

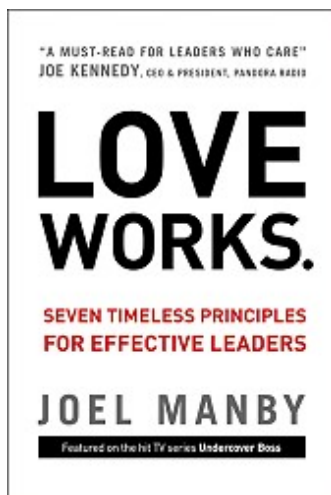
VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #11 by Michael Brown

September 2013

Love Works

The concept of servant leadership is one we have and will continue to revisit in this series. I have also found works that are servant leadership works, but which provide a different expression or interpretation of it. An example of such a work is "Love Works" by Joel Manby. I had heard of this work recently, and was thrilled when I was able to see him give the keynote address at the 2012 Toastmasters International Convention. After getting him to sign a copy, I asked him if he was aware of the concept of servant leadership, and he said he was. He clearly accepted that this work is servant leadership, but using a different way of expressing it.



The concept he puts forth in his work is not original with him, but an expression of the corporate culture of the company he leads as CEO: Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE). They are the largest family-owned theme park corporation, whose corporate culture is servant leadership-based. The name is probably unknown to most, but the amusement parks they own or operate are probably well known. They include 20 some parks in several states. These include Silver Dollar City in Branson, MO, Dollywood and several other parks owned by Dolly Parton, Stone Mountain Park in Atlanta and Wild Adventures in Valdosta, GA. Keep in mind that with their culture, the company has been VERY successful, giving a return of about 14% to the shareholders.

For many people, Joel and his company's culture was introduced in an episode of the TV series "Undercover Boss", where Joel went 'undercover' and worked entry level jobs at several of the company properties. An element of the show that some don't accept is at the end where the CEO gives something to the people they worked with. In Joel's case, the 'rewards' given were actually from the company's Share it Forward Foundation, which was created to help employees in need. This foundation is funded by employee donations which are then matched by the company. So these were not on-off gifts.

An important concept that Joel emphasis is that too often people seem to be given a choice of acting one way at work and another way outside of work. As if we can be nice outside of work, but that at work we can't. I've seen this in action. Years back at my company, I often times had to deal with a certain high-level manager. He was, in my opinion, a difficult person to deal with. I didn't care for him or his manner of behavior. Later I learned that, like me, he was active as a scout leader in the local council and that many other scouters thought he was great. He basically conducted himself in two very different manners at work and outside. So one of the premises of "Love Works" is that you don't need to do this.

Another important matter is that Joel notes that people too often feel that following these concepts somehow means one is not working to achieve the organization's goal. (this same accusation is made

about servant leadership). For a company, that goal is to be profitable. For other organizations, that goal may be something else. The important thing to keep in mind is that you can do right by the employees/members of the group AND by doing so, meet the organization's goals. You don't need to sacrifice values for profits. And has been pointed out, companies which follow a servant leadership model (including HFE) have been shown to be VERY profitable.

Now, to understand the concept being put forth in this book, it should be understood that many misunderstand the word "love", because in English it covers a wide range of meanings. Here we are speaking of love the verb. The principle of treating someone with love regardless of how you feel about that person. In Greek, there are 4 words for love:

- Eros
- Philos
- Storge
- Agape

Eros is where we get the word 'erotic'. Enough said. Philos is 'brotherly love', the love of friends. Storge is love of family and family members (parent & child). The forth word is the important one: Agape. Unconditional love. A decision, a matter of will. This is the basis of "Love Works".

Going further, HFE uses 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to express the concept of love:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

This lays down the foundation of their culture, based on 7 principles:

- Patient: Have self-control in difficult situations.
- Kind: Show encouragement and enthusiasm.
- Trusting: Place confidence in those around you.
- Unselfish: Think of yourself less.
- Truthful: Define reality corporately and individually.
- Forgiving: Release the grip of the grudge.
- Dedicated: Stick to your values in all circumstances.

So let's take a little closer look at some of these concepts.

Being patient means not losing one's 'cool' in a bad situation. It also means praising in public, and admonishing in private, something that too often is forgotten. And that praise and admonishment needs to be specific if it's to be effective.

Kindness is about being encouraging and showing enthusiasm. One part of this is shown by the personal notes that HFE founder Jack Herschend gives to employees. Has anyone ever given you a personal note encouraging you? How might you feel if you received something like that? How might someone else feel if you gave them one? (and I don't mean a quick email or text message either.)

Trust can be a hard thing to give. We often times feel we can't trust people, because they will abuse that trust. But it's important to do so. In the book you'll learn about a tool call RACI, which stands for Responsible, Approve, Consult, and Inform. Trust the people you lead to make decisions and act on them.

Unselfishness is a little misunderstood. It not thinking less of yourself, but think of yourself less. Which means you are thinking of those you lead and work with more. This means helping them.

Truthfulness goes back the quote by Max DePress: "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." Be truthful with others, especially if you expect them to be truthful with you. Another interesting tool covered in the book is "Same as, More of, Less of". What do you appreciate in others? This is "same as". What do you want more of from them? And what do you want to see less of from them? Can you be honest with others to cover these with them, and allow them to cover this with you?

Forgiveness is something we all have a problem with. Can you forgive someone and give them a second chance? And in the book, Joel covers two different examples. One where they gave an employee a second chance and how that person made the most of it. And another where they gave an employee several second chances, and how they weren't able to do so. But you got to try.

And finally, you must be dedicated to your values. You have to do it all the time, in both the bad times and good. Too often in organizations, when things are rough, values are tossed out the window, as if they can't be afforded, when in fact, this is when they are needed most.

Tied to this are the concepts of "Be Goals" (How) and "Do Goals" (What), which ties these all together in the performance goals of the organization.

As noted, a different take on servant leadership, but one that is very successful.

For those wanting to see a video explanation, youtube has a 3 part video of Joel speaking on it at the FCCI (Fellowship of Companies for Christ International) Conference. Sadly, we don't see the slides he is referring to. This is largely the same explanation of what he gave us at the Convention.

1. Love Works! - Joel Manby | Undercover Boss | Part 1 – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EgUoyFTPvI>
2. Love Works! - Joel Manby | Undercover Boss | Part 2 – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZEgpIJifo8>
3. Love Works! - Joel Manby | Undercover Boss | Part 3 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H6epYRUHHc>