



# LOUUDER



RESOURCES



# EXCERPT FROM YAMILETTE CANO'S INTERVIEW WITH CHARLIE KATZ:

## FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO BE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEADER DURING TURBULENT TIMES

A "CEOS SPEAK" INTERVIEW WITH CHARLIE KATZ

THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT. LET'S NOW TURN TO THE MAIN FOCUS OF OUR DISCUSSION. CAN YOU SHARE WITH OUR READERS A STORY FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE ABOUT HOW YOU LEAD YOUR TEAM DURING UNCERTAIN OR DIFFICULT TIMES?

There are great times and certain times when we get to lead our teams through all of the excitement and wins that we have. But there are of course difficult times with the most recent being leading our teams through COVID-19. At the beginning of COVID-19 there were so many uncertain things like what was going to happen with events, travel, and all in-person activities.

When you are confident in your leadership and your team it helps propel the entire organization through uncertain and difficult times. My leadership philosophy is that if you take care of your team and keep them engaged they will take care of your clients and the business will flourish. This is true in good times and in uncertain or difficult times, the key to engaging your customers and being successful is engaging your employees. When your employees are engaged, they will have an emotional investment in your business which means they care deeply about the organization and the work that they are doing.

COVID-19 brought a whole new meaning to global economy, events moving virtual with attendees around the world, virtual training, clients that we were used to in-person changing to virtual, and so on. But the beauty of this massive change that occurred in early 2020 is that it opened the door for so many opportunities and this is exactly how my team and I assessed the situation. We no longer look at the limitations of travel or venue size for events -- we can now have meetings and events with hundreds of thousands of people from around the world. I am very grateful for my global team where we have embraced the global economy and the ever changing technology around how business is done. So when all events, training, and meetings went completely virtual in 2020 we were ready to take on this change with open arms. Since our team has always been located around the world and the fact that we work with clients in almost every continent we were able to support our community with making the switch to virtual as well through our years of combined experience in this space.

As a leader, I had to ask myself what does my team need from me? They needed me to be flexible, adaptable, and human. I needed to show my team transparency from my side and show them all the amazing benefits of being transparent. When you model this as a leader it encourages two-way transparency from your team. I started checking in on each of my team members more regularly, not only to see how their work was coming along but also to check in to see how they are doing mentally. I am more of a laissez-faire style leader so the past year and a half I ensured I stayed very flexible with my approach and assisted my team with setting intentions to propel us forward.

By supporting my team and being flexible we were able to navigate the COVID-19 times with confidence, without fear, and with LOUDER style -- with motion, emotion, and impact.

## DID YOU EVER CONSIDER GIVING UP? WHERE DID YOU GET THE MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE THROUGH YOUR CHALLENGES? WHAT SUSTAINS YOUR DRIVE?

I have not considered giving up because I thrive on challenges and being told that I can't do something pushes me to prove people wrong.

Motivation for me comes from the satisfaction of helping individuals tell their story with motion, emotion, and impact. The feeling I get when I see others achieve their communication goals and tell their story with confidence motivates me to put in the work and make things happen. I also find it very helpful changing my word choice when there are tasks at hand: instead of saying I "should" do this, I alter my word choice to say I "must" get this done.

My drive is sustained by three major things:

### 1) Breaking Big Goals Down:

It is so important to set S.M.A.R.T goals for our personal lives and our business lives. Creating S.M.A.R.T goals sets me up for success by making my goals specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. And to further aid my success I breakdown big goals into smaller chunks to help me achieve them. I love looking at the big picture and setting goals to challenge myself that may be outside of my comfort zone. Sometimes we crush these huge goals right off the bat but sometimes procrastination, fear, perfectionism, and other factors that can often get in the way of achieving these big goals. This is where breaking goals down comes in handy!

### 2) Managing Expectations:

Manage your expectations so that they don't manage you. I always ensure that I communicate with all parties involved so that they have a clear understanding of what to expect and when to expect it. I believe that it is better to over communicate than to under communicate -- I don't leave things up to chance. I learned a long time ago that you should never ever assume -- when in doubt I ask for clarification. I also find it helpful to anticipate various scenarios with my team so that most problems that come our way have been predicted and a thought out solution is readily available.

