



EXECUJAVA

A collection of thoughts, ideas, and lessons-learned from executives regarding leadership.



LEANN CASE

FOUNDER OF EXECUJAVA

It was several months into the stay at home order during the COVID-19 pandemic, when I found myself feeling crabby and lonely. I thought the introvert in me would thrive in a work-from-home situation, so I didn't understand why I was so irritable and grouchy.

It was my leadership coach Wendy Neu of Crossroads Coaching & Consulting who made the connection for me. She reminded me that I'm the type of person who feeds off of the energy from others. While I require quiet and alone time, I still need community and collaboration. I love learning, and especially learning through intentional conversation with others. I also have a personal mission to live a joy-filled life, and to help others - in whatever way I can - do the same.

So I created ExecuJava.

ExecuJava is a group of leaders that meets monthly over coffee (and breakfast!) to discuss what keeps us individually up at night. There are many angles a leader must consider - both at work and at home. What better way to dismantle worry, learn and grow, and empower others than to collaborate?

We each bring our concerns or current question to the table, and we help each other see that pain in a new light. We are intentional about discussing and discovering new ways of thinking and new (or old but good) practices to implement. We have the desire to be our best, so we bring examples, solutions, and grace to the conversation. We leave lighter.

This document is a compilation of the topic summaries from our discussions over the last two years. The ideas here come from our various experiences and from what we've read or learned from others.

We hope that these summaries help you with what might be keeping you up at night, so that you can lead with inspiration and joy.

The ExecuJava friends come from various organizations with versatile backgrounds and leadership journeys. The following individuals contributed to the ideas within this document.

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LEADERSHIP DAILY DISCIPLINES

There is a ton of information that is anecdotal; for example, as leaders we should listen, build trust, and communicate. You'll also find specific disciplines of top executives reading 500 pages a day and/or meditating, etc. Those are all good to be reminded of and even to practice.

We, however, narrowed it down to simply focusing on self-care. If our minds and bodies are well, then we can best care for our teams. How we keep our minds and bodies in good condition is different and personal, and we don't need to fall into the trap of should-ing (i.e. I should be doing this or that because I see other leaders doing so).

Demands come at us from all angles so it was a welcomed crystallization to have the answer be so simple.

BALANCING HOME & WORK

CREATING BOUNDARIES

Lead by example: Establish a culture where high achievers or those who desire to be more engaged aren't compelled to work all hours, so that they are protecting their time and energy. They will follow your example, so:

- Don't send evening emails (if you must work late, use your email scheduler and have the email sent in the morning during or just before working hours).
- Be clear about when you are and aren't available. If you leave early, tell people ahead of time. If you protect your home hours, share that you put your phone down when you get home and are not available except for emergencies.
- Take time for yourself and share that you do so with your teams. (Ask what they are doing.)
- Intentionally coach staff that being off their devices is important for well-being. (And then follow that care for yourself.)

Keep/protect your routines and your energy: Be aware of what works for you and create your schedule accordingly.

- If (before COVID) drive time was a calming or learning time for you, recreate that (if you aren't going into the office).
- Know when you have the most energy and honor/share that.
- Build in time before and after each Zoom/Teams meeting so you aren't jumping on/off meetings. Your frazzled energy will follow you otherwise.
 - Give an off time, like 1:25 pm, for when you have a hard stop. People will pay attention to that and honor that specific time rather than running over the allotted meeting time.
 - If you are leading the meeting, purposefully end the meeting 5 to 10 minutes ahead of schedule so people can re-energize themselves.
 - Have conversations with your family when you are working from home about when you are and aren't available. Encourage your staff to do the same.

Fact: 30 minutes on a video meeting is equivalent to one hour in person. There is a ton of energy put into being present on an on-screen meeting.

5

WAYS TO CHALLENGE OURSELVES AS LEADERS



As leaders, how do we challenge ourselves from a growth perspective? We've heard it said that we are either leaving our comfort zones or we are staying in them. Getting out of autopilot is uncomfortable - it's hard, makes you tired, and causes doubt. We've also heard that if we leaders don't feel like crawling in a hole and quitting on a weekly basis, we aren't challenging ourselves enough.

