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The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus by Eric Harvey, David Cottrell, and Al Lucia

or “How to Get the Big Things Done in YOUR “Workshop”... All Year Long

Open your ears to participation. Ask for and listen to employee ideas and opinions and where it's the right thing to do, let them make decisions.

Pay attention to how you're perceived. Ask for employee feedback on how you are doing as a leader. Once you get the feedback, act on the information by using it as a catalyst to becoming an even more effective leader and for developing a better organization.

Walk a while in your employees' shoes. Ask them about the problems, challenges, and obstacles they may be facing in meeting their goals. Listen and show them that their feelings are important. Ask what you can do to make things easier and better for them and for the business.

Teach ‘the business’ of the business. The more employees understand about how the business works, the more likely they are to accept and support change. If you really want everyone to be ‘on the same page’ with you, teach them about how your business operates and what's involved in keeping it going.

Help your employees see the difference they make. Help each employee understand how they fit into the big picture and how their functions, efforts, and contributions are vital to your business.


Do right by those who do right. Good performance should be reinforced with positive consequences. Develop an ‘attitude of gratitude’. Show that you truly appreciate workers who meet or exceed your expectations. Show this appreciation through actions and behaviors. Look for, and seize, opportunities to give verbal and written acknowledgements – and ‘thank you’s’ for doing right. Doing right by those who do right is one of the best things a leader can do for his/her employees. Employees feel good when they receive the recognition and you should feel good giving it. Positive recognition helps to keep employees motivated and more likely to repeat the performance that got recognized.

Expand the reinforcement possibilities. Encourage co-worker recognition and look for ways to expand the ‘attitude of gratitude.’

Confront performance problems .. early. If an employee has a performance problem, address it as soon as it's discovered. If you don't, the problem will only get worse. An unchecked performance problem can become a de-motivator to the rest of your organization and it will affect how you are perceived as a leader.

Coach the majority in the middle. According to Santa: “There are falling stars that represent the few employees who exhibit performance problems... and there are bright novas – the super stars that represent the opposite in employee performance... Most of the ‘lights in the sky’, however, are neither falling stars nor super novas. They're what (he) call(s) the middle stars, and they typify the vast majority of ... employees.” p. 62

“It's imperative that these middle stars avoid falling backwards. They need to stay as good performers or, better yet, move to the superior level.” As a leader, YOU play the critical role in making that happen and you do it by **coaching**. – helping your employees avoid problems and do the best work that they can.

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- Make sure that everyone knows and understands the performance expectations that come with employment;
 - Provide the training and resources they need to meet those expectations;
 - Give frequent and specific feedback on how they are doing;
 - Identify any obstacles they may be facing and then do your best to eliminate those barriers;
 - Teach them how to set, manage, and achieve goals;
 - Help them learn from mistakes ... and successes;
 - Hook them up with mentors from the super-star ranks;
 - Stay aware of what they are doing and 'nip in the bud' any problems that start to surface.