"It's All About Leadership": Learning How to Lead From One of the Best

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Being an Executive Officer or Board President is never an easy job, but holding one of these positions in the current industrial and economic environment demands even more from the individuals in these roles. HBA Presidents and EOs are the people members turn to for answers, guidance, and hope, but, have you stopped to consider why people should be led by you? Holding a certain position or title and accepting the “power” that is associated with it does not make you a leader; it simply makes you a boss. So what can you do to assure members and staff that you are a true leader and someone they can confidently follow?

At the first National Leadership Training Conference for 2008 in Des Moines, IA, attendees benefited from hearing a presentation by Brian Grubb, the Corporate Director of Learning & Content Delivery for The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center. Mr. Grubb works with external groups who want to learn The Ritz-Carlton's best practices and benchmark their organizations against these standards. During his presentation, “It's All About Leadership,” Mr. Grubb outlined what it takes to be a leader in The Ritz-Carlton sense of the word and how these qualities can transfer to anyone in a leadership position.

According to Grubb, the number one trait for leaders to possess is optimism. Leaders need to constantly be looking forward and have a vision. Additionally, a leader needs to be able to show others that the vision is achievable. In our current industry this means reassuring people that “we will get through this.” Similarly, a leader can, and must, create Psychological Ownership of the organization’s mission and purpose. Psychological Ownership refers to the idea or recognition that our work is not what we do but rather it is who we are as an organization. Leaders generate a group’s buy-in to the idea so that all involved are on the same page and working toward the end result or goal in a similar fashion.

One of the best ways to create buy-in is through a strategic plan. By its very definition, strategic planning is a visionary process that helps define what you want your association to become. Grubb points out an important caveat when it comes to these plans. Keep in mind that less is more. You want your vision, mission or organizational “essence” to be something that staff can easily remember and express to others, especially members. Grubb suggests that you should be able to summarize your organizational essence in 35 words or fewer. If people can easily recall what it is you are all about or stand for, then they are more likely to accept the ideal, believe it, and strive towards it.
In addition to a strategic plan, leaders also create Psychological Ownership by fostering a productive, prolific, and positive culture for organization. Excellence is created by design, so leaders must lead by example and set up a working environment that is conducive to meeting established goals. The Ritz-Carlton energizes and reinforces its culture with employees on a daily basis and suggests that this is something that every organization should do. Additionally, it may sound obvious, but you must eliminate mistakes by ensuring that you are only focused on work when at work. The Ritz-Carlton believes that you cannot deliver extraordinary service with flawed processes, so as a leader you must establish the necessary working systems and show people “the way” by conducting yourself in the manner you expect others to follow. As Grubb put it “enlightened leadership and engaged employees create desired outcomes,” but it is up to you as a leader to get those employees engaged.

Along with these ideas, Brian Grubb provided a complete list of twelve “Principles of Leadership” that The Ritz-Carlton stands by. These principles range from perhaps more evident ideas, like the power of communication and recognizing employees, to more overlooked aspects of leadership, such as growing the organization’s talent and fostering an environment of high trust and low fear.

To get the full benefit of Brian Grubb’s presentation, attend the National Leadership Training Conference in Atlanta, GA this November. The conference will take place November 6 & 7 at the Intercontinental Buckhead Atlanta, and Mr. Grubb will make his presentation during a general session on Friday morning. Come to learn from him, NAHB Staff, and your peers about how to be the most effective leader you can be. For more information on the Atlanta Leadership Training Conference, visit [www.nahb.org/LeadershipTraining](http://www.nahb.org/LeadershipTraining).