We can get caught in a trap of always seeking more - for ourselves and for others. Then there is the opposite desire to just cocoon to get away from it all because it's just too much.

Shouldn't challenging ourselves be at least a little bit fun? The simple answer, we concluded, is yes. Here are a five ideas about the topic from our chat:

5 WAYS TO CHALLENGE OURSELVES AS LEADERS, cont.

- 1** Set guardrails. Know what is important to you so that when an idea comes your way or you have your eyes set on jumping into a new challenge, you have protection in place before you even begin. Doing so respects yourself and others.
- 2** Be intentional about balance. That balance looks different for each of us. For some, it includes simply being home for dinner with the family. If there is a desire to do more/be more but it goes against that example guardrail, then it's too much, you're off balance and you should adjust.
- 3** Be careful. Our society likes to consume and do more, more, and more. Be conscious of what makes you content. (And just because a podcaster says something like, "you should feel like crawling a hole once per month or you're not growing," doesn't mean that's the right mentality.)
- 4** Know your why. Understand what is propelling you forward and challenging you in a good way. That way, when you are up against the discomfort and the doubt, you can ask yourself if what you are doing lines up with who you are and with what you want to be doing. If that matches, the discomfort and the doubt are part of the growth process versus a sign that you are over doing it.
- 5** Listen to your body. The discomfort can mean growth and it can mean you need to check all of the above as you might be pushing yourself and/or involved in too much.

QUIET QUITTING

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Going to the State Fair is a tradition for many. You go. You eat the same things you eat every year. All those fried foods on a stick, buttered up ears of corn, boats of ice cream, and buckets of cookies are not good for you, but for the sake of tradition, you eat them anyway. Most of the foods aren't even that great from a taste perspective, but we eat them anyway because everything is amazing at the fair. So the big question is, how often do we succumb to tradition for the sake of tradition?

Take the latest topic in the working world of quiet quitting. Work is changing. Fast. The group contemplated the quiet quitting topic but from a tradition standpoint. Are we so focused on tradition — for the sake of tradition — that we are missing what's important? That's a question that isn't necessarily directed at employers but employees as well.

Employers can check their philosophies around work because people need flexibility to live their lives. (Employer Realty check: People's lives aren't always centered around their job.) Employees can check their love for what they are doing day in and day out. If you don't love what you're doing, maybe you just aren't in the right place. (Employee Realty check: That's something for you to solve versus your employer solving it for you.)



QUIET QUITTING, cont.

So how do we, as leaders, navigate what's been a tradition in business versus a new way of thinking (while keeping the business stable)? Here are some specific resolutions discussed during our ExecuJava at the Fair meeting:

- 1** Ask Why. Is your way of thinking tied to facts or assumptions? Ask, "why are we doing a certain thing this way?" Ask, "why am I coming to this job day in/day out?" If the answers are, "because that's how it's always been done, because 'a lot' of companies do it this way, or because this is just what you do," then a good pause is in order. Ask, "why is this tradition important?"
- 2** Experiment. Don't be afraid to try a new method (and give it time). Even if your current method is backed by facts, try something new with a small control group. Use #1 to go against the narrative and give reasoning for experimentation. That sounds like, when someone says, "Yeah, but (insert the tradition)." We need to re-but back with, "Yeah, but (insert the opportunity for different)."

Remember when TCF Bank changed the banking game by being open 7 days a week? Tradition said, "Banks are open Monday - Friday." TCF Bank said, "Yeah, but why? Why not be open longer to provide flexibility?" (Things may have changed now for TCF Bank but we can't deny that their move was still a game changer for the banking industry.)

- 3** Create Boundaries. Outside of tradition, sometimes the fear of staff entitlement can keep businesses (i.e. leaders) from looking through a different lens of what a job or the office set up could look like. So when we ask why and then experiment, we must be ready to truly listen, take the risk, challenge status quo, fail, and pivot. As leaders, we can set boundaries for ourselves in the form of expectations.

