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Change La

How to Be at Our Best in Tough and Changing Times

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In a world of change, most of us prefer rhythm, consistency and predictability. But strong leaders have learned to also be agile, adapt and love solving problems and tackling new challenges.

Successful leaders, like world-class athletes, know how to focus to get the tough jobs done. And what do they focus on? The goals, not the obstacles; what success will look like, not what failure will feel like; the stimulation of the challenge, not the fatigue of the struggle.

At several World Championships in both triathlons and skiing, I felt intimidated, stressed and worried about what might go wrong. However, a successful performance depended on my converting that nervous energy to a positive focus on goals, knowing that once you get through the element and that months and years of training had prepared me well for the challenge. You can do the same: Convert your negative work goal setting, and focus on strategies and an optimistic outlook. Most importantly, these are the leadership traits that inspire colleagues.

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Spreading Inspiration

World-class performance and leadership skills are within our reach as we work to provide customers with an exceptional experience and consider the following:

Who you are may be more important than what you know.

Has someone in your house ever said "Excuse me for living!" Or has a colleague ever said "You OK?" If so, they have picked up on changed your persona. Persona is that aura around you, those subtle nuances of your personality. Your family may forgive you for being colleagues won't.

Leaders must live at a very high level of awareness, tuning into persona changes under pressure. Colleagues love leaders who are focused, working, yet fun loving; and well organized, yet spontaneous when necessary. It's a tough balancing act to be competitive, goal oriented, humble and compassionate. The secret is awareness. Always be conscious of how your persona is changing under pressure, how it is changing and what you need to do to get back to the real you.

How you communicate is just as important as what you communicate.

As your company does more with less, are your colleagues experiencing pangs of uncertainty and stress? At a time when food and hospitality be optimistic, focused, enthusiastic and inspirational, the pressures we are experiencing may push us more toward being preoccupied with a tough balancing act, and successful leaders work as hard on personal communication style as they do on the financial and technical issues.

It is a lot more than just saying, "Have a nice day." It means leaders continually recognize colleagues who excel, make meetings fun, and take an interest in the individuals on their team. They tend to the barrage of challenges thrust their way, yet make time to get out and see colleagues and customers. They tune in to how pressure is affecting them, yet make sure they are aware of how it is affecting others. It is an integral part of our professional culture, which means we must be more diligent than ever to stay in touch with our teams through personal to the memo emails, have brief "stand up" meetings, send a personal note for a job well done and make time for brief conversations with motivate them.

Camaraderie, collegiality and teamwork are critical in tough times. In tough times, we need tough teams:

colleagues who pull together, work hard and come to work every day with a positive outlook on challenges. We don't have time for "G.O.P. the energy out of a room. Tough teams are built on respect, fun, compassion and recognition.

The difference between a team and a staff is that each person on a team wants to contribute, to do their best and to achieve success. For a job is to create that environment with celebrations of successes, recognition for a job well done and continuous feedback on progress. If timeliness or goals haven't been met.

Adopt a "lava lamp philosophy" with your staff.

Remember the lava lamp? Once plugged in, turned on and warmed up, it is always moving and changing. A lava lamp philosophy means always looking at what we do and how we can do it better, differently and more effectively. We are agile, adaptable, resilient and always improving.

Prohibit "psychosclerosis" on your team.

"Hardening of the attitude" will kill any change initiative. It sounds like this: "We've never done it that way before," "We tried that back in '91 broke, don't fix it." Don't let this insidious disease afflict your work teams.

What you focus on expands.

Remember the quote, "I'll believe it when I see it"? Turn that around to "You'll see it when you believe it," and positive things begin to happen. If you focus on outcomes, you are more likely to achieve them; focus on the obstacles and you are more likely to stumble.

Pressure and stress cause us to naturally fixate on the cause of the stress. It goes back to the caveman and "fight or flight" mentality. In a state of fight or flee, with increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, narrowing of focus and attention, and tenseness in the gut. But harness that pressure, envision the outcomes we want and to strive for them. My sons are mountain guides. When we are skiing in the mountains in the Alps, they often say "Dad, don't look for cliffs and crevasses; look for the good snow between them!"

A tough situation will have a more positive outcome if you can imagine a successful resolution, then set goals for making it happen.

Use the 10/90 Rule to keep your team focused on solutions, not problems.

Spend 10 percent of your time and energy on the problem and 90 percent on the solution.

Keep your balance.

When you can't control stress and change in your life, balance it. Do those things that offset fatigue and frustration, like physical activity, playfulness, fun, love and humor. Do all those fun things that have been moved to the back burner "until I get past all this stuff I have to do at their life and wished they spent more time at work. We have to get what we need—not just what we want.