

NEWSLETTER

THE ATTENTION ECONOMY OF LEADERSHIP

Where You Place Focus, Teams Place Effort



Current Insight Worth Noting

Emerging Leadership Patterns: Tech & Attention in Leadership

A groundbreaking recent study reveals that leaders who effectively manage both AI collaborators and human teams share distinct practices—specifically, interrupting less and engaging in more conversational turn-taking. Those who exhibited greater social intelligence, adaptive decision-making, and intentional dialogue consistently drove better team performance.

With AI tools creeping into forecasting, analytics, even re-tracking, the question isn't just what insights you use—it's how you interact with your team. Amid automation, your attention, presence, and conversational engagement become even more strategic. Every dialogue with a rep, every check-in, sets the tone. In effect, your leadership rhythm will remain one of the most human and impactful assets in a digital-first environment.

The Science of Attention

Modern neuroscience has shown that attention is not limitless — it functions like a scarce resource. The brain consumes nearly 20% of the body's total energy despite being only 2% of its weight. Researchers describe attention as the “gatekeeper” of behavior: what gets noticed repeatedly wires itself as habit. In organizations, leadership attention acts the same way — it filters noise into signal. A manager who constantly asks about “numbers closed” trains a team to chase activity, while one who asks “what value was delivered” shifts the spotlight toward quality. In psychology, this is the principle of selective reinforcement.

Global pharma has repeatedly shown how leadership attention defines legacy. The thalidomide tragedy of the 1960s exposed what happens when speed to market overrides safety — leading to one of the most stringent regulatory eras in drug history. Decades later, the opioid crisis in the US revealed how relentless focus on sales metrics, without ethical balance, destroyed reputations and bankrupted once-mighty firms. In contrast, the rapid yet rigorous Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine collaboration proved how disciplined attention on science, safety, and speed can restore trust while transforming global health.

The message endures: in pharma, where leaders place their attention — ethics, science, or short-term numbers — determines whether their impact ages as progress or as cautionary tale.

Philosophers have long argued that attention is the foundation of meaning. Simone Weil wrote,

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”

The Stoics, centuries earlier, insisted that where the mind dwells, the character follows. In leadership, attention is not just managerial hygiene — it is an ethical act.

*“Where leaders
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Because what leaders repeatedly notice becomes, for their people, a silent decree of what matters and what does not. In pharma, where reps juggle science, sales, and human trust, the manager’s gaze

becomes the cultural filter: does the team believe patients matter, or only prescriptions?

The Pharma Reality

For Indian pharma managers, this “economy of attention” plays out in the smallest moments:

- In field visits — asking about quality of engagement, not just call counts.
- In reviews — rewarding effort and ethics, not just targets achieved.
- In WhatsApp groups — noticing knowledge sharing, not just numbers posted.

When 70% of a rep’s motivation is shaped not by incentives but by managerial cues (as multiple organizational studies show), what managers choose to focus on creates cultural DNA. In an industry battling mistrust, compliance pressures, and rising burnout, this DNA becomes the difference between fragile performance and sustained growth.



Takeaway: A Manager’s True Currency

The real wealth of a pharma manager is not in budget approvals or target sheets — it lies in attention. Every act of focus is an investment: in habits, in culture, in loyalty. Spend it on the trivial, and you will build fragile teams. Spend it on the meaningful, and you will build reputations that outlast numbers.

Or as William James, father of psychology, observed:
“My experience is what I agree to attend to.”

So it is with your team: they become what you consistently attend to.