SSD Global Solutions

Leadership Development Module
LSS Black Belt Candidates

We realize that a number of Lean Six Sigma candidates have already been in Leadership Roles.

Therefore, we are providing a series of articles we would like you to quickly read as opposed to trying to teach leadership since that is an entirely different workshop.

After reading the articles give a quick summary of your thoughts. This should be submitted in one document or as an email. We are looking for informal comments and certainly if you gained any knowledge from the article. There are 5 articles and all are very short. You may refer to the article by its number. We update articles and try to offer the most recent and relevant information. We are always open to suggestions. This portion of the program is more a reminder that as a LSS Black Belt you are in a leadership role. These also provide good examples on the types of articles we you will write in Phase III, although the topic will be related to LSS specifically and not necessarily to leadership these articles provide good examples of what we are expecting.

Please send your submission to Alex.Ramsey@SSDGlobal.net.

Article #1

6 Things Effective Leaders Should Do to Inspire Their Teams

by Marty Fuduka

A leader's job description can seem like an ever-growing list of bullet points, but the priority for CEOs, CFOs and staff managers alike is always the same: leading their team. The question is, "how?"

As a chief operating officer, my goal has been to foster excellence at my company, N2 Publishing, which is home to a range of personalities, skills and temperaments. I searched long and hard for the key to effective team management, and it is simply this: inspiration.

Employees will have challenging days. To get through them, they'll need motivation, which leaders can supply by creating an inspirational environment, all day, every day.

Finding ways to do this is not the easiest task, but it's the right choice, always. Here are six basic steps to start motivating your staff:

1. Be future thinking.

If your organization believes in promoting from within, let that be known. Scant opportunity for growth means little motivation for employees to work to their full potential. I personally sit down with every new hire at our home office within his or her first week and discuss, among other things, our promote-from-within culture.

I encourage workers to not allow where they're at today to dictate how they think about the future. I personally have that belief in the way I look at my own life as well as how I look at an individual or a company.

2. Share examples.

Speak of both failures and successes so your team can relate. At the annual sales conference for my company this year, I did not lead off by speaking of victories but rather of a time when I was unable to make a sale. This type of admission not only shows that I'm human, but also that my company doesn't gloss over struggles.

Share stories about people who have overcome adversity or obstacles and have succeeded. What one person can do, another can do as well.

3. Send messages designed to inspire.

You never know whom your words will touch on any given day. So every message, no matter how short, should have an inspirational component. When speaking with employees -- whether one-on-one, in small groups or at a meeting of more than 100-plus, use the opportunity to connect and inspire.

A word of caution, though: The ups and downs in an employee's personal life can carry over into the office. This might impact the way an employee responds to even the most positive message.

4. Remember, good behavior is contagious.

As leadership expert Ken Blanchard says, catch people doing something right. As a leader, when you do catch someone doing something well, praise the individual where others will hear.

Tell staff members to behave like an owner. When one employee took the time do extra research before making a decision on office furniture, it resulted in a lot of money saved. So I shared the good news with the staff. Putting the spotlight on this kind of behavior has a way of catching on and creates a positive and motivational work environment.

5. Realize that consistency is key.

It's impossible for employees to build a relationship with a leader who changes from day to day. If you regularly promote positive, inspirational, motivational behavior, then that's what you will see happening. This technique is the opposite of intimidation or manipulation, which are the lowest forms of management and leadership. Leaders must realize what they wish to promote and stick with that message every day.

6. Just ask.

What inspires one person might leave another cold. Make the effort to get to know your members of your team. For example, salespeople work on commissions. While many said larger paychecks motivated them, one team member found her inspiration in the things a paycheck would allow her to do (taking time off or going to the kids' soccer games).

So ask employees, "What's your why?"

You might not be able to use all of these steps in your organization, but by implementing even a few, you're telling employees you care. And that's the best inspiration a leader can offer.

