

**JUMPSTART
YOUR
FUTURE**

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**EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES
FOR
NEW LEADERS**

DANI R. APPLE



Jumpstart Your Future
Effective Strategies for New Leaders

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Dedication

Jumpstart Your Future is dedicated to those leaders and would-be new leaders who have committed themselves to leading others and managing complex manufacturing processes of all types throughout the United States and across the globe. What you have chosen to do takes courage, selfless dedication, integrity, strong values, a commitment to continual self-growth, and most importantly, unwavering character. Without your commitment to your craft, the excellence that is American manufacturing would grind to a halt. As middle management, you are the backbone of your organization—wear that label with pride. Along with dedicated associates, you are directly responsible for the results that make your company successful every day. You take on that responsibility with strength and commitment to make a difference!

In his 1910 speech “Citizenship in a Republic,” Teddy Roosevelt sums up accurately what true leaders are: “It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, who strives valiantly, who errs, who comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who does actually strive to do the deeds.” This is what leaders are. This is what leaders do!

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Jumpstart Your Future

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Preface

The preface of a book should provide a few things for the reader. It should say something about the author so that readers can decide whether the author is knowledgeable about the subject. It should tell you something about the methods used to collect data for the book. Finally, it should tell you why the author decided to write on the subject.

I am not a professional writer or career management consultant. I am a blue-collar guy from a middle-class family in Pennsylvania. My parents were both military service veterans of WWII. My father was a Marine combat veteran in the South Pacific, and my mother was a WAC who performed for the troops stateside as a featured singer of a military band. My father worked in sales, managed taverns, and owned a grocery store and deli. My mother was a factory worker in a printing plant for thirty years. Difficult physical labor.

When I graduated from high school, I worked in construction and as a laborer in a printing plant until I entered the US Navy in 1969 and served until my discharge in 1973. Following my discharge I worked a few short-term jobs prior to college, including a stint in a steel mill. I have a BS in business administration and accounting from National American University and completed a graduate program in industrial relations and behavioral management from Cornell University in 1984. I graduated with honors from both universities I attended; I earned that distinction with hard work.

I have some education, which I knew was necessary to move forward in a career in the late '70s, and I have some blue-collar factory worker experience. But other than that, my story is very middle-class,

much like many people who will learn from this book. So far not much would compel a person to say, “Wow! I really need to read what this guy has to say about management and leadership for new managers.” The second half of this preface will hopefully change that and explain why you should read this book if you are considering a new career as a leader and manager.

My journey into and through manufacturing management began in 1978 in the coal mining industry and concluded in the beverage industry at the end of 2004. During that span of time, the positions I held included five years as an HR representative in mining and beverage plants, and twenty-two years as a production supervisor, production manager, facility manager, and operations manager in the wine, glass, and soft drink bottling industries. During my twenty-six-year management career, I worked for five corporations, mostly midsize or large companies, and small, midsized, and large factories. Three of the firms I worked for were union-represented organizations; two were nonunion. As you may know, there are differences associated with leading people in union and nonunion companies. The mining and manufacturing plants I worked for were in Wyoming, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia, so there were both cultural and workforce diversity challenges for me to learn from. I adapted well, with much help from both the leaders and the many production associates I had the good fortune to work with and learn from.

The functional positions I was responsible for during most of my career leading manufacturing operations were processing, production, quality assurance, warehousing and logistics, maintenance, and engineering. I explain this as I believe that for most new or potential leaders of manufacturing organizations, these are the key functional positions in most plants.

Now that I have covered most of my qualifications that enable me to write about management and leadership, let me answer the question, “Why write this book?”

For several important reasons, including health, I decided to leave the manufacturing management field and use the knowledge and skills I had earned in manufacturing in the executive recruitment industry in 2005. At that time, I saw recruiting talented people for manufacturing management positions as a natural transition for me. I thoroughly knew what these positions were responsible for and understood what client companies would need to fill key positions to positively impact their organizations. I was right! I was fortunate to have a colleague from a previous company who had established a successful executive recruitment business. After discussions he gave me the opportunity to join his firm in South Carolina. I owe him a debt of gratitude for giving me the opportunity to begin a second, most interesting, and challenging career.

As an executive recruiter, a key part of my job after I had acquired companies to recruit for was to get detailed information from my clients regarding all aspects of the positions they wanted me to fill. Once I had that information, I began recruiting candidates from similar industries with the education and experience needed to fulfill my clients’ needs successfully. Initially the positions I recruited for were manufacturing roles and included supervisors, managers, and executives in the production, quality, maintenance, logistics, and engineering functions. This had been my area of expertise when I worked in manufacturing, and I knew those functional areas thoroughly.

What I discovered while interviewing both client representatives and candidates was twofold. On many occasions my clients didn’t always have a clear understanding of what they were specifically

looking for in a role. Oh, they had position descriptions, but they were often outdated, and there were now a few new duties that were part of what was required. Our discussions typically cleared up those issues, and we agreed on the revised set of requirements for the position. Second, and most important, was that many of the candidates I spoke to while screening their requirements for a position did not have the knowledge level of their *current* position that their résumés indicated they had.

When I qualified candidates to present to my clients, my thorough manufacturing knowledge allowed me to really dig into what my candidates knew about the function of their current position as well as the one they would be interviewing for. That process exposed a lack of foundational knowledge of their role that, to me, was absolutely critical to their effectiveness and growth early in their career and could dictate the entire path of their careers moving forward. In essence, they didn't know what they didn't know. Several of my clients verified my concerns about this reality over time following interviews with candidates. My candidate review would be: "Good candidate. Appeared qualified, presented themselves well, but when we dug deep into their work history, there were questions the candidate could not answer that were of concern to us." This should not be the case for candidates who really know their craft.

Just for the record, some of the food and beverage companies that I recruited for included some of the top large and small food and beverage companies in the United States—Nestlé Waters, Kraft Foods, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Tropicana, Ralcorp, and Baldwin Richardson Foods. The companies that I recruited from were equally excellent companies, both large and small, as their employees had similar skills and worked in similar operations and cultures to my client companies.

OK, now you have some information about who I am, my qualifications for writing on management and leadership, my research methods, the fact I did it for twenty-six years, and my reason for writing this book. The goal of this book, as the title says, is to jumpstart your future and provide you with effective strategies for new managers. This book is not an all-inclusive or lengthy text to give you all the information you will need to build your entire management career. The goal is to help you build solid foundational skills and confidence as a *new* leader at the start of your leadership career that will serve you and the organizations you work for throughout your career. This book is designed to be a quick read as well as a desk reference you can refer to often and easily. While this book deals largely with manufacturing leadership and management, it is just as applicable for leaders leading people in many types of processes.

Hopefully my writing style is direct and to the point but conversational, with a lack of complicated verbiage to wade through. In leadership, effective person-to-person understanding is the key. That is my goal in this book.

OK, now that we understand each other, let's get started!

1

In the Beginning

Most of the new leaders I knew in my career decided to become leaders for one of two reasons. Either they had the innate desire to eventually lead people and organizations, or someone in their community or company saw their talent to lead, told them so, and over time, they decided to take the leap. Whatever drove your decision to become a leader, one critical axiom that must be understood is that once you commit to becoming a leader in an organization, your working life and the challenges it presents will change dramatically. You are no longer a single performer, where how well you work determines the outcomes you produce and any rewards you gain. You are now getting a volume of work done through others, and in some cases, these may be people you have worked with for years as a co-worker. Your job will be to weave the talents and behaviors of people of different ages with different values and work ethics into a cohesive, productive work team that enjoys coming to work each day and supporting each other and their leader—you!

It will be your job to become the face of your organization to your team in both the good and the bad times. You will be expected to handle difficult situations with patience, honesty, and consideration for both your associates and the business while accomplishing your goals with professionalism and empathy. At the same time, and you will hear this term often when you become a leader, you will need to

develop *a sense of urgency* in all you do. You are, after all, now leading a business operation, and the expectation will always be to operate a safe and profitable business.

Before you accept your new leadership role as either a supervisor or a manager, there is a critical step to getting off on the right foot for your initial success and future development. It seems like such a no-brainer that readers may wonder why it is necessary to bring the topic up. Trust me on this. It is far too often given only lip service and is the source of failures for many new leaders.

Either in your interview with a hiring manager, likely your boss, or prior to starting your new job, make certain that you know *all aspects* of the position you are applying for. Make sure the position description you viewed is current and all requirements and accountabilities in the role are thoroughly discussed. Ask questions about the shift requirements and typical workweek, the number and demographics of the people you will be responsible for, and the most pressing issues in the position or department you will be leading. Your team members' age groups are of particular importance as the value systems of today's workforce have changed dramatically since my days of leading operations. Frequent communication will be needed initially to get all team members on the same page. Effective and collaborative team meetings can work well to bridge the generational gap, but more on that later.

You do not want to go into your new position not knowing critical information about either the job you will be responsible for or the people you will be leading. Frankly, any organization that hedges in answering key questions about your role should be cause for concern and consideration. You *need to know* as much as possible about your new responsibilities to begin to form your strategies for success right out of the gate.

Welcome Aboard

Let's assume you accepted a new leadership role. You're excited to get going, but at the same time, feeling the pressure of now being a leader with much more responsibility. To break the ice and become a part of the leadership team, meet with your manager and have them take you around the operation and meet the functional managers you will be working and collaborating with, and have a good dialogue about what will be needed to form a strong functional relationship. Communication is key—very important. Make the effort! Meet your human resources professionals; they will be your experts for company policy and employee relations issues and guide you through the myriad of “people problems” you will experience throughout your tenure with your organization.

