

# How to lead with empathy: 7 tips from Bumble's Chief Operating Officer

Jessica Li spoke with Sarah Jones Simmer, Chief Operating Officer at Bumble. Sarah was formerly Chief of Staff at Bumble, VP and Head of Business Development and Partnerships at PHLUR, and director at Global Philanthropy Group. Sarah shared her advice for collaboration, leadership, and organisation.

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## Create an environment where people feel safe enough to spar

Conflict is healthy, and to create progress, we must get out of the mindset that unity is the ultimate priority. Through providing constructive feedback on ideas, we can collectively get to the best solution. To this end, focus on developing a culture where people feel safe and secure in speaking their mind, rather than simply agreeing with predominant narrative. I'd rather know what you really think, not just what you think I want to hear.

# Listen first, speak second

As a leader or more seasoned employee, you may instinctively want to share your thoughts at the first opportunity. But listening is often more important than speaking and through effective listening, you can provide more valuable input and empower more people in the team to share their perspectives for greater cognitive diversity in each discussion. One tactic I intentionally employ, especially during a brainstorm, is to not speak during the first half meeting, in order to ensure other perspectives are shared first.

# Leverage your voice to call attention to different opinions

As a leader, use your position to shed a light on softer voices and dissenting opinions. Notice who has not yet shared their perspective and empower them to do so.

# Motivate people who are different from yourself

Your success as a leader relies on your ability to empower diverse teams toward common goals. It is not your team's job to figure out and cater to your leadership style but rather it is your job as the leader to effectively motivate each person. Understand what makes each person tick and how they work and tailor your style to meet their needs.

# Write everything down

Sarah uses the notes app on her phone and computer to sync across her devices. Whenever she has a thought around a to do item, no matter how small, she writes it down and builds up her agenda continuously. Then, she never misses an action item, and crafting agendas becomes very natural.

# Try not to overanalyse anything

Nothing goes according to plan, but everything will be okay in the end. Things that seem major and like the end of the world one minute or one day will fade away and be resolved with time and perspective.

# Turn obstacles into opportunities

There is still so much that needs to be done in the fight for gender equality. The stagnancy of change can often feel discouraging but by seeing every barrier as an opportunity to create change, we can turn these frustrations into optimism. Be inspired by each other's resiliency and set an example for other women, allies, and even naysayers to show it can be done and massive, amazing businesses can be created by focusing on women.

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