ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Love and Flourishing in a Business Organization: The Practical Wisdom of Barry-Wehmiller, Inc.

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Abstract

Organizations can encourage the development of networks of loving relations and an overall culture of love that promotes flourishing. Although high-level expressions of this reality are not yet statistically normal, they are morally normative—and much can be gained from studying the relatively successful outliers. These exemplar organizations serve as pathfinders for groups that desire greater flourishing and wonder about practices that might work even in settings currently characterized by zero-sum competition. This article frames meanings of "love" and "flourishing" that are practical in a business context—containing implications for other sectors characterized by a sense of collaboration, including sectors where scarcity and antagonism are normal (i.e., most human systems). For this purpose, we focus on Barry-Wehmiller, Inc. We explore some of the ritualized practices within this corporation, as reflected in the published literature and in the experiences and observations of Brian Wellinghoff (BW's Senior Director, Leadership and Outreach), that have helped this organization to emerge as a beacon for others. We suggest that the degree to which such rituals are skillfully enacted helps to shape the flourishing experiences of the people within Barry-Wehmiller's span of care—and serves as a beacon to those in other companies interested in learning from Barry-Wehmiller.

In response to the 2008–2009 global financial meltdown, the "worst economic crisis of our lifetime" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 98), many large business organizations engaged in

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the predictable action of laying off thousands of employees. This violent, systemic outcome is standard operating procedure in many organizations during the "bust" part of the inevitable boom/bust business cycle. It is perfectly legal and, although lamentable, generally socially approved. Such "carnage" may be normal almost everywhere—even taken-for-granted. But not at Barry-Wehmiller, Inc.:

> The carnage ran wide and deep. In 2008, Citicorp laid off 73,000 people. Bank of America, 35,000. General Motors 34,000, and Hewlett-Packard 25,000. Fortune 500 companies laid off another 163,662 people…. Before we had embraced our Guiding Principles of Leadership, when something like this happened we 'rightsized' our organization with little hesitation, laying off people in the offices and plants experiencing a significant drop in new orders. It was considered good and responsible management, and I [Chapman] had done it for years… (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 99–100).

As CEO of the company, Bob Chapman realized that "if we let people go in that brutal economic environment, it would devastate them and their families and even some communities…. The human toll was almost too painful to contemplate" (p. 100). Why was it "too painful" for Chapman to follow the expected practice of laying off thousands, but not for leaders of other large companies? Why did Chapman care?

Before we provide answers about this specific company, which is the focus of our article, it is helpful to consider similar experiences at other companies to underscore the point that such outliers, while statistically rare, are more prevalent than is commonly recognized. Hewlett Packard provides a good example. During a time of great economic stress, when the technology giant was at risk of "folding" (Senge 2022), it was kept afloat largely because of great technological innovations originating within one of its divisions. When researchers attempted to understand what was driving this innovation within the 15,000 workers located in this division, they discovered that it could be traced to small, collaborative networks of 20 or 30 people each. These "networks of loving relations" arose "naturally" (Senge 2022: n.p.), with some members drawn from inside the organization and others from outside (even from competitors), and they were not assembled or directed by management. In these networks, people helped each other solve problems, not because they were directed to do so, but because they wanted to… because they cared. Love and care had been made practical: "I will never forget that group of HP engineers and managers talking in the most matter-of-fact way about love—not as a romantic sentiment but as the *utmost practical truth* about what they knew to work [i.e., to be successful] in their work… (Senge 2005: 19, emphasis added). It is becoming more widely appreciated that organizational "effectiveness depends on the qualities of the social relationships" (Senge 2005: 19).

Another outlier: The Breakers, a luxury hotel in Palm Beach, Florida. Prior to 2003, annual employee turnover was 100%, meaning that, on average, people quit their job within a year. By 2019, the yearly turnover rate was down to 17%, among the best in the entire hospitality industry. What changed? As CEO Paul Leone explained:

> We strive to be an organization of conscience and action, a culture of care and well-being. Our drive to succeed across our diverse businesses is ultimately fueled by our commitment to serve and nurture our team, to build an environment where staff can

grow and feel inspired to live a fulfilled life, and to help our community and environment flourish as well (quoted in Sisodia and Gelb 2019: 222–223).

In other words, The Breakers aims at becoming a *healing organization* (Sisodia and Gelb 2019), a positive force for regenerating the capacities needed to promote flourishing for all people and the natural ecosystem upon which all life depends. This, as we will argue, is the work of love at an organizational level. Barry-Wehmiller, The Breakers, the innovative and caring networks within Hewlett Packard, all aspire to manifest love and flourishing.

