

The Leader: Learning Through Teaching

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We live in a world where learning is critical. We work in an industry where the need for expanded learning is essential for growth and continued success. We seem to agree as an organization that staying on the "cutting edge" of learning is what sets us apart in a very competitive environment.

We're all involved in the learning process. Many of us have discovered the best way for us to learn. We recognize there's no magic formula for the best method of learning. There is much to be said for learning through teaching. In fact, there are many advantages, both for the leader/teacher and for the learner.

Because of the dynamics of what is happening in corporate America and to the entire world economy, we have to learn new ways. . . to learn. Different work forces --including those in healthcare -- have different learning demands.

Some of the best teachers concentrate on real life. They teach with the goal of helping their students learn how to achieve specific results. There's a movement from the merely theoretical to practical application.

In his book, "The 7 Habits Of Highly effective People," Stephen R. Covey discusses learning when he explores the sixth habit, synergy. He gets to the heart of the issue when he states: "Synergy tests whether teachers and students are really open to the principle of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts." Covey later describes a personal experience that supports the idea that the effective teacher is a learner: "I was almost mesmerized by it (the teaching experience) because it seemed so magical and creative. I found myself gradually loosening up my commitments to the structure of the class and sensing entirely new possibilities." The teacher became a learner!

Teacher As Learner. . . .

1. Requires More Study

Teachers have to "dig deeper" when they know they will be transferring information, knowledge or ideas to a broad group. They quickly learn that the best teaching comes from the "overflow" in their lives that they have learned from experience.

2. Reinforces Personal Learning

When we know we're going to be teaching, it heightens our own learning initiative. We are forced to think out issues in more detail and to consider ideas more broadly. Our personal knowledge becomes more important.

3. Builds A Call To Action

Teaching documents what we consider important. When we teach those with whom we work, the learning experience becomes a call to action, applying what we're teaching.

4. Builds A Consensus Of Importance



Effective "teaching leaders" build consensus on critical learning issues. This creates a common pool of knowledge that can be useful in positively affecting our direction.

5. **Affects What We Become**

Ultimately, leaders teach by what they do, what they don't do, how they lead, and what their followers observe them becoming. Our actions, our lives, are still the most important as

Advantages For The Learner

1. **Creates An Environment Of Discernment**

The learner can be more effective in discerning the leader's ideas and institutional direction when there is common involvement in the learning experience. Communication is improved tremendously as to the critical issues that will affect the organization.

2. **Helps Move Learning To Implementation**

When there is a direct teacher/learner relationship, there is a quicker buy-in to ideas that must move through the implementation process. It helps create an awareness of learning that is intended to be used in specific situations.

3. **Creates A Stronger Tie With The Teacher**

When the "learning experience" is working right, there is stronger bonding in the relationship between the teacher/learner. Meaningful discussion and dialogue opens opportunities for growth.

4. **Helps Build Corporate Culture**

Teamwork is a critical ingredient in business success today. Common learning opportunities can be a vehicle that will help build a strong culture. It can be the means to create a common vision and the methodologies that will guarantee success.

5. **It Enhances The Learning Experience**

One of the real pluses for the leader being a teacher is that you generate more "bang for your buck." The direct impact of the leader and their associates learning together can be a fantastic plus for the organization.