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CURRENT STRATEGIES TO INHANCE THE LEADERSHIP STYLE IN THE MILITARY

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Abstract:

The role of leadership in the military is gaining increasing recognition. Just as society looks for a leader to define its purpose and lead it forward, military is concerned with the selection and development of people who can successfully lead the military organization through an environment characterized by uncertainty, global turbulence, and organizational instability.

1. Introduction

It's an age-old question: Are we influenced more by nature or nurture? Applied to leadership, the question becomes: Are great leaders born or made? It's one of the most frequently asked questions in leadership development.

Let's start with the definition of "leader": "working with and through others to achieve objectives." Given this definition, anyone in a position whose achievement requires support from others can play the role of a leader. I like this definition because it supports the philosophy of "leadership at all levels," which is so critical at present.

However, leadership styles could and should be permanently develop according to the time being.

Here are some of the strategies which could bring more effectiveness in the art of leadership.

2. Self Esteem

When you make someone feel important, you gain their willingness to work for you.

Here are some techniques to improve self esteem:

- Ask their advice. Even though you may feel you have the answers to a problem, ask for their help. This makes the employee feel that you think their opinion is worth considering.
- Remember the name of the person you are dealing with, and use it often in your conversation. Remember the most important thing to a person is their name.

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- Discuss subjects; but do not argue about them. Arguing infers that you think the other person is wrong, therefore bringing the person down, and hurting their self esteem.
- Sincerely compliment them occasionally. You can surely find something to praise someone about.
- Be more willing to listen than to talk. Pay close attention, and show interest in what they are saying.
- Be interested in the person. Keep people well informed on all matters that may concern them.
- Show respect for a person's knowledge by repeating a remark of theirs that will reflect favorably on them.

3. Become a Good Listener

Generally people do not know how to be good listeners. People usually only remember about half of the information they are told. Below are some points on becoming a good listener.

- Be ready to listen. Stay alert in your posture and in your facial expression.
- Try to avoid distractions.
- Eliminate bias in your thoughts about a person, otherwise you will never comprehend what they are saying.
- To ward off boredom, try to stay ahead of the speaker by anticipating what she may say next.
- Try to group thoughts or points to make it easier to remember.
- Look for key words in what the person is saying. It makes recalling the conversation easier.

4. Planning

Planning is one of the key management tools. Certainly all of our organizations have short, and long range plans. Through planning, we decide a course of action to achieve goals and accomplish objectives. Planning prepares us for how to perform in the event certain things happen.

Planning requires getting facts and data. The more information you can gather together, the better equipped you will be to make decisions.

Policies and procedures are either originated or examined and brought up-to-date when planning.

Objectives are also reviewed when a planning process is implemented.

Planning helps to unify an organization by getting others involved.

Change is accepted more easily when the plans are known throughout the organization.

Planning brings attention to dangers or pitfalls. If the planning is thorough, disadvantage as well as advantages will be uncovered.

Decision making skills of the staff can be strengthened, through proper planning. For instance, if several alternatives could be taken to solve a problem, a decision must be made as to which one will be carried out. Ask for thoughts and comments from the staff.

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5. Motivating

People at all levels must feel they are needed. You cannot motivate a person if they do not feel essential to the process. Ways to make a person feel needed:

- Keep them informed.
- Challenge a person, thus allowing them to grow.
- Make them feel proud of the job they are doing.
- Praise the person. Let them know they are doing a good job.
- Learn what people want from their jobs. Individual or team recognition, routine tasks or constant challenges...know someone's likes and dislikes in order to be able to motivate them.
- Recognition is more important to some people than salary. People want to be given credit for a job well done.
- Make mention of special accomplishments of an employee (or even their family) even if it is an accomplishment outside of work.
- Communication is the key to motivating. Listening is an important factor.
- People like to know what is going on, and what to expect.
- Keep them informed.
- Have regular meetings to exchange thoughts and take the opportunity to advise them of what is going on around the company, with customers and in the industry.
- Show enthusiasm about your work and that will help to set a work ethic thus motivating others.

- Set goals for those you supervise. Also, help them achieve the goals by giving them the opportunity to get things done. Do not set unrealistic goals.

6. Disciplining

The art of dealing with people when they fail to do their job or they behave abnormally. The better you know an individual, the better job you can do of disciplining him. With some people, you need to be firm, or even demanding. Others, just a hint of a suggestion for change is all that is necessary.

Here are a few strategies on making one of the most distasteful acts of supervision a little more palatable:

- Try to discuss the situation as soon as possible after the incident. That way, the situation is fresh on everyone's mind.
- Usually, time only makes matters appear worse.
- Talk to the individual in private. Try not to let other people see or hear you.
- Don't embarrass the person.
- Try to be friendly, and listen to the person tell their side of the story first.
- Weigh and decide the facts before you constructively discipline.
- Do not nag or harp on the subject over and over again. This will only cause irritation.
- Do not argue.
- Control your emotions and try to control the other persons'.
- Try to have the person see the seriousness of the situation, and why they should change their attitude or performance.

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- Attempt to determine the reaction to your discipline.
- See if the individual feels they are being treated fairly.
- Try to get a commitment from them to do better in the future.

7. HANDLING PERSONALITY PROBLEMS - a very touchy situation.

People with personality problems are that way because of their strong emotive response to situations.

