

MAY-JUNE 2022

## The Connected Leader



It's hard not to feel frazzled these days, constantly distracted by the barrage of notifications from our devices and demands at home and at work. This makes it harder than ever to make meaningful connections with people, which means that business leaders need to proactively reach through the clutter to create genuine connections with their teams.

"Today's digitally distracted and emotionally burnt out teams are looking to their leaders for purpose, authenticity and connection," says human behavior expert Colette Carlson. "At the same time, leaders need to align their teams behind their vision and inspire them to deliver on their goals."

Connected leadership starts with defining and aligning your own purpose, says Colette, and then communicating it to your team. Leaders should also model the behaviors and attitudes that support this purpose and recognize when team members are doing the same. Aligning a team behind this culture helps build connections with the leader as well as between team members.

"Encouraging a sense of connection within a team builds camaraderie, strengthens motivation and increases productivity," says Jean Cantey Segal, FCCS Chief Learning Officer. "This all leads to higher engagement and lower employee turnover, which is increasingly important given the current talent market."

Leaders should take the time to identify each team member's strengths and values and connect them to the team's and organization's mission, tying the simplest of tasks to their values and purpose. Have more frequent conversations, asking deeper, richer questions to build deeper, richer relationships, and be genuine in your concern about how your team members are doing emotionally. Most importantly, avoid distractions and be present in the moments you're interacting with your team.

"Truly giving someone your undivided attention in the here and now is one of the greatest gifts you can give anyone," says Colette. "Leaders should also be willing to be vulnerable, admitting to their own challenges and mistakes."

Vulnerability leads to more openness and trust. This creates a culture of honesty, which is strengthened further when leaders invite and welcome feedback from their employees on everything from how their work is going to how the leader manages and communicates.

"We learned through the pandemic that people can pivot and innovate at an incredible rate when working toward a common purpose," says Colette. "Strong leaders align and motivate their teams by proactively building authentic connections with the people who are helping them toward this shared goal."

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— **COLETTE CARLSON**  
HUMAN BEHAVIOR  
EXPERT

You can hear more about being a connected leader from Colette's recent [Future Forward Podcast](#). She was also a featured speaker at the 2022 FCCS Learning Conference.

### Top Tips for Connected Leaders

- Every day, look for opportunities to connect with your team, whether in person or virtually. Systemize and calendar these so you have dedicated time to follow through.
- Ask your team how they want to connect, making each connection point more meaningful to them.
- Express appreciation in genuine and specific ways outside of performance-based recognition.
- Value the voice of every team member as an expression of the team culture.