



Empathy: greatest creator of energy
By Ann Golden Eglé, MCC
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Why is Angela Ahrendts, Apple Retail SVP, one of the highest paid and most sought after executives in the country? Holding the top female executive position at Apple, Ahrendts admits to not being a techie in any sense of the word.

Still Apple CEO Tim Cook, worked diligently to steel her away from Burberry? Why?

Ahrendts raised Burberry's stock by a remarkable 300% during her final year as CEO. Yet it was not her retail prowess, but Ahrendts' leadership skills that Cook was after. Specifically her ability to motivate people.

In a recent interview with CBS Morning Show, Ahrendts says this about leadership:

“Don't over think it. Connect with people. Do what you say you'll do. Be empathetic. Empathy is the greatest creator of energy.”

When a person feels seen and heard by you they feel safe with you. Defensiveness and insecurity dissolve. Open discussions lead to creatively dreaming together. Great things result.

Some leaders are naturally empathetic. They are rarely too busy to listen when they sense something is important. They remember every step of the ladder they took to reach where they are today and understand the value of those who currently occupy those positions.

Other leaders I've worked with think 'empathy' is some emotional intelligence nonsense. They don't see the need nor do they have time to develop this skill.

Think empathy isn't a vital leadership skill? Experts disagree.

- Bestselling author Simon Sinek's work with the Marine Corps led to his book *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*. Specifically he discusses understanding and prioritizing the well being of your people. Sinek's TED Talk has been viewed 30 million times.
- Success Magazine published: "Why the Empathetic Leader is the Best Leader" on March 15, 2017 citing the biology of feeling understood and recognized at work.
- The Harvard Business Review will publish *Empathy* (HBR Emotional Intelligence Series) on May 9. Containing segments as: "Why Compassion Is a Better Managerial Tactic"

Than Toughness”, this book provides research showing how our emotions impact our work motivation, productivity and lives.

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, is vital leadership skill.

If you wonder where you rank on the empathetic leader scale, here are some traits of a highly empathetic leader. Ask yourself how you measure up.

Empathetic Leaders:

- Are good listeners.
- Are nonjudgmental.
- Ask more questions than provide advice.
- Understand that we all have different emotions around the same situation.
- Take in the other entire person, not just their professional role.
- Pay attention to what’s *not* being said during important conversations.
- Know without words that an employee is struggling.
- See when praise is not really heard out of fear or insecurity.

Tim Cook, Angela Ahrendts, Simon Sinek, HBR, Success Magazine are a small number of top national leaders who see the need for increased empathy in business today. Do you?

I challenge you to select one of my listed empathetic leadership skills and begin to strengthen that skill today.

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