The business atmosphere feels like it has changed more toward employees being focused on themselves. Now, that's not necessarily a bad thing. People should take ownership of their own well-being and not solely rely on their employer to do that completely for them. Employers can, however, individualize while also clearly defining the job. If entitlement seems to creep in, the boundaries (for everyone) have been set which makes us more ready to solve it.

The ExecuJava group enjoyed the sugar and grease that the State Fair provides in its "experience" kind of way. There's no need to throw tradition out just for the sake of a cry for renewal and awareness. Traditions hold great memories of the past and they hold efficiencies for today and tomorrow. Yet, as great of a tradition as the State Fair is, it is still evolving. We can take a lesson from this annual event by protecting what's important while also asking why, experimenting, and creating boundaries so that our businesses are also evolving and growing.

BLIND SPOTS

We're all taught that the blind spot of our vehicle is a dangerous one. If we don't intentionally look into it, we could end up smacking into another vehicle or whamming a door or the back end into a post. Much like a vehicle, we also have blind spots when it comes to our behavior tendencies. At this month's ExecuJava, we talked about those blind spots in relation to our strengths.

Strengths are areas where we thrive. But we know there are rich learning opportunities in exploring the things we don't even see, can't do very well, and the things that drain us. As leaders, we ought to pause and recognize the times when things aren't clicking for us and intentionally look into our blind spots to help us lead better.

How do we do that? Acknowledge that we have blind spots. Be humble enough to share what doesn't come naturally, and then surround yourself with people who think differently.

What actually is a blind spot? Some examples from our group were when we're focused on:

- The end result (i.e. big picture, vision-focused), thereby, missing the process details that may be (very) important or missing that a practice may need adjusting because it is outdated.
- Our own thought process, thereby, missing another point of view or missing on communicating expectations.
- Doing the tasks, thereby, missing on the opportunity that comes from delegating.

BLIND SPOTS, cont.

How do we protect ourselves from our blind spots?

- Know that there are learning opportunities in those spots and lean into them. From a corporate culture standpoint, share that failing is learning. (Don't just say that. Talk about what didn't work or where you missed an opportunity and then lean into that lesson-learned by encouraging a new idea or different path and adjust your behavior accordingly.)
- Pause to look back. Ask yourself and ask your teams, what did we learn on this journey? Make note of what worked, what didn't work, and why.
- Take time to get to know your people and what they need. Find out how they operate best and look beyond the surface, then flex your approach to them. Watch for natural biases and your own (and their) limiting beliefs.

We know the vehicle we drive has blind spots, we know that our behavioral makeup has blind spots. In both instances, we can lean forward or crank our necks to see around the impediments with the intention to protect ourselves and others.

CONTROL VS EMPOWERMENT

How do you ensure an employee doesn't take "empowerment" too far (meaning, they are taking liberties that impact culture and the bottom line)?

How do you avoid going too far with bureaucracy while maintaining necessary controls?

How do you communicate a balance between those necessary controls and empowerment?

BUILD A FRAMEWORK

Put a framework in place that allows individuals to recognize an improvement and then offer a suggestion. (Examples include building your own version of SharkTank or Kaizen, or create a formal improvement committee.) Use this to identify the next layer of leaders.

COMMUNICATE BOUNDARIES

Communicate boundaries of when employees are empowered to make changes and when they need to bring it to a leadership level (so they understand there may be an impact to what they want to change).

REVIEW PROCESSES & PROCEDURES

Be intentional and set times throughout the year where operating processes and procedures are reviewed. Also review the controls that are in place. Balance these against the whole organization's plan and confirm it all matches up.

TRUST

Trust that you've hired the right individuals with the right skills. Let go of in-the-weeds details.

BUSINESS GROWTH

How can we, as leaders, effectively support and manage growth for the company while we are constrained by talent shortages, supply chain issues, etc? What is effective for growing business - marketing, sales, networking, acquisition? What are the pitfalls? In the past we talked a lot about helping individuals grow, this month was about business growth.

