



LEADERSHIP CROSSROADS....

This time we were to explore the opportunities for using servant leadership in your organization. However, I felt it best to take a pause from that full fledged process to consider the current economic situation and how important leadership is to this identifying approach to take your organization through these hard times.

I heard a lecture recently that talked about how ‘folks made it through the depression while being unable to read or write.’ These folks had a work ethic, loyalty to the company to take care of them and their needs. Folks did not worry about the material things we just must have these days.

Today, most ‘folks’ can read, write and operate complex technologies to benefit themselves through referral employment opportunities and their organizations depending upon their respective motivations. If the recent holidays are an indication of things economic –Black Friday posted a 7.2% increase over last year [CNN.com].

Leadership in these hard economic times is paramount. We can define leadership in terms of guidance and direction [American Heritage Dictionary.com]. With this in mind, there are three things to keep in mind: 1) Change is evident. In life, things change and we change. 2) Maturation [maturity] to make decisions and can identify the impacts both positive and negative. 3) Growth. Growth is only limited by our thoughts.

As a leader, it is up to you to counsel folks wisely about their place and worth in the organization. It is up to the leader to determine the correct course for the business, and don’t remain loyal to situations, conditions or business operations that can impair growth potential for individuals and the organization.

So, what does all this have to do with servant leadership? The short answer is a lot. If the basic core of servant leadership is to put the needs of your employees ahead of the organization then, at its core, the leaders’ role is to insure the needs of employees are addressed. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs reflect psycho-social needs of individuals period. It does not specifically address businesses, organizations, or anyone else. There is no overlap or intersection of Maslow’s needs and leadership except through the lens of servant leadership.

Servant leaders inspire and engage people, giving them a sense of ownership in every aspect of their job and the organization. In doing this, they capture hearts, minds, spirits, creativity, commitment and excellence.

The philosophy of servant leadership sounds simple, but in practice is difficult. To truly engage means to trust and delegate, surrender power and share recognition, relinquish all impulses to believe that those at the top of the hierarchy are more superior. It means saying, meaning and showing that everyone is a leader, and more difficult yet, it means ensuring that everyone is valued as such. Everyone within an organization has a set of responsibilities, and the job market pays those responsibilities differently.

However, the heart, soul and success of the company lie in the hands of every single employee.

Implementation during these economic times can be tricky. However, the approach can be made whether large or small scale, organizational unit, department or team level or entire company. The implementation process is based upon three steps: foundation, feedback and follow-up. Each will be discussed briefly and individually.

- *Foundation* is the process where the standard of servant leadership is established through training and knowledge of the practical aspects of servant leadership.
- *Feedback* is the process of identifying the leadership styles, traits and behaviors of those in the area to be affected by the servant leadership foundation implementation. It is important that all members understand themselves and others.
- *Follow-Up* is the process where goals are established and measurable outcomes can be assessed regularly.

Sounds simple, right? Absolutely! Focus efforts of everyone upon the end goal of productivity and business, but most importantly how everyone impacts the business. Good business is everyone's business.

So tell me, do you accept the challenge?

Until next time....

Have a blessed holiday season with those you love, and those without whose efforts your organization or business may no longer exist.

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