



Leadership Development

Anywhere, Anytime

Practical Tips for School Leaders – #26

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The Genie, The Bottle, and What's Next

I read an interesting blog the other day about leadership titled *The Genie, The Bottle, and What's Next*, by Wally Bock. Reflecting on the article caused me to reexamine my leadership style. Do I allow people to make choices and have autonomy in their positions? Do I encourage creativity, and risk taking while they design their own response to challenges, instruction and problem solving? Do I focus my attention on building the capacity of those on my staff or do I expect them to fall in line and do it my way?

I know as a young leader as much as I want to say I gave my faculty and staff choice I know I was reluctant to let go. It took me years to realize that if I let people around me create their own work processes and practices the results would be better. As educators we must be grounded in research and best practice for instruction, management, and leadership. From that knowledge we are able to be innovative and encourage others to do the same.

Every leader comes to their role with various experiences and expertise that frames actions taken. The faculty of a school is rich with diversity beginning in the office and extending to the classroom and support staff. Why is it important to embrace diversity and learn from each other? Are there intentional processes in your school used to focus on learning from each other?

Do you encourage people to be creative and design strategies to accomplish their responsibilities or do you expect the staff do conform to one model? In this blog Dr. Bock identifies the genie as autonomy. He says that our way of work has changed so dramatically the past few months that it may be difficult to put the genie, autonomy, back into the bottle. People have used videoconferencing to facilitate meetings, talk to a colleague, collaborate in a PLC, teach children, conduct interviews, present budgeting needs for 2020-2021, etc. Workers are setting their own schedules within certain parameters. They are deciding what to wear, where to meet and what time of day to conduct business. No one is looking over their shoulder and yet they are productive. Ineffective supervisors may be uncomfortable with the work at home, anytime, anywhere model. Bock quotes a mentor of his saying, "If you have to look over someone shoulder to tell if they're working, at least one of you doesn't know what they are doing".

Everyone is anxious to return to the workplace offices, classrooms and schools. How can we use the lessons learned from working remotely to make our organization stronger, worker's happier and more productive? Research in motivation finds that autonomy improves performance, wellness and engagement. How can leaders expand on what has been learned the past few months to adjust the things that should change while maintaining practices that work? Are there steps that can be taken to empower staff and faculty to make important choices about their workday?

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