



Supervisor Mentorship at DLA Distribution Oklahoma City, Okla., developing a high performance culture

Leadership behavior is a critical element of any culture change effort. As an organization engages in culture change it is critical that leaders behave in ways that are consistent with the culture that the organization is endeavoring to become. A critical element of this is that leaders have the skills and capabilities to behave in the ways that will develop a high-performing culture.

Ned LaViolette, director, DLA Distribution Oklahoma City, Okla., has initiated an effort to transform his organization's culture with the goal of becoming a high performing organization. A key element of this change effort is the initiation of a Supervisor Mentorship Program.

This effort involves LaViolette working directly with the supervisors to develop their skills and capabilities so that they are able to demonstrate the behaviors that are expected of them as leaders within a high-performing culture at DLA Distribution Oklahoma City, Okla. The initial session was focused on the critical aspect of how supervisors should interact with their employees on a day-to-day basis. He used the principles of emotional intelligence as the framework for this session and demonstrated the proper ways for supervisors to conduct themselves during interactions.

To continue this mentorship effort, LaViolette coordinated with John Destalo, DLA Distribution culture champion, to have Dr. Bryan Adkins, president of Denison Consulting, spend two days at his organization to teach the supervisors and managers the basics of the Denison Culture Model and provide a greater understanding for how this model can be used to build a high-performing culture.

A particularly powerful aspect of this session was the portion Adkins calls "What You Might Hear." This is a series of slides organized around the four

quadrants of the Denison Model. For each quadrant, Adkins has gathered quotes of organizations he has worked with, one grouping of these quotes is from organizations that are high-performing in the quadrant and the other is from organizations that are "not so high performing." These quotes help give life to the Denison quadrants with more expressive, natural language, such as "We do a good job of connecting the dots," to express a culture strong in mission. Another example is "It's all about winners and losers," to express a culture weak in consistency.

As he presented these quotes, Adkins asked them to think about which quotes reflect their current situation. This led to specific discussions by the supervisors and managers about their experiences with the culture at Oklahoma City.

At the end of this session LaViolette challenged each supervisor to use the "What You Might Hear" slides and sit with their team and go through each of those slides and have them reflect with their teams on the culture. After they have done this they were directed to work with their teams to develop team goals and objectives which would go up through the branches to the senior leadership of the organization.

In addition to utilizing Adkins for his Supervisor Mentorship Program, LaViolette had him sit with their culture committee, which is a voluntary committee of employees from across the organization. They have been meeting weekly for a number of months to gather the voice of the employees and involve the employees in contributing to the improvement of their culture. Adkins gave a similar presentation to them, listened to the challenges they have faced, and provided advice for them to be productive culture change agents within the workforce and help them focus their team efforts on having a positive impact on their culture.

For much of the second day, Adkins participated in two Town Hall sessions with the workforce. This Town Hall session included a presentation by a customer communicating the importance of the work of DLA Distribution Oklahoma City, Okla., employees to the customer, a safety training session for how to deal with an active shooter scenario, a welcome to new employees and various updates by the director including the status of key metrics as well as Adkins' presentation.

The presentation by Adkins was much the same as that given to the supervisors and the committee. Transparency between management and the workforce has become a critical element of Oklahoma's change efforts and providing the supervisors and employees much the same information in these briefings aligns with this principle.

At the end of the session, LaViolette shared with the employees the challenge he gave the supervisors letting them know that their supervisor will be sitting with them as a team to reflect on those key culture slides and develop team goals and objectives.

After his experience at DLA Distribution Oklahoma City, Okla., Destalo stated, "While we all understand significant culture change within an organization is a very difficult and slow effort, the work going on at Oklahoma City is focused and incorporates all the elements of the Denison culture model. During my two-day visit I saw firsthand efforts at improving adaptability, mission, consistency, and involvement. It was a pleasure to spend time with this organization and hopefully have provided support that will contribute in at least a small way to the steady improvement of the DLA Distribution Oklahoma City culture."