

## Rule #45: Do Right

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**A**LL WE HAVE ARE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS. IF THESE HEARTS AND minds *aren't* taken care of, what kind of company are we going to be? We need to create an environment where people's hearts and minds can thrive."

That statement, for me, is the epitome of heart-led leadership. It was spoken by the CEO of a billion-dollar company who is committed to growing profits, expanding market share, and satisfying shareholders. A CEO who is committed to accomplishing these things as a heart-led leader.

The individual who said those words to me is Tee Green, one of the most authentic, humble, and service-oriented leaders I've ever met. He is the CEO of Greenway Health, a medical software company based in Carrollton, Georgia. Over the past several years, I have spoken in various venues to the company's executives, employees, and customers and have gotten to know the organization fairly

well. Greenway is not just an industry leader in the field of electronic medical records; it is also known for its exceptional service and its caring attitude toward clients, employees, and communities.

I experienced this firsthand when I was at the company's annual conference recently and saw Tee speak to 3,000 Greenway customers. After introducing a new product line, he said: "Look, I'm the CEO. The buck stops here. If anyone here has a problem with our software, or a question about it, call me. Here is my cell phone number."

And Tee then gave his personal cell phone number to the 3,000 attendees. That is putting yourself on the line for your product. That is caring about your customers.

Tee founded Greenway with his father in 1998. The company provides software to physicians, pharmacies, and other health care providers so they can electronically manage medical records and revenue cycles. Greenway also specializes in health care analytics—the use of software to interpret clinical studies, analyze the efficiency of care, or utilize genetic information to develop better treatments. His father is now retired from the firm, but Tee has helped Greenway become one of the country's top providers of medical software. For a while, the company was growing at a rate of 30 percent a year, and although that rate is not sustainable forever, Greenway is still growing rapidly—just last year the company hired 450 new personnel, and now it has 1,700 employees.

Greenway went public in 2012; two years later it was bought for \$644 million by Vista Equity Partners, to merge

it with Vitera Healthcare Solutions, another medical software company. At the time, Greenway was working with 15,000 health care providers in the United States; Vitera had a client list of 85,000 providers.

Mergers take place all the time in the business world, but there is an aspect of this deal that is not so common: the new company is called Greenway Health, the software products are marketed under the Greenway brand, and the new CEO is none other than Tee Green. Now, how many times do two companies merge and retain the name and the management team of the smaller company? Not often.

When I asked Tee about this, he was his typical humble self. “Well, I think Vista Equity just liked our road map,” he said. “They liked where we were driving the company.”

But mergers are about hard-nosed business decisions. Even though Vitera was six times the size of Greenway, Vista Equity was not just giving preference to Greenway’s products or “book of business.” It was buying into the Greenway brand and into Greenway’s concept of heart-led leadership. It was buying into the who, not just the what.

I don’t have any particular knowledge of medical software, but I am passionate about people and servant leadership. And, based on my experience in working with hundreds of companies and thousands of executives, I can tell you that Greenway is run by some special individuals.

For one, I don’t think I’ve ever been greeted more warmly by staff members at any company than I have been at Greenway. But the distinctiveness of the company’s

culture goes beyond mere friendliness. It's apparent when you walk into a meeting with Greenway executives how much they care about each other, and that they are dedicated not only to growing their company but also to ensuring that the organization maintains its character for the long term.

"We wanted to build a generational company that would be around for decades and be able to make a true impact," Tee told me. "We wanted to fundamentally change how health care was provided. At the same time, we wanted to attract people who would build a career here, not just stay a few years and move on. I wanted to build an organization that employees would be proud to be a part of."

"Look, anyone can build a company and then sell it a few years later and make a lot of money," he said. "But is that really what it's all about? I'd rather do something for the long term and build something that lasts."

Mike Hairston, executive vice president for sales, and Eric Grunden, vice president for professional services, have worked with Tee for years. Mike first met Tee when they were students and fraternity brothers at Auburn University; he has worked at Greenway almost since its founding in 1999. Eric has been with Greenway for more than a decade. I spoke with the two of them one day in an effort to get more insight into Greenway's brand of heart-led leadership.