Several additional questions need to be asked before the initial question

can be answered. Questions like, What do you really want to accomplish? Where do you want to be five years out? What do you want to be known as (niche or generalist)? Are you willing to take calculated risks?

Moving into the solutions portion of our discussion, we talked about three main areas: culture, marketing, and sales.

1. One of the big concerns when entering into a business growth phase is maintaining a positive culture that is focused on shared values. We talked about being careful of having a chaser mentality like that of some of the dot com companies that didn't last. Instead, a stretch mentality (like discussed in the book *Stretch* by Scott Sonenshein) looks at building more with what the company already possesses versus what it is missing.

2. From a marketing perspective we know that content is king and establishing your company as having the experts in your industry will contribute to business growth. Think about what the personas that make up your audience care about and then craft content that speaks to their problem (offering solutions that help the audience see the problem in a different way). Use your own experts to offer various forms of insights, which humanizes your brand (building trust and relationships before a sale even happens) while also putting you in a position of being the go-to in a purely helpful way.

3. The big driver experienced by the group that helps grow the business is having a sales position. Having an individual devoted to nurturing leads versus various positions attempting to conduct business development was by far the most impactful for business growth in our discussion. It's important to set expectations with the company leaders and that sales individual at the beginning. The main expectation was a slow return rate (return comes over time so keep the pipeline full). To find the right salesperson, the group recommended going to conferences to look for industry experts and to learn if that person loves the activity of closing (a major piece of the sales process where the sales process often fails) as well as someone who is on fire for your mission.

DO DIFFERENT

What will you do differently this season?

Things are moving and changing so quickly. Pause. Be curious. Dig deeper rather than blasting past and checking a box.

Reflect on what we accomplished by having to act fast (regarding sending staff home at the beginning of the pandemic and working amidst a pandemic). We acted quickly and adapted when we had to remove bureaucracy. Overlay that success and look to find ways that we may be limiting ourselves unnecessarily.

Get back to a forward-thinking mindset versus a reactionary one.

Be clear on removing negativity - the language and the attitude. Set the example and set the expectations.

Growing and scaling the business in a different way than before.

Looking for what I need to do differently so I can retire the way I want to.

Looking at what's truly important and finding how I can work differently to get to that point.

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WAYS TO KEEP YOUR GAME FACE ON



How do you keep your game face on when you sometimes want to be snarky, roll your eyes, walk away, or worry?

- Give others the benefit of the doubt
- Focus on the issue, not the emotion
- Offer training (give of your time to help others learn the process or procedure because likely the issue is lack of understanding)
- Shift the perspective of the conversation and focus on what's right versus what's wrong
- Model a positive, curious/understanding/grace-filled behavior
- Ask, "what else can we do?"
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Appreciate people's differences (and knowing that "realistic" may come across as "skeptical", for example)
- Know that, as a leader, showing concern or even displeasure or annoyance shows you are vulnerable and vulnerability creates trust
- Remember that, as leaders, we don't always have to show only the bright side/smile and say something positive

LEADERSHIP COMPLACENCY

Our topic for this month's ExecuJava circled around learning and recognizing when, where, and how we can learn so that we don't become complacent leaders and so that we stay engaged with changing needs (internal and external).

To get to the answers, we started with questions you might ask yourself:

- What is it that I want to be different? (Is it my personal income, who I am as a person? What do I want that to look like? What is the impact I'm hoping to make? What's the vision of what could be?)
- How do I take what I have and merge it into something new? (What are the strengths that I want to exemplify and put into inspired action merged with where I see a need?)
- How do I learn best? (Groups, books, videos, etc.) What is the process of learning that I love and do I have the desire to learn?

