

## Good to Great: Leading the Way

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Just as ACCC is a multidisciplinary organization, each of our member programs is made of staff of many disciplines. As leaders within our institutions, do we value each member of the team so that we maximize the expertise of each discipline?

One definition of leadership in an organization is “communicating the worth of potential in others that they come to see in themselves.” To show value, we as leaders have to give our employees a “voice.”

We operate in a “knowledge age” in which a leadership philosophy of command and control is not effective. I often ask our managers what they are doing to win the “hearts and souls” of staff. My suggestion: give staff a voice in the decision-making processes and value their contributions.

I am a firm believer in building consensus around issues and decisions. I understand that with large groups or committees counting votes may be necessary, but the underlying leadership principle is to value people and listen to them in order to make decisions. When you value your employees, you win their hearts (passion), their minds (knowledge), and their souls (desire). A leadership approach that values and listens to staff creates a culture in which self-motivation can flourish.

Another way to give people a voice is stewardship delegation. With this approach, the leader shares with staff the vision of where the department is headed. As Stephen Covey would say, you begin with the end in mind. Then, allow your employees to determine how to make that vision happen. Send staff the message, *as your leader, I am your resource to help get the job done*. Value their contribution instead of dictating. Leaders who

use stewardship delegation actually increase their influence and earn a high level of commitment from staff.

By valuing the expertise of each person in our department, leaders communicate to staff: *I don't know it all. You are important. And, it takes all of us to accomplish the mission of caring for our patients with cancer.*



Two leadership traits necessary to create this type of culture are empathetic listening and demonstrating true understanding. As I sit in committee meetings, I am often amazed

at the lack of communication that takes place. Oh, people are talking—they are just not communicating. The most common barrier? Not listening to each other. As a leader, my job is often to help group members recognize what each participant means—and then to recognize where there are similarities or differences. Another sign of lack of understanding is not answering the question that is being asked. Clarifying helps participants reach mutual understanding, which in turn, helps lead to consensus.

Finally, one simple but critical factor underlies good communication and valuing employees—trust. Good leaders build a reputation with staff by “walking the talk” and being true to their word. It takes time to build trust. You can say that you value people, but you have to show them by what you do as well.

As we value the expertise that each individual brings to our department and motivate our employees by giving them a voice, we can achieve excellence in patient care through the synergy of each individual. Good leaders inspire people to have confidence in their leader, but great leaders inspire people to have confidence in themselves. ☐

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