



Outstanding Leadership in a Service Culture

by Brad Worthley

The only way you can create and sustain a strong service culture is to have leaders who understand how large the role is that they play in the culture. Being an outstanding leader is not just a passive title on a business card, it is incredibly hard work if done properly and just as selfless a role as being a great parent. There is nothing glamorous about being a leader or being a parent, it is just plain hard work and exhausting on the best days. It requires people in these roles who have a strong desire to want to learn more and pass their wisdom on to the people they lead. There is an old saying: “Great leaders are great readers” meaning that leaders are constantly seeking knowledge and looking to be even better tomorrow. They are self-motivated when it comes to learning and utilize every resource available to them, including books, audio programs, You Tube, trade publications, training seminars and other industry resources.

Many casinos spend adequate resources to train and develop their directors and managers, but far less resources on their supervisors. You might send directors and managers to trade shows, conferences and professional development events. But who spends the most time with the front-line employees? Who spends the most time facing guests? In most organizations, the supervisors are where the rubber meets the road. They are the ones who have the most influence over the team members, and who have the most influence over the guest and their perceptions of their experience with your organization. You might assume that your directors or managers pass on their wisdom, but we all know what happens when you assume.

One of the characteristics of an outstanding leader is someone who is strategically focused on building their people. It is not an accident or “when I have time” kind of thing, it is structured and intentional. It also sends a very powerful message to the people you lead – it says, “You are important and I want to invest in you and your future.” However, there may be some leaders in your organization who lack self-confidence and hoard knowledge because they perceive it is job security for themselves. If no one else knows how to do their job, then it makes them feel less vulnerable and gives them the misperception of security. It is a misperception because the hoarder, who starves their team members of knowledge, should be the first person to be fired (just for doing that).

Here are just a few characteristics of an outstanding leader:

- They do what they say they will do – keeping their promises and following through on their commitments.
- Their actions are consistent with the goals and direction of the company, and they emulate the behaviors requested of the team members.

- They are capable of making a difference in the lives of others.
- They admit their mistakes and realize that attempting to hide mistakes is much more damaging and erodes credibility.
- They arouse optimistic feelings and enable people to think positively about success.

Outstanding leaders are also great delegators, because when you delegate to someone, you are sending the message that you believe in them or that you trust them, and that is huge. Some people don't delegate because they feel guilty dumping more work on their supposedly already overloaded team members. However, the team member's perception of the situation is normally “They don't believe I am capable” or “They don't trust me” which is a huge de-motivator. If you are going to delegate, you might consider following a few rules in order to be successful:

- Surround yourself with people who you can delegate to – if you can't delegate to someone, that is a red flag.
- Match the person to the task – take advantage of each person's strengths, because they will want to do more.
- Delegate low risk projects at first to build confidence in people who may need it.
- Listen intently if the person has ideas on how to do something better – fresh eyes bring fresh perspective.
- Stress results, not details - Make it clear that you are more concerned with the outcome than the details.
- Inspect what you expect and follow-up early-on to make sure they are on task with the project.
- Keep a delegation log so you will be able to monitor the progress and keep track of deadlines.

Outstanding leaders are rare because most people are not willing to put the work in to achieve that level of proficiency. If you want to make a great investment, invest in yourself – it has the greatest return and annuity. ♣

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