

Demonstrating a People Focus – Lessons in Leadership – John Sherman

What makes up a successful company or organization? You can start with lists of various needs, but the most important element of any organization is people. Regardless of your product or service, people do business with and for people. If you run a grocery store, the product does not get purchased, put on the shelf, or accounted for without people. If you are in the transportation industry, people start and operate the trucks, planes, or trains. So, demonstrating a focus on people is a leader or influencer's most important quality.

If you ask your employees what are just some of the things they look for in a leader, you might find a few of the following, which by the way establishes trust:

- **Safety** – When employees know you are focused on their safety for their sake, and not just the sake of the company looking good, you set a standard that all employees can gravitate
- **Responsibility** – When a leader takes 100 percent responsibility, they demonstrate to their employees the following
 - You are going to try to do the right thing
 - Whether it is your fault or not, you are going to fix the issue and not complain
 - Whether it is your fault or not, you are going to demonstrate a positive attitude
- **Communication** - Your employees expect clear and concise communication. Employees want to hear from you often and want to hear a consistent message
- **Expectations** – Providing precise and clear expectations set employees up for success, not failure. The expectation is a benefit for them, and not a hammer for discipline
- **Create Learning Opportunities** – Education is critical in the changing world around us. By providing refresher or reminders of important ways to execute a task or duty, you begin to establish a standard of quality in their work
- **Mentoring** – Part of the learning experience is a solid mentoring plan. Pick up the book *“Modern Mentoring”* by Randy Emelo. You will find a whole new world of mentoring opportunities you have never even considered
- **Provide Encouragement** - Encouragement and recognition is needed by all employees. They may not admit this to you, but if you show this appreciation at the right time, and in the manner they would like to receive, the one-on-one relationship investment is noted by the employee
- **Demonstrate Genuine Concern** – Show genuine concern when employees come to you with problems or questions. Showing them that you care goes a long way in satisfying their needs even if the answers are not what they want to hear
- **Welcome Ideas and Opinions** - The old saying of: *“One of us is not as smart as two or more of us”* is actually very true. Most of the time a leader wants to show that he or she knows the answers and wants to “fix” things, however your employees want to feel their input is welcome
- **Give us a Goal/Measure and be Competitive** – Most people do not like to be competitive if it makes them look bad, and they often consider measurements as a means to punishment. However, if they are competitive and measure things as a team, the competitive nature can improve their engagement and performance

You see the more you focus on your people, and listen to what they want and provide them with just some of the elements above, the better your chances of building a successful and engaged team. The focus on people becomes the focus on the team, and the focus on the team will bring success to all.