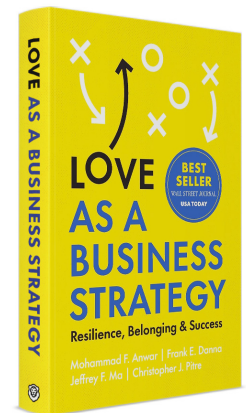


Love as a Business Strategy

Resilience, Belonging & Success

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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Can love be the leading factor for business success? In *Love as a Business Strategy*, the authors stress that not only can it be, it must be. After experiencing all of the pitfalls of a business that didn't put love first, the leaders of Softway discovered that by leading with love they were able to not only meet business objectives but also treat the people around them better and make everyone in their business happier to work for them. By leading with love in business, companies will be able to create a culture that attracts and retains top talent, influence the behaviors of everyone around them for the better, and ultimately meet their business goals and achieve more than they ever thought possible.

But first, they must learn to master inclusion, empathy, vulnerability, trust, empowerment, and forgiveness at every level of their business. They must understand how to put the human back in human resources, and why together everyone can achieve more than they can alone. In the end, every business will find that they benefit from the power of love both on a human level and when it comes to financial success.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why love is good for business.
- Why culture is better than strategy, and behavior is even more important than culture.
- The Six Pillars for creating a culture of love.
- How putting people first creates systems that lead to better business outcomes.

Introduction

In its simplest form, love as a business strategy means putting people at the center of work by creating a workplace that puts humanity first.

Here's why that matters: the average person spends more time with their coworkers than they do with their own families. For most people, then, work lies at the very center of their lives. That's a lot to ask of a person—and far too often, this sacrifice goes unacknowledged and unrewarded. Many organizations put little thought into the environment they create for their employees, which often results in an indifferent or downright toxic culture. Eventually, this culture starts seeping into other aspects of their employees' lives.

It doesn't have to be this way. People and profit don't have to be mutually exclusive. There is not one number on a balance sheet that isn't connected to a human being. That means that if you want to produce better numbers over the long term, then you should support and empower the people behind those numbers.

Change begins by embracing your own ability to affect change. Whether you're the CEO or the newest team member, you have influence. If you can learn to wield that influence in the service of a culture of love, you will find value both for yourself and for your organization. In fact, you may even find that the impact you have is far greater than you could have ever imagined.

Why Love is Good for Business

The work of building resilient, high-performing companies starts at the individual level. How we treat each other creates or destroys culture. In order to build a culture of love, each and every member of an organization should be working toward improving their own behaviors—both for the betterment of themselves and for others.

Through introspection and self-awareness, meaningful behavior change is possible. We're able to achieve resilience and belonging, which in turn lead to our ultimate goal of high-performing teams and better business outcomes.

What Is Love?

When we talk about love in the business sense, we're talking about a deep-rooted and intrinsic care for other humans. Love in the workplace means working as a team with good communication. It means putting other people before your-

self. It means looking to the person on your right and on your left and asking what is best for them as a whole person. Genuine, human care creates a ripple effect throughout everything people touch in an organization. It means focusing on humanity, not just profits. Love means doing things out of care for others and with the intent of helping others, even if those things aren't easy.

Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast

Culture is about the emotional environment you create and the behaviors that build it—whether the environment is toxic or supportive. Culture is all around us, binding us together. We can't see it, but we can feel its presence in everything.

Companies love to showcase all their shiny bells and whistles to entice prospective employees to join their team. However, as wonderful as these perks are, they are just features of your workplace—features that have little to do with your company culture. Leaders focusing on perks and benefits alone don't create a workforce of engaged contributors.

Strategy is great, but a well-conceived plan is meaningless if your team isn't united around that plan. They will struggle to execute and struggle to make proactive choices in service of organizational goals. A healthy culture has an uncanny ability to motivate and unite people.

Behavior Eats Culture for Lunch

Over the past few decades, companies have rightfully stressed the importance of culture in building a successful business. But while our hearts are in the right place, our focus can often be unnecessarily broad, failing to account for the impact of individual behavior on culture as a whole.

Groups are made of individuals. As such, cultures are the result of individual behaviors. Each day, the behaviors of every single team member serve to either strengthen relationships or destroy them. And as their relationships go, so goes the organizational culture. The healthier the relationships, the healthier the culture. If a culture of love is the goal, our individual behaviors are the path forward.

Understanding the Culture of Love

In the next section, we'll explore the Six Pillars of Love. These pillars are much like the cylinders of an engine—you need all six firing in harmony in order to create momentum and move forward. If even one cylinder is firing out of sync, performance suffers—and it may even fail.

These pillars all represent words and concepts you've heard before. In fact, you may even be tired of hearing them. Keep an open mind. Ask yourself, "How can I apply this pillar to myself? What would this look like in practice around me?" You might even discover some pillars that your organization is missing entirely.

Inclusion

In companies that don't explicitly emphasize inclusion, many team members feel as if aspects of who they are might not be welcome or appreciated—as if they aren't allowed to be their full selves at work. As a result, they hold back important parts of themselves that could potentially add value to the organization.

A culture rooted in inclusion, however, enables everyone to contribute at a high level. A fully included team is a more productive team, and a more productive team produces far better business outcomes. However, creating space for that full inclusion can be a challenge. Organizations must look for opportunities to include, and to establish a place where team members include, even when it's more convenient and less costly not to.

