



Leading with flexibility, compassion & empathy

“This is your team. Not your family. I want to be clear that your family should come before your team. And so should your well-being.”

I had goosebumps listening to this founder kick off his all-employee meeting, and it didn't matter one bit that we were connecting over Zoom. I also thought he was spot-on, and I reinforced that notion in my talk immediately following his. To be clear, he wants his team to win and the people on it to thrive. They have a very aggressive growth agenda, which is going to demand plenty from them in the coming months. However, the message around values and priorities was crystal clear.

Leading with flexibility, compassion, empathy and a family-first attitude while balancing the huge demands required to deliver a high level of performance may seem like a paradox. It's not, but it does require exceptional leadership.

Exceptional leaders communicate with clarity and confidence and invest the time to create authentic, meaningful relationships. The best leaders invest the time to frequently and consistently connect in one-on-one meetings because that is one of the most important aspects of the job: [44% of millennials](#) would be more likely to increase engagement if their managers met with them regularly. I'd posit that this isn't isolated to millennials right now.

It matters so much because those moments of connection afford leaders their very best opportunity to listen, understand and create alignment in the support of a shared agenda. It's where relationships deepen. It is precisely where a leader can lean in to offer more flexibility and support when it's required and emphasize what is required to drive the performance of the business.

Having clearly defined expectations and holding people accountable to those expectations consistently is critical to leading a high-performance team. So is caring enough to put people first. That requires plenty of compassionate, courageous communication especially during times of change.

I invite you to develop your leadership skills. Inspect your calendar. How many one-on-one meetings do you have scheduled? See whether that number feels right or whether there might be room to schedule more focused time investing in your people.

It's worth it.