### 3) Me Time:

As an entrepreneur it can be difficult to turn work off because you feel like time not spent on work is wasted time. But it is so important to realize that this is not the case. I set up "work hours" for myself and try to step away from work throughout the day. I find stepping away and having boundaries with work gives my brain the opportunity to have a breakthrough moment. Some of my favorite "me time" activities include going to yoga, exploring the beautiful Hong Kong outdoors with Hong Kong Outsider where I have faced many fears, and spending time with and spoiling my chihuahua Pepe.



## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE MOST CRITICAL ROLE OF A LEADER DURING CHALLENGING TIMES?

I believe the most critical role of a leader during challenging times is to be a coach with compassion not a coach with compliance and have a strong emotional intelligence. I also believe in being a resonant leader and reading my team.

I plan one-on-one's with my team to stay up-to-date on their progress and their goals. As a leader it is important to stay on track with the direction your team wants to go in -- as a leader you should empower your team to make the choice that leads them to change so they find their goals.

As mentioned, I lead in a laissez-faire style but I try to ensure I am also creating a caring environment where each individual in the organization matters. When you coach and use your emotional intelligence as a leader you anticipate the needs of your team by identifying with them and actively enhancing their well-being. A lot of leaders naturally coach with compliance where they instruct their team members to act the way the organization thinks that they should act.

Be a coach for your team, not a manager. Translation - drive your team's performance to get them to their next level rather than just be someone who organizes the work and processes.

## WHEN THE FUTURE SEEMS SO UNCERTAIN, WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO BOOST MORALE? WHAT CAN A LEADER DO TO INSPIRE, MOTIVATE AND ENGAGE THEIR TEAM?

There are three big things that I find boost morale, inspire, motivate, and engage my team:

### 1. Authentic Communication

As a leader, communication is critical -- good leaders are good communicators. As a leader it is so important to think clearly, express ideas, and share information internally as well as externally. When you communicate as a leader it is so important to be authentic. Stop thinking about how you should sound and just be yourself! Be honest, sincere, and find your own voice -- people don't appreciate people who are inauthentic.

Employees nowadays want to feel like they have a say in an organization and their work matters so it is important that they believe in their leaders. Be a leader with intention, integrity, and consistency whenever you communicate -- this will allow your team to have confidence that you will be calm and practical even during the most uncertain times.

As leaders we must also encourage two-way communication so that employees ask questions and voice their opinions which helps them feel empowered which will lead to greater performance and morale down the road.

Like anything authentic communication takes practice: see what works for you, what doesn't work, and adjust as needed.

## 2. Appreciation

When your team feels appreciated it increases job satisfaction and employee morale. Employees want to know that you care and that you notice their work, when they know you care it increases motivation, team engagement, and productivity. So how do we show our amazing employees that we appreciate them?

### Acknowledge Accomplishments Immediately

Celebrate accomplishments of your team -- even if they are small. Show your appreciation for their accomplishment right away whether it be through a personal note, a phone, call, or a text message. Always praise a job well done, your team can't read your mind. Identify specific actions that you found admirable so that the praise feels sincere.

### Flexible Scheduling

Your employees have lives outside of work! Allow your employees to enjoy life, send them home early, tell them to come in late, and don't let them think about work while they are on vacation. Get excited about the fun things your team is doing outside of work and support a strong work-life balance.

### Provide Opportunity for Advancement

People want the chance to continuously learn and cross-train to learn different departments. Encourage your team to keep learning and show personal interest in their personal and professional goals. Encourage mentoring and job shadowing in your organization which benefits staff wanting to move up and senior management. Senior staff can provide professional guidance to employees with less experience and they can benefit from the fresh perspectives of up-and-coming employees.

## 3. Empowerment

Empowering your employees means giving your employees permission to take action and make decisions. When you empower your employees you build trust in leadership and encourages creativity.