Empathy

It's not easy to fully understand and embrace a situation that someone else is going through. Doing so requires not only a high level of emotional intelligence, but also a willingness to bear the same burden someone else might be experiencing. It is for these reasons that practicing empathy may be the most challenging Pillar of Love—and also the most critical.

Empathy is being able to turn off your mic and turn up the volume on everyone else. In other words, empathy is about not just listening to the needs of others, but also seeking to understand their emotional experience.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability isn't always easy. It takes a lot of courage, but it's almost always worth it. In fact, it's the secret sauce of building human relationships; when people see you being vulnerable, they want to be more vulnerable, too.

A culture rooted in vulnerability allows people to be open and honest and share meaningful emotions. It means we're willing to own mistakes and learn from those mistakes, rather than having to be seen as perfect. Your job isn't to be perfect all the time. Your job is to bring your ideas to the table and to create a successful organization. A successful organization is nothing but a series of mistakes that turned into opportunities. Viewed from that lens, vulnerability is a

sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.

Trust

Predictive trust is trust based on an expectation that someone will perform according to your expectations. But there's a deeper form of trust—vulnerability-based trust. This is built on what the Harvard Business Review refers to as the three elements of trust: relationships, expertise, and consistency. Each element is important, but relationships are ultimately the determining factor in building vulnerability-based trust. If a person is inconsistent or lacks crucial expertise, trust in that person might take a hit, but it can be rebuilt. If a person betrays a relationship, however, it may be impossible for others to ever trust in them again.

Empowerment

When you are empowered to do your job, you feel valued, trusted, respected, and included. You feel as if you can bring your full self to work, contribute to a culture of love, and help grow the organization.

In a culture of love, empowering a team member isn't about putting someone in charge and then ignoring them. It's about setting them up for success. When approaching empowerment from a growth mindset, you can remain engaged and available without intervening or micromanaging the process. Instead of handing your team members answers, you clear a path for them so they can arrive at the answers themselves. It can be difficult sometimes to avoid the impulse to intervene, but we've seen time and time again that when you give someone a chance, they will rise to the occasion.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the ability to look past someone's mistakes, shortcomings, or offensive actions, and continue to build a relationship. In business, and in any relationship, forgiveness is not a one-and-done event but rather an ongoing process.

For the people that we love, whether in a personal or professional context, our empathy and forgiveness require constant renewal. It is through this process of renewal that we can best understand what forgiveness looks like in a culture of love.

Put Love to Work

In the following sections, you'll learn what happens when you embrace a culture of love. Can love be woven into process, tools, and hiring practices—the very DNA that makes

a business functional? Is love really a viable option that can bridge the gap between better cultures and more revenue? The answer—backed up with data—is yes.

To Lead is to Serve

A culture of love is enabled and embodied through servant leadership. This practice is not just ‘a nice thing to have.’ It is essential. Put others needs first, be humble, practice gratitude, do not ask others to do something you’re not willing to do yourself, always assume good intent, look for the good in others and find weaknesses in yourself, respond instead of react, know that power does not equal leadership, take care of others, and recognize that change starts with you. These are the ingredients of true servant leadership.

We Are Better Together

Successful teams share a few common elements that help them excel. They feel free to speak up, they admit ignorance and describe what they do or don’t know quickly, and there is no single leader in the group, with team members taking turns leading and sharing what they have learned.

A high-performing team is autonomous, practices the six-pillar culture, believes that ‘we’ is greater than ‘I,’ is outcome-oriented, and is fine with failure because they recognize it leads to growth.

HR (Humanity Required)

How you recruit, how you hire, and how you manage and grow your talent matters. After all, in a culture of love, people are the whole point.

When you pursue love as a recruiting strategy, your workforce will become more diverse and more effective. You must learn to look beyond the resume to the real person, careful to consider people with nonstandard backgrounds for a given role. Don’t recruit as if you were painting by numbers. Be open to what someone’s background and life experience might bring to the table.

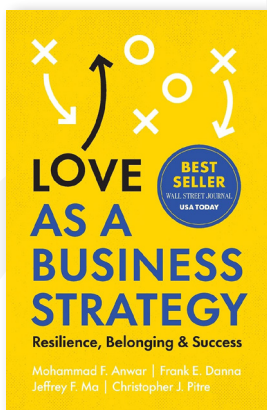
Systems: People, Process, and Technology

It doesn’t matter how technical the process or mundane the system. Every policy decision we make should be approached through a lens of love. We should be constantly asking how our decisions and interactions impact others. If our systems don’t reflect our desire to put people first, then our claims to have a culture of love would be meaningless. When you focus on how you can best support your people, all decisions on process and tools will flow naturally from there.

Waiting on the World to Change

How can you make your change personal to people? How can you show them results? How can you communicate in a way that is not only engaging, but also compelling? Change is possible, but your words and behaviors are what will convince people to change. Ultimately, that is the best kind of proof—the proof in action.

You can be valued for your difference in opinion. You can truly be one person and not a work version and a home version. You can be included and aspire to lead. It’s all possible, when we lead with love.



Softway is a business to employee (B2E) solutions company that offers experiences, services, and technology products to help build resilient, inclusive, and high-performing companies. In 2015, when a toxic culture almost bankrupted the company, Softway’s leadership team—including authors **Mohammad Anwar** (CEO), **Chris Pitre** (VP), and **Frank Danna** and **Jeff Ma** (Directors)—vowed to bring humanity back to the workplace. Today, through the Seneca Leaders program and other employee-focused offerings, Softway is helping thousands of leaders spanning over forty-six countries transform their businesses by putting love to work.

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