This is certainly a reassuring marketing and public relations angle in an age of relentless scandal. But is any of this believable? Can such loving networks be sustained over time and even expanded? In this article, we examine Barry-Wehmiller, Inc., as a case study of love implemented with practical wisdom in a competitive business context in the service of flourishing. It is first necessary to explain what "love" and "flourishing" might mean in such a context. This should dispel common confusions about these terms.

What Is Love?

"It's important to stop thinking about compassion in a sentimental or emotional way" (Trzeciak and Mazzarelli 2019: location 1045). The same might be said of love, although of course sentiments and emotions are central to many—but not all—experiences of both love and compassion. Be this as it may, Trzeciak and Mazzarelli are keen to ensure that compassion is not confused with empathy: feeling what another person feels. Compassion is not reducible to feeling: it is a "*response* to another's pain or suffering involving an authentic desire to help…. compassion is the *action* that flows from empathy" (location 996, emphasis added). Similarly, love has generally been understood as a feeling (noun), but it too is also an action (verb). But much more than this, a complete understanding of love includes many parts of speech and "constituents that promote flourishing for self and others… arranged with practical wisdom according to a unifying *grammar*… in a manner that signifies a life-affirming *story* (emphasis added Lee 2022: 24; Lee and Pearson In Press). In its purest and highest forms, love is designated by the Greek word *agape* because it is unconditional, overabundant (in the sense of "offering more than what the situation demands"), breaks the expected cycle of "reciprocity" (the need to repay), and "brings benefits" (Iorio 2017: 16; Kierkegaard 1847/1962; Lee 2022).

In other words, love is aimed at the promotion of flourishing for all without exception. But unlike compassion, it is not just a response to suffering. At their best, effective compassion, uplifting gratitude, genuine forgiveness, deep listening, and so forth, are all expressions of love (Post 2022). We have demonstrated elsewhere that love is not an "add-on" in a business context, nor is it at odds with organizational effectiveness or financial success (Hummels et al. 2021; Lee 2022; see also Hummels and van der Put 2023). Instead, it is integral to both. In the words of former Vice President of Google, and author of *Conscious Business,* Fred Kofman: "Love is strong. It is the most powerful force in the universe. Love is a competitive advantage" (quoted in Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 82). Or as Martin Luther King, Jr. so eloquently put it:

> What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

This does not reduce love to justice, but suggests instead that love can determine the character of expressions of power in seeking justice so that abuse is avoided. One result is more effective justice. Again, there is a parallel with the closely related construct of compassion: "When [health care] providers have compassion for a patient, they are more likely to be meticulous about their care, have higher quality standards, and are therefore less likely to make a major medical error" (Trzeciak and Mazzarelli 2019: location 1026). Properly understood and skillfully practiced, love and compassion enhance the *quality* and *effectiveness* of any human endeavor (Klemich and Klemich 2020). But again, love is the more encompassing term. Alan Mulally, former President and CEO of both Boeing Commercial Airplanes and Ford Motor Company, saw business success as being the result of creating a "connected culture of love" so that, for example, engineers who highlighted design flaws would not be seen as "the bearer of the problem" but instead as "a beacon pointing the way toward a solution" (Johnson 2023). The ability to feel safe enough to raise concerns, and to know that colleagues support this act because it serves the well-being of all—customers, employees, shareholders, stakeholders—hinges on the presence of "networks of loving relations" (Senge 2022) that have established strong bonds of trust. These networks do not form spontaneously but rather require purposeful cultivation and attention. Too often organizations purportedly recognize their importance but fail to make the commitment to sustain them.

Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas (1274/1948: parts I–II.26.4) and many others have understood that, "To love is to will a good for someone." Indeed, all forms of love seem to share a common set of essential features, especially a concern with promoting the well-being—or better, the full flourishing—of the beloved (Hegi and Bergner 2010). This understanding of love informs a major, new, multi-year research project on the construct and assessment of interpersonal love (VanderWeele and Lee 2022), derived from the normative framework proposed by Aquinas, which includes both *contributory love* and *unitive love*. In this work, contributory love is understood as the "disposition toward desiring the good for the other" and unitive love as the "disposition toward desiring union with the good that is the other." In other words, love involves both a healthy relationship with, and nurturing the growth, or flourishing, of the other. Empirical assessments of love developed for this project include, for contributory love, the extent to which a respondent desires to support the wellbeing for the beloved, expresses a willingness to make extend the self to help the beloved, exhibits a sense of wellbeing interdependence with the beloved, demonstrates appropriate affection or compassion to the beloved, affirms the dignity of the beloved, and has goodwill towards the beloved, even when hurt by them. For unitive love, assessments include the extent to which a respondent is able to be fully 'present' whenever they are with the beloved, to listen deeply to the beloved, to participate in joy with the beloved, to seek to understand the beloved, to spend time with the beloved, and to demonstrate commitment to the beloved.

