



When we “show up” the right way, great things happen.

Description

How we “show up” at work matters. It matters for everyone, but especially for leaders as we are in a position to influence so many others. Are we fully present and engaged or distracted? Are we calm, centered, and focused or scattered? Positive and optimistic or skeptical? Open and accessible or unapproachable? Energized and ready to work or passive?

As leaders, everything we do and say is amplified. Our words and actions have a tremendous impact on the daily experience of those we lead. They also set the standard for how others work and behave. How we present ourselves has a huge impact on outcomes.

You’ve heard it said that how we *show up* determines where we *end up*. It’s true. When we show up in a bad mood, we’re met with negativity and resistance. When we show up optimistic and open, we’re met with creativity and potential.

First impressions are made in a matter of seconds. Here, I don’t mean the first time we ever meet someone. I mean the impression we make each day, in every meeting, in every conversation. Those first few seconds can dramatically affect what comes next.

It’s really powerful when we intentionally show up in ways that help us connect with others; build trust-based, meaningful relationships; and encourage employees to bring their best game.

I was talking to my colleague Kim Bass, who is an experienced leader, about this subject. She has worked with a lot of people over the years and was instrumental in putting together the tips I’m about to share.

TIPS FOR SHOWING UP THE RIGHT WAY

MINDSET SHIFTS

Be self-aware and in reality about how others experience you. How do you show up now? What needs to change? This is the starting point for everything. (Self-awareness and coachability are the two most important qualities in a leader.)

Strive to be purposeful. Have a reason for all you do. Don't just go through the motions. Acting with intention is at the heart of moving from *transactional* to *transformational* leadership. (Transactional leadership is based on processes, control, and getting tasks done. Transformational leadership is about engaging, motivating, and inspiring people to work toward a shared mission and vision. Click [here](#) to learn more about these two styles of leadership.)

Know that authenticity and vulnerability are incredibly powerful. When we are seen as leaning into our truth as a leader, our words resonate with people. They respond to us in a way that can't happen if we're putting on a false persona.

Adopt an inclusive mindset. Don't call people out, call them in. Rather than criticizing them when they make a mistake (which will discourage future contributions), pull them into the conversation and make them part of the solution.

Come from a place of positivity. It's human nature for negativity to be our default setting. We can override that when we come from a place of positivity. Showing up this way can help shift the mood of others.

Assume good intentions. When we're always expecting the worst from people, we react with suspicion or defensiveness. People can sense our perceptions, and it shuts down rapport. I find most people genuinely want to do the right thing.

Listen to learn, not just to fix. This is an important part of humility. Assumptions are often wrong. When we listen with an open mind, we may find what we thought we knew is not the case.

MEETINGS

(I included a special section on meetings because this is where it's most obvious how leaders show up.)

Make sure every meeting has an agenda. This helps everyone bring their best self to the meeting. This keeps you on track and shows people you take their time seriously. The agenda is what allows everyone to be prepared and add real value to the discussion.

Be present and engaged. Participate in the discussion and try to avoid looking at your phone.

Show up with humility. Leave your title at the door and be respectful. Arrive on time and yield the floor to others. Ask what they think. Really listen.

Practice the pause. Stop before responding, take a deep breath, and realize how you're presenting. When we're reactionary to ideas we squash innovation.

Be all in, even when it's not your idea. People will notice and hopefully emulate you. An all-in attitude encourages engagement, teamwork, collaboration, and helpfulness.

Role vs. Person: Stay in your role. It helps you get clear on what your job is. It's the North Star on how you respond to things. You might like a person but if their idea won't work it's important to say so.

Keep meetings to 50 minutes. This allows you to “show up” for the next meeting fully engaged. You may need time to prepare for the next meeting in case they’re scheduled back to back.

Make meetings more than a report out. Think of them as healthy discussions where you can strategize and innovate. If it’s just a report out, it drives disengagement.

GENERAL BEHAVIORS

Don’t underestimate the power of clarity. Ambiguity creates chaos and keeps others from “showing up.” As leaders, when we aren’t clear, we often have to pick up the part of the job they didn’t understand.

Know your triggers. It’s part of self-awareness. When you know what sets you off, you can avoid situations and/or be prepared to handle them in a way that doesn’t damage relationships.

Manage your moods. Be aware of how you arrive at work. Learn how to quiet yourself when you feel yourself getting upset.

Be collegial. Give credit where it’s due. People will appreciate that you acknowledge them and will want to keep giving their best effort.

It’s fine to be proud, but don’t be boastful. It’s normal to feel good about a job well done, but stay humble. No one succeeds without the support and contributions of others.

Take ownership by being accountable. Do what you say you’re going to do and acknowledge it when you don’t.

Get things done. Keep a focus on the end game. Derailment is easy, but don’t allow it.

Don’t give oxygen to toxic behaviors like gossip and complaints. First, do not partake. If someone asks a gossipy question, say, “Why do you need to know that?” If someone is complaining about co-workers, say, “How did she respond when you brought that to her attention?” This sends a message about what won’t be tolerated. Leaders often set the tone on this for the rest of the organization.

When we pay attention to how we show up, it changes a lot of things. There can be a noticeable “ripple effect” as our behavior catches on with others. Seeing how our own efforts to be a better person influence others to do the same is one of the greatest gifts of being a leader.

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