



By Kim Follis, CPC, CTS

Recessions create leaders. These days, as part of the leadership team here at Delta Dallas, I find myself recounting my earlier recession experiences to my team. During the first recession I went through in this industry, I was clueless. During the second, I almost went down for the count. When this recession came along, however, I just looked up and said “Bring it on!” It has been important for my team to know that I can relate to the challenges they are experiencing in this recession.

In times of uncertainty, it is natural for people look to those in charge – their leaders – for guidance. My team is reassured by the fact that this is my third recession and I am still ready for the challenge ahead. In any difficult time, people start to look around to see if their leaders have the qualities they perceive to be most important in a person worthy of following.

We have an open atmosphere here at Delta Dallas. From my desk I can hear almost every conversation in the office. Lately, I have been intently listening to our recruiters’ conversations about leadership. Every day we discuss what qualities our candidates desire in a potential manager. We also converse with clients about what leadership qualities they are looking for in an employee. It turns out; there are a few qualities that consistently rise to the surface during these conversations. They are:

Vision: The ability to give direction.

Motivation: The passion to carry you through what you need to accomplish.

Confidence: The strength of belief in oneself.

Initiative: The fortitude to make decisions and do what needs to be done.

Knowledge: Not only possessing the information, but sharing it with others.

Productivity: Bottom line, quantifiable results.

Here’s the eye-opener, though. My staff has actually been discussing the characteristics that I look to develop in *them*. My goal is to build more than a team. My goal is to build a team of leaders.

I have been particularly interested in the relationship between leadership qualities and productivity lately. As I have been reading, I have found that some of the experts believe that it is a leader’s responsibility to maximize team productivity and to contribute by example – and I agree with a majority of their comments. However, the most important productivity factor in our office is developing the leader within each of our employees. It is much easier to set goals for your team and be done with it than it is to make efforts to develop leaders. But in my experience – individuals who can lead themselves have higher production levels. Ancient Taoist Lao Tzu said, “Give a man a fish; feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish; feed him for a lifetime”. It has been more important to teach my team the life skills of goal setting, accountability, and measurement. These personal leadership tools will help them to maximize their production as individuals and for our company.

Are you ready to develop individual leadership in your team? It is a process, but you can begin to guide and grow your internal leaders by teaching them what the essentials are. This week, take a

few of your top producers (they will be the best team members to begin with) and ask them to answer the following questions:

- Do you have clearly-defined **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-Bound) goals related to specific job responsibilities?
- Have you defined systems, procedures and processes in place for each job task?
- Do you have an understanding of the acceptable measurement tools for the job at hand?
- Are you evaluating your work regularly and the results you have obtained?
- Do you have the adequate tools/skills available to accomplish the defined goals?
- Do you have the authority and decision-making ability to complete the required tasks?
- What motivation is present to drive needed results?

As your employees work through these questions, they take on the responsibility for their own productivity and differentiate themselves as company leaders.

Creating leaders has many rewards. In the past few months I have been inspired by the leaders in my own staff. Their feats of leadership, risks toward personal accountability and personal productivity have amazed me. One of our consultants came up with a new hiring solution to meet the financial/guarantee concerns of a client creating a win/win situation. Another consultant worked with a client to explain the importance of weekly one-on-ones with her staff in order to review departmental goals and expectations. I have even seen our team of grown women celebrate each other's weekly accomplishments with whistles, pom-poms and silly string . . . creating a sense of community and motivation for the week to come.

As a leader, let it be known that you expect leadership qualities in your staff and provide support . . . but press your team to come up with

their own creative solutions. You will be doing your employees a favor by preparing them for the times ahead. The economy to come will require that employees think creatively and offer far more value than just filling a cubicle. [Talent](#) will be a critical factor for workers and corporations in the new economy. By mentoring your employees, you are preparing them for maximum production and developing your company culture for the future ahead.



Kim Follis
Vice President
Delta Dallas
kfollis@deltadallas.com