Mike shared a story from the company's early days that, to him, symbolizes what Tee and Greenway are all about.

"This happened shortly after I started here. One of the

first sales I made was with a company in Mississippi, and we had some of their employees come to Georgia for training on the new system,” he told me. “While they were training, one of the women got a phone call that no parent wants to receive. She found out her son had been killed in a car accident. Well, Tee heard about this and he immediately ran out of his office and went down the hill to the training center so he could console this lady. Then, within an hour, he had somehow secured a private plane to fly her back to Mississippi so she could be with her family.

“Now remember, this is when we were just starting out and Greenway didn’t have a lot of staff or financial resources. But Tee felt it was important for us to support this woman in her time of need. Then a week later, he came into my office and said to me, ‘I feel like I need to go down to Meridian, Mississippi.’ So we went there together and we visited the woman who had lost her son. Tee gave her a long embrace and sat there and talked with her for some time.

“That’s the sort of action that comes from the heart of a person. Tee has always had this heart, and it shows in the way he built the company. I believe that companies take on the personality of their leader. If your CEO is brash or dishonest or egocentric, then you wind up with a company that is brash, dishonest, or egocentric. If your CEO has a heart for serving others, then you wind up with a company that has a heart for serving others. And that’s what Tee is all about.”

Eric Grunden also told me about an incident that illustrates Tee’s distinctive style of leadership.

culture goes beyond mere friendliness. It's apparent when uses a whiteboard a lot," Eric said. "And he writes a number down in the corner of the board. So in one of my first meetings with him, I noticed that number on the board and asked him what it was. I guessed that it represented the number of employees at the company. 'You're close,' he told me. 'It's the number of families that are represented by employees who work here.'

"Well, that just says it all about Tee. That sort of caring for the families of his employees. It really hammered home for me that I'd chosen the right company and the right leader to work for."

Mike and Eric told me about what has become known at Greenway as Rule #45: Do Right.

"One time, we came up with a list of 60 or 70 words or phrases that represented what we wanted to be and to achieve as a company," Mike said. "Number 45 on that list was 'do right.' And that has become a phrase that we use all the time now at Greenway. We try to remember Rule #45 because we want to do right by our families, our customers, our co-workers. It's hard sometimes when you're also facing financial pressures to think in these terms, but Tee feels that you should look at everything through the lens of 'Am I doing the right thing?' If you are, then it's the right decision."

*Do right.* Those two words sum up what Greenway Health is all about. And they are what heart-led leadership is all about.

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**AS PART OF DOING** right, the company has tried to be cognizant of its responsibility to give back to the community. In fact, to me, Tee's greatest success as CEO of Greenway Health isn't in building a billion-dollar company but in fostering a partnership with Rapha Clinics, a nonprofit organization that offers free medical services to people who cannot afford health care.

The first Rapha Clinics were founded in Georgia by Sue Brockman. For years Sue worked on little more than a shoestring budget and a prayer. Tee met Sue in 2012 and discovered that she was managing two medical clinics in Temple and Bowdon, Georgia, with ancient computers and little funding. He believed Rapha's mission of providing free health care to residents living below the poverty line was a perfect way to show Greenway's commitment to giving back and its belief that everyone should have access to quality medical care. So he decided to help. Greenway organized several fund-raisers for Rapha and provided the organization with free medical software and training. The company also recruited volunteers to work at Rapha, looking both among its own employees and among Greenway customers. Some doctors who use the Greenway software now volunteer as staff physicians at the clinics.

"Our customer base is service-oriented," Tee said. "Most physicians go to medical school because they want

to help people. So they get excited about things like the Rapha Clinics.”

I visited one of these clinics after Tee invited me to speak at Rapha’s annual fund-raiser, and I came away incredibly inspired. The clinic, which had several examination rooms for physicians as well as a dental facility, has served about 6,000 patients over the past few years, and not one of them has paid a dime for medical care. What impressed me even more, though, were the passionate volunteers. From the second I walked in the front door, I felt love for the patients in a way that I’ve never felt in any other doctor’s or dentist’s office.

