

Leadership example

In an interview with biotechnology giant Amgen, CEO Kevin Sharer tells this remarkable anecdote of the moment it was just announced he was going to become CEO the following year: "I asked the top 150 people in the company to meet with me for an hour each—150 hours in total. And I gave each of them the same five questions, which they received in advance: What three things do you want to change? What three things do you want to keep? What are you most worried I might do? What do you want me to do? Is there anything else you want to talk about? And I just listened for an hour. Many of the people came in with stuff written down, and in the case of those who didn't, I took notes. And then I tabulated all the responses, coming up with a pretty accurate and timely picture of what the top 150 leaders in the company wanted to do. I put all of this together and sent out a memo to the entire company summarizing my findings. These interviews gave me the mandate to do what I needed to do. It created a shared reality for the company and allowed people to begin aligning around a number of goals. The exercise was probably the single most important thing I did upon becoming CEO". -- Amen.