Know Your Operation Thoroughly

After you have met with key leaders you will be working with, invite your manager into your office for an in-depth discussion of what they expect you to accomplish in your first three, six, and twelve months in your new role. Be as specific as possible. Your manager should know the most important issues that need to be addressed, and the two of you should agree on what those issues are.

When I first became a department manager in the wine industry, I wanted to get a quick start in making a positive impact, but I knew little about the process or processing lines and equipment I would be responsible for. I asked my manager if he would consider sending me to some type of equipment seminar to help get me up to speed quickly. His answer was a classic, right on the money, and *I urge all new leaders to pay close attention.*

“Dani, you have the best training ground possible on your production floor. You are responsible for leading your team and this

production operation. Spend at least several hours each day on the production floor, observing each piece of bottling equipment, and talking with the operators who make your lines run. Ask questions of all your employees. Let them know that you need their help in learning the operation so that, in turn, you can help them with their jobs. In six months, you will know enough to begin making sound decisions for your team and the operation. You will never get so smart that your people can't help you make good decisions. Never forget that."The man who gave me that sage advice was my manufacturing mentor, and his name was Don MacDougal. His advice helped me be successful in every manufacturing role at every company I worked for throughout my career. Mac's formula for success enabled me to improve productivity and to build effective and engaged work teams for the next twenty-two years in the glass and beverage industries, union and nonunion operations, and diverse work groups and cultures. While the story we just covered is very useful as a part of your early learning as a new leader, let's cover the rest of what it really means.

To be an excellent leader, *strive to know every aspect of your manufacturing operation* and spend as much time as it takes to learn it. You can't lead an operation effectively if you don't understand how it runs. As ridiculous as it may sound, there are too many "leaders" who still exist that put in more hours at the office generating impressive charts and graphs on their computers and think this is the key to effective leadership. *It's not!* In today's data-driven manufacturing world, producing tracking data is a critical skill. But it will never have the long-term, sustained effect on manufacturing performance that a strong, process-knowledgeable leader will produce. Dedicate yourself to putting in the extra hours, and don't expect this process to be an

eight- or ten-hour day. It will often take much more time than that, but the long-term payoff will be well worth the effort. Start with learning your raw materials processes. Learn the basic function of each piece of equipment on your processing lines, the conveyor systems, and each aspect of your lines that produces your product. Know and understand the engineered speeds your equipment is designed to operate at and the corresponding speeds of conveyors and equipment that make up the entire manufacturing line. Your operating budgets, which we will discuss briefly later, will be based upon the engineered speeds of your equipment. *Always know what they are*; they can and will change.

Manual processes still exist on many manufacturing lines, even after Kaizen, lean manufacturing, and robotic initiatives have dominated manufacturing operations over the past thirty years. If your operation has manual processes, understand them. When the opportunity occurs, improve them.

As a new manufacturing leader, you will be inundated with a complicated set of responsibilities, many of which you do not know but are still responsible for. You will be expected to perform these functions at least acceptably, even in the beginning. Production planning, raw materials scheduling, labor scheduling, payroll, quality assurance, process improvement, production reporting, safety, staff meetings, and on and on will likely be a part of your daily requirements. How do you get all this done and still spend enough time learning your operation?

Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan

Being a smart, innovative, and thorough planner and executing your daily plan is key to your long-term success as a leader. As soon as you have begun to understand most of your new responsibilities, you should be able to plan your workday to ensure you can spend the

needed time on your production floor. You will be able to plan your administrative functions at times when your operation is running smoothly, and you can dedicate the time needed to complete necessary reports on time. To the extent possible, the best time to spend with your team on a manufacturing floor is typically at the start of a shift. Getting started on schedule is critical. Prior to wrapping up your shift, gather data for a shift handoff if a shift will be following yours. As you become more proficient in understanding the complexities of your operating lines, it's also wise to be on the manufacturing floor to support your teams when things such as mechanical breakdowns or product changes take place. That's a great time for you to work directly with your team and further learn your operation from those doing the work.

There will be daily requirements in your job that require your time, such as staff meetings or impromptu meetings that affect your operation, which will sometimes limit the time you have on a given day to observe your operation. That can't be helped. Things occur in operations every day that were not planned for and which need to be addressed immediately, if not sooner. Take the initiative and solve the problem. *But remember* that the time you spend and the knowledge you gain learning as much as possible about the actual manufacturing in your operation will *always* be one of the keys to your long-term success as a leader.

To wrap up chapter one, I offer a few actual experiences that occurred in my career that hopefully impress upon you the value of thoroughly learning and knowing all aspects of your manufacturing operation and your role as a leader in it.

In the mid-1990s, my position as a production manager in the wine industry ended when, as happened to many companies in that

period, my company was purchased by a larger company in the industry. Sadly, all our employees either retired or were terminated. The new company did offer some positions in their firm to some of our salaried employees. I was not one of them; they did not need a production manager.

For the next six months, I searched for similar opportunities in the area where I lived, as it was important for my family to stay in that part of New York State. I was fortunate to receive an interview with an outstanding company in the glass industry in a factory located not twenty miles from my home. It was a supervisory role, with a small reduction in pay, and I would be working twelve-hour shifts on a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. schedule. Quite a change for a forty-five-year-old man who had exclusively worked the day shift for the previous eighteen years! The company was a union organization, and I had no prior knowledge of the process I would lead. *I jumped at the opportunity!*

When I went to the interview, I met and interviewed with the production manager of the facility, a very bright, personable, and motivated leader. We hit it off almost immediately. As part of the interview, the manager took me on a tour of the entire manufacturing floor. It was a small operation, and he asked me to make notes during our tour that we would discuss after we got back to his office. When we sat down and discussed the tour, he asked my opinion of what I had just observed. I gave him a candid description of five or six issues I observed during our tour that I thought were areas that appeared inefficient or redundant and could likely be improved to save money. The manager agreed with my assessment but asked how I was able to determine those process issues that I related to him in a brief factory walk-through.

My brief reply was that I had been a production leader for thirteen years in my previous company and had also toured several other pro-

duction facilities during that time. It was my job to know what was efficient and what was not. Frankly, if I had come away from our tour with no observations, he should not have considered me for his position. *The next day I was offered and accepted the position.*

The second example of the importance of a thorough knowledge of your manufacturing operation did not have a positive outcome. I was working for a major beverage client and recruiting production manager candidates for a key role they had in a large, high-speed facility in Pennsylvania. The position was a key role, and the client wanted a candidate with the skills to be promoted into higher-level roles in the future. I submitted a candidate to them with a strong leadership background on his résumé from a Fortune 100 company, and I thought I had done a thorough job of screening the candidate prior to submitting him to my client. I had covered most of his pertinent background for the role, thought it to be close to my client's requirements for their role, and in the initial phone interview, the candidate did well.

When I received the call from my client following the candidate's on-site interview, the hiring manager relayed the following assessment to me.

"Dani, I can see why you submitted the candidate to us. On the surface he appears very qualified. He looked the part—bright, well-spoken, and could talk the basics of the position. However, as my managers and I asked him in-depth questions about the speeds of his operation, common bottling line problems he faced, training and performance issues, etc., he really could not speak to those specifics of his operation. He said in his company, managers didn't get that involved in those types of daily activities and that supervisors or line leaders handled those issues. As you know, our company's philosophy

requires more involved leadership with our associate teams, and this man's background will not work for us.”

Clearly an opportunity was lost because, early in his leadership career, the candidate did not have the gift of a mentor who impressed upon him the *necessity of thoroughly learning all aspects of his leadership role and manufacturing operation.*

Key Takeaways Chapter One

- Review and understand your new job responsibilities *thoroughly*.
- Learn and understand your entire manufacturing processing operation as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Gather information from your leadership sources, manufacturing reports, and team associates.
- Thorough, effective daily planning and executing that plan is critical to your success in the early phases of your new leadership role.
- Arrive at your job early, review your daily plan and know what to expect. Stay as long as is needed after the workday to be prepared for the next day.

OK, let's move forward!

2

Know and Care about Your People

In my humble opinion, *the most important factor* in your success as a manufacturing leader will be your knowledge of and your ability to connect effectively with your work teams. You can only do that if you have taken the time to get to know them, let them get to know you, and share information on what makes each of you tick.

Think about it for a moment. If properly maintained, your manufacturing equipment is going to run. If scheduled properly, your raw materials will show up just in time to run your product. What is the one variable in your process that is the most unpredictable and will require most of your time to lead effectively? *It's your work team!*

I can't remember who the speaker was anymore, as it was nearly forty years ago, but I still remember a quote from a female speaker at a management seminar I attended in the early 1980s. Discussing keys to worker motivation, she said, "If you really want to know what motivates your associates, find out what their *want to* is." By that she meant to find out what makes them come to work every day. As a leader, tap into that need, and you will have a loyal and hard-working associate. Over the years I led manufacturing teams, I never forgot that sage advice; it served me well for over twenty years.

Basic common sense. Basic human relations. Understand why your associates come to work every day, tell them it matters to you what they think, and then enjoy the working relationship you will de-

velop with people who feel respected as more than employees. People like being a part of a team where everyone is treated with respect as a valued team member, regardless of the position they hold or the job they do. Common courtesy and respect for all your associates should not be something you *have* to do; it should be a part of who you are. Any leader lacking this character trait should, in all seriousness, consider another occupation! It's that important.

