**Prepared by:  
Ismail Elmaliki**

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Leadership Development and Training

Introduction

One of our company values is that our people are our soul and providing the best employee experience is priority to continue success within the company. The day-to-day experience for employees starts with how our leaders effectively communicate with them and that our employees feel that they’re valued for their work by the leadership team. To ensure the best experience and continue our success, I’m proposing that managers and senior managers take part in our leadership training program.

**Current Situation**

The challenge we currently face at our organization is that our employee turnover is at an all-time high. Looking at our employee semi-annual employee surveys, it isn’t coincidental nor any surprise that we are in this situation today. Some commonalities that exist in these employee surveys include the following comments:

* I feel that I have no sense of purpose nor am I making an impact
* I keep getting told what to do from management without clear specifics
* My feedback to colleagues and leadership isn’t heard within the organization
* My manager doesn’t align with my long-term career goals here
* Everything is all over the place and there’s no organization

Based on these comments, it’s clear that we as a leadership team have failed to hear out employees, empower them to grow, and create an atmosphere in which employees understand that they’re the reason why our company is successful. When our employees feel that they matter, it’ll translate to success within the company with happier customers. When we help our employees succeed nourish their growth within the company, then they’ll be committed helping the company carry out its long-term goals and also empower their colleagues as a result. When everyone becomes a team player and only wants success for both their colleagues and the company, our potential as a company is infinite. But to make this dream a reality, it starts with the leadership team embodying our company values and putting them to action through consistent employee engagement every single day.

**Leadership and Training Program Details**

*Common leadership mistakes* - by being a part of the leadership training program, leaders will further sharpen their strengths and will be able to avoid common pitfalls that may potentially damage the relationship between employees and the leadership team. According to a published article The Value of Valuing Employees: Six ways leaders inadvertently curb innovation, motivation from The Newsletter for Health Care Registration Professionals (2013), there are common pitfalls that may seem petty in our eyes, but our employees may actually feel undervalued and feel like they don’t matter as a result. Here are some examples of common pitfalls that are important to avoid as listed by that article:

* Failing to respond to employee emails
* Failing to provide feedback – whether constructive or positive
* Acknowledging employees only when they make mistakes
* Failing to celebrate victories
* Showing favoritism
* Burning out employees

These common pitfalls need to be examined deeply, especially with regard to how it may affect our employees at a psychological level. The training is also a moment of self-reflection to examine where we are today, identify our goals as leaders, and how we can drive employees to be their best selves every day.

*Communicating* - Another structural part of the leadership program is focusing on several competencies that will offer a refresher on leadership fundamentals. One of those extremely important competencies is communicating – understanding this competency allows us as leaders to revisit the basics and reflect on why we’re currently employed as a leader by the company. In an article called The Twelve Competencies: Leadership Training for Local Government Officials (2007), Fred Fisher discusses how he teamed up with key staff members of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to develop training manuals for local elected leaders. In discussing communicating as one of those competencies, he also mentioned how listening is a skill that’s a part of communicating and that “it’s a skill to be revisited from time to time in an effort to make local governments more open, transparent, and accountable. The ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus reminded his colleagues that nature has given us one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak” (p. 31). Here it’s clear that listening to our employees must be adopted into our work habit: by listening to our employees, we’ll be able to better communicate with them.

*Company social media* - adding onto the topic of communication, the leadership program we’ll highlight our plan as a company to expand electronic communication: because a work environment in the 21st century must integrate technology. Integrating technology will create flexibility as a result of being able to widely communicate news, customer reviews and recognizing employees for their accomplishments instantly! Although emails are integrated into our company, we must take it a step further and by using an internal company social media network. Let’s examine an article called The Use of Social Media in Leadership Communication: Benefits, Challenges and Leaders’ Perspectives. The author, Catherine Lee (2015), conducted a survey to companies that have integrated social media into their work environment; what she found is that there are many benefits of social media in an organization, especially with regard to internal communication because: many individuals use social media in their personal life, so they already have an understanding of it; information can be shared instantly and is up-to-date; any employee (or select employees) can start a forum to send/receive feedback without the need to arrange a meeting. By empowering employees to use this tool positively, Williams and the leadership team can use this to collect employee feedback, collaborate, and come to a decision that’s best for the company in the long term.

