



WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

How to simplify leadership

by Jerry Glass

For a manager in any organization, the task of designing and delivering a project on time and on budget sometimes can seem overwhelming. Team members look to their leaders to create a vision and explain how a project will be successfully executed. General Colin Powell once said, "Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers." The key to achieving successful results lies in making the task as simple to understand as possible. In addition, communicating clearly, concisely, and with clarity of thought helps managers simplify leadership.

Listen to your people. They should be your priority. Be certain the people on your team understand the assignment, and encourage them to ask questions. If they need to talk to you about an idea or an issue, make time to meet with them based on their schedule, not yours. Don't tell someone with an idea or a question to come back later. By the time you're ready to meet with him, the idea or question may have been forgotten, or the employee will have lost the passion for wanting to talk to you about it. A good leader always makes time for others. People get dejected when they are told to come back later because now isn't a good time for you.

Be passionate. Ambition and motivation are contagious. Everyone on your team should want to succeed as much as you do. People can read body language. If you aren't excited about an assignment, how can you expect your staff to be?

To achieve is to believe. Have a laser focus on achieving the outcome you desire. As my father said to me when I was very young, "Anyone can say no. That's easy. It is much harder to find someone who wants to solve a problem by saying yes, I can do that!" You don't need people on your team to tell you all the reasons something can't be accomplished. You need people on your team who believe they can figure out how to reach a goal, no matter how impossible it may seem.

Communicate your message often. Famous taglines such as "Just do it" or "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" are simple and meaningful to consumers.

Create a simple message that your team members will understand. Then, repeat it over and over again in meetings and communications, and make it a part of everything you do.

Keep the momentum going. Projects don't fail because ideas are bad; they fail because leaders are unable to maintain the momentum that existed at the start of a project. Many times, projects start out with a lot of excitement but later lose energy when people start to miss meetings or assignments aren't completed on time. A great leader makes sure his team is organized, tasks are assigned, and each person is held accountable for getting things done.

Lead by example. Organize check-in meetings, and create timelines and action plans. Don't leave your team members unsure of what needs to be done. For each task, describe what must be accomplished, how you are going to get there, who is going to help you, and when you expect to complete the assignment. Not everyone is taught how to be organized or on time. Great leaders don't criticize someone for being late or not being able to find something. Demonstrate to others how to be better organized or manage their time.

Compartmentalize large projects. Help break down seemingly complex projects into smaller, simpler "chunks." When viewed as a whole, a project can seem overwhelming unless you can break it down into smaller and simpler assignments, creating the building blocks to a successfully completed project.

Sure, there will be bumps in the road, and other projects and issues will get in the way of your assignment. However, if you follow these simple principles, you will be viewed as a good leader—that is, someone whom others want to follow, who will make a difference in his organization, and, most important, who will leave the company a little better than when he arrived.



Jerry Glass is the president of F&H Solutions Group and a recognized expert in HR and labor relations. Contact him at jglass@fhsolutionsgroup.com or 202-719-2060. ❖