

Personal Leadership Experience

I joined Spirit Mountain Casino (SMC) as the Food and Beverage Training Supervisor just under two months ago. In my new role, I was provided with the support and freedom to redefine training and development for the department. This new venture has provided me with an excellent opportunity to put into practice my work in living systems and creating learning in a learner centered outcomes framework.

I invested several weeks listening, observing, asking questions, and testing language to help me gauge the culture and the team attributes with which I would be working. Based on this observation and conversations with my manager and the director of Client Services, it became clear to me that we needed to reframe how we envisioned relationships between team members as well as reframe the meaning of learning and training. To support the envisioned result, we would also need to introduce new language.

I developed a new vision of how people related based on conversation at all levels of the organization. All aspects of communication were brought to one common denominator, people talking together. At shift changes, at meetings, to generate input and to help team members become part of the fabric of the organization, conversation is promoted and modeled. I have been successful in changing the conversation to conversation and this is having a profound positive impact on the way people relate.

I then introduced a change to the concept of training and learning. No longer was this an instructor-centered activity

that team members 'made it through'. In Food and Beverage we now are facilitating learner centered experiential learning.

Our supervisor team is not fully prepared to lead in this type of environment. We have developed a new foundation for our direction with three different leadership teams in order to help them construct their own definitions. This is helping them own what they have defined. To do this, I worked with each group using experiential conversational exercises where they constructed their own definition of professional attributes for their positions. We are now taking that work and rewriting their job descriptions based on the attributes they constructed. We then will shape our review process to assess and reward based on their ability to fulfill the attributes they constructed. Further, we will work with HR to select candidates for employment based on these same attributes. Through the process, we will be treating the different nodes within the human development process as a living system. To further support the new expectations we have of our supervisors, we have moved authority not only down to them, but also past them and into their teams. In meetings and in front of their team members we are engaging them through conversation in the new expectations and supporting self-organization of work and decision making. Language also has a profound impact on this effort. As we have indicated to the teams, "you better not wait for a memo to tell you what to do because by the time you get it, the circumstances will have changed and the direction will be invalid".

I have been an effective leader in this situation because I

have invested in creating a clear and compelling vision that matters to the team and to the organization. I have created conversations around questions that matter to the team and to the organization. I consistently disturb the system by asking new questions and drive in new perspectives not held within the team. One of which, is the concept that to help people change behavior, beliefs, and attitudes, consistent conversations focused on the desired change must take place over years not over one lecture.

I am willing to ask the hard questions and remain clam, focused, and open to input even in the most hostile of circumstances. I am committed to invest myself completely to help create the result envisioned. I consistently am warm, friendly, and approachable, keep a sense of humor, am empathic, and integrity based. I create conversations with people throughout the organization day in and day out. I participate in the new employee orientation every week and introduce the concept of conversation to new and existing team members and leaders. I am able to quickly and effectively synthesize diverse issues into a clear living systems perspective. And finally, I really care about helping people build capabilities and capacity for growth and change. If I can help our team members create healthy lives, they in turn will create healthy homes for their children and the children are our future.