

## Serving Your Team Members

by Dennis Hooper, published in the Houston Home Journal on Tuesday, April 5, 2005

A simple book with powerful principles is *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know--and Do*. Read it with another person; you'll have a good dialogue on how to improve leadership in your organization.

The authors are Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller. Ken has written many books on leadership. He keeps it simple, but his suggestions are "right on." Mark Miller has been building leaders his entire career, making Chick-fil-A a standout in the fast-food industry.

The book describes a series of mentoring sessions that newly promoted Debbie Brewster has with Jeff Brown, president of the company. After a few months of meetings, their mutual respect and trust have grown. Debbie has applied Jeff's counsel, with improved results and relationships on her team.

Debbie asks Jeff how she can let the people in her department know that she really cares about them. She wonders if it is appropriate to ask about their personal goals and how they spend their time away from work.

Jeff responds by describing a situation when his team was doing annual planning. In addition to reviewing their work plans and goals for the coming year, he offered: "If you'll share with me things that you would like to accomplish in your life outside of work, I'll help any way I can."

Jeff continued his explanation: "I told them that if they would share with me the top five things they wanted to Be, Do, Have, and Help in their lifetime, I would do all that I could to assist them in achieving those twenty things."

Debbie asked if Jeff had been able to support these individuals under his authority. Jeff gave an example of his contribution in each of these four areas:

- To a man who wanted to *be* a great father, he gave a compact disc on the topic.
- For a woman who wanted to *attend* the Masters golf tournament, he obtained tickets for her.
- For a woman who wanted to *have* a more balanced life, he provided a helpful book and some related coaching.
- To a man who wanted to *help* the homeless, he introduced the director of the downtown shelter.

Debbie was surprised that Jeff's team members had been willing to share their personal-life desires with him. Jeff admitted that not all of them did, at least not at first. Further, he confessed that he could not have even made the offer early in his career.

"I was not a serving leader. Unfortunately, I was a self-serving leader.... Life was not about them, *it was all about me*. I'm not proud of it, but I'm thankful for the experience.... Someone saw potential in me and helped me understand that the rewards of becoming a serving leader were far greater than being a self-serving one."

Well, "The Secret" is out! Great leaders serve those who look to them for guidance and support.

You might wonder why I chose to share this piece of the book. First, Jeff clearly served his direct reports by supporting their personal interests.

Additionally, Jeff served his team members by creating an environment where it was safe for each team member to explore his or her personal vision. Many individuals in our society--probably many of those in your organization--are unable to describe what they want from life.

By asking individuals to consider what they want to be, do, have, and help in their personal lives, this exemplary leader guided his team members to prepare a healthy context for their work lives.

What a valuable service for a leader to provide!