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Blendex: One of the Country's Preeminent Blending Companies

Blendex batters, breadings, seasonings and marinades are used by food companies throughout the U.S. Blendex's primary business is to blend dry ingredients for the food industry and is one of the fastest-growing custom blenders, with a product line of nearly 300 food products.

Blendex is firmly committed to Total Quality Management (TQM) and has been rated Superior by AIB for over a decade. Their obsession for excellence is evidenced by the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) accreditation and being the recipient of numerous awards.

Meeting and exceeding customer expectations is their number one goal. This means the company must continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. In the interest of enhancing their performance, Blendex recently hired the McConnell Technology and Training Center (MTTC) to provide supervisory development and lean-sigma process improvement consulting. Ron Pottinger, President of Blendex, said that his organization is very impressed with the MTTC team of professionals: Andy Meyer, Ph.D., Director of the Business Solutions Group; Angel Jones, Organizational Consultant and Galvin Jones, Senior Consultant.

Tony Jessee, VP for Quality Assurance, is very pleased with the assistance provided by MTTC. "We have had four supervisory development sessions and MTTC was able to customize the training based on our needs," Jessee said. "During the period of these initial supervisory development sessions, we have found that our productivity has already increased and based upon the comments and activities of our supervisors, I don't feel that this is just a coincidence."

An added value that MTTC provided was assistance in preparing a grant application for funding assistance from the Bluegrass State Skills Corporation. "MTTC helped us get a grant for 50% of the cost of the training and development they are providing," Pottinger said.

MTTC staff identify each week what topics will be covered and management input is welcomed. At the end of each session, they debrief management regarding what has been accomplished.

In addition to supervisory development, applying lean manufacturing principals is a key goal of this initiative. The initial lean focus was on the production line of Blendex's top selling product. Value stream mapping was used to determine which areas needed improvement. After looking at the results of the value stream mapping exercise, management reviewed recommendations to determine what "could" and "could not" be changed. After these decisions are made, process changes will be implemented and their impact will be measured.

"Our expected outcome is a 25% increase in productivity and I think we will meet or exceed that goal," Jessee said. "We are also pleased with the MTTC approach. Galvin Jones is teaching us how to do this so we can do it ourselves in the future," Pottinger said.

Blendex management believes that the supervisory development training and the changes resulting from applying lean-sigma manufacturing principles will also lead to increased employee morale and reduction of turnover.

For more information about Blendex call 800-BLENDEX and for more information about MTTC's services call (502) 638-4467 or email BusinessSolutions@mttc.org.

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– Tony Jessee, VP for Quality Assurance, Blendex





ANGEL JONES
Organizational Consultant

The Five Best Practices of Leadership

Although it seems as if the fundamentals of leadership have changed, this is not the case. From more than two decades of research, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have found that the act of leadership has not changed. What has changed is the context of leadership. Kouzes and Posner attribute the change in context to several factors such as heightened uncertainty, a “people first” mentality, the global economy, and a changing workforce. With all of these factors in play, more than ever there is a need for strong leadership. The need for strong, effective leadership begs the question - “What makes a strong leader and can we turn ordinary people into effective leaders?” Based on their research, Kouzes and Posner developed a five best practices model of leadership. The model is called The Leadership Challenge® and its purpose is to assist managers and individual team members in furthering their abilities to lead people to greatness.

THE FIVE BEST PRACTICES OF LEADERSHIP ARE:

- 1. Model the Way:** This practice focuses on credibility and values, which are two of the most important characteristics a leader can have. Strong leaders stand up for what they believe and in order to do that they have to be clear about what exactly is important to them. Once a leader is firm about what they believe it is important that their actions align with their beliefs. If this does not happen their credibility is ruined and no one will believe the message if they do not believe the messenger.
- 2. Inspire a Shared Vision:** Effective leaders are always looking into the future and searching for possibilities. They have a clear image of where the organization is going. In addition, leaders help others recognize the possibilities and enlist them to turn grand possibilities into reality. In order to enlist others in their vision, leaders show their constituents how the vision is, not only good for the organization, but also has the constituents' interest at heart.
- 3. Challenge the Process:** Leaders seek and accept challenges. It is up to them to change the way things are. If things are staying the same they are not improving. However, change can be stressful. Leaders create an environment where constituents feel in control of change. Also, leaders generate small wins for their team to create a sense of accomplishment and allow their team to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes.
- 4. Enable Others to Act:** Leadership is not a one-man show. Strong leaders know that they can not do it alone. They have to build trust among their team and foster collaboration in order to meet goals. Trust and collaboration are two very important elements in achieving goals in an organization. Leaders also strengthen their constituents by creating a sense of personal power and ownership because this is when people do their very best.
- 5. Encourage the Heart:** Accomplishing goals is generally a difficult task. People become exhausted and frustrated. Often they are tempted to give up. Leaders show their team appreciation. They recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of their team as well as the individuals on the team. Great leaders have high expectations and when these expectations are met showing appreciation is essential in having the behaviors repeated.



These five leadership best practices are tried and true. They have stood the test of time for more than two decades. Kouzes and Posner's research indicates significant results, each time they put the principles into practice. These results include increased job satisfaction, employee commitment, team productivity, and sales performance. The results stay the same across industries and disciplines and in public, non-profit, and private sector businesses.

For more information on how to bring The Leadership Challenge® to your organization, contact Angel Jones at ajones@mttc.org.



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