



Every Leader Must Master This One Very Important Skill

By Lolly Daskal

A practical approach to leadership is to look at it as a collection of skills. The specifics are slightly different for everyone, depending on individual strengths and direction. But there's one important skill that every leader needs to master—something that will benefit you no matter what your leadership style may be, what your specific role is or what field you're working in. Once you master it, you're positioned to make a huge difference for your organization and the people you lead.

The skill of connecting is the secret sauce of great leadership. Here are just a few of the reasons why:

When you connect, you get involved. When you're connected, you become immersed in everything that's going on—with your organization and with your people. You can't possibly understand the scope of your leadership without leaving the executive floor and diving into the details of the operation. The best leaders are present and involved with their people.

When you connect, you hear better. Connected leaders make the time to listen thoughtfully and follow up with questions that dig deeper. They're constantly paying attention not only to what's being said but also to why it's being said. Spending time every day truly listening to your people creates a sense of mutual understanding and shared success. It builds trust and creates opportunities for candor and understanding.

When you connect, you value and appreciate. When you master the art of connection, you're positioned to see people's strengths and accomplishments

firsthand. You begin to build relationships, and those relationships make it more meaningful when you express your appreciation. We all want to feel valued, and expressing a deeply held appreciation for what people do is the best way to make them feel valued—which in turn motivates them to keep learning and growing.

When you connect, you show care. When you focus your leadership on connection, you create an environment that fosters loyalty and encourages retention. When you understand people as individuals, you're better prepared to help them set ambitious goals and coach them in doing great things.

When you connect, you make it personal. Employees value personal connection—nobody wants to follow a leader they don't know or understand. When people perceive a gap between themselves and their leaders, it creates a climate of opposition and mistrust. But that gap disappears when a leader works to create mutual respect, understanding and a sense of camaraderie.

When you connect, you get curious. When you're genuinely connecting with someone, questions come naturally. As a result, you learn more, gain new insights and ideas, and get an early sense of upcoming opportunities and challenges.

Lead from within: When you make a connection with your people, you'll notice a significant difference in your employees—and in every aspect of your leadership.

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