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What? There are different love languages for leaders to use depending on who they are talking to? Yes, but it is less about the love part and more about the feeling valued and appreciated part. Before anyone starts gagging, let me explain.

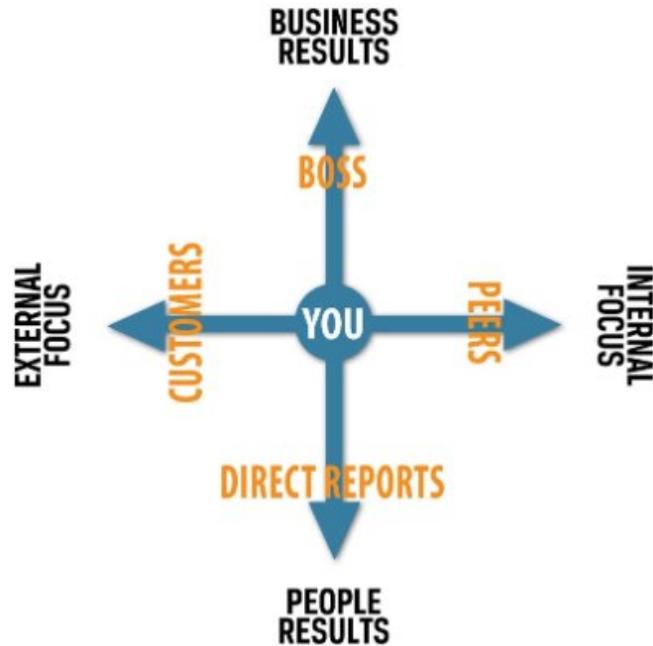
When I was younger, I was introduced to a book, *The Five Love Languages*, by Gary Chapman that described the different ways or “languages” that people feel valued or appreciated. Some people feel valued when others do service-

oriented activities for them. In contrast, others feel most valued when they are verbally complimented. The main point was to identify how each person uniquely felt valued and to tailor one's communication accordingly. Now, this can be helpful for improving one's family and marital relationships, but what about applying it to the workplace?

Leaders Need to Achieve Results

Every day, leaders are expected to achieve business and people results. They need to achieve the objectives of the organization through day-to-day outputs both from operational results and through team, engagement results. To accomplish these results, leaders must manage four types of relationships: boss, direct reports, peers, and customers. Each relationship is important and deserves focused attention. And, each relationship values and needs different things to be productive. Understanding and adjusting to the specific needs of each of these four types of relationships will help a leader be successful.

So, what is the language that works best for each of the four relationships? To be an effective leader, each of the four relationships needs to be given the time, attention, and language that is valued the most. Here are the languages that need to be used to build productive relationships with each of the four key relationships for a leader:



Language for Your Boss:

To build an effective relationship with your **Boss** and upper management, use the language of **Business Results**. Your boss is focused on performance and is expecting you to deliver it. Business results are primarily what your boss is evaluated on—what will deliver his or her success. You might not like this reality, but it is the nature of things. You need to convey how you will achieve these results in your communication with him or her. If you are not putting business results at the center of your conversations with your boss, you are likely not speaking the language that he/she understands and cares most about.

Language for Your Direct Reports:

To build a relationship with your **Direct Reports** use the language of **People Results**. Your employees are focused on how the dynamics of the team are going, the level of engagement, how they are being developed, and how talent

is being promoted on the team. Your team members want feedback and communication and to work in an environment that challenges and rewards. Yes, they also care about the performance outputs, but focusing on people results in your communication will get at the heart of what they care most about. It will help you speak their language.

Language for Your Peers:

To build a relationship with your **Peers** use the language of **Internal Focus**. Peers are concerned with how resources are being allocated and how work is being done internally. They want clarity on hand-offs, transparency in budgeting, and a desire to partner to make things work better. Talking about team engagement may build some good will, but speaking about improving the day-to-day work patterns and negotiating resources in a fair manner will get at the heart of what peers value.

Language for Your Customers:

To build a strong relationship with your **Customers** use the language of **External Focus**. This concerns the broader marketplace in identifying the competitive landscape, industry trends, and current and future customer needs. Customers are less concerned about how something is produced or if the team is happy. Customers want to be assured that you know their concerns and hopes. They want to see action in satisfying their needs, even if it is small amount. They also want to hear ideas on how their wants will be addressed in a cheaper, faster, or quicker manner. This is the language of External Focus that builds effective relationships with key stakeholders and customers outside of the organization.

Speak their Language!

An effective leader crafts messages based upon those with whom they are speaking or working. The leader understands that the four different relationships each speak a different language. They know that using each relationship's unique language will improve understanding and lead to balanced performance. So, test it out. Use a different language based on the relationships you have and see the difference. They will appreciate how you speak their language!