These empirical assessment tools do not encompass a comprehensive list of every aspect of love. But they provide examples of the kinds of thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors that might characterize an organization that is committed to supporting "networks of love" within a

"connected culture of love," and more generally, for the creation of "love-based technologies of change" (Maparyan 2012: xvi). Expressions of love within a business organization might take the form of regular celebrations of the dignity and creativity of team members, processes designed to ensure that team members deeply listen to each other so that decisions can be guided by what is truly best for all involved, and above all, a demonstrated commitment to the promotion of flourishing of all. Barry-Wehmiller organizes daily life in their workplaces in a manner that seeks to foster these forms of contributory and unitive love as a demonstration of *stewardship*. This stewardship takes the form of deep commitment to the flourishing of all and is central to the culture and ensures that expressions of love continue to be enacted over time. The meaning of stewardship is operationalized as follows: "to truly care, to feel a deep sense of responsibility for the lives we touch" and to "heal the brokenness" that workers may have suffered as a result of "toxic cultures and abusive leadership" they experienced prior to working at Barry-Wehmiller (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 68).

Several empirical assessment tools have been developed specifically for organizations in order to make love-based practices more visible and to link them to various outcomes, or *fruits of love*. For example, organizations have been assessed with a measure of agape, defined as "the commitment to the well-being and flourishing of others" and described by the acronym "**A**genda for **G**rowth and **A**ffirmation of **P**eople and the **E**nvironment" (Hummels et al. 2021; Hummels and van der Put 2023). This assessment includes the personal development and growth of organizational members (a component of flourishing), a recognition of each member's dignity, support for the voice of members in determining organizational outcomes, and more. This research found that organizational agape scores across more than 500 companies were significantly higher when the organization's culture affirmed the organization's responsibility for employee well-being. The agape measure predicted a range of desired outcomes, including the company's financial and competitive position, as well as higher employee satisfaction and commitment and lower absenteeism (Hummels and van der Put 2023).

Related measures of perceived organizational culture, including *caring climate* (Weziak-Bialowolska et al. 2023) and *compassion climate* (Nolan et al. 2022) have also been shown to predict various flourishing-related outcomes. In fact, an "institutional scorecard" has been developed to assess the promotion of love and flourishing in health care organizations around the world (de Campos In press). Essential elements of this assessment include: personalized care and attention to patient needs, respectful and attentive forms of accompaniment of the patient (i.e., caring presence without being obtrusive), and honoring of the patient's dignity and agency throughout the treatment process. Although not always explicitly labeled as "love," the elements of love (including the forms and expressions of care and compassion assessed by Weziak-Bialowolska et al., Nolan et al., and de Campos) are powerful predictors of flourishing (see also Chen et al. 2019). In fact, there are sometimes strategic reasons why the word "care" might be preferred, as some business audiences are not prepared to think in terms of love, but the connections between care and love are obvious, as noted by Barry-Wehmiller CEO Bob Chapman (see Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 82, 244–245).

What Is Flourishing?

There is widespread recognition that the self-centered pursuit of *well-being* and the achievement of in-group goals at the expense of outgroup has contributed to political polarization, environmental degradation, and the weakening of democratic institutions, providing impetus for a new *economic operating infrastructure* (Waddell et al. 2023; see also Scharmer and Kaufer 2013) and a new vision for management and leadership. Von Kimakowitz et al. (2010:4), proposed *humanistic management* as a solution, grounded in three dimensions: (1) "unconditional respect for the dignity of every person," (2) "ethical reflection [as] an integrated part of all business decisions," and (3) the search for "normative legitimacy for corporate activities" in the context of meeting "corporate responsibilities." This combination of dignity, ethics, and legitimacy born of responsibility leads to the promotion of flourishing for all, not just well-being for some, "through economic activities that are life-conducive" (Von Kimakowitz et al. 2010:4). Put simply, humanistic management expresses love in action in the pursuit of *flourishing* for all, rather than narrow forms of in-group *well-being* (Lee 2022; Ritchie-Dunham et al. In press). Organizations that base decisions on these guiding principles can be understood to be engaging in humanistic management and contributing to a healthier economic operating infrastructure. Such shifts are also aligned with Santos and Laczniak's (2009) *integrative justice model*, which includes the absence of exploitative intent, just forms of empowerment and co-creation of value with vulnerable groups, and a view that is aimed at the long-term achievement of the good.

