

Eminem Was Right



To foster a resilient team culture, you better lose yourself.

BY MATTHEW P. JENSEN

It was more than 11 years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. Vance Thompson Vision had just settled into our new facility. In the months leading up to the move, our team had grown rapidly to nearly 50 people—almost double our size the previous year. We had a strong team culture fundamentally rooted in caring for and being present with each other. Each day began with a huddle to discuss customer-centric priorities, process improvements, and general announcements.

After a few weeks in our new space, which was nearly four times the size of our previous office, I became frustrated that attendance at the morning huddle was dwindling. (It is important to note that many of the missing team members were often in front of patients and had started their day before the huddle began. At that time, however, I struggled to put myself in their shoes.) I approached the surgeons to suggest taking a different tack in stressing the importance of attendance. The conversation went something like the following:

Me: "I'm considering passing around a sign-in sheet at our huddles to emphasize the importance of starting our day together. It has been key to our past success."

Vance Thompson, MD, senior partner and current ASCRS president: "You could do that, but I wonder if it's going to accomplish what you hope."

Me: "Say more."

Dr. Thompson: "I wonder what would happen if, instead of mandating attendance, you made the huddle so awesome and amazing that no one would ever want to miss it."

Me: "Uh, okay?"

What he was suggesting was a concept I was only beginning to grasp and am continuing to learn about: Leadership isn't just about our initiatives; it is about

inspiring others to see the value in these initiatives. Challenged to make our huddles unmissable—and even entertaining—I found myself rallying leaders and team members across the organization to elevate our morning meetings. They became a significant cultural event. Today, daily huddles at our sites across several states incorporate play, game shows, acting, music, and fun to highlight our organization's core values. Without the push from Dr. Thompson, I might have continued to rely on flimsy justifications to drive team performance.

This experience illustrates one of many instances when I needed to develop self-awareness for the betterment of our organization. The *because I said so* approach is short-sighted and one-sided.

In today's dynamic work environments, where collaboration and innovation are key to success, cultivating a strong team culture is paramount. One of the most effective ways to foster it is with emotional intelligence. By understanding and managing emotions effectively, team members can build trust, enhance communication, and create an environment that is conducive to growth and resilience.

BUILDING SELF-AWARENESS

The bedrock of emotional intelligence is self-awareness. Encouraging team members to embark on a journey of self-discovery fosters introspection and reflection. By gaining insight into their own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, individuals lay the groundwork for effective collaboration. Leaders can facilitate this process by creating an environment that values openness

and vulnerability, encouraging honest self-assessment, and providing constructive feedback.

PRACTICING SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is a critical aspect of emotional intelligence. It involves managing impulses and navigating emotions adeptly, particularly in challenging circumstances. Within teams, maintaining composure and exercising self-restraint can defuse tension and pave the way to constructive dialogue. Team members can develop these skills through mindfulness practices, stress management techniques, and the cultivation of a resilient mindset. Leaders set the example by maintaining poise under pressure, demonstrating empathy, and championing a solutions-oriented approach.

CULTIVATING EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, and it is a cornerstone of effective teamwork. Actively listening to others, embracing diverse perspectives, and showing genuine concern for colleagues help foster an inclusive and supportive team culture. Leaders can nurture empathy by creating an atmosphere of trust, encouraging open communication, and celebrating diversity. Building strong interpersonal connections based on empathy lays the foundation for cohesive and high-performing teams.

ENHANCING SOCIAL SKILLS

Transparent and open communication channels reduce misunderstandings and promote alignment toward shared objectives.

Strengthening teamwork allows individuals to harness their collective strengths, overcome challenges, and strive toward success. Equally crucial is learning techniques for conflict resolution that transform disagreements into opportunities for growth and innovation. Encouraging open dialogue, active listening, and collaboration fosters team harmony.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Cultivating a practice culture steeped in emotional intelligence requires commitment and consistency from leaders and team members. The former catalyze change by embodying emotional intelligence principles and fostering an environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered. Offering training opportunities equips team members with the tools to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics effectively. By prioritizing emotional intelligence, organizations can foster a resilient workforce capable of thriving despite adversity and driving sustainable growth.

LOSE YOURSELF

I learned that asking a team to perform because I said so was far less effective than appealing to their professional and emotional well-being. To paraphrase Eminem, lose yourself in the moment for the sake of your team, and you will not miss your chance with the opportunities that come once in a lifetime. ■

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- Financial disclosure: None