

# Warren Buffett Says the Ultimate Test of How You've Lived Your Life Boils Down to 1 Powerful Word

How many of us can truly measure up to this?

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Warren Buffett

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When it comes to [sage-like wisdom](#), Berkshire Hathaway CEO [Warren Buffett](#) has a mountainous surplus of it circulating the internet.

Some of his advice is so commonsensical it stops us in our tracks and makes us think about whether we're truly measuring up to the things that truly matter. For example, take this truth-telling mirror moment from the [Oracle of Omaha](#):

Basically, when you get to my age, you'll really measure your success in life by how many of the people you want to have **love** you actually do **love** you. I know people who have a lot of money, and they get testimonial dinners and get hospital wings named after them. But the truth is that nobody in the world **loves** them. That's the ultimate test of how you have lived your life. The trouble with **love** is that you can't buy it. You can buy sex. You can buy testimonial dinners. But the only way to get **love** is to be **lovable**. It's irritating if you have a lot of money. You'd like to think you could write a check: *I'll buy a million dollars' worth of love*. But it doesn't work that way. The more you give **love** away, the more you get. [Bold emphasis obviously mine.]

This is far from being as simple as it sounds. Society has taught us that we have to compete and "win" at all costs to make it to the top, sometimes at the expense of others. Along the way, we became self-absorbed and forgot about service, compassion, gratitude, and respect. In other words, *we forgot how to love*.

I don't know about you, but when I'm nearing 90-years-of-age, as Buffett is, the last thing I want is to face the dreadful and sad prospect of failing Buffett's "ultimate test."

I don't say this from a place of insecurity but of affirmation and praise for one's life's work. Human beings are designed to experience the emotions of love--not the squishy, romantic kind of love that will make your human resources team bite their nails.

Let's examine this further.

## **What's love got to do with it?**

Demonstrating love at work and in business is showing up with actions. It's how we, as leaders, go about caring for others to do their best work. It's how we, as

founders, carry forth a noble company mission with excellence and in service to others.

How is actionable love openly displayed as a business value that leads to uncommon results? There's one hard prerequisite. As Buffett mentioned in his quote, people can't be in the position to receive love if they aren't willing to place themselves in the position to give it away.

Let me suggest three ways that you can profoundly do that and pass Warren Buffett's "ultimate test" with flying colors at the end of your life.

## **1. Love your work.**

Buffett said this in a separate quote: "In the world of business, the people who are most successful are those who are doing what they love."

Do we ever think about that as we go about the daily grind? We work our butts off and have this paycheck-to-paycheck existence; we may find job security for a few years, maybe less. But in another mirror moment, how many of us can actually admit that we wish we were doing something else--something we actually *loved*?

Research has suggested that doing what we love is a major contributor to our happiness as humans. World-renowned philosopher and physician Albert Schweitzer once said: "Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

## **2. Love your customers.**

A recent example of loving your customers well came in an [interview I conducted with Kyle Slager](#), CEO of San Diego-based [Raken](#), the top-rated daily reporting app and field management software for the construction industry.

In order to provide more value than anyone else in the construction market, Slager's team learned the rare virtue of empathy as a business practice to understand their customers on a deeper level than ever before.

This meant spending more time with them and building honest relationships on a real human level of understanding about their customers' true needs.

As a result, Raken's empathy-first focus evolved into a business mission "to create the fastest, easiest-to-use solutions for the construction field."

Slager said most companies in his industry fail because they were more focused on adding bells and whistles to their product than providing real value.

"I think it's very hard to succeed if you're more in love with your product than your customer in any market, even more so in construction," says Slager.

### **3. Love your employees.**

Loving your employees is best expressed through valuing them as human beings; it's removing obstacles from their path, giving them the opportunity to do what they do best every day, and setting them up for success.

A great strategy for loving your workers well is to give their jobs meaning and purpose. In *Give and Take*, Wharton professor Adam Grant cites research that found that when people find purpose in their work, it not only improves that person's happiness; it also boosts productivity--a win-win for the whole organization.

Fostering an employee experience of this magnitude sets the stage for people to love what they do (see point No. 1). This creates the ultimate competitive advantage of people who show up to work every day with passion, loyalty, and emotional commitment.