Toy Box Leadership
Leadership Lessons from the Toys you Loved as a Child

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What leadership lessons can be learned from the toys you loved as a child?
- What are the characteristics of successful leaders as identified by Hunter & Waddell?
CLASSIC CHILDHOOD TOYS

How does each toy characterize its paired leadership trait?

- Legos – Relationships
- Slinky Dog - Vision
- Play Doh - Mentoring
- Yo-Yo - Creativity
- Mr. Potato Head - Communication
- Rubik’s Cube - Ethics
- Rocking Horse - Efficiency
- Lite Brite – Illuminate to Communicate
- Weebles – Endurance
- Green Army Men - Strategy
Compare the classic toy to its paired leadership trait. What characteristics do they have in common?

Think of some examples of the leadership trait in action. Prepare to share at least one of these with the group.
LEGOS = RELATIONSHIPS

- Building begins with connecting
  - If you dream it you can build it

- The success of one Lego brick is dependent on another
  - You can’t build a rocket with a single Lego.

- Lego Bricks
  - Provide strength and substance to the structure
  - Legos are reliable, compatible, reusable

- Lego Landmines
  - Misplaced bricks – Where did they go?
  - Forced bricks – May be a wrong fit
Slinky Dog = Vision

• Sharing Vision: Pull then be patient
  – Vision pulls an organization forward by giving it direction
  – Observe the process & plan for improvement
  – Balance the pull with patience
    • Sometimes it’s necessary to allow followers to catch up
  – Speak of possibilities, not improbabilities

• PULL with:
  – Communication: Followers must know where you are going in order to follow
  – Courage: Risk the “What ifs.” Without the risk there can be no reward
  – Determination: Those who fight the pull need pulling most

• Pull by Example
  – Never send people down a path that you wouldn’t travel yourself
PLAY-DOH = MENTORING

- Mentoring is the Mold that Holds
- Leaders adopt modeled behaviors
  - Intentional and purposeful behaviors
  - Positive Influences

- To become like Play-Doh, a mentee must be
  - Humble and open to honest feedback
  - Teachable & Eager to Learn
  - Willing to keep it fresh – dried Play-Doh can’t stand the pressure
YO-YO = CREATIVITY

• Creativity
  • Happens only when you let go!
  • Fuels growth and opportunity
  • Is dormant until released
  • Depends on the right conditions

• Yo-Yo Success Strategies
  • Sometimes it’s necessary to rewind
  • Regenerate to get that yo-yo back on track
  • Remember to try a few new yo-yo tricks
POTATO HEAD = COMMUNICATION

- Communication - The right face for the right place
  - Communication is a vital part of a leader's job
  - Control your verbal & physical cues with others

- More than 20,000 facial expressions
  - Deliver your message
  - Communicate your intent

- Eight faces every leader must pack
  - Empathetic
  - Confident
  - Intense
  - Attentive
  - Disappointed
  - Happy
  - Sincere
  - Optimistic
RUBIK’S CUBE = ETHICS

- Ethics
  - Making the Right Turn will solve the Cube
  - Every move affects the whole cube

- There are no shortcuts in maintaining ethical behavior
  - Correct actions create order,
  - Incorrect actions create chaos.
  - People don’t suddenly decide “I’ll be unethical today.”

- Ethical leaders value integrity
  - Seize opportunities to make sound moral judgments
  - Desire Accountability/Conduct business with transparency
  - Beliefs and actions determine the measure of integrity
WEEBLES = ENDURANCE

- A leader is most closely watched in the moments following a failure.
- Failure
  - A fact of life; not necessarily the final fact.
  - Inevitable; not necessarily bad
  - Immediate response: Staying down is not an option.
- Handling Failure
  - Anticipate the fall
  - Learn from the fall
  - Don’t duplicate the fall
- How leaders find their center of balance
  - Determination – Leaders get back up every time
  - Persistence – Hiking the path of least persistence guarantees failure
  - Purpose – Have a clear sense of purpose
  - Support – Enlist the support of others – mentors, colleagues, etc.
Efficiency – Must move with purpose
  • Don’t be “All show and no go”
  • The only thing worse than an inefficient person is a group of inefficient people.

Four types of inefficient Rocking Horses
  • The Dead Horse – outgrown usefulness, complacent, lacks ambition
  • The Hobby Horse – pre-occupied with personal interests
  • The Wild Horse – rebellious, lacks direction, takes the renegade route
  • The High Horse – a bureaucrat; advances personal agenda as priority

Rocking Horse Helpline
  • Remember that history doesn’t record mediocrity
  • Set goals, aim for efficiency and don’t make excuses
LITE BRITE = ILLUMINATION

• Illuminate to Communicate
  • Your message won’t be “brite” if there is no lite

• Lite Brite bulbs fail when messages are
  • Ambiguous
  • Untimely
  • Irrelevant

• A filter is worth a thousand words and makes a leader’s message compelling

• A message is worthless it reaches the audience

• Make delivery – Simple, memorable and focused.
  • Design rather than filtered bulbs bring the picture into focus

• Remember: Communication is about your audience
GREEN ARMY MEN = STRATEGY

• Success in the set up
  • Engage others:
    • 5 minutes face to face often better than a week’s worth of emails
    • Plan well and with purpose

• Potential of staff points to potential of organization
  • Strategic leaders assess options
    • Count the troops – know how many people you have
    • Count the types – quality inventory, the talent in your group
    • Count the time – time for planning must be a priority

• Positioning
  • The who – place people based on the talent needed for the job
  • The where – where are you going to need people?
  • The when – when will you need people for a specific job?
SUCCESSFUL LEADERS

- Model a variety of effective leadership traits similar to those represented by the toys in this exercise
- Share the toys by building leadership capacity in others
- Remember: The leader who runs with scissors…should purchase good insurance!
NEXT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

Leading Between the Lines: Where Policy and Common Sense Collide
SOURCES


- http://www.toyboxleadership.com
TEN-MINUTE TABLE TOP TOY BOX DISCUSSION

- Open the “toy box” containing your assigned toy and its paired leadership trait

- Generate a list of characteristics the classic toy and paired leadership trait have in common

- Include at least one good example of the leadership trait in action

- Nominate a spokesperson to share group’s work (~60 seconds)