

DTD Episode 45 Show Notes

Your Leadership Balancing Act

As I work with clients to create a formula to eliminate drama in their workplace I get to see the impact of varying leadership styles

As I look back over a 20 plus years I have reached a conclusion: the drama happens when leaders are too far in either direction along the spectrum of leadership strategies.



And I now know for certain: Leadership is the Greatest Balancing Act!

Where do you fall along the spectrum?

I've worked with leaders who provide no instruction for how to conduct work leaving everyone to scramble as they design work and coordinate efforts on the fly. Others are micromanagers, dictating every action and leaving no room for creative problem solving or the design of a new path towards a pre-determined end goal. The business is limited by the perspectives, ideas, background, insights, and experiences of the leader or business owner alone

I've seen leaders communicate everything and communicate nothing. Communicate too much and you have an uneasy team reacting to the whims of what ultimately is a passing thought or idea. Communicate too little and employees are operating in the dark, unaware of how their roles help to meet the current mission, with no view of future plans and how roles fit together. Employees cope by creating assumptions to fill in the blanks where facts should live. And, as I've stated many times in other episodes, our assumptions are rarely filled with sunshine and butterflies. For some reason most humans tend towards fearful assumptions of doom and gloom when they are kept in the dark.

I've seen everything from collaborative leadership styles where they've reserved no decision to the full discretion of the business owner to dictatorships where there is zero opportunity for input. At one extreme is a team too rich with power and influence, at the other is a business that moves at a snail's pace as employees sit motionless waiting for the specific direction of a leader for even the smallest initiative.

I've seen everything from the leader who designed processes with intention and expected they be followed without error and regardless of logic with no opportunity for change to the disorganized team that creates process on the fly

I've been witness to effects of the tyrant who disciplines employees for every misstep. The resulting culture generates a team of employees walking on eggshells, hiding mistakes and engaging in duck and cover to just get through the day. On the flip side are the leaders who fear holding employees accountable for even basic standards of work and instead spend their days cleaning up messes and making sense of chaos.

I've helped leaders who feel any kind of acknowledgement or show of gratitude is overkill; after all, their employees are receiving a paycheck. And I've helped others pull back on the reigns when thank you's were on overdrive. Their praise was reminiscent of my years potty training toddlers. After a certain age we should get kudos for going above and beyond and not for completing the most basic task.

In every instance it was movement towards the middle that created harmony and productivity in the organizations I serve.

I've edged them towards that middle with a caution to avoid swinging the pendulum too far to the other side. It tends to be a part of the process, however. It's difficult to land square on the mark. That central balance point is a goal to shoot towards not a place to live 100%. Perfection is rarely, if ever, achievable.

I ask you to take a moment and evaluate your leadership style? Where do you fall on the spectrum of leadership strategies for communication, acknowledgement, accountability, autonomy, structure, training and more. The land of no drama exists in that illusive area of

communicate but not too much, discipline but not too harsh, empower them but not all the way....