The construct of flourishing provides a suitable North Star for humanistic management and an improved economic operating infrastructure, as well as the pursuit of integrative justice, because it includes personal well-being, growth, and development that occurs in contexts in which *all people* are experiencing these outcomes and the natural environment is also thriving. It is therefore helpful to consider the domains of flourishing, or "complete well-being," at multiple levels (VanderWeele 2017: 8149; Holtge et al. 2023; Keyes 2002; Lee and Mayor 2023; Seligman 2011; VanderWeele et al. 2023). To take just a few examples, individuals flourish when they perceive their lives as meaningful, creative, and as contributing to the common good; groups flourish when they foster a sense of shared values and collective mission, and they have effective structures for ensuring harmonious internal and external relations; ecologies flourish when they are able to regenerate the conditions necessary to sustain and expand life. Systems flourish together when harmony prevails among all of these multi-level outcomes and dynamics, as assessed by subjective and objective indicators. We describe this as *Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing* (EWF, see Ritchie-Dunham 2024; Ritchie-Dunham et al. In press) and we take 'ecosystem' to refer to social networks and resources, the built environment, and the natural world. For the majority of the world's population, these ecosystems are further embedded in a sacred canopy, or spiritual context, that structures a sense of greater, transcendent, or ultimate meaning.

It is difficult to measure more than a handful of flourishing outcomes in a single research project, but the construct of EWF orients us towards the development of increasingly comprehensive measurement tools. For example, an earlier organizational focus on *wellness* is giving way to a more expansive engagement with *flourishing*, although in most cases this is not quite broad enough to be considered as EWF (e.g. Kay et al. 2023). It may be helpful for some groups to conceive of flourishing as a journey, with initial attention focused on a handful of outcomes, in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the vast number of possible

outcomes in a manner that would inhibit progress on any of them. In addition, flourishing and related constructs are somewhat contested and are currently being debated in critical dialogue (VanderWeele et al. 2023). In this context, we recommend the adoption of a "flexible map of flourishing" (Lomas et al. 2024: 1) that permits groups in the early stages of a flourishing journey to focus on the levels and outcomes that they are best able to explore and attain, while not losing sight of other important levels and outcomes.

We hasten to add that participation in truly loving relationships is itself a (partial) form of flourishing and that healthy expressions of love are also powerful predictors of flourishing. We wish to stress that treating people as mere objects to be manipulated in the service of instrumental goals is not consistent with flourishing, as we understand the term. The same can be said of extractive ways of relating to the natural world and all living things. Such objectification violates central tenets of the sacred narratives of indigenous peoples, as well as contemporary theologies, and is inconsistent with forms of flourishing that can address our contemporary crises (Cottingham et al. 2023). In other words, it is our contention that flourishing that is not firmly grounded in love is not deepest flourishing, even if a utilitarian calculus determines that a majority of members experience positive affect, a sense of purpose, and other desired domains of partial well-being. It is worth noting that the social containers in which many people seek flourishing—whether for-profit companies, non-profits, schools, hospitals, or organizations in other sectors—have systematically pushed love to the margins:

> It is more than coincidental that a 'cognitive takeover' has occurred since the 1970s within dominant social institutions, such that intellectual, 'head' skills have become much more valued relative to the caring skills of the 'heart.' We struggle to flourish within a social architecture in which intimacy has been intentionally 'organized out' (Cottingham et al. 2023: 4).

This is partly why Barry-Wehmiller is such an important case study for the journey towards EWF: the organization has eschewed objectification by emphasizing the dignity of every person (i.e., "everybody matters," Chapman and Sisodia 2015) and by designing a business model that runs on love and care. We consider some of the progress that has been made by this organization, as well as some current and future directions that it might pursue in the quest for more complete EWF.

Love and Flourishing at Barry-Wehmiller, Inc., Informed by Brian Wellinghoff's Experiences and Reflections

Upon his ascension to the role of CEO of Barry-Wehmiller in 1976, Bob Chapman would have used neither "love" nor "flourishing" to describe the environment in the organization. Like many businesses, Barry-Wehmiller embodied a history of traditional management thinking—one that eschewed discussion of emotions and failed to see the larger impact that businesses can have on individuals, families, and communities.

Just like each person's individual journey towards flourishing, Bob Chapman led Barry-Wehmiller through a journey of exploration and discovery, a journey from money to meaning. Today, Barry-Wehmiller acknowledges its true impact in the world "to measure success

by the way we touch the lives of people." Through systematic leadership programs, refined processes, and myriad cultural initiatives, Barry-Wehmiller seeks to live out the manifesto described in our book *Everybody Matters* (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 15–16):

- Everyone wants to do better. Trust Them.
- Leaders are everywhere. Find Them.
- People achieve good things, big and small, every day. Celebrate Them.
- Some people wish things were different. Listen to Them.
- Everybody matters. Show Them.

