

LOVE WORKS

SEVEN TIMELESS PRINCIPLES
FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS

JOEL MANBY

Updated and Expanded Edition
of the Leadership Bestseller

 ZONDERVAN
BOOKS

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Love Works

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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ISBN 978-0-310-35976-0 (audio)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Manby, Joel, 1959- author.

Title: Love works : seven timeless principles for effective leaders / Joel Manby.

Description: Updated and expanded edition. | Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "In this updated and expanded edition of the bestselling leadership book *Love Works*, Joel Manby demonstrates that leading with love is effective even in difficult business environments like SeaWorld, and shares how leaders can harness the meaning of love, the verb, to improve their workplace culture, their bottom line, and their personal lives"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019057629 (print) | LCCN 2019057630 (ebook) | ISBN 9780310359746 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780310359753 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Leadership. | Virtues.

Classification: LCC HD57.7 .M3874 2020 (print) | LCC HD57.7 (ebook) | DDC 658.4/092--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019057629>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019057630>

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Published in association with Jenni Burke of Illuminate Literary Agency, www.illuminate.literary.com.

Author photo: Garrett Lobaugh

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

Printed in the United States of America

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 /LSC/ 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To Mom and Dad
for teaching me to love at home
and
Jack and Peter
for teaching me to love at work*

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FOREWORD

June 16, 1998. It was a typical Tuesday morning in Atlanta, Georgia. I had flown into town to meet with a potential board member for the company my brother and I cofounded, Herschend Family Entertainment. But where was he? I glanced at my watch for the fifth time. 9:20 a.m. Joel Manby was twenty minutes late. *Twenty* minutes! Clearly I'd made the wrong choice in asking him to be part of the team. I'd been impressed with his credentials and experience, but I'd wondered about his values: would he *get* our company culture?

And would he ever actually show up?

I took a last look at my watch. It seemed like he would be a nonstarter—probably just another hotshot businessman with a character as shallow as a sheet of paper. That's when Joel walked in—he'd gotten lost in those pre-GPS days—and the rest, as we like to say, is Herschend family history. Joel served at HFE as CEO and president for thirteen years, and during his tenure our company grew from nine to twenty-six properties located in ten states with exceptional financial results. Joel was *exactly* the right man to lead.

Now don't misunderstand me: I'm *still* not happy Joel was late! I'm extremely punctual, and I expect my team to be punctual as well.

But the fact that Joel went from such a rough start to such a strong finish is actually testament to a simple but overlooked idea:

Love works.

You see, when Joel walked in twenty minutes late to that first meeting, I had every right to let that *first* impression be my *last* impression. One strike and he would be out. But I decided to interview him anyway, and it didn't take long for me to realize that giving him a second chance was one of the best decisions I'd ever made. It was the right thing to do.

What I didn't have words for at the time, but what I knew in my bones, is that doing the right thing in business doesn't have to come at the expense of the bottom line. When I gave Joel a second chance, that was forgiveness in action—one of the principles this book discusses—and it absolutely helped our company flourish financially. Wise leaders use their personal ethics to effectively *manage* the tension between corporate values and corporate profits. At the end of the day, that works best for everyone:

Shareholders are glad the company is healthy.

Employees are grateful to work for a company that truly cares about them.

And customers see something special and keep coming back for more.

Friend, the book you hold in your hands isn't testament to a single man or a single company. It's much bigger than that. It's about seven principles of effective leadership that have been around for thousands of years but are often forgotten or dismissed. It's engaging and practical. And it's about the best way to lead, a way that will bring bottom-line results and deep contentment.

Love works. Trust me—I saw the proof every day that I went to work with Joel.

Sincerely,

—*Jack Herschend, Cofounder and Chairman Emeritus,
Herschend Family Entertainment*

INTRODUCTION

UNDERCOVER LOVE

As I fumbled for my alarm at 3:00 a.m. on my first day on the job as a street washer, I wondered what I was getting myself into. The CBS television network had asked my company to participate in its hit reality show *Undercover Boss*. As president and CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE) at that time, I'd agreed to work at Silver Dollar City, our original theme park in Branson, Missouri.

