

You Need Both Passion and Compassion To Lead

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Passion gets you up in the morning; it is the fuel that drives you to immerse yourself in your work and deliver results. Compassion is what you extend to others; it is the manifestation of caring and concern. Though these two concepts may not get equal time in the discussion of leadership, they are equally important.

When it comes to leadership, passion is spoken about frequently, though primarily in the abstract, as in having a "passion for the job" or "passion for results." By contrast, compassion takes a back seat; it's considered a nice-to-have attribute but few leaders speak publicly about it. In truth, if you want to deliver on passion; that is, use it as a lever to rally your team to achieve something sustainable, you must do so with compassion – by recognizing and demonstrating your belief that what people do matters. In that vein here are some suggestions for developing and leveraging both of these critical leadership traits within yourself and your team.

To stoke passion:

Set high goals. People who love what they do love to push to see how high and how well they can fly. By setting stretch objectives, you push motivated people to do their best. The pursuit dovetails with their passion.

Stoke the fires. Give frequent feedback so people know where they stand. When folks get off track, show them the way back so they can apply their passion toward meeting the needs of the team.

Measure results. Passionate people love to know how they are doing and what it means. Show how what they do matters in terms of gains against goals. And whatever the measurement, broadcast it.

To nurture compassion:

Coach frequently. Management is a process of enabling others to succeed, specifically putting them into positions where they can succeed. Provide them with guidance. This is the compassion equivalent of "stoke the fires."

Put people first. Look for ways to put this concept into action. Insist on people-friendly HR policies related to sick leave and child and elder care. Consider flexible schedules. Look for ways to accommodate those who want to work part-time, such as parents with young children.

Support volunteerism. Make it known that your organization will donate time and effort to community service efforts. Perhaps it is a local school or maybe a family shelter or a multiplicity of assistance efforts. Some organizations provide paid leave for people engaged in community volunteer efforts. That is wonderful but not always possible. What is possible for most however is simple recognition of community need and a commitment to serve it.

Passion is often subjective. It is the zeal we feel when we are doing what we enjoy and when we see the positive effects it has on us as well as our team. Compassion, by contrast, is nurtured from within -- but it doesn't have any effect until you apply it to others. It's no good being compassionate if you never do anything for anyone. Accountability matters in both passion and compassion. That is, you hold passionate people accountable for results for which they strive. And you demonstrate compassion by holding the organization accountable for delivering on its promises to its employees.

What role do passion and compassion play in your organization? What role -- if any -- do you want them to play?

John Baldoni is a leadership consultant, executive coach, and author of six books on leadership. He was recently named one of the world's most influential leadership gurus by Leadership Gurus International.

http://conversationstarter.hbsp.com/2008/01/twin_virtues_passion_and_compa.html