This manifesto encompasses the practical Barry-Wehmiller approach to fostering love in the workplace. Each of the five elements of the manifesto are behavioral competencies that can be explicitly trained, developed, and acknowledged. What we have learned over several decades is that when love is present in the workplace, it creates the most nurturing environment for flourishing. This flourishing occurs in all of the domains mentioned above, not just within the workplace. Team members who participate in love at work experience flourishing at work, at home, in their communities, and in their spiritual experiences.

Trust Them

Upon the founding of our Guiding Principles of Leadership, Barry-Wehmiller embarked on a series of listening sessions throughout the organization to uncover the best practices upon which we could expand and areas where we needed to improve. The most consistent message we heard was that we needed to earn the trust of our team members by not just speaking about love but practicing it.

Recent research has shown that 58% of people in America would trust a complete stranger more than they would trust their manager (Chapman and Sisodia 2015). During the listening sessions, we learned that team members had experienced a prevalence of integrity-compromised leaders, who said the right things when times were easy and who acted in un-loving ways when times became hard. The traditional mantra has been, "it's business." But business does not have to be a "love-free" zone.

During the Great Recession, Barry-Wehmiller experienced a 40% reduction in revenues and found itself in an economic landscape where competitors, suppliers, and industry bulwarks were all laying off people. To effectively avoid lay-offs, Barry-Wehmiller embraced a furlough program—with each team member, on average, taking 2–4 weeks of unpaid vacation, but with flexibility and employee input with regard to how it was implemented, in recognition that some employees were better able to absorb the financial impact. Some employees absorbed the impact for colleagues by extended their own time off so that others could remain on the payroll. Trusting employees in this way to help shape the implementation of this program was central to its success. At a time when other companies were instilling fear in employees through layoffs, organizing our response to the crisis in a loving manner invited employees to demonstrate their own "incredible caring" as well as "altruism" and "generosity" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 105). We also temporarily suspended the 401k match. We responded this way because, in Bob Chapman's words, "this is how a caring family would respond. We would all take some pain so that no one would experience the ultimate sacrifice." The organization's bottom-line performance returned in months, not

years, and the Chapman family decided to reinstate and then increase 401k contributions so that everyone would be made whole.

The conventional approach in business—laying of hundreds or thousands of workers—would obviously have harmed those laid off and all of the people in relationships with them. It would have almost certainly contributed to a reduction in "passion, creativity, optimism, and caring" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 97) among the employees who remained. This is not the path to flourishing for individuals, organizations, or communities. Instead, Barry-Wehmiller followed the caring and ethical 'co-creation' approach at the heart of the *integrative justice model* (Santos and Laczniak 2009; Santos and Facca-Miess In press). The company responded to the crisis as a "caring family" would: "everybody would pitch in with a sense of shared sacrifice and a shared destiny" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 101). The "wide acceptance of the idea of shared sacrifice… even from divisions that weren't badly affected" (p. 101) by the crisis simplified and accelerated the process of reorganizing in the face of a novel business threat—and this was only possible because of the shared trust that had already been created and by demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the company's "fundamental ideas," including measuring success "by the way we touch the lives of people" (p. 103). In order to demonstrate that the sacrifice would indeed be shared by all, Bob Chapman reduced his own salary to the amount he made in 1968: from $875,000 to $10,500. All of this suggests a practically wise organizing process grounded in love and oriented towards the simultaneous achievement of both organizational effectiveness and supra-organizational flourishing.

Find Them

Statements from CEOs and academics alike often express the challenge of finding good leaders across many industries and types of organizations. In the process of completing 140 acquisitions, Barry-Wehmiller has learned that leadership is abundant, when two things are true:

1. Leadership is encouraged (not stifled)
2. Leadership is developed (not left to chance)

When Barry-Wehmiller gets involved in a new business, we immediately begin with the same types of listening sessions that followed the founding of our Guiding Principles of Leadership. These sessions are a dignified way to begin professional relationships with people who have entered our span of care. However, they also serve to identify where team members are engaged and passionate about their work. Where we encounter team members like this, we know that there is very likely an inspiring and effective leader associated with that team.

Too often, previous managers have stifled these leaders, by passively focusing only on the numbers or by actively encouraging these leaders to stop "wasting" time on relationships and communication. Some of our most senior leaders in Barry-Wehmiller today were quickly promoted after acquisition and became critical drivers of the evolving culture.

