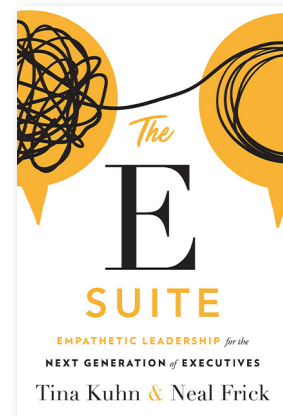


# The E Suite

Empathetic Leadership for the Next  
Generation of Executives

by **Tina Kuhn and Neal Frick**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Leading with empathy is more important than ever in the current executive climate. Taking an empathetic approach to leadership will help to establish and nurture relationships with clients, employees, and the public. This makes empathy a powerful leadership tool in the workplace. By focusing on interpersonal relationships, you can create and engaged, productive, employee-driven team.

In *The E Suite: Empathetic Leadership for the Next Generation of Executives*, Tina Kuhn and Neal Frick focus on how to use empathy to build high-performance teams. They explore how to use empathy in your management style and integrate it into daily business practice. You'll find everything you would expect in a management handbook, including employee development, attracting new talent, communication, and conflict resolution, and marketing and sales. What's different about this book is that each of these chapters is filled with practical guidance to help you embrace diversity, eliminate bias, and improve your workplace relationships.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to use empathy to build high-performance teams.
- Ways to develop an empathetic leadership style.
- Practical methods for using empathy in your day-to-day business practices.
- The value of using empathetic leadership to grow your business.

## Introduction

Many leaders view empathy as something intangible. Because they can't assign value to empathy, they adopt a fast-paced, high-stress form of leadership. This may bring productivity in the short term, but it's not sustainable long term. Empathy directly impacts productivity by making employees emotionally invested in their work. Workers whose needs are met and who feel they are treated well will naturally engage in their job. A willingness to work to capacity is directly tied to a feeling of engagement with the organization. 74% of employees in 2020 indicated that they would work longer hours for an empathetic employer. In 2017, this number was only 64%, indicating that business has changed during this time. When employee mindset changes, management must change too.

## Part I: Organizational Strength Through Empathy

Since people are the cornerstone of business, business success is dependent on individual motivation and engagement. Leaders set the tone of the business. For the organization to run successfully, the leaders within it must be engaged, positive, and empathetic. High-performance teams have empathetic leadership. Their leaders have the ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and put them in positions that allow them to succeed based on their abilities. Diversity and inclusion are the foundation on which a healthy organization must be built. This creates space for creative and unique solutions to everyday workplace problems.

### Chapter 1: Building Strong Organizations

Employees are most engaged and motivated when they feel they are part of an organization's success when they can grow and learn, and they feel supported by their leaders. By focusing on the people within an organization, leaders can build it into something strong and successful. There is a trickle-down effect within the workplace. A leader's attitudes and emotions directly impact that of the employees.

Leaders can create an empathetic, people-centric organization by displaying positive and genuine leadership. It's important to ensure that each person understands the goals and vision of the organization. Leaders can show people they matter by listening without bias, showing respect, implementing the ideas of others, and keeping open communication among personnel and management.

### Chapter 2: High-Performance Teams

Empathy can be used to help create and maintain a high-performance team. There are specific exercises you can employ to help increase empathy within your team. These include engaged listening, formalized debate, and emotional self-evaluation. Regularly requesting input from team members and sharing in victories not only builds high-performing teams, but it helps maintain them over time.

### Chapter 3: Empathy is the Key to Diversity and Inclusion

Typically, the more diversity there is within an organization, the more empathy there is. This is because when people learn to work with others who are different from themselves, they also learn to understand different points of view. Diversity doesn't just mean avoiding discrimination and ensuring ethnic diversity, it means having a diversity of thought.

Diversity of thought ensures that the workplace doesn't stagnate and it can lead to great innovation. Creating it requires a shift from a hierarchical workplace model to a flexible leadership model and a bottom-up exchange of ideas. Unconscious biases can limit thought diversity and lower empathy levels. Leaders must challenge their own biases and eliminate them in the workplace. They should also implement training to help others embrace diversity within the organization.

## Part II: Managing and Leading with Empathy

Learning to lead with empathy requires self-awareness and understanding your own emotions. This awareness allows leaders to capitalize on their own strengths and those of their team members. Empathetic communication will allow you to manage confrontation and navigate transitions within your organization.

### Chapter 4: Management Styles and Empathy

A leader's attitude and approach towards their employees determine the general tone of the workplace. When leaders are positive and upbeat, others generally follow suit. Leaders who are negative and resigned with their demeanor will find the attitude is contagious. If leaders have empathy, their team is likely to do the same. Different management styles bring about different workplace conditions. Good leaders alternate between different styles of management, depending on the situation.

There are four management styles that can be used, each of which can be effective when used in the right situations.

- Autocratic style – Most effective for fast decision-making or when rapid change is needed. This style is appropriate when team members don't understand tasks or priorities.
- Democratic style – This style is effective for highly experienced teams, resolving group conflicts, or when input is required from multiple sources.
- Nurturing style – Employing this style of management is necessary to keep loyal, happy employees with low attrition rates. It provides a sense of belonging and community within an organization.
- Laissez-faire style – Team members who are independent, skilled, and willing to make decisions for the benefit of the organization as a whole will benefit from this style of management.

