.

A leader who is missing even a few of those characteristics, so long as integrity is present, can still lead. They will have some deficiencies but those can be overcome by strengths in other characteristics.

But there is another characteristic of Authentic Leadership that doesn't get the "ink" that it should. That characteristic is a caring heart.

One of the truest bits of knowledge I know about Authentic Leadership is this... you can care for people without leading them but it is impossible to lead them without caring for them.

If you do not care about other people then you cannot lead them. If you do not care about other people then you should not pretend to lead them. If you do not care about other people then you cannot lead...anyone.

When one of the people who you are responsible for leading asks you for help how do you reply? With "I'm busy right now but as soon as I'm done I'll help you." Or with, "How can I best help you now?"

Are you willing to complete your work after you help someone else? Does your success matter more than the success of the people you lead? Do the people you lead get whatever time you have "left over" after you've taken

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care of your own needs? Have you discovered their strengths, hopes, goals and objectives outside of work? Do you see them as an individual or simply an employee? Are you more interested in what they can do for you than you are in what you can do for them?

Have you ever even asked yourself those questions?

This quote has been attributed to many people so I won't attribute it to anyone, just know that it isn't mine. The quote says "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

What are you doing to demonstrate that you care about the people you lead? What are you doing to show people in general that you care about them? One of the surest measures of Authentic Leadership is how the leader treats people who can do nothing for them.

If you only care for people who can help you succeed then you're missing the one characteristic of leadership that you must have in order to Authentically Lead.

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