

Leadership Strategies

I n t e r n a t i o n a l

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leadership institute

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Greetings

In this issue you will hear about an organization whose call center staff is essential to helping customers effectively use diagnostic equipment and supplies to make critical decisions about patients' lab results. This organization has gone from last in customer satisfaction in their industry to number one... and in the process made a significant improvement in business results.

The second story is about the Department of Social Services in Alamance County, North Carolina, who have significantly improved both management and employee accountability by transforming their approach to leadership.

Finally, Keith Ayers, President of Integro Leadership Institute will share some thoughts with you about leading high performance organizations.

We look forward to sharing more thoughts on creating a high performance culture with you in future issues.

Laura Hauser and David Hauser

- Five Years of Sustained Progress

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"True empowerment, even though we have talked that talk before, is also a culture change. And it will require that each and every one of us changes." Sidebar Promotion 3

This client is one of the leading global diagnostics companies, providing diagnostic equipment and consumable supplies for the healthcare industry worldwide. The **Technical Assistance Center (TAC)** is a call center with specialists who help clients in pathology labs with technical questions or problems related to use of their equipment and consumables.

The TAC plays a key role in the company's success. After examining customer satisfaction results, the management team realized that this department was simply not meeting customers' needs. They decided to make some fundamental changes. The TAC's stated mission: *to enhance people's lives by providing proactive and responsive solutions that drive excellence in the world of medical technology.* This is their story.

The Challenge: In 1998 and 1999, independent surveys rated the TAC as one of the worst in the industry in customer satisfaction. A new Vice President came in to lead the TAC with a vision that they would be: **NUMBER 1! ABSOLUTELY THE BEST! No Question - No Compromise!**

He shared his vision with his people: *"Our goal is to be perceived by our customers, our competition, and ourselves as the BEST Technical Assistance Center in our industry. We will be recognized by internal and external customers as superior to such a degree that the TAC is a competitive advantage in the selling process. Each of us will become empowered to do whatever it takes to totally delight the customer."*

*These words were used to announce the launch of a training process called **The Pursuit of Customer Excellence** to his team of 200 Technical Call Specialists, supervisors and managers who at that time comprised the frontline technical assistance for thousands of hospital and clinical laboratories worldwide.*

"What we are really looking at here," the VP

*explained during our planning process, "is a **culture change** ...creating a culture that focuses not only on technical excellence, but also on customer service excellence."*

He continued by emphasizing the need for personal accountability within an empowered environment:

So, the TAC began its journey. It was not without challenges and obstacles - three site consolidations, two reductions in workforce, continuous product upgrades, software releases and new equipment launches. Over the last 5 years, the number of phone calls fielded by the TAC has been on a steady increase, while the number of TAC Specialists has been on the decrease.

The Process: *The management team realized from the beginning that this pursuit would indeed be a journey, and would require commitment to an on-going process of learning at all levels of the organization. It would not be simply be about skill-building; it would also be about attitude- building.*

A parallel training path was established. The Call Specialists engaged in a series of training modules focused on building personal excellence and accountability, driving the theme: "if better is possible, then good is not enough!"

The management team also participated in the the training with the Call Specialists. However, they realized that the training endeavor would not be successful unless they became stronger leaders.

In early 2000, [the Integro Leadership Development Process](#) was launched to help the managers redefine their roles and began to focus on leading as well as managing. They learned that their role as leaders was to create an environment where people could make their own choices, drive their own success and share in the leadership of the vision.

Gradually they began to build a culture of empowerment and shared leadership, driven by a common purpose and personal accountability.

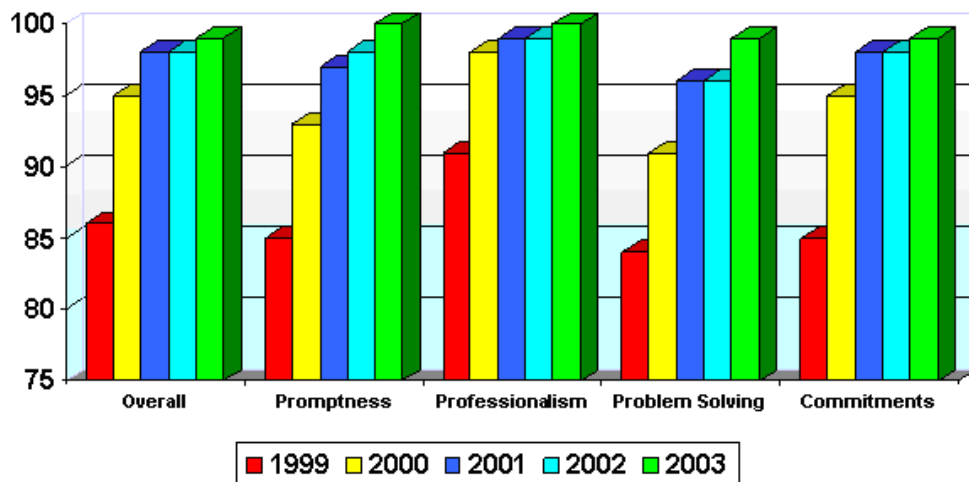
As you reflect on the TAC's success in delivering customer service excellence, keep in mind that:

- *Sales have increased*
- *The TAC is fielding the highest number of customer calls ever*
- *TAC staffing is lower than it has ever been*
- *Quality issues and product challenges have remained constant*
- *The overall cost of business in the TAC (total business cost divided by number of customer calls) has decreased and is at an all-time low*

Take a look at the graph below and the results are apparent.

"The work environment has done a complete turnaround from where it was in 1999...the negative atmosphere is gone. A new level of morale and positive attitude is evident; the TAC has developed a joy in the day-to-day job, and a genuine friendly and helpful attitude. The specialists feel appreciated and important. The TAC work environment is now fun and energetic. We have a common language and can laugh at our own idiosyncrasies. We have become a more

TAC Customer Satisfaction Survey Results



cohesive organization...a new openness is evident in working with each other and with our customers."

"In the past, the focus of our managers and supervisors was on knowing their programs and policy. Now the focus is on leadership. They now understand what it means to be a leader...and that it means being accountable."

***--- Susan Osbourne,
Director of DSS,
Alamance County,***

Keys to Success: According to the new VP, *"The Integro process really pulled our management team together and helped us focus on our common goals of customer excellence."*

Keys to the sustained success of the TAC training endeavors:

- Commitment was from top-down and everyone at all levels were willing to change
- Management recognized the need for a culture change
- The approach was process-driven and included benchmarks along the way
- Shared leadership, empowerment and accountability were established at all levels
- Management was willing to change processes and metrics to align with the new culture
- On-going training, support, tools, and resources are provided at all levels of the organization

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Leadership Transformation in the Department of Social Services

North Carolina

The Department of Social Services (DSS) in Alamance County NC is a state supervised, locally administered agency of 170 employees who provide a wide range of human services to children, adults and the aged.

Like most government agencies, employees' salaries are below those paid in the private sector, so the additional benefits provided to government employees and the ability to better balance personal and work life, are important in attracting and retaining talented employees

The Challenge

As a result of the economic downturn of the past couple of years, government revenues from taxation were reduced and with that came the need to reduce expenditure. One of the areas considered for reduction was employee benefits.

Unfortunately, the outcome for DSS in Alamance County was a significant increase in turnover. The interesting thing was that during the exit interviews, the main reason given for leaving was not the reduction in benefits. The primary reasons given for what they would need to stay were: better leadership; a work environment where they could learn and grow; and a more satisfying career path.

The Director of DSS Alamance County, Susan Osborne, was very aware of the need to develop their leaders... there were too many examples of a lack of accountability among their supervisors. Susan was also aware that the department's practice of promoting the best workers into supervisory roles without giving them the training or tools to do the job was a major contributing factor to the lack of leadership effectiveness.

The Process

Susan and her leadership team knew that it would take time to turn supervisors into leaders who would willingly be accountable for the environment they

create and for developing their people. It could not be achieved as a result of a single training event. So in early 2003, twenty-six managers and supervisors embarked on the [the Integro Leadership Development Process](#) .

There were a number key factors in Integro's approach to leadership development that led the leadership team decide on this process. The process started with a measurement of the current level of leadership and management competencies of each manager and supervisor using a 360 degree approach. This provided each person with a benchmark of how they were perceived and helped them focus their learning on their own individual needs.

The learning modules in Integro's process were designed to be spread over a twelve to eighteen-month time frame, giving participants the time they needed to apply what they were learning back in the workplace before going back to learn more. The expectation of accountability was also a key factor. Each manager and supervisor was expected to complete specific application exercises with their direct reports and report back at the next session.

The one-on-one coaching provided to each manager and supervisor between each of the learning modules has also had a significant impact on the success

The Results

The leadership team was able to significantly raise the bar on what was expected from the managers and supervisors and, as a result, a much higher standard is being achieved.

