

Pearls of Leadership Wisdom: Take a Chance on Me

Welcome to my backyard once again and Pearls of Leadership Wisdom. Today this one is called Take a Chance on Me. Turns out that our local PBS station is having a special on ABBA this week and I bet there's many of us who not only recognize tunes, but certainly know a lot of the lyrics. Well this one, Take a Chance on Me, is one that I hope you start to stream, hum, and think about in your job as a leader.

Here's why . . . when I work with leaders and they have a major project to initiate, or a team to put together, or something special needs to get done, they often think about, "Well what skills do I really need to have in place here? Who's got those skills and how do I put the A-team together?" Great wisdom, right? Well, not so fast. Just for a moment, I want you to think about was there ever a time in your career when someone took a chance on you, someone gave you an opportunity to try something, do something, that you actually didn't have skill in, that you hadn't done before, but gave you the chance to learn?

I ask leaders, "Tell me about a time when you learned the most." Think about that for yourself right now, tell me about a time when you learned the most. There are often common threads and one of the common threads is this: Well it was the first time I led a project, or the first time I had to conduct a major sales meeting, or the first time I had a chance to fill in the blank. The first time is often a fabulous learning experience.

In this time of tighter budgets and resources, one of the most impactful things we can do is to take a chance on team members. Now you may be tempted when you have a major task or project to delegate or assign, to text one of your go-to people, we all have them right, one of your go-to people and say, "I need some help, I'd love you to do this for me," but that's from your usual suspect list. Rather than using your list of usual suspects, create a different kind of list, start this list out with who needs experience in doing this? Who might enjoy having the chance to learn? Who haven't I given a stretch assignment to in awhile? Asking yourself questions like that will help you figure out who you might be able to take a chance on.

When I was in graduate school I had an advisor who did a fabulous job and he took a chance on me. I remember one time when he came to me saying, “I need help with data analysis for this engagement survey, and I think you would do a fabulous job with it.” Now I got to tell you, doing a data analysis from an engagement survey was absolutely not in my wheelhouse, but the fact that he said he needed help, and the fact that he said he thought I would do a fabulous job, gave me the confidence to at least jump in and try it. I learned. I also learned that it wasn’t my favorite thing in the world to do, but I learned and delivered and added a new skill set to my arsenal.

So as leaders we not only have a chance to be a catalyst for someone’s motivation, we have the opportunity to give people a chance to learn. The lyrics to this song really say it all, and maybe there’s someone on your team who would be singing them if they could. I’m going to do my very best: “It ain’t no lie, if you put me to the test, if you let me try. Take a chance on me.” Take a chance on someone. Thanks.