Private Club Performance Management

Leadership on the Go

Ed Rehkopf

Leadership on the Go

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Teachable Moments

Good Leadership – It's Just Common Sense

I recently read an Internet-posted news article entitled, *Disney Offers Customer Service Training*. While I found the article somewhat interesting, it was the reader comments posted below the article that caught my attention. Here they are:

1st Posted Comment: *"I work for a medical practice in Georgia that sends a few of their employees to Disney for training each year. Our patients (guests) really responded well to our new customer service guidelines. However, management really needed to attend the training as well as the regular employees. They became complacent in their 'ivory tower' and expected all of us to treat the patients well (and of course we did); however, **management needed to extend the same courtesy and good manners to their employees**. In the past 3 months the company has had record turnover and still harbors a large disgruntled employee pool. No idle words .... **'Treat others the way you would want to be treated.'"***

2nd Posted Comment: *"When we returned, all 1st level management (the ones dealing with the customers) were asked to implement the Disney experience in our daily activities. **The most unfortunate part of the Disney experience was that although our senior management went along on the trip, I am yet to witness the impact it had on them when dealing with us 1st level managers**."*

3rd Posted Comment: *"I agree with the posters who feel that **senior management should lead by example and treat their subordinates with dignity and respect. It just seems like common sense, that when employees are happy and feel-well treated, this will filter down to the way they treat the customers. Everyone in an organization deserves to be treated well and this makes for optimum performance.**"*

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: Discuss the posters comments above and discuss them with your management team. Ask them what lessons are to be learned from these examples?

Take Away: Without the active involvement and example of leadership (and Service-Based Leadership at that), improvements in employee morale, dedication, empowerment, and ultimately in member service will not happen.

Teachable Moments

Good Leadership Examples

"We have all worked for bosses in our lives, and their examples, both good and bad, can teach us much about becoming true leaders.

Hopefully, you have worked for some good leaders or had the opportunity to observe good leaders in action.

Consider some of the things you have seen or experienced that constituted good leadership and how they motivated or energized you to work harder or do better.

Use any example you can think of and search for what you found impressive about the behavior. How can these examples influence your own current work environment?"

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: This is a great exercise to let your managers talk about their own experiences with good leadership. Relating positive examples of how a good leader or mentor impacted their lives is a great way to illustrate the immense difference good leaders can make.

Hopefully, you have worked for some good leaders or had the opportunity to observe good leaders in action.

List some of the things you have seen or experienced that constituted good leadership and how they motivated or energized you to work harder or do better.

Use any example you can think of and search for what you found impressive about the behavior. How can these examples influence your own current work environment?

Take Away: As one senior club executive put it, "The longer I'm in this business, the more I realize it's all about leadership."

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Teachable Moments

Fear-Based Management

"Fear-based management is rooted in the insecurities of the supervisor. While most people have insecurities, in this instance, the immature, inexperienced, and untrusting attitude of the supervisor dominates the workplace. Some symptoms of fear-based management are:

➢ Unwillingness to take a risk.

➢ Lack of initiative and acceptance of the status quo.

➢ Employees afraid to express opinions or answer questions.

➢ Lack of trust.

➢ Defensiveness and blame placing.

➢ Lack of communication or only top-down communication.

➢ Poor motivation and morale.

Fear-based management can be overcome by a leader with an open, trusting attitude and a willingness to grow, both as a person and a leader. Because of its detrimental impact on employees, members, and the bottom line, fear-based management should not be tolerated in any club."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line

Discussion Points: Discuss how fearful managers create problems in their organizations. Take each bulleted item above and give examples of how the behaviors are damaging to the organization.

Take Away: Fear-based management is detrimental to the health and welfare of any organization.

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Teachable Moments

Becoming a Service-Based Leader

"Successful leadership depends on the quality of relationships between a leader and followers. As such it entails relationship skills – the personal characteristics and abilities to connect with and inspire the enthusiastic efforts of a diverse group of people toward a common goal.

True leadership requires an understanding of what makes people tick – individually and in group settings. It requires sensitivity to the needs and desires of others. It requires openness and accessibility so followers are comfortable bringing their concerns and issues to the leader. It requires a person who is self-analytical, who examines every less-than-optimum outcome for improvement, often discovering a better way to interact with followers. It requires a person who puts the needs of the enterprise ahead of personal ambition, who recognizes that tending to the group welfare in a disciplined way will ultimately bring about better performance.

