Primary Drivers

Description

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Before you can begin to lead, you need to know and be able to speak to what your motivation is. Your motivation will impact every aspect of your work as a leader, and therefore impact every individual you lead.

To understand why this important, think back to a bad leader you've had to follow in the past. What was it that you didn't like about them? Were they driven by pride, and therefore didn't hear your input? Were they motivated by power and control, and seeming to gain pleasure from micromanaging your work? Perhaps they were motivated by a passion for technology, and had a genuine interest in solving problems. Maybe they gained satisfaction from collaboration and coordination?

Each of those, good or bad, can be traced back to a primary driver. Acknowledging what yours is can help correct a problematic mindset, or ensure your actions are aligned with what you truly value.

In my opinion, there is one primary driver that leaves all others in the dust.

Empathy

> The psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the emotions, thoughts, or attitudes of another
>
> *https://www.dictionary.com/browse/empathy*

It's more than just caring, or sympathy. Sympathy is considering how you would feel in someone else's shoes, and that's a great first step. Empathy means considering how *they* feel in their situation. If you imagine their life situation, experiences, personality, etc. How would you imagine they might feel?

Empathy for your own leaders means you are invested in making sure you understand what is required of you, and that you will do your best to help your leader succeed.

Empathy for those you lead means you are invested in making life easy for your team. You will be diligently watching and listening for pain-points that have a negative impact on productivity and morale. You are invested in their own career progression, and in helping them develop the skills they need to succeed. You want to make sure your team has everything they need, so that if you were to step away, they could continue safely until your return. You ensure people know that they are genuinely heard and their feedback seriously considered.

Empathy for your peers means you celebrate the achievements of those around you. You work to make sure your give the proper dedication to any collaborative efforts, making sure they have all the support you are able to provide.

Empathy for your customer means you will be on the lookout for product improvements that will benefit them. That could be anything from pricing, to features, or performance, or even partnerships.

Consider the effect of ignoring empathy. You don’t care about your leaders, coworkers, team, or customers. You pursue nothing but your own interests. You leave everyone around you unsatisfied with your contributions, since they didn’t take anyone else into consideration.

Whether we like it or not, good leadership takes emotions into consideration. Embracing that fact will not only make improve the well being of everyone around you, but that feeling of support will be associated with you, and your career will benefit from it.

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