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Frontline Leadership: Leading By Example

by Keith Carruthers

It may be an old adage, but leading by example is unfortunately a concept that escapes some of today's frontline leaders. Although we hate to admit it, there are still some leaders who may openly state their opposition to any form of double standard, but act in a way that is not consistent with this position. They have forgotten that it is what they do, and not what they say, that matters most. As frontline leaders, we need to understand that most communication and interaction between our team members and "the company" comes through us.....so we are "the company" where they are concerned. This means that what we say, and even more critical, what we do, has a huge impact on what the team members think, and how they behave each day at work. Take absenteeism for example. This is an area that is a reasonably significant concern for many companies. Our job as frontline leaders is to manage this pro-

cess, to ensure that we demonstrate empathy and support to employees who are absent from time to time, while also dealing with the few who abuse absence from work. We also need to recognize that the abusers are a very, very small percentage of the workforce, and we need to be careful not to put policies and procedures in place that punish all for the abuse of the few. So you're a frontline leader, and have a great team working with you. They need some direction from time to time, but are dedicated and knowledgeable, and are doing a great job at delivering on the promise to the customer. Lately however, you have noticed that Frank has been missing more time than usual, and the situation is becoming an increasing concern. You have spoken to him informally to see how he is, and he has assured you that there's nothing wrong. Despite this, the situation has continued to dete-

riorate, and you are now at a point where a more formal counselling session is required. If you are a leader who also misses a fair amount of time, how do you think this will impact the effectiveness of the discussion you are about to have with Frank? Will Frank really be listening to what you have to say, and will he truly understand the importance of the discussion? What about discussions with employees over adherence to personal protective equipment policies, when you yourself are seen from time to time in violation of the policy? Take a minute to reflect on your personal performance in the workplace, and how it may be impacting your effectiveness as a frontline leader. Are you practicing what you preach? If not, it is likely that your effectiveness is being diminished, which is negatively impacting your team's overall performance, and that of the organization as a whole.

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Developing an Effective Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee

An effective JOH&S Committee is one of the most powerful, pro-active tools we have in preventing physical and mental injuries, as well as financial losses, in our workplaces. If for no other reason than having several of our most valued assets, our employees, taking an active hands-on role in identifying and mitigating hazards which reduce the risk of injury, illness and property damage. The challenge we have as employers is to create a positive safety culture that keeps our JOH&S committees motivated

and active to add real value to the organization, and not just to meet regulatory requirements.

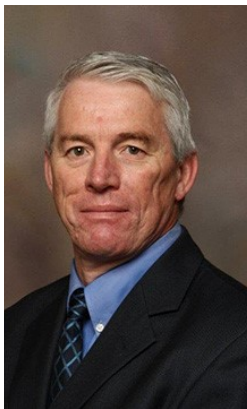
Here are some key points to keep in mind in relation to your organization's JOH&S Committee:

- The function of JOH&S Committee has to be, and demonstrated to be, important to the senior management team
- Ensure the committee understands their purpose, responsibilities and status within the organization. This is why regular committee training is so

important

- The Committee's main function is to not only identify hazards and recommend solutions, but also to educate and encourage all other employees to become involved and do their part.

We need to remember, having a positive safety culture leading to exceptional safety performance not only makes us feel good, but is simply good business, and if everybody does a little, no one has to do a lot!



Mike Farrell
Process Improvement
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Practical First Steps: 5S Workplace Organization

Many manufacturing leaders acknowledge the need for productivity and efficiency improvements, but often don't know where to start. Lean concepts are simple but navigating through the activities and tasks can be overwhelming. It's important not get hung up on terminology, but rather focus on getting people involved and having an immediate impact on efficiency.

In most situations, the simplest (and usually the first) step is to focus on improving your exist-

ing work space and processes. 5S workplace organization is a structured approach to improving the physical workspace where the staff determines the work process design and are highly involved in 5S improvements. This results in quick improvements by having tools and materials where they are required, when they are required... "a place for everything and everything in its place".

The five pillars of a visual workplace are Sort, Simplify, Shine Standardize, and Sustain. Suc-

cessful Lean implementation requires a visual workplace and 5S is the best systematic process for workplace organization. It's low cost, easy to explain, and fairly easy to implement and maintain.

The benefits of this simple strategy to your business will be immediately noticeable. The workplace will be cleaner, more organized, safer, and more efficient which improves overall morale and impresses customers.



John Challes
Administrative Services

The Value of Sales Orders

Sales Orders are documents that serve a dual role in the organization's administrative system. They are generated by the organization after receiving a purchase order from a customer.

Firstly, the Sales Order benefits the customer, as it serves as confirmation that their order has been received, and provides detailed order information such as quantity, price, and delivery.

Secondly, Sales Orders benefit the organization by initiating planning, scheduling, the ordering of materials and work force allocation to deliver on the promise to the customer.

These are key planning steps used to ensure that the resources required to meet sales demand are in place, and proactively highlights any concerns which ensures that delivery dates are kept in check.

The use of Sales Orders are a key process step for both the

customer and the organization, which helps to ensure that products and services received match what the customer has ordered, and also that those products and services are delivered on time.

In today's business environment, timely delivery of goods and services has become a key factor in winning new business, so implementing a solid Sales Order process can be a key factor in achieving unprecedented levels of business growth.

Increasing Productivity: A Supply Chain Perspective

Productivity and efficiency are topics that have historically been high on the list of focused activities for most businesses, and seems like common sense.