Finally, learning leadership skills is not a one-time event. Just as different endeavors and levels of organizations require different skill sets for managerial success, leadership skills must expand and develop as the individual moves up to higher levels of responsibility. But the skills learned in the early years of one's career will be the foundation for the broader skills necessary when one takes on greater responsibilities, particularly if you understand that true leadership is a lifelong journey, not a destination."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: Discuss the following points and why they are important to becoming a Service-Based Leader.

Sensitivity to the needs and desires of others.

Openness and accessibility on the part of the leader.

Self-analytical, examining every less -than-optimum outcome.

Putting the needs of the club ahead of personal ambition.

Disciplined tending to the needs of the enterprise will bring about better performance.

Take Away: Having an outward focus on others, putting the needs of the club first, being open and accessible to constituents, and being willing to examine less-than-optimum outcomes will help you become an effective Service-Based Leader, bringing success to you and your club.

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Teachable Moments

Your Constituencies

"Before you can effectively exercise your leadership skills, you must clearly recognize your various constituencies—those groups who depend on you and for whom you must provide leadership and service. For many positions this is clear cut; there are members, employees, and a boss. However, for some positions there may be other groups who rely upon your exercise of leadership.

So for every leadership position, one must identify the constituencies served. Once you have identified these, make a list of each constituency's needs and how you and/or your team can best serve them. In most cases you need to visit with constituents to hear directly from them what they need or expect from you.

With a clear understanding of their needs, you are in a far better position to determine priorities and execute your responsibilities."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line

Discussion Points: Every leader serves multiple constituencies—"those groups who depend on you and for whom you must provide leadership and service." These constituencies typically fall into three groups—"members, employees, and a boss."

What things do these three constituencies depend on you for?

Make a list, then assess how well you do in meeting their needs.

What else could you do to better serve their needs?

Do you have any other constituencies in addition to these groups?

Who are they and what do they need from you?

Take Away: Knowing your constituencies and their needs will underpin all your efforts to provide leadership and will be major determinants in your success.

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Teachable Moments

The Soft Stuff

"Roger Enrico, former chairman at Pepsico, famously said, **'The soft stuff is always harder than the hard stuff.'** As one who has worked in hospitality leadership roles for over thirty-five years, I would say that truer words were never spoken. In the detail and people rich environment of the hospitality business, it is the absence of well-developed 'soft' skills at all levels of organizations that create our greatest challenges.

So what are we really talking about when we speak of the soft stuff? In short, it's the people skills – those aptitudes and abilities used to get the most out of our human assets. It encompasses all those things we talk about when discussing leadership – the highly nuanced interactions with a diverse workforce that result in motivation, morale, enthusiasm, focus, commitment, initiative, productivity, teamwork, organizational cohesiveness, and group success.

So what are some very real things that you can do to improve the soft stuff at your club? Here are three basics:

➢ **Leadership training for all managers** to ensure they understand the absolute importance of leadership in all they do. The ongoing example and performance of your leadership team is **THE** most important driver of your club's success.

➢ **Well-defined organizational values and constantly reinforced service culture** are an absolute must. Without clearly articulated values and club culture, your efforts to provide high levels of service to your membership will certainly fail.

➢ **Training, training, and more training** is a bedrock requirement in the hospitality industry. There's just too much that needs to be done right every day by everyone on your staff to leave the details to chance.

The 'hard stuff' – the buildings, golf course, and other amenities are certainly important to a successful club experience. But without the soft stuff they are just expensive shells and monuments, lacking in the reassuring warmth and human touch that is at the heart of hospitality and service."

Ed Rehkopf, What I Expect from My Club Management Team

Discussion Points: Have your managers talk about some of the challenges of developing the "soft stuff" at your club. What are some specific things that could be done to improve the soft stuff so it's not so hard?

Take Away: Develop the skills of a Service-Based Leader, create and reinforce a culture of service, and train constantly and consistently to master the "Soft Stuff."

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Teachable Moments

Empowering Employees

"What are empowered employees and how can they help your club in meeting its mission and vision? In the simplest terms **empowered employees are viewed as full-fledged partners in your quest for high standards of quality and service**. Instead of the traditional view that employees are easily replaceable elements in an organization, people who must be trained to do narrow, well-defined tasks and who must be closely watched and supervised at all times, the concept of empowerment says that today's more educated and sometimes more sophisticated employees **need and want to contribute more to their employer and workplace**. Yet many businesses marginalize their employees by refusing to listen to them and by failing to let them contribute to the enterprise in any meaningful way.

