THE LEADERSHIP CRUCIBLE

PAYING IT FORWARD
Leading With Purpose

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What Right Looks Like

After 40 years in the fire service, Chief Randy Bruegman founded The Leadership Crucible Foundation dedicated to helping shape future leaders by emphasizing integrity, paying it forward to others, and leaving things better than we found them. Together, we can inspire a new generation of leaders committed to these essential values.

In today's society, the concept of what constitutes "right" can vary dramatically based on one's individual, political, and social perspective. Those perspectives are shaped by our personal experiences, backgrounds, and personal belief systems. As social media has emerged as a powerful tool over the last two decades, its dramatic impact has significantly amplified our diverse perspectives. This development has facilitated a wide range of discussions, which, as we have witnessed, has led to divisions in our society and polarization in our political landscape. Watching this unfold, it's clear that much of the rancor and discontent could have been minimized or redirected if someone in a position of authority or influence had stepped up to do or say the right thing.

From my own personal experience, it really all comes down to one critical element: leadership. Effective leadership is essential for guiding discussions, fostering understanding, and ensuring that the focus remains on constructive outcomes rather than divisive rhetoric.

What "right" looks like is fundamentally rooted in ethical and compassionate leadership. Effective leaders do not merely manage; they lead with integrity, a shared purpose, and cultivate an environment of trust through honesty and transparency. Many of us have personally experienced or observed the opposite of this behavior over the past decade, which has led to disillusionment regarding the prospect of taking on leadership roles. I've observed that many capable and talented individuals are opting to stay on the sidelines rather than stepping into leadership positions.

This trend has allowed those with less experience, compassion, and in some cases, a lack of integrity to assume these roles, and the repercussions are becoming increasingly clear in various areas of society. I strongly believe we

need to cultivate and encourage authentic leaders who can inspire positive change and guide us through these challenging times. If you are one of those principled individuals that has been sitting on the sideline, your talents and insights are needed now more than ever. We are facing critical challenges, and people like you, with valuable experience and strong values, have the potential to make a meaningful difference.

I recently hosted Brigadier General (Ret) John "Dragon" Teichert on my podcast, and we discussed the importance of leaders who embody strong ideals. I asked him what insights he would share with today's leaders to enhance their effectiveness based on his extensive experience. His observations offered valuable and seasoned perspectives from a proven leader.

"There are a couple of key points I like to emphasize when discussing my leadership philosophy. While it's important to have a leadership philosophy, it must be grounded in the needs of the people you are leading. There's ongoing discussion about whether followers today are different from
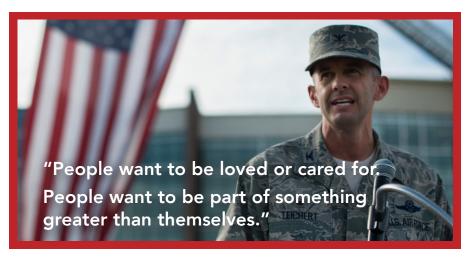
those in the past. I believe there are some differences, but fundamentally, there are two innate human needs that leaders can uniquely fulfill:

1. People want to be loved or cared for.

2. People want to be part of something greater than themselves.

As a leader, it's essential to consider how to exercise your understanding of these two needs. By applying your skills and allocating time and resources to meet these fundamental human needs, you can unlock individual talent and unleash the power of your teams. Many people are yearning for genuine care and concern from various figures in their lives, including their leaders.

Therefore, leaders must be intentional about communicating how their actions contribute to fulfilling a higher purpose in their followers' lives. When leaders successfully address both of these needs, they create an incredible capability within their workforce, which is actively seeking leadership that embodies care and a connection to something greater than themselves."

In today's multigenerational workforce, it's essential to communicate differently and tailor our approaches to each generation. However, I believe the core message remains constant: people want to feel that they are working for someone who genuinely cares about them and is invested in their well-being, alongside the well-being of the organization.

"People want to be loved or cared for. People want to be part of something greater than themselves."

A great example of this is when General Teichert donned set of firefighting gear and participated with his staff in the 911 stair climb, a tribute event that honors the first responders who bravely served during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, particularly the firefighters and emergency personnel who climbed the stairs of the World Trade Center in their efforts to save lives.

When being led, "right" actions often include behaviors and attitudes that contribute positively to the development of you as team members, align with the organization's goals, and foster a productive, collaborative, and respectful environment. Here's what that can look like:

1 Proactive Engagement:
Team engagement is vital for creating a dynamic work environment. When leaders and organizations actively allow their employees to contribute beyond their defined roles, they not only position them as valuable team members, but also help them to develop skill sets that prepare them for higher-level positions. This proactive approach is essential for ensuring organizational sustainability and value, and long-term success of their team members.

2 Commitment to the Mission:
A strong commitment to the organization's mission is essential for achieving success. Employees whose personal goals align with those of the organization tend to have the greatest impact and experience the most significant professional growth. As an employee you will know when you feel it, as a leader, you will know it when you see it.

3 A Collaborative Mindset:
When your leaders and your organization prioritizes a collaborative mindset that fosters teamwork and shared successes, it establishes a compelling internal value proposition for everyone. By supporting teammates and valuing diverse contributions, leaders can help create an environment that encourages a variety of perspectives and creativity. This approach leads to constructive conflict resolution, strong relationships, and enhanced team performance.

4 Professional Integrity:
Organizations and leaders who prioritize professional integrity recognize it as the cornerstone of trust within the workplace. By embracing accountability, upholding ethical standards, and leading by example, they instill confidence among their team members. This foundational principle fosters a culture of trust and collaboration, ultimately resulting in an organizational environment that is firmly rooted in ethics and integrity.