We then talked about two moments of pause:

1. Remember the successes you've had. Pause and notice the pattern of impact, the work that was done, and the leadership steps you took. What was it in those past successes that worked given your contribution? What were your actions that left you feeling fulfilled or that gave you great satisfaction?
2. Maybe you're not sure if you are in a state of complacency. Pause for awareness. Ask yourself, in order for me to advance as a person (or to help this business advance), where do I need to grow? Am I just taking what comes at me or am I contributing new ideas and listening to others' new ideas with an open and excited mindset?

We summarized the conversation with the readiness to get uncomfortable. Getting uncomfortable doesn't remove comfort. We can have comfort in knowing and working in our strengths and capabilities; however, in order to grow personally – so that our businesses can grow – we must be willing to take risks.

Risks can come in the form of learning new ideas or methods and/or pushing ourselves in a new and different way. Being intentional about finding that drive (or renewed drive) is a form of discomfort yet is necessary to stay engaged with changing needs.

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Employee well-being - what an important and ongoing topic! We are coming out of a pandemic to only have war and inflation stare us down. As leaders, we are sandwiched between those external environmental threats and the internal needs and passions of our employees. How do we keep from getting distracted by those varying factors while still serving as caring leaders?

Intention is the word that summarizes all the thoughts shared.

- Set values intentionally. Meaning, go deeper than listing general beliefs, like being trustworthy or innovative. Have conversations about what aptitudes are necessary for your specific company/industry and how those match up to what you value. Examine beliefs at the operational level.
- Work values intentionally. Meaning, use the values (and their deeper meanings) as a decision-making tool. Having a shared understanding of what you stand for and stand up for via values protects you from getting distracted from social and economic shifts.
- Communicate values intentionally. Meaning, constantly share your why. When people have clarity around why a value is listed as important to the company, they have knowledge versus having to guess or create their own interpretation. They feel included, part of a bigger purpose, and personally aligned.
- Take care of ourselves intentionally. Meaning, as leaders our cups cannot be depleted. It takes a significant amount of energy to lead, and we cannot serve as positive, driven, supportive (all the adjectives) leaders if we are on empty. Be intentional about assessing and adjusting where we are physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. According to author and pastor Craig Groeschel, "We can't give to others consistently without refilling occasionally."

RIPPLE EFFECT

WORKING FROM HOME

If only we had a crystal ball that perfectly revealed the impact of our actions. If only we knew ahead of time the result of one decision. If only we could visibly see the ripple effect, the changes along the way, and the eventual outcome that happens from one little choice. If only.

The topic of working from home and the many ways of successfully doing so has been a hot one for the last couple of years. This month, we dissected the ripple effect of companies allowing employees to work from home and the possibility of that decision resulting in stunted individuals. Stunted in resiliency, experiencing and contributing to camaraderie, and professional growth. There is concern that leaders are doing employees a disservice by allowing them to work from home.

Is working from home teaching people to avoid and is it inadvertently teaching them that avoidance is safe? Is working from home creating and perpetuating anxiety and fear? Is working from home creating separation and individual entitlement?



RIPPLE EFFECT, cont.

In the form of more questions, here is the summary of the work from home dialogue:

- What is fact and what is a myth? For example, is a lack of water-cooler chats because people aren't in the office truly a detriment to camaraderie and individual growth opportunities, or is that an assumption that is being made?
- Am I making decisions (on whether to allow/continue to allow working from home) based upon what I personally like/prefer?
- What is our company in the business to do? Therefore, what does the company need to be successful?
- What's the best work method for our team (as a whole and as micro teams within our company)? Does it matter to us what other companies are doing?
- How do we define our culture? Is it wrapped around how we engage with each other? What is the trust factor and if that is or isn't working, does it matter where we are physically working?
- What is being revealed now by having employees work in different methods (i.e. outside of the office) than before 2020? Are there gaps we now see that provide opportunities for growth (versus only pointing to working from home/hybrid working as problematic)?

There is no magic mirror that will help us see exactly what will happen in the future because of employees working from home or working from an office (or both), and there is no one perfect answer or method that fits every person's needs or desires. As leaders, it's our job to create a hospitable environment - wherever employees may be located - and to make space for opportunities and growth to thrive. It's everyone's job to take care of their own health well-being.