Meet Your Team Members Individually

In each production leadership role I undertook with three different companies, in different states, and with culturally diverse work teams, I made the effort to know and understand my coworkers. After the employee meeting with your manager and team to introduce you as their new leader, let your people know that you will meet with them individually and soon. The sooner you set time aside to meet with each employee—and this may take weeks or months, depending upon the size of your team and the complexity of your operation—the sooner you will begin to develop the honesty and trust that is *essential* to forming and working with an effective and self-motivated team of associates.

When you meet with each individual, make sure they know the meeting is a two-way conversation. You are not just learning about them; they should also be learning about you, asking questions to get to know you better, how you lead, what your expectations for the operation are, and fundamental things like family and basic values. Not intimate details, personal or private information, but information to better know who you are as a person. Going forward, a leader and their team will go through many difficult and trying workdays together, and it is comforting for associates to know that their leader has the character, strength, and knowledge to lead them successfully, regard-

less of the circumstances they face together. They want a leader that will have their back!

A word of caution when you begin to meet with your team members. These people do not know you yet. Some will welcome the chance to meet with you and talk your ear off. Others will be reticent, and you may have to encourage them a bit to express themselves. They likely haven't had this type of opportunity to talk with their boss in this way before. Don't be surprised if some of your associates want to show you their appreciation for taking the time to meet with them. I have been the recipient of apple pies, various types of fruit, gift cards to movies, etc. because associates sincerely want to express their appreciation for speaking personally with you. Who knows? It may have been a bribe to score a few points (I didn't accept them but expressed my appreciation). But in retrospect, I don't think so. Your people will care as much as you do.

Take whatever time is needed. *This is an investment*, a very important one—treat it that way. Over time you will be amazed at the change some of your associates will undergo in expressing their views to you and sharing ideas on how you can improve your operation. As a leader, you can't ask for more than that.

Utilize Talent of Team Members Effectively; It Is a Business

In the first few months as a new leader, you will be spending a lot of time on your manufacturing floor learning both your machine processes and observing the skills of each of your associates. Observe your associates' work habits with a keen eye, as your observations will come into play in deciding whether you have the right people doing the right jobs for your operation. *There are few things that you*

will do as a leader that have more of a positive impact on the success of an operation than having associates performing jobs that they enjoy and are good at. People who have an aptitude for their jobs are generally good at them and take pride in their performance. Conversely, people who are misplaced in their jobs and have little control over being placed in a role they did not want, perform indifferently and aren't fully engaged in the process.

There are reasons that cause associates to be placed in positions that do not suit them. In some union organizations, seniority, as opposed to qualifications or skill, can be a deciding factor in position selection. The same situation can occur in nonunion operations, but the result can be the same. Suppose the position is operating a key piece of production equipment that drives the performance of a manufacturing line. In that case, that associate's performance can create serious productivity and cost problems, as well as morale issues for other associates on that line, if not corrected quickly. As the team's leader, it's your job to both address and correct this type of staffing issue and to do so fairly, honestly, and compassionately. Work closely with union representation in a union operation, HR, and with the associate who may need to be moved to a new role. Your objective is to resolve a manufacturing problem while simultaneously creating a more satisfying work experience for a valued associate.

Staffing talent properly in manufacturing operations is one of the more common and costly problems that exist in many companies. Too often, they are not addressed as quickly as they should be and create long-term inefficiency, cost, and morale issues on work teams. I've often heard production supervisors or managers justify not tackling these issues with comments like, "It's not the employee's fault; they were put into that position because they were needed there and

were just helping out,” or “They have been in that position for a long time; you can’t just remove them and place someone else in that job.” As I mentioned previously, these problems need to be addressed with honesty, compassion, and a sense of fairness for those involved. But make no mistake, *they do need to be corrected, or they will create a long-term problem.*

As the leader of your work team, the eyes of all your associates will be watching how you handle these situations, and they expect you to resolve them to benefit the associate involved and the work team. Trust me on this; the other associates on a production line know almost immediately when they have a team member who is incapable of performing their job and want their leader to acknowledge it and correct it. Not doing so affects the entire team every work shift. It affects the productivity of the team and, in some cases, the individual workload of other associates. The sooner the problem is corrected, the more positive the attitude of the entire team, including that associate who was removed from a job *they knew they were not good at* and placed in a role where they could be successful. When handled well, these situations tend to turn out very positively for all involved and enhance the leader’s credibility as a leader who is concerned about his entire work team and has the courage and judgment to make the difficult calls when needed.

To illustrate this situation, I relate a staffing situation I encountered in the beverage bottling industry in the late 1990s. I had just assumed a shift manager role in a large, high-speed bottling plant, managing a team responsible for operating three production lines on the 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift. This plant was the company’s flagship operation and had just added several new manufacturing teams due to increased production requirements for the plant.

Our new team of associates for the 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift was largely comprised of associates new to the company with little or no experience operating high-speed beverage bottling lines. Our job as a team was to get these associates trained and up to speed as quickly as possible to begin meeting the plant's scheduled product requirements. As you might expect, very few experienced associates in the plant volunteered for our new 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. team with a brand-new leader that none of them knew, so our resources to meet the requirements of our schedules were very limited. In the first several months of operation as a new team, our results were dismal.

On a beverage bottling line, the filling and labeling machines are the key equipment driving the process's success. They are also the most complicated to learn and operate and require a person with a mechanical aptitude to be an effective operator.

On one of the key lines that our plant counted on to be a good producer, we had a new associate operating a labeling machine who had little aptitude to understand the machine or operate it effectively. I had not placed this associate in the role of labeler operator; he was there when I arrived, but I knew very quickly that a change would need to be made soon. It makes for some long and very trying nights for associates when, despite your team's best efforts, you do not have the talent in the right places to be successful.

This associate was doing his level best to learn his job and be successful but also knew he did not have the aptitude to operate this equipment. Every night that line team struggled to meet our production schedules, and at 3:00 a.m., after nine hours of work with three hours remaining, the frustration and exhaustion levels on that line team were taking their toll. A change had to be made, but until a qualified replacement could be found, the position would have

to be filled with qualified replacements from other shifts—overtime replacements.

I had met several times with the associate we had to remove from the position. We reviewed his performance and options to remain on the team in a different position if that eventually needed to happen. He wanted a few more weeks to try to improve his performance but agreed that he was struggling and was OK with a position move if it was the right thing to do.

The change proved necessary. We made it, and our cost center absorbed substantial overtime expenses until we had trained a qualified replacement for the position. After speaking with the associate who was changing jobs, we agreed to have a brief meeting with his line team to explain the move to his team members, which we told them was a mutual decision. He had wanted out of the role, and our team needed a talented labeler operator to meet our production requirements. The line team totally supported the change and the associate's new role. In a short time, we had a highly functioning line team and a motivated associate who felt good about his new value to the team and the company. A win-win had been achieved that the entire line team knew was needed and welcomed. Over the four years I worked at that facility, the line team in question proved to be one of our most reliable producers.

The type of situation described above occurred several times in my manufacturing career. On each occasion, necessary changes were made to correct the problem quickly, but with the full cooperation of the associates involved and communication with the team of associates where the change occurred. People know when they are in positions they are not suited for, and they want the leader's help in moving to a role where they can be a valued team member. It's human nature.

To wrap up this chapter regarding knowledge of your work team and utilizing talent, I offer the following advice to give you an effective starting point to begin building your most effective work team. When you first take on your new role, meet with your immediate superior and get their opinion on who your operation's most talented and key contributors are. I mean most talented in technical skills, worth ethic, and informal leadership skills. You will come to rely on these types of talent many times during your tenure. Meet with your most skilled technical associates, machine operators, mechanics, engineers, etc., and pick their brains regarding what they believe to be opportunities to improve your operation. These same people will prove to be your most valuable resources, and they will welcome the opportunity to contribute to their team's success.

Utilizing the different types of talent in your work team effectively *will* be a key to your success early in your management career. Remember, you have not yet mastered the knowledge to be considered an expert in your operation, but you will still be expected to produce excellent productivity and manufacturing results. Excessive cost overruns, production inefficiencies, product quality problems, and poor associate morale are all by-products of *not having talent where it is most needed*. It has ended the leadership careers of many new leaders before they had the opportunity to learn their vocation. The business of manufacturing is more competitive than it has ever been, and it will not get easier. *Be one of those leaders who knows what is most important to effective leadership early in your career and build a solid foundation for your future.*

Key Takeaways Chapter Two

- Get to know your team members. Take the time to connect on both a business and personal level. Make sure they know they are valued and that their opinions matter. People enjoy working for leaders they can relate to and will give you their best effort consistently!
- Know what talent is needed for success in your operation and make sure the right people are in critical positions. When necessary, make the changes needed. Do it with compassion and a sense of purpose. Communicate the need for any changes with your work teams; they will understand and support you.

Let's talk about communicating!

3

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

The third critical skill set and performance requirement as a new leader is your ability to communicate effectively. Few successful leaders in any company have achieved their career leadership goals without having the communication skills necessary to communicate effectively at all levels throughout their careers.

As a new manufacturing leader, you will be expected to effectively lead team meetings with your manufacturing associates right out of the blocks. You will also be expected to attend management and leadership meetings with fellow leaders to explain the manufacturing results of your department and the reasons for strong manufacturing performance or inferior performance results.

In an article written in November 2019, Associate Director of Communication at Harvard Business School Lauren Landry estimates that *inadequate communication* in large companies costs \$64.2 million in losses and \$420,000 in small companies annually. Those losses come as the result of low morale, missed performance goals, and lost sales. Those are staggering numbers!

