

Santa On Leadership

I've been thinking a lot about Santa Claus this week.....hoping he'll show up at my house again this year! In my musings it occurred to me that Santa can teach us a lot about how to create a Spirited Workplace! For instance:

SANTA EXPECTS THE BEST: From the time we are wee ones we have a clear definition of what Santa wants from us. If you were like me you worked very hard to be on Santa's "nice list", although occasionally you leaned dangerously close to ending up on the naughty list! But you probably knew exactly what was naughty and what was nice. I think Santa starts each year EXPECTING us to end up on the nice list.....and guiding us back to it every time we are naughty. What can we learn? Give your staff (and yourself) CLEAR expectations of what is to be accomplished, EXPECT the BEST results, and guide them (and yourself) back on the path when necessary.

SANTA REWARDS OUR EFFORTS: Of course, if we worked really hard that year, we got rewarded!! Presents on Christmas Day! Maybe even one on Christmas Eve depending on our traditions. (For some of us, the presents didn't come on Christmas or from Santa - but during the eight days of Hanukkah.....which was just as fun!!) I do differ from Santa on one point. Why wait till the end of the year? Why not reward, appreciate and thank your employees and co-workers on a regular basis? Thank them for their effort as well as their success. (No one can be nice 100% of the time.....but our effort is worth a thank you or two.....don't you think?)

SANTA KNOWS WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE LIKE: Santa doesn't give everyone the same gifts! No! He gets to know each individual on his list and personalizes his gifts accordingly. This is why I got Barbie dolls while my sister got a baseball glove! A baseball glove was a perfect gift for Julie, but I wouldn't have known what to do with it! Santa took the time to read my letters and find this out! What about you? Do you know each of your employees? What kind of reward and thank you would they like most? If you are purchasing a gift certificate for an employee, have you taken the time to find out what his/her favorite restaurant is? The lesson? Know your employees and know what kinds of rewards are meaningful to each of them.

SANTA DOESN'T FORCE US TO BE WHO WE'RE NOT: Personally, I loved sitting on Santa's lap at the mall. Many children do. However, many children do not. Santa does not expect those children to sit on his lap (although sometimes their parents do!). Sometimes we have employees who revel in the spotlight and enjoy very public recognition. Others prefer private recognition. Do you know who enjoys what? The lesson: Give recognition to all, and give it in a way that is comfortable for each person.

SANTA RECOGNIZES THAT IT'S A TEAM EFFORT: Santa gets a lot of credit for the surprises on Christmas morning, but he lets us all know that he doesn't do it alone! We know he has a full staff of elves that make the toys, a beautiful wife who keeps his morale up, and a stable of magic reindeer that help him make the trip! He even has all of you, who leave Milk and Cookies that keep him going! The lesson: A success is rarely the result of one person's effort. Are you recognizing the ENTIRE team?

SANTA IS FUN! Santa dresses in fun clothes, he laughs constantly (Ho, Ho, Ho!), and he creates a feeling of anticipation and expectation in every child he serves! He doesn't just drop off the gifts; he flies around the world in a bright red sleigh and comes down the chimney while you're sleeping! It's not just the presents we enjoy.....it's the FUN! And we work hard all year because we are looking forward to that FUN! Okay.....you don't have a sleigh or a magic reindeer.....and no matter how often you work out at the gym, sliding down the chimney is probably not a good idea. But you can still create a FUN atmosphere for your staff to work in!

Encourage people to whistle while they work! Celebrate successes! Surprise them with FUN! As long as you set up the CLEAR EXPECTATIONS we discussed earlier, the fun atmosphere should not distract people from their work! In fact, you might find that you get even more done. After all, Santa and his staff manage to get their job done incredibly well!!

So.....as the new year approaches, why not tap into your inner Santa Claus? Learn from his leadership lessons, and make 2007 a MAGICAL year!!

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