



Leading from the Heart

By Alice Dendinger, SPHR

AFTER 10 YEARS of teaching the SHRM Learning System to aspiring Senior Professional in Human Resource Management (SPHR) and Professionals in Human Resource Management (PHR) candidates, I was surprised to see a change in the text's discussion on leadership. In 2003, for the first time, the Learning System shared a model by famous business authors Kouzes and Posner that included leading from the heart. More specifically, their model stated that when getting extraordinary things done, successful leaders Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart. It is this reference to "leading from the heart" that I would like to address in my last article as state director for the SHRM Texas State Council.

To achieve a common vision, leaders must motivate others to act in a way that inspires them to "want to" instead of "have to." Whether leading employees or volunteers, a leader must generate commitment instead of mere compliance to maximize the likelihood of success. Leadership is not about controlling people; it's about caring for people and acting as a resource for others who are not gifted with leadership abilities. Leadership is not about being the boss; it's about being present for people and making a commitment to develop the strengths and talents of others. Leadership is not about holding on to power,

information or success, it's about letting go of ego and celebrating as a team. Leadership is not about pointing fingers but looking at the three fingers pointing back and taking the time to reflect and become acutely aware of strengths and opportunities. The best leaders I have worked with know their limitations and are not afraid or threatened to admit vulnerabilities. I am going to take a huge risk and say it: leadership is about love.

Now before you quit reading, understand that I have been concerned with the "L Word" in the workplace. I used to be a hard-hitting HR professional if an employee suggested he or she really loved another employee. Yikes – do I hear sexual harassment in the making? Then one day I attended a seminar by Hale Dwoskin, author of the "The Sedona Method." He stated that expressing love to another person is simply saying, "I want for you what you want for yourself; what do you want?" These few words epitomize "leading from the heart" for me. If leaders ask everyone they meet this question and really listen to the answer, they could achieve extraordinary results.

This question can be woven in to our interviews, performance appraisals, corrective discipline and even terminations. It is the foundation of coaching and resolving employee relations issues. It is true when we say that an employee does not leave a job, they leave a boss. Don't be dumped.

Try this question out, and before the clock strikes 5 p.m., say to someone, "I want for you what you want for yourself, what do you want?" Just watch the expression on their face soften with relief as they realize they have found a leader who cares. ✦

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I have served as the SHRM Texas State Council Director for the past two years and have volunteered in a SHRM-related leadership role since 1995. I have had the cherished gift of working with some terrific people who genuinely lead from the heart. These individuals are truly servant leaders who Advance the Profession and Serve the Professional before considering their own agendas. Heartfelt gratitude to:

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