



REVIEW ARTICLE

THE EXIGENCY OF EMPATHY IN LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

In this ever changing dynamic world, the need for the foundational ethics and behavioral traits is growing to a significant scale. It is an unfortunate fact that there is a notable fall in the minimal ethical standards among people. To understand the cause behind the present scenario is what this article is aimed at. The ultimate objective of this research is to contribute to the world of business a momentous understanding that will upraise the standard of managerial judgment. What is it that is responsible for the weak managerial decisions? It is the lack of empathy! It is dominantly important for the factor of empathy to be inculcated in every manager to make sound decisions. The need for this behavioral trait and the importance of empathy in this present world scenario is discussed to narrow down to the accurate scale that measures the righteousness in managerial judgment. The quality of empathy is to be withheld by every individual to retain the minimum ethical standards in decision making. Leaders have an expectancy to be maintained that will enable them to consider the followers' views and opinions. It is empathy which transforms leaders and elevates their potential to entail large number of followers. When leaders tend to work towards building their following and forget to execute what they are authorized to perform, they fail. It is when they do what they are ought to do, that they will impulsively build their following.

"If we have optimism, but we don't have empathy – then it doesn't matter how much we master the secrets of science, we're not really solving problems; we're just working on puzzles."—Bill and Melinda Gates.

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INTRODUCTION

Empathy, one of the important behavioral traits in decision-making, is most commonly phrased as putting yourself in someone else's shoes. It is the reason behind the empathetic leadership that is effective to a long lasting relationship. Dictionary defines empathy as *"the ability to understand and share the feelings of another."* The word empathy is derived from the Greek words *em* and *pathos* which mean *in* and *feeling* respectively. Keeping the other' feelings in consideration is what empathy is all about. The world needs leaders who possess this gifted quality to live a fulfilling life. Barack Obama has stated, *"The biggest deficit that we have in our society and in the world right now is an empathy deficit. We are in great need of people being able to stand in somebody else's shoes and see the world through their eyes."*

The Need and Importance of Empathy

Effective leadership: "Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives."— Oprah Winfrey. In the research paper of William A.Gentry, Todd J.Weber and Golnaz Sadri, titled *"Empathy in the workplace: A tool for effective leadership"* they have reported, *"Many leadership theories suggest the ability to have and display empathy is an important part leadership."* For a leader to be transformational, empathy must be embedded in his leadership style. The researchers of the paper have stated, *"Empathetic emotions as rated by the leader's subordinates positively predict job performance rating from the leader's boss"* and that *"empathetic emotion plays an important role in creating this paternalistic climate of support and protection to promote successful job performance in these high power distance cultures."* Contributing to the most of the trust gained, empathy is what develops the sense of belongingness among the workers. It is not a healthy environment if employees don't have the culture that welcomes them open-heartedly into the existing climate. This demands the employability of empathy

as stand by the Centre of Creative Leadership that "*empathetic leaders are assets to organizations, in part, because they are able to effectively build and maintain relationships; a critical part of leading organizations anywhere in the world.*"

"Empathy is still lacking in the leaders who need it most," says Ernest J. Wilson III. Empathy is one of the five critical attributes which he emphasizes would uplift true success among leaders. He was frankly surprised to discover the incorporation of empathy among success driven leaders. He also emphasizes that *this enthusiasm for empathy among business leaders crosses borders*. Wilson defines empathy as a "*deep emotional intelligence that is closely connected to cultural competence.*" Analyzing the emerging marketing concepts, they are most likely based on what people desire. It is a clear notion of empathy which is being employed in the modern marketing concepts. Although not incorporated by the word empathy, marketing had evolved to an entirely different level in this ever changing world firefly die to the understanding of how significant the role of empathy is. The widely used acronym SERVANT Leadership is based on seven paramount attributes of leadership among which empathy is one of them explaining the value of humility and the importance of integrity in leadership. The founder of Modern Servant Leaders quotes "*Leaders who lose the ability to empathize lose the ability to lead.*" True leadership is not a 'wanting to be served' but a 'wanting to serve.' This understanding translates the actions of leaders. Mother Teresa is a classic example for such a genuine leadership. Her extraordinary actions were so true and real that her love towards God and mankind has grown her ministry to touch millions of people in over 133 countries, which inspired over 4,500 sisters to join hands with her to work towards the vision of spreading love and kindness among humanity.