When you first decide to take on that new leadership role, make an honest assessment of your ability to communicate at the levels required in your new role. Be tough in your assessment as you will be required to communicate effectively in difficult situations, sometimes

bearing bad news or discussing problems with your teams that will require change and that will be met by resistance from your work teams. It will be your job to communicate effectively to your team and, despite their concerns, rally them to work with you to meet the challenges caused by change. That's what a leader does!

When you assess your communications skills, consider communications with your team, individual associates, and the leadership groups in your plant or company. You will eventually need to communicate effectively in all three areas. If you find during your assessment that you lack the ability to speak effectively before groups of people, as I did early in my career, do not let that shortcoming deter you from becoming a leader if leadership is what you really want.

While the fear of public speaking is a common fear of many leaders, both new and seasoned, it is a fear that can be overcome with a bit of courage and a willingness to improve. CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Warren Buffet and Mahatma Gandhi both suffered from *glossophobia*, or the fear of public speaking, so if this is a challenge for you, fear not; you are in good company.

I struggled with public speaking as well—sleepless nights, elevated stress levels, and self-doubt about the ability to deliver. Now in undergraduate school, I took the mandatory speech class and made it through the class successfully. However, there is a big difference between giving a short speech in a classroom and delivering important business information to a group of concerned team members or presenting business results to a group of smart colleagues who will ask difficult business questions in management meetings.

Knowing that I would not succeed as a leader unless I could get over my fear of public speaking, I went to my employer at the time (1981) and requested formal training to improve my speaking skills.

They enrolled me in a Dale Carnegie course in public speaking, and the results of that training transformed me from a person who dreaded public speaking to a person who welcomed speaking opportunities. I did well enough in the course that I was elected president of that Carnegie class and was given the opportunity to be a graduate instructor to assist students in the succeeding class, which I proudly accepted. Talk about a transition! Whatever method you decide to undertake to improve your speaking skills, take it seriously. *It's essential to your career*; it will take time, perseverance, and courage to become the speaker you need and want to be.

Let's take a brief look at the communication types you will be required to effectively perform in your new role as a leader and touch on a few communication characteristics that you will need to master. Keep in mind that all the communication skills we discuss will be required at some point early in your career, but those that you have directly with your work teams and individual associates will be most important to the success of your team's performance and your relationship with them.

Types and Characteristics of Communication Skills Needed by New Leaders

Large Group Team Meetings:

- **Style:** Be who you are; do not emulate a persona that you think will be more effective than you are. Your personality and character are what you should portray to your team, as that is what they expect. Style is largely overrated; your ability to give important information to your team and your sincerity in delivering the information is what counts.
- **Enthusiasm:** Always deliver your information with enthusiasm. Even when delivering negative news or discussing difficult changes, deliver an honest message and touch upon both sides of any issues. You want to inspire and empower your team to meet any challenges and to be successful in doing so.
- **Transparency:** Basic honesty. NEVER try to go around a problem by sugarcoating your message. Your team will see through this weakness immediately, and your credibility as their leader will suffer. You will have many group meetings with your teams—some very positive and others more difficult. But your team always needs to see you as the honest and courageous leader they have come to know. They can deal with bad news; they just want to hear it from you!
- **Empathy:** When communicating with your team, you are communicating *with* them, not *at* them. Encourage comments and suggestions from your associates based on the information you present. Make the meeting a conversation when possible and take their comments or questions when they ask them, not at the end of a presentation when it is convenient for you.

They need to know that their input is important, and addressing it immediately goes a long way to gaining their cooperation in difficult times. There will be times when you will need to present information to your teams without interjections due to the consistency or urgency needed in the message. Explain that up front, and your associates will understand.

Small Group Team Meetings:

- **Clarity:** Whether you have informal team meetings in your office, your production area, or a break room, keep the meeting informal. Be clear about the information shared and answer any questions. These meetings often share information about the day's schedule or a special product requirement, so make sure all team members are clear about your message.
- **Encourage feedback:** Answer any questions your associates may have and be open to any feedback you may get about the information you shared with your team. When associates understand the *why* of your message, they will give you their full support. That extra minute explaining the *why* to your line team will keep them on their toes and may save an error that could occur because of a lack of information.

Individual Associate Meetings:

- **Empathy:** Understand that many employees are not initially comfortable with individual meetings with their boss. Make them feel comfortable at the start of the meeting but make certain that the message that needs to be sent is delivered and understood.

- **Preparation:** Make certain to prepare for your individual associate meeting. Whether it be a corrective action meeting, performance appraisal, thank-you for great performance, etc., make sure the information you share is accurate and delivered respectfully. If they are done with respect and clarity, even difficult meetings where performance issues and improvement plans are discussed will generally be received positively by your associate.
- **Active listening:** Too often in meetings with associates, leaders do not focus enough on *actively listening* to what their associates are saying. The leader wants to make sure all-important points are covered, and while they are listening, they are thinking about what they want to say next. Understand this dynamic for what it is and make a genuine effort to both hear and understand your associate's point of view. When they see that you are genuinely concerned about their opinion, they will be more comfortable with the meeting and more open in your discussions.

Management Group Meetings:

- **Preparation:** Whether the purpose of the meeting is scheduling, budgeting, manufacturing performance, or policy, always do your homework with the goal of being the most prepared leader at the meeting. Nothing is worse than being called upon in an important meeting with your peers to give your opinion on an important issue that you should know cold and being unprepared to respond effectively. Your credibility as a key leader in the organization will be questioned, and your

long-term promotional opportunities may suffer if you are not seen as a leader who can deliver when called upon to do so.

- **Adaptability:** Learn to adapt your communication style to the group of leaders you are speaking with. It's fine to be less formal with leaders you work with every day; they know and respect you. When, however, you are presenting information in a meeting with leaders or executives that you do not normally interact with, take a more formal approach. Your company expects you to deliver an accurate and effective message, so tailor your communication style to that objective. In situations early in my career where I was called upon to present important information to a group I was unfamiliar with, I practiced my presentation several times until the message and time I wanted to deliver it in met my expectations, which were high. It's a strange phenomenon, but when you practice an important presentation several times to get it right—even if you practice it in your den or an empty meeting room with no people present—you become more confident in how your presentation will go to a group. *Familiarity breeds confidence!*

An example of adapting to your audience occurred around 1983–1984. I was taking graduate classes in industrial relations and behavioral management at Cornell University. I had been promoted to a production manager role in my company about six months prior to the beginning of my classes, and my previous role was in employee relations. During one of my work motivation classes, my professor approached me and asked if I would be interested in a speaking opportunity on the Cornell campus to speak with a group of soon-to-be graduating MBA students.

After asking my professor what she would like me to speak about, I felt that I was knowledgeable enough in the subject area to be a useful speaker to a group of smart, Ivy League MBA candidates, so I accepted her offer to address the students on the Cornell campus.

The topic I was to speak about was the human resources function in a manufacturing facility, seen through the eyes of a manufacturing manager who uses human resources principles as part of his daily responsibilities. As I began preparing for this speaking opportunity, I agonized over the effective way to present my information to the students that would be most meaningful to them. I decided to present the information from the perspective of a manufacturing manager who had previously been in employee relations but now had insights into how associates on a production floor view human resources.

When I arrived on campus and was led to the hall where I would speak, I must admit I was a bit intimidated by the physical surroundings of the facility. It was a most impressive hall, and as this was my initial attempt at this type of presentation, I wanted to deliver a useful message to the students. My instructor gave me a very nice introduction to the group of fifty or sixty students who were present, and then it was showtime! I introduced myself to the students, thanked them for coming to the presentation, and told them that I would speak with them from a manufacturing manager's perspective. My goal was to make them aware of what it would be like when they were human resource professionals in a manufacturing facility and what it would take to be effective in their role.

For the next forty-five minutes, I shared with the students the critical HR functions and how they are viewed by hourly paid associates working on a production line. I made a point of personally interacting with the students in the audience and took questions as I spoke.

I gave examples of the types of challenges they will have in manufacturing plants being the company HR professional while also acting as an employee advocate when called upon to do so. That was their job!

On several occasions when giving examples of interactions with employees, I became a bit animated to really give the students a realistic feeling of what they could expect from manufacturing people.

“This is no longer a classroom; you are now an HR professional in the field.”

My objective was to *make it real* for the students, and I succeeded in doing so.

When I concluded my presentation, I again thanked the students for inviting me to speak and mentioned that I would remain in the hall for a bit of time if anyone had questions for me. I received a very nice ovation from the student group, and more than a few students stayed around for several minutes to thank me again or ask a question.

One of the students came up to me and said I should consider giving presentation lessons to some of their professors. I was flattered and asked what the student meant by that comment. He said that as knowledgeable as their professors were, very few of them interjected the energy into their presentations that I had or made the effort to personally connect with the students to drive home a point, and that it would make a difference if they did. Now in all fairness to professors and instructors, when you are teaching students all day every day as your vocation, I can imagine that it is difficult to consistently generate the type of energy I had to your class on a consistent basis.

The point this example puts forth is the importance of *adapting your style* to your audience. When you make the effort to communicate *with* them, instead of *to* them and make them a part of the

message, people become engaged in the process, and you become an effective communicator!

Becoming an effective communicator as a new leader is a *process*, even if you are comfortable with your communication skills going into your new role. Situations will occur daily on the job that will require you to communicate effectively with your teams, and you will need to understand from experience how to communicate to meet the objective of each situation. Constantly work on your communication skills; they can always improve and are a key to your leadership future.

