

Leadership NOTES

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Leadership Involves the “I” and the “We”

By the time we enter the workplace, we all have had plenty of exposure to messages about being part of a team as well as taking care of ourselves as individuals. Workplaces have cultures just like families, communities, social groups and countries have cultures. What is a healthy balance between acknowledging and appreciating individual differences and taking care of the organization as a whole?

In leadership, acknowledging the gifts that each individual brings to the table is important, yet we also have to manage expectations of customers and employees. This is done through honoring good stewardship in the process of making decisions that are sound, responsible, and ethical and are in the best interest of the long term viability of the organization and those we serve.

Take a look at the chart below – food for thought:

Topic	Example	Individual	Collective
Hiring	Selecting top choice employee for position	Person may be very strong technically and bring skills needed	Does the individual align with the values sought for customer service? Will they work well with the team?
Communication from Management	Choice of sending emails, having group meetings or individual conversations	The manager may be more comfortable sending emails	During change, it is important for the wellbeing of employees to meet more face to face for opportunity to express concerns.
Information Systems (IT)	Selection of software for use by the workgroup/organization	Latest/greatest is the choice of the person having to perform the function everyday	What costs can we afford? How user-friendly and understandable is it for the layperson? How well supported is the software for troubleshooting?
Field Equipment	Selecting best tools for field workers	Crew members differ in what they desire	Make a choice that satisfies the outcomes needed with efficiency and effectiveness. The overall best decision may not satisfy all individuals.
Training and Development	Workgroup needs to develop competencies to support the desired service level.	An individual may be ahead of, or behind the group. Tailor self-study or individual coaching.	Group development can allow for varied learning styles. High performers can coach others.
Performance Management/ Corrective Action	Need consistency and equitable accountability	Individual action taken may be more lenient or harsher than what has been the norm for the culture.	Re-define acceptable performance including behaviors that support the culture you are trying to establish.

One great challenge of leadership is balancing the respect for individuals with making the best choices for the organization and community. Teaching this balance results from modeling selfless decision-making and discussing tough topics with employees so that we keep overall service at the forefront in carrying out business needs that reinforce what's best for the collective wellbeing ... better known as “servant leadership.”