

Leadership Alliance
Final Project Presentation

2009-2010

By

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The project I chose for Leadership Alliance was a complete renovation of our company website. Our website was created eight years ago and, with the exception of a few updates from time to time, was outdated and lacked finesse. Mary's Woods is a trendsetter in the industry and we must continue to convey that message in all of our marketing efforts, including our website. I was excited about this project because I felt it would provide me with a variety of opportunities to work with my staff and peers and allow me the opportunity to implement The Practices of Exemplary Leadership throughout the year.

Although the project was not completed by the anticipated deadline, we are now near completion and have benefitted from this project on many levels. Communication and collaboration are vital to the success of any organization, and this project has allowed our organization to collaborate interdepartmentally while improving our lines of communication. We now have a deeper understanding of the needs for each department and have experienced the satisfaction of pulling together as a team.

I joined the Leadership Alliance last year along with a fellow director at my community. However, at the beginning of summer our community experienced a major restructure, and her position was downsized. As a result, I inherited a major portion of her department – publications and resident activities and events. Along with the addition to my department, which includes three additional direct reports, I committed to follow-up and complete her Leadership project: Annual Wellness Campaign. We pulled together as a team, delegated duties and have completed the details of that project. We are experiencing a tremendous surge in team spirit, and this challenge was an unexpected opportunity to practice leadership practices.

The Website Renovation Team consists of a diverse group of people who could offer a variety of perspectives. This group includes a website designer who is responsible for restructuring the layout and copy, our current SEO website manager, two current residents, our publications coordinator, our sales manager, and our directors. We have an open line of communication and we share information and ideas via email and in-person meetings.

The Wellness Campaign Team consists of the director of wellness and in-home services (she inherited two direct reports with the restructure), director of health services, activities & programs manager, fitness manager, sales manager, activities/fitness coordinator and publications coordinator.

We faced some common challenges along the way with our website revision. Our primary challenge continues to be coordinating meeting times. Our schedules are such that it is difficult to pull everyone together in a timely manner. Also, this project requires surges in creativity, and it was often difficult to carve out enough time to follow through on an idea. Additionally, we

faced creative differences with our designer, and we were determined to help him understand and embrace our consumer needs. At times, the designer and SEO manager had difficulty communicating and compromising, resulting in frustration and delays.

To overcome the scheduling challenges for our website project, we elected to share information electronically and reduce the number of in person meetings. The best way to carve out uninterrupted 'creative' time was to schedule time away from the office. We would meet in the conference room, model unit, or private meeting space on campus. Also, it is more effective to meet separately with the designer and SEO manager. With the addition of the new department, we promptly identified priorities and felt the wellness program must take precedence over the website renovation. Additionally, I appointed one of my new directs to be the point person for the website renovation to keep the lines of communication open. We are excited to redirect our full attention to the website in the immediate future.

The two challenges we faced with the wellness program was the need to quickly understand the details of the program so we didn't lose any momentum and coordinating our schedules to allow adequate time to create and organize the final activities and programs for the year.

To immediately overcome the above two challenges, we quickly pulled all participants together with the promise of offering whatever time and support they would need to achieve success. We embraced their project, opened up our schedules, (and a few bottles of wine) delegated responsibilities and worked together to complete the project to everyone's satisfaction.

The six leadership behaviors that I found most critical to the success of both projects were:

1. Develop cooperative relationships.
2. Treat people with dignity and respect.
3. Paints a "big picture" of group aspirations.
4. Set a personal example what I expect of others.
5. Ask "What can we learn?"
6. Praise people for a job well done.

Over the past year I have implemented the following six leadership behaviors:

- Developing cooperative relationships was critical to getting our projects off the ground and creating team spirit. Everyone felt valued and eager to participate. When the downsizing occurred and the staff members in that department were split up, they were immediately relieved and then energized to know they were valued and critically important to the success of our newly expanded team. Additionally, the two outside website professionals are engaged in the project and committed to our success.

- Treating people with dignity and respect ensures long term team success. Peers treat each other as they are treated, and it is contagious throughout the community. Working respectfully with the outside community has the same results on a more global level.
- To engage our team and maintain their long-term commitment to our two projects, it was important for me to paint the big picture of a) the value of an updated website and b) the immediate and long term benefits for a creative wellness/activities campaign. We all shared our vision, feel secure in our efforts and are excited for future challenges.
- Modeling the way by setting a personal example of what I expect of others builds confidence in their belief in me as a leader. They know that I am willing to roll up my sleeves to get the job done and they have been eager to do the same.
- By asking “what can we learn?” keeps us alert and aware of how we can continue to improve our services to others. It plants the seed for creative thinking and we find ourselves checking in more often which is building deeper relationships and heightening our excitement about the future.
- At the end of the day everyone benefits from hearing “job well done!” It validates their efforts, builds confidence in their abilities, and your leadership style, and I believe it helps build future leaders!

The opportunity to learn and implement The Practices of Exemplary Leadership over this past year has been crucial to the success we have experienced with the department restructure and website project. I plan to identify and implement one of the thirty leadership behaviors each business day, reflect on the results, and continue to rotate them throughout the year. Many leadership behaviors will naturally occur each day, but this will encourage me to focus on each and every leadership behavior throughout the year. I believe this will allow me to continue to grow as a leader, build harmony within our community and identify and promote future leaders.