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Springtime and Leadership It's a New Season!

In nature, spring is traditionally a time for growth and renewal. In business, it's the season to look at ourselves and our management team for opportunities to develop our fullest potential. For our business to grow, we must grow.

Evaluate the Current Leadership Team

Who makes up your leadership team? Were many of them promoted from within? Congratulations, today we need to grow our own leaders whenever possible.

Have you provided leadership development? Many people are promoted to leadership positions without the proper training or many times without any training. This is very risky. Some will figure it out and succeed, though usually taking longer and at a much greater cost than necessary. Others struggle and sometimes are lost both as a productive worker and a potentially great leader. Even new leaders who do okay may never fully make the transition without learning effective leadership skills.

Have you had formal leadership development yourself? Have you asked the members of your team for feedback on what works well with your leadership style and what changes you could make to increase their success or the company's success?

Cultivate Leadership Skills

A leader's job is to get the right people in the right jobs doing the right things for the right reasons. Matching the right person to the right job is imperative. Using the nature analogy, plants thrive when they are in the right location with the right light and food. People also thrive when their natural strengths match the job requirements and support is provided.

Does every employee know the right things to do? Do they know daily if they are winning or losing without you telling them? Don't assume that because you have worked with someone for a long time that they know your priorities; ask them.

A leader needs skills in three overall areas: technical, process or strategic thinking and human skills. The higher the leadership position, the less technical skills are of value. Without formal leadership development, leaders tend to rely on their technical skills and end up doing their people's job instead of their own.

Here are symptoms that leadership development may be needed.

Not Exercising Authority Effectively: The manager isn't holding some or all team members accountable. The manager

works around an employee who isn't doing his or her job or is being too hard on employees. The manager uses the power of the position rather than coaching and inspiring.

Poor Time Management and Productivity: The manager puts out fires constantly rather than identifying the cause and developing longer term solutions and processes. The manager works long hours and doesn't think he can take a vacation. The manager is too busy to provide coaching to employees.

Not Developing the Potential of the Team: Lots of time is spent answering questions because the manager is the only one who knows the procedures; nothing is in writing. He or she micromanages employees instead of developing them. The department doesn't work as well when the leader is away.

Lack of Delegation: You hear, "It's faster to do it myself than teach someone else." This might be true the first time, but if we don't take the time to teach, we will always be doing the task rather than doing our real job, getting results through others.

Missing Motivation: You hear, "No one cares as much as I do." Employees are told, "We need to do this because top management wants it done." Good leaders take personal responsibility and tap into the individual employee's motivation.

Ineffective Problem Solving and Decision Making: The manager makes decisions and solves problems that his or her people could solve.

Create the Right Environment for Growth

Create a development plan for yourself and each employee, but don't waste training dollars. You can't just send someone to a one day seminar most of the time. Take these steps to create a climate of real behavior change:

- Agree upon specific behavior change goals prior to the training.
- Spread the training over a period of weeks to increase retention and application.
- Allow multiple exposures to the information through reading and listening.
- Schedule weekly meetings with your manager to measure progress and discuss specific application of the ideas.

Take time this spring to cultivate leadership skills in yourself and in your team. Create the right climate for individual and organizational growth. Grow your own leaders! The first step is awareness. To take a free leadership self-assessment, visit www.attainmentinc.com.

Linda Tennant is President of Attainment, Inc., a franchise of 40-year-old Leadership Management Inc. (LMI). Using a proven Behavior Change Process, Attainment helps leaders improve in the areas of leadership, productivity, communication, teambuilding, coaching and sales. Listen weekly to 'Attainment with Attitude' on the John Adam Show, KXAM1310, Tuesdays at 7:40 p.m.