

Successful Leadership Skills
A Newsletter for Real Leaders
Published by
SuccessfulLeadershipSkills.com

A Time To Be Thankful?

A Time To Be Thankful?

The flow of the news and information upon us has been non-stop, more than a little overwhelming, unprecedented, scary.... You can add your own descriptors.

We have seen housing values plummet, and now continuing with reducing stock values. Foreclosures are at record levels. No one really knows where the bottom will be. Many are re-thinking retirement plans, some of you have already postponed retirement. We have seen bank failures; a growing variety of financial firms are in deep trouble and most of us don't understand all the interdependencies of the worldwide financial system. Heck, we have watched our leaders get it wrong month after month ...it sure looks like they don't have a handle on it.

We have seen many hospital clients struggle with the bond market. If they can even place debt it is with interest costs that will put real strain on their cost structures.

Now we are seeing real evidence of the problems spilling over to the general economy. Layoffs are in the news literally every day. It looks like significant unemployment is going to become the next major issue.

Retail is down and it is not very probable that the Christmas spending season is going to turn the corner for those that look to make most of their profits in the Holiday quarter.

And it seems like every day we hear about another sizable firm use the "B" word. Bankruptcy is no longer an uncommon news item.

**An excerpt from our
upcoming
book on
healthcare
leadership -**

**Barry Arbuckle, CEO
Memorial Care
Medical Centers
Headquartered in
Fountain Valley, CA**

We have seen the federal government commit new billions and billions to address these issues... When you add everything up we think it actually gets to the trillions. And all this is on top of what we already were facing with social security and Medicare and our "usual" deficit spending.

Many of you have told us you have stopped listening to the news and reading the paper because it is just too darn depressing.

There is no question there is a sea-change underway, many people are scared, and no one can predict what will really happen next, when it will get better, or what the long term ramifications will be.

A time to be thankful? We say yes!

And now, as we approach Thanksgiving, you might be feeling a bit depressed from it all. A time to give thanks? Are you kidding? Well, we say yes... it is more important than ever to focus on what we should be thankful for. And as usual, Inside Out Solutions has a non-conventional suggestion for you to consider.

We're not going to write a positive thinking piece, nor even a reminder that "this too will pass". Those things are fine and might help a bit. But, instead we are going to suggest that you actually do some work with a process that will give your brain a chance to refocus.

If you have worked with us on business problem solving you know that we always spend the front end of any problem solving process building deep and full perspective about the problem.

We often do that by asking four to seven penetrating questions that starts to help the team look at their issue from many different angles.

But, no matter how dire the circumstances, we always start out by asking one simple question first. It usually surprises the team because they are so focused on all the problems they see.

The powerful question? **What's Right?**

Teams often don't want to do it. Often they believe nothing is right. The usual reaction is that 'everything' is wrong. Frankly, that is just lazy thinking and we are not afraid to push them hard to list everything that is right about their circumstances and the problem.

Why do we do this? First of all, we really need to know what is right. It starts out the team and the process on a positive note. Frankly, they always surprise themselves about how much actually is right. Compiling the list creates unusual positive energy. And most importantly, the list gives them those items that we must make sure are maintained and sustained.

Writing about this approach reminds us of a time with a client when we were asked to consult with the Chairman of the Board. The Chairman wanted to meet with us to discuss getting rid of the CEO. We started out that meeting by asking the Chairman to tell us what was right about the CEO. The Chairman responded that they did not want to talk about that and that they wanted to discuss termination planning. We pushed pretty hard and risked getting fired but eventually the Chairman agreed to answer our question. By the time the 'What's Right' list was completed the Chairman was already re-thinking their position. Other lists did point out some real issues that had to be dealt with, but the 'What's Right' list provided the energy and focus that allowed the Chairman to work with us to create a coaching plan rather than a termination plan.

This simple but powerful question can work for you as an individual just as well right now, perhaps when you need it most. Whether you are deeply troubled about current events or not, we suggest you take this time before Thanksgiving to get in a quiet place and work on your personal 'What's Right' list. We suggest you do it both for your work life and your personal life. If you do this seriously and thoroughly you will be amazed about how much ends up on the list. You will be reminded of those items in your life that you will want to make sure you continue. And, in the spirit of the season, you will find much to feel thankful for. Lastly, you will be surprised on how it will change your attitude.

Focusing on 'What's Right' by itself will not make all your problems go away. So, in future issues we will focus on sharing some of our perspectives on problem solving that we know will be able to help you and your business.

Here at IOSI we will have one of our own ongoing planning meetings in just a few days. One of the first things we will do is to focus on our What's Right lists. As we work on our own big questions, I also know we are going to find a lot to be thankful for. We hope you do as well.

We wish you a thoughtful, peaceful, and thanks filled November.

An Excerpt From Our Upcoming Book On Healthcare Leadership

The healthcare industry is one of the most complex in the world. We can all benefit from the insights from successful leaders in this business. We are working on a book to do just this. Each month we will share a pearl of wisdom.

Barry Arbuckle, the CEO of the Memorial Care Medical Centers headquartered in Fountain Valley, CA talks about how he maximizes his Boards as a strategic resource:

"Board member selection is key. We emphasize recruiting focused, accomplished business people for our Boards. You don't want them to defer to you because you are the healthcare "expert."

If I propose something that is too extreme or off-point my Board members are strong enough that they'd walk me out, probably in a strait jacket!

So handpicking those people that fit the culture and are secure enough in their positions to really debate with you and challenge you are the keys to a successful Board.

It is also very important once you have brought on a Board member to give them opportunities to really use their talents. Because one of the worst things you can do is bring somebody in that wants to contribute, but you do not give them good opportunities. If that happens you have lost a great strategic resource.

It is easy to underestimate how much time and thought it takes to develop an excellent Board. But, it is one of the most valuable things a CEO can do."

Forward to a Friend

We welcome and encourage you to forward this to as many people as you think will find this interesting.

If you would like to contact us or leave a suggestion for topics you'd like to see in future issues, please email info@successfulleadershipskills.com.