The area within the organization that had the highest turnover and the lowest morale has made a complete turnaround. Not only is morale up and turnover way down (despite reduced benefits), but regular client complaints have been replaced with spontaneous calls to Susan from clients thanking her for the way

the staff in this area are helping them.

Other noticeable improvements are:

- Performance management has become a year round focus rather than a once a year event.
- Performance reviews are regular, ongoing discussions that are more conversational in style. As a result, they are more valued by employees and perceived as genuine.
- Supervisors have started building real teams. They were always called teams, but before working with Integro Leadership they did not function that way.
- The DiSC Behavioral Model has had a significant impact on improving communication at all levels and has meant that recognizing and valuing individual difference is becoming a reality rather than just lip service.

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Does your organization have the leadership it needs to thrive in today's world?

The world of work has changed significantly in the past ten years...technology has created a truly global marketplace. Who would have imagined a few years ago that when you call a local company's 800 number to speak with customer service that you would end up speaking with someone in India.

Customers want high quality products customized to meet their needs... and they want it now. So employees need to be able to respond quickly, solve problems and make judgments that previously could only be made by management.

A High Performance Workforce is Required The increase in competition and the changes in technology have put pressure on organizations of all sizes to better utilize the talents and commitment of their employees. You cannot afford high staff turnover in this current environment.

A recent study conducted identified what senior executives believe are the top four priorities when it comes to creating a *high performance workforce*:

1. Attracting and retaining skilled staff
2. Changing organizational culture and employee attitudes
3. Changing leadership and management behaviors
4. Improving workforce performance

The key here is the organization's culture.

How employees feel about coming to work, their attitude, is primarily influenced by the climate or culture in which they work...but what many leaders don't understand is that it is their behavior that creates that climate.

Leadership Affects Everything!

- Leadership behavior creates the climate employees work in.
- Employee attitudes and behavior are affected by their perception of the climate.
- Talented employees won't stay in what they perceive to be a negative climate.
- Talented prospective employees won't join an organization unless it has a reputation of being a *great place to work*.
- Improving workforce performance is not possible without talented employees.

Leaders need to understand that a *high performance workforce* can only be achieved through *leadership and management behaviors* that create a culture in which talented people want to work, and where employees can actually use their talent.

Billions of dollars are invested in leadership and management training every year...so why do we not have outstanding leaders and highly engaged employees in every organization?

The Importance of Building Trust is Overlooked

We believe the basic cause of the lack of engagement and performance of employees is not being addressed by most leadership training... business leaders, and I flatter many by using that term, are progressively destroying the trust of their employees and their customers.

They don't do this deliberately, or even consciously... they just do not understand that being *trustworthy* does not guarantee that you are *building trust*. They expect that because they are *trustworthy*... and they are in an ethical, moral sense, that people will trust them. And yet they may be going to work every day and destroying what trust there is.

Building trust is a skill that must be learned.

Executives, Managers and Supervisors need to understand what they must do to build trust with employees... *and* continue to do that while they focus on improving business results.

What is a High Performance Culture?

Imagine a work environment where all employees are fully engaged in what they do, and go to extreme lengths to fulfill their responsibilities each day.

They feel connected to the purpose and vision of the organization because they have a clear understanding of how vital the service is that you are providing to your customers and the community. They also see a clear connection between what they do and the success of your organization in fulfilling its purpose.

As a result, employees see their work as meaningful, they look forward to coming to work, and have a sense of pride in what they do and the organization they work for.

There is a high level of trust throughout the organization:

- Information is exchanged freely as needed, feelings and opinions are openly discussed and people do not have hidden agendas.
- Expectations are clear, disagreements are discussed and resolved and individual performance is discussed and agreed on without having to rely on a formal process.
- Differences are valued, employees feel respected for their contribution, and have input into how the organization can be more successful.
- People keep their commitments, strive for excellence in everything they do, and can count on each other for support.

This is a place where people want to work...a workplace based on *trust* and *personal responsibility*.

The outcome is obvious. *Customer satisfaction* improves, *staff turnover* reduces and *productivity* and *profitability* increase.

This is the business of the Integro Leadership Institute... and our associates like Leadership Strategies International who help organizations create a *high performance culture* based on trust and personal responsibility.

Keith Ayers, Integro Leadership Institute

Thank you for your interest in creating a work environment based on *trust* and *personal responsibility*.

Sincerely,

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