

The leadership equation is simple: someone leads and others follow - a two way street that requires human connection. Most people are more interested in recognition than they are money. Connecting with people where they 'live' is what motivates them and gets the job done. Feeling understood, valued, heard and listened to builds trust. When someone trusts you, they're more likely to follow you.

We know instinctively when someone is authentic. It doesn't need to come in the right personality package, but it needs to be sincere. As unique and personal as our problems seem, we all tend to worry about the same things and react to the same stressors. Likewise we respond positively to the same influences and behaviors.

Do you get stressed about your own performance and the potential impact on your job security? Add the stress of managing the productivity of the people who work for you. You worry about how to motivate them to get their jobs done. You worry about how their performance reflects on your abilities. It's sometimes stressful enough to keep you awake at night.

You wonder why people can't get it together, be more focused and committed, even worried like you are. Your stress levels soar as you keep pushing your colleagues, attempting to motivate them. You feel pressured by the people above you and you try and convey that to them. Your employees don't seem moved.

You read management books hoping you'll find the formula that will increase productivity, thinking to yourself "how hard can this be?" You hold meetings and discuss the project, parameters and deadlines yet again. They nod their heads, they agree, they look like they understand, but nothing changes. You're losing sleep and no one is listening.

You stay after they all leave – again - trying to sort through everyone else's mess making you late to meet your friend for drinks. When you finally arrive, your friend is waxing on about how great things are going at her job, how her people are performing better than ever and she's about to close a big deal and her promotion is in sight. You're happy for her but you just feeling like putting your head down on the bar – maybe banging it a few times in the bargain.

You ask the dreaded question – how the hell is she getting people to perform? Your friend says "Well, they trust me". Oh. Huh? "They trust you. Right – that gets great work done on time?" She tells you: "It does. I put it on the line with them. I'm dead honest."

You ask her to say more. She tells you "Well, I'm honest and I'm vulnerable – I let them know what I'm worried about, what we all stand to lose; and to gain." You think: That style seems a little personal. But she's got your attention. She continues "I tell them what I'm excited about, but I also tell them how stressed out I get about our projects, how much I worry about the approval of the people above me and the demands of our clients."

You're still thinking: "I do that too, I don't see how this is any different, but OK, her people probably get paid more than I can afford to pay my guys. Her boss is probably easier to get along with. Maybe they get frees lattes and sushi on Fridays. Who knows"?

Then your friend drops the bomb: “Oh and I always find something good about what they’re doing and no matter what else I tell them, I tell them that too. You say: “What are you talking about”?

She responds: “I constantly praise people. Even when I have to reject their work or make them stay late or change the plans or revise the project, I find something good to tell them. And, they know I’ll almost always go to bat for them with management. They love that. They count on it. They tell me how great I am to work for. They trust me”.