Article #2

Turns Out, Humility Offers a Competitive Advantage

by Zachary Feder and Khatera Sahibzada

In an age where authoritarian power is being questioned from the classroom to the boardroom, the emerging research is conclusive -- humility is a dramatically more powerful and effective way of leading.

Scientific inquiry into the power and effectiveness of humility in the workplace has shown that it offers a significant “competitive advantage” to leaders.

According to a study from the University Of Washington Foster School Of Business, humble people tend to make *the most* effective leaders (that’s right, *the most*) and are more likely to be high performers in both individual and team settings, according to associate professor Michael Johnson.

Unsurprisingly, researchers found that employees who rated their managers as humble reported feeling more engaged and less likely to quit. They also reported being more committed to a leader’s vision, and more trusting and receptive to their ideas.

“Our study suggests that a ‘quieter’ leadership approach -- listening, being transparent, aware of your limitations and appreciating co-workers strengths and contributions, is an effective way to engage employees,” Johnson and fellow researchers Bradley Owens and Terence Mitchell write in the study.

The risks of lacking humility.

It’s no secret that executives are often hired based on skills and experience, but fired based on personality. Arrogance, narcissism, and Machiavellianism are factors that we now know regularly precipitates executive failure.

Former CEO of Enron Jeff Skilling, junk bond king and white collar criminal Michael Milken, and one-time leader at American International Group (AIG) Joe Cassano were all executives lionized by business publications as if their overconfidence was a clear indicator of paranormal abilities, super intelligence, infallible strategic vision and magical oratory skills. Yet, all of these leaders were credited as the cause for the collapse of their organizations.

More recently we’ve seen former Abercrombie CEO Mike Jeffries and Thorstein Hein of Blackberry exemplifying how leaders *should not* behave at the top. Yet while their behavior may seem obvious to some, it remains largely ignored by most boardrooms, who often look the other way because of the preconception that overconfidence equates to wisdom, when it can often be just a mask to hide self-doubt.

Humility may not be what you think it is.

One of the challenges in proposing a power in humility is that many of us associate it with weakness and an inability to stand up for ourselves. But humility, as it turns out, has nothing to do with weakness precisely because it requires a substantial inner strength to embody -- one that not only welcomes feedback and criticism but knows that it is one of the fundamental ways that we grow. In this way, the ability to ruthlessly self-reflect and accurately see our limitations, as much as our strengths, is essential to reaping the benefits of humility.

Dean of HBS, Nita Nohria, whose department has conducted extensive research on various types of leaders, found that all of those who were successful shared one quality in common: reflectiveness, or the ability to possess an accurate view of themselves -- warts and all. In practical terms this means that humble leaders have trained themselves to see the world around them with a much deeper level of clarity.

How to spot humility.

Whether we like it or not, those around us can see our humility (or lack thereof) far better than we can. Certain scenarios will quickly highlight our strength of character or betray a pridefulness that disguises insecurity. Some scenarios to consider when evaluating a leader's humility include:

1. When they are being celebrated: Are they boastful and take all the credit, or conscious of the full range of elements and individuals that have caused the success?

2. When they are being criticized: Are they self-confident enough to receive feedback and learn from it, while honoring themselves in the process, or do they resist, defend their position and push back?

3. When they are engaged in competition: Do they respect their opponents, and see the opportunity to engage with them as a valuable learning experience from which to grow, or are they ruthless and disrespectful?

4. When they are in a momentary (or prolonged) position of heightened strength, or heightened weakness: Are they graceful to those "lower" on the hierarchy, and receptive to those "higher" on the hierarchy, without feeling that doing either somehow takes something away from them?

In each of these scenarios a leader will be triggered into revealing their level of humility by being asked a very specific question in various ways. One that we find at the very root of humility: How comfortable are you with power, in yourself and others?

The degree to which leaders have grown into a mature relationship with both sides of the coin of power (having it, and not having it) will be clearly illustrated in how they conduct themselves in

response to it. Humility reflects a relaxed posture in relation to power, while arrogance will betray an immaturity and awkwardness in the face of it.

