

CONNECTIONS INC.

Employee & Family Solutions | Employee Assistance Programs

Vol. 26 #4

A Message from Matt

Empathy is the ability to understand and appreciate another person's perspective, feelings, and experiences. It allows leaders to connect with people in a way that builds trust, respect, and belonging. Empathy is not lowering standards, avoiding difficult conversations, or agreeing with everything someone says. Effective leaders use empathy to understand first, then respond with clarity and accountability. When people feel understood, they are more likely to engage, grow, and contribute at their highest level.



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"You shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw some things back."

-Maya Angelou



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BUILDING A SUPERTEAM

In the workplace, success is often driven by learning and adapting quickly. Research highlighted in *Harvard Business Review* found that the highest performing "superteams" distinguish themselves through a relentless commitment of continuous improvement.

For leaders, that starts with **experimentation**. Strong teams regularly test new ideas, challenge assumptions, and view setbacks as opportunities to learn rather than reasons to retreat. Leaders who create psychological safety make it easier for employees to take intelligent risks and innovate.

A second practice is **making curiosity contagious**. The best leaders don't pretend to have all the answers. They ask thoughtful questions, admit what they don't know, and encourage learning from colleagues at every level of the organization.

Superteams also create space to **discuss challenges openly**. By asking questions such as, "What are you stuck on?" leaders surface obstacles early and foster a culture where seeking help is seen as a strength, not a weakness.

Another key principle is **staying connected to the work**. Effective leaders remain engaged enough to understand frontline realities, remove roadblocks, and model commitment without micromanaging.

Continuous improvement also requires **feedback that feels supportive** rather than punitive. Frequent coaching conversations help employees learn, adapt, and improve while maintaining confidence and engagement.

The best leaders **support growth** beyond an employee's immediate role, recognizing that new experiences, skills, and interests often bring fresh value back to the team.

Finally, superteams are united by a **strong sense of purpose**. When people understand why their work matters, they become more committed to excellence and more willing to keep improving.

The lesson for leaders is clear: teams become exceptional when learning, growth, and improvement are woven into everyday work.

This article is adapted from *Superteams: The Science and Secrets of High-Performing Teams* (Simon & Schuster, 2026), by Ron Friedman.

Written by: Matt Visser

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program's mission is to provide holistic assistance products and services that support optimum productivity, team work and healthy community in the workplace.

Connections Inc. Employee Assistance Program mission statement since 1988

NOTEWORTHY

EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Employers grapple with persistent labor shortages, rapid technological change, and mounting pressure to increase the population of skilled employees. During a recent congressional hearing before the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, lawmakers from both parties and workforce experts agreed that apprenticeship programs represent one of the nation's most effective talent development strategies.

For HR leaders facing ongoing recruiting challenges, congressional attention highlighted a growing movement to expand apprenticeship programs beyond traditional skilled trades such as healthcare and manufacturing into trades like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and other industries. Congress Committee Chairman Rep. Burgess Owens, R-Utah, framed apprenticeships as an "essential response to a rapidly evolving labor market where continuous learning has become a business necessity."

Dollars and cents show that apprentice programs reveal positives for both employers and those they hire. Workers completing apprenticeship programs produce salaries of approximately \$80,000 and employers receive an estimated return of \$1.44 for every dollar invested in apprenticeship programs.

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/apprenticeship-gains-attention-as-employers-confront-skills> Author: Roy Maurer, Report Summary by Andy Visser

Maynard's Corner

Maynard's Corner:

Every employer agrees that their most valuable asset is their employees. A proactive engaging EAP can maintain and improve the performance of that most valuable asset.

And the annual cost to maintain and improve performance is less than the cost of the Christmas ham. Ham serves its purpose for the holiday.

A proactive engaging EAP serves its purpose for the entire year.

Please call us for a no-obligation Proposal of Services. After all we are here to help!

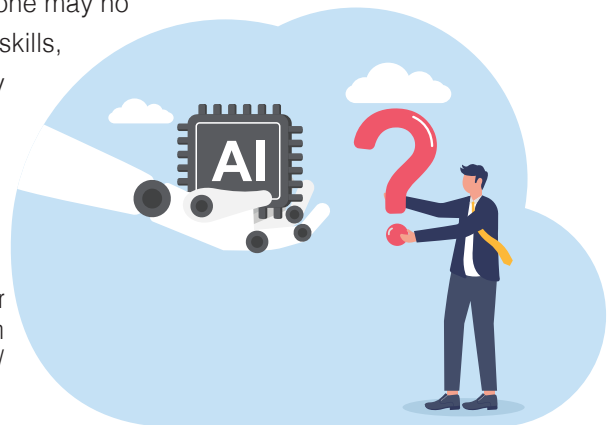


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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MY JOB

A recent Pew Research Center survey highlights significant AI anxiety among workers, with only 6% anticipating more job opportunities and 32% fearing fewer opportunities will exist. AI is perceived as a threat. While traditional career paths valued accumulated experience, AI's impact means expertise alone may no longer suffice. The Pew Research Study stresses that essential human skills, including judgment, communication, and critical thinking, remain highly valuable. Professionals are encouraged to adapt by building adjacent skills and leveraging AI as a tool, rather than undergoing complete reinvention. Lifelong learning and adaptability are key to thriving in this evolving landscape.

On Future AI Use in Workplace, US Workers More Worried Than Hopeful | Pew Research Center
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<https://thelgroup.com/clarify-expectations-to-execute-with-excellence/>



NEXT ISSUE: FIRST RESPONDER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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