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Former CEO of Century Medical Inc.;
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Akira Hoshino's Leadership Lessons **| ExCo Insights**

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In this series, we explore some of the most important lessons and insights from our executive coaches and mentors.

Akira Hoshino, executive coach and mentor at The ExCo Group, former CEO of Century Medical Inc., and Current Auditor of CARE International Japan, shares his leadership lessons. These include understanding the people you lead, the importance of accountability, and the skill of staying highly attuned to your team.

KEY LEADERSHIP LESSONS

A key lesson was the importance of truly understanding the people you lead. I learned this lesson from my younger son. When he was growing up, I put a lot of pressure on him, saying that he had to be number one in his studies and in sports. I thought we were doing well, but when he was 15, he ran away from home and disappeared for two weeks. My wife and I searched for him, visiting his friends and all the places he used to go, but we couldn't find him. We eventually found him after two weeks, and he returned home, but he was still unhappy about how things were. I spent six months trying to

understand where he was coming from. He finally shared that he couldn't take the pressure and he wanted some freedom.

I also realized that I was taking a similar approach to the team at work by putting a lot of pressure on them. I wanted us to do better than our budget and be number one in the company. I reflected on the fact that if I can't even have a good relationship with my son, how can I build a good relationship with my team and lead them well? So, I completely changed the way I managed. I listened carefully to them every day. I asked them more questions about their backgrounds and the challenges they were facing in their lives. That approach helped me feel closer to my team.

Another lesson is about the importance of accountability. When I was a CEO, I of course had to make a lot of decisions. Initially, I found that many people were coming to me to argue with the decisions I was making because they affected their job. And so I changed my approach and started sharing more of my thinking about how I reached a decision, how I weighed the pros and cons, and what the decision meant for the company.

I changed my approach by sharing more about how I reached decisions and what they meant for the company. It helped build understanding and trust.

WHEN I COACH CLIENTS, WE OFTEN TALK ABOUT...

One common theme is the importance of always considering risks and considering different scenarios, including the worst-case scenario. In business, many things can go wrong. For example, what if your star salesperson leaves? What is the succession plan? You have to consider all the different risks and scenarios while ensuring they don't prevent you from moving forward and making decisions.

Another topic that clients often discuss is the challenge of managing people. What should they do if they have a problematic relationship with certain employees? My advice is to try to see as many of your employees as possible every day and pay attention to any changes in their body language or behaviors. This is more difficult in companies where people work remotely, but you really have to be highly attuned to reading facial expressions on video calls.