

'Lead with Love' Transforming Corporate America

On Wall Street and in the board room, the topic of "leading with love" doesn't come up too often. Joel Manby, head of one of the country's leading theme park companies, hopes to change that.

Television viewers first saw Manby's philosophy on the CBS show *Undercover Boss*. Manby wanted to tell the world that "love works," even in corporate America.

The Love of Jesus

Manby's job is to show families a good time. His mission at Herschend Family Entertainment is to maintain a culture that models the love of Jesus.

"We are to love others as He loved us," Manby shared with CBN News. "He pleaded with His disciples on His last night to do that, so I don't see how we can go to work Monday through Friday and leave that alone."

On *Undercover Boss*, viewers witnessed that care when Manby disguised himself as an entry-level worker at Silver Dollar City, the company's theme park in Branson, Mo.

More than 18 million viewers watched Manby at Silver Dollar City that week. It was the second most popular program, trailing only *American Idol*. It was a show that made him a household name and also a show that transformed his heart.

"What *Undercover Boss* did for me is allow me to touch the true stories of those who were suffering inside our own company, and everybody has something going on in their life," Manby explained.

"It may not be cancer; it may not be a destroyed home like it

was in *Undercover Boss*, but everybody's struggling. And when I touched their lives and felt it emotionally, then I really wanted to help," he said.

After the program, Herschend Entertainment ramped up Share It Forward, the company's foundation that helps employees in need.

Manby said that before his TV experience Share It Forward helped around 40 families a year. Now, that number has grown to more than 800.

"We take care of our own here, and frankly we don't need the government to help us take care of our employees, and I think I'd rather do it ourselves," Manby said.

Leadership Crisis?

That wasn't the only lesson from going undercover. Manby received emails from people around the world who watched the show and complained about their own bosses.

"I realized that we had a leadership crisis in this country," Manby told CBN News. "And that's when I decided to write this book so I could share these principles and give hope to others who felt like there should be love in the workplace."

The result: *Love Works. Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders*. In the book, Manby encourages those in charge to follow biblical guidelines of being patient, kind, trusting, unselfish, truthful, forgiving and dedicated.

The message isn't to ignore the bottom line, but to look at profits differently. For example, Herschend Family Entertainment sees them as a product of doing the right thing over and over again for customers and employees.

"We're in markets like San Francisco, Philadelphia; they don't necessarily always agree with the Christianity part, but they agree with the values part," Manby said. "And they like

knowing how they're going to be treated. And I tell you, it has worked everywhere, not just in Branson."

Manby said you can lead this way and still hit the numbers. He described his company as more profitable than ever.

During the last seven years, operating profit grew more than 50 percent, and the company generates a 14 percent annual return to shareholders.

When Love Becomes a Verb

Co-founders Jack and Pete Herschend, whom Manby calls his heroes, call his style a win-win.

"Talk to the regional Vice President Brad Thomas here about budget, and he'll say Joel is very strict on budget," Pete Herschend told CBN News. "But Joel pays attention to the people of this company. I've been here 52 years; he knows more men and women in the company by their first name than I do."

"The potential of that book impacting other leaders and therefore changing the lives of entire organizations is very, very exciting," Jack Herschend shared with CBN News.

"The biggest thing I want readers to take away is that love does work as a leadership principle in the for-profit world," Manby emphasized. "It's not just for the home. And it's also love the verb, not love the emotion."

This CEO believes love, the verb, will lead to more content leaders, employees and customers, a culture where the use of power doesn't become the abuse of power.