

Quality Leadership: Managing Ourselves and Others For Maximum Effectiveness

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Abstract

One of the greatest attributes of a successful program, organization, or agency is quality service. Many administrators face the dilemma of managing and empowering employees to accept and own the vision of high quality services. This presentation compares traditional techniques of management with the revolutionary style of “lead-management” which promotes quality services and worker empowerment. The major focus is on quality as it relates to maximum effectiveness, paradigm shifts needed to facilitate the elements of lead-management, and the development of the characteristics of change-readiness.



One of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is to begin with the end in mind. This workshop will seek to accomplish the following three goals: (1) to stimulate thought through involvement activities and humor, (2) to share some ideas and techniques from training, experience, and information gathered from recent pertinent literature, and (3) to provide resources for further investigation and study. The major areas of focus are (1) a management style to produce quality, and (2) paradigm shifts to facilitate the process.

One of the greatest attributes of a successful program, organization, or agency is *quality service*. Would you agree that our vision as leaders is to always provide high quality services to develop and maintain a successful model program or organization? Would you also agree that finding a way to manage people to produce and maintain quality is probably one of the greatest dilemmas we as managers or leaders face? In other words, how can we get the staff to accept the vision of a quality program as their vision too?

Thomas Jefferson once said, “People, like nations, are motivated by self-interest.” We are tuned to the radio station WIIFM – “What’s in it for me?” In The Control Theory Manager, Glasser (1994) states that workers will not see what’s in it for them unless the work satisfies their basic survival and psychological needs. The five basic needs as described by Glasser include:

1. *Survival* – the physiological need for air, food and shelter
2. *Freedom* – the need to make choices, to live without undue restraints
3. *Power or achievement* – the need for accomplishment and recognition, a sense of being in charge of one’s own life
4. *Love and belonging* – the need for involvement with people, the need to love and be loved, to affiliate and bond with other people
5. *Fun* – the need to enjoy life, to laugh, to see humor and to learn

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How does your job satisfy the four basic needs? Would your employees describe their work as meeting their basic needs? Dr. Glasser says, “The more need satisfying the work is, the better the quality of the work” (1994, p. 52). He describes the *characteristics of quality* as:

- It always feels good.
- It can always be improved.
- It lasts.

Think of one thing that you consider true quality. Does it fit the characteristics of quality? Does a quality program fit the characteristics? How?

What management style promotes quality and empowers workers to produce quality? In The Control Theory Manager, Glasser (1994) describes how lead-management promotes quality and empowerment in the following comparison with the traditional authoritarian boss-management style.

Boss-Managers Vs. Lead-Managers

Boss-managers set the task and the standards for what the workers are to do, usually without consulting the workers. They do not compromise; the worker has to adjust to the job as the boss defines it or suffer any consequences the boss determines. *Lead-managers*, however, engage the workers in an ongoing honest discussion of the quality of work that is needed for the program to be successful. They not only listen, but also encourage their workers to give them any input that will improve quality.

Boss-managers usually tell, rather than show, the workers how the work is to be done and rarely ask for their input as to how it might possibly be done better. *Lead-managers* show or model the job and work to increase workers’ sense of control over the work that they do.

Boss-managers inspect the work or designate someone to do it. Because the boss does not involve the workers in this evaluation, they do only enough to get by; they rarely even think about what is required for quality. *Lead-managers* teach the workers to inspect or to evaluate their own work for quality with the understanding that they know what high quality work is.

Boss-managers create a workplace in which the workers and managers are adversaries because coercion is used to try to make the workers do as they are told. *Lead-managers* continually teach the workers that the essence of quality is constant improvement. The lead-manager’s job is as a facilitator – doing everything possible to provide the workers with the best tools and a friendly, non-coercive, non-adversarial atmosphere in which to work.

Paradigm Shifts

Moving from boss to lead-management is a process that requires time and effort. What can managers and leaders do to facilitate the process? Morris Shechtman (1994), author of Working Without a Net, advocates the need for the following three important paradigm shifts.

“Care for” rather than “take care of” people. “Taking care of” (caretaking) means that we do things for our staff that they are perfectly capable of doing themselves which fosters dependence and indicates to them that they are not capable and need someone to do it for them. “Caring for” means that we challenge the staff to take responsibility to be the best they can be which fosters independence and interdependence (teamwork).

Redefine what constitutes acceptable work – moving from adequacy to peak performance. In the past job security often involved just showing up for work everyday and doing only what you had to do to get by for 20 or 30 years until retirement. Today there is no such thing as job security – only skills security. In today’s high-risk

work world of budget slicing and downsizing, mediocrity and mere competence are no longer considered acceptable. Peak performance (being the best one can be) is now required of all workers. We must give people the freedom to be innovative, let them be responsible for quality, and let them be proud of their work – then hold them responsible for performance and results.

Embrace rather than resist change. People naturally resist change, not wanting to move out of their comfort zone – their old ways of doing things; however, without change people and organizations stagnate. The old ways and rules that worked in a slower paced world are no longer effective. Quality cannot be maintained without change and constant improvement.

Coping with Change

Understanding the four phases of change described by Scott and Jaffe (1994) can assist the coping process. We need to be aware of the phases and be sensitive to which stage co-workers are experiencing in order to assist them in successfully moving to the next phase. The four phases and related behaviors include:

1. *Denial* – lack of reaction, withdrawal, focus on the past
2. *Resistance* – anger, blame, anxiety, depression, apathy

Resistance is the hump in the middle of the road that few leaders know how to get their people over. If we can't overcome resistance, we'll end up with volumes of ideas and none of them implemented. Four of the most common resistance drivers that keep us in our comfort zone are:

- fear – *panic and procrastinate cycle*
- feeling powerless – *no one asked me*
- inertia – *too much effort, too uncomfortable*
- absence of self-interest – *what's in it for me?*

How can we overcome this resistance to change? In Sacred Cows Make the Best Bulls, Kriegel and Brandt state, "Resistance will fall off in direct proportion to how involved one is in the change process" (1996, p. 217). A feeling of ownership and self-confidence are instrumental in overcoming resistance. We can turn resistance into readiness by preparing for the certainty of change. The last two phases involve becoming change-ready.

3. *Exploration* – concern about details, confusion, energy, new ideas
4. *Commitment* – cooperation, better focus, anticipation of next challenge

Change-ready People

What traits do change-ready people share? The more developed the following characteristics of change-readiness, the quicker one can move through the phases of change and deal with the conflict that results from it.

- *Passion/drive* – intensity, determination, fuel that maximizes all other traits
- *Resourcefulness* – creative, innovative, make the most of any situation
- *Optimism* – enthusiastic and positive, an abiding faith in the future
- *Adventurousness* – the inclination to take risks, the desire to pursue the unknown
- *Adaptability* – flexible, resilient
- *Confidence* – strong sense of self-esteem
- *Tolerance for Ambiguity* – comfortable when things are vague, in flux and unclear

What are your change-ready strengths and weaknesses? What will you do to further develop the areas that need improving?

Even though you possess strong change-readiness traits, successfully implement paradigm shifts and develop a model program or organization, remember the Japanese word *Kaizen* which means “finished never is.” Quality requires continuous improvement. In *If It Ain't Broke, BREAK IT!*, Kriegel and Patler (1997) emphasize the need to “continue fixing it all the time; if you don't, it will break.”

Resources

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