Productivity, by definition, is the ratio of inputs to outputs...so if we focus on minimizing inputs and maximizing outputs, we are more productive, and will see a positive impact on the bottom line.

While common sense, productivity efforts historically have been focused on the main process areas of our businesses...where the action is. Although this tends to make sense as these areas are often our biggest cost centers, and therefore have the biggest potential gains, that is not always the case. The reason being that although these are the biggest areas of expense, they have also been studied, re-studied,

and studied some more. As a result, the biggest potential gains may in fact be found in the support areas of the business.

This logic holds truth in the Supply Chain space as well. Supply Chain Professionals tend to see their value as a Professional in the amount of "spend" they control. Because of this optic, we often put our most inexperienced people in charge of MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Operations) expenditures. The problem with this is that purchasing a large volume of small items (consumable supplies, parts, service contracts) is often the most complex of our spend activities, and if not carefully managed, can result in a "death by a thousand cuts" impact on the overall cost structure.

This is but one example of how

shifting our focus into some of the areas that have been virtually untouched from a productivity and efficiency standpoint can potentially lead to significant gains.

It is also important for Supply Chain Professionals to recognize not only where we spend our money, but the value that key vendors can provide, as well as the cost of managing these vendors. Having to hire extra staff to manage vendors increases business inputs, and drives down productivity and efficiency, unless careful consideration is given to how their work will result in overall business gains. As a result, streamlining business processes and the work we need to do in support areas can also have a major impact on improving overall organizational productivity.



Keith Carruthers
Supply Chain and
Operations Specialist

Maintaining a Strong Banking Relationship

Is your Banker a Partner or an inconvenient reminder of a debt obligation?

In good times, most relationships with bankers are likely minimal. But when businesses find themselves struggling, some fail to adequately manage their relationship with their banker, leading to trust issues with a critical partner for their business.

From the many years I have dealt with Bankers, here are a few points that I have found useful in creating and maintaining a positive banking relationship:

- Bankers are trained to avoid excessive risk. They are lending depositor's money and they have a fiduciary responsibility to protect their depositor's money. They have lending limits, approval limits, bank rules

and Managers to report to. If you want your banker as a partner, learn the rules and treat them like a partner.

- Bankers do not like surprises nor do they like being left in the dark. They can't help and utilize the tools at their disposal if they don't know what is going on, so keep them informed.

- Bankers understand negative events happen that are outside of your control. When it is something within your control such as inventory, receivables, payables, or sales cycles, they expect you to understand these and manage them to your benefit. For those things outside of your control, they expect a plan of action on how you can lessen the impact on your bottom line.

- Remember that Bankers have many clients and limited time

for each of them. Listen to the feedback they provide, and give them the timely information they require. Written responses to the banker's needs are often valuable as they provide time to craft a balanced response that can be used as support documentation for the banker's internal reporting requirements.

- Issuing a quick fire monthly report can be helpful, but only if you balance the communication with a few positive and negative highlights so that the banker gets a balanced view of the business's current state.

All in all, we need to realize that banking is a confidence game. If you violate the trust your banker has in you, you will break confidence and the bank will no longer have faith and trust in you and your business's ability to weather the events that sometimes happen despite our best efforts.



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Human Resources: Psychometrics

Getting the right people on the bus, and ensuring they are in the right seats, has never been as critical to business as it is today. With the baby boomer generation leaving the workforce in increasing numbers, many businesses are making the shift in HR focus from recruiting to retention, making sure that once we attract talent, that they stay with us for the long-term. This is a bit of a daunting task, as the mobility and number of companies that people tend to work at during their career lifespan has been trending upward for decades.

When we make key people decisions, we often use subjective judgement, or “gut feel”. After all, people are people, not machines, which we tend to use to justify the subjective nature of our HR decision making processes.

Although there is no doubt that some degree of subjectivity and gut feel can be extremely beneficial, adding some form objective data to confirm or deny our views can also be highly valuable. Utilizing psychometric assessment tools to uncover underlying beliefs and motivations, as well as to test the validity of the responses we are receiving, is one way to add objectivity to the HR decision making process.

We need to keep in mind, however, that psychometric data is only one piece of information, and should be balanced with the other information being considered, and not be the sole information used when making key human resource decisions.

About Us

SSI Consulting Solutions is a Canadian company that specializes in helping its clients gain competitive advantage through implementation of world class business practices. It is through these practices that our clients not only compete, but gain significant advantage over their competitors, thereby allowing them to gain market share and enhance shareholder profitability.

The global nature of today's business environment has resulted in increased competition, razor thin margins, and an enhanced focus on servicing the customer. Price and Quality no longer win orders, but are “a given” in the marketplace.....it is those who can deliver consistently and with the shortest lead times that

win and retain new customers. Our consulting philosophy is formed around the concepts of



Keith Carruthers
President and CEO, SSI
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teamwork, partnership, service, and quality, both in the coordination of our efforts within our firm and in our interactions with our clients. The core project team will be led by a member of our senior consulting team. The strength and qualifications of our firm enables us to provide analysis that is both prompt and thorough.

We strive to form partnerships with our clients. Our best recommendations can be delivered only through recognition of each client's unique situation. Effective communication of our work is a top priority as we believe that timeliness and stakeholder alignment are essential to project success. We deliver a quality, timely service as promised., and take pride in delivering high value to our clients.

Our areas of expertise: Lean, Occupational Health and Safety, Finance, Six Sigma, Marketing, Frontline Leadership Coaching, Human Resources Management, Business Strategy, Change Management, Management Coaching, Supply Chain and Operations Management