The takeaway.

When leaders live from a strong, humble, center of gravity they are naturally perceived as more honest, trustworthy and capable. Because humility prevents excessive self-focus it also allows leaders to develop deeper perspectives in their relationships, which makes them more perceptive and capable of anticipating the future. They are not fooled by what they see on the surface, and are able to perceive behind the curtain of individuals and whole systems.

In this way, humility is a treasure that leaders can only receive once they have taken the journey into the very heart of who they are.

There's an old saying that seems capture it: A pseudo leader always leaves you with a feeling of *their* greatness, while an authentic leader always leaves you with a feeling of *your* greatness.

Article #3

The 7 Must-Know Rules of Productive Meetings
by Kevin Meany

In a meeting with a new business prospect not long ago, I surprised myself and everyone else in the room. Shortly after an executive from our advertising agency starting talking and clicking her way through a perfectly fine PowerPoint presentation I stood up, walked over to where she was sitting, and closed the lid of her laptop.

Concerned that the energy was leaving the room, I explained that while we have 20 great client case studies we would be happy to discuss, we like to shake things up. What better way to demonstrate that than by changing our approach to this introductory meeting? With that, I literally tossed the agenda in the trash can. While I hadn't planned to disrupt this gathering, I was pleased with what happened next: We had a great conversation about our prospective client's objectives and challenges -- and, yes -- our expertise. What started as a lecture turned into an interactive, animated discussion. That prospect is now a major client at our agency.

Sure, my team was a little surprised by my interruption, and I apologized to them later. But when it comes to meetings, I like them to be short, interactive and productive.

Here are the seven rules to follow when it's time to huddle:

Related: **For More Productive Meetings, Throw Out Your Conference Table**

1. Start on time.

Five people gathered in a conference room at 10 am should not wait five minutes for a straggler. Close the door and start the meeting. Waiting for latecomers only reinforces their behavior. Those who arrive late and inconvenience others are unlikely to do it again.

2. State your goals.

Note what it is you hope to decide or accomplish at the beginning. If there is an agenda, keep it short so that the goal isn't getting through a long, overly detailed agenda.

3. Keep gatherings small.

Try to limit meetings to five to seven people if at all possible. When the group becomes larger, some attendees become spectators.

4. Keep them short.

Often, the amount of time you schedule to accomplish a task is the amount of time it actually takes. One hour seems to be the default standard, probably based on our Outlook or Gmail calendars. Try scheduling meetings for 30 or 45 minutes. Or even 15 minutes. Saving 15 to 30 minutes here and there adds up.

5. Expect everyone to contribute.

At our company, if you don't speak up in meetings, you aren't invited back. Interaction and sharing ideas are critical.

6. Create new rules for PowerPoint.

When a visual presentation is required, we have a few guidelines about those, too. We use more pictures than words. (I like to follow the rule of Twitter -- no more than 140 characters -- when it comes to words on a slide.) We ditch jargon. We end with a summary of decisions and next steps.

7. Take it outside.

When a small group is gathering, I like to take the meeting out of the conference room. Sometimes we will take a walk or find a place outside to sit. To me, a conference room -- even a cool-looking one -- puts people in "classroom" mode.

Adopting a keep-it-moving approach to meetings usually keeps ideas flowing. When we get stuck or dull, I'm all for changing course, ditching the agenda or, if necessary, ending the meeting altogether.

Article #4

Avoid These 8 Mistakes as a New Leader
by Mark Hunter

It's not uncommon for new leaders to make mistakes, but I argue that some of these can be avoided.

Below are 8 of those mistakes and how to avoid them:

1. Thinking you need to make every decision.

Trying to make every decision will only turn you into a micro-manager. Strong leaders know there are numerous decisions that can be made just as well by others, and there's no better way to allow others to develop their leadership skills than by letting them make decisions.

2. Thinking you know everything.

Regardless of how smart you may think you are, nobody wants to work for (or be led by) someone who comes across as a "know-it-all." Strong leaders know there is always more to learn, and they actively seek out new things to learn each day.

