

TEAM BUILDER

Channel the Five A's of Leadership

> While the pandemic reminded us of the importance of core workers, it also brought into sharp focus the effectiveness of business leaders. We saw firsthand how everyone from retail shop owners to corporate CEOs had to adapt quickly to a variety of challenges, from staffing issues to changing consumer behaviors. A lot was on the line for companies of all sizes. It was a sink or swim experience.

According to Glenna Hecht, a Dallas-based human resources expert who specializes in training, speaking engagements, and consulting with clients across the country, good leadership is so much more than merely logging record profits when times are good. It's about showing up, keeping your door open, setting a good example, and walking the talk.

No matter how deeply ingrained your leadership qualities, there is always room for improvement. Here are Hecht's five A's to improve your approach:

- **AWARENESS** "Being aware involves four steps: observe, listen, think, and connect. Sometimes owners or managers leave out a step; sometimes the connecting — aka a reactive emotion or reprimand — comes too soon.

How many times did we believe we had all the information and find out we were missing a valuable piece? By that time, whatever we've said can't be unsaid. Remember to observe and listen first — this gives a good leader time to think, bring down the energy, and react calmly."

- **ACCOUNTABILITY** "Ultimately, workers follow what a leader does or does not do. Ask yourself, am I consistent in my communication? Am I saying one thing and doing something else? Also, don't hesitate to get in the trenches. W. Edwards Deming once said, 'You can expect what you inspect.' You must show up to lead — otherwise, you can't effectively hold people accountable. At the end of the day, you're a role model for the entire team."

- **AVAILABILITY** "Owners and managers like to boast that they have an open-door policy. But is your door truly open or is it more like a screen door, with you half listening, distracted by your email or phone? If you're not engaged in the conversation, workers will notice and might be less likely to reach out in the future."

- **AUTHENTICITY** "At the end of the day, no one has all the answers. Whether a shipment was missed or an order of white roses delayed, every single day brings different challenges. The pandemic only amplified this trend. It's important to have a level of vulnerability and to be honest. You can say, 'I don't have the answer at this moment but I'm going to figure it out, or we'll figure it out together.'

"Sometimes errors are serious, and workers need to be held accountable and further trained. But it's also important to foster an environment in which mistakes can be owned up to and fixed — even your own."

- **ADAPTABILITY** "Always be ready to adapt to new and changing conditions. Let's say, for example, construction interrupts your retail displays, a key worker moves on, or you miss work to stay home with a sick child. In these situations, you need to rethink and regroup. Anticipating the need to pivot many times a day will help you react to ongoing problems graciously. Ultimately, the way you deal with a problem is more important than the problem itself." 🌿

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