



mhca's e-Newsletter

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The Future of Work is Human

A Guest Article from Hannah Ubl, Co-owner of Good Company Consulting

A truth that is universally acknowledged: leading is hard. Yes, it can be rewarding, the good kind of stressful, and feel natural for those in the position. *And* it's also challenging! Between puzzling over how to handle turnover, prevent and manage stress, foster a great company culture, and adapt to changes brought by AI, hybrid and Gen Z... it can be overwhelming, even for behavioral health leaders who know the importance of putting people first to their core.

In our work at Good Company Consulting, we look for solutions in the chaos so that leaders can keep the focus where it matters most: the humans, who are doing deeply human work. Our number one piece of advice to show up as the kind of leader that everyone wants, nay-needs, is: go back to the basics.

Lead by the platinum rule.

This is a subtle shift from leading others the way *you* wish to be led to leading how *they* want to be led. Easy in philosophy, exceptionally difficult in action... but worth the effort. When you lead via the platinum rule, employees and staff take notice because they feel seen, valued and spoken with instead of spoken to. Organization-wide, you can embody this approach by regularly inviting feedback in town halls, surveys, and listening sessions and then providing an action & accountability plan based on what you hear. Be visible, and get to know the people in your facility. Set the example of leadership with your own direct reports by creating a "working with me" cheat sheet that answers questions like: What is the best platform and process by which to communicate with you? What does it mean to you if I include a "..." at the end of an email? What is the best way to set you up for success? What are your working pet peeves? How do you like to be rewarded? Learning people's working and communication preferences gives you the answers you need to operate by the platinum rule, and when it starts in senior leadership, that mindset and approach will trickle down to everyone.

Lean into compassion.

Compassion is the norm in any behavioral health organization, and all the effort that is spent extending that compassion towards clients and patients' needs to also extend to your colleagues and selves. As a leader, there are three essential elements to this crucial style of leadership:

1. Self compassion. Yup, it starts with you. Leaders are notorious for their low level of self-nourishment and yet it is the most important place to begin! It better allows you to navigate your own emotional reactions and make intentional follow-up decisions, it increases your ability to empathize and understand the people you work with, and it sets a model for others to follow.
2. Crafting a culture of compassion and awareness for others. Studies have [shown](#) that a compassionate culture can lower employee exhaustion and absenteeism while also raising employee satisfaction and retention. Consider your culture as your beliefs in action. The key word here is *action*. Look at your organizational core values and be sure you can identify specific actions that you take towards those values. Do people know what compassion looks like in your organization? This can look like PTO policies that require minimum days off, and clearly mapped communication back-up plans for when someone is out. It can be a mutually agreed upon hybrid arrangement to accommodate the difference in employee needs. And it always looks like listening, followed by action.
3. Inspiring others to action. We all have unique intrinsic motivators so there is no one way to inspire! When leaders ensure that peoples' essential needs are met first, they can figure out what truly empowers people to think creatively, openly communicate, and thrive. We recommend providing resources from an organizational perspective so that people can individualize motivation for each person on their team.

Embrace change instead of fighting it.

The workplace, and workforce, is *always* changing. And that is wonderful! However, a natural reaction to change is to defend what's currently working or deny a new approach. Think back to when computers first entered work, or when people requested a change to the suits & ties dress code... those who worked with that change got ahead and those who fought to keep things the same fell behind. The next time feedback makes you uncomfortable, or you're asked to find new flexible work arrangements, or to implement the latest AI solution, ask yourself what it would look like to embrace the change and what if it all worked out?

Did you enjoy the article? Then stay tuned for Hannah's session at our Spring Conference in San Antonio. mhca members who can't make the conference will also have access to the recording of her session following the conference here: <https://mhca.com/conference-presentations>

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