So I stumbled out of bed and put on an unfamiliar uniform: work jeans, black safety boots, a jean jacket layered over a hooded sweatshirt, and false glasses. Thankfully my thirty-five-dollar a night motel room had a coffeemaker, so I sipped the hot brew and tried to remember that I was now officially John Briggs, a laid-off autoworker looking for a fresh start.

The whole project was risky: what if the very act of going “undercover” exposed our workers or our company to ridicule or embarrassment? That would make compelling television for CBS, but it would be unfair to our company. My leadership team at HFE decided to trust our corporate culture and the genuine devotion and goodwill of our

hardworking employees. After all, we experienced it firsthand every day, just like the guests at our theme parks, so wouldn't it be wonderful to share that vision with viewers all over the country?

These thoughts were quickly driven from my mind when I arrived at Silver Dollar City at 4:00 a.m.—you don't have a lot of time for introspection when you're being taught to wash streets with a high-pressure hose in the freezing predawn air!

Richard was my mentor, a quiet and humble man who reminded me of my father. At one point, I lost control of the hose and sprayed Richard. The CBS producers may have been secretly hoping for an outburst of anger, but Richard simply looked at me and said in a calm voice, "You might just stay behind me." As we worked, I learned Richard's home had been flooded six months earlier, and he had been forced to move his wife and five children into a pop-up trailer while he scrimped and saved to pay for the renovations. This was a huge strain on both his budget and his family life, yet he always worked with a cheerful attitude.

Later that day, I worked with Albert, a young man who worked as a supervisor at the front gate area at Silver Dollar City. Albert is a sparkplug full of energy and creative ideas to improve the park. He spent some of our time together showing me his roller coaster designs, and he told me that it's his desire to someday be the CEO of the company. As I later struggled with the front gate ticket system, I was wishing he had spent a little more time training me instead! At least the sun had come out and my hands were beginning to thaw from the morning street washing.

As the day wore on, I learned Albert was having tremendous difficulties obtaining college credits because he was trying to squeeze coursework around his full-time job at HFE—and trying to get married soon too! He was working about fifty hours a week, going to school at night, and trying to keep a bride-to-be happy, yet he still had the time and energy to help me, "the new guy," get used to his first day on the job.

I worked with four other people at four other properties that

week, but the pattern was the same: hardworking, dedicated employees doing a great job, even while struggling with some aspect of life. They loved the company, they shared the desire to achieve our mission: “make memories worth repeating,” and our culture—a culture molded by our founder and purposefully crafted to carry into the future—matched their caring hearts.

At the end of the show, when I revealed my true position at HFE, we rewarded each of these six employees with a grant from our Share It Forward Foundation to address their particular financial need. In chapter 6 you will see how these programs are funded and structured, but seeing them in action so moved me—and the viewers—that for the first time I truly grasped their importance.

Richard was literally stunned, unable to move or speak, as we presented him with a \$10,000 check to fix his home so he could move out of his pop-up trailer. When we gave Albert a scholarship to attend college full-time, he cried so hard that I asked for the cameras to stop so he could regain his composure. That’s how it was with the other people we provided grants to as well. But they weren’t the only ones who were affected by seeing love in action.

EXPECTING MORE FROM LEADERS

More than eighteen million viewers saw our episode of *Undercover Boss*, making it the highest-rated program on CBS that week and the second most popular show on any network, trailing only *American Idol*, which was the number 1 show on all of US television at that time. After the airing, my cell phone seemed like it was ringing 24/7, and page after page of messages filled up our social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and email. Our corporate website, for instance, averages fifty hits per day, but in the first forty-five minutes after the show, we got sixty thousand! People who witnessed our employees in action were intrigued by something, and they wanted to know more.

