

LEADING THE LEADERS: How to Get Leadership Team Members to Reach Higher Levels of Excellence and Responsibility

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Question: What do senior members of a leadership team (team leaders, program directors, lead instructors, assistant directors, and others) need from us to keep growing, be motivated, and feel they are benefitting from their work in our organization?

Answer: These are the responses to that question from about 50 experienced directors of summer camps who attended my “Leading the Leaders” workshop at the American Camp Association Southeastern Conference in Tampa, Florida in September of 2011. The categories that you see here are my own, created to organize the responses that were provided. I have also noted in parentheses the number of times an exact word or phrase was used. (A few responses have not been included here because they seem to answer a different question, which would be “What do the senior team members need themselves?”)

I. RECOGNITION/PRAISE/REWARD

- A. praise (2)
- B. praise and recognition for a job well done (2)
- C. authentic positive praise
- D. positive reinforcement (3)
- E. encouragement (3)
- F. recognition (5)
- G. promotions
- H. feeling appreciated for their work (4)
- I. “thank you”
- J. money

II. COACHING/MENTORING

- A. a good evaluation (3)
- B. constructive feedback (5)
- C. honest feedback for growth
- D. constructive timely feedback
- E. knowledge and information (2)
- F. continuous education
- G. training (5)
- H. guidance/direction
- I. strong mentorship

- J. coaching
- K. knowledgeable mentors, guides, partners
- L. skills
- M. opportunities to use the skills learned
- N. opportunities to test and grow different skills
- O. positive relationship with their supervisors (i.e. desire not to disappoint)
- P. resources

III. COMMUNICATION

- A. communication
- B. regular “check-in’s”
- C. clear information
- D. updates
- E. having difficult conversations without putting them off

IV. COMMUNITY/CONNECTION

- A. community
- B. connectedness
- C. fellowship with one another
- D. friends at work

V. CHALLENGE

- A. challenges
- B. increasing challenges
- C. thought provoking stimuli

VI. RESPONSIBILITY/INDEPENDENCE/AUTHORITY

- A. responsibility (8)
- B. progressive responsibility
- C. responsibility to make decisions
- D. authority (2)
- E. empowerment (2)
- F. accountability
- G. opportunities to lead meetings and be seen as a leader
- H. independence (2)
- I. autonomy
- J. opportunity to grow
- K. opportunity to “own” something (2)

- L. ownership of an important part of camp (e.g. programming for a special group, evaluation of staff, cabin inspection, schedule, etc.)
- M. opportunity to own something fully and manipulate the situation as needed

VII. SAFE FREEDOM

- A. freedom to do their job
- B. authority to be creative
- C. encouragement to try, fail, learn, and succeed
- D. safe place to try/fail (2)
- E. safe environment which invites them to take safe risks
- F. independence to make their own decisions/mistakes
- G. freedom to be creative
- H. freedom to still be young

VIII. CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND DIRECTION

- A. a mission to believe in and be proud of
- B. vision (2)
- C. knowledge of mission
- D. specific sense of purpose (2)
- E. goals of the leadership team
- F. goals (3)
- G. objectives
- H. clear job description (3)
- I. knowledge of camp policies
- J. boundaries

IX. TRUST

- A. trust (7)
- B. trust and confidence that we know they can do the job
- C. to be trusted
- D. honesty (2)
- E. belief and faith (2)
- F. security

X. INPUT

- A. input—we hear and value their ideas
- B. opportunity to share their thoughts on how the program is running
- C. a voice—a time to be heard where the focus is on them and true listening occurs

- D. opportunities to share
- E. opportunity to evaluate the director/owner

XI. SUPPORT

- A. support (11)
- B. supportive environment
- C. good support staff
- D. materials, tools, necessary supplies to do their job (2)
- E. knowing they will have “back-up”
- F. knowing they will be supported by the director

XII. DIRECT CONTACT WITH CAMPERS

- A. positive interactions with campers every day

XIII. SUCCESS

- A. opportunities to succeed
- B. knowledge that they are making a difference
- C. sense of accomplishment

XIV. TIME

- A. time
- B. time to be frustrated and regroup
- C. time for reflection
- D. planning time
- E. time with all the staff but also time just for the leadership team

XV. REST & RELAXATION

- A. R & R (2)
- B. fun (4)
- C. laughter
- D. a break
- E. rest
- F. time off to decompress