

BEST LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR 2023

Be authentic, discover your “why” and set clear goals.

By Stacey Phillips

Most business owners would agree that excellent leadership is critical to operating a successful company. “It is a balance of various aspects that can help a company become a dynamic force when done correctly or destroy a lifetime of work if done poorly,” said Jay Perry, the founder and owner of Ally Business Coaching and Automotive Business Consultants.

Perry also co-authored the Quilly award-winning book *Success Manifesto* with Brian Tracy. The book focuses on what is necessary to succeed in life and highlights eight leadership aspects to help propel leaders and their employees to the top of the game.

Perry and his wife, Kim, are certified business coaches based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and offer leadership development courses throughout North America and internationally. Their coaching practice focuses on goals to assist businesses in improving profitability through developing their team into leaders.

“We are very boutique-like in our business model,” said Perry. “I chose that model deliberately because I wanted to be able to positively affect a client and achieve measurable results that the client can turn to and say, “Yes, they helped do this.”

Perry is passionate about leadership development and recently shared advice about leading teams as well as how to address challenges pertaining to multi-generation staff.

→ What advice can you offer those who are leading teams in 2023?

We’ve found in our research that there are certain behavioral characteristics that teams want to see in their leaders. One is authenticity. Whatever leaders are planning to do, it has to come from a genuine area of concern and motivation to help others. When that is on display, people respond extremely well to it.

Whatever you introduce to your team, make sure it’s authentic and genuine and is communicated from the heart. Many leaders tend to gloss over challenges, but that’s not authentic. Our experience and research has shown that transparency is the most effective approach. Your goal here is to mobilize team members to face challenges and subsequent changes.

Like author and podcast host Simon Sinek says, you really must research your ‘why’ – the reason you want to do something. Sinek wrote several books, including *Find Your Why: A Practical Guide to Discovering Purpose for You and Your Team*.

Being authentic and discovering your ‘why’ leads to the second piece, which is clarity around goals. One of the ideas I have promoted in my book and my co-author emphasizes is to write down your goals based on something that you want to achieve. Then ask yourself, ‘Why do you want to put effort into a certain endeavor and what will it take to get there?’

The third piece is to communicate in a way people can relate to. This takes the most skill. When we put together a plan, it’s created with intellect; however, when we start to interact with others, it happens in the emotional realm. This presents an opportunity to inspire and create engagement.

→ How do you recommend communicating with employees?

Although the decision is typically on an individual basis, a good rule of thumb is first to clarify why you are doing something, why it is so important and why anybody else should care.

Then, I would create what I call a “champion”. This could be a confidante, someone inside or outside the organization who you trust their judgment and can share the information with ahead of time. Eventually, you will want to communicate with your team because any goals you



Jay Perry, Ally Business Coaching and Automotive Business Consultants



set will likely impact everyone. By that time, you will have practiced with your champion and fine-tuned your message. Let your team know your thoughts and the importance of everyone working together.

One mistake many leaders make is regularity. They get fired up at the beginning of the year with New Year's resolutions and start off great for the first couple of weeks. Then, the day-to-day distractions kick in. Distractions not only make us busy, but also impact employees in performing whatever initiative we want to kick off. We need to be very mindful of this.

The frequency of communication is critical. I recommend creating a checklist of touchpoints on how you will approach something. Let's say you are going to have a team meeting on January 4th. You can schedule that appointment ahead of time and start to get everyone excited. During the January 4th meeting, I suggest finding a date to reconvene and discuss the program to ensure everyone is on the same page. That's an essential step many leaders miss. I find it extremely helpful to set a certain deadline to accomplish the task(s) and report back to the group.

→ What are some best practices for businesses with multi-generational staff?

I've done a lot of research and reading on that subject and it can be tricky. We're engaged in several projects right now with multi-generation staff where we are helping facilitate communication. I don't like to call it succession but that's a big part. It's about indoctrinating the younger generation into the responsibilities that the older generation has carried out for 30 years.