One man from California wanted to let us know what he had seen. “If I didn’t already have a job right now—and in this [economy] thank God that I do—I would apply at your company over and over again

until I was hired, even if I was picking up trash,” he wrote. “I would be so proud to be part of a company like yours.”

His sentiment was repeated over and over by people who wanted us to know that they wished their own places of work were more like what they had seen on *Undercover Boss*—in other words, more respectful, cooperative, joyful and, well, more *loving*.

The volume of requests to learn more about our organizational culture and our employee-initiated assistance foundation was overwhelming. I needed to limit my outside engagements for the sake of the business, but a quiet voice inside kept suggesting that this message was exactly what people in all sorts of organizations—businesses, non-profits, and government agencies—needed to hear.

The simple truth is this: there is a crisis of confidence in leadership. The level of dissatisfaction and even resentment present in the thousands of letters and email messages shocked me. People felt as if they couldn’t trust their leaders and bosses. That’s why our episode of *Undercover Boss* provoked such an overwhelming response—people were hungry for something new, something better. Countless workers wanted more from their leaders and their work environment, and we were hearing about it.

WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

The most satisfying part about appearing on *Undercover Boss* was that it confirmed the wise management philosophy that the leaders at HFE had been nurturing for half a century: *leading with love*.

Leading with love is counterintuitive in today’s business environment because it turns many so-called leadership principles upside-down. Yet the outpouring of support from people who had never even heard of HFE convinced me that while we might be doing something slightly crazy by leading with love, we were also doing something that people were hungry to be part of.

As I tried to process my experience on the show and the response to it, I was asked to participate in a panel discussion by the Society of Human Resource Managers. While I was on stage, the subject

of *Undercover Boss* came up, and what happened next took me by surprise.

When the host asked me what was behind our caring culture displayed on the program, I said, “Well, we actually use love to define our leadership culture at HFE. Not love the emotion, but love the verb. We train our leaders to love each other, knowing that if they create enthusiasm with their employees, the employees will in turn create an enthusiastic guest experience. I think most organizations avoid discussions about how people should treat each other, and I think that’s what is wrong with a lot of organizations. Why are we so afraid to talk about love?”

Unexpectedly, the crowd applauded—and kept applauding! Of all the topics covered that night, the discussion about how people treat each other at work and using love in business was the *only* subject that generated strong applause. People were longing to learn more about leading with love.

Soon after that, I gave a keynote talk at our industry convention in Orlando. Over thirty thousand attendees were at this convention from attraction companies all over the world, including Disney, Universal, and hundreds of others.

I spoke to a sold-out lunch crowd about HFE’s history and our philosophy of leading with love. Although I touched on our overall business model, I spent most of the time discussing how we used love to define our leadership approach.

The response was encouraging. After my talk, attendees on the convention floor continuously stopped me to express their appreciation for sharing that kind of message. They, too, wondered if leading with love might really be the good news for their organizations that it seemed to be.

The headline in the industry paper the next day featured my speech and the headline: “What’s Love Got to Do with It?”

I answered the headline’s question in my head: *Everything!*

And that’s why you’re holding this book in your hands. No matter what kind of organization you’re part of, and no matter what level of

leadership responsibility you hold, you're reading this because you're hoping that there's a better way to lead than simply "hitting the numbers" and caring only about the bottom line.

I can tell you unequivocally that there is a better way, and that way is leading with love. It's a way to lead that grows the bottom line *and* respects employees, a way to lead that demands accountability *and* gives second chances. In short, it's a powerful way to transform the way you lead and the culture of your organization.

I don't expect you to believe this until you read the stories and principles in this book. My experience isn't a fairy tale. In fact, it's full of pain and false-starts and failures. But I can tell you that coming to HFE changed the way I view leadership and the way I live my life. By the end of this book, I hope I will have convinced you of one thing: *love works.*



LOVE IN LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER 1

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

*It's been a hard day's night,
and I've been working like a dog.*

—JOHN LENNON AND PAUL MCCARTNEY

1.1

IS THIS WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT?