In addition, leadership development cannot be left to chance. When team members or young leaders show initial aptitude, we need to provide the skills and courage to bring love into their leadership. This involves both the ability to spend time with more experienced

leaders in the organization and their engagement in formal leadership programs. Barry-Wehmiller teaches foundational courses in listening, recognition, and inspiration to consciously develop leaders.

Celebrate Them

One of the most profound and impactful ways we can express love in any aspect of life is to openly acknowledge the meaningful actions of others. Within the walls of Barry-Wehmiller, we call this "recognition and celebration." Among the majority of the 140 acquisitions we have successfully completed, one of the most common perspectives we encounter is that a paycheck or a yearly performance review are sufficient recognition for a job well done. But love requires more.

To create an environment for flourishing we systematically engender recognition through 3 key modalities: education, process, and program. First, we teach how to recognize and celebrate. While children have a natural capacity to empathize and acknowledge others, our journey to adulthood often creates roadblocks to genuine expressions of appreciation. We have multiple modules within Barry-Wehmiller University (an internal training center that also hosts workshops for those outside the company) which teach all leaders and team members the why, what, when, and how of powerful recognition. Participants are taught how to create a recognition message with feelings, behavior, and impact—with an emphasis on the feelings.

Second, we embed recognition in our everyday processes. Our standard meeting agenda encourages beginning all meetings with time for recognition. We do this because recognition is one of the most powerful ways of acknowledging someone's innate dignity. It also draws support from research that demonstrates that those who spend only a few minutes in reflections of gratitude are more creative and active in meetings.

Third, we foster specific programs for recognition, large and small. Whether through printed cards placed throughout the facility or a website in our human resources information system, team members and leaders alike have daily opportunities to recognize anyone else in the organization. Our "Shine the Light" program provides a venue for larger recognition, where we encourage nominators to select a personalized gift and involve the recipient's family through a video, a note home, or surprise attendance at the ceremony. This underscores the point that organizations are not simply static structures; they involve dynamic processes that organize and re-organize how members interact with each other. Do these interactions feel warm and joyful? Do they encourage and empower members to support each other's flourishing? Recognition, celebration, and gratitude have become powerful ingredients in Barry Wehmiller's culture and these aspects are reaffirmed in daily practice.

Listen to Them

I had the personal and unusual task of convincing the Barry-Wehmiller organization to systematically teach listening. Like many of the core components of love in the workplace, we can often fall into the illusion that adults already know how to listen, to love. However, professional training programs on the components of love are still very spotty in our world today—and programs in colleges, universities and secondary schools are also rare. No matter how many training sessions one has attended, and no matter how effectively one might

listen in certain situations—we have yet to find one person who doesn't benefit from a reminder and refresher. The path to flourishing is a journey; one in which listening provides benefit at nearly every step.

Listening for flourishing is more than hearing; it is more than capturing the facts from others. Listening for flourishing relies on capturing the entire message, including facts and feelings, from another, as well as attending to the many domains of flourishing (e.g., meaning and purpose; character and virtue; satisfying relationships; clear and noble mission. See: VanderWeele 2017; VanderWeele et al. 2023). It is about providing acknowledgements and door openers to the speaker so that they own the conversation and are not hijacked by the listener. It involves quieting the mind as much as the mouth, to provide full attention. And it constantly seeks understanding, for in the words of Carl Rogers, "Nothing feels so good as to be truly understood."

At Barry-Wehmiller, leaders are expected to listen—to individuals, to teams, and to the whole of the organization. It evidences our commitment to achieve people and performance in harmony—because listening not only promotes individual flourishing, as we have defined that term in this article, but it also impacts the bottom line through better decision-making, more improvement ideas, and greater change management, which moves the journey in the direction of EWF.

Show Them

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of Barry-Wehmiller's culture is the commitment to model this approach to love in the workplace. Our first requirement is for all members of our workplace family to commit to the flourishing journey. This starts with authenticity and vulnerability.

Our leaders are challenged to be transparent and to share information about where the business is and where it is going. Knowledge is power, and we seek to empower as many people in the organization as we can with the knowledge about our performance. In addition, leaders need to be willing to say "I don't know" and "I need help." It is a characteristic of the organization that we systematically identify when projects initially go off course so we can swarm resources and support where they are needed.

