

Hello, everybody, Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute and our pod series, Digging Deeper.

One of our members, shout out to Mike Benike here from one of our last podcasts, talked about the importance of tapping the human potential in our business. And that got me thinking a little bit about some of the lessons I've learned during this hunker down period, our stay at home orders and all, and in my case, I'm staying at home with two daughters, their husbands and three grandchildren. So, today's lessons are actually on things I learned from the interactions with my grandchildren. So, I love my grandchildren and apparently, for some reason, they like me as well. And in trying to analyze why we have a good relationship, several things occurred to me.

The first one was to be successful with these little kids, and by the way, they're two and a half, one and a half and a half. So, these are really little kids. But probably the most important thing and I learned this long ago really is you got to get down on their level. So, if you want to have successful relationships there, I usually get down on the floor. And when I'm on the floor, it's amazing how much more they interact with me and keep playing with a particular toy or something like that. But again, coming back to the business level, many times, especially as leaders, we sort of come off of our pedestal and we may fail to get down on our people's level and talk to them as equals or on a job site, if you have issues, to get down sort of to their level of thinking and what they're talking about and get away from the things that are consuming us and really be truly interacting with them. So, think about that, get down on their level.

The next thing is, which I learned from the grandchildren, is you really have to work hard to listen. Now, I mentioned two and a half, one and a half and a half. They really don't communicate all that well. You might be thinking, "Well, on my job site, a lot of these people don't communicate all that well, either." Well, and maybe they don't, but my point here is that you really have to work hard to listen to them. Even a half year old does communicate. You can see when he's unhappy, he's been standing too long or he's been laying on his back too long, or they have a dirty diaper or whatever it is, but they're talking to you.

The one and a half year old has this amazing thing. He's talking in full sentences. I can't understand any of it. But then he takes my finger and he takes me to where he wants me to go or what he wants and he shows me. So, he does know how to communicate, I just had to learn how to listen to them. So, and a lot of times when, let's just say, you're on a job site and somebody's got a problem and you don't get the problem. Well, let them take you there and show you the problem. Let them show you what it is. It's not easy sometimes because they're talking about something that again is, might be at a different level or you don't quite get, but to really listen intently and then let them show it to you is going to improve your communication and interactions with those folks.

The next thing I discovered from my grandchildren is, when you want them to do something or you want them to go somewhere or you have a new idea, you really have to approach it with excitement and enthusiasm to capture them. And then they go along well, and they seem to enjoy it very much. My two and a half year old pointed at the sliver of a moon last night at sunset time and it was really cool. But again, the moon is something we approached with enthusiasm and excitement. So now if you have a change you want to get accomplished in your business, or you want to get folks to do something, maybe you need to approach it with excitement and enthusiasm in order to capture them and to get them thinking that this is a good thing as well.

The fourth thing I want to talk about is, I think in the long run, you earn these grandchildren's trust and you keep their trust. Just sort of a funny example, but when you potty train a child, oftentimes I know my wife uses M&M's. If you go to the potty, you'll get two M&M's. Well, when you tell a child that you've got to follow through. You give them the M&M's, you establish trust. If you tell them you're going to take them to the zoo, you got to take them to the zoo, and you establish trust. Well, the same thing happens with your employees and your coworkers. When you make a commitment for something and you follow through, you establish that trust. And again, that establishes that communication and relationship that stays solid. So, earn their trust, keep their trust.

And then finally, so this last situation, I go in after nap time. The mothers have all gone out shopping or whatever, and one of the kids wakes up a little early so it's my responsibility. I go in the room, it's all dark. It doesn't smell very good. And immediately the first thing I touch doesn't feel very good. So now I'm in this sort of sticky situation and I've got to deal with it, right? I've got to deal with it and to not upset the child, I got to deal with it in a calm and confident manner. And in doing so, the child doesn't suffer from it at all. We get the situation solved and then we're back at whatever else we're going to do. And I thought, really again, the same thing happens in your work. Whatever the problem is, however sticky or stinky the situation is, you've got to deal with it, right? And you got to deal with it now in a lot of those cases. And when you do so calmly and confidently, your people will believe in you and they'll believe in the solution and they'll come out with great morale.

So again, if you want to get the best out of your people and you want to have the best relationships and interactions and get the best response, get down on their level. Work hard to listen. Don't be afraid to let them show you if you don't understand. When you got new ideas, approach them with enthusiasm and excitement. Earn their trust, keep their trust. And finally, if you encounter a tough situation, deal with it and keep it calm and confident while you do so.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper, thanks for tuning in.