Some people feel that everybody is against them. Some may be over-aggressive or even hostile, while others may be very submissive or dependent.

How you handle such people determines whether these individuals become human relations problems of a higher level.

Here are some things to do and not to do when dealing with such situations:

- Avoid becoming involved on an emotional level. This does not mean to ignore the individual, but rather to help them by doing all that you are responsible to do.
- Emotional problems should be left to professional counseling.
- Delicately recommend professional help.
- Do not allow yourself, and discourage others from becoming emotionally involved with the person. This becomes very time consuming, and generally ends up affecting several people and has no positive effect.
- Remember, misery loves company therefore, do not become entangled in the problem.
- Try to help the person with a particularly strong personality trait by teaming them with compatible individuals. This may mean putting two aggressive people together, rather than a passive and a bold one.
- Sometimes however, it may be beneficial to put together an apprehensive person with a confident one. This may serve to mature the more apprehensive individual.
- Sometimes, you may have the opportunity to match a person's personality to a particular task, which may help to change their surroundings, and thus create a new emotional as well as physical outlook in their work environment. Often times, this will have a positive carry over into their home life.

8. Delegating

A skill that really requires disciplining yourself that will in turn allow you to supervise better.

How to make your job easier:

- Could much of the work that you do be done by those you supervise?
- Do you frequently find yourself overloaded with detail work?
- Are you taking more and more work home with you at night?
- Are you working longer hours?
- Are those important jobs you are asked to do getting done just in time or a day or two late?
- Is too much of your time being spent on unimportant jobs?
- Have the things that you do become routine in nature?

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If the answer to most of these questions is "yes," then maybe you have not yet adopted one of the KEY skills of managing, the art of delegation. This is particularly important if you have hopes of moving up in the organization. Your skill in delegating could be a major factor in deciding whether you can handle greater responsibilities and a greater job.

A Successful Leader gets things done through others.

Do not fall into the pitfalls of being fearful of delegation.

Unwillingness to delegate may be a psychological problem involving fear.

Unfounded reasons for this are:

That credit for the job being done will go to someone else.

That it will become known that others know more about a particular job than you do.

That someone may do the job better that you have been doing.

Remember it is to your credit and it exhibits confidence in your skills as a supervisor to place competent people around you. Delegation is a requisite of good supervision. It supports trust and confidence in those you supervise and enables them to handle the tasks that will free you to do more important work.

Make it known that you are now doing more top level decision making and possibly researching new techniques and ideas to better the operation.

Effective delegating requires proper planning and thought, and also proper follow-up.

Here are some suggestions for making delegation successful:

- Understand the purpose of delegating. You have three basic objectives in delegating:
- Get the job done.
- Free yourself for other work.
- Have your "team" benefit by learning and experiencing what you have been doing.
- Decide specifically what you can delegate. Generally delegate as much of your work as possible. Do yourself only what no one else can do.
- Recognize that subordinates will make mistakes. Make sure they understand what they are to do. Be willing to take blame for mistakes that may be made.
- Clarify what you are delegating. Agree on what the task is and how much "power" you are delegating to them to perform a particular job. Also, let others know of the arrangements so that proper cooperation will be extended to get the job done.
- Most important, follow-up. Remember that although you have delegated responsibility and empowered others to get the job done, you still have the final accountability for the job. Ask your team for progress reports or discuss with them from time to time.

9. Empowerment

This newer strategy may in-fact be the culmination of all the points above. Simply put, empowerment is delegation taken a step farther. In delegation, the supervisor is not only accountable for the results, but also assumes some responsibility since in most cases the delegated tasks most often are the job of the supervisor. Empowerment is the total,

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unmistakable passing on of responsibility to a person or team to accomplish a job or perform a process. As coach or supervisor, you maintain accountability for the overall outcome or results of the process.

Empowerment brings with it a challenge for the organization to provide state-of-the-art systems, education, tools and most importantly support to the team for maximum performance. Applying empowerment frequently shifts ownership of a function or process from a traditional supervisor to a group, and with that ownership transfer; pride, job satisfaction, motivation and creativity develop.

10. Conclusions

As a summary of all the points discussed above:

- Remember, you can be a great influence on the initiative and drive of those you coach or supervise.
- Be enthusiastic and continually look for ways to maintain morale, build confidence, and motivate.
- Be a good listener. Talking about a situation or a problem expands communication so that understanding is improved.
- Do a good job of planning and scheduling. Keep your team informed so they will understand their role in the organization and will tend not to be confused.
- Keep people busy. Generally, people would like to have too much to do than not enough to do. They lose self esteem if they are not kept busy, and then productivity falls off dramatically.
- Try to solve problems promptly. Letting bad situations go tends to only make them worse.
- Give people a chance to do their work without "annoying" them. Leave them alone unless they need you for something, and let them work.
- Provide the tools, environment and most importantly support for your team to perform at its peak.
- Show your human side. Demonstrate that you care about someone by visiting them when they are in the hospital or on extended sick leave. Wish someone a happy birthday. Remember their employment anniversary.
- Be fair. Do not favor people. Praise them when it is due and constructively criticize when it is due.
- A leader recognizes he is only as strong as the men he leads. His responsibility is to own the team's failures, and share the team's successes.

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