Key Takeaways Chapter Three

- Honestly assess your communication skills and style going into your new leadership role. If training is required, tackle that challenge ASAP in your new role and become the communicator your team and company need you to be.
- Consistent and frequent communication with your teams is a must! You can never communicate too often with your team, but you can communicate too infrequently. Be that leader who lets the team know it is important to keep associates informed about everything that will affect them at work. Whether it is a five-minute meeting on the production floor or an hour-long large group meeting in a conference room, each meeting is important and has value as, in some way, it will affect your associates.
- Adaptability in your communication ability is *critical* to sending the right message in different situations. At times you will be able to speak with your teams in a friendly, conversational manner that is both pleasant and easy to give and receive. Other situations will require a straightforward communication style to convey the serious nature of the information you give, and the expectations required from the communication. *Become the leader who quickly knows what communication style is required and deliver the goods!*

Time to talk about *money!*

4

Follow the Money!

As a new manufacturing leader, one of the most important skills you will need to learn early in your career is the financials—the cost of running your department and leading your teams. Unfortunately, in my experience, it was also one of the key factors of my overall responsibilities in which I was initially given the least amount of information by those superiors who selected me for my new role as a production leader. The initial priorities were knowing my manufacturing process, my team and associates, and production efficiency. Equally important, however, is understanding the costs associated with your operation.

Now I was expected to learn the labor rates of the associates that worked for me for payroll purposes. I was expected to know the basic line efficiencies our teams were expected to produce. Initially, given the complex responsibilities I had assumed, this was enough to start. However, it wasn't until I received a copy of our quarterly budget, outlining the overall department financial performance, that I knew the full scope of what I was responsible for.

I was shocked to review the less-than-stellar financial performance of my teams and our performance versus the budgeted standards that had been established for our department. I knew that our department's overall performance needed to improve in efficiency and quality, but not knowing how the cost structure of our department was

established, I was at a loss to explain those areas where our performance was lacking or how to improve it.

After suffering through a few embarrassing departmental budgeting meetings about six months into my new role, I went to the accounting department. I asked them to provide me with a list of all the expenses of running my department, both the *operating costs* (i.e., raw materials, labor costs, and equipment costs) and *overhead costs* (i.e., building and utility costs). Our departmental costs in our financial statements were broken down into these basic categories, and I needed to know how they were established by accounting so that I could begin to attack those areas that required improvement.

Gathering Information on all Raw Materials Cost

In my case of a beverage bottling department, I needed to know the *direct operating costs* incurred in producing a case of wine. That included the raw materials (e.g., wine, bottles, closures, labels, and finished goods cases), the total costs of operating the production equipment, and the labor costs utilized to produce the product. Between the accounting and purchasing departments, I gathered the information I needed to calculate the cost of producing our products, which often varied according to the production schedules and their packaging requirements. Initially, I put together a manual list of all products' operating costs per hour to review our actual costs versus budgeted requirements as needed. (Yes, it was that long ago, before Excel and spreadsheets). Department *overhead expenses* (e.g., building costs, utilities, insurance, etc.) were largely fixed, and our daily performance had little impact on them.

Gathering Information on Budgeted Standards for Production Line Performance

The next step in understanding the costs of manufacturing our products was to understand how *production or line efficiencies* were calculated and established as our standard, budgeted cost. Production machine overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) standards were principally utilized as the operating standards for the line; these standards were generated by the equipment manufacturers when the equipment was originally purchased. Over time and wear and tear on equipment, OEE standards need to be adjusted to accurately reflect their capacity as they age. But the change, in my experience, seldom reflects reality.

Built into the budgeted operating efficiency standards are things like product changes during a shift or unforeseen events that occur and which the department had no control over (e.g., power surges or outages, etc.). These represent unscheduled events and should not be counted against efficiencies. It's critical to thoroughly know the optimal operating speeds of the equipment that drives line performance (fillers and labelers in my beverage experience) and spend most of your time analyzing their overall performance.

Structure Standards and Accountabilities into Line Performance

Once you have established the costs of producing your product, it's time to review how effectively your production lines operate. Hopefully you have detailed production reports for at least a year that you can review to give you an accurate history of line efficiencies as well as a history of those factors which created suboptimal manufacturing

performance. Unfortunately, in many companies, including a few that I worked for in the '80s and early '90s, production reports were little more than simple manual reports that highlighted the product that had been run, the line that it ran on, the date, the number of cases of product produced, and the line supervisor signature. Occasionally, if a significant equipment downtime event occurred, that was also documented. Not nearly what you need to know after every shift! For the record, while companies today that can afford them use automated reporting systems with PLCs, *manual reports can still be effective* if those compiling them do so accurately and document downtime events that occur during a work shift. Line improvements that are needed can only be implemented if there is evidence to verify the need, so accuracy and accountability are the keys.

When establishing or reestablishing your standards for your production lines, review current standards and performance with your manufacturing superiors and make sure they accurately reflect what can be achieved, given the equipment and team you have. Review equipment age, optimal speeds, and any barriers to performance built into the process. Also get buy-in from your superiors that you will review these new standards with your supervisors, if you have them, and your equipment operators responsible for the equipment's performance. Including the associates responsible for operating the equipment as part of implementing new or revised standards, gives them a voice in the change and may just give you excellent ideas on how to implement the new standards by explaining them to your teams. Be able to show your associates the cost of doing things the old way and the cost savings gained with new and efficient processes.

Understand your company's method of calculating manufacturing efficiencies as different companies use similar but different formulas. At the beverage companies I worked for in the '80s and '90s, basic production line efficiencies typically ranged from 65 to 80 percent. Sixty-five percent was considered the minimally acceptable efficiency. Eighty percent represented the budgeted target efficiency and the point at which company profit targets would be achieved. Productions departments that ran consistently in the 65–70 percent line efficiency range were losing money. Those in the 75–85 percent range were making money and were considered efficient. Much of the profitability of the companies depended upon the cost of producing the product versus the finished good sales price in the market. *Profit margin!* A good example of the difference that efficiencies make is the costs of manufacturing a case of Coca-Cola versus the costs of manufacturing a case of wine. Now the wine costs more to produce, but the price it is sold for will be five to ten times higher than Coke (\$150 versus \$20). What that means regarding efficiencies is that high profit margin product organizations like wineries can absorb a bit more inefficiency in their production processes than a soft drink beverage producer can.

As the leader of your production teams, learn about these costs associated with producing your products and make every effort to share them with your team members in meetings. Show the calculations determining the budgeted case standards per shift (80–90 percent) and what occurs when your lines run at 65 or 70 percent. The bottom line is that you are losing money and making it easier for your competition to take some of your business in the market.

A basic calculation might be as follows:

Your filling machine drives the line standard and is rated at 70 bottles per minute (bpm). Each hour you should be producing 350 cases.

$$70 \text{ bpm} \times 60 \text{ minutes} = 4,200 \text{ bottles per hour}$$

$$4,200 \text{ bottles per hour} \div 12 \text{ bottles per case} = 350 \text{ cases per hour}$$

$$350 \text{ cases per hour} \times 8 \text{ hours per shift} = 2,800 \text{ cases per shift}$$

If 100% efficiency = 2,800 cases,

$$80\% \text{ efficiency} = 2,800 \text{ cases} \times 0.80 = 2,240 \text{ cases}$$

$$65\% \text{ efficiency} = 2,800 \text{ cases} \times 0.65 = 1,820 \text{ cases}$$

The difference of 420 cases multiplied by the consumer cost of a finished case in the market shows how much potential revenue is lost when operating at poor efficiencies.

Over extended periods of time, poor efficiencies will cost your department and company hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars each year, depending upon the volume of product your organization produces annually.

Make sure that your team understands the reasons for the budgeted standard of 80 versus 100 percent. Things like product changes, machine part changes, power outages, etc., are expected and therefore built into the standards to reflect what the line should realistically be able to operate at consistently. This is considered a profitable operation.

Understand Your Operating Budget

As a new leader in a new or current company, you may not need initially to be concerned about operating budgets and how they work. Learning your operation and team members and understanding the basic prior-

ities of making progress in key areas like productivity and quality will require most of your time. However, as you gain knowledge and competence as the leader of a department and team, your knowledge and management of your operating budget and finances as it relates to the company's budget and financial statements will take on added significance. You will be expected to both know and effectively manage both.

While it is not this book's priority to go beyond your first few foundational years in learning your new leadership role, knowing and mastering the financial constructs of budgeting and costs will always be important to you, even early in your skill-building years as a leader. Let's review a few reasons with actual examples that happened to me in my career, and you can judge for yourself on the significance.

Before I go into the examples, keep in mind that different companies have different philosophies and methodologies for establishing budgets.

Some companies establish budgets exclusively with their finance/accounting and sales/marketing departments, and operations managers have little input into the budgeted requirements they receive and are required to perform to. Projected sales drive this process, and the financial gurus plug in their formulas for income and expense projections, and voila! a capital budget is produced. There is no discussion with operations leaders about whether the budget reflects what can be achieved. It meets the projected profit objectives of the company; therefore, it is law. *Beware of this process* and understand that it is imperative to understand your costs in this type of budgeting process.

As a production manager in the wine industry about thirty-five years ago, I had an experience that brought home how important my knowledge of costs of running my department was. I received a copy of the quarterly financial statement and came across what I just knew

was an accounting mistake on the statement. The statement showed a small negative variance in a key expense area of my department over a three-month period. I knew from my own records that the report was inaccurate because I kept meticulous data on this area, and our manufacturing performance during this period had been outstanding. Not only did we not have a *negative* variance, but the report should have shown a positive variance of \$15,000–\$20,000 during this period’s budget—that’s how well we had operated.

