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Fast Lane Genuine advice

How to develop an adaptive culture

By Brian Horn
Smart Business Chicago | May 2010

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Edward J. Doherty and his team at The Bricton Group Inc. have an adaptive style of management. That means if they have a general manager of a property with certain strengths, they build around those positives and try to supplement for their weaknesses.

"It's a very rewarding style of management when you see somebody who you have worked with and really helped focus their strengths and really drive off of their strengths and, at the same time, help them adjust to their deficiencies and make them grow is rewarding," says the founder, president and CEO of the hotel management group.

Smart Business spoke with Doherty about how to lead with an adaptive management style.

Q. What are the keys to being a good leader?

The one way I encourage — and hopefully, I lead the same way — is I call it the push from the bottom up versus the Whac-A-Mole type of leadership. Some people view leadership as top down. A little Whac-A-Mole pops up and then they whack it down if somebody has an idea. The authoritative, dictator type of management, which is so prevalent in the United States and maybe throughout many of the industrialized countries, I feel is completely wrong. Somebody does have to be the quarterback in the huddle, there is no question about that. But at the same time, I always try to tell our senior leadership team that we're trying to push them up, and they're trying to push the next level up so as you keep pushing each level up, the associate can maybe reach the stars. We come from underneath and provide support to lift up, rather than come down from above and dictate.

Q. How can a leader get front-line employees to come forward with an idea?

Just the culture we try to create at the Bricton Group and all the hotels we operate kind of spawns that. We've got all sorts of different venues and avenues that they are able to support ideas. We've got all sorts of systems and suggestions and open-door policies. And hey, if anyone can help us do something better, that either makes the guests more satisfied or helps bring more dollars to the bottom line through better productivity, we're all for it. I can assure you that's the stance that everybody at our company takes.

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Edward J. Doherty, founder, president and CEO, The Bricton Group Inc.

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