

**PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES:  
EMPATHY LEADER**

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Empathy plays an important role in the development and maintenance of human relationships. Empathy is often confused with sympathy, where in fact there is a clear difference between the two. Sympathy focuses more on the feelings of love and affection whereas empathy entails a profound understanding of another person's feelings. A person with empathy will put himself in the other person's shoes and take an active interest in their predicaments.

***Why empathy matters??***

In most organizations, the leader-employee relationship plays a crucial role in producing organizational effectiveness and productivity. A leader with a high degree of empathy will usually be able to understand behaviours in a relationship and use appropriate feelings and emotions in addressing the needs of the employees. Such leaders can form a meaningful bond with the employees and display a genuine concern for their well-being and emotions. Empathy is related to the leader's interpersonal skills which enable him/her to respond appropriately and effectively to the employees' behaviours (Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia, 2010). A leader with empathy usually expresses genuine humanity towards his/her subordinates (Mayfield, Mayfield, and Neck, 2017) such as giving compliments for a job well done (Mayfield, Mayfield, and Kopf, 1998). Such a demonstration of empathy and care can help the leader achieve the required behavioural enforcement among employees.

An empathetic leader is often a good listener, a quality that enables him/her to understand issues from the employees' perspective and thus provide the appropriate assistance. Employees generally prefer empathetic leaders as they are well-known to have a proper degree of openness in accepting employee sharing and feedback. Empathetic leaders typically delegate tasks based on the employees' skills and capabilities and provide training to ensure that the tasks are completed correctly.

Several studies on leadership highlight the elements of empathy including those provided by the theory of Motivating Language by Mayfield and Mayfield (2016). Empathetic leaders can build high-quality relationships which in turn enable them to comprehend the level of employee satisfaction and identify any underlying dissatisfactions regarding task delegation, rewards and benefits, as well as provision of support (Mahsud et al., 2010).

***Empathy during the Pandemic***

During a pandemic, empathetic leadership is crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire country. Many organizations, whether public or private, are being pressured to follow new norms in their daily operations. Undoubtedly, workers are dealing with a variety of issues as a result of the new norm; it is at times like these that leaders need to be more empathetic in working together to address this critical situation, as a way to provide emotional security for the workers.

In a conclusion, a leader's ability to empathize is a requisite skill. It not only helps in building a supportive work climate but also in boosting employee morale. Employees are more open to listening to orders given by an empathetic leader due to his/her approachability and tendency to value the employees' efforts.

## References

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