

Leading in the Age of Authenticity: 5 Skills Your Team Craves

--Mark Maestas

The landscape of leadership, both in the church and the marketplace, has undergone a seismic shift. Gone are the days when technical expertise alone could command a room. Today's workforce, shaped by the millennial wave, a global pandemic, and the rise of Gen Z, demands a different kind of leader – one who not only possesses competence but also embodies empathy, vulnerability, and genuine connection.

So, how do you measure up in this new era of leadership? What areas might need a bit of fine-tuning to truly resonate with your team and unlock their full potential?

Here are five essential leadership skills that your team is yearning for in 2024 and beyond:

1. Vulnerability: Strength in Openness

The traditional image of a leader as an unyielding, stoic figure is fading fast. Today, vulnerability is not a weakness, but a superpower. It's about having the courage to acknowledge your limitations, admit mistakes, and ask for help when needed.

When you, as a leader, allow yourself to be vulnerable, you create a culture of trust and authenticity. You demonstrate that it's okay to not have all the answers, and you empower your team to do the same. This fosters open communication, encourages collaboration, and ultimately leads to stronger, more resilient teams.

2. Appreciation: Fueling the Fire

Never underestimate the power of a simple "thank you." Recognizing and appreciating your team's efforts is not just a nice gesture, it's a fundamental leadership responsibility. When you consistently acknowledge their contributions, you create a positive and motivating environment where individuals feel valued and respected.

Make appreciation a regular practice. Incorporate it into your team meetings, highlight individual achievements, and find opportunities to celebrate successes both big and small. A culture of appreciation fuels engagement, boosts morale, and inspires your team to reach new heights.



3. Awareness: Leading with Empathy

Awareness encompasses a multitude of qualities, but at its core, it's about being attuned to the needs and perspectives of those around you. It's about understanding how your decisions and actions impact your team, your organization, and the broader community. This can be a particular challenge for pastors, especially those who speak every week. It's easy to get caught up in the rhythm of sermon preparation and delivery, perhaps even

“workshopping” ideas with the staff throughout the week. While this is certainly important, it's crucial to remain aware of the needs of the congregation and the practical realities of getting things done within the church.

An aware leader is perceptive and empathetic. They actively listen, seek feedback, and strive to understand the challenges and aspirations of their team members. They are sensitive to the dynamics within the organization and work to remove roadblocks that hinder progress and create unnecessary burdens.

4. Team Mentality: Leading Alongside

Leadership is not a solo act. It's about being an integral part of the team, working alongside your colleagues to achieve shared goals. It's about demonstrating a willingness to roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, and support your team every step of the way.

When you lead with a team mentality, you foster a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. You inspire your team to go above and beyond, knowing that they have a leader who is invested in their success and willing to work alongside them to achieve it.

5. Empathy: Navigating Challenges with Compassion

In today's rapidly changing world, challenges are inevitable. Economic downturns, industry disruptions, and unexpected crises can create uncertainty and anxiety. During these times, empathy becomes an even more critical leadership skill.

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Empathy is about understanding and sharing the feelings of others. It's about acknowledging the impact of difficult decisions and communicating with compassion and transparency. When you lead with empathy, you build trust, foster resilience, and help your team navigate challenges with confidence and hope.



Leading with Heart and Mind

The demands of leadership have evolved. Today's workforce craves leaders who not only possess intelligence and expertise but also demonstrate vulnerability, appreciation, awareness, a team mentality, and empathy. By cultivating these essential skills, you can create a thriving environment where your team feels valued, supported, and inspired to run swiftly towards God's vision for your organization.