Rather than suggesting a subject they should talk about it, we encourage them to bring a topic to us.

One of the approaches that is universal to all successful meetings, especially when dealing with multi-generational issues, is understanding. Like Dr. Stephen R. Covey said, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

We came up with a rule for the big multi-generational projects that we are working on right now: everyone has an equal voice. This allows the hierarchy to disappear. It isn't magic and doesn't happen in one meeting overnight. Instead, it is a process. It has taken about eight consistent meetings to reach a comfort level where everybody is truly speaking their voice.

In cases like these, I strongly recommend a facilitator to help keep things on track. In most family dynamics, you'll find there is an alpha who will speak first and dominate the conversation. Everyone else speaks after the alpha. That's not what you want when you are addressing family issues. Everything needs to be discussed and you need a safe space where everyone feels comfortable speaking their mind.

You also need patience. As I mentioned, it will take more than one meeting. Some family members may be upset but everyone needs to realize it's a process and it's imperative to be involved for the long haul.

Consistent weekly meetings help break down barriers and allow everyone to get to the issues that need to be discussed. Most people listen for the opportunity to speak, so they often stop listening to people and miss nuances. They may even misconstrue or misinterpret what is being said.

We need to stop listening just to form a response and focus on listening to understand the person. One of the techniques we teach is active listening. We call it leadership listening because it's when you hear an issue that demands leadership be applied. We encourage people to put on their leadership headphones to understand the other person. We also recommend leaders rephrase their understanding of what another is saying to them to ensure continuity and uniformity in thought and that everyone is on the same page.

If you don't know your employees and their career aspirations, how can you possibly help them accomplish those personal goals?

→ Do you have any insight on changes you've seen in business leadership since the pandemic?

Since the pandemic, we've seen a huge increase in leaders interested in better connecting with employees. This is especially true due to the staffing shortage affecting our industry.

Whether you are an auto recycler, repairer, parts or paint distributor, car dealership or accounting firm, everyone is dealing with the same challenges in staffing. As a result, many businesses are looking for ways to recruit, engage with and retain employees.

There is a theme in our advanced leadership development course called the Influential Leader. We encourage leaders to get to know their people and those in their circle. That holds true with family situations as well. If you aren't listening to them, you don't really know them. As your circle expands, it's important to get to know others at a deeper level.

Even pre-COVID surveys showed that the top two things on the list for employees were opportunities for advancement and acknowledgment. People want an opportunity for advancement and to be acknowledged for their contributions.

Money always appears on the list but isn't typically

higher than fourth. That's a significant fact that we need to keep in mind. Money is important and wages need to be competitive, but obviously, we want to go beyond that to be an ideal employer.

If you don't know your employees and their career aspirations, how can you possibly help them accomplish those personal goals? You can't. Sitting down over a cup of coffee and talking to your employees can be tremendously enlightening. Think about it as connecting with the person and learning what they are thinking as opposed to giving advice and telling them what to do about something. This ultimately becomes an opportunity to be a mentor or a champion for someone.

Even though we are facing many challenges, every one of those are opportunities to rise above the competition. More than ever before, people are looking to connect, collaborate and be part of something that is inspirational and provides meaning in their lives. Excellent leadership starts to unlock this potential. 🚗



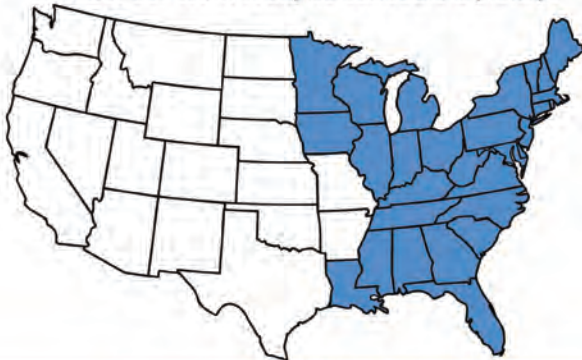
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