



Leadership Emails

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Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

February 17 - March 10, 2022

Kevin's Leadership Emails are powerful explorations into personal development, both inside and outside of the practice.

Enjoy reviewing all this transformational, thought-provoking content.

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Lessons From My Brother

On Monday, Valentine's Day, my brother Gary took his last breath after a fierce and courageous 3-year battle with Stage IV colon cancer.

I am grateful to have spent quality time with him while he still had all of his faculties ahead of his rapid decline. Monday I told him I loved him and was proud of him for the last time for his earthly journey. I believe, without a shadow of doubt, he is in a better place with a renewed and restored body and health with his Maker. One day, we will be together again. Until then, I promised on my last call with him that I would carry on the mission and do great things in his honor.

I know it has been a tough year for so many of us, for many different reasons. I have heard the stories of loss and heartache from many of you. I continue to pray for all to be able to press on even during such difficult times we have all faced. Although this kind of loss can leave a gaping hole in our hearts, I believe, wholeheartedly, the gap is filled to a greater level with the awareness of all the fond memories we have with those who have gone before us.

In honor of my brother, I want to share with you life lessons I learned from him that we all can benefit from, as he was truly a champion in his own right. Gary's legacy will live on through those who knew him and loved him in all the roles he played in the lives of those blessed to spend time in his circle of influence.

Gary was the ultimate team player.

My brother was willing to do whatever it took to finish the job. Nothing was beneath him. He helped when asked. He mentored people in order to help them be a contributing member of the team. He stayed late, showed up early, worked through lunch and willingly gave all he had each day. He never complained. He simply put his head down and got the work done.

Gary had no ego.

My brother was as humble as they come. He did not need the recognition or pat on the back. He knew to his core he put in a full day's work each day he showed up on the job. Even when he started getting promoted into formal leadership positions, he was the first guy to dive back in and help his team when things went off the rails. People were drawn to him because they knew he treated everyone as an equal, no one better and no one worse. He united people to complete defined objectives.

Gary was the most reliable person on his team.

My brother was willing to work overtime, work holidays, work for someone who was sick, who wanted time off for a personal matter and the list goes on. He took his first sick day well into his battle with cancer because his doctor basically threatened to show up to his work and tell his supervisors it was doctor's orders to stay home.

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Gary was loyal and committed.

My brother had value beyond what he realized. He had endless opportunities to leave his company, yet chose to stay because he believed they treated him well, and in turn they deserved his loyalty. After 35+ years, his loyalty and commitment paid off. He was blessed to have tremendous health benefits, which ended up paying out over a million dollars during his battle with cancer. Over the course of the last 6-months of his life, his supervisors figured out ways to give him “admin” duties to keep him on the payroll and continue his benefits. I am certain he was a pretty special guy who gave so much to his company where they would in turn do something so extraordinary for him.

There are an abundance of attributes I could continue with as he had many strong qualities and characteristics about him. I chose these because he had a champion’s mindset. He knew it took a team of people to accomplish anything in life, whether it be at work, church, on the ball field, or anywhere else. It is so important to focus on your team’s dynamic in order to have a chance at accomplishing worthy objectives.

My brother, sister and I were fortunate to be part of a family who all had extremely committed work habits. We were taught from as early as we all can remember that when we make a commitment we will see it through. Having been positively influenced by our mother, who is a farmer’s daughter, and grandfather, who is and always will be my number one role model, we were blessed to learn from the best. Talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. We were taught to take action. I will forever be grateful to add my brother to my list of inspiration.

The list above is important because each quality he possessed was by choice. He chose to be the person he was in his career, as well as is in his personal life. The reason the list is worth reflecting on is because your accomplishments are limited to the connectedness of your team and YOU play an equal part in your team’s effectiveness.

Every team member either plays a supportive or destructive role within the team’s makeup.

Every team member either adds value or does not.

Every team member either keeps the team connected or they create a disconnection.

Every team member either contributes to a positive outcome or sabotages the outcomes.

Every team member buys into having a championship mindset or they do not.

In the end, if your team is not united on all fronts in pursuit of a clear and concise mission, you are on the road to nowhere. Teams not committed to unity end up creating their own demise by creating intentional drama, gossiping, being unsupportive of others, especially new team members, and complaining.

In all of my business experiences over the last 25+ years, I can say without a doubt, those who achieve the most have the most connected teams. Those who come up short, fall apart or never reach their potential have major disconnects that are all self-perpetuated. I continue to be amazed how certain teams can be in lockstep with each other and achieve extraordinary results, where other teams with more people and/or more talented people

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struggle mightily. The one commonality is how much self-induced drama exists within the culture of the practice.