We can use these questions to get to the root of what is really at stake for our organizations. We should then be deliberate with consistent communications and transparent actions that support our unique answers. Working through these types of questions can result in the promotion of individual health and well-being while also keeping our focus on the mission and vision of our individual companies.

How do I bring in more business, when things have changed so much?



MARKETING

Getting an audience's attention (i.e. business) isn't just a conversation for the marketing and/or sales departments, these points are good for us as leaders to remember in developing/protecting internal culture and in helping our fellow leaders keep the customer in the center of everything we do.

1. Tell Your Story (and the story of how another customer's problem was solved).
2. Understand The Deeper Why (and share that as a story).
3. Make Them the Hero (i.e., ask them to serve on an advisory board).
4. Educate (give, give, give information, insights, tools).

Not one is better than another, together these four ideas make a great mix for creating trust that will earn business over and over again.

MENTAL HEALTH

What is our role as leaders to balance support and accountability as it relates to supporting the mental health and wellness of employees?

1

Remind staff of the resources available (under your benefits package) - more than once per year at the benefits meeting.

2

Build a trusting relationship with your staff so you can recognize when someone on the team is "off."

- Establish steps to bring job performance back up to standards.
- Be okay with knowing that the individual still needs to perform a job, and that they have to take their own steps to get necessary help.
- Don't solve the problem for them. Ask, for example: What have you tried? What approach would you take?
- Be intentional and genuinely ask, "how are you?" We're no longer in a society that hides from or slaps a bandage on what is causing a person to spin.

3

Creating a leadership development program, to include:

- Teaching problem-solving vs. solving the problem for them.
- Recognizing signs of distress.

4

Look inward/check in with yourself because your potential to lead others is a direct result of how you lead yourself.

Depleting your own energy, working long hours, etc., isn't setting a good example.

SHARING OUR WORK DAYS

We spend a large portion of our lives at work, and that's a massive void if we aren't sharing components of that with our spouses. We want to share work-related information with those significant people in our lives, except we don't want to relive the bad/hard/pains. We also don't want them to take on the stress we carry.

Having an outlet for stress is important to our well-being, no matter how well we think we can process it on our own. It's essential for protecting our marriages or significant relationships to find a way to share all aspects of our lives.

Here are some tips shared:

- We don't have to share every single detail.
- Share some snippets during the day via text or make a quick phone call to check in.
- Share, during the day, that you may be carrying some burden, so your spouse knows what to expect (your temperature) when you come home while also giving them a nugget of your work life.
- Go for a walk and intentionally share three bullet points from your day.
- Make specific time before sleeping to "download" snippets from your day.
- Share that you want them to be part of that work-portion of your life and how you intend to include them. Offer boundaries so there is understanding and it doesn't become a chore or lead to animosity.
- There is strength in community and in having relationships where you can be vulnerable. Vulnerability = building trust. You can have that with your spouse, you can also have that with a work colleague (internal or external) so you don't have to carry everything by yourself, always.

REFLECT & PLAN

What was something you learned in 2022, and something you'll do differently in 2023?

It's been an unprecedented year. The plans made a year ago are way off and no longer relevant. The lesson learned was that we didn't do enough scenario planning.

We want to be in a better place to serve our community, so we will do a better job asking questions like, "What do I not know today?" We'll consider different scenarios, like anticipating a recession, shortages, and increased pricing. We'll then create the playbooks that relate to those various scenarios, giving us a leg-up with readiness should we need to pull one of those books off the shelf.

We'll also continuously revisit our plans by re-forecasting and adjusting the plan accordingly. We don't want to be along for the ride and let the wake take us where it will take us. When you're in such a reactive state, it sets you back in planning and it's harder to get the traction needed to move forward. We know that we need to be nimble and can't predict every step, but we can be more prepared by setting and recognizing the signals that tell us we need to adjust. It's a bridge we'll build halfway while continuing to watch the other side.