It was a cool June evening in 2000. I was sitting alone in a one-room apartment in northern California, more than three thousand miles from my family in Atlanta. My place was completely bare inside: no pictures, no personal items, not even a single fake plant to warm the joint up. It was just a place to sleep.

Outside, the steady sheets of rain pouring down were a perfect picture of my life. I was the brand-new leader of an internet startup called GreenLight.com—and the dot-com bubble had just burst.

That night I had consumed enough wine to dull the sharp edge of the emotional pain and stress that were cutting into me. But what was I going to do, drink more and more each night? I had struggled with short seasons of depression before in my life, but this episode was getting the best of me. I didn't know if I could endure the pain anymore. I had no idea where to turn, and for every raindrop spattering against my window, I had a question running through my mind.

My career was like a high-speed treadmill. After graduating from Harvard Business School in 1985, I moved my family ten times in fifteen years as I accepted new leadership positions of increasing responsibility and pressure. The constant moving put a tremendous strain on our home life.

One of our moves was to the startup of Saturn Corporation,

which went from zero to \$5 billion in revenue in three years. That job required countless hours of single-minded focus. While at Saturn, I was promoted to CEO of Saab North America. The division was losing money, and my job was to change that. The countless late nights and constant travel continued as a result of the seemingly endless pressure to hit the numbers. And we did—my family sticking with me despite my constant absence, while my team and I helped return the company to the second best year in Saab’s North American history.

Unfortunately, there was no such thing as a finish line. I never “made it” or earned a chance to spend more time at home with my family. In 1999, three years into my Saab assignment, Asia and South America were added to my responsibilities. So, just one year before the night I sat alone in that empty apartment in California, I spent more than 250 days on the road, mostly in Asia—and even when I was home, I consistently had 6:00 a.m. phone calls with Sweden and 11:00 p.m. phone calls with the Asian markets.

I was burning out, and so was my family.

Something needed to change. So I asked my boss, the CEO of Saab worldwide, if I could return to “only” being CEO of North American operations, which would cut my travel in half.

He refused.

Have you ever had a moment when a single conversation changes the course of your life irrevocably? It’s almost as if time slows down so much that you can see the fork in the road. I was determined to make the right choice—and the right choice was *not* the path that led to year after year of missed birthdays and kids who were slowly becoming strangers.

I made the difficult choice to leave Saab for what I thought was a better lifestyle and a chance to get my family back on track. I decided to take the CEO position at GreenLight.com, the “car tab” at Amazon.com that let people buy a car with a few mouse clicks. I knew a startup would be tough, but I also knew there would be no international travel, and there was a large financial upside.

So I thought. Then the bubble burst, and it took me with it.

On my *first* week of work at GreenLight.com, the NASDAQ

crashed and lost more than a third of its value. We weren't yet generating cash, and what was a three-year cash reserve quickly became a ninety-day cushion. In other words, as an organization, we suddenly had only ninety days to live, not the three years I thought we had when I took the job. At the end of my second week of work, I was laying off three-quarters of our team.

How's that for bad timing?

We took our Atlanta home off the market, delaying my family's relocation, since I would be working 24/7 trying to salvage GreenLight.com. I rented an apartment in California and traveled back to Atlanta only once or twice a month.

The path that I had thought would lead me back home to my family had instead led me to a bare, lonely apartment in California, with rain coming down outside and a sense of hopelessness descending inside. As I sat alone, finishing off my last glass of wine, the questions continued to beat against me:

My entire career I've been so driven . . . for what?

The harder I work and the higher I'm promoted, the worse life gets.

Is there any hope of balancing my career goals with my family goals?

My self-esteem is tied up in the performance of the companies I run.

Do I really want my emotional highs and lows to be based on quarterly profit reports? Is that what life is all about?

If this is what a career in the business world looks like, should I go into a different line of work—one that can unite my skills and my values? But is it right to give up all the experience I've gained?