Armed with my manually tabulated data, I went to accounting and questioned how they came up with the numbers in this cost center for the period. I proved almost to the dollar what we had spent and wanted to know how a mistake this large occurred. To my surprise, the accounting folks did not dispute my records; they agreed with me. However, their next response was a real eye-opener and only strengthened my resolve to always know the costs associated with managing our department’s finances. The response was that mistakes can be made when financial statements are put together or transposed numbers create errors. They thanked me for my understanding of the process and my diligence in bringing the cost issue to their attention.

A second example occurred in the soft drink bottling industry around 1999–2000 and was part of a performance appraisal a management superior gave me. Now I had an excellent relationship with this leader and respected his abilities, but on this occasion, I differed from his opinion on my knowledge of labor expenses and how they had occurred during the period that my evaluation covered. The comments were to be a part of my work history with the company and stated that I needed more knowledge in understanding the cost of overtime wages to the company. Those words are not precisely the verbiage that was used, but that was the substance of what would be on my evaluation.

I spent the next fifteen minutes with my manager explaining that my shift had originally been staffed to operate three production lines during our twelve-hour, 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shifts. During many of the shifts throughout the period in question, our production teams were required to operate four, and sometimes five, production lines on our shifts. These extra production lines were needed because of increased sales requirements and sometimes because of inefficient shifts preceding ours. Either way, we were given marching orders to add lines to our shift that we did not have associates to run. We could only accommodate the extra line shifts by calling in associates for overtime for the key positions, supplemented by temporary employees in the manual jobs. In those situations, which were frequent, we also had to take skilled employees from existing key line teams so that we had enough skilled employees to operate all the lines safely and produce quality products. This requirement affected the productivity of our priority lines but was the only way we could achieve the production requirements of all lines required. The bottom line? Triple whammy—fewer cases produced, excessive costs, and less employee satisfaction.

Now, this example is not to knock the soft drink industry, the plant that I worked in, or the company. It was an excellent company with good leadership; it was simply the nature of the soft drink industry's high-speed, high-volume, frequently changing environment.

To his credit, after our discussion and hearing me out, my manager agreed that I understood the effects of using overtime labor to produce our products, and he changed my performance appraisal to reflect his revised views. Our discussion also strengthened our relationship as manufacturing colleagues. It's called communication and sometimes requires disagreement to achieve the best results. The seven years I spent as a production and operations leader

for that soft drink bottling company taught me volumes about the knowledge, persistence, and patience required to be a truly effective leader. Leading a team of associates on a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift five and sometimes six days a week and asking for their support and best efforts to make a process work, teaches a leader the importance and value that each member of your team brings to your operation. It makes you a better leader for your associates and your organization.

Key Takeaways Chapter Four

- Gather information on and know all the costs of producing a case of finished product on your production lines. Keep a file on all products you produce; you will be referring to it frequently, and you should know the costs. You can't manage what you don't know.
- Gather historical and current information on production standards and optimal operating speeds of key equipment. It's critical to know what the barriers to performance were in the past. As equipment and processes age, improvements will be required, and you want a thorough knowledge of what was and will be needed to meet the company's current manufacturing goals and objectives.
- Make sure to review your department's production and cost standards with your superiors, so they are actually achievable. The complexities of operating an efficient and profitable production line are many. At times, company departments that generate budgets and standards can miss key items in the manufacturing process that will significantly impact a line's ability to operate at or near standards. You do NOT want to find that out after your department absorbed excessive costs because of a technical issue that the budgeting gurus failed to consider. It happens, but it is your job to make sure that it doesn't happen to you!
- Communicate department production standards and associated costs with all your associates. Make sure they understand the basic cost structure of manufacturing your products and the importance of standards and consistent efficiencies.

Answer all questions. The *why* is very important to keep your team informed and their opinions valued.

- Understand how your capital budgets are structured and your role in the process. As your career moves forward and your responsibilities increase, the financial constructs of budgeting and your knowledge of them will take on added importance and become critical to the growth of your department and the company.

OK, let's talk just a bit about planning!

5

Planning and Scheduling for New Leaders

The planning function in manufacturing cannot be overstated in its importance in producing consistently strong manufacturing performance. As a new leader progresses in their role, the planning function will take on added significance. It will eventually involve establishing business plans for your department that support the company's annual financial objectives and are your blueprint for how you intend to achieve those goals. For our purposes in this book, however, we are focused on those first few years of your leadership development. Those years will form your basic foundational knowledge, and we will stick to the level of planning that will typically be required in learning how to make your operation run like a well-oiled machine. Pardon the pun.

Let's look at those areas of manufacturing planning you will initially use daily and weekly to manage your operation. These areas will go a long way to ensuring consistently excellent results if performed diligently and with a strong sense of purpose. As we list the planning you will be doing to run your world-class operation, *always* remember that regardless of the type of planning format or software system you use to produce your plan, get out from behind that computer and desk. Go out on that production floor and collaborate and communicate with your associates to *make certain* that everyone is

on the same page. You may want to take a minute to say “Thanks, folks,” for what you anticipate will be a most productive shift.

If there is one axiom in manufacturing operations that all production or manufacturing leaders need to learn early and live by, it is *always expect the unexpected!* With that truth in mind, keeping your team informed on daily and longer-term operating plans keeps them *plugged in* and engaged, which is precisely what you want!

Production Scheduling

This will include both the weekly schedule that lays out the production schedule for an entire workweek for all associates to review, and the daily schedule, which will likely be posted on a bulletin board or displayed as an electronic display in a common work area. While the weekly schedule is the road map that gives associates a view of the work plan for the week, the daily plan is the one that *each day must be focused on* as it represents what is happening *now!*

When I led manufacturing teams in the '80s, '90s, and early 2000s, I tried religiously to have my daily production and staffing plan posted several hours prior to the end of each work shift. It was important to let my team members know as far in advance as possible where they would be working each day. Simple common courtesy! On most days on our production lines, associates worked the same job, and there was little or no change. However, on scheduled days when product changes took place, associates sometimes worked in different, more challenging positions. It was important to communicate that change ahead of time and discuss the change with the team member affected if necessary. Issues like employee absences or short-term vacations were often a part of the challenges that affected the daily schedule and required constant knowledge of and communication with team members

to effectively cover operations. Such is the life of a production leader and those good souls who work with them to make them successful.

Resource Scheduling

In this case I am referring to the associates working in various positions on a production line. I detest referring to human beings as labor—always have. I used to be “labor” in my younger years as a line worker and wasn’t crazy about the term then—nothing has changed! People resource scheduling can also be required weekly and daily as production requirements can change daily, requiring the movement of associates to different jobs and, at times, different departments.

As discussed in chapter two, knowing your people and their talents is where resource scheduling begins. People with the ability, desire, and “want to” should be the team members operating the equipment that drives the success of your lines. Operating complex manufacturing equipment is not a job that anyone can do safely or effectively; it’s a learned skill, and the most mechanically talented and motivated of your associates should typically be staffed in these positions. On a beverage bottling line, those positions were filling machines, followed closely in importance by the labeling machines. These pieces of equipment were complex mechanically and it took many months and, in some cases, a year or more to gain competency. For the past twenty years or more, some beverage bottling companies have purchased pre-labeled bottles for their higher speed lines, looking to cut the costs of labeling their largest selling products that make up longer production runs. Gaining efficiency is always the objective.

Staffing the remaining positions on your production line is a matter of knowing which associates have the manual skills and persistence to apply themselves consistently to the task at hand. It may

seem like a no-brainer to staff positions that don't require great skill with any associate, but that would be a mistake. Every employee on a production line has value, and everyone will perform highly repetitive tasks for eight or ten hours or more. Do you think that's easy? Give it a try sometime; you will gain a whole new level of respect for your associates handling the manual labor.

Now some leaders—no, managers—are of the mindset that it should not matter which people you staff in what position on a production line. Whether they like or get along with the person working next to them should not matter; they are paid to do a job. Simply plug them into a job, and they will produce their best work. These managers *actually believe that*. That has not been my experience in my twenty-two years of staffing production lines in high-speed beverage lines, ceramic manufacturing facilities, and union and nonunion facilities.

To the extent that a leader can do it (and this is not always the case), try to schedule people working close to each other with people of a like mind, value set, or personality. Some people are amiable and can work well with anyone; others are not, and it's just common sense that people who enjoy working together will work hard to produce excellent results. They truly appreciate working with someone they enjoy working with for eight, ten, or twelve hours, and they appreciate the leader who understands that important piece of human nature. For any leader who doubts the wisdom of staffing people who enjoy working together, try it yourself. Schedule yourself on a manual job on a production line for a few hours. Stand or sit there doing the same repetitive task constantly and *concentrate* on doing it effectively, with no mistakes.

Now when you do this, make sure your working partner is someone who pays no attention to you, makes no effort to assist you when

you need it, and could not care less that you are there. You WILL gain an appreciation for the wisdom of staffing your lines with teammates who enjoy working together. During a long and difficult work shift, it is one of the best tools you have to build satisfaction into an associate's work.

Another tool you may have, depending upon your operation, is rotating your associates into similar jobs they have the skills and training for but with different people. It may not be for everyone, but many associates welcome the chance to try something new in a slightly different environment. I used this tool with associates who enjoyed new opportunities for learning, and in some cases, it motivated them to learn more challenging positions in the department. It turned out to be a win for the associate and increased the talent level for my department. Creativity in scheduling can be a good thing.

Raw Materials Scheduling

Now in many of today's manufacturing plants, the raw materials scheduling function is performed by a purchasing department or demand planners whose job is to ensure that your manufacturing operation has all the *direct materials* you need to produce your products.