The year 2022 taught me the value of in-person connection. We're getting back to more and more in-person meetings, and I realized that I had to rebuild that muscle. Working from home has its advantages and that allowed me to do more with my family. It was freeing in some respects. However, it didn't allow for the kind of connections that are necessary for business. I see now more than ever that success came from (and will come from) in-person connections.

In addition to strengthening that muscle, in the next year, I plan to develop more business acumen. Strategic planning and business finances are the two most important. I want to learn different angles so I can best make sure people understand what we do, how we do it, and who we are.

REFLECT & PLAN

What was something you learned in 2022, and something you'll do differently in 2023?

Perception is reality – even when someone's perception of you isn't even close to your intention. I learned this year that my input can be perceived as being superior. While my intention is to offer suggestions or to help others see the scenario differently, the message that's being received is that my way is the absolute best way.

All of us want to feel that we are being heard and that we have a voice. I believe in and strive to create an environment that allows for that openness. In fact, I've always thought one of my strengths is seeing a different angle (and helping others see a different perspective), which may be true. What I know, however, is that our greatest strengths can also be overused and become a weakness.

I'm more self-aware now that my intentions aren't always matching up to the output or the reception. In 2023, I'm going to listen more, get curious about what I'm hearing, and ask more questions before offering feedback.

I've been asked to serve in a leadership role over a group of volunteers at church recently. With that comes leading the pre-service volunteer gathering, where I will pray over our time together. I'm not good at that – I haven't ever been in a position where I've been asked to pray, out loud, over a group. This will stretch me and I'm looking forward to being more comfortable doing so.

REFLECT & PLAN

What was something you learned in 2022, and something you'll do differently in 2023?

In 2023, I'm going to be more intentional about improving on emotional intelligence. I've mentored people on it this last year and am learning how it all works together. In the past, something might have been annoying, thus triggering an inappropriate or aggravated response. I'm learning to find my own sweet spot and take the long-lens view. Meaning, I'm learning where and when I need to pause before speaking. I'm learning to see the long-term vision rather than reacting to the immediate situation.

Some reminders:

- Draft the message but don't click send right away. Come back to it and then determine - with a clearer mind - if the reply is appropriate.
 - Set a date for a follow-up meeting when time is needed to calm down, breathe, or consider. Having something on the calendar brings accountability.
 - Recognize your limiting beliefs and give yourself grace. Understand why I might be in a reactive state (it may have more to do with me than with you) and then know that being perfect isn't realistic.
-

I learned that you can never have enough friends. While I have not conquered it yet, I am trying to learn how to stay patient as times change. I tend to want things done or fixed right now, yet I know going too quickly will not provide the best results. Fortunately, I am surrounded by people I trust who remind me to take a breath.

REFLECT & PLAN

What was something you learned in 2022, and something you'll do differently in 2023?

I'm a Maximizer. According to Gallup's CliftonStrengths, that means that I focus on ways to "stimulate personal and group excellence." In my words, I am always looking to make something better – even if it's fine. I've learned this year that my Maximizer is often in overdrive, and that's not healthy for me.

My intention for 2023 is to stop doing more (and more) and, instead, lean into what I'm already doing. What I need to learn, however, is how to not maximize the lean-in while also not feeling bored. I tend to both overly dig into a single subject while – in some areas – checking a box and quickly moving on to find the next best thing. Where's the balance? How do I not get bored with the lean-in while feeling content with repeating what's already working (and maybe doing some tweaks versus major overhauls)?

I'm reminded that rest is also part of what I need to do differently in 2023. I don't really know how to rest, nor do I understand what is classified as rest. When you're a Maximizer, rest can be bucketed as laziness. I also have some learned beliefs about rest (i.e. laziness) that need to be dismantled and relearned.

There's no call to action here.
We're not selling anything whatsoever.

We believe in collaboration, in each other, and in you.
We simply wanted to share the results of our many
discussions to hopefully leave you feeling lighter, and
ready to be the best version of a leader that you can be.