Show employees that feedback is important both ways. As a leader it is important that you encourage your employees to provide feedback to you and the organization -- and make sure that you actually use the feedback and assess it. Feedback shows us how to effectively empower our teams.

When employees feel empowered it rates buy-in and they will have an emotional investment in your organization. By empowering them you will create excitement and encouragement while improving your employees emotional well-being.

### WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE DIFFICULT NEWS TO ONE'S TEAM AND CUSTOMERS?

Situations like delivering difficult news to one's team and customers is one of the many reasons that we need to have a high emotional intelligence as leaders.

### Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

Be sure that you have everything prepared before you enter into the conversation. You need to understand the how and why behind the difficult news, understand who was involved, and know what the rationale was behind the difficult news. When you do a good job of preparing you'll be able to effectively communicate the difficult news and adequately answer any questions that arise.

### Be Direct

People will react in different ways based on how the information is delivered. Being direct isn't only about the words you choose but also about the body language that you use. Be confident in your approach, use eye contact, check your posture, and don't fidget -- poor body language will send the wrong message when you deliver the news. Use your emotional intelligence to be thoughtful and caring with your communication but don't sugar coat anything.

### Next Steps

Once you deliver the news, answer any questions and then direct attention to positivity about the future. Show your team or your client's that you will be there for them with whatever they need. The receivers of the difficult news will need your support so make sure that you are authentically there for them

And most importantly, be empathetic during the entire communication process. Empathy is a key attribute of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Empathy improves our interactions with one another and leads to more effective communication.

## HOW CAN A LEADER MAKE PLANS WHEN THE FUTURE IS SO UNPREDICTABLE?

Life as a leader would be boring if the future was always predictable!

Effective leaders bring certainty into uncertain times. It doesn't mean that the leader has to have all the answers but it's the certainty inside you as a leader that together with their team you are able to find the answers and move ahead.

As leaders, we often know what to do but we don't do what we know. We second guess ourselves out of fear and go off course but trust your instincts and do what you know.

Leaders must continuously work on strengthening their emotional intelligence. I don't believe that it is something one is born with but like any other skill it is something that we can learn and practice. Through our emotional intelligence we can become more flexible and use humour, playfulness, compassion, and creativity in the middle of stressful times -- allowing you to tackle any challenge with your team. When you constantly practice your emotional intelligence and have consistency in your intentions people will look to you for support, insight, and guidance.

Create a vision for your team, give them an idea of what the future can hold. When a vision is put in place, it gives your team a desire to grow, improve, and offer a sense of purpose. Having a sense of purpose gives you the leader and your team a sense of "why." And any small setbacks or obstacles will seem insignificant when you have a strong vision in place -- it helps us persevere through the tough times.

## IS THERE A "NUMBER ONE PRINCIPLE" THAT CAN HELP GUIDE A COMPANY THROUGH THE UPS AND DOWNS OF TURBULENT TIMES?

The number one principle that I would say can help guide a company through turbulent times is communication. There are various aspects of communication that leaders should focus on all the time, and especially during turbulent times. Communication is so important because it puts everything into perspective for the organization.

### Be Versatile in Communication Style

A skilled leader in touch with their emotional intelligence will adjust their communication style based on who they are talking to, the medium they are delivering their communication, and the timing. Be in tune with your team and give them the communication style that they need at that moment.

### Communicate Often

I don't really think that it is possible to over communicate -- keep in mind communication is a two way street that involves a lot of listening and not always talking. Communicate a vision to the entire organization so that teams in all departments can feel inspired and work towards a common goal.

### Use Your Storytelling Skills

Everyone loves a good story and this is now arguably one of the most effective ways to communicate. Storytelling gives purpose to what it is that you are saying and people are more likely to buy in when they understand the purpose behind a decision or a vision.

## CAN YOU SHARE 3 OR 4 OF THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES YOU HAVE SEEN OTHER BUSINESSES MAKE DURING DIFFICULT TIMES? WHAT SHOULD ONE KEEP IN MIND TO AVOID THAT?

### Resisting Change

It can be a scary thing for any leader to have the realization that their business is no longer sustainable. And so often when leaders get to this point they will automatically resist change out of fear and be closed off to new ideas.

