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Accepting a New Role: A Test in Leadership



Balancing a Job Transition

Accepting a new position carries with it a host of emotions. It can be exciting, unnerving, humbling and even cause you to question why you accepted a new role in the first place. Regardless of the reason for a job change, whether due to promotion in your current job, a relocation, or even for a better opportunity down the road, the resulting disruption to your daily routine can be overwhelming. Typically, the mere act of “accepting” a new position ranks as one of the more stressful events in your life. It’s very easy to become comfortable in a position and resist or even avoid the decision to change because of the many “unknowns” that come along with it. However, it is the openness to change which sets you apart. It stretches and tests your abilities as a person, employee and leader.

When starting any new job, there is a tendency to want to make an immediate impact. In fact, it is almost an expectation to move into a new role and swiftly make big changes. But, contrary to this method, it is best to approach a new role with longer term goals in mind.

Although making drastic changes may seem necessary, this action might ultimately damage your chances for longer term success. The first weeks on a new job should be devoted to one thing; building a solid team grounded on trust, respect and accountability. This requires a thoughtful and disciplined approach. Your team members must feel heard, understood and respected. And if a transition in leadership is handled well, the trust cultivated between you and your co-workers can be extremely powerful.

5 tips to ensure success in a new role...

1. **OBSERVE.** Watch how the business operations function and watch closely. Observe personal interactions. Observe processes. Observe the employee's expectations. Observe the big things and the little things. And most importantly, refrain from comments, input or interruptions. It can be difficult to resist the temptation to improve processes as you see opportunities but don't- not yet- you will have your chance. Making immediate changes, however important they may seem to be, is shortsighted.
2. **BUILD TRUST.** The teams trust in a new manager may take time to develop. After all it is human nature to be weary of change; and a new leader is that "change agent". But, more important than the employees trust in the leader is the trust the employees have among themselves. This is crucial. No operation can sustain, let alone grow, without a strong level of trust and respect among the staff members. They must be able to freely share their ideas within their group without fear that their input will be construed as negatively directed towards anyone. Without a level of trust *between* the employees, a leader will have difficulty initiating any changes.
3. **DON'T FEAR CONFLICT.** If team members bury their ideas or concerns from other colleagues for fear of conflict or "hurt feelings" rather than engaging in an open and healthy discussion, they will ultimately never be satisfied with the outcomes or results. Heated debates and possible short term conflicts will lead to more refined ideas, improved processes and a stronger culture of respect and trust among staff members. It becomes "ok" to push each other to resolve conflict. If you have created an environment of trust, employees will express their ideas, talk about them in a group, and then naturally support the results because they have been involved in the process. Their opinion has been heard and respected by their peers; no matter the outcome.
4. **EXPECT ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMITMENT.** To work as a strong and productive team, everyone must play by the same rules, even the leader! If just one staff member has accountability issues, that employee alone may erode the very foundation of trust between the other group members. If, for example, there is a commitment to have no cell phone or computer use during meeting time, the staff must be respectful and follow the rules. And if the leader does not expect and enforce accountability, it is a disservice to the others. The staff members that abide by the rules will begin to resent those that don't and this naturally leads to staff apathy.
5. **BE RESULTS DRIVEN.** Any new leader obviously wants to make an impact on the operation, whether it's improving guest service scores, growing revenues, or completing important projects. With a strong team culture built on trust and respect of the leadership and of each other, the operation will be better equipped to achieve its goals. Listen to and respect staff feedback and engagement. But, don't back down on your goals and aspirations and those set for the company.

The first weeks on a new job must be devoted to building a culture of trust, respect and accountability. By observing, listening, fostering debates, and expecting complete accountability and compliance a new leader will make a long-lasting impact on the business operations. Remember having trust in your team is a good thing; after all someone trusted you.

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