That night I felt the world closing in around me—and I wanted out. In my darkest moments, I wanted out of life itself. I knew what that would do to my family, however, and I didn't want to be that selfish. But what other options did I have?

My cell phone rang. It was Jack Herschend, former chairman of the board of Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation (HFE), one of the largest themed entertainment companies in the world. I had been on the board of HFE for three years and thought very highly of Jack and the company.

“Joel, how are you brother?”

I had no words, only tears, as the emotion poured out. Jack’s acute empathy skills had a way of doing that to me. He was always quick to listen, and he cared deeply about people.

As quickly as I could, I gathered myself and explained the situation, revealing some cracks I’d kept hidden for years.

What he said next surprised me:

“Joel, the timing of this phone call may be fortuitous. I’m retiring as chairman next year, and all of us on the board would like you to be the next chairman of HFE. We feel the company needs your leadership strengths and style. Would you consider it?”

I was speechless.

“Joel, I know you’re struggling with your family situation, and I think the values and culture of HFE are a perfect fit for you.”

Culture? Values? My family? Talking about these things in the context of a prospective job was as unusual as it was welcome.

I was unable to speak. My eyes were again filling with tears, and my throat was closing up. Jack and his family had run HFE for more than four decades. He was asking me to take over a legacy that he and his brother, Peter, had built. Why me? Why now?

And his words were not only about him or the company—they were about my personal life as well. He was worried about my family? That night I was too shocked by his offer to understand the answer to my own question: what kind of leader was this?

As I would learn later, the answer was simple: a man who leads with love.

LEADING WITH LOVE

My career had left me completely unprepared to meet men like Jack and Peter Herschend. All my life I had been living by the numbers because numbers were all my leaders seemed to care about. If I had any deeper principles, I needed to check them at the company door, because once I was at work, it was all about financial performance.

When I performed well, I was rewarded and respected. When I

failed, I felt like I was kicked to the curb. It was that simple. Inside I longed for a better way—a way to unite who I was as a business leader with who I was as a *person*. I wanted to care about the people I worked with and for. I wanted to work somewhere that rejected the false dichotomy between profit and people or profit and principles. I wanted, in short, to be the same person all the time: at work, with my family, at my church, and when I was alone.

But I had been in business long enough to know that was a nearly impossible dream.

As it turned out, that call from Jack set in motion a chain of events that would provide answers to many of my questions. I didn't realize it at the time, but my experience at HFE would revolutionize the way I saw—and see—leadership.

This book was born from the conviction that leading with love is the best way to run an organization.

Any organization.

I understand that this is a controversial claim, but I also now understand—all the way to the core of who I am as a leader—that it is true. Love isn't a feeling, but an action, an action by which leaders and entire organizations can experience almost unimaginable success *and* personal fulfillment.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Lest you think all this talk about love is an excuse to avoid the hard truths about leading an organization, let me set your mind at ease.

The bottom line is essential.

If we didn't hit our financial goals, we could not achieve the other objectives we had at HFE, like being a “great place to work for great people.” However, we achieved profits by doing the right thing for customers and employees; profits are not an end in themselves. Profits are a product of doing the right thing—over and over again.

During my thirteen years as CEO of HFE, we more than doubled our EBITDA (cash flow) and earned over a 14 percent annual return for our owners, clearly beating the large and small cap stock market

performance during very difficult times, including the “great recession” of 2007 to 2010. And we did that while consciously leading with love. Two of our parks earned the industry’s highest honor for quality: the Applause Award.

Sacrificing values for profits is a flawed choice.

At the same time we experienced financial success, we also grew in love—and I mean that in a practical, bottom-line way. HFE’s Share It Forward Foundation was established to help our employees who are in need. Employee donations are matched by company profits and the Herschend family adds an additional gift. We grew from helping about sixty families per year to over seven hundred families per year in just five years—and that is for an employee-initiated giving program in the midst of difficult economic times!

