

Everybody Matters

Foreword

“Our people matter,” says nearly every CEO on the face of the planet. “Without our people,” so the logic goes, “we would not achieve our goals.”

Rare are the leaders of organizations who will tell you that their people don't matter. However, there is a big difference between understanding the value of the people inside an organization and actually making decisions that consider their needs. It's like saying, “my kids are my priority,” but always putting work first. What kind of family dynamic or relationship with our kids do we think results?

The same is true in business. When we say our people matter but we don't actually care for them, it can shatter trust and create a culture of paranoia, cynicism, and self-interest. This is not some highfalutin management theory –it's biology. We are social animals and we respond to the environments we're in. Good people put in a bad environment are capable of doing bad things. People who may have done bad things, put in a good environment, are capable of becoming remarkable, trustworthy, and valuable members of an organization. This is why leadership matters. Leaders set the culture. Leaders are responsible for overseeing the environment in which people are asked to work...and the people will act in accordance with that culture.

Culture equals values plus behavior, as my friend Lt. Gen. George Flynn, USMC (ret.) says. If an organization has a strong and clearly stated set of values and the people act in accordance with those values, then the culture will be strong. If, however, the values are ill-defined, constantly changing, or the people aren't held accountable to or incentivized to uphold those values, then the culture will be weak. It's no good putting “honesty” or “integrity” on the wall if we aren't willing to confront

people who consistently fail to uphold those values, regardless of their performance. Failure to do so sends a message to everyone else in the organization –“it doesn't matter if you're dishonest or act with questionable integrity, as long as you make your numbers.” The result is a culture of people who will drive for short-term results while systematically dismantling any sense of trust and cooperation. It's just the way people react to the environment they are in. And without trust and cooperation, innovation suffers, productivity lags, and consistent, long-term success never really materializes. The worst-case scenarios often end in crimes being committed, sleight-of-hand accounting practices, or serious ethics violations. But the more familiar scenarios include office politics, gossip, paranoia, and stress.

I admit I am an idealist. I understand that it is a lot easier for me to say and write things like “put your people first” than it is to actually put it into practice. Financial pressures, pressure from the competition, pressure from the board, the media, Wall Street, internal politics, ego...the list goes on...all factor into why sometimes well-meaning leaders of organizations don't (or can't, as some say) care about their people like human beings instead of managing them like assets.

That's why Bob Chapman matters.

If you ask Bob what his company does, he will tell you, “We build great people who do extraordinary things.” If you ask him how he measures his results, he will tell you, “We measure success by the way we touch the lives of people.” It all sounds rather fluffy and mushy. But for the fact that he means it –and it works. Because if you ask Bob what fuels his company, only then will he talk about the financials. And on that level, the

amount of fuel Chapman's companies are able to produce would be the envy of most CEOs.

When I first met Bob, he told me he was building a company that looked like what I talk about. Again, I'm an idealist. I believe it's important to strive for the things I speak and write about... achieving it is an entirely different thing. And so I told Bob, the very first time we met, "I want to see it." And see it I did!

We crossed the country visiting various office and factories and in all cases Bob let me wander around and talk to whomever I wanted. I was free to ask any questions. He stayed out of all the meetings and he wasn't with us when we took factory tours. And what I saw was nothing short of astounding. I saw people come to tears when talking about how much they loved their jobs. I heard stories of people who used to hate going to work, who didn't trust management, who now love going to work and see management as their partners.

I saw safe, clean factories, not because of some management-imposed safety or cleanliness program. The factories were safe and the machines well looked after because the people who worked there cared about their equipment and each other. I could go on and on...but it's probably better if you read the book.

I've since taken others to see Barry-Wehmiller's offices and factories, and the results are always the same. People are blown away by what Chapman has created. As for me? I can no longer be accused of being an idealist if what I imagine exists in reality.

It begs the question, if what I talk and write about can exist in reality, if every C-level executive acknowledges the importance and value of people, why is Bob Chapman and Barry-Wehmiller the exception rather than the rule? The reason, once again, is pressure. Though nearly every CEO on the planet talks about the importance of doing things for the long term and the value of long-term results, an uncomfortably high number don't seem to run their companies that way. Forget about ten- or twenty-year plans, the quarter or the year is king. Even if a five-year plan exists, odds are it gets changed or abandoned within those five years. It's hard to make a strong argument to defend the way so many leaders of organizations conduct business today.

Though a lot of leaders talk about this stuff, in *Everybody Matters* you will see what happens when you actually do it. You will learn what happens when leaders care about the lives of the people inside the company as if they were family, Truly Human Leadership, as Bob Chapman calls it. You will also learn about the remarkable power unleashed when leadership is aligned with a long-term vision. That single ability is what allows for the patience to do the right thing. That combined with a desire to do right by the people is what makes companies great. And I think we need a few more great companies in the world today.

Simon Sinek
Optimist

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