

Seven Steps to Being an Effective Leader During Turbulent Times

By Teray Stephens

1. **Share the pain:**

- Be empathetic - let others know that you understand that a lot of change may be stressful and it is OK to be afraid of the unknown or have some resistance to change.
- Encourage them to share how the change is affecting them.
- If you allow someone to express how they feel and voice their concerns, it releases that energy, then you can discuss it and move into problem solving and a plan to move forward
- Remember - most people just want to be heard and then they can move onto action. If you ignore it or minimize, there is all of that pent up energy which turns to resentment and resistance and can negatively affect their performance or achieving successful outcomes.

2. **As others voice their concern & fears, write them down, and then ask is there anything else?**

- Allow others to voice their concerns and assure them they have been heard by writing them down,
- The most important step is to ALWAYS ask the question – **Is there anything else?** – because that will normally be the 1 thing that is bothering them the most but they are afraid to admit.
- Once all of their concerns are on the table, you can work together to put a plan in place to deal with them.

3. **Ask what will be the best outcomes from the changes?**

- This is 1 of the most powerful steps you can use because it takes you from the problem and into positive outcomes.
- Having 1 or more persons focused on positive outcomes is a tool that ALL successful leaders use to achieve results.
- This process also supports a bigger, longer view of what is possible.
- These days, the outcomes in your workplace can be very significant. For example, if you are working with the unemployed and/or workforce activities, you can:
 - ✓ Provide people with jobs to pay their bills or keep their family from being homeless
 - ✓ give another individual hope and encouragement when they feel despair
 - ✓ help create more jobs, particularly green jobs which support the individual, the environment and the economy
 - ✓ help people get back to work which improves the economy and reduces government expenditures
 - ✓ achieve significant goals and get positive press for your organization

4. **Be mindful of the impact you have on others and try to maintain a sense of humor**

- Your attitude can make someone else's day – either good or bad. It's your choice. Think back to a time when someone gave you a compliment or said something really nice and it made your day. You can probably also remember a time when someone else was cranky and it ruined your day.
- And a bad mood in the office is like a virus – it 's contagious, spreads quickly AND can have very negative effects on your colleagues, clients and performance
- You have the ability to change lives – 1 person at a time. Again in these tough times a kind word and the willingness to listen can make
- Bless the person that has a sense of humor and makes others laugh or smile.

STORY I recently had a client who was hearing from the IRS because they had submitted their payroll taxes late after a major downturn in their business. They sold some assets and paid the payroll tax but still owed a large penalty, so their account was turned over to the IRS collections dept. My client was panicked because the collections process was aggressive and they didn't know how they were going to pay it. A suggestion was made to call the IRS and see if a payment plan could be worked out.

They called collections and told their story, and found a wonderful person on the other end. She was helpful, told them what they could do to apply for a waiver on the penalty, walked them through the paperwork and offered to hold off collections until they received an answer back on the waiver.

My client called me back - almost in tears of relief because they had some breathing room and someone had treated them with kindness & understanding. Although I know my client thanked them profusely, I'm not sure if the agent on the other end really knew what a major affect she had on them that day and their business.

I tell this story as a way of showing how a person on the other end of the phone can have such a major positive impact on someone's day & life.

5. When you change your mind you change your world.

- Changing your mind is about changing your belief systems. If you find yourself being resistant to change, you might want to ask yourself is that "working for you and are you achieving the results you desire? If the answer is NO, then look at your reasons and belief systems. Some belief systems, particularly about change, may be there because you have never challenged them.
- We now live in a constantly changing world, and everyday we get to choose how we deal with it. My recommendation is that you examine the results and reasons you have in your life, and if you are looking to achieve more results than reasons, identify your underlying belief systems and start working to change them.
- The goal here is to help you feel better, make better choices and get more and better results in your life or as Mohandas Gandhi said "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

- 6. Identify 3-5 goals/priorities that can have an immediate, positive impact, then go for those goals are achievable, help build the foundation and:**
- Identify 3-5 goals that are achievable within a relatively short period of time and can have a positive effect on the individuals or group
 - Many times major success is built on a foundation of smaller successes. I had an entertainment client who wanted to build their company to \$50M in revenues and wanted to achieve that in 2 years. Initially he wanted to go for only large clients and big contracts, but I was able to convince him that starting with smaller clients and contracts would allow him to build a reputation, identify issues that would have been disastrous with a larger client, and not be dependent on 1 large source for most of his revenues. He listened to me and indeed built a very good reputation, generated solid revenues from a group of clients and built a strong foundation for his company. Now his company is being considered as an acquisition by a major media company for around \$50M.
- 7. Now this final step is very important. Remember each day to review what you have done and acknowledge yourself – give yourself a pat on the back.**
- Think about all of the things you did get done instead of all the things you didn't get done. It's a way to take care of yourself and maintain a more positive attitude
 - This is also a great group exercise. Take 5 minutes during the day and write the accomplishments of individuals or groups on a board in your office where people can see them. I like to call it the 'winners circle'.
 - I know they may just be doing their job and they may not be monumental wins, but remember big wins are built on a foundation of smaller wins and people like recognition.
 - Consider implementing 'employee of the month' if you don't already have it. It's another way to build morale and provide recognition.