## Chapter 5: Empathetic Leadership Starts with You

The greatest leaders are tough and demanding, but also empathetic and fair. Throughout history, leaders who have found the greatest success apply principles of empathy and love without compromising their vision. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a perfect example of an empathetic leader. He embodies determination, persistence, and empathy. He spent time listening and understanding the people he was fighting for, but he never gave in when facing confrontation. He was tough but still empathetic.

There are five things that empathetic leaders do:

- Know themselves
- Work on increasing empathy
- Align people in positions that maximize individual strengths
- Consistently motivate and inspire others

Being self-aware is the first step to increasing your empathy. You can't avoid your emotions, but you must be able to control what you do with them. Recognizing different perspectives with genuine interest comes with self-awareness. Engage with people and look for ways to help and understand them. Allow others within your team to make decisions and delegate responsibilities in order to create an environment of trust. Leaders should have a clear understanding of individual strengths and maximize those strengths to reach their full potential. Finally, motivate and inspire the team by

exhibiting passion, excitement, and ethical behavior.

## Chapter 6: Developing Empathetic Communication Techniques

There are many different types of communication methods and each has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. It's estimated that 93% of our communication is non-verbal. Our non-verbal cues provide context for what we are thinking and feeling, which is why empathy is best shown through communication methods that allow for body language cues to be read.

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective type of communication for building empathy as they allow the ability to use both verbal and non-verbal communication. Confrontation and conflict resolution are also best conducted face-to-face. Video meetings follow close behind as an effective communication strategy when a face-to-face conversation isn't possible. Because non-verbal information is still available to the participants, it still builds empathy and trust between the people involved. Group meetings are an effective communication technique for building rapport between team members and increasing collaboration. This can occur in-person or via video conference.

For remote teams, telephone communication is necessary, but it can be more challenging to convey empathy due to the inability to receive non-verbal cues. When used with discernment, email can be a powerful communication tool. It's a very efficient way to send quick pieces of data and information, but it is also very easy to misinterpret email messages because non-verbal communication is missing. Like email, texting is also efficient but devoid of non-verbal cues.

## Chapter 7: Effective Confrontation through Empathy

Confrontation often brings up negative emotions, but it doesn't have to be difficult. There are seven simple steps for handling confrontation in a meaningful way:

- Determine a common goal
- Don't play on others' emotions
- Understand your own reactions
- Help others save face
- Tackle underlying issues and not behavior
- Don't presume to know what others are thinking
- Present constructive options for resolution

## Chapter 8: Managing Empathetically during Transformation or Change

People often resist change because it takes them out of their comfort zone. It evokes feelings of fear and uncertainty and people move toward the unknown. Leadership must implement change carefully by engaging employees in the process of continuous improvement. The five steps to implement a change or transformation are:

- Create a vision and goals for the organization
- Create detailed plans with actionable steps
- Create a team of champions for the change
- Develop a plan for communication
- Have a retrospective each week to determine if adjustments are needed

Be mindful of the pitfalls of transformation. These include:

- Leadership not buying into the change
- A lack of planning and vision
- Lack of flexibility during the process
- Poor communication about changes
- Resistance to change

## Part III: Growing A Business Through Empathetic Leadership

Every organization has its own set of priorities and challenges that require a customized approach to success. Understanding how to use an empathy-based approach to hiring will allow you to place the right people in the right positions. It will help you engage with potential customers by creating targeted content that meets their needs. Sales will increase when you learn to understand a customer's fears and challenges.

### Chapter 9: Empathy and Hiring

Hiring employees is a challenge. By applying an empathetic approach to hiring, you can have a better understanding of the organization's needs, as well as the ability to identify the people who fill those needs. This means identifying what skills you require in your organization that cannot be taught on the job. This includes skills like critical thinking, the ability to work independently, and quick learning abilities. Look at your existing team and hire individuals who fit into it by offering more diverse thought.

The key elements of empathy in hiring are creating job descriptions that appeal to a diverse candidate pool, articulating how the role impacts your organization's goals, maintaining awareness of biases during interviews, and developing a rapport with candidates.

### Chapter 10: Empathetic Marketing Campaigns

The most effective marketing campaigns employ empathy. In order for most businesses to succeed, they must engage in marketing to some degree. Successful advertising knows its brand and remains sensitive to the values of potential customers. To use empathy at the forefront of your marketing campaigns, it's essential that leaders understand their customers and strive to meet their needs. Create marketing content by showing potential customers how their lives are improved by using your product or service. Continuously review the results of your campaigns to determine the level of success and make changes accordingly.

### Chapter 11: Selling with Empathy

Much like marketing, sales strategies should also employ empathy. Empathetic sales increase close rates, build better client relationships, and gain more repeat business. Refine your sales pitches based on getting to know your customers. When you know what your customers want and need, you can use targeted, individualized communication to gain potential and returning customers.

## Conclusion

Empathy is a must for leaders to have a positive impact on their team members and clients. By showing empathy, you can alleviate discontent in your workforce at no cost to yourself or your organization. Empathy is about building relationships that drive productivity within a business. Applying the practical solutions in this book will start you on your way to becoming an empathetic leader. Making significant change starts with you.



**Tina Kuhn** is an accomplished CEO with expertise in organizational transformation. Tina has held a number of leadership positions and is the author of *The Manager's Communication Toolkit*.

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