



# The ingredients of leadership

*Leadership served well is like a good meal*

**"FOOD NOURISHES** the body. Leadership, if served well, nourishes the spirit, inspires innovation, and influences outcomes."

With these words, I opened a conference for executives in food service for senior living communities across the country, sponsored and hosted by Direct Supply, an employee-owned company, headquartered in Milwaukee.

## RECIPE FOR LEADERSHIP

During the keynote, I suggested that ingredients for effective leadership include the three I's: Influence, Inspiration and Innovation.

### INFLUENCE

Participants were asked to consider the qualities of someone in their lives who inspired them. Qualities they identified included: compassion, care, thinking outside of the box, ability to have fun, being capable of hearing a different opinion, etc. In our coaching and consulting world, we identify those qualities as qualities of Emotional Intelligence.

I shared with the participants that, while IQ and technical skills are important for securing a job, the qualities of Emotional Intelligence are twice as significant as IQ and functional skills combined as a predictor of success.

We know that if we want to influence others, we need to give them the sense that we appreciate and believe in them.

### INSPIRATION

Definition: To fill someone with the urge or ability to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.

Effective leaders do what Max Depree writes in his book "The Art of Leadership." He suggests that there are two major responsibilities of leaders: The first is to define reality and articulate a vision, and the second is to say "thank you."

As leaders, we need to connect the mission, vision and values of the organization to the

purpose of the contribution of each employee.

Consider the story of a man walking in a city. He sees a building being constructed. When he stops to ask the first worker: "What are you doing?" The worker responds with a bit of sarcasm, "It's pretty obvious that I am laying brick." As the man continues around the corner, he asks a second worker, engaged in the same process of slabbing down mortar and adding bricks. When he asks this worker: "What are you doing?" she replies, "I'm building a cathedral."

As leaders we need to ensure that employees know that the work they are doing is contributing to building a cathedral.

A number of years ago, I had the privilege of working with the leadership team for the Green Bay Packers. We worked together to develop the mission and vision statements, and to articulate the values of the organization.

In a facilitated meeting with all employees we presented the work of the leadership team to invite their buy-in. One of the exercises was for employees to talk in small groups about where they witnessed values in action. As the conversation evolved, a coach stood up and said: "I want to talk about excellence (one of the defined values). Every day I go into the locker room, the floor is spotless, equipment is in order, everything we need for a game or practice is ready for us." Then he said across the room: "Jim, I have never thanked you." Jim worked for the Packers for 23 years in maintenance and facilities. He never had the experience of being thanked publicly. The coach's words not only inspired Jim, they inspired all of the leaders and employees in the Packers organization.

### THE THIRD I: INNOVATION

Innovation is making changes in something established with new methods, ideas, etc. Or to introduce something new, often a new product.

How do leaders encourage innovation? In-

novation means change and when change is introduced in our lives there is some level of resistance. Leaders need to acknowledge the resistance to change, normalize it, and then provide support for employees to transition through change.

If we are to encourage innovation, we must encourage ideas. Oftentimes, the ideas that employees bring to leaders frustrate rather than advance possibilities. Learning to receive ideas from others, even when you don't think they will work, is an important skill in leadership. If employees believe their ideas are not welcome, there will be no innovation.

As I concluded the Direct Supply keynote, I realized how grateful I was for the experience of being with this group of passionate, committed leaders who are eager to influence, inspire and innovate. They will make a difference in the lives of hundreds of staff and residents who live in senior living facilities across the country.

What will be the leadership meal that you prepare in your organization? ■



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