

## All you need is love

“Love” – *a strong feeling of fondness for another person, esp. between members of a family or close friends.*

The definition of love in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English takes almost half a page but it starts with the one I described above. We use the word “love” loosely when referring to things: I love chocolate, she loves dancing, and they love Seinfeld. So why is it so hard for leaders to use and apply love when it comes to the workplace? Let’s do the math and see if it would make sense, scientifically speaking:

Average number of working days in a year – 220

Total number of hours over the working year (220 x 24) – 5280 hrs

Average working hours of a full time employee – 7.5

Total time spent in the workplace over the course of the year (220 x 7.5) – 1650 hrs.

This means we spend approximately 31% of time of the entire year with the people we work with! The percentage is actually higher if we deduct the time we spend sleeping and commuting... But as a leader, try using the word love in the office and most likely you will be met with scorn, suspicion over your mental state, and even a potential sexual harassment complaint. This is understandable because most people refer to another definition of love: *“fondness combined with sexual attraction”*. What is it about the workplace that automatically shuts down the greater meaning of the most human and empowering emotion in the world?

People are not used to hearing the words love and leadership in the same sentence or the same place. Great leaders must have the courage to resolve conflicts, make difficult decisions, and inspire others to follow his or her vision. How is that possible if they don’t love the people they work with? In essence, we love all people, regardless of their personal characteristics and behaviors, just because they are uniquely human and therefore, special creatures. I believe that leaders cannot be effective if they do not know how to love. When leaders care deeply about their associates, it means that the individual and group interests are the primary focus of their behavior, and this confers authenticity to their character, actions, and leadership. You can’t fake love after all...

Several action plans have been written over the years on how leaders could apply love to the workplace; some say that courage and fearlessness, combined with mentorship and a display of vulnerability are the attributes of a love leader. Others have touched on the courage to show vulnerability as the Holy Grail.

I don't dispute any of these elaborate theories but I also believe that most things are simpler than people make them to be, and that human beings don't need a sophisticated plan when it comes to love. Think about how boring life would be if we needed to plan and strategize every interaction we have with our family, friends, and co-workers... In reality, all of these qualities make great leaders in general: courage, vulnerability, mentorship, and fearlessness. But what is the difference between great leaders and love leaders? *Authenticity!* Have you ever received a telemarketing call where you can tell the person doing the sales pitch is reading mechanically, word by word, and attempting to sound friendly? That's exactly what I mean by being authentic, either you do it because you passionately believe in it or you are going to sound like a "friendly telemarketer".

So what exactly is a loving leader? It is someone who treats others as they were members of his or her family. Think about it: every person in the office is a mother, father, son, daughter, grandchild, grandparent, uncle, aunt, etc, in someone's family. How would like *your* family member to be treated? As a leader you will be faced with difficult situations that may affect the lives of hundreds of people; in order to be effective you will have to rely on your courage, fearlessness, communication skills, and strategic thinking. But let's face it; life in the workplace is much more about day-to-day mundane stuff than mega crisis requiring decisive action. That's where authentic loving leaders can thrive and make a significant difference in the lives of the people they work with, and consequently the bottom line. But let's set the record straight before people start thinking that life is a "free for all" under love leadership: results matter and they matter a lot. Like a parent who grounds his or her son for not following the rules of the house, a loving leader cannot be afraid of practicing tough love.

Life and business are not that much different and as much as some ordinary people and business leaders like to think that they are unique and irreplaceable, at the end of the day we are very similar to each other. What truly makes us different and special is the mark we make on others by how genuine we are in our display of love... The Beatles said it all back in 1967 in their "Magical Mystery Tour" album:

"There's nothing you can do that can't be done  
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung  
Nothing you can say but you can learn how to play the game  
Nothing you can make that can't be made  
No one you can save that can't be saved  
Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be you in time

All you need is love"