5 Adaptability:
Leaders who recognize that adaptability is essential in today's ever-changing work environment actively promote lifelong learning and foster a growth mindset within their teams. They understand that modeling adaptability through their own actions and reinforcing its importance in the workplace are critical for creating a culture that encourages resilience and flexibility. This approach empowers team members to embrace change and cultivate a growth mindset, equipping them to navigate challenges effectively and contribute positively to the organization's future.

For employees, the concept of "right" often translates to experiencing a profound sense of belonging and purpose at work. It means feeling valued and recognized for their contributions, which in turn boosts morale and underscores their importance to the organization. When employees are aware that their well-being is a priority, it fosters trust in leadership and encourages greater engagement. Understanding how their individual work aligns with the organization's mission adds meaningful context to their efforts, inspiring commitment to shared goals. Being empowered to share ideas and take initiative provides a sense of ownership over their work, which enhances motivation. A collaborative atmosphere that encourages teamwork and open communication fosters camaraderie among colleagues, further strengthening connections. Additionally, opportunities for professional growth reinforce the belief in advancement and overall job satisfaction. When the workplace culture is rooted in integrity and trust, it creates a secure environment where employees feel confident in their leaders and are invested in the organization's success.

The concepts of belonging, purpose, recognition, and growth are increasingly relevant across the generations found in today's workforce, each of which brings distinct perspectives and values.

1. Baby Boomers: This generation values job security and respect for experience. They appreciate recognition for their contributions and may seek mentorship opportunities, both giving and receiving. A workplace that enhances their sense of belonging and acknowledges their expertise fosters loyalty and engagement.

2. Generation X: Often seen as the bridge between technology and traditional work ethics, Gen X values flexibility and work-life balance. They appreciate being empowered to take initiative and make decisions. A workplace that champions autonomy and professional growth resonates well with their desire for belonging and personal fulfillment.

3. Millennials (Generation Y): This generation highly values purpose and meaningful work. They seek workplaces that align with their personal values and offer opportunities for collaboration and creativity. Millennials thrive in environments that prioritize well-being, open communication, and recognition, which enhances their engagement and motivation.

4. Generation Z: The newest entrants into the workforce, Gen Z, are characterized by their tech-savviness and desire for inclusivity and social responsibility. They prioritize workplaces that foster a sense of community and provide opportunities for professional development. This generation expects transparency from leaders and a culture rooted in trust and integrity.

As workforce demographics evolve, organizations that prioritize belonging, purpose, and trust not only help employees feel valued but also adapt to the changing expectations of their diverse workforce. By fostering a collaborative atmosphere and providing growth opportunities, employers can create an inclusive work environment that resonates with all generations, ultimately enhancing overall morale and productivity

For many, the concept of "right" is rooted in fairness, justice, and kindness, serving as the foundation for a harmonious society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. While interpretations of what is right may vary based on context, the core principle remains clear: it's about action that uplifts individuals and benefits society as a whole. On a personal level, "right" manifests in our everyday choices—being honest, helping others when they need it, and standing up against injustice. Acting rightly means taking responsibility for our actions, understanding their impact on those around us, and making decisions that align with our values and integrity. At the societal level, "right" refers to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, receives equal treatment and has access to the same opportunities. Social movements for civil rights and gender equality have continually redefined our understanding of fairness, reminding us that progress is achieved when we confront inequities and advocate for justice. Yet, doing what is right often presents challenges. The path may not always be clear; sometimes, we must navigate competing values and difficult decisions. In such instances, reflection and open dialogue are essential, as is a commitment to considering the broader impact of our choices. Ultimately, for me, embodying what is right means striving daily to be my best self, treating others with respect, and standing firm in advocating for fairness. It's about making the deliberate effort to contribute positively to the world around us, creating a better future for everyone.

Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways

Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in The Leadership Crucible Podcast, we make notes on the key leadership takeaways that we discussed. We share theses personal and leadership takeaways-these insights- with you in hopes it will help you reflect on them personally or from a professional perspective. These may also provide potential talking points that you can discuss with your team or colleagues, which often create great dialogue insights.

The idea of "right" often means feeling a deep sense of belonging and purpose at work. - Leaders who meet the basic human needs of feeling cared for and being part of something bigger unlock the talents within their teams. - Ultimately, "right" includes behaviors that uplift individuals, promote fairness, and positively impact society, based on ethical decision-making and respect for others. - When personal and organizational goals align, employees recognize it, and leaders see it clearly. - Embodying what is right means striving every day to be your best self, treating others with respect, and standing up for fairness.

- As workforce demographics change, organizations that emphasize belonging, purpose, and trust make employees feel valued.
- The idea of "right" often means that we feel a strong sense of belonging and purpose at work or in whatever we are engaged.
- When leaders show they care and help us feel part of something bigger, they unlock the amazing talents within their teams.
- In the end, "right" is about uplifting each other, promoting fairness, and making a positive mark on society, all while making choices that respect everyone.
- When our personal goals match up with our organization's goals, individually you will feel it, and your leaders will see it too!
- As our workforce grows increasingly diverse, organizations that prioritize belonging, purpose, and trust create an environment where individuals feel valued and appreciated. These are the kinds of organizations that people will be eager to work for.
- Embracing what is right means trying your best each day, treating others with kindness, and standing up for fairness.

Leaders Are Readers

I believe that to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight. To that end, we provide a few suggested titles below for you to consider:

Dare to Lead
  Brené Brown
The Culture Code
  Daniel Coyle
Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us
  Daniel H. Pink
Radical Candor
  Kim Scott
The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business
  Patrick Lencioni