
What the Experts are Saying



Jeremy Baker

About Jeremy Baker

Jeremy Baker is the Deputy Assistant Director for the Office of Intelligence at Homeland Security Investigations, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security. Jeremy has worked in the national security field, including within the intelligence community, military, law enforcement for 20 years.

On Leading Diverse Groups

I think there's a key leadership principle here that, if regularly practiced, has a way of solving this problem already. First, let's acknowledge that the strongest teams are those that are created from a diverse representation of backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge. Second, let's note that multiple studies have shown that employees feel most engaged in the workplace when two fundamental conditions are met: 1) their leadership cares about their professional development, and 2) their leadership cares about who they are as a person. Let's focus on this second aspect for the sake of this question. What does it mean to me? It means it's absolutely critical for me as a leader to recognize my team members as discrete human beings who are so much more than a block on an org chart or a line of code in a payroll system. I must acknowledge, respect, and embrace that members of my team are people with their own needs, desires, dreams, fears, and aspirations. There is not a single approach or leadership practice that will meet every single employee's needs or preferences. To meet their needs and ensure their success, I must acknowledge their differences and experiences and understand at least to some extent what makes someone tick—what gets them excited, what makes them withdraw, what makes them inspired to lead others. If I embrace and lead by this principle—that I must care about each member of my team as their own individual human being—I will have already created the personal flexibility to lead a team of individual, DIVERSE human beings.