

## Celice Swanson

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## LEADING WITH GRACE

I want to ask you something.

#### When was the last time you led with grace?

I'll ask again.

#### When was the last time you led with grace?

You may be thinking, 'Celia, I can't even think of the last time I led with grace.' And if you're thinking that, you're my kind of people. Why? Because leading with grace is easier said than done and we'll unpack that more in just a moment.

I'm the author of a book called, <u>Gracious and Strong</u>, and I'm often asked why I chose that title. The phrase was brought to my attention when one of my former Walmart colleagues said to me, 'Celia, I saw you lead through seven CEO changes under the most scrutinizing circumstances and throughout it all you were nothing but gracious and strong.'

That phrase really stuck with me because I thought 'Hmm. I'm not sure grace is the first word I want to be known for as a business executive.' Why? Because that's not really a term you hear or see demonstrated very well in the business world, right?

But what I've found overtime is that leading with grace truly is the secret sauce to being a great leader. And it is ultimately about how well you can handle unexpected left turns that are inevitable throughout your leadership journey.



#### **Unexpected Left Turns**

An unexpected left turn is a concept I write about in my book. It's when you face a seemingly insurmountable challenge that hits you out of left field. Our lives and careers are simply a series of unexpected left turns that take us from one season to the next. They can seem like insurmountable challenges or golden opportunities. They can happen fast or slowly build overtime. The key is to navigate these challenges with grace and not get stuck or become paralyzed by the situation.

#### What do you think of when you hear the term 'unexpected left turns'?

- Perhaps you were laid off or have had to lay someone off yourself?
- Maybe you've lost a relationship or are going through a divorce?
- What about a global crisis that completely disruptives your business and way of life?
- A death of a family member or loved one?

These are all very real examples. Many of them I've lived out myself. But the reality is, regardless of what happens at work, it's up to you to show up in a way that matters.

And that's where leading with grace comes into play.

I define leading with grace as doing three things

Leading with the heart, Leading with the mind and Leading with respect

Leading with grace is when you capture the heart, the mind and respect of the individual.





Well, Celia, what does that actually look like?



These three principles are profoundly necessary - otherwise you risk:

- Losing your sense of purpose and direction you've lost your ability to ignite a sense of achievement and purpose within your work.
- Not knowing your true North losing your sense of direction of where you're headed.
- The ability to effectively face unexpected left turns of life and leadership you lose your ability to face unexpected left turns seeing them as threats vs. opportunities.

The following guide unpacks principles for how you can lead with grace in the workplace. You can use the final page to capture notes on how you can apply what you've learned to your own leadership journey.





#### LEADING WITH



The very best and most trusted leaders cultivate the **heart, mind, & respect** of the individual.

#### Leading with THE HEART

#### **Have Courage**

Have the courage to stay within your Bright Lines even when there is high risk and little to no return. Realize that leading with the heart requires you to bring your entire self to work and think holistically about who you are as a leader.

#### Care and Show It

Demonstrate that you care about people as individuals by understanding their perspective and how your decisions as a leader ultimately affect them personally and professionally.

#### Inspire

Nurture your team's sense of achievement through celebrating wins and major milestones. Recognize publicly that what they do matters and how it has a direct impact on the organization.

#### Leading with THE MIND

#### Look Ahead

Ask, 'How can I rise above the grips of my current situation?' As a resilient leader, you must constantly look for golden moments of growth amidst the most challenging seasons in your life and career.

#### **Shift Your Focus**

Ask, 'How can I create opportunity for others?' Although it's important to set goals, true success comes when you focus not only on being your best self but replicating that behavior in others.

#### **Fuel Purpose**

Bring your personal mission to life by seeing the larger vision at hand. Amidst every unexpected left turn is an opportunity to show yourself and others what you're truly made of as well as what drives you to be your best.



## Leading with

#### **Be Present**

Showing respect for the individual is a core principle of leading with grace. Respect is shown when you are truly present with others and have strong awareness of your emotions and state of mind.

#### **Defend Dignity**

Take every opportunity to advocate for yourself and others when Bright Lines are crossed. You will earn the trust, honesty and transparency of those around you.

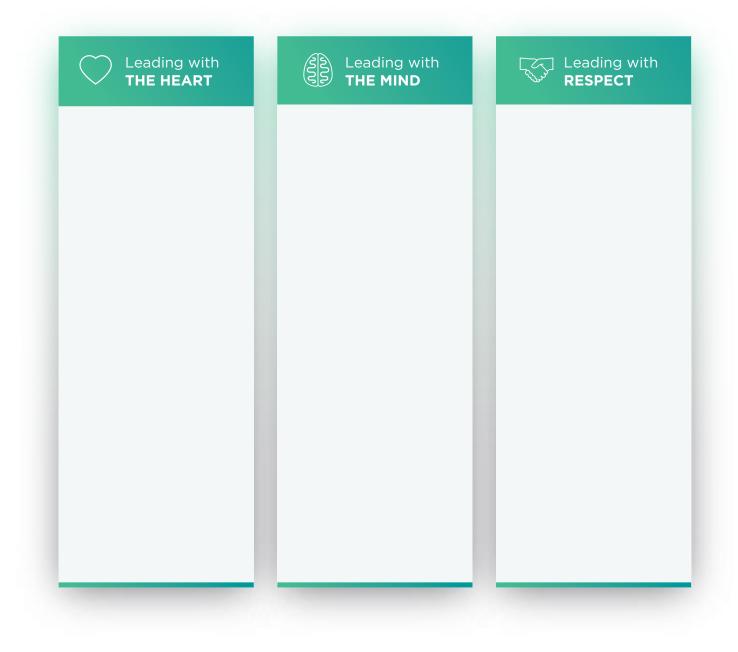
#### Add Value

You demonstrate respect when you show up and contribute more than expected. Don't just add on to what someone else says, always ensure you are stretching an idea and finding new ways to excel.

Cultivating the **heart, mind, & respect** of the individual over time will empower, build confidence, boost loyalty, and create a powerful sense of 'we' within your organization.

# GRACE

Use this page to capture your thoughts on how you can lead with grace.





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Celia Swanson is a senior executive leader who spent 25+ years at the world's largest retailer championing its culture and its people. She is notably recognized as the first female executive vice president at Walmart Inc. breaking the glass ceiling for many women to follow.

In addition to her professional career, Celia is known for her community leadership in Northwest Arkansas. She was selected by the Northwest Arkansas business community as the 2016 Athena Woman of the Year for her excellence in community service, board leadership and regional impact in Northwest Arkansas.

Celia's contributions were recognized by receiving the top two operations awards from Sam's Club and Walmart US. Her deep expertise in retail, large-scale transformation, company culture and multigenerational workforce engagement serves as the cornerstone of her career legacy.

### HOW CAN I SERVE YOU?

#### CONSULTANT AND COACH

Developing Leadership Aligning Culture and Mission Strategic Planning Managing Change Engaging Your Board of Directors

#### SPEAKER

Conferences and Corporate Gatherings

#### WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

Training Tailored to Your Company

#### AUTHOR

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