

2 Ingredients for Leadership Success

Have you experienced a teacher or professor who was brilliant in their subject, but didn't seem to care about you as their student?

Have you encountered a doctor or nurse who seemed to be a genuinely caring person, but only average in their skills?

This is a common experience and can be true in anyone from a plumber to a therapist.

But when you find someone who is both competent and cares, that is an extremely valuable person.

The same is true for leaders.

When a leader is highly competent and clearly demonstrates that he or she sincerely cares, that is always a winning combination.

I've met pastors who are brilliant Bible teachers, but somewhat distant from the people. I've also met warm and loving pastors who are only average in their communication skills.

Here's an intriguing question. Which do you think is more important? Competence or Caring?

The quick answer might be, "It depends." Perhaps you'd say: "I want the pilot of my next flight to be competent; I don't care if he's aloof and distant. I don't need him to hold my hand, I need him to land the plane." Fair enough.

But there are far more situations where I think you will say caring matters. For example, I want my dentist to be really good, *and* I want him to care. I don't want some guy with a drill in his hand with zero compassion!

You don't want the teacher of your 1st grader to be brilliant in early childhood education, and yet be cold or even harsh toward your child.

As a leader, I don't think we have to settle for either/or, and I know the people who follow you don't have to settle.

Candidly, people have choices. They will search until they find a leader, doctor, teacher, coach, boss etc., who is both caring and competent.

Two Truths to Help You Move Forward:

1) Caring isn't automatic.

Not everyone cares. We agree on that.

You can't learn to care. It's not a skill.

Here's some good encouragement. If you take personal inventory in a very honest moment and determine that you are not naturally a caring person, you can ask God to help you care. Or perhaps you do care, but struggle to express it well.

If you ask God to give you a heart that cares and the ability to demonstrate that you care, He will. I believe the only criteria is that you use that heart level care for the good of others and the advancement of His Kingdom.

It also takes personal capacity to care. You need to have the margin in your life to express that you care. For example, if you have a serious health issue, or a struggling marriage, or have just experienced a significant loss, or intense personal financial pressure, it's difficult to show others that care when your life is, (understandably or otherwise), centered on you.

Further, caring isn't independent from competence. As a church leader, if you don't really care, it's difficult to possess the needed empathy that allows you to be motivated to pay the price to get better.

2) Competence always comes with a price.

I love the principle that Malcom Gladwell writes about in his book, *Outliers*. He calls it, "The Rule of 10,000 hours." He lists and tells amazing stories about people who have reached an extraordinary level of excellence, and all have invested at least 10,000 hours of practice in their arena of expertise.

The following process will help you increase your competence so you will become better at what you do.

Honest assessment

Gaining a solid and accurate self-awareness is where this process begins. Knowing what you are good at, and what you are not, is essential. Accurate assessment includes the honest opinion of leaders beyond you in their level of experience and capability.

The willingness to work hard

No one gets really good at what they do without hard work and burning a little of the "midnight oil." Without passionate and consistent effort, even the most naturally gifted leaders will remain average.

Great coaching

Very few leaders can teach and coach themselves. You don't need a coach or mentor to meet with you every week or even every month. You are fortunate if you have a great mentor or coach who meets with you two or three times a year. You need all that time between meetings to practice!

Practice, practice, practice

Playing the guitar is different from practicing. When I play the guitar, I'm doing what I know. When I practice the guitar, I'm working on something that I can't do till I can. Perhaps it's a really tough chord that I just *cannot* play. So, I work on it until I *can*.

The same is true in leadership. If you practice something in leadership, that means you are working on a skill that you don't have, until you do. And then you keep working on it until you master it.

Of course, if your church continues to grow, you never really master anything in leadership because as your church continues to increase in size, your skill needs to advance with it.

So how about you? What do you need to focus on more right now?

Competence or Caring?

How about each individual on your team?

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