A few companies have truly embraced the concept of empowerment and have discovered the immense power and synergy that can be unleashed when employees participate more fully in their operations. Any employee at a Ritz-Carlton hotel can spend up to $2,000 a day per guest to solve problems and not just to satisfy their guests, but to wow them with outside-the-box service.

Yet it takes more than waving a magic wand over employees' heads and telling them they can spend money to solve problems to reap the benefits of employee empowerment. Like any complex and detail-intensive issue, establishing a culture of empowerment for employees requires Service-Based Leadership, careful planning, well-defined policies, and training to implement effectively.

In reviewing club operations, there are three principal areas where empowered employees can contribute significantly to improved performance:

1. Resolving member service issues.

2. Helping improve work processes as part of Continual Process Improvement.

3. Taking on certain delegated management functions."

Ed Rehkopf, What I Expect from My Club Management Team

Discussion Points: Brainstorm with your managers how your club might institute a formal process of employee empowerment to resolve member service issues. What steps should be taken? What obstacles would prevent you from doing it? How can these obstacles be overcome? Why is Service-Based Leadership with its focus of serving employees necessary for empowerment?

Take Away: John Tschohl, founder of the Quality Service Institute, said, "Without empowerment, an organization will never be a service leader."

Leadership on the Go

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Relationships and Leadership

"John C. Maxwell, author of the bestselling *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, says that the definition of leadership is influence. While it is, first and foremost, the ability to influence followers, it also requires that the leader influence those people who make up any and all constituencies.

Influence is derived from the relationships you create with your followers and other constituents. How you act and interact with others is the basis for your success as a leader. The quality of your relationships will determine your outcomes. But you must understand that each of your followers and constituents is a unique individual with different needs and motivations. What may work with one may fail miserably with another. But the art of relationships can be learned. Generally speaking, while it requires experience, judgment, a measure of sensitivity to the needs of others, and a fair degree of emotional maturity, the ability to form and sustain meaningful relationships improves with age.

Developing leadership, or relationship skills, is a cumulative process. It's why Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great, Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*, proposes the Level 5 Hierarchy leading to the consummate Level 5 Leader. It is why potential leaders must be identified early, why young managers must be trained in the skills of leadership, and why such skills should be nurtured and shaped with each increase in responsibility and each step of the career ladder.

Creating and sustaining meaningful relationships is at the heart of Service-Based Leadership. The extent to which you are able to develop those relationships early in your career will have a great bearing on your future success—but not only in your career. The bonus is that in developing Service-Based Leadership skills, you develop the skills to form meaningful relationships in other areas of your life."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: Discuss what it means to influence someone. What are some of the ways that your managers must influence their employees? Their boss? Other constituencies? Explain the difference in a leader's relationship with her boss, her employees, and the members of the club.

Take Away: The ability to influence others is the essence of leadership.

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Teachable Moments

Consistency and Common Decency

"In addition to possessing integrity and demonstrating competence, leaders must also be consistent in their values and vision. Such consistency requires a foundation of principles for one's actions and a well-developed guide for how to proceed. Followers will quickly lose confidence in an erratic leader or one without a clear and compelling vision.

Employees can deal with some agenda changes from senior management, but continually changing initiatives sap them of their enthusiasm and willingness to adapt. This is particularly so when they are not involved in decision-making and they are not treated as if they matter.

This brings us to common decency and how followers are treated. While every person may have his or her own conception of what is decent, common decency encompasses those behaviors considered to be the ideal in human intercourse. Among them are:

➢ Respect—regard or consideration for others and their needs.

➢ Sensitivity—heightened awareness to needs and concerns of others.

➢ Courtesy—polite behavior, respect, consideration, helpfulness.

➢ Kindness—goodwill, generosity, charity, and sympathy toward others.

➢ Generosity of Spirit—absence of meanness or smallness of mind or character.

When a leader demonstrates these behaviors in his dealings with all constituents, it naturally creates strong, trusting relationships. Once again, though, consistency is essential. A leader cannot be kind one day and callous the next and expect his constituents to trust him.

