9-26-2016

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LEADERSHIP FOR MILLENNIALS

Jerry Dale Jones and Catherine Barrett

Abstract
Times have changed, and technological and societal changes have created a complex environment in American schools that can present significant challenges for school leaders. Different knowledge, skills, and attitudes are required that are starkly different from those reflected in past school administrations. Leading millennials requires a different approach to management that relies on a team concept to achieve school success in the 21st century.

Introduction
The educational leaders of today's schools require different knowledge, skills, and attitudes from those reflected in past school administrations. Recognizing that the behavior of the educational leader is one of the critical factors supporting quality schools, the administrator must make the shift away from dated management models to focus on 21st century education that requires effective, innovative collaboration among all constituents situated in the education process.

The millennial shift must begin with effective leadership and move toward the development of a strong team concept. The team approach allows the leader an opportunity to create a collective energy that builds success for everyone. The team concept, if properly developed, allows for creative, inventive problem solving that leads to finding win-win solutions within what is often perceived as the hostile environment of public education.

The development of a strong team concept is essential to any organization, but for schools and school systems, an effective team approach can influence dramatically the quality of the educational mission. It is important for everyone on the team to understand that they are part of developing a positive climate conducive to learning, and that through teamwork; every member can make significant contributions.

Governments at both the state and national levels have been persistent in applying mandates to solve issues in schools; however, in the business and industry environment, experts who advocate for the use of teams to solve problems state the following:

- The people closest to the problem know best how to solve the problem.
- The use of teams provides an opportunity for empowerment that is not afforded to the individual.
- Team members have a feeling of ownership of the problem and actively contribute to the solution of the problem.
- Team members learn ways to build team morale, ownership, and involvement, and learn how to have fun being part of a team.

Over years of experience, we develop many skills. If we use them, they grow and serve us better; if we never take them out of the box, these gifts remain unopened, then we lose the

benefit they could afford us. Price Pritchett (2012) reminds us in *You 2,* to: "Think of a striped caterpillar humbly crawling along the stem of a milkweed plant a few inches from Mother Earth, changing into a strikingly beautiful monarch butterfly that soars high in the air and bravely journeys thousands of miles in its yearly pilgrimage to become a monarch, to free those shining auburn wings, to fly high and free, the creature must break out of the cocoon of safety and open its gifts."

We must encourage and support each team member so that there is a willingness to reach for the talents and skills that are still hiding our unused potential. We must create a climate where opening our gifts is enjoyable. Paraphrasing the words of psychologist Haim Ginott, and applying them to the team, we must remember that we could be the decisive element in the team. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather… I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, my response decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated.

As we work to develop the hidden talents of our team members, it is important to keep in mind that when we throw a pebble in the pond, we never know how far the ripples will go. The talent that we help nurture could be just the one that solves some vexing problem and leads the team to great successes. Treat every team member as though you expect him or her to blossom and reach his or her potential. Your expectations will help make a metamorphosis happen.

Team learning is something that must take place throughout the life of the team. It takes effort and determination to keep team members in a winning frame of mind. The leader of the team must become the mentor. It is the leader's responsibility to help the team members develop the talents and strengths needed to achieve the goals.

As in sports, no one wins unless the whole team is focused and the vision is clear. Good mentors always use the words "WE" and "OUR." They also emphasize how everyone's work is part of the winning solution.

Each member of the team; however, must know that their contributions are important. The mentor must Invite participation, not dictate solutions, and let decisions "bubble up" from the group. The mentor must share the glory and accept the blame. The mentor must be willing to accept complaints publicly and speak in private with team members about ways to improve. The mentor must pat people on the back, praise them in front of other team members, and publicly give them credit for their accomplishments.

The mentor must be involved at all times, so that they can maintain a good "feel" for what is going on with the team. It is also important that the mentor "walk the talk," -- set the example. A mentor is leader. Lou Holtz, former head football coach of Notre Dame, once stated that in life everyone asks three questions of a leader or mentor. The first question is, "Can I trust you as a leader?" The second question is, "Are you committed to excellence?" the third is, "Do you care about me as a person?" These questions and the other points discussed above are essential to the success of any leader and team.

Effective teams need nurturing and time to develop, and the leader can be strategic in this development. The Nominal Group Technique is one of many structured group processes designed and developed to aid teams in decision-making, ensuring everyone on the team has an equal voice. Team decision, on average, generates more unique ideas, high quality ideas, and more ideas than a decision made by an individual or a few individuals. Nominal Group Technique is comprised of seven basic steps:

> Step 1: Review the meeting's objective; it is important the meeting objective be
> reviewed before the meeting continues.
> Step 2: Silent Idea Generation. Each team member writes at least three ideas on a piece

of paper and presents one of the three to the facilitator at recording time.

