

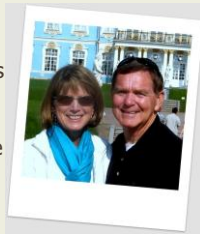


Issue #6 - August 2010

Greetings from very warm and humid South Carolina! We have had a great summer and hope you have too. Tommy and I kicked off the season with a Baltic cruise. The picture you see here is from St. Petersburg.

But now summer is ending and it is time to get fully back at work. And time to get out our summer edition of

Directions while we still have some summer left. You will see the format has changed a little, and we're interested in any feedback you have about that or our content. Thank you for subscribing!



--Ellen

TEAM MANAGER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Still only \$1500 per TMDC participant!

Upcoming programs in Charleston, SC:

February 7 - 9, 2011
April 4 - 6, 2011

Send an e-mail to admin@ecdavis.com to register or for more information.

If you're not familiar with this program, read about it [here](#).

DO THEY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

by Ellen C. Davis

New times ... new questions:

- Does a post-recession environment call for a different workplace culture?
- What does this imply for the role of manufacturing leadership?
- And do our front line leaders have what it takes?

The Shifting Cultural Landscape ~ as our clients describe it:

"If you thought things had to happen fast before, think even faster now... Process improvements, new technology, and new systems are raining down with promise - and with challenge... Customer and government oversight is growing, and "in our face" more than ever... etc., etc...."

"Our front line manufacturing leaders must (1) adapt faster to changes; (2) more assertively get others to adapt rapidly; (3) engage more professionally with customers on their own; (4) more readily provide direct and straightforward critical feedback; (5) more quickly initiate and effectively lead problem-solving, often independently of technical resources to guide them; and (6) confront issues earlier to mediate disputes among groups as well as individuals. In short, more than ever before, they must Drive for Results, Drive for Excellence, and Drive for Continuous (and Rapid) Improvement."

"And, of course, we still need them to be (7) situationally sensitive and responsive; (8) participative team builders; (9) strong listeners; (10) excellent delegators."

"Our tolerance level is lower. We can't afford for any front line leaders to be passengers on the bus; they must all be bus drivers."

Strong, assertive, fast-acting individuals clearly are in demand. These have become uncompromised behavior requirements. However, relationship building and participative skill expectations have absolutely not gone away. Can today's front line leaders adapt successfully and quickly enough? Can organizations strategize to help them?

Ways to Take Action

- Put these shifting requirements squarely before incumbent leaders. Talk through the rationale. Describe specifically what you can do to help them, as well as what you expect them to do personally.
- Conduct an honest, objective, assessment of each current front line leader. A third party assessment center is best, but however you do it, pinpoint with them their strengths and deficiencies against the expectations. Knowledge of the "gap" may be painful, but it will help much more than hurt in the end.



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- Plan development to address pinpointed needs, and do not place every leader into the same program. Experienced leaders have already attended many programs, and resent time in training that has not been matched to their specific need. "One size fits all" training is high on my list of what doesn't usually work.
- Make development much more than training! Practice, with clear and timely feedback, can do wonders. Auditing on the job application of new behaviors will be helpful as well.
- Consider other opportunities for those who say this shifting role is not for them. Can they become individual contributors again or lead in a less pressured context? Encourage them to go for it if you think they are only nervous, of course. But keep in mind that saying "we know you can do it" is a huge mistake if you don't really think they can.
- When selecting new leaders: Announce and explain the qualifications very clearly before posting; test/assess for the capabilities and do not rely on interviews; counsel candidates on the pressure-packed and potentially conflicting expectations. In other words: **Proceed with Caution!**

What are you going to do?

There are ways to approach this that can bring organizational success and also be fair to the individuals - though potentially tough. We are working with several clients right now who are finding ways to rise to this challenge. Please contact us if we can help you find the best ways for your organization.