



## Management & Supervisory Notes

December 2010

### The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus

Ever wonder how Santa Claus is able to read all those letters from children, make millions of toys, keep up with changing customer requests, and deliver everything in 24 hours? He has a few secrets – 8 to be exact. Here are a few morsels from Santa's quality journey.

When it comes to getting big things done well, Santa creates an unwavering and uncompromising focus on the Mission of "Making spirits bright by building and delivering high quality toys to good little girls and boys." He keeps the mission at the heart of everything by: 1) making sure that the elves and reindeer know what the mission is; 2) discussing with each how their respective job specifically contributes to the mission; 3) keeping the mission at the forefront by discussing the mission at staff meetings and training sessions, posting the mission on the walls, including it on letterhead and more; and 4) making the mission a core component of their decision-making and work-planning processes. When the workshop takes on too much or goes on tangents, the mission brings them back to why they're here.

Santa says that you can't focus on your mission without focusing on the folks that make the mission happen. Making sure that everyone knows what values are important – such as respect, integrity, quality, customer service, responsibility, and teamwork – and then helping everyone turn those good beliefs into everyday behavior is how leaders create a great place to work.

Though Santa had grown the workshop in size and complexity, he learned that involving workers in running the operation and making decisions that affect them is a key strategy for leadership success. Santa learned that elves liked when he walked in their shoes by working alongside them or asking them about the problems, challenges and obstacles that they face in filling their orders and meeting deadlines, especially when he acted on their recommended improvements. Nothing motivates employees more than knowing they're making a difference.

When the orders for red wagons dropped off a while back, Santa recognized the fine job the elves had done in building the wagons, showed the elves the data indicating a declining red wagon market and the emerging market for video games, discussed the benefits of retooling for video games, and asked for their commitment to the new direction. Santa committed to provide the training and support the employees would need to make the changes and to demonstrate patience and understanding as the elves went through the learning curve. There was no choice in whether the change will come or not, Santa explained, the only choice was how they would respond to it.

Providing in-depth operational, financial, and customer preference information; cross-training; and participation in performance monitoring helped the elves grow and develop. Santa found that the more employees understand about how the business works, the more likely they are to accept and support change. Once the elves and reindeer connected their work to their customers' satisfaction, they began to initiate change recommendations.

Everything counts – for your people and especially for you as their leader. Everyday, seemingly insignificant actions and behaviors determine our overall goodness. Santa revealed that regardless of what is said or written elsewhere in the workshop, his actions – whether good or bad – are the performance standards employees will follow. Santa advises – "Never forget that getting big things done all year isn't about magic. It is about leadership."

The full story can be found in The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus How to Get Big Things Done in Your Workshop All Year Long by the Performance Systems Corporation. This quick read and example-filled charming story is part of the [UPS Resource Library](#) or can be purchased for approximately \$15.