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President's message: Many different styles of leadership

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Naturally there are many different styles of leadership. Leadership is an extremely important part of our role as managers, but this topic is rarely taught in a classroom. The members of our staff and residents of our buildings look to us for leadership, and this is especially true during tough times.

How can I learn to be a great leader? There is no one source to obtain the skills needed to be a true leader. Some people are born with the natural ability to lead while others struggle to learn to be good leaders through trial and error. I do not profess to be an expert on leadership but through the years I have read many books on the subject. Some of these books are thousands of years old, like, "The Art of War" and "The Book of Leadership and Strategy" from ancient China. My favorite way to learn about leadership is to read biographies of great leaders to see how they dealt with hardships of true life or death challenges. The recourses are endless if you are going to follow this approach. Some of the stories of people like Theodore Roosevelt are more unusual and entertaining than most fiction.

I would like to share with you some tips from my experience. If you are a strict manager and are ordering your staff to follow you, they may do so for a time but they are generally not enthusiastic about it. Inspiring your staff to follow you works a lot better than ordering them to do so.

A method that tends to work effectively is to involve your employees in the decision making process. Ask for their opinion and feedback on a policy or approach before implementing it. If you make your staff feel they are part of a solution to a problem they tend to carry it out as if it was their own. Praise and reward your staff when they have performed a good job. Try to teach your staff new skills and more importantly learn from your them. Yes you can learn something new from any level of employee if you listen to them. Listening is an important skill and most of us neglect it. Encourage them to take classes and improve themselves. Take interest in their advancement. Treat everyone with respect. Take the time to smile and stop to talk with all of your employees. Let someone new take the lead on a project.

As a leader it takes courage to apologize and take responsibility. You will gain respect for taking responsibility for your mistakes. Apologies go a long way. Taking responsibility defuses criticism. Being able to work under pressure and to prioritize is also critical. You do not want to lead people in circles. Teach your staff to do everything that does not have to absolutely be done by you personally. The book "Leadership 101" says, "Teach your employees to be your next replacement." Set goals for yourself and your team every year. Set both long term and short term goals. You will not go far unless you strive to obtain some goal. Time passes us by quickly. Make it an obtainable goal but do not be afraid to also be ambitious. If you fail try again and again. Lead by example. You must be able to lead yourself to a goal before you can expect anyone to follow you. One of George Patton's chaplains once said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers."

One of the most inspirational speakers I know is John F. Kennedy. He once said, "We choose to go

to the moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy but because they are hard. A great British explorer George Mallory who died on Mt. Everest was asked why do you want to climb it and he said because it was there. Well space is there and we are going to climb it."

What a great example of setting goals with the courage to follow through on them. As you are all aware we went to the moon before the decade was over. At the time JFK gave this speech the chances of going to the moon before the decade was over was slim. Great things can be accomplished through believing in an idea and carrying it out.

I want to close with one of my favorite quotes from Teddy Roosevelt:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man that points out how the strong man stumbles, or when the doer of good deeds could have done them better.

The credit belongs to the man in the area, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly and errors, and who comes up short again and again because there is no effort without error and short comings.

But who does actually strive to do the deeds, who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion ,who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows that in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at worst, if he fails, fails daring greatly so his place in the end shall never be with those timid souls who have never known victory or defeat."

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