

Application Guide

LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE



BOTTOM LINE:

Great leaders care more about making a difference than making a point. In a culture more polarized than ever, it is possible, and important, to lead from the messy middle where problems are actually solved.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. The middle is messy, but it's also where problems are solved.
 - A. Differences are inevitable, division is a choice.
 - B. There is tension in our culture, because our nation has chosen against the middle and, unfortunately, we've become more and more polarized.
 - C. The middle is not compromising your beliefs... it is staying out of extremes.
- II. Fear is the fuel of our separation.
 - A. Fear motivates. And, unfortunately, with the current use of social media, our charged political climate, social unrest, and the global pandemic, people are motivated by fear more than ever before.
 - B. In order to gain a following, our political leaders scare people away from the other side by capitalizing on this rising fear.
- III. *"Doing"* not *"believing"* is the key to moving forward.
 - A. We can shape our corporate and community culture by how we behave.
 - B. It's easy to point fingers... but that doesn't make a difference. What makes the difference are the communities of people who DO what's right and come to the aid of those who don't.
- IV. The best practices and behaviors for action include:
 - A. Resist the urge to make a point instead of a difference.
 - 1. When we only seek to make a point, it often comes at the expense of those on the other side.
 - 2. It's easy to make a point but to make a real difference something needs to be done; telling someone they are wrong is not the same as inspiring them to do it right.
 - 3. As a leader, you don't need to take a stand on everything the public wants you to take a stand on.
 - a. Some questions just shouldn't be answered. Don't make a point that undermines your influence.
 - b. As a leader, you can only provide clarity, not certainty.
 - B. Don't fear guilt by association.
 - 1. You can't influence people that you refuse to associate with; you can't build a bridge to a community of people if you're afraid of what people will think about you being there.
 - 2. To build a bridge, you must be comfortable with the idea of permanent footings on both sides of the ravine.
 - C. Don't attempt to police the behavior of people who don't believe what you believe.
 - 1. The moment we begin assuming that people see the world the way we do and are just doing something wrong, immoral, or unethical, we have made a huge mistake.

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2. If we do a good job policing ourselves and understand that people have different perspectives than us, we can make a difference.

V. We don't have to share all the same points to be able to share common concerns or burdens.

A. When we acknowledge this we can actually do something together.

B. It's hard to remain at odds with someone you are working alongside to meet a need.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. When emotionally charged topics arise, how do you tend to react?
2. When you step into a controversial conversation, what are your motivations in delivering what you have to say?
3. If polarizing conversations arise at work, how can you steward a team that consists of individuals with views on both sides of the coin?
4. What is one thing you can do in your organization this month to take a step toward the middle of a potentially divisive issue?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

1. [Not In It To Win It](#)

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