Leading from the front with authenticity with Peter Sweers, Chief Technology and Operations Officer at Interac

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Peter Sweers is a veteran leader with over 30 years of experience in many senior executive-level positions at companies including CGI, Foresters, and Scotiabank. Currently, the Chief Technology & Operations Officer at Interac, over the course of his career, Peter has led many organizations through transformations and has built high-performing teams. Having formerly worked with Peter, Predictive Success CEO David Lahey coined Peter as one of the best leaders he's worked with, noting that dream team leaders behave a certain way and Peter is one who protects and takes risk for his people, makes fun happen at work and is someone that his people want to work for. We sat down with Peter to get his take on what it means to be a dream team leader.

What does it take to be a great leader, and what does that mean to you?

Being a great leader, or being a leader period, means understanding the situation and circumstance that you're in. I think the first and most important thing is to understand what type of leader is required for the circumstance and how you show up to fit that bill. You have to lead from the front and be authentic and consistent in all situations so that people will understand that it's okay to bring you good, bad, or indifferent news. You don't want people second guessing you because people can very quickly see through a façade.

Do you have a "secret sauce" to creating a successful team?

I generally take roles that involve fixing things and by and large one of them that always needs fixing is culture. Fixing culture is block and tackle, there's no silver bullet where you come in with a playbook. The circumstances are always different and then there's the broader culture in the enterprise. Interac, for example, is a high-volume, high-profile payment organization so what I'm looking for there are people that act with a high sense of urgency and precision, everyone on the team is very reliant on each other so having a strong culture of trust is also important. You need to have team members that can champion your vision. You need the right people, the time, and tools like The Predictive Index® as delivered by Predictive Success that help you figure out how to build a successful team. To me, having a dream team, or more so the right team means that people are operating at the right levels.

How does culture impact the success of a team?

Having a healthy culture is an absolute necessity because culture will eat strategy for breakfast. If you have a poor culture, regardless of how good your strategy is, you're not going to be able to further it and deliver on it so I think that having that cohesive, trusting, respectful, whatever attributes that you need in a high-performing team, are an absolute must. You can't be a great leader if you don't understand the culture that you have or need to drive results because it's always going to be a journey to get there and you have to know who can make that journey with you and who can't. You as the leader have to take the steps to create the culture that you need to drive performance.

Do you have any advice for other leaders?

You want to spend extra time being empathic and listening to the situations and circumstances that people are operating in, especially now in COVID times. That comes down to authenticity and showing people you care, and leading from the front which is so important. Make sure it's not all about work, make time for some play too. I have all of these rules in life, for me, they are consistent light posts, and one of them is always do what you say you are going to do. When you lead from the front with your rules, your people will pick up on them and it will start to become the DNA of your team. Be authentic, consistent, have fun and work hard.