



Timely Information for Personal Success

Leading Hands-On in Social Distancing Times

By Joel Patterson

With so many people working remotely being a hands-on leader is more important than ever. Yes, it's possible to be "hands-on" even if you're not there physically! Just like a leader can be "hands-off" even if he/she *is there on-site* (i.e. the manager is distant and in his/her office most of the time).

Regardless of the work situation, remote, on-site, or both the point is: The more a leader separates him or herself from the rest of the company, the less effective he's likely to be.

Here are some suggestions based on what I've learned on my path to becoming a productive, involved, hands-on leader:

❖ **Approachability.** It's vital that every person in the company feels that they can come to you with their problems and you will hear them. The more you listen to your team, the more insight you will gain into how to lead them effectively. Never brush off an employee's idea, opinion, or problem. Listen with intent, not apathy.

❖ **Offer feedback.** If a team or individual is underperforming but hasn't gotten the feedback needed to address the issue, nothing is going to change. In the same way, if you have employees giving 110% effort and producing outstanding work, *that* needs to be recognized. Make sure your team knows that you are present; you see

the work they're putting in, and you are on the same side.

❖ **Lead by example.** I've found that leading by example is an essential element of leadership. The leaders set the attitude of the entire company. You can't expect a collaborative workforce if you don't collaborate with them. You can't show up late much of the time and then complain they're not working 100%. Neither can you expect loyal, dedicated employees if you don't fight for them when necessary.

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Healthy Recipe: Cauliflower Stuffing

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ tbsp. olive oil
- 2 onions finely diced
- 2 sticks celery
- ¾ cup chopped mushrooms
- 5 cups cauliflower florets
- 1 ½ cups ground pork
- 1 ½ tbsp. fresh sage
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 2 eggs
- ½ tsp. pepper

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 390 degrees F.
2. Remove the stalk of the cauliflower and break the head up into small florets. Try to keep the florets uniform in size and not too big or chunky, otherwise they won't cook evenly. Place all of the florets into a large bowl.
3. In a large pot heat the olive oil on medium heat and add in the diced onions, celery and mushrooms and cook for approximately 5 minutes until the veggies have softened. Pour the cooked mixture into the bowl with the cauliflower and set aside.
4. Cook the sausage for approximately 5 minutes until well cooked. Add the meat to the bowl along with the chopped sage, eggs and chicken stock. Season with salt and pepper and toss with your hands until well combined.
5. Pour stuffing into a baking dish and cover with tin foil. Bake for 20 minutes and then remove the tin foil and bake for another 10 minutes until the cauliflower is tender and the top becomes golden in color. Serve warm with gravy.

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❖ **Honesty pays off.** Transparent communication is crucial when developing trust. Employees know when you are vague with information or messaging. The more you can be completely open with employees, the more they will trust you to lead them. For example, if we have a complex implementation coming up, and I can see that we are going to need to work longer hours and possibly a weekend or two – I tell my team precisely that. While it may seem like being the bearer of bad news, it's better than leading them to believe they will be logging out at 5 p.m. every night when that's simply not the case.

❖ **Be the leader you'd want to have.** When making decisions, you have to think not only about the success of the company but the happiness of your employees. A solution carried out by an unhappy employee is never a sustainable solution. If you're not sure about how your decisions are affecting your team, ask for feedback.

Summary

In every situation, try to put yourself in the shoes of those you lead. Are you the type of

supervisor you'd want to work with? Each of your employees is a human being. It may seem like an obvious statement, but it's easy to get caught up in the big-picture decisions and forget about the individuals that those decisions affect. Invest in your employees, and they will want to invest in you. On the flip side, *ignore* their wants and needs and don't be surprised when people leave, and morale and productivity is low. ■

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