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Manage Resources

Lead People

by Ken Embley

For those who experience the bite of our minimum wage monster, no words that suggest a "should" or "ought" result in some form of comfort. From the perspective of the owner and that of the employee to those who seek services, the bite is real and real people experience the pain.

What is real—a limited amount of resources. What is real—a person with needs and emotions. What is needed to deal with what is real—a responsible person who can manage resources and at the same time, lead people.

Managing resources calls for action. Managing resources encourages a person to defend their territory, argue their point, and just maybe, the effort results in garnering a fair share of the community pie. Sometimes "things" work for the better and sometimes they do not.

This process can be frustrating, demeaning or pick any other negative descriptor, yet at the same time, the management of resources is the easy part of the job and is sometimes used as a crutch or an excuse to ignore the tough part of the job—leading people.

The old saying "manage resource—lead people" clearly comes into play when dealing with a topic as tough as minimum wage. The temptation is for managers to spend an enormous amount of time and energy managing the minimum wage resource and spend very little time and energy to lead people who suffer the bite of minimum wage.

People solve problems and it takes a leader to rally people to find solutions. I stumbled across an old September 2004 addition of Utah Business, the addition featuring the 2004 "best of business." The article identified all types of businesses, businesses that must manage the bite of minimum wage and other limits on resources. However, what distinguished each business was an ability to lead people in the pursuit of a common goal. Sprinkled throughout the entire article are stories of owners, employees and customers sharing valued experiences. Repeatedly, the common themes were such things as same vision, recognition for a job well done, pride in ownership, and sacrifice for the greater good. These are all examples of the types of "things" leaders develop in people who join a common cause to achieve a common goal. This is leadership!

Another old saying is "you do not manage people into battle—you lead them into battle." If you are suffering from the bite of the minimum wage monster, do you spend most of your time and effort managing the monster? If you do, I suggest you take a step back and reassess your attack. The suggestion is to balance your attack! If you find yourself in need of adding some leadership to your attack, consider:

- Working to develop a common purpose—do the people that count understand the organization mission?
- Working to develop each person's understanding of their role in achieving the mission—do the people that count understand what they do to contribute to mission success?
- Work to recognize each person's effort and contribution—do the people that count know that you recognize their collective and individual contributions to mission success?

There are endless numbers of stories from real people who rally around real leaders and

collectively tackle the resource monsters they face. So what is real? What is real is to find the balance—a balance between managing limited resources—and leading people in an effort to achieve mission.

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