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Leadership at all levels: Lindsay LaNore

**Ways to be a daring leader**

**In her book *Dare to Lead*,** author Brené Brown writes, “Daring leaders must care for and be connected to the people they lead.” It’s a simple idea but one that can’t be overstated. Again and again, studies have shown that the more invested employees are in an organization, the more productive they will be.

The same is true for leaders. Perhaps even more so, because leaders have a direct effect on the productivity of everyone around them. As a leader, your role is as important for the teams you lead as it is for the customers you serve. It’s too easy to spend all your focus and time on customers without enriching the experiences and development of your staff. Remember: You set the tone that allows employees to feel a sense of belonging. And, ultimately, this strengthens a company’s culture.

We all know how easy it is to get caught up in the daily grind and forget about company culture. There’s enormous pressure to increase productivity, and there are constant fires that need to be put out. However, one of the most important steps you can take toward greater productivity—and avoiding igniting those fires in the first place—is remembering to connect with your team.

**Ways to connect**

Start by showing you care. Say hello and smile when you enter a room. It may sound like common sense but when you’re busy it’s remarkably easy to forget. Then check in with employees. Spend the first 15 minutes of each day doing the rounds of the office, or schedule regular staff meetings to keep everyone in the loop. Meet with new staff and get to know them.

Take the time to connect on a personal level whenever you can. Emails—or, worse still, texts—can be very impersonal. Personalize your responses and add specific messages that you know will motivate the recipient. A handwritten note may be even more effective.

Be intentional with your questions. It may be as simple as asking about somebody’s weekend plans or what project they’re working on. Then follow up with a question or two after the weekend or project is completed. Remembering names and the things that are important to those around you is invaluable. If it helps, jot down some notes and write relevant dates down in calendars.

Schedule time to talk about professional development. Helping a staff member develop their potential is a key part of effective leadership. Ask your team how they feel about their workloads and if there are new things that they wish to learn or experience.

Finally, give them permission to interact and communicate outside of the day-to-day minutiae. Plan some unstructured time together to let everyone decompress, whether it’s a happy hour or an annual retreat. It’s easy to see interaction as wasting time, but that chatter can also foster collaboration and creativity. If we want employees to show up fully, it’s critical to make them feel like they can be themselves.

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