

# LEADERS OPEN DOORS, PART II

Elevating and transforming the team, the company and the culture BY: DOUGLAS S. CAIN

**"IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE OTHERS TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE, DO MORE AND BECOME MORE, YOU ARE A LEADER."** - JOHN QUINCY ADAMS



**AS MENTIONED IN MY ARTICLE** in the last issue, open-door leaders uplift us. But what does that mean to an organization? Can you measure it? How do you spot it? I look to see if I am transforming the company, the divisions (or teams, as I like to call them) and each person in the company. I feel you can measure it. You may not be able to measure it by the inch or pound, but it is a transformation you can sense, just like you can measure the power of the wind without actually seeing it.

No matter how you can measure it, however, you are responsible for transforming the team, the company and the culture. And unlike transforming oneself (like my own Damascus Road experience ... that's another story!), transforming an organization is something that comes by the inch, day by day, by repeating one good behavior after another.

Sometimes it takes the repetition of an event to keep you on track. I have found with our corporate staff development program, Lake University, that my own transformation is reinforced with each class I have to prepare for. Each presentation and each reading makes me more dedicated not only to the success of the program, but to each employee's enrichment.

All of this is to provide Lake Truck Lines and Lake Oilfield Services with their next group of

leaders. I am known for taking all employees, from drivers and office staff to the highest levels of management, for a long walk on the property. This is when I give them "the talk." It allows me to share not only the vision and mission of Lake Truck Lines and Lake Oilfield Services, but also how the five corporate core values fit. But in the end, this talk allows me to better understand my employees, with the goal of making them the next generation of leaders in the company.

I have spent the last year learning the "Rockefeller habits" and incorporating them in our daily business model. One of the things I have enjoyed most is getting the "right people on the right seats on the bus." Sometimes you have an employee whom you seem to fail to lead in the direction the company is going no matter what you do. That was the case with one of our employees.

For the past two years, she was a "C" player, and we questioned many times whether we could find the right seat for her. She was, as could be described, an outsider. But we continued to move her around the company. When we finally got her just the manager she could admire and respect, she became the "A" player I always thought she was. She is, in fact, the best student at Lake University and I predict great things for her.

Always look for the outsiders in your organization. Those outsiders just might be the ones who make the difference and who, in most cases, give you your greatest satisfaction as a leader.

Of course, the ultimate outsider is the leader. I'm not looking for sympathy, but I can tell you the old adage, "It's lonely at the top," is the truest statement ever written. There is no one to keep you to the schedule you hold as the standard, and you look at your own work and constantly go back to it and modify it. It's tough, but if you go through a personal transformation like I did, ask for help. Holding others accountable for holding you accountable makes it easier.

Bill Treasurer, author of "Leaders Open Doors," listed a number of steps to take to get to your own personal transformation:

- 1 Get a mentor inside the company and a coach outside the company.
- 2 Get a brutally honest 360-degree feedback process.
- 3 Do regular service work.
- 4 Take a yearly retreat.
- 5 Change yourself (get a personal trainer, buy new clothes, get a new hairstyle, etc.).

The point is: If you want to be a leader to everyone at the office, you need to be a leader to yourself outside of the office first.

I will close this column with a very poignant thought. When you decide to hire someone, you are doing significantly more than just trading time for money with that person. You are, in essence, taking responsibility for the care and growth of that person, much like the father of the bride symbolically hands over the responsibility of her care to the groom.

Simon Sinek, author of "Leaders Eat Last," put it so succinctly: "Every single employee is someone's son or someone's daughter. Like a parent, a leader of a company is responsible for their precious lives." Wow. If that does not shift your paradigm as to your responsibility in your company, I don't know what will.

My final article on leadership will address the concept, "Why can't everyone be a leader?" Until next time ...

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