

DOES LEADERSHIP MATTER? AT LIFESCAN, IT'S THE WHOLE ENCHILADA!

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Everywhere we look these days, it seems people are talking about leadership. This is nothing new – after all, for as long as there has been civilization, there has been leadership. But it certainly seems to have taken on a different sense of urgency these days.

At LifeScan Canada, a Johnson & Johnson company and Burnaby-based leader in blood glucose monitoring, leadership is important. In fact, as Les Klajnscek, President of LifeScan, likes to say, “It’s the whole enchilada. It’s a preoccupation.”

For years, we have taken leadership to mean the behaviour of those at the upper end of the hierarchy. The senior managers. But for Les, leadership is something very different. “When people at LifeScan talk about leaders, it’s right throughout the organization – leaders at every level. Everybody is a leader.”

There is no doubt that LifeScan has created a culture that is defined by the way leadership is perceived and practiced. “For this organization, leadership is about how people act,” explains Les. “Leadership is a state of mind. It’s about who you are being as you’re doing your job . . . It’s someone who is willing to take action and not just sit back and let things happen around them. It’s someone who shapes the environment around them – as distinct from being shaped by it. For us, it comes from living our vision of “creating a world without limits for people with diabetes”. If you come from that place, you can’t *not* react to opportunities to help people take control of their condition; this creates a powerful guiding force for the company. Or, as one former colleague put it to me impactfully, quoting a leadership guru “Be the thermostat, not the thermometer”.”

While Les admits the returns of this approach may not be totally apparent for quite a few years, nevertheless there are already noticeable changes. “We innovate better, we have a great talent pool, and we get things done. I see people taking charge regardless of where they are in the organization. I see others coming and knocking on my door to get my people. I see phenomenal growth and even better opportunities for the future.”

Les is clear on the role of the CEO in creating a “leaderfull” organization. “If you are a new leader, you have to first understand what is really going on in your organization. Then quickly communicate to people what it is you see in the organization – what’s that

vision? Put a stake in the ground to let people know what you're all about. Start talking about it, create coalition, and put people on the task of figuring out what we need to do. Set out audacious goals right away. Spend an inordinate amount of time and money talking about leadership, doing leadership training, giving people leadership opportunities."

While Les is confident about his approach at LifeScan, he admits that there are dangers. In a small organization, there are risks of having a company of leaders with limited leadership opportunities. However, LifeScan is part of the larger Johnson & Johnson organization, which gives them the opportunity to fulfill employee growth beyond the boundaries of the business unit. "We have had people go to other J&J companies in Canada, to the US and Europe from our office".

The other challenge is balance, certainly a personal challenge for Les. "The toughest thing is balancing work and family and creating an example for employees. On the one hand I want everyone to work hard and think about the business 24/7. On the other hand I want them to have a real life, taking care of the family at home, spending enough time with the kids while keeping an eye on the ball. I really believe you can't achieve the first without having good balance in the second."

If ever there was a formula for creating a high-powered organization, it has to be LifeScan's and Les's strategy:

- Hire the right people who are primed for this; weed out those who are not
- Instill the vision and guiding principles (this is the J& J credo for LifeScan)
- Trust that your people will do it
- Get out of the way, and
- Reward them when they do it.

But to do all this means taking on a new, and for some organizations, a radical view of leadership. It requires senior management to view leadership as inclusive rather than positional, and in so doing creating an organization in which all employees are encouraged to develop their leadership abilities.

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