



Do you remember that show The Newlywed Game?

It's pretty old. I think they did a revival a couple years back.

It is a game show where newlywed couples are tested on how well they know each other. They do this by asking them both the same question, then having them write down their answers and hope for a match.

What might this look like if you did a version of this at your organization with you and each of your team members?

If you ask them what they care about.

What they want from you as a leader.

What they want for themselves in their lives and in their jobs.

Would your answers match?

I bet in some cases they would, particularly with staff that you have a strong relationship with, that you've worked together for a long time, that are really open.

But I bet in other situations your answers wouldn't match, with staff who are new, are not quite as open, or maybe you just don't have that type of relationship with.

Whatever the case is, it's important that you understand what each and every staff member on your team cares about, because in order to lead them effectively, you have to lead them based on what it is that motivates them and what their own goals are.

The first step in this process is figuring out what your staff want.

You can certainly pay attention to their actions, but the best way you're going to figure it out is by asking them directly.

You can start this even during the interview process. Ask candidates what they're looking for in a job and in their leader.

It's not just the job responsibilities that people care about. They care about the job environment.

Will they be able to flex their time?

Can they work from home?

Will you support them if they decide to continue their education?

There's so much that goes into what people want, what makes people feel satisfied at a



job or not. It's important to hire people that you can support well.

Once you hire them you have this conversation again, and you figure out what they want and what they need from you.

You continue to have this conversation to make sure that you're providing it.

Things change over time- both people and their circumstances.

When someone tells you that they have a certain goal or they're motivated by something, that may or may not hold true throughout their time working with you.

Continue to have this conversation with each member of your team.

Remember that everybody has their own unique set of wants and needs, but all staff are going to want some version and some level of growth, autonomy, and purpose.

For growth, remember the Kim Scott distinction between your rocks and your rock stars.

Your rock stars are going to be motivated by a lot of vertical growth, and your rocks are going to be pretty happy where they are, but they're going to want growth opportunities to deepen the skills that they already have.

Everybody wants a level of autonomy, but people will be at different stages for how much they can handle effectively which again will change over time.

When it comes to purpose, there are really two main components of purpose.

1) staff need to know how the work that they're doing affects the overall organization vision and goals.

2) It's also important for you to know as a leader what their personal purpose is.

What do they care about?

What is their mission for themselves and their lives?

It's important that you take the time to understand what your staff care about.

This does take time and it's something that comes from building relationships.

Even if you ask early on don't expect to get every bit of the answer from just asking one time.

You'll continue to deepen the answer and understand better as you continue to build relationships with your team.



It's also important to recognize that people have lives outside of work and there are lots of different things people care about there, too.

Do your best to encourage and support and be curious about everything going on in your staff's lives both inside the office and outside of it.

It's also important for you to help your staff become what they want to become.

Of course, you have your own organizational and team goals that you'll need to meet, but your staff is going to have their own goals and interests and things they care about outside of those organizational goals. How can you help support them in those areas?

Many times we have no idea what those goals are because we only focus on the goals of the team, and it's a missed opportunity.

You can still help people develop in areas that maybe aren't 100% related to their current job position, but they could be somewhat related.

By investing in your team on things they're really interested in, it's going to motivate them to stick around a little bit longer and to be more positive and productive at work.

If people are going to leave they're going to leave. You can't ever prevent that, but you can delay it. If you support and take care of your team members, they're much more likely to stick around and be far more positive and productive when they do.

Ask and adjust based on what your staff tells you they need from you.

This includes everything from how you communicate to how you work together to how you give feedback and give praise and everything in between.

Always check in with your staff on how you're doing in your role as a leader to support them and how you might be able to do it more effectively.

If you do get to a point where you realize that your staff just isn't a good fit, maybe in their working relationship with you, or the current position they're in, the team that they're on, your organization, or even the career that they've chosen, this is an opportunity for you as a leader to support them.

Is it time to give them a different supervisor?

A different position?

Maybe move them to a different department?

Help them find something in a different organization?



Even a different field?

Yes, it's your role to make sure that they're doing their current job effectively, but you also want to make sure that you are setting them up for success as a professional when they're with you and when they move on.

I'd like to think of this distinction between good and great. Jim Collins has a book called Good to Great. One of the main themes is that good leaders help staff thrive where they are, but great leaders help staff thrive where they want to go.

You may be surprised to know what some of your goals and motivations are for your team.

You'll never learn if you don't create the space to ask them and to create the opportunity for an open honest conversation.

We don't need to pretend that where your staff are right now is where they will forever be. That doesn't happen very often. Why not be open and honest about what their long-term goals are?

I remember an intern I was working with who was training to be a social worker. Whenever I work with interns or staff, this is one of the first questions I asked- What are you trying to do in the field? Do you know what your goals are at this point?

In the many interns I've supervised over the many years I've done it, they give me an answer that's related to social work because they're studying to be social workers.

But this particular intern didn't when I asked them the question. They told me that they were on the pageant circuit and they were hoping to be a runway model.

Not the answer I was expecting, and definitely not a field that I'm very familiar with. But it was an opportunity for me to talk to her about what she cared about, what she was really motivated by, if I did come across an article or something in the news that I could share with her. It showed that I had interest in what she was passionate about.

There's always a way to find crossover when it comes to skills or things that you can get trained on.

It really helped build a relationship because I showed her even though my role was to help her be a great social worker- and I think I did- I also got to support her and help her as a person in her goals outside of that.

You can use all kinds of assessments and tools but like all assessments, there is some value and there's limited value.

Don't rely just on assessments.



Ask and have lots of conversations with your team about what they want and need from you.

So, the most important question for you is, how will you give your staff what they want?