

Simon Sinek, the best-selling author of '**Start with Why**' and '**Leaders Eat Last**', shared the Best Leadership Advice you'll read today:

The responsibility of a company is to serve the customer. The responsibility of leadership is to serve their people so that their people may better serve the customer. If leaders fail to serve their people first, customer and company will suffer.

Marcel Schwantes

Thirteen years ago, I reported to a CEO with the same belief system. The greatest lesson he taught me was that you're there as a leader to serve the employees. This was his competitive advantage.

The reason why that works, I remember him telling me, is that when you serve by investing in your employees' development, when you look after their needs and equip them to succeed, they'll be exceptional and do great work for the customer. Bruce--that was the CEO's name--knew at the core of his being that to serve our customers well, he first had to serve me well.

What will it take to lead like this?

Like most things in life, this higher form of leadership takes belief, commitment, and habits (practice). Once you knock off those first two on your own, your next move should be to make these three behaviours below habitual. This will partly address Sinek's tweet that leaders should "serve their people so that their people may better serve the customer."

1. Be a great listener

Leaders "serve their people so that their people may better serve the customer" by actively listening to their needs. Notice I said *actively* because doing so takes real skill.

The late Stephen R. Covey once said:

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

Great leaders will park their thoughts, clear the agenda in their heads, and listen to understand. Since customer-facing front-line employees typically know more than a leader about what's really going on, this humble gesture is the first step to really good problem-solving and customer care.

2. Recognize your people

Leaders "serve their people so that their people may better serve the customer" by responsibly *praising* and *recognizing* them for good work (and being specific in the praising to reinforce the behaviours you want).

In fact, the companies in [Gallup's study](#) with the highest engagement levels use recognition and praise as a powerful motivator to get their commitment.

They found that employees who receive it on a regular basis--once per week, in fact--increase their individual productivity, receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers, and are more likely to stay with their organization.

3. Provide direction

Leaders "serve their people so that their people may better serve the customer" by responsibly giving guidance, direction, and feedback. People at work want to know how they're doing and what's going on; great leaders tell them by always pointing the way forward.

According to Gallup research, the second most-common mistake that leads to **turnover is lack of communication**. Managers must [give people regular feedback on their performance](#) and clarify goals and expectations, especially during times of change and transition.

Great leaders don't rely on outdated annual employee performance reviews. They offer monthly one-on-ones to coach employees and evaluate their progress consistently so there are no surprises later. This is what your high achieving employees crave in order to keep developing and building their strengths.