The bottom line is this: HFE is more profitable than ever and enjoying leading with love more than ever. By actively using the seven principles of leading with love—to be patient, kind, trustful, unselfish, truthful, forgiving, and dedicated—HFE is ensuring that their business is resilient and profitable and their employees motivated and loyal. HFE does this because it makes good business sense and it’s the right thing to do.

THE DILEMMA

What about you?

Have you ever wondered if it’s possible to maximize profits *and* value relationships?

Is the dissonance between the values you hold at home and the values you adopt at work slowly wearing you down?

Do you ever wonder if your work might change the world for the better?

Have you ever wished that work could just—work?

I have wished all of these things, and my experience at HFE has taught me that they can each become a reality—no matter where you work or what your job title is. All it takes is a desire to do the right thing and a lot of hard work.

Some people think leadership is only about the bottom line. What I have learned is that “only” is the wrong word in that sentence. Leadership is about the bottom line *and*

- loving the people you work with.
- making your community a better place.
- feeling a sense of satisfaction at the end of every day.
- leading employees who can't imagine working anywhere else.

These things aren't mutually exclusive. In fact, the opposite is true: the bottom line is best served when leaders lead with love. That's the counterintuitive journey I would like to lead you on in the chapters that follow.

If you have read this far, I know you're hungry for something beyond business as usual, so let's get started—and transform the way we lead.

CHAPTER 2

THE JEDI MASTERS

Do or do not. There is no try.

—YODA

In Star Wars, aspiring Jedi knights must be trained by a Jedi master. The Jedi master is always wiser and more experienced, so he or she is able to train the young Jedi in the proper way. Jedi masters have a strong understanding of a source of energy called the Force—and they always strive to use the Force for good.

Every organization has its Jedi masters. Herschend Family Entertainment's Jedi knights are Jack and Peter Herschend. Yet all organizations, big or small, lose their Jedi masters and go through other difficult leadership transitions. When Jack and Peter retired, the culture was strong, but it wasn't defined and was at high risk of becoming diluted as we continued to grow with new properties.

HFE needed to define its culture to teach others how to lead with love as Jack and Peter had taught by example.

2.1

KEEPING A COMMON TALE FROM BEING A COMMON TALE

It was at Herschend Family Entertainment's November 2006 board meeting that it finally happened. Jack and Peter Herschend had been on HFE's board since 1960, and this would be their last meeting. Forty-six years is a long time to sit on one board, but for HFE, it was all too brief. From that day forward, Jack and Peter would no longer sit at the table with us, no longer offer their vote, no longer share their voice and vision.

It was a big moment, and some of the board members and family tried to talk Jack and Peter out of it. The brothers had, along with their parents and wives, transformed a guided tour at a single cave in Branson, Missouri, into an enterprise entertaining over sixteen million customers a year and employing over ten thousand employees in twenty-six properties across the United States. They would climb any mountain for their employees, and the employees knew it too—which was why HFE had such a powerful sense of corporate unity and enthusiasm. Jack and Peter embodied a rags to *selfless* riches story, and their generosity was a beacon that attracted and kept the absolute finest employees.

THE FAREWELL

There were tears in the room and plenty of mixed emotions. But Jack and Peter have tremendous wisdom and humility. They knew that what mattered was creating an organization built to last, an organization that would stand the test of time. Jack's departing words confirmed what all of us already knew.

Small in stature with thick gray hair and a strong handshake, Jack stood up slowly, feeling the effects of several hip replacements that stemmed from personally testing one too many of the attractions he helped create. Jack's hands were worn from years of working in the parks, hand-pouring cement steps into the cave, and personally planting thousands of trees throughout Missouri as a dedication to the environment. Jack's every deed and word seemed to have a specific purpose.

"I appreciate the calls for Pete and me to stay on the board, but we will not. As you are aware, Pete and I have carefully constructed a ten-year transition. A plan that took me from CEO to chair, chair to voting board member, voting board member to nonvoting board member, and then off the board. Pete is following a similar path. This plan is critical so that the company can transition smoothly while Pete and I are still healthy."

