

Leadership Philosophy

Background

Leadership is a deeply personal and important part of my life. Leadership has helped me grow as a person and to increase my self-awareness and confidence. To create a leadership philosophy, I drew from several sources: *The Leadership Challenge* and *SLPI 360* (Kouzes, Posner, 2017), *StrengthFinders 2.0* (Rath, 2007) and *Dare to Lead* (Brown, 2018) as well as several years of hands-on leadership experience.

SLPI 360 – I asked a variety of people to participate in this evaluation and was luckily enough to have ten of them respond. I utilized my current leader and vice president, several peers, several direct reports and an area director. I was encouraged by the results and found that most of the scoring was similar to how I ranked myself. There were a few areas where I will spend time learning about gaps that emerged and how I can perform differently in the future. Here are my strongest to weakest of the five practices of exemplary leadership:

1. Encourage the Heart
2. Enable Others to Act
3. Inspire a Shared Vision
4. Model the Way
5. Challenge the Process

StrengthsFinder insights – Another tool I used to inform my philosophy was the StrengthsFinder assessment. I took it a few years ago and have found it to be very helpful in guiding me to things that are not only strengths but also areas that give me deep personal satisfaction and joy. My top five themes are:

- Positivity
- Arranger
- Developer
- Individualization

- Empathy

Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead* encouraged me to take a deep dive into my values and what drives me as a leader. From that self-reflection I realized that my core values are 'making a difference' and 'share joy'. When I'm at my best and utilizing these values and I show up as an enthusiastic, intuitive, and confident people-first leader.

My Philosophy

It's important for me to lean into my core values every day starting with making a difference. There are many ways I can make a difference as a leader, and they all begin with the people I lead and interact with. Taking time to really know my team, listening to their goals, aspirations, hopes and dreams is important, as is what are the things they are struggling with personally and professionally. How can I support them where they are at today? I intuitively make connections with the information people share and can see areas they can grow and contribute in new and different ways to support their own growth and our organization in the future. We can then explore those areas together and create a development plan. Getting the right people into the right spot is one of the most exciting aspects of leadership to me.

Making a difference also shows up in how I recognize people and their contributions. I believe in celebrating learning, wins (big and small) and steps towards achieving our goals. It can be easy to forget to acknowledge achievements in the whirlwind of day-to-day operations. Taking time to acknowledge team members efforts and successes is critical to our team's success and helps create a high-performing environment. My team knows I love to celebrate, and celebrating others is something that brings me a lot of joy and happiness.

Another area where my make a difference value shows up is in how I 'show up' for my team. This means that I lead by example, share real feedback, and make tough decisions for the

good of the team and organization. It's meant helping people find the right seat on the bus (transitioning roles) or taking a different bus (out of our organization). Those types of decisions can feel hard in the moment but being able to focus on what the team needs and what obstacles are preventing us from performing at our very best has been helpful.

Share joy is my second core value. Being a leader has enabled me to create an environment where we can have fun and do important meaningful work together. Joy is like a lot of emotions – very contagious. I've seen anxiety and fear tear through a department based on how a leader shows up. My goal is spread positivity and joy as much as possible. That doesn't mean I ignore problems or put my head in the sand when things go wrong. It does mean I work to create a workplace that feels good and where people want to be. We spend a lot of our lives at work, so I firmly believe that we need to have fun doing the work. I work very hard to create a community of kindness where we respect each other and where we can work hard and have fun. I personally do this through a practice of gratitude, encouraging others and linking our work to a higher purpose.

Our companies' mission is: to create a quality environment where we work together towards the betterment of dentistry worldwide. Being able to share that purpose with my team is critical to our success. We aren't just building widgets; we are working on products that help people live healthy lives.

Sharing joy is also linked to my love of learning. I'm in my element learning about something new and then sharing it with others. I crave being in an environment where new information and ideas are readily shared. Taking those concepts back to my team and helping others have those 'Ah ha' moments is amazing. Interestingly, I thought about 'Joy' as my value, but the act of sharing it is really what is most important to me. Having that connection with another person is what brings joy a live for me.

Being a leader has helped me learn more about myself than I ever thought was possible. This philosophy helps guide me in my work and is the foundation on which everything else we are learning will be built on. Staying true to these values helps me lean into situations and show up as my best self.

Resources

Brown B., 2018. *Dare to lead. Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts.* Penguin Random House.

Kouzes J., Posner B., 2017. *The leadership challenge. How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations. 6th edition.* Wiley.

Rath, T. (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0.* Gallup Press.