The Harvest of Empathy

What you sow is what you reap is the belief. When leaders sow it takes to understand followers, they proportionally reap the trust of followers to believe in them and what they do. The consequences of an action are a result of the intention behind it. Though we sometimes find cases of unintentional outcomes, it is important that our intentions are right and acceptable on the moral grounds for the constructive benefit of others. Most likely, leaders who gain the trust of followers enjoy the benefits of their empathetic seed in their actions. The outcomes of sowing empathy are better socialization of followers with their leader while the followers are attracted to trust the leader, are open to criticism, believe in their leader and accept him to lead them.

1. Better socialization: It is the feeling of belongingness and the welcoming spirit that gathers people and makes them one. It is utmost important that leaders are together as one with their followers. What makes it the most difficult point of leadership is when the leader fails to understand his followers. To mingle with the subordinates, it would be a roller coaster ride if the leader doesn't have what it takes to understand them. Without knowing what's going on in the minds of people, it is not likely to comprehend of what they are feeling. Followers develop a sense of feeling they can put their trust in leaders who respect

their thoughts and puts themselves in others' shoes to understand what it feels like to experience something. To make the world a better place, empathy must be necessarily incorporated to encourage a positive socialization.

2. Attracted to trust the leader: The word trust sounds big most of the times but it is not impossible to hold firm onto it. Many can say that trust once broken is hard to fix but that doesn't mean trust mustn't be given a chance. Doing what is right without selfish ambitions attracts followers to rely on their leader. The belief gets stronger only when things are done right. Putting empathy as a mask to selfishly gain the trust of people by giving them everything they want regardless of the integrity factor is dangerous. Leaders must overcome this danger and stand strong and firm on the ethical grounds to do what is integral. For if they fall to please men, they will fall as leaders. True trust is gained when leaders take right decisions. It is the due responsibility of leaders to explain when people don't understand and that is when they gain a perpetual trust gained overtime. Never compromise on momentary trust and understanding because it will be of no effect when the results of the action finally come.

3. Open to criticism: Would you be open to criticism by someone who doesn't even attempt to give you a chance to be understood? Certainly not! It is to people who understand you that you choose to listen to. Leaders must not compromise over the fact that they will not be heard if they choose not to hear. As simple as it sounds, it makes an enormous difference in the relationship to be heard of by someone. Those who empathize do not criticize for the sake of being a critic but intend to benefit others by constrictive criticism. And it is only to those leaders who put themselves in the shoes of others that followers choose to listen to and henceforth they are open to criticism to accept their flaws and become better in character and in action.

4. Believe in the leader: Jesus said, "Don't be afraid just believe." To be able to say something that sounds so simply and yet is so powerful to make things happen needs tremendous confidence. This confidence that Jesus portrays comes from what he understand of people. There is no better leader than Jesus Christ in the entire history who has had and still has followers like He does. It is simply because He knew the hearts of people. This belief in your leadership comes when you step into the position of your followers and understand what it means to follow. What empathy exposes is beyond a leader can express in words because it helps uncover the hidden feeling of the deepest understanding of people.

5. Accept the leader: Following starts and proceeds with acceptance. Before you follow, you accept. Don't you? And if the leader is not acceptable, it's not likely to happen that you follow him. Being truthful to himself and to others will enable people to accept and give someone a chance to lead. It might not be easy, but the first impression can take a leader to a great position in the minds of people. As long as the leader understands and is humble, excellence in actions is just in the fingertips of the leader. As important as it is to gain acceptance, it is important that it is retained; this is only possible if empathy is maintained.

Conclusion

To be a better judge and to be a better decision maker, a leader must be empathetic. Empathy is not selfish! Empathy enable you to give, give what the people need not what they want. In this world of unending wants, it is important to trace out what is actually needed. It is when the needs are met, a person can live a smooth life but if wants are run after, they will never end nor anytime be all fulfilled. An empathetic leader knows what you need and you want because he takes the effort to understand the real preview of the situation putting him-self in your position.

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from his angle as well as your own." Henry Ford

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