The room was silent; we could have heard a pin drop.

He continued: "It's a common tale for a family business to lose its way after the godfathers leave, which is why Pete and I feel strongly about this. We both understand that in order to keep this special company special, we need to let a new team of leaders and an independent board carry on, out from under our shadow. We want to remain family owned forever, and we want it to feel like a family, but we also want to be led by the best team possible. With this in mind, it's important that the board and the leadership never lose sight of the three main Herschend family objectives: a specified growth in profit so it is 'a great long-term investment,' to be a 'great place to work for great people,' and to 'lead with love.'"

Jack cleared his throat and sipped a glass of water before continuing: "We understand that sometimes tension can exist between these

objectives, but that is a tension that needs to be managed. It's not okay to achieve profit growth and destroy our culture as a 'great place to work for great people.' It is also not okay to focus on being a 'great place to work' without achieving our financial objectives. This is a tension to *embrace*, not eliminate. I have great faith in this board and in this leadership team. The time is right."

With that he sat down.

Jack was right. Typically organizations start small with an entrepreneur and/or inspirational founder; they have a caring family-type culture with a workforce completely committed to a cause. However, when these same organizations find themselves in a transition, the founding culture rarely remains intact. For the culture to survive, it must be defined *and* adhered to or the organization could lose its way. Once an organization loses its soul, the financial performance usually starts to decline and the best people leave.

Either that, or it isn't an organization anyone *really* wants to work for.

HFE was committed to avoid becoming another "common tale." We wanted to ensure our special culture thrived as the founders retired and we continued to add properties in other geographic locations. However, we needed to lead with love—just as Jack and Peter had for decades—in a way that could be taught and measured.

Has your organization gone through a similar leadership transition? If not, it will eventually. I believe you will be better positioned if you can identify and maintain a strong culture built on timeless values that drives healthy behavior and achieves strong financial results.

It's to those seven timeless values that we will turn in chapters 3 through 9, but first a brief word about leading with *love*. What is love, anyway?

2.2

LOVE IS A VERB

I could accept the fact that Herschend Family Entertainment employees loved working for the Herschends, and even that the Herschends loved them back—though that was a bit of a tougher sell, given many of the people I had worked for. But I was struggling with the word *love* and how to define it in a way the employees would understand and accept. We all tend to think of love as an emotion, a feeling, and that is *not* what we are discussing here.

MORE THAN A FEELING

Treating someone with love regardless of how you feel about that person is a very powerful principle. This type of love is the basis for all healthy relationships, bringing out the best in ourselves and others. It can make us great spouses, great parents, and great friends.

Great leaders too.

All too often, however, when we read the word *love*, we automatically think about romantic love—the emotional kind.

What I'm talking about, however, is love the *verb*, not the emotion. I'm talking about actions, not feelings. I'm referring to a set of behaviors that people use to build a healthy relationship with someone regardless of how they feel.

Why the communication problem? Because the English language has only one word for love. For purposes of this chapter, it would be

better if we all were Greek! The Greek language is more articulate in expressing the distinctions among various types of love. In fact, the ancient Greeks distinguished *four* primary kinds of love: *eros*, *philos*, *storge*, and *agape*.

Eros is the love expressed when your teenage daughter bursts through the door and declares, “I’m in love!” As an overly protective father of four beautiful young women, I’m not thrilled with that announcement! *Eros* yielded the English word *erotic*, and it’s all about desire, attraction, and warm, fuzzy feelings. This is the romantic love Hollywood has exploited to make billions of dollars.

Sadly, it doesn’t stand up very well to pressure. The problem with *eros* is that it depends on circumstances. If the evening is romantic—if the sunset is gorgeous and the wind warm and . . . well, you get the idea—*eros* can exist. However, as soon as there are hurtful actions or mean words, *eros* withers. Therefore, *eros* isn’t a reliable basis for building a meaningful or healthy relationship over time—and it’s not the foundation on which to build an organization either.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Most of us recognize *philos* as the root of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. Those of us who know Philadelphia Eagles fans may take issue with the “brotherly love” part—after all, these are the fans who booed Santa Claus during halftime! However, this is the word our Greek friends used to describe the love of friendship and the fellowship of being with people we enjoy. *Philos* describes the people you want to hang out with and who want to hang with you too.