Making the effort to treat others well will go a long way toward building meaningful relationships with all constituents."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: Discuss the importance of consistency in a leader. What happens when a leader is inconsistent in his values, vision, goals, guidance, and direction? What is the impact on his followers? Why is exhibiting the common decencies so important in gaining people's trust?

Take Away: A leader must also be consistent and treat others with common decency to gain the trust of followers and constituents.

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Teachable Moments

Morale Matters

"Morale has always been, and will always be, an important concern to military leaders. The effectiveness of their fighting force demands it. But it is not just in armies that morale is important. Athletic coaches know that dissension, bad attitudes, and pessimism will destroy all chances for victory and work hard to build the confidence and morale of their teams. The same is true in business or any group endeavor. Morale matters!

One dictionary defines morale as 'the moral or mental condition of a person or group with respect to cheerfulness, confidence, etc.'

Attitude and morale are also important ingredients in hospitality operations where friendliness, good cheer, and enthusiasm are bedrock requirements for success. While hiring the right people with the right personal qualities has always been a safe bet when building service teams, the very act of creating teams brings its own challenges. As we have said in *Leadership and a Failure of Engagement*, the group dynamic often creates problems that can interfere with the smooth functioning of the work team.

So how does a leader go about ensuring good morale within his or her team? First and foremost, are the requirements of Service-Based Leadership – of the need to communicate well with the team; of interacting daily with team members and providing direction; listening to and addressing their concerns; providing the tools, resources, training, and support for employees to do their jobs well. Beyond that is the need to recognize the ultimate value of people and act on that principle; to provide value as described in *Adding Value to Your Club*; to treat all employees with dignity and respect; to lead by example; to ensure closure on issues; and to be open and approachable to employees.

When all these things are done conscientiously and consistently by the leader, good morale is a natural by-product. By focusing on being the best Service-Based Leader you can be, morale and its attendant group enthusiasm and good cheer will come naturally."

Ed Rehkopf, Leadership on the Line – The Workbook

Discussion Points: Discuss the impact of good and bad morale on followers. Why is this particularly crucial in the service industry?

Take Away: Leaders must always be concerned with the welfare of their followers and provide the leadership that ensures high levels of morale.

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Consistent Club-Wide Leadership

"Management teams can be dysfunctional for a host of reasons, but there is none so basic as a variety of leadership styles. To expect that any group of managers, each with his own background, training, and experience, will have a similar effective leadership style is unrealistic.

Yet as with so many other aspects of management, consistency is essential to faithfully communicate and reinforce the club's culture, service ethic, and environment for employee empowerment. Without leadership consistency, employees get a mixed service message, and their morale and commitment varies from manager to manager and department to department.

Imagine a management team made up of department heads with the following leadership styles:

➢ Military – with its requirement of absolute, immediate, and unquestioned obedience,

➢ Democratic – where decisions are only made after lengthy discussion and debate,

➢ Gunslinger – with its emphasis on shoot first, aim later,

➢ Absent – where the leader is never around or is hiding in his office,

➢ From another planet – where the leader expects that everyone will know what to do and will do it without being told,

➢ Uncommunicative – where the leader gives everyone the silent treatment,

➢ Teed off – where the manager is angry all the time at everyone,

➢ Political – where the manager believes his only function is to suck up to members or owners, and

➢ Service-based – where the attitude and primary motivation of the leader is service to others – to members, to employees, to owners or board.

Clearly, such a jumble of leadership styles will lead to a confusing and contradictory example and message to employees, as well as create barriers to cooperation and teamwork between departments. The solution to such a fragmented workplace is for the general manager to promote a consistent style and application of leadership club-wide. This can only be done by providing consistent leadership training to the entire management team. Given the uneven comprehension of leadership issues among any group of managers, the benefits of a uniform understanding and application of leadership will bring club operations to a uniformly high state of performance."

Ed Rehkopf, What I Expect from My Club Management Team

Discussion Points: Discuss how the above listed leadership style may impact followers and why a variety of styles within a club management team contributes to uneven and inconsistent employee performance.

Take Away: A consistent leadership style across the entire management team is necessary for success in group endeavors.

About the Author

Ed Rehkopf is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and received a Master of Professional Studies degree in Hospitality Management from Cornell's School of Hotel Administration. During his long and varied career, he has managed two historic, university-owned hotels, managed at a four-star desert resort, directed operations for a regional hotel chain, opened two golf and country clubs, worked in golf course development, and launched a resource web site for the club industry.