Step 3: Individuals' ideas are recorded on a flip chart. The floor is not open for discussion and no value is placed on any idea that is presented by a team member.

Step 4: Ideas recorded on the flip chart are addressed individually and clarification is requested. Team members may ask questions, but no value is placed on the ideas.

Step 5: Using color-coded cards with point values assigned, members independently rank the items on the list. The assigned values are placed on the flip chart by the corresponding item. The points are totaled for each item, and the top three are used for step 6.

Step 6: This is a brief discussion of the results of the first ranking and the values assigned to the top priority items.

Step 7: The group makes its final ranking using the top three items. The final ranking will provide the order in which the items will be addressed. This is only one of many ways that Nominal Group Technique can be used with groups or teams.

Horst Schulze, the President and CEO of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, made the statement, "Leadership is the fuel that runs the organization." This being true, then the next logical deduction is that a productive team is the catalyst that drives the vision.

A productive team can develop the way in which people interact and work together while working on problems and making decisions. In the development of this strong team approach, clearly defined goals and objectives must be established. The collection of information is essential and the data must be analyzed and put in a format that is usable to all team members.

The next step in the process requires the generation of solutions; no solution should be overlooked or ruled out before it is explored. The selection of a solution is a major hurdle that will prove crucial in the commitment of the team to the fulfillment of the solution. The decision-making at this point becomes critical to the credibility of the team and must be supported by the leadership of the organization. The organization must provide time and training that will help insure the success of the team's decision.

The last and most important step is the evaluation of the solution to measure its effectiveness. The evaluation should also be tied to some type of continuous improvement plan that empowers the team to start the process over if needed. During this process, it is important to note that some teachers prefer to make suggestions anonymously. Consider having a suggestion box where comments can be offered by faculty and staff, outside of formal meetings.

Significant to this discussion, is attitude. It is understandable that people will have difficulties in life. The problem comes in how long we focus our attention in the direction of the disappointment. The energy that it takes to concentrate on what is going wrong keeps us preoccupied and unable to focus on correcting the problem. W. Clement Stone, the president of Combined Insurance and author of numerous books, said, "There is very little difference in people. However, the little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative."

The importance of attitude is illustrated by the story of three umpires who found themselves comparing notes on their profession. The first umpire said, "There are balls and there are strikes, and we call them as they are." The second umpire disagreed slightly, saying, "There are balls and there are strikes, but we call them as we see them." The third umpire said they were both wrong. "There are balls and strikes," he agreed, "but they isn't nothing until we call them!" He was positive in his attitude that he made the difference.

The attitude of the team is crucial to the success of the team. Each team member needs to be positive in his approach to dealing with the problems that confront the team. Do not look for

mistakes. Look for things that have been done right and celebrate them. Broadcast good news. Find and reward the person you "catch" doing good things. We call such a person a "good finder," and every teams needs at least one good finder, someone to offer strokes to others. Faultfinders are too prevalent, and they bring the attitude of the team down. The best problem-solving attitude to have is a positive "keep-at-it-tude." Developing the team concept within the school setting is somewhat like the fly in Pritchett's (2012) book, *You 2*.   Pritchett tells a true story about a fly in a life-or-death struggle against the windowpane trying to escape. The door is open on the other side of the room and if the fly would make a 180 degree turn, across the room in a matter of seconds, freedom awaits.

Dr. Pritchett asks some very important questions at this point. Why doesn't the fly try another approach, something dramatically different? How did it get so locked in on the idea of that particular route and determined effort offering the most promise for success? What logic is there in continuing until death, to seek a breakthrough with "more of the same?"

It has been said that a pessimist thinks the fly is trying to hide, while the optimist thinks the fly is looking for a way out. Regardless of who is right, when it is apparent that the current path is the wrong path, a smart person will seek another way to achieve his objective. Trying harder is not always the answer to success. Sometimes we must take a more creative approach to getting the team and the school involved.

Good team members have the willingness to try something new. They are good explorers and are always looking for a new challenge or for the discovery that has not been made. The willingness to keep an open mind and focus on the future is essential. The window to the future is a far better guide to success than the mirror of the past. There is no goal that cannot be achieved with the power of synergy generated when teamwork and enthusiasm are practiced.

Reference

Pritchett, P. (2012). *You 2:* A high velocity formula for multiplying your personal effectiveness in quantum leaps. Pritchett LP: Dallas TX.

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