When rolling out this manifesto in our organization, or sharing it with the thousands of individuals in other organizations we have had the pleasure of meeting over the years, one of the most common responses is: "No one is doing that for me." This may be true. Even in Barry-Wehmiller today, there are people who feel disengaged or poorly appreciated for what they do, and we are working hard to change that. But simultaneously, we challenge everyone—you and me—to consider: "How can I do this for others?" or perhaps more aptly for this article: "How can I love others like that?" Having clarity about the meaning of terms such as *love* and *flourishing*, as we have defined them—and having a clear rationale for why they are essential and practical in a business environment—is necessary in order to model them in practice.

From the perspective of Barry-Wehmiller, achieving love and flourishing in a business organization is a constant journey, without a conclusion. Leaders can promote environments of love and flourishing through a combination of their personal actions and the business systems they create. These systems are more critical to the achievement of love and flourishing than individual action alone. At Barry-Wehmiller, we are integrating Talent Leadership,

Daily Visual Leadership, and Strategic Planning into a cohesive whole that reinforces the commitment to love and flourishing on daily, weekly, quarterly, and yearly cadences.

Still, progress will rarely be linear. Setbacks will occur. But throughout our journey, two elements keep the people of Barry-Wehmiller moving forward: (1) there is no greater calling than to foster love and flourishing and (2) promoting flourishing at work creates the greatest value for the most stakeholders. These two elements are expressions of both *unitive love* (e.g., current leaders investing time in deeply reciprocal relationships with future leaders) and *contributory love* (e.g., giving future leaders the skills they need to love others more fully into being). Some organizations communicate this as love in the service of flourishing. Others use more muted language. When Chapman and Sisodia (2015) included the phrase "The Extraordinary Power of Caring" in the subtitle of their book, they sent a powerful cultural signal that Barry Wehmiller's principal work is the work of love. This is evident throughout the core practices that organize and re-organize the work of the company, which Chapman and Sisodia (2015: 15–16) have summarized as *find them, trust them, celebrate them, listen to them,* and *show them*. The company *finds* passionate team members and invests in them; it *trusts* them to co-create what have often been viewed as the exclusive prerogatives of management (e.g., deciding how to implement a furlough during an economic crisis); it teaches all members how to *celebrate* each other and provides space for that to happen; it teaches all members how to *listen* more attentively and, in the process, how to be fully and lovingly present to each other; and it *shows* all members that they are deeply valued, not only for their contributions to the organizational mission, but as human beings and as "somebody's precious child" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 67).

Discussion and Conclusion

Organizations vary with regard to the extent that they promote the various domains and levels of flourishing over time, across internal organizational divisions and units, and across geographical locations. Research is beginning to reveal that full flourishing, as we have defined it, is comparatively rare in organizations around the world, but also that there are important lessons to be learned from the positive outliers (Ritchie-Dunham 2024; Ritchie-Dunham et al. In press). This research is demonstrating that some groups and organizations have created—and continue to recreate—agreements for relating internally and externally in healthy ways. Such agreements are premised on "truly caring for every precious human being whose life we touch" and "including everybody" in a daily encounter with abundance: "an abundance of patience, love, hope, and opportunity" (Chapman and Sisodia 2015: 15). In other words, these groups have institutionalized the practice of love in the service of flourishing. This does not mean that the institutionalization is consistent throughout any group or organization; the empirical record at one microfinance bank reveals important variations (Ritchie-Dunham et al. In press). But from our vantage point, Barry-Wehmiller, Inc., has made laudable progress connecting love and flourishing in a business setting.

The practical wisdom of these efforts is especially evident each time there is a downturn in the business cycle, and palpable on the factory floor. This does not mean that the company is uniformly successful across all domains of flourishing or organizational divisions, or that this progress will continue indefinitely. All organizations are subject to variation over time, including mission drift and cultural change, which is why we stress attending to dynamic

processes of *organizing* rather than only static *organization* structures. But what we have noticed after a period of sustained development of a "caring culture" at Barry-Wehmiller is worth sharing. How might other organizations discover the power of love—of ways of organizing so that caring becomes more normal and effective—in promoting organizational goals and fostering flourishing beyond the boundaries of the organization? We believe that the five core elements of the company's manifesto (find them, trust them, celebrate them, listen to them, show them) are all transferable to other contexts, in business and beyond. We suggest that all five are necessary for the practice of humanistic management, because they organize the search for dignity, ethics, and legitimacy born of responsibility that is capable of leading to the promotion of flourishing for all.

