

Spring 2020

## Leaders! Shift from DOING to LEADING

Most leaders are, first and foremost, high-performing individual contributors. For most, the ability to get stuff done is what landed them their leadership role.

And guess what? This high-performing, get-stuff-done passion does not go away just because of a promotion.

I'd like to tell you about Rebecca. Like so many leaders, she was consumed by her project list, as well as her endless list of required meetings every day.

Rebecca prided herself on all that she could accomplish in a day. Although she was in a leadership role, she was quick to remind her team that she was also expected to attend meetings, participate on project teams, and get her own work done on behalf of the company.

### **The Problem: Rebecca was regularly annoyed by the needs of her employees**

"Why can't they just do their work?" Rebecca often thought. "I didn't need all of this attention from my boss...and still don't actually." Rebecca's employees, meanwhile, were frustrated that she was often unavailable, even keeping her door shut if she wasn't away in meetings. And when they knocked on her door, they were often welcomed with a "now what?" sigh.

### **The solution/the approach**

Because Rebecca was systematically (and in fairly short order) creating frustration—even resentment—on her team, her boss, Mike, sat down with her to share these concerns. While Rebecca was defensive and touted her excellent track record for getting results, Mike explained that she is no longer measured only on her own work accomplishment but—even moreso—on the success of her team.

Rebecca agreed to begin making a conscious effort to make herself available to her team. She incorporated two of our strategies: a) Schedule leadership and b) create a visibility plan. As you read the examples that follow, you'll see how Rebecca wove some things into her regular schedule and made herself visible (and accessible) to her team.

1. Every day, Rebecca talks to at least one of her employees to ask how their day is going and learn what they need from her.
2. Every morning, Rebecca comes out of her office at 9:00 am to say good morning to all of her employees. This seemingly small gesture makes her more available to her team if they need something to get started for their day.
3. Rebecca now leaves her door open as a sign of availability.
4. And, my favorite—she stopped sighing.

### **The result**

Rebecca has learned that a key expectation of her new role is to, in fact, make time for her employees. By helping to maximize their productivity and satisfaction in their roles, the department is getting more accomplished, and her employees feel better about coming to work.

What about you? Do you have opportunities to become more available to your team?

*Aleta Norris provides an ongoing column on developing better leadership skills. She is a leadership expert and Principal at Living as a Leader LLC.*