Again, using the example of a beverage bottling line, direct materials would be those used to make and package the product, such as bottles, labels, closures, finished goods cases, etc. The purchasing department purchases and schedules raw materials for manufacturing lines from current and long-term sales projections. Make *absolutely certain* that you become a very close colleague with the person in your plant who performs this function for you.

Back in the wine business of the 1980s, just before the inception of demand planning, I was responsible for ordering the daily and

weekly quantities of finished bottles required to produce our products for each shift and the week. Doing so gave me a deep appreciation for the criticality and attention to detail required in the function. One mistake on an order could shut a line down for hours at a time, costing thousands of dollars. It happened, and I did it! In many plants in the '80s and into the '90s, resourceful production managers carried a safety stock of key raw materials in their warehouses for just such human errors. It gave them a buffer and an option to keep their operations running until the materials needed finally arrived. It also came with a cost. You were now carrying raw materials inventory and tying up money to cover potential human error.

With the advent of Toyota's brainchild, the just-in-time raw materials procurement system, of the late '70s and early '80s, materials planners became critical players in the manufacturing processes of plants worldwide. The daily coordination and communication with planners became the critical partnership with the production departments that it is today.

Consider that work stoppages due to a lack of raw materials can occur for many reasons. Changing product forecasts, weather conditions, freight or vendor issues, etc., can occur at a moment's notice and cause serious and costly problems for your operation, plant, or company.

Take the time to understand your facility's purchasing and raw materials planning functions and develop a strong relationship with the person who schedules the raw materials needed for your production. Communicate daily with these folks—not just “as needed” each day, but *anytime* you have a question about any raw materials and when they are scheduled. Be the proactive leader you are expected to be!

Product Changes and Equipment Maintenance Planning

During your workday and week, you will be required to perform product changeovers on your manufacturing lines. Most will be scheduled changes; some may be situations that were not planned but are required because of changing product requirements. For scheduled product changes, get into the habit of planning for these events well before they occur and make the most of the time that your lines will be down. In most cases machine handling parts will need to be changed out and then properly adjusted for the next product. Product changeovers can take thirty minutes or several hours, depending upon the complexity of the equipment in your operation.

These downtime events are perfect opportunities for a smart leader to accomplish other department tasks that need to be done that typically do not occur when your production lines are running. Maintaining equipment, reworking or discarding defective product, cleaning conveyors and work areas, assisting equipment operators with storing equipment, and handling parts just removed from the line are just a few productive uses of equipment changeover downtime and often pay dividends in lines running better once the changeover is completed and the line is up and running again. Now don't tell your boss that I mentioned this, but you may just want to throw in an extra fifteen or twenty-minute break for your line employees into the time the line is down.

When I was a new leader in the 1980s, I began incorporating the extra break into our workday on those occasions when our line was down, and our downtime work was caught up. I took a little heat from superiors for doing this on occasion, but I always considered it an investment in employee morale. Again, simply considering the human

nature aspect of a production line. Hard-working people performing physically repetitive tasks for hours on end, sometimes very physical in nature, appreciate the fact that their leader is thinking of their welfare. I always considered those leaders short-sighted for taking issue with the extra break concept. I always believed that the team associates who worked with me appreciated small acts of consideration for their work and that fact was typically proven to be true by the period production performances they delivered for the company. Strong manufacturing performance is not a sprint where a fifteen-minute break should be an issue, though some manufacturing leaders may argue that point. It's the *sustained* excellent performance over a long period of time that produces the company's financial objectives and gives it a competitive market edge that really matters. Now let's assume the maintenance or engineering department in your organization has established a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) program in your facility to manage the overall process of maintaining all manufacturing equipment. They may have decided to utilize one of several maintenance philosophies that will work best for the complexities of your facility, also considering the costs of their maintenance program. Whether your plant uses a preventative maintenance program, predictive maintenance, total productive maintenance, or autonomous maintenance, they all have specific benefits. Their goal is to keep your manufacturing operation running safely and effectively. The costs of poor maintenance in a plant include budgeting issues, excessive production delay and costs, unsafe equipment, shorter life cycles of equipment, and dissatisfaction and employee frustration, to name a few.

As the new leader, understanding how critical effective maintenance performance will be to the sustained success of your team's

manufacturing performance, I have a few thoughts that will prove highly useful to you. As with most ideas in this book, I have used these ideas successfully in my career—on occasion, not as quickly as I should have.

Meet with the head of your engineering or maintenance department and discuss the maintenance program and philosophy they use for the plant and your operation. You might be surprised how many new manufacturing leaders fail to do this early in their new roles. Ask the department head which engineers or mechanics will be assigned to perform the maintenance for your operation and ask about the strengths these technicians have that will prove valuable to your equipment's performance. This may seem a bit pushy to some, but don't presume anything. It's your job to know who can do what and their skill levels and knowledge of your equipment. Ask whether the technical associates report to you directly or on a dotted line. There will be times when your decision may differ from that of the maintenance head, and you may have a difficult call to make.

Establish a strong relationship with your engineering and maintenance professionals; they are your lifeline to excellent production line performance. Solicit their opinions on all things engineering or mechanical in your operation before you make decisions that they will be responsible for executing. If they are a part of the decisions that will impact your operation, they will make it work!

From a short-term planning perspective, always invite your engineers and mechanics to participate in planning sessions with you to optimize scheduled downtime during a production shift or week when important but minor maintenance can be performed that will pay longer-term dividends to equipment performance. They have schedules to adhere to from the maintenance department, and close

collaboration with the production leader will be required to accomplish all their maintenance requirements and objectives.

Based on the complexity of your operation and production requirements, you will have one or possibly a few planned maintenance overhauls or rebuild shutdowns each year. These are planned line shutdowns to replace major components in your key equipment and can take days to a week or more to complete. Many plants schedule these shutdowns during the slowest production cycles at the end of the year, over holiday periods, or when the run hours of your equipment have surpassed the hours when optimal performance will occur because of worn-out components.

Meet with your superiors to know when these events are scheduled and be a key part of the plan. For the equipment overhauls in your department, obtain the best technical people in your plant to perform the work. Changing the major mechanical components of your key equipment requires exacting adherence to equipment specifications, and only the most adept engineers or mechanics should be doing it. Second, they will likely be working with highly skilled technical representatives of the equipment manufacturer, and it's an excellent opportunity to pick the brains of these representatives to gain further knowledge of the equipment. Be assertive with your superiors regarding which engineering or maintenance talent you get for these tasks. How well your lines run once the rebuilds have been completed will depend on the quality of their work. Leadership requires the strength to let those you report to know that YOU are responsible for the work that gets done. The expectation is an outstanding rebuild of your equipment completed on schedule with excellent results. They will appreciate your application to your work!

For our purposes in this book, I will not discuss capacity or inventory planning. While they are critical functions, in today's manufacturing world they are either partially or wholly performed by a specialized department, so the manufacturing or production leader has limited responsibility for their execution. It is certainly important to gain information on their functions early in your career. But in most circumstances, they will not be the foundational planning skills that will drive your leadership success or your team's performance during the critical first few years of your learning experience.

Key Takeaways Chapter Five

- **Production schedules.** Construct well-thought-out production or manufacturing schedules that support optimal performance of your lines with your superiors. Where possible, run products in succession that require minor equipment changeovers and disruptions that meet that period's production of finished goods to orders. Post the weekly and daily schedules as soon as possible to communicate to your team members and be ready to thoroughly answer any questions regarding the *whys* and *how* to your people. *Communicate, communicate, communicate!*
- **Team member staffing schedules.** Post them daily, post them as early in the day as possible, and be ready to answer any questions regarding the reasoning behind the schedule. Changes in staffing schedules or from the norm get people wondering why, and it's simply smart leadership to get out in front of a situation that could result in faulty assumptions or, worse yet, gossip. You also want to ensure that associates involved with a change understand the reason for the change and embrace their assignment as an opportunity and with enthusiasm. The respect that a good leader shows to their associates in all aspects of the job is typically reciprocal and builds a strong work culture based on mutual trust!
- **Raw Materials Scheduling.** Meet with your raw materials and purchasing professionals early in your new role. Different-sized organizations may have different titles for this group but get to know these professionals very well and coordinate with them very closely *every day!* They are responsible for supplying the materials your production operation needs to

run smoothly and on schedule. When unexpected changes occur, these folks will work their magic with your raw materials vendors to deal with difficult changes as effectively as possible.

- **Product change planning.** When you are putting the daily and weekly production schedules together, to the extent possible, optimize product runs to eliminate any unnecessary product changeovers. Based on their ingredients and packages, there will be products that will run almost seamlessly with other products, requiring minimal changeover and line downtime. At times order requirements will make this impossible. Product changeovers will occur more often than is efficient, but that's the nature of the business at times. When this occurs, *communicate* the changeover needs to your team in your pre-shift meetings and prepare for the changes to minimize the impact on line performance. Don't be afraid to challenge your superiors or schedulers if you see an opportunity to eliminate a product change they may have missed. Do so respectfully and with data that supports your position, if needed. *You are the leader responsible for making the schedule work and will be held accountable for its results.*
- **Maintenance planning.** Whether planning minor maintenance during product changeovers, like lubricating equipment or conveyors or planning for large equipment projects like equipment rebuilds during a scheduled shutdown period, *always* communicate with your engineers and maintenance technicians responsible for performing the work. On minor repairs or projects, it may be a five-minute meeting on the production floor while you are reviewing the daily production

schedule. Make your technical team a part of the planning process from the beginning for the major projects requiring several shifts or more, like expensive component parts. Ask for their advice in planning the project and make sure to secure the most skilled engineers or maintenance technicians available to perform the exacting work required to replace components. I've been on the wrong end of major component projects gone awry and trust me on this—it is not an enviable situation to explain to superiors!

