



Leadership Starts with Tough Decisions: Five Leadership Skills for Outstanding Team Building

Leadership starts with tough decisions. Let me share with you my recent leadership challenge and the leadership secrets you can use in any team building situation for great leadership results.

I have the honor and pleasure of volunteering for many groups and causes. In many situations, I am called upon to lead as chairperson or co-chairperson. Recently, I had the honor of co-chairing an event that involved leading and motivating a team of volunteers to work together for a successful result. Overall, the team volunteers are leaders in health care, education, business, media, the arts, and faith-based organizations, etc. In other words, this team of volunteers consisted of very motivated and accomplished people who wanted to make a difference.

One committee member became increasingly negative in her communication and actions at the expense of the other committee members. She behaved in a manner that was not in line with our overall mission. After a coaching session agreeing on what was expected from her in relationship to our mission, her behavior became increasingly worse. The final straw was a very negative e-mail that stated she was the only committee member who was doing anything and personally attacked the other committee members.

After consulting with the event organizers to gain agreement on a plan of action, I called this person to let her know that this was not acceptable behavior and invited her to meet with me to discuss how we could bring her behavior more in line with the mission of our project. She rejected my invite, and I let her know that by not accepting my invite, she was no longer a participant in our event. I followed up with an e-mail and letter reiterating my verbal statement. She made the choice to "fire herself."

As leader of the event, I made telephone calls to committee members to explain the committee change, let each committee member know the wonderful job they were doing, and shared with them where we were in relationship to our mission and goals. While making these calls, I soon found out that some committee members were not as involved in the project because of the one negative committee member. Some members had stopped attending meetings, stopped communicating, and weren't giving 100% for the event. After assuring them that they were valuable team members of the project and that this "negative member" would not be involved in the project's going forward, we experienced a new level of motivation and participation that took our event to a new level of success and broke a record for attendance.

You may be in a similar leadership position whereby the success of the organization, project, or team depends on how well and how fast you make decisions when faced with challenging situations. The following five leadership skills will keep you on the leadership track during challenging situations, no matter whether your organization is for profit or non-profit, so that you can achieve your goals:

1. Live the Mission When Making Leadership Decisions

Live the mission by constantly communicating the mission so that everyone of the team understands the mission and acts to live the mission. Ask team members the following question, "What did you do today to live the mission and achieve the goals of the mission?" Develop clear and concise team member descriptions so that everyone understands how they make a difference. Motivate and reward team members based on how well they lived the mission.

2. Maintain Standards When Making Leadership Decisions

Once you and your team understand the mission, it is easier to create and live up to the standards of the mission. In the above story, when a team member began to act in negative way, I coached her on what the standard was for acceptable team behavior. I let her know both the consequences

for continuing to exhibit negative behavior and rewards for being a positive team member. In this way, the choice becomes that of the team members, and you can make the leadership decision based on their future actions.

Remember, you must, as a leader, maintain a consistent standard level when interacting with all team members.

3. Seek Consensus When Making Leadership Decisions

When in a leadership position, we sometimes feel we are all alone when making tough leadership decisions. You should never feel that way because in most cases you can rely on other leaders in your organization that can share with you the information, experience, and tools to making a successful leadership choice. In the story, I consulted with the event organizers, board members, and my co-chair before communicating with the problem team member. By consulting with the other leaders in your organization, you gain a group understanding of the challenge, discuss a plan of action with the rewards and consequences, and develop a follow-up plan if needed. In other words, you are all in step when it is time for any action to be taken.

4. Quickly Take Action When Making Leadership Decisions

Now that you have gained consensus, quickly take action. The quicker you can take action, the sooner you can eliminate any further potential challenges. The faster you can make your leadership decision, the faster you can set a positive course for the behavior you want to correct. Also, when you make decisions quickly, your employees will see you as a strong, decisive leader they can trust and want to follow.

Note: Once you make the leadership decision, never regret taking action.

5. Communicate to Your Team When Making Leadership Decisions

Communicate to your team why you are making a leadership decision. This will allow your team members to be involved in the decision. Eliminate any concerns they may have while communicating how important your team members are in accomplishing the mission. You will gain valuable insight from your team members on how and why to proceed with your leadership decision.

Remember, as a leader, you will need to make tough decisions. Follow these five leadership secrets for making your leadership decisions much easier and for gaining outstanding team results.

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