by Shawn Doyle

**“Eight Quintessential Questions for Leaders”**

**1.Do you have a mission, vision, and values statement?**

The advantage of mission and vision statements is that they help a team articulate who they are, what they do, and why they are doing it.

**2.Do you have a short-, mid-, and long-term strategy?**

What is the plan, Stan? What is the view, Drew? What are the objectives, strategies, and tactics for the team? By definition, short term is six months, mid term is 18 months, and long term is 24 months. When you practice long-term thinking as a leader, it enables you to make better decisions with the long-term view. The job of a true leader is to point the team toward the future, and you can’t do that if you don’t even know what that future is.

**3.Do you hire people smarter than you?**

The best leaders are generalists and can see the big picture. They hire specialists. You want the best and the smartest you can find because they get results.

**4.Do you communicate well with the team?**

Most teams I interview tell me they have no idea what is going on and feel like they are in the dark. Every leader should be doing the following: 1) having regular and consistent staff meetings; 2) meeting one on one with each team member consistently; 3) using communication methods ( email, phone, memo, voice mail, etc.) that work best for the specific situation. Most leaders are too busy to communicate effectively and then blame the team when something goes wrong.

**5.Have you created a motivational environment?**

Are your people excited, enthusiastic, and interested in their work? It is up to the leader to create that kind of environment. How?

* By having the kind of positive and upbeat attitude yourself that you expect from your people. Employees model their leaders’ behaviors.
* By treating people like valued members of a great team.
* By making sure the physical environment of the space is acceptable. I’ve seen break rooms in such sorry shape that I wouldn’t even let my dogs go into them. I’ve seen offices with peeling paint and dirty carpet. What message does that send?
* By hiring people who represent the way you want the culture to be and fire people who are mean, difficult, and uncooperative. Remember, they are the environment, and one sourpuss can make for a tough morale problem for all.

**6.Do you reward exceptional performance**?

If you do not reward exceptional performance, then those exceptional performers will leave. When exceptional performance happens, recognize it and reward it.

**7.Do you hold people accountable?**

People *want* to be held accountable. Here’s the key point: those who are doing a good job want credit for it. They’re tired of other people not pulling their weight and getting away with it. Leadership is not about popularity, but respect.

**8.Are you committed to employee development?**

All employees on every team deserve to have discussions with their leaders about their career goals. Every leader should then work with each team member to help create an individual development plan at least once a year and then follow up regularly to help them get there.

When this is done well, it puts an end to “dead-end jobs” because all have goals they are working toward. Team members feel respected and appreciated because the leader spent time talking about their future.

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