3. Failing to realize you're being watched even when you're not being watched.

Leaders are leaders 24/7, and one of the easiest ways to undermine your ability to lead is by being one person while leading and a different person at other times.

4. Failing to realize that it is not about you, it's about the team.

There is no need for a leader if there is no one to lead. The measurement of a team is best seen in the sum of the results of the people. If the results are greater as a team than they are individually, then the leader is doing what they're supposed to be doing.

5. Not realizing how quickly what you say or do can and often will be misinterpreted.

Regardless of how well you may think you communicate something, it still needs to be verified. Nothing will sink a new leader faster than being misinterpreted. Remember, it's not just words that can be misinterpreted; your actions as a leader are under just as much scrutiny.

6. Being afraid to lead when it's time to lead.

Anyone can lead when things are good. It's when times are rough is when leadership is needed. Don't be afraid to stand up and make the tough call. You'll earn more respect for making the tough decision, regardless if it is ultimately right or wrong, than you will for shirking your responsibilities and not leading at all.

7. Not realizing the most important thing is what happens when you're not present.

This is all about developing people who do the right thing, regardless of whether you are around. Great leaders can step away from an organization and there is zero reduction in the performance of the team.

8. Finally, for those of you leading a sales team, let's not forget the biggest problem new sales leaders make is they try to lead the customer.

Your job as a sales leader is to lead your people, not the customer. You lead your people so they can lead their customer. If you attempt to lead the customer, you will undermine the salesperson, and the customer will turn to you for answers rather than the salesperson.

Article #5

Why Admitting Your Mistakes Will Make You a Better Leader
by Steven Blank

At SuperMac, I thought I was a good VP of marketing: aggressive, relentless and would take no prisoners – even with my peers inside the company. But a series of Zen-like moments helped me move to a different level that changed how I operated. It didn't make my marketing skills any worse or better, but moved me to play forever on a different field.

Zen Moment #1- Admitting a Mistake and Asking for Help

Up until this point in my career I had one response anytime I screwed something up: Blame someone else. The only variable was how big the screw-up was – that made a difference in whom I blamed. If it was a very big mistake, I blamed the VP of Sales. "This marketing campaign didn't work? It was a brilliant strategy but Sales screwed it up." (My own lame defense here for this behavior is that sales and marketing are always cats and dogs in startups. Historically, these were two guys with high testosterone. They hit each other with baseball bats until one of them dropped.)

This first Zen moment happened at a SuperMac exec staff meeting. I was asked to explain why a marketing program that cost $150,000 literally generated nothing in revenue for the company. I still remember that I was gearing up to go into my "I'm going to blame the sales guy" routine. Since our sales guy was a good street fighter, I knew the ensuing melee would create enough of a distraction that no one would talk about my marketing debacle. My brain had queued up the standard, "It's all Sales's fault," but instead, what came out of my mouth was, "You know, I really screwed this marketing campaign up, making it successful is important for the company, and I need all your help to fix it." You could have heard a pin drop. It was so out of character, people were shocked. Some stammered out, "Can you say that again?"

Our president picked up on the momentum and asked me what I needed from the rest of the exec team to fix this debacle. I replied: "This is really important for our success as company and I'm really at a loss why customers didn't respond the way we expected. Anybody else got some other ideas?"

From there, the conversation took a different trajectory. It was uncomfortable for some people, because it was new ground – I was asking for help – wanting to do what was right for the company.

It was definitely a "Zen moment" for me in terms of my career. From then on when I screwed up, not only did I own up to it, I asked for help. This behavior had an unintended consequence I couldn't have predicted: when others started volunteering to help me solve a problem, finding a solution became their goal as well.

Soon one or two others execs tested the waters by making a small tentative “ask” as well. When they discovered that the sky didn’t fall and they still had their jobs, our corporate culture took one more step toward a more effective and cohesive company. Ownership and Teamwork not turf.

Note to Student: Have you had any Zen moments?