Critics might object that not everyone at Barry-Wehmiller is fully flourishing, or that not everyone experiences the love that we have described. This is likely the case in any human group. On this point, it is helpful remember the "overabundance" associated with the form of love known as agape (Iorio 2017: 16; Hummels and van der Put 2023). More than just reciprocity, agape involves generous giving, forgiveness, and a capacity to overcome entrenched conflicts: "Agape is not a weak, passive love. It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community. It is insistence on community even when one seeks to break it" (King, Jr. 1958/2010: 94). This bears repeating: agape "is insistence on community even when one seeks to break it." Barry-Wehmiller has ritualized important aspects of love as conceptualized by the interdisciplinary project led by VanderWeele and Lee (2022). This does not mean that everyone participates in such rituals equally, or with deep sincerity. But these rituals do "insist on community." They also include both unitive love, as experienced in listening sessions and in the joy of celebrating the contributions of other organizational members, and contributory love, as manifested in the commitment to no layoffs during economic downturns.

At a deeper level, the listening and celebration rituals at the company, along with a refusal to lay off members, reflect an affirmation of the dignity of every person, a process to help people more fully experience each other's presence as fully realized human beings (not just as automatons able to fulfill an organizational purpose), and a desire to support flourishing for all. This was evident to the first author when he experienced the generosity of Barry-Wehmiller University in the fall of 2022 and the warmth of the cultural climate of the company's nearby factory. The company's University provides training for team members, but also gives the company's practical wisdom to outsiders as a free gift in the hope of inspiring others to carry this wisdom into their own sectors. Love and flourishing are not tools of extraction aimed at competitive advantage. They are shared with outsiders. At many factories, there is a palpable sense of formality, even hostility. Not so at BW Papersystems, a factory near the company's University. Instead, expressions of warm care are normative among employees.

The first author observed multiple instances of this kind of caring. Laughter was common and genuine friendships seemed to prevail. This has practical implications. One machinist explained to the first author that under the previous ownership, he would keep technical information to himself with the understanding that when a business slowdown occurred that he might demonstrate to bosses that his knowledge of the machines had value and others with less knowledge should be laid off. Now that the factory is part of the Barry-Wehmiller organization, he shares his knowledge freely and this results in more efficient operations, especially when he has the day off, because others can keep the machines in good work-

ing order. Another example was provided during a question-and-answer session involving another employee and a group of scholars. The employee described, with great sincerity, the difference between the indifferent culture established by the factory's previous owners and the caring culture established by Barry-Wehmiller. He explained that he felt safe—psychological safety is necessary but not sufficient for flourishing—and he knew that he was safe, in a material sense of not becoming expendable in the next economic downturn. The first author watched as a professor at a business school spontaneously embraced the employee—an immediate, ontological encounter of the overabundant agape-love that many of us felt in the core of our being that day.

This love insists on a kind of community that is all-too-rare. In fact, the "core dialectic" of the human condition involves addressing a series of "separation challenges" (e.g., losses of various kinds, including a job, a loved one, or one's own health) with attachment (love-based) solutions (Fricchione 2011:6, 33; Schlesinger 1995). Neuroscientist Paul MacLean, author of the landmark book, *The Triune Brain in Evolution*, stated that "the most painful mammalian condition" is "separation" (quoted in Fricchione 2011:xii). The solution, "what evolution has arrived at after a billion years of life on this planet," is "love" (Fricchione 2011:xv). This solution was affirmed in the spontaneous embrace of the factory worker by the business professor at the micro level, and also by the machinist sharing technical information freely with coworkers, and by the company's refusal to lay off workers at the macro level. Such expressions of love seem "overabundant" in a world where scarcity is assumed and systemic disconnects are the norm (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013).

The question that Barry-Wehmiller is beginning to more fully explore, through its outreach efforts and by co-creating initiatives like the Humanistic Leadership Academy (https://humanisticleadershipacademy.org) is: "How do we contribute to the 'stewardship of the whole' in order to collaborate on the co-creation of an 'economic operating infrastructure' that fosters flourishing for all" (Waddell et al. 2023: 1–2; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013)? This includes deeper engagement with regenerative relationships with the natural world and greater focus on Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing (Ritchie-Dunham 2024; Ritchie-Dunham et al. In press). The motivations and tactics behind such an "overabundant" move towards system stewardship is worthy of future research as Barry-Wehmiller continues to evolve. If we choose to live in the subjunctive mood, *as if* "the Earth is the school of love," then workplaces are strategic sites "where we form relationships and learn to connect through service for the sake of the whole" (Bishop 2017:109). Is it too much to ask that workplaces become true Beloved Communities, as Martin Luther King, Jr. intended that term, aimed at fostering deepest flourishing for all? The polycrisis of our era seems to demand it. Exemplar organizations, even—or perhaps especially—business corporations, can play a leadership role by integrating the holistic development of individuals with a systemic commitment to Ecosystem-Wide Flourishing.

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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