

Hello. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. Please give us the benefit of your thinking in the comments below. And we thank you for that.

This week I want to talk about how leaders can increase connection in their organizations. I saw a Ted Talk by Dr. Todd. I may not say this, right. Dewett. D-E-W-E-T-T. And I thought it was really important. It was short maybe seven or eight minutes, but it was very impactful. So why are we talking about this? Well, if your employees, if your team perceives that somehow, you're on a different level. You're in the executive suite, and they're out doing the hard work of the organization. You know, I think that's a cost. And I think all of us as leaders need to be connected to our teams and our people to get the most out of ourselves and the most out of them.

So, he talked about, Todd Dewett talked about, a boss. It was really happy with his team. And he was so excited. He really wanted to thank them and do something special for them. So, he said, I'm going to... He went to the team and he said, I'm going to do something for you guys. I'm going to invite everybody to happy hour. So, they went to a big hotel. Well, only about half of the employees showed up for this happy hour. And one very brave employee after a couple of adult beverages went to the boss and the boss, "So I'm kind of puzzled. Why did only half the team come out?" And he said, "Well, not only did only half the team come out, but they only came out because they thought there may be some punishment in it or some loss of prestige or something if they didn't come out."

So, the boss was just like, "Golly man, I missed the mark on that one." Well, the team continued to perform really well. And again, the boss wanted to do something special and he said, "Okay, we're going to do something really special as a team, we're going to go canoeing as a group." Well, less than half of the people came out this time. And again, that brave employee went back to him and said, he said, "Why did only a handful of people come out?" And he said, "Not only the most people not want to go canoeing, but you screwed up their weekend."

So, this boss in his zeal to try to do something wonderful for the team projected himself onto the team, he liked happy hour and he liked canoeing. And so, he said, if I love these things, well, then my people do too. But he didn't ask them. He didn't ask them. And so, he went back to this brave employee and he said, "I want you to talk to the people and see what they want to do." And then they came back and they said they wanted to go see professional wrestling. They wanted to go to a professional wrestling match. So sure enough, he bought tickets for the WWE or whatever it is. And he took them in and about a hundred percent of the people came out and he said it was the best thing they ever did. People were patting him on the back and calling him by his first name, for the first time ever.

He didn't project himself onto employees. He asked them how simple is that? He asked them what they wanted. It's hard for us as leaders to admit how flawed we are, you've heard Dennis talk about flawed leadership in a lot of his blogs. It's, we don't remember what it was like to be a young person and to be unsure of ourselves. We don't remember that we had a learning curve at one time. We don't remember that we made a lot of mistakes and that we still, we're loath to admit that we still screw things up, right? We think we can't be vulnerable. We think we have to be the strong, silent Gary Cooper type for our people. And that's what leadership is all about, but that's wrong.

So, a story I think that helps illustrate this. So, we had a talented employee here, one time named James Mode, and he's, he's moved along now. We couldn't keep him. Anyway, he's just too talented. But he had a great story. He had been in the advertising business earlier in his career, and he said they always had three pitches that they would take to company leaders. It didn't matter what business the company was in. It always three pitches. There would be creative pitch, number one, creative pitch, number two. And then third pitch was always, you be the spokesman for the company. Which pitch of the three did the company leaders always choose? It was the third one. It was the third one because they thought, Oh, I'm magnetic and charismatic. And nobody can tell the company story better than me. And if you think about it, there's the pillow guy and then there's Lee Iacocca. And there's all these guys, men, and women that end up trying to be the pitch

person for their companies. And most of them come off as... You'd be better to go with the creative alternative is what I'm telling you.

Anyway. Why do I tell you this story? Because it's about the egos. James said they were always... The third pitch, always appealed to the ego of the leader. It's not about the team. It's not about the customers. It's about the self. It's about the leader's self. And that's why they always choose alternative number three. People like and relate to real, okay, this is what Ted Dewett says. Three ways that you can be real with your people, keep your ego in check and show vulnerability. You know, it's... One of the things that really creates connection with people is asking them questions about their lives, about their kids, but about their jobs.

You know, are you happy? Are you happy doing what you're doing? And how can we make things better for you? You know, part of being vulnerable is asking stupid questions. I ask a lot of them. Sometimes unintentionally, but anyway. The stupid questions is key to, I think, I read a book one time and they talked about how, especially as you go up the food chain in the organization, people stop asking stupid questions. So if somebody says something and they use an acronym, like whenever IT comes up at our company, all these acronyms come up and I have to ask every time, what is that? What, I remember one time they talked about POC, which is proof of concept. I didn't know what that was. I had to ask "What's POC?" I asked stupid questions because I'd rather appear stupid than stay stupid.

Okay. And then the third thing, let your people in your company share their amazing knowledge. The people in your company have different experiences, different perceptions, different expectations, different ways of looking at the world, let them share those things with you and the rest of the team. And you'll get more diverse thought. You'll get more creative thought. You'll get a lot of things out of it. So, I'd like to hear how you create connection in your organizations, the tools, tactics that you use. And we'll look forward to seeing that in the comments.

This is Wayne Rivers at the Family Business Institute. And thank you.