

## YOUR MOST VALUABLE INVESTMENT DECISION

*by Doug Nielsen, CSP, MSW, LCSW*

So what business do you "think" you are in?

Are you in manufacturing, mining, healthcare, baking, education, government, oil and gas, retail, financial services, construction? If your response was similar to one of the above you would be wrong. Why?

Because, no matter the vocation, position or organization you are in, you are only in the people business. Period! If you want to stay alive and viable in the waves of uncertainty we find ourselves in, you are in the people business.

### **THE PEOPLE BUSINESS**

*You are in the people business. When you care for your people they will take care of what matters most!*

They were replacing the ball bearings in their revolving door weekly? Why, because their turnover rate was so high that the door never stopped moving. This call center had a 300% turnover rate. That's over double the industry norm. Although they were proud of the plaque on the wall that indicated "We treat our employees as our number one priority," their attitude, actions and policies demonstrated otherwise.

Once, while doing training for this company, showing midlevel leaders how to measurably transform mediocre results into high performing and highly engage

teams by utilizing the ownership advantage, a senior leader popped in. The group was learning the concepts of creating a new vision of *first being accountable to hold others accountable*. The leaders were having fun during the learning process when a senior leader apparently heard laughter and was upset. Yep, he did not like hearing laughter. He then reprimanded us and told the group that they were unprofessional because they were laughing (I am not kidding). He then looked at me as if I were the "spawn of Satan" and left.

This organization was terribly out of balance. They were too invested in "their results" and "their numbers" and made a *most very costly decision* to overlook investing in the human spirit! If you were to calculate the turnover, recruiting, training, integration and residual impact on profits and customer service and delivery, it's clear that this was not a financially viable strategy.

Needless to say, this company did not bring me back and shortly thereafter went out of business. When you don't take care of your people-they don't take care of you.

"The single best predictor of overall excellence is a company's ability to attract, motivate, and retain talented people."

~Fortune magazine

### **HOW ABOUT YOU?**

As a leader how are you approaching the people you work with? Don't be too quick to answer. Seriously, do you know the names of their spouses or kids? Do you know their favorite hobby? Do you know

where they were raised? Could you name all your employees eye color?

What could my brother teach you?

### **ICE CREAM: HOW TO WIN THEIR HEARTS AND DO THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE**

I wish you could have been there as I watched my brother Wes in the kitchen carefully cutting up strawberries.

Wes works at the railroad.

In fact, I come from a long line of railroaders and I even worked with the railroad for a few years. It has been said that the next step below the railroad is prison, so in my family we are just glad to have jobs.

If there's one thing I know about people who work for the railroad, it's that they DO NOT work in the kitchen under any circumstance.

So, seeing Wes in the kitchen came as a real surprise. I asked him, "What are you doing?" He without hesitation, said, "Making homemade ice cream to take down to my guys."

He's in a fairly big leadership role with a very *interesting* group of employees. (In fact there is one guy who literally thinks he's a dog and when they ask him to bark like a dog, he does. This guy needs help.)

"Why are you making ice cream?" I queried.

"Doug, I don't know all your fancy theories of human behavior and all your psychobabble mumbo jumbo, but I do know how to *win hearts of people*. *Once you win their hearts they will walk through fire for you.*"

"I bring ice cream once a week and they absolutely love it. It's amazing to me that grown men can get so excited about something so simple, but they do. Oh, and you should see how they react when I bring sliced cucumbers with salt! Wow!"

He continued. "Doug, you know how they closed the huge Salt Lake shop and moved it to a brand new "state of the art" facility in Oregon. Now I am left with a small "Podunk" shop here in Salt Lake."

"Guess what, we are out-performing Oregon in almost every single area? We have broken down equipment with fewer men. We are required to do more with less and guess what? We are doing it. We are doing it!"

"Do you know why?" he asked.

"Let me take a guess. Does it have something to do with Ice Cream?"

"Absolutely!"

There is shocking power in a leader who has a fiery conviction for his/her vision, the courage to stand up against the odds, and the drive to lead his/her people to victory!

Most leaders don't have a big enough vision or lack the courage and drive to honestly stand up and lead -- all the while making their people their number one priority.

The door to outstanding results is opened by making a conscious decision to make your people your number one priority and then and only then have you earned the right to lead them to the desired result. You might argue that your people are paid to do certain tasks, and that is true, but if this is your mindset I can promise you that you are only scratching the surface of

your potential as a leader. I invite you to see the bigger picture of your leadership potential.

You may be a good manager, but you have made a most costly decision to treat your people as things and that choice will never stir the souls of your people to greatness. It is absolutely critical in these uncertain times that you win the hearts of your employees.

Wes focuses first on connecting with and winning the hearts of his people. They trust him and his actions demonstrate it. He then creates a vision for his people. At first, it seemed impossible to do what they are doing-but the results speak for themselves!

In fact the Center for Leadership Development did a three year study to find out what the key characteristic of great leaders. Their conclusion: the only statistically significant **factor differentiating outstanding leaders from mediocre ones is caring. Surprising? No. Great leaders have the uncanny ability to first show they care and then courageously lead their people to amazing execution.**

"Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## **THE OWNERSHIP ADVANTAGE ACTION PLAN**

1) First, I invite you to get out a sheet of paper and write down the names of people you lead or influence (this could include your family).

2) Next, rate your level of connection on a scale from 1-10 (ten being the best).

3) Then ask yourself if they would agree with the rating you gave.

4) Commit to and write down (writing this down is key) an action plan to better win the hearts of your people over time. This might include things like:

- *Reading one book a month (or listen to audio) on the subject of relationships like How to Win Friends and Influence People.*
- *It might be finding a mentor who excels with people.*
- *Attending seminars on leadership.*
- *Asking your employees how you can make this a better place for them to work.*
- *Ask for input on decisions- particularly on decisions that impact them.*
- *Show you trust them by giving them ownership for its solution.*
- *Feed the minds of your people by sharing a daily thought and joke (simple, but brings amazing results).*
- *Brag on them: depending on the personality do it publically or privately.*

5) Lastly, I invite you to courageously lead your people to do the seemingly impossible. Create a

clear picture of where you want to go and their role in achieving it. Ask for their suggestions.

If your people are not buying into your vision-you have not won their hearts!

Remember, the most costly decision you will make is how you choose to treat your people. The key to success lies in winning their hearts. How can you creatively bring "ice cream" to your team?

Winning a person's heart is something that you earn and has nothing to do with a title!

I want to personally invite you to take the helm of the most costly decision you can make as a leader-to invest in your people.

You are in the People business, when you care for your people they will take care of what matters most!

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*over 17 years experience in aligning people with performance through personal ownership. He is also author of the recently released book, [Take Life By The Helm: Proven Strategies For Gaining Immediate Control](#). To talk with Doug further about gaining the Ownership Advantage for your organization contact him at 801-391-4356 or [doug@dougspeaks.com](mailto:doug@dougspeaks.com)*



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