In these situations, leaders have to think back to when they started their business or got into their career when they went against the norm, challenged the status quo and made some pretty amazing things happen. Use some creative thinking and a disruptive mindset to once again challenge the status quo and embrace change.

### Not Effectively Communicating

No one likes to be the person who has to deliver difficult news but this is all part of being a leader. Communicating with your team and partners through good times and difficult times is all part of being an effective leader. Sometimes you have to be the one to have those difficult conversations and make the difficult decisions so it is crucial that we realize that this is our role as leaders.

During difficult times your team will be scared and possibly even feel uncertain about their job security so it is important for leaders to be transparent and honest about challenges that the business is facing, even if they do not have all the answers for their team. Leaders who continue to be compassionate and transparent during difficult times will create more loyalty and trust with their employees.

#### Learning from Experiences

So often when a leader makes a mistake they will just beat themselves up for all the things that went wrong and continue to live in the past. But what do we achieve from this? Instead, take a step back and learn from the experience!

Ask yourself some empowering questions: What could I do better to have a positive impact on my success? What evidence could I have been more in tune to and picked up on? What will I do in the future to be certain that this does not happen again?

#### Sacrifice Quality

When we are going through difficult times we need to keep a handle on costs and we need to get employees on board with our vision and any changes that are being made.

When we cut costs and make changes it is so so important that we do not sacrifice the quality of our product or service. Find a happy medium that works for you in order to keep your existing quality in place.

HERE IS THE PRIMARY QUESTION OF OUR DISCUSSION. BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE AND SUCCESS, WHAT ARE THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS A BUSINESS LEADER SHOULD DO TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY DURING UNCERTAIN AND TURBULENT TIMES? PLEASE SHARE A STORY OR AN EXAMPLE FOR EACH.

#### 1. Effective Communication

An effective leader needs to be a skilled communicator for internal communication and external communication. Leaders who do not have strong communication skills can have a direct impact on employee satisfaction, motivation, and even productivity. Ensuring that your employees are motivated for a common vision and driven for success should become a top priority for all leaders. As leaders, we need to think with clarity, clearly express ideas, and share information to multiple audiences within the organization and outside of the organization.

I learned a long time ago that effective communication as a leader goes way beyond expressing communication verbally. It's also listening, body language, authenticity, and attitude. When leading seminars with senior leaders in organizations, this is always something that I stress to my clients: create awareness in all avenues of your communication within the organization.

LOUDER is very interesting as an organization because we have a global team. My communication style as a leader needs to take into account different cultures, backgrounds, and time zones. When COVID began I also had to take into account the various situations each of our team members was in -- some were in lockdown, some were not, lockdowns were different on every continent where some people were able to leave their house for extended periods and some were not. As a leader over the past year and a half, I had to remind myself to be human, put myself in my teams' shoes, and check in with my team often to see how they were doing mentally. My goal as a leader over the pandemic was to project confidence and strength and to be united as an organization.

## 2. Tactful Empathy

By using tactful empathy as leaders we can create a stronger buy-in and work together as a team to create a mutual understanding of change required to execute various strategies, and successfully implement them. Tactful empathy allows us as leaders to understand and provide employees with what they need to succeed which gives employees trust and strengthens our relationships with our employees.

Characteristics of empathetic leaders include listening attentively to what your employees are telling you and putting complete focus on the person talking through eye contact, body language, and not fidgeting. It should be your goal to spend more time listening than talking so that you can have a better understanding of any difficulties they are facing and your employee will feel heard.

As a leader I make it a point to understand the individual goals and purpose of each individual on my team so that we can work together to align these with the organization's goals. I also have bi-weekly sit downs with my team individually to check in on their goals and get their thoughts and ideas on various projects. I believe that by being more in tune to my employee's goals, I can create a tactful approach to accomplishing the goals of the organization.

## 3. Impactful Intentions

When you set impactful intentions as a leader you are creating a new and specific state of mind that serves the purpose of yourself and of the organization. You want to set intentions that describe how you want to show up, be visible, and contribute. They represent the core values of you as a leader and the organization and aim at creating an attitude so that you commit to following through with the intentions that you set.