In the end, the reason I use my brother's life legacy as a lesson today is because he figured it out without even knowing how brilliant he was. He taught others through his actions and results. He lived a life of consistency and upheld his integrity with a strong character. I have looked up to him since the day I can remember events in life. I will continue to use him as a barometer for what I contribute to this world. I can only hope I do with such vigor and consistency as he did.

I hope his story can be an inspiration for you as well.

Rest in peace my dear brother. You deserve the rest. You fought a worthy battle as a warrior unlike most. Your legacy lives on with tens of thousands of people who will hear me share your story far and wide on all platforms that are available to me. You were a champion on earth, and will continue to be a champion in heaven as our guardian angel.

Until we meet again, dear brother!

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The Power of Acknowledgment and Praise

You have heard us preach about the power of acknowledgment and praise from the moment you were introduced to the core philosophies of DST. In a world filled with people who are selfish, narcissistic, and fake, genuine appreciation and encouragement go a long way as they are rarely heard. This is why your willingness to acknowledge others and praise people for making smart choices and doing good things has such a profound impact.

Like everything else, there are a million reasons why you won't do it.

"Why should I have to constantly tell people they are doing a good job?"

"Just because they do their job doesn't mean I should applaud them."

"It is a lot of work to remember to tell people nice things."

"It feels strange to tell a patient we are proud they made a smart decision to get healthy."

The list goes on. I hear this all the time. When it comes to team members, I hear the complaints from doctors and leaders. When it comes to patients, well, I hear it from someone in every aspect of the practice.

Ironically, the teams of people (inside and outside of the dental industry) who show up to go to battle with you in the arena are those who feel appreciated and valued by words, not compensation and employee benefits. They covet the words acknowledging their efforts and results. They crave validation and whomever provides it, genuinely, gains their loyalty.

Patients will make commitments to themselves when they feel appreciated and know their feelings have been acknowledged. Patients don't hear positive reinforcement anywhere in their lives either, so when it shows up, they lean in and pay attention. They consider you an advocate, and dare I say, a friend. They will open up to be real and honest with you. They will make commitments where other professionals were not able to connect the dots.

I share this with you as a reminder because each and every one of us craves the attention. Whether it is admitted or not depends on one's ego or level of comfort in being real and raw. My admission follows.

Since I was a young boy, I sought approval from both my dad and brother. I looked up to them both. I realized early on I would never receive it from my father, so I turned to my brother for the "fatherly" approval every young man seeks. It was unfair of me to apply this burden to my brother. I simply had nowhere else to seek my life's validation in my day-to-day living. I lived every day of my life hoping both of them, or at least one of them, would be proud of what I accomplished in life.

My brother was never quick with "emotional" words, yet we all knew he loved us. After the second half of his battle with cancer, and beginning to acknowledge his mortality, he began offering up words he had always thought but rarely spoke. When he did, those who received his kindness took those words to heart in a deep way.

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In one of our last text exchanges while my brother still had all of his faculties, he shared the most powerful words he ever gave me. These words will carry me through the rest of my life without him, and dare I predict, be the catalyst for me doing more with my life than I was on pace to do prior to receiving them.

"Please know what you mean to me and I am proud to call you my brother. I love you more than you know."

Whether it was right or wrong, I wanted to make my brother proud. From the first moment I can remember, all I wanted to hear were those words. I'm grateful to have become extremely close to my brother where we were real, honest and open with each other. His death has left a gaping void in my heart. I wept when I watched him be lowered into his grave; I stood by under frigid temperatures and freezing rain as I simply couldn't allow him to be alone for this final moment when the rest of the fathers had already left after saying their final goodbyes.

He gave me the greatest gift anyone can give, which were his words of acknowledgment and praise. They will be the catalyst for great things to come. Greater than I ever had planned, I'm certain.

I will cherish these words forever.

I pray all of you take account of your approach when it comes to offering kind words. Not just because "it works" when it comes to getting patients to say "yes" to treatment, but because you want to be the catalyst for a tidal wave of good.

My final comment, in an attempt to be encouraging, is to offer a perspective that may shift your approach in offering your heartfelt words to others.

You may be the one and only person who will share kindness with someone who has been craving words of encouragement and compassion for longer than they would like.

You could create a shift in someone that will carry them through hard and uncertain times.

You could be a bright light in someone's world where it has previously been dark.

Your kindness could fill a long-standing void in the life of someone who so desperately seeks validation and self-worth.