*Valuing employees* – this is another element we’ll be diving into for the leadership and development training. It’s important to mention that when discussing the topic of valuing employees, we don’t treat it as some conceptual topic imposed onto leaders. Rather, it’s a leader’s obligation and duty to embody this and translate this embodiment into action. Let’s dive into another source on that discusses this. In his book The Relationship Engine: Connecting with the People Who Power Your Business, Ed Wallace (2016) emphasizes that leaders must be able to communicate and connect with the very employees that drive their business. In Chapter 5 he introduces his 4th principle – “Value People Before Processes” (p. 81). Here Wallace uses practical examples to vividly illustrate the importance of valuing people before processes; one example that sticks out is of Tom Feeney, CEO of Safelite AutoGlass, and his decision of putting the company’s people first (p. 86). By Feeney making that decision, he understands that having happy employees leads to creating happy customers which in turn leads to profitable growth. As Feeney simply puts it, “take care of your people and they will take care of their customers” (Wallace, 2016, p.86).

*Goal-setting* – in order to put all of these components into practice and make our employees feel valued, leaders must re-visit goal-setting by examining Locke’s Goal-Setting Theory. The first step of this theory is to clearly and vividly define a goal, then work towards completing that goal. According to Locke’s research on goal setting, the more difficult and specific a goal is, the harder people tend to work to achieve it. Further adding to that, Locke in one study discovered through a decade’s worth of laboratory and field studies on the effect of goal setting and performance that 90% of the time, specific and challenging goals (but not too difficult) led to higher performance than simple or “do you best” goals. Hence, it’s clear that integrating goal-setting regularly will lead to higher performance for us and better alignment with our employees to set clear, and measurable goals so they’re even more driven. To ensure goal-setting works, goals must follow these four attributes:

* Specificity: the goal must be crystal clear and specific.
* Difficulty: the goal should be set with a reasonable amount of difficulty; if the goal is too difficult, then an employee will just give up; if the goal is too easy, then there’ll be low motivation in the workplace.
* Acceptance: how well the goal is accepted by the employee and how meaningful that goal is to the business unit.
* Commitment: degree to which the employee is committed to reaching the goal; when an employee takes part in the goal setting process, then he/she will be highly committed to completing that goal and making a contribution.

**Qualifications and Experience**

I’d like to take a moment to talk about my experiences, which will shed light on why I’ve taken the initiative to recommend and put together course material for our leadership training program. For over eight years, I’ve worked within organizations that take pride in delivering excellent customer service, which in effect is the result of employee accountability and enjoying where they work. My most recent experience that led to where I am today was working at Apple Inc. as a Genius. In this role, I not only held myself to high standards with customers but also resembled a technical leader to many of my colleagues working there. Learning from successful managers and senior managers working there, I was able to apply many of those principles earlier to motivate my colleagues towards reaching their goals and encourage accountability in the hectic 24-hour Apple Store located in New York City. I also held myself accountable to handle employee communication by creating Employee Daily Downloads – a Keynote our leaders utilized daily to share technical updates and changes to our current workflow, quiz our technical knowledge, spark employee discussion, and engage in employee recognition. This keynote was utilized in the beginning of an employee’s day – specifically their first 20 minutes. When an employee started his or her day with the Daily Download, it sparked:

* employee engagement
* listening skills on the part of managers
* motivation to start the day

Most importantly, relationships between employees and managers improved as a result of using the Daily Download as that moment of connecting with one another to start the day.

**Estimated Budget**

Direct Annual Cost of Internal Company Social Media: $900.00

*Chatter (Saleforce platform to engage employees within the company)*

**Conclusion**

Our employees deserve leaders at their best and the leadership development and training program will exactly just that. When our employees feel valued, are growing as individuals by stretching their capabilities, and are empowered by leadership, our potential as a company is infinite.

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