Time to discuss quality assurance!

6

Quality Assurance

Understanding the Quality Assurance Function

It's your first day on the job in your new leadership role, and you are on the production floor about to begin your first day's production with your new team. You notice a person speaking with your filler operator, and there appears to be a discussion regarding the product, and nothing is moving! You are about to meet someone who will keep your products safe, with the right specifications of all ingredients and packaged correctly. You have just met your quality assurance (QA) professional.

The QA function in any plant is responsible for ensuring that all products produced are produced to the exact specifications of the product requirements before being shipped to customers. This function becomes even more critical in the food and beverage industries because you deal with consumables. The QA function in beverage facilities has multifaceted responsibilities—the most important being that the product is safe to consume, and that the chemical makeup of the products are what they are supposed to be.

For example, in a QA analysis for wine, the analysis will check the acetic acid, L-malic acid, sugars, pH, total acidity, free SO₂, total SO₂, and alcohol by volume. If you are analyzing champagne or sparkling wine, that analysis would include the CO₂ content as well. CO₂ gives sparkling wine or champagne its effervescence, obviously a critical

component for champagne consumers. For the record, the CO₂ levels in a 750 mL bottle of champagne should be in the 4.6 to 6.0 volume range. Just in case my readers of this book are curious.

A pre-bottling QA analysis of a carbonated soft drink would include testing for water quality, sugars, CO₂, acids, flavorings, color, chemical preservatives, antioxidants, and foaming agents. Again, for the record, a 12 oz. bottle of Coke contains about 6 grams of CO₂ gas. For those QA managers out there who may read this, this basic description is only to give readers an idea of pre-bottling testing and may not include all ingredients tested.

Typically, product testing is done just prior to the start of production, either in a nearby QA lab or in a portable QA analysis area close to the production line to expedite getting the needed information to the machine operator who starts the process so that production can begin once the product is cleared to run.

I would advise all production or manufacturing leaders to work closely with the QA technicians or supervisors who service your lines, particularly when you are the new leader and learning new processes. Gain a strong understanding of the types of testing and analysis performed on the products you manufacture. Understand the basic equipment and instrumentation used for analysis and learn the most critical issues of product quality you will encounter. Form a partnership and be proactive with your QA technicians and supervisors to work for solutions to reduce all product quality issues that affect product safety and can cause significant manufacturing line downtime. The QA department and its staff are your saviors, not your antagonists! At times the frustration of getting a product into specification can be overwhelming, and it may take extended time to find the problem and solve it so you can operate your lines. I have had this feeling many times in

my career in both the production of champagne and soft drinks—CO₂ was the culprit keeping me up at night. Develop the *maturity* and *patience* to understand that when situations occur that stop production, the goal is to find the problem, correct it, and begin producing a safe and quality product. Once again, we are not in a sprint here; we're in a marathon. In the end, *excellent manufacturing and QA practices and procedures sustained over the long term will be the winning hand!*

In addition to the product that goes into the bottle, box, or other containers used in manufacturing, the QA team in your plant is responsible for ensuring that all packaging materials used for your product meet the established specifications for your product. Using a sparkling wine line as an example, QA teams are responsible for checking the quality of bottles, the pressure or torque of a screw cap closure, the depth of a cork, the wire hood or muselet that maintains the cork's positioning in a pressurized container, the correct and required script on a label and the positioning of that label on a bottle, the capsule (whether plastic or foil), the date codes on both labels and finished product cases for quality tracking and traceability purposes, and on and on.

For alcoholic beverage products, the type of alcohol, alcohol content, net contents and color material used, the Surgeon General's warning regarding alcohol consumption and pregnancy, driving or operating equipment, and the Proposition 65 or 2018 Safe Harbor warning requirements regarding cancer risks, birth defects, etc. are particularly critical pieces of federally required script that need to be accurate on labels to protect the consumer.

For anyone questioning why all these requirements are necessary for QA departments to control, just think back to the times you experienced an issue with a product you paid your hard-earned money for

and received a defective product. It may be the sour bottle of orange juice you bought that was out of date, the bottle of creamer that had a closure so tight you could not remove it, or the expensive bottle of wine or champagne that had a screw cap so tight or a cork driven so deeply in the bottle that you could not remove it. Exasperating experiences all! American consumers have been on the wrong end of defective products thousands of times. It happens. Defective products can and do get out to consumers. But the best companies have outstanding QA departments that establish and maintain stringent product quality standards that meet or exceed state and federal product quality requirements. They do not sacrifice product quality for manufacturing numbers! They work diligently with their manufacturing counterparts to produce the best of both worlds: excellence in manufacturing and world-class product quality and safety. Both objectives must be achieved. It is a new manufacturing leader's responsibility to lead the QA initiative in their operation and to educate and instill in all their associates the ongoing criticality of product safety and quality. In my career in the beverage and glass industries, I was blessed to work with excellent QA professionals who taught me and worked closely with me to consistently produce excellent results. The excellent companies I was fortunate to work for made product quality a key pillar of their successes and enjoy those reputations today.

Key Takeaways Chapter Six

- Establish a strong relationship with the QA team in your facility and gain thorough knowledge and understanding of the quality testing and analysis processes of the products you manufacture.
- Communicate with your team regularly and stress the importance of product quality and safety on every work shift. They are responsible for being “the eyes on the line” and working closely with your QA team to meet and exceed your plant’s QA goals. As the team leader, *you* create the quality culture and set the standards for what is expected. *NEVER compromise producing a safe and quality product to get a few more cases out the door.* That last sentence could be an excellent quality sign to post on your bulletin board—right next to the production schedule.

Time to talk about leadership!

7

Leadership

To lead or not to lead, that is the question!

The subject of leadership has been discussed and written about for centuries as it relates to leading manufacturing organizations, from the industrial revolution in the mid-1800s to the present. It is a subject of infinite importance as it continues to evolve as a key to the successful performance of corporations worldwide.

Throughout my own experience as a leader from the early 1980s to the present, I have read many influential writers on leadership beginning with Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in 1981 and including Stephen Covey's recent book *Trust & Inspire*. I have always worked at improving my leadership skills by reading such authors as Peter Drucker, John Maxwell, Ken Blanchard, and Stephen Covey. Each of these leadership experts and others has contributed to my understanding of leadership's importance and what makes a good leader. Throughout your leadership career, it will be important to your continued growth as a leader to expose yourself to new ideas about improving your leadership skills.

For the purposes of this book and your initial growth as a new leader, I will try to define what leadership might look like in your first manufacturing leadership role. In the very first paragraph of chapter one, we discussed briefly why people decide to become leaders. It is a critical question to answer before you begin to take that journey.

Understand that once you commit to leading people, *your working life and the challenges it presents will change dramatically*. You are no longer a single performer; you are now getting a volume of work done through others.

Take a minute and reread the first page of chapter one: “In the Beginning.” Reread it several times and maybe make a poster of the most important points for your office wall to refer to daily. Understand what it means to be a leader and the commitment and courage it will take to be successful in your new role.

Two of the best descriptions of leadership, as I would define it for manufacturing leaders, come from two very different sources and generations. In *The Ultimate Guide*, Tony Robbins writes, “Leadership is the ability to influence, inspire and help others become their best selves, building their skills and achieving goals along the way.” The second description comes from the introduction of Stephen M.R. Covey’s new book *Trust & Inspire*, and it’s a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt: “A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves.”

Stop and think about these two brief, but very powerful statements about leadership and the objectives of an effective leader. First, any effective leader should inspire, influence, and help their team members to become their best selves and build their skills and achieve their goals. Second to receiving their paycheck, these are the reasons people enjoy coming to work. Second, a great leader’s goal for their associates should be to build their competencies and, thereby, their confidence. Autonomous work teams with high levels of competence and work satisfaction typically grow from the leadership of progressive, selfless leaders who put the welfare and growth of their associates ahead of their own. As a benefit of that process, an effective

leader also builds their knowledge and competence as a leader. As an important prerequisite to taking on your first leadership role, consider taking a personal inventory of your character, abilities, and personality and compare them to those that are required of an effective leader. I have listed ten character traits and skills that will be most important for a new leader to have in the beginning of the leadership journey. Leadership experts may differ slightly from those I have listed, but again, we are talking about your first year or two in your new role and what is most important initially to grow your leadership skills.

1. **Confidence:** The feeling of self-assurance arising from one's own abilities or qualities. An absolute must-have, even for a new leader. You should believe that you have at least the basic skills to grow into the role of an effective leader. Early in your role as a new leader, you will be tested, and you cannot be afraid to act on what you believe is the best course of action. Mistakes will happen; that's how we learn. But the courage to make a decision will leave an impression on the people you will be leading.
2. **Honesty:** The quality or fact of being honest, upright, and fair. Truthfulness, sincerity, or frankness. Freedom from deceit or fraud. Early in your new role as a leader, your associates' perception of your honesty and integrity will begin to form their opinion of you as a leader they can trust. *Nothing you can gain as a leader is more important than the mutual trust earned and built between you and your team associates.*
3. **Integrity:** The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. You live in accordance with your deepest

values, are honest with everyone, and always *try* to keep your word.

4. **Communication skills:** A leader is someone who inspires team associates and positive change when needed by their ability to communicate. They empower those who work with them to work toward common objectives. A leader's most powerful tool for doing so is the ability to communicate. Effective communication is vital to gain trust. There are many skills