

LEADon's Corporate Family® Leadership Development in Action: How our Customized Approach Makes "Magic"

Every company we approach is like a great novel waiting to be read. On the cover you see the title, and you get a picture about what the business is about – but inside, that's where the real story is unfolding.

Sometimes it's an unbelievable success story – for example, the young genius that puts together a group of computer geeks, and suddenly they become a worldwide, billion dollar business. Other times, you will find an ongoing drama: one problem after another compounded by feuding coworkers and frazzled executives.

Most of the time this "novel" approach is more of a mystery. All of the pieces for success seem to be present, but for some reason the company just can't quite get it together. Something seems to be missing, but what? The leadership plan isn't intact, but "whodunit?" The real mystery is how the team members will be able to pull together all of the loose ends to become personally and professionally successful.

This was exactly the type of "mystery" that the team at LEADon® walked into with General Contracting and Associates (**the name has been changed for confidentiality*). On the surface, General Contracting and Associates (GCA) seemed like a fairly successful group of builders that had expanded over two decades to a team of two hundred executives and employees. Yet when their call came in to LEADon®, the GCA leaders expressed frustration over several key components of their business. Could we help them discover what they needed to do to resolve these issues? We scheduled an initial meeting at their corporate offices for the following Monday morning.

The large office complex we arrived at could have been occupied by any number of companies we interact with – insurance corporations, software developers, service industries, medical businesses, accounting firms or even law enforcement agencies. Everything appeared neat, clean, and efficient – just like their daily operations seemed to be running.

After several of the top executives led us to their conference room, the real story began to unfold. First, the business was operating fairly smoothly – but there were underlying conflicts that simmered every day. This unresolved conflict was exacerbated by a general decline in communication throughout the organization. Various departments were beginning to compartmentalize, further eroding the cohesion that typifies high-performing teams. In addition, the four different generations within GCA’s workplace were often at odds with one another, creating concern for leadership.

The executives at GCA knew that these problems, while still not affecting overall profitability at this point, had definitely impacted productivity, morale, and the overall corporate culture. This team of leaders had spent their entire careers building this company from the ground up – literally! They not only wanted to see it successful, but they also wanted to leave behind a healthy corporate family that could carry on GCA’s work in the community for generations to come.

In other words, they were looking beyond the status quo – they wanted the company to truly be “significant.” After outlining these concerns, they also expressed that they were willing to “go the distance” – acquire a fresh take, adapt a new attitude, accept new systems of accountability – whatever it would take to enhance their corporate family’s development now and in the future.

his is when we explained the LEADon® approach to Leadership Development:

LEADon® isn’t a pre-planned, canned approach.

We want to get to know your company first, then we will develop a plan of action together. In other words, we are experts in leadership development, but we will not enter your business with a “we know better than you” kind of attitude.

As we assess your company’s needs, we will ask for your ideas, input, expertise, and buy-in to our proposed “game plan” before we proceed.

Our team has a psychology/counseling background which we will incorporate in our training and interactions with your team members. This is unique from most

leadership development companies today, but we are confident that this will offer your executive team an edge as they begin to gain new insights into interacting with each other as well as with all team members.

Once we make a joint commitment to work together, we will not leave until the job is done. This may be a few months – or many months - but it all depends on YOUR needs, not ours!

After reviewing these four steps, the GCA executives looked relieved – as if some giant burden had been lifted from their shoulders. When we asked them about this, they explained that they had used a “leadership development” group the preceding year, but it ended up being a complete failure because their employees resented the textbook methods and corny in-services that seemed more like high school camp experiences – “You know, hug-a-tree kind of stuff” one executive said with a wide grin.

We assured them LEADon® would not have any “hug-a-tree” experiences for them or their employees!

We jointly agreed to meet the following week for a tour of the plant, an informal meeting with top level managers, and a brief talk presenting the suggested LEADon® plan based on their input. During the course of the next month, several more meetings were held with key leaders in the company to offer support and to gain information on the day-to-day operations and needs of GCA.

Within a matter of months, all of GCA’s top executives were meeting regularly with LEADon® principals. These meetings assisted them in achieving the goals they had outlined for improving the overall culture of their company. Some executives also chose to meet individually with members of LEADon’s team as their schedule permitted, or to utilize phone and e-mail conferencing for support. In addition, monthly sessions were held with team members of each department. During these interactive sessions, the concerns that the employees had expressed in the initial days of planning were addressed in a fun, yet informative atmosphere.

Perhaps the most magical aspect of this transformation at GCA was the employees’ enthusiasm at being included in the process. They realized that the executives could be spending the company’s resources in many other ways, but instead they had chosen to make a vested interest in the current happiness and satisfaction of

their team members. The group also began to see the “bigger picture” – that this company really wanted to create a corporate culture that made a difference in the world – and would make a difference for years to come.

After one year of working together with GCA, LEADon® team members received one of the nicest, unexpected compliments . . . we were all invited to the company’s 4th of July picnic! You see, GCA felt that we were part of the Corporate Family now. And amidst the crowd of employees, family members, and friends, we got a clear glimpse of how this former “mystery novel” would unfold. Previous corporate foes chatted over hamburgers and corn-on-the-cob. The burned-out Baby Boomers - who once contemplated early retirement - now ran the obstacle course with Generation Xers and Millennials. Even the quiet, technically-savvy CFO - who used to be short on EQ - joined the fun, headed for the dunk tank, ready to raise some money for the company’s favorite charity.

GCA’s story – like so many of the companies that we work with – could have written itself quite differently, especially if the leadership team had failed to act. Yet they dared to make that first call for help – even though on the surface everything was working “okay.” Those executives were willing to carve time out of their already packed schedules in order to move beyond the “status quo” and really become significant. And their dream of increased productivity and profitability has become a reality. All members of the Corporate Family have become inspired to meet the business goals, and this team feels they will truly leave a lasting legacy.

So, what’s your story? Are you ready to take that next step in transformational Corporate Family® leadership that will make a real difference in your professional and personal life – as well as your fellow team members? Let’s work on creating that kind of “magic” together.

Steve Wilke, Ph.D.



Dr. Wilke and his team at LEADon® have dedicated themselves to equipping executives as well as Corporate Family® members and leaders of all types in order to improve their performance through internal and intentional leadership. In particular, Dr. Wilke assists companies that want to enhance their corporate culture and equip employees with the Corporate Family® leadership skills necessary for success in today's global economy.

The author of several books, Dr. Wilke also serves as a media consultant on Mental Health and Leadership issues. He resides with his family in Southern California.

Jared Wilke, Psy.D.



Jared Wilke, Psy.D, is a clinical psychologist who has worked in multiple roles with the LEADon® Team over many years including the Director of Social Media, facilitated research and development of our products and now adds the role of consultant as a Principal of LEADon Inc. He continues to hone his expertise in the disciplines of psychology and leadership with his work coaching and mentoring executives and leaders, developing high performing teams and corporate families. Equipping others to realize and reach for their potential and to exceed expectations are among his primary objectives. In addition, his publications and professional presentations include his work with the Corporate Family® Model of Leadership Development. Dr. Wilke has a private practice in Southern California where he assists families, couples, and individuals.

Founded in 1998, LEADon® is a highly respected organization focusing on improving executive, team, and corporate performance through internal and intentional leadership.

The LEADon® team includes professionals with expertise in Individual, Organizational, and Systems Psychology, Psychological and Organizational Assessment, Educational Leadership, Business and Management, Law Enforcement, and Non-Profit Organizations.

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