

# Take the Reins

## How to foster a culture of leadership at your company

By Lori R. Storm, CAMEx, CCAM



*As managers, every day you have the opportunity to either lead or follow. And depending on the situation, your role may shift from one to the other. But, ultimately, as a professional, you take the lead, guiding, directing, solving problems – influencing.*

Behaving as a leader is what you are trained to do. But you likely weren't born a leader. You had to earn your reputation. How does this happen and how can you foster and support leadership in those around you?

### Leadership in the Company Setting

For many managers, leadership begins where they work. Managers can belong to a company that has strong leadership in the executive team and a workplace where they experience leadership in action. We spoke to two people in the industry who take the role of leadership with great seriousness.

For Jason Brown, CCAM, CEO and Principal of Homeowners Management Company, LLC, and winner of the CACM Vision Award for Inspirational Culture, leadership starts with an understanding of why we are in this industry and what our influence can be for our clients. "We have an opportunity to make such a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve every day," he said. It is this basic tenet that guides his understanding of leadership for his team.

In the office he focuses on how to create an inspirational work setting for everyone. This starts by hiring with values in mind rather than a specific skill set. "Skills can be taught. Making sure

everyone on the team has shared core values," is more important. Jason ensures that respect, dignity, trust and mutual support are practiced on a daily basis.

In an industry that experiences its share of negative input, Jason strives to make the workplace supportive and encourages everyone to care for and lift up one another. He sets the tone and leads by example. His door is always open, and he encourages feedback, positive or negative, from his team. "I am just as accountable as every other team member," he said. Jason takes his own education seriously too. He looks for industry training and coaching to make himself a better leader.

For David "Bo" Banks, CCAM, Division President of The Management Trust for Northern California, his style is servant leadership. His philosophy is to hire for culture and fit, to look for service-oriented people. "We are a customer service company that specializes in homeowner association management," with the emphasis on customer service, he said. He sees his responsibility as helping his team, offering guidance and pushing each of them to be their best.

As an employee-owned enterprise, an expectation of leadership is baked into the company's DNA. Sometimes his role is to get out of the way and let the team take the initiative and the

accountability for making headway. "If I have done my job right," he said, "providing direction and instilling a sense of ownership, then the entire company benefits. And when the team is engaged and focused on the value of customer service, then the employees have internalized a leadership mindset."

"As a large company, we can offer further options for leadership training," a chance to gain further leadership education and experience, said Bo. The company brings together potential leaders from all their divisions to a multi-day retreat led by the company's CEO. Employees are immersed in the history, the values and the direction for the entire company. "They return with a greater sense of ownership," he said.

It is not surprising that both companies focus on giving back to their communities. Employees at each workplace organize charitable donations during the holidays, enter charity fundraising events throughout the year and donate time to help others, both those in need within the associations they serve and in the larger community. Being generous to others is part of who they are.

Both leaders place a great deal of emphasis on education. Starting with regular manager meetings, where information is disseminated, but more importantly, where information is

shared among the group, to more formal education for the managers. In addition to supporting their team's ongoing continuing education requirements, Jason and Bo provide educational budgets to their teams and support the attainment of additional certifications.

Board members receive ongoing educational opportunities too. You will find regular workshops and seminars hosted for their boards throughout the year. "Educated clients are better clients," said Jason. Both leaders believe that well-educated boards make better decisions and have a better understanding of the professional leadership that their managers bring to the table.

### Leadership from Within

As managers, you have your own authority and ability to demonstrate leadership. You do not need to wait for someone else to confer it upon you. Leadership starts with core values. If you are someone who takes your education seriously, who wants to demonstrate knowledge and exert influence, you want to know your stuff. There are many formal classes, forums, webinars, magazines and videos that you can access to boost your knowledge in the industry. You are holding education in your hands right now. CACM works very hard to make sure you have access to information that is relevant and

important.

Your industry partners are a wealth of information. All you have to say to your landscaper is, "I want to know more about the types of irrigation systems an HOA can use," and chances are you will unleash a torrent of enthusiastic education. Law seminars provide ample opportunity to chat with attorneys, and reserve study specialists find their industry fascinating AND they want to help you in imaginative ways to assist your HOA in tackling large projects.

Offering guidance and direction to those around you gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your leadership. Other managers, staff in different departments and your boards will turn to you for leadership. All these diverse groups appreciate someone with a sense of mastery and a generosity of spirit, those qualities which make a good leader.

Whether you work for a company that fosters leadership or not, you can take the reins and make leadership part of the culture of your company and, more importantly, who you are.



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By now, many of our members have heard from our new Education and Credentialing Advisor, Tammy Willits. Tammy's primary role at CACM is to work alongside our members in making the most of the courses available to you as a CACM member.

Contact Tammy to walk through how you can elevate your personal brand with quality education and certifications that carry the highest level of professionalism. She can be reached at [twillits@cacm.org](mailto:twillits@cacm.org) or 949-340-6615.