

## ***“Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way”***

### NMH Leadership Letter

Dear Leaders,

It was great to be with all of you again and to see and hear of your progress. It has been substantial and in many of the right places. You are clearly making progress and changing the NMH world for the better. Decisions were made to go for Baldrige and Magnet. Wow!

We began our two days on a theme of Management Marines, and recalled the USMC belief that in a Corps of people who have to do difficult work that it's essential to do one of three things—lead, follow or get out of the way. To the unaware that message may sound a little harsh, but in fact it's just the truth. At times each of us needs to be leading, getting out in front of the troops or speaking that which others are not ready to. At other times we need to follow, to support those who are leading at the moment, or on an issue of importance. And when we are not able to do either the first or second task, then getting out of the way of those who are is in fact a contribution to what they are doing. Every day, on every issue, leaders of an elite team, the USMC, ask themselves where they should be positioning themselves. And as we get into one of those three positions we help the NMH Corps get it done. Today, can I help by leading, can I help by following, can I help by getting out of the way? *Semper fi!*

Jim Dague, visiting fireman from Goshen Health System was a shot in the arm—a great case study of success using the New American Hospital. One result: you decided to give the ax to the term Associate as we climb up the ladder of respect to a stronger term of Colleague. Yeah, wish we'd gotten the term right at Session 1, but Management Marines are more concerned with getting it right than getting it neat, so it was a good call.

***col-league*** *n: a person somebody works with, especially in a professional or skilled job. syn: associate, coworker, assistant, partner, collaborator*

One thing Jim said bugged me: His assertion of 60-70% management turnover, based on the assumption that the NMH experience would be a repeat of Goshen's. No one can say for sure, of course, but I don't think that's going to be the case at NMH. Since our philosophy at Goshen and NMH is the same—no layoffs, positive people building, enforcement of respect—the only management turnover possible comes from people 1) voluntarily transferring out of the organization; 2) voluntarily transferring out of management and back into Colleague ranks; or 3) from being asked to leave. The first kind comes from other job opportunities or spousal job transfers; the second from people deciding for whatever reason that they want to do something different or can't work the hours. The third kind, where people are in essence removed from management are typically the smallest group, our experience suggesting 5-10% at most.



It is really only this third type of turnover that is of any concern because it suggests that there has been a performance deficiency. Remember the Performance Formula at our session?  $P = \text{Ability} \times \text{Motivation}$ . My experience in working with managers over the years is that there is almost no managerial failure associated with lack of ability. Oh sure, there is always the work that must be done to learn how to do management tasks—stuff like MANSYS, and DIGs, and Training Logs and SERVE. But none of that is rocket science, and I would say that no manager at NMH is unable to do that work or learn what is necessary to do the work.

Instead, analysis of managerial performance problems suggests that nearly all of the deficiency comes from the motivation side. Maybe they don't really want to be in supervision, and were put into the job because there wasn't anybody else around to do it. Perhaps the culture/climate was punishing in the past and conditioned the person to not keep reaching out and risking new things, or perhaps they weren't rewarded when they should have been, or maybe they had a bad boss. Life is what it is, and perhaps didn't come together in the right way. So what should an unmotivated leader do now?

Well, look around you. Isn't this a different situation, a different opportunity than you've had before? With all your experience and capability, couldn't you teach and lift everyone around you? What about the large numbers of the team who haven't yet been involved in DIGs/JDIs as "participatators" on our 'tater farm? You could make a huge difference in their lives. Finally, what kind of memory do you want to have when you're 80 and sitting in the rocker? What would that older you tell today's younger you to do at NMH, now, for yourself?

I don't want to see any of you leave—we'd miss you doing the locomotion! If you're the engine on a project, pull with all your might. If you're the caboose, you're very much needed, so follow. And if in this moment neither of those two roles seems available, then be sure you're off the tracks and not standing in front of the onrushing train.

Be the Little Engine That Could. If you haven't read that book in awhile (its in the Library), find out why the little engine wanted to get over the mountain so badly. Find out what motivated her to perform when others just gave up. It will make you think.

Best to each of you,

Brother Clay

