

Helping Leaders Be More Effective & Organizations Reach New Heights In Performance

Leadership Solutions Newsletter

Congratulations! Because of our past relationship you are receiving our newsletter...*at no cost to you!* If this is your first issue, then welcome! We appreciate the opportunity to share best practices in leadership, management, personal and professional growth, recruiting, retention, and other areas critical to your success.



In this issue, we offer one article in this issue:

- Servant Leadership

If you have ideas for future issues, share them with us! Again, thanks for your readership.

Enjoy your newsletter!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Merle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

A certain young man was born into a family of standing in the community. His father was the CEO of a large international company with substantial holdings in twelve countries. The father was shrewd and ruled the company with an iron fist, although it was not always so. As a young man, the father had inherited the company from his father. He wanted to be a good leader and his hearts' desire was to lead with wisdom so as to see everyone in the company prosper.

The community in which they lived showed the effects of the father's philanthropic labor for he contributed greatly to the development of buildings, parks, and monuments. This was a matter of great pride for the father and important people from around the world came to see his works.

Yet in the process of accomplishing many great things, including bring international recognition to the company, the father had become further removed from his employees and less concerned over their welfare. Over the years, he became increasingly concerned about his standing in the world community and worked tiredly to accomplish the desires of his selfish ambitions.

In order to help maintain relationships with the officials in each of the twelve companies, he established strong relationships with key people, special interest groups, religious institutions and government officials. He prided himself for being a chameleon of sorts embracing the philosophy of, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." The only problem with this is that over the years, he slowly strayed from what he had been taught growing up and, frankly, was not to certain of what he really believed any more.

The day came when the father died and the entire company was left to the son who became the CEO. Shortly after he assumed command, many of the union representatives and managers sought an audience with the young CEO. With one voice the delegation said, "Your father demanded much from us. Over the years, however, he became less and less concerned about working conditions, compensation, giving us a voice in running the company, and as a result:

Our safety record has gone out the window and workers are clamoring for changes. A recent accident resulted in the deaths of several workers and the media has been brutal towards us. Various state and federal agencies are preparing to close down a number of our operations.

Our employees are upset about the company's compensation package and are looking for opportunities to leave the company. Many of our employees could make fifteen percent or more if they went to work for a competitor. Additionally, healthcare benefits have not kept pace with rising healthcare costs. As a result, employees have had to pay more and more out of their pockets for routine procedures.

In recent years, upper management has been closed to ideas that would address safety issues, improve morale, help employees cope with company demands or even ideas to improve operations.

You are in jeopardy of losing many employees that have hung in there. Recruitment efforts to fill existing efforts have been a disaster. The young workers we are trying to attract are very reputation oriented and they don't want to work for a company that isn't well respected. They are also environmentally sensitive and suspicious of bureaucratic hierarchies. They want to be involved in the decision-making process at the entry level.

The bottom line is that your father left you a company that is tapped out and on the verge of collapse. We believe there is little time to act, but if you do so quickly, perhaps we can turn this situation around.

The young CEO promised to give their suggestions due consideration and made an appointment for them to return in three days for an answer. Shortly, after they left, he arranged to meet with the Board of Directors. This was a group of older distinguished men who had been with the company for many years and had faithfully provided input to his father when asked.

When they met, he explained the recent developments and asked their input. They said to him, "If you will listen to their concerns, take steps to address their issues, give them a voice in running the company, and show you care, they will support you and this situation can be turned around. However, you must act quickly."

He considered their advice. Although it sounded like it had some merit, he was concerned that it sounded soft. He wrestled with the thought that he should establish himself as the leader by taking command and showing a firm grip on the organization. He decided to consult some of his friends with whom he had grown up and attended school. In fact, he thought, "I'll throw a big party in the Executive Suites area, so my friends can see the company headquarters. They will be so impressed! During the party, I'll invite my buddies into the Board Room and see what they think."

The party was quickly organized and invitations sent out. The night of the party came. Many of his friends arrived in limos or other expensive cars. It was quite a scene. The media was there and the setting was opulent. Expensive wine, fancy hors d'oeuvres and delicacies were abundant.

Shortly after dinner, he invited his buddies into the Board Room. He passed out big cigars and they responded by toasting his success. Finally, he explained a little about the situation, just enough for them to get the gist. Their advice was this, "Take control! Show them you're the boss. Most likely, they just want a free ride at your expense. Tell them that your ol' man was a pussycat compared to you and that if they thought he was shrewd and demanding, they haven't seen anything. Then demand that the profit margin be boosted within existing budgets, set deadlines for the development of new products and expanded distribution, and insist that they work longer hours, if necessary."

The young CEO sat in his office looking out the window feeling his chest swell as he thought how his father would be proud of him. Earlier in the morning, he had met with the delegation of union representatives and managers. He explained that he appreciated the group coming to him and that after much thought he had reached a decision. He had slowly risen from the chair he in which he was sitting and began walking around the conference table where the members of the delegation were sitting.

As he tucked one thumb behind the lapel of his suit and gracefully puffed on a cigar with the other hand, he began, "You came to me with a bunch of allegations about how bad things are.

Sure there are some problems, but as I have thought about it I realized that these problems are the result, not of my father's doing, but of your poor management and worker apathy. I should probably fire you, but I'm not.

You should know something about me. If you thought my father was shrewd and tough, know this: He was a pussycat compared to me. I was born to lead this company. I'm in charge! It's a new day all right!

Tell your staffs that I'm disgusted with their apathy. If you, and them, were taking care of business there wouldn't be these problems. Now, I want you to go back to your respective plants and convey this to your people. Furthermore, I expect...no, demand that each of your plants improve the profit margin by ten percent by the end of the year. In thirty days, I want to see a plan from each of you on how you will accomplish this and include in your plan goals for development of new products and how you will expand distribution efforts."

It had been quiet after he finished and the delegation shuffled out in silence. He was very pleased with his performance and was certain that he had established himself as the man in charge. "My-oh-my, " he thought, "Wouldn't father be proud of the way I stepped up to the plate and took charge."

The coming six months were devastating for the young CEO. Report after report of problems came in. First, the EPA shut down one plant, then one of the foreign countries seized another. Next, came a riot over safety conditions, followed by a major job action at all the plants in America. By the end of the six months, he had lost control over all the operations but two. Even in those two operations, he couldn't find workers to fill the growing number of vacancies.

Could this happen? Yes, in fact, this story is really based on the Biblical account of King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, as recorded in I Kings 12: 1-19.

As you read the account, you will notice that Rehoboam did not consult God for wisdom. Furthermore, he rejected good advice in favor of bad advice that resulted in his losing ten of the twelve tribes.

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