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January 16, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

This commends to you Denise Andrew's program of People Supporting People, which was a life-changing experience for the organization I was responsible for and me.

About five years ago, I was asked to co-lead the development of leadership training for Procter & Gamble General Managers. We put together a week-long program and revamped a leadership model which captured the collective behaviors that, when observed, are described as leadership. We have been successful in this training, and our classes have reacted positively to the leadership training. Our goal with this training is to train leaders who are effective across many countries and cultures, not just their own. As such, a portion of the training is teaching where various cultures stand along a dozen or so dimensions of culture.

During this training and when leading a large global business unit, I struggled with two challenges. First, while we can easily train the behaviors that collectively are described as leadership, how do we train a leader to love the people they lead – to have heart – which gives their leadership authenticity and sustainability? Second, how can we make the cultural training experiential so that people from different cultures experience first-hand how their socialization could inadvertently lead to hurting others? Or, said more positively, how do we get people to work to understand other cultures so they can be more effective leading outside their own?

We then worked with Denise, who had created People Supporting People, and required every member of our global organization to go through the People Supporting People training. It was a wonderful transformation for the attendees that gave them heart for those they worked with and helped elevate our Golden Rule (treat others as you want to be treated) to the Platinum Rule (treat others as they want to be treated). The Platinum Rule was critical, since if you are to treat someone the way they want to be treated, you must know them. You must work to understand them, their culture, and how they would like to be treated. This is a heavy burden in a global organization.

For me personally, People Supporting People was the leadership transformation that we were missing. I believe I gained heart for the people I work with during my four years at West Point and five years in the 82nd Airborne Division in the U.S. Army. When you are relying on a colleague for your life – your parachute to open, the round to have the right charge and fuse, etc. – and you are in urgent or dangerous situations, you immediately learn to love the people you rely on. This love makes one's leadership more effective. It is sometimes referred to as being authentic. Or it is what balances the need for the leader to be demanding. Great leaders are simultaneously demanding and caring. That balance is critical.

I highly commend People Supporting People to all who would like to unleash the power of people.

R. A. McDonald