Intentions differentiate from goals because they don't focus on one single outcome. Goals are more focused on the future whereas intentions are focused on the present moment and how you want to be moment to moment. When you set your intentions they should be positive, uplifting and in the present tense.

As a leader I am always setting intentions for myself and for my company and I share these intentions with my team. My intention as a leader is to be a confident leader who supports my team with achieving their dreams, living their lives, and enjoying laughs along the way. I remind my team that we are not brain surgeons so stop stressing out and enjoy life! I also encourage my team to set intentions for projects, clients, and presentations to help them express their authentic selves in everything that they do.

#### 4. Never Stop Learning

When we feel we are growing and learning it gives us purpose. When we stop growing we might feel feelings of fear and anxiety -- sometimes without even realizing it. I'm always reading a new book, taking a course, or listening to a podcast. I love learning new skills! As a leader I also make an effort to connect with other entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs, and industry experts so that we can share knowledge, experience, and discuss ideas.

The most empowering knowledge that we can learn with our teams is not a particular set of skills or competencies, it's knowing that you can learn anything you want to know -- you have the power and the choice. And this is something every leader should have in their core values and encourage amongst their team.

I encourage my team to keep learning and give them the tools to do so which give them the feeling of a purpose. As a team we chat about the new book we just read or a course that we would recommend everyone to take. When there are uncertain times, there is one thing we can stay certain about as a team is that we will keep learning. Through COVID we were able to find various companies doing super cool things with online events, connect with them, and learn -- there have been some great opportunities in this space.

#### 5. Take Care of Your Team

Simply put, take care of your team and they will take care of you and your business. Culture is the personality of your business and the environment that you create for your team. As a leader it is important that you live and breathe your values which is why it is important to make them authentic so that it's just second nature to you. If your business is going through uncertain times where perhaps you need to cut costs, do not cut company culture and engagement -- your people need you.

Taking care of your team means having strong employee engagement and workplace culture. I am a firm believer in flexible work hours so I encourage my staff to create work hours that accommodate their lifestyles and if they take the afternoon off to go to the beach, I'm all for it! When you make an effort to engage your team and make them feel like they have a say, they will take care of your customers and your business will thrive.

This past year, I made more of an effort to check in on my employee's mental well-being, their safety and security, and their free time. With the lockdowns taking place around the globe, I found it difficult for myself to step away from work because what else was there to do? But I made sure to take time for myself and ensured the same from my team.

CAN YOU PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FAVORITE  
'LIFE LESSON QUOTE'? CAN YOU SHARE HOW  
THAT WAS RELEVANT TO YOU IN YOUR LIFE?

My favorite life lesson quote:

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath away." - Maya Angelou

In my life, I try to do things, be with people, spend my time and energy positively, and pour my heart into moments that take my breath away. Life is a beautiful thing so let's live it!

XO

*Yamilette Cano*  
LOUDER founder



THANK YOU!

A huge thank you to Charlie Katz for this fun interview and thank you to Authority Magazine, Thrive Global, & bitbean for publishing this piece.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

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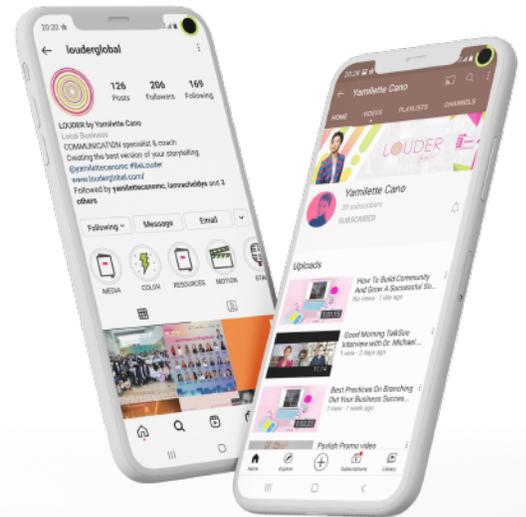
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