

Empathy as a Performance Strategy: *The Heart of Leadership Excellence*

Overview

Leaders today face rising pressure, declining trust, and increasing burnout. In this provocative and energizing keynote, **Craig Dowden (PhD)** — bestselling author and executive coach to top CEOs — debunks the myth that empathy is a soft skill that is only about being “nice.” Instead, he shows how empathy is a competitive advantage that drives accountability, alignment, and performance.

Blending powerful stories, scientific evidence, exclusive insights from over 200 CEO and global thought leader interviews, and proprietary data from his evidence-based Empathy Assessment, Craig introduces a bold new framework for empathy as the catalyst for peak performance. He arms leaders with a **practical, high-impact roadmap** for leading with empathy without compromising expectations, authority, or results.

Key Audience Takeaways

- 01** A research-backed definition of empathy that strengthens performance rather than lowering standards.
- 02** Clarity on the three dimensions of empathy — cognitive, emotional, and behavioral — and how to apply each under pressure.
- 03** Insight into common leadership blind spots that erode trust, and how to correct them in real time.
- 04** Tactical tools for navigating feedback, conflict, and courageous conversations with empathy and credibility.
- 05** How to foster a culture of empathy and peak performance.
- 06** The future of empathy in an AI-driven world.

Why Craig

RESEARCH

Empathy Research in Action

Craig's upcoming book, *Empathy: The Heart of Leadership Excellence*, features original insights from 75+ CEOs and global thought leaders — including Starbucks, Campbell Soup, TELUS, Old Navy, and Equifax — alongside Daniel Pink, Marshall Goldsmith, Amy Edmondson, Stephen M. R. Covey, and Kim Scott.

EXPERIENCE

Real-World CEO Experience

Host of the *Do Good to Lead Well* podcast — ranked in the top 0.5% globally — and facilitator of elite CEO Mastermind groups at Harvard University and across North America.

CREDIBILITY

Evidence-Based & Engaging

PhD in psychology. *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* bestselling author. Keynote speaker known for translating science into actionable strategies — with warmth, humility, and humor.

Ideal For:

Executive Teams in High-Stakes Environments

Whether navigating rapid growth, complex stakeholder demands, or organizational uncertainty, this keynote equips senior leaders with the tools to lead empathetically without sacrificing results.

Founders & C-Suite Leaders Managing Transformational Change

Ideal for leaders facing reorgs, M&A, cultural realignment, or crisis recovery. This session addresses the emotional dynamics of change while building team cohesion and trust.

Leaders Committed to High Performance Without Burnout

Empathy is a powerful lever for sustainable excellence. This keynote supports those seeking to drive accountability and wellbeing side by side.

Conference Keynotes & Association Events

A compelling choice for audiences looking for fresh, science-backed perspectives on empathy, leadership, and the future of work — especially in tech, healthcare, education, and government.

CEO Forums, Masterminds & Leadership Development Programs

Designed for high-caliber, growth-oriented leaders who value self-awareness, evidence-based tools, and a deeper understanding of how to elevate team performance through human connection.

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