I believe I do all I can to be a light on a daily basis. I promise I will try even harder to carry on my brother's legacy and continue to make him proud as he watches over me in heaven.

The question I have for you is...

How will you choose to impact those in your circle of influence on a daily basis?

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Conundrum

Every year leading up to Christmas, my wife and I have a ritual where we seek out American-based small businesses in an effort to support their mission of taking their passion, as founders, and bringing good to the world. Although we have this approach in our shopping throughout the year, we put in the extra effort to find new businesses we have not engaged with before.

As I was searching for inspiring t-shirts to add to my collection, I was introduced to a new company via an online ad, most assuredly through the tracking of my choices, which I find helpful and not intrusive. It saves me a lot of work! I was drawn to this company due to its affinity to the mountains and outdoors. I also found their name quite intriguing: Conundrum Outfitters. I knew it was my kind of company when one of the first messages I read on the company's main web page stated,

"We're Not For Everyone."

"Apparel and Gear for the Rugged, Untamed, and Self-Reliant."

Well, hallelujah, a company speaking my language! As I poured over the content of the website, I was moved to order an abundance of merchandise as I knew how much I would be inspired wearing their apparel and seeing their stickers on my laptop each day as I prepare for my daily conversations.

I will share with you a handful of the brand statements that connected with me.

"Built to Endure."

"Work Hard. Live Tough. Roam Free."

"Rugged and Restless."

The following is my favorite and inspired me the most to share a special message with all of you who serve the dental and oral health speciality industries.

"Live Beyond the Boundaries. Life Begins Where the Road Ends."

When I first read these two sentences it immediately triggered thoughts of decisions I made and experiences I have had because I chose to live a life without defined boundaries when it comes to business and relationships. Mainly, the examples that came to mind were those after I climbed out of my darkest valley of life back in 2012. The thoughts were inspiring and emotional.

I was proud of all I accomplished, which was beyond anything I could have imagined as a young man during my college years. Visions of what is left to achieve showed up as well, all of which are exciting and limitless. As I think back to my introduction to this new small business, I am in awe of what their vision and passion was able to spark inside of me.

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This leads me to all of you. I believe the industry you serve has created artificial boundaries by which most people believe they are to be contained.

You **HAVE** to take insurance.

You **CANNOT** ask for prepayment for services.

You **HAVE** to let patients choose when they want to schedule their appointments.

The list goes on. One of the many things we are proud of within DST is the fact we believe the perceived boundaries are meant to be broken through while creating your own personalized beliefs and vision of what is achievable for your patients' health, your team's accomplishments and what you want your business and lifestyle to look like without any say from industry norms.

Whether you recognized it at the beginning of our relationship or not, you chose to "Live Beyond the Boundaries." You chose to continue down the road where most believe it ends.

What Boundaries do you believe you have broken through in your career, or life in general, since we have been on this journey together?

What Boundary would you like to break through next?

Today's message is meant to reach your soul. I want nothing more than to simply encourage you to stir up emotions about wanting to achieve more than you once thought possible. I want you to believe you can create whatever your vision is for the who, what, where, how and why you serve your community of patients. I want you to believe the road extends beyond what is believed to be the end.

Over the course of the next several weeks, I am going to focus on how each of you can become more in tune with who you are as a human being and what holds you back from breaking through your self-imposed boundaries in an attempt to be the catalyst for a tidal wave of good outcomes from your personal breakthroughs in life and career.

I believe in all of you.

I believe you all are capable of more than you can imagine.

I believe your ability to influence others is a powerful force and that you have merely scratched its surface.

I believe you all can advance the positive influence you have on all people who are blessed to find themselves in your inner circle.

I believe we all have more to experience and achieve.

My hope is you all come with me on this journey, that is, should you choose to ramp up your efforts to maximize the outcomes you can influence and create in your community and beyond with whatever audience you have.

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If this message speaks to you, you may want to check out the Conundrum Outfitters website and read their story. I loved it. It was real. It had passion. It was thoughtful and inspiring. There are many lessons to glean from their approach, tone and intention of word choice.

Let us all Work Hard...Roam Free from Boundaries...and be Self-Reliant as we Endure what life throws at us in our effort to be a source of light and a force for good.

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First... Focus On YOU!

As mentioned last week, we will continue on with our multi-week exploration of breaking through your own personal boundaries.

Today, I chose to do a video as we begin the journey by first...focusing on YOU!

Thank you in advance for taking time to come along with me as we explore such an important topic in life and career!

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