Although *philos* is great, and I *do* know Eagles fans I like, *philos* can be conditional or even selfish. If you wrong someone, *philos* can fade; time and distance can end it too. Unfortunately, all of us have lost a *philos* friendship over one or the other of these circumstances.

Storge, the third kind of love, is the natural affection felt between family members. This is where the term “blood is thicker than water” comes from. A mother’s affection for her children compares to no other. Family affection has an exclusivity and acceptance not

experienced in philos or eros. Anyone who has lived through parenting a two-year-old tyrant or a teenager knows plenty about storge love!

Philos and storge are still insufficient types of love on which to build an organization, however—we can't always work with our friends or family, right?

LOVE THE VERB

The fourth kind of love, *agape*, is unconditional. It is a decision, a matter of will. Its verb form is *agapao*, but for simplicity I will use *agape* because it's all Greek to me. The key principle is to think of agape as a *verb*, not an emotion.

Agape love is the foundation for the best and noblest relationships that humans are capable of. It is deliberate and unconditional love that is the result of choices and behaviors rather than feelings and emotions.

In that regard, agape love is about the values we embrace as a way of life, and it is a determination to *behave* in a certain way that stems from our regard for other human beings, regardless of how we may feel about them. For leaders, demonstrating agape love is about behavior, not emotion.

This is a critical distinction that explains why agape love can be the motivating force of a successful organization.

Agape love can exist in the most hostile environments—even work! Eros and philos would evaporate in a stress-filled work environment, but agape can stand the test of time. In fact, with agape love, you can dislike someone or be frustrated with them and still treat them with love. Agape love will promote healthy relationships among employees and their leaders, allowing people to perform at their very best, all the while withstanding the pressure and tension that can exist in a high-performance organization.

Those Greeks were onto something!

AGAPE LOVE WORKS

If agape love builds healthy relationships in all walks of life, why shouldn't we always use it to build our organizations as well?

Why isn't there more dialogue about how to create and maintain healthy relationships at work? After all, common sense tells us that people will perform better if they are treated with respect and trust.

I have served in large and small organizations, public and private, and also on boards of several nonprofit and for-profit organizations. After more than thirty years of witnessing all forms of organizational structures, I am still surprised at how willingly we discuss strategy and how to increase profit but how loath we are to discuss how to build and maintain a successful corporate culture by consistently treating all employees in a way that attracts and keeps the best talent in all levels of the organization.

That is why I submit that we should never leave love at the door when we come to work. On the contrary, *love works*.

Think about love the verb, not love the emotion. Think agape, not eros, or even philos or storge. Think commitment and will, not feelings, and you will start to see how love works.

Basing the leadership behavior of an organization on the definition of agape love may strike you as a new or even revolutionary idea—and in the context of modern American organization practices, it is. But the inspiration for using agape love as a leadership principle actually comes from one of the oldest and most respected authorities on human behavior in the world: the Bible.

The seven principles we will explore in the rest of this book are paraphrases from 1 Corinthians, a letter written two thousand years ago. Chapter 13 of this letter is known as the “love chapter” because there the apostle Paul wrote: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

This is agape—and these are principles that will transform your organization, from the bottom line to the bottom of your employees' hearts. Love is

- patient
- kind
- trusting
- unselfish
- truthful
- forgiving
- dedicated

How these words get worked out in the context of a successful organization may surprise you—remember, they are *never* an excuse to ignore poor performance or neglect the bottom line.

As you will see in the chapters that follow, agape love is a leadership principle that holds leaders accountable and helps any organization become healthier and more enthusiastic.

Join me as we learn how.