

From Results to Relationships

Bill Prince, President & CEO, BA Volunteer Enterprises

I worked for thirty years for a large corporation. I started with them as an entry-level employee and worked up to middle management working in direct support of the officers. In 1985, when I was 40 years old, I was identified as a high potential manager, but in spite of the fact that everyone was very pleased with my work, I never could break through to the next level. When I was still in mid-management 10 years later, I chose to leave. I knew there were aspects about me that held me back, but I was never sure what they were.

It was only later that I learned that I had a very hard-nosed approach to doing business. In certain cases, you could even say that I was brutal. I would always win my point and get my program implemented, but I generated a lot of animosity among my peers and the people who worked for me. I was a tough guy and they didn't appreciate my tactics.

I joined A&A, an outsourcing firm that provides contract personnel for the telecommunications industry, in 1995 and we sold more than \$1 million worth of business in the first 90 days of operation. But the same personality traits that got me in trouble at my former employer were still there and, once again, I was facing a situation where, even though I got results, I was not the kind of guy that was going to be an officer. In spite of my success, my career at A&A was heading for a plateau.

Then the owner of A&A took an interest in helping me and even though I softened my approach, I still had moments when I could offend everyone in the room. My behavior could be acceptable 98% of the time, but it was the remaining 2% of my behavior that was my downfall. If you have one rotten egg in a dozen and you make an omelet, you wouldn't want to eat it or serve it to guests.

At that point my boss told me that A&A wanted to invest in my professional development. That's when I entered Turknett Leadership Group's Executive Development Program. The biggest initial decision that was made was whether or not I wanted to go through the change process. I chose to change. The program included 360 degree feedback and leadership development. The consultants were able to identify the blind spots I needed to work on. Bob is very effective and he was able to help me. I learned to develop compassion and tact. One thing

I did was apologize to co-workers and take responsibility for the success of my relationships. But

everyone was very aware of the change in my behavior because my management style had changed dramatically. So dramatically, in fact, that peers and subordinates were now telling me it was a privilege to work with me. My reputation had completely turned around.

The biggest breakthrough for me was the awareness I gained from the 360 degree feedback data. Then the leadership dimensions that they showed me helped define key concepts and narrow down the behaviors and attitudes I had to work on. We really focused on one or two areas in particular. My social astuteness tested out at rock bottom; it was a blind spot that didn't register with me. Just the process of clarifying these issues was of tremendous help for me. One technique that was also very helpful was developing a "Model of Change," which I worked on. The model had two columns: "What I Needed to

Start Doing" and "What I Needed to Stop Doing." I began asking for feedback, giving more thorough explanations, being more tolerant, and taking responsibility for better communication. I stopped negative non-verbal behavior such as glaring at someone if they didn't meet my expectations.

I was stuck in a management style that was outdated: a hard-nosed, insensitive approach that worked in the '60s or '70s. That was a time when the meaner, the more ruthless you were, the faster you progressed up the corporate ladder. But that approach began to fall out of favor in the mid-80s. By the late '80s and the '90s business people who relied on that approach were called toxic managers. So if you practiced a very aggressive, hard-hitting management style in 1975, you would have been promoted. In 1985, you would have been held back. In 1995, you would have been fired. Things have changed and thanks to Turknett Leadership Group, I've been able to change along with the times and reap the resulting benefits. If I had the benefit of the Turknett Leadership Group's coaching during my corporate career, I am confident I would have achieved my goal of attaining officer level sooner.

Bill Prince is the former Executive Director of A&A Services, an outsourcing firm that went from \$200,000 in sales in 1994 to \$18 million in 1998.

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