“I owe a great deal to Tee and his people,” Sue told me. “Tee is such a caring, compassionate person, and he and everyone at Greenway have given so much of their time to support Rapha. And Tee has such a beautiful vision for what Rapha can become.”

That vision goes beyond fund-raisers, software, and volunteers for a local health care clinic. Greenway decided to make these clinics a core part of its mission and has set a goal of opening a new Rapha site for every 1,000 new customers. As this book goes to press, two new clinics are slated to open in Georgia and Alabama, and more are in the planning stages. One reason why Greenway employees are so committed to adding those 1,000 new customers is because they know they are doing more than just growing a company. It’s not only about making profits; it’s also about changing lives.

During my last visit to Greenway’s campus, I stayed at

Tee's home. While I was there, I asked him about his management style, his business philosophies, and the culture of the company he built.

"Very early on in my career," he said, "I saw that many people weren't concerned with the heart of the other people they worked with—nobody knew their neighbor, so to speak. But I figured out that if we tried to understand our neighbor, the people we worked with, then we could learn what motivated them and what was in their hearts and minds. And then, once we did that, it had beneficial effects on the whole workplace. People were happier, we had less turnover, and we had more consistency in the execution of our vision."

That sounds great, I told him, but how does a business leader go about accomplishing this?

"Well, that's not to say it's easy," he answered. "It's actually harder this way. Anyone can go into a meeting and be comfortable talking about revenue streams or profit margins. But if you ask someone to talk about themselves, it's uncomfortable. That's a whole other layer there that you're getting into. When you sit down in my office and I ask you what your mind is like, what your heart is like, what is happening with your family, that's uncomfortable, and you have to be a strong and disciplined leader to do it consistently with each of your team members. But it's important if you want to build high-performance teams. Because if you don't understand someone's heart, you won't ever have full trust."

What do you say, I wanted to know, to people who think

this is too touchy-feely to be part of a strategy for business or a leadership philosophy?

“It’s true that people may think it’s touchy-feely,” he said, “but I believe it’s just the opposite. Come into my office and ask people about me. No one will say that I’m soft. I look at this as an investment. I’m investing in my team and in their hearts. And the only way to invest in someone’s heart is to show them yours.”

I did, in fact, ask people in Tee’s office about his management style, and they all confirmed that he was a caring but demanding boss. “He is not soft by any means,” Mike Hairston told me. “He is very direct in what his expectations are, he is very demanding, and he holds us accountable. But you can require a high level of performance from your team and still be compassionate. Just because you have a great heart doesn’t mean you’re a pushover.”

Near the end of my conversation with Tee, I asked him to tell me about the business principles that he used as the foundation for Greenway Health.

“We’re not perfect,” he told me, “but what we consider every day is service. We’ve built our company around the tenets of service, innovation, and leadership. But service is number one. How can we serve? That is what we try to live as a company. Service is when you put others first: your customers, your company, your industry, your community. In corporate America, we’re taught to perform, to win. We’re taught that it’s a dog-eat-dog world. But I like to think that we can win in a different way.

“Every day I wake up and ask myself, ‘How can I serve

today? How can I make someone smile? How can I make their day better?’ That’s the business model I want to have. Because the more you can do that, the more you can positively affect others, the more successful you will be.”

*How can I serve today? How can I make someone smile? How can I do right?* Those are the words of a heart-led leader who happens to be running a billion-dollar company.

The truth is, if Greenway Health can become a billion-dollar company using a model that focuses on taking care of people’s hearts and minds and on serving and positively impacting others, other organizations can do the same. Heart-led leadership is not just a warm and fuzzy approach; it’s not just an idealistic attitude or a way to make employees and customers happier. It’s a leadership philosophy that can positively impact your bottom line. Heart-led leadership is a business model that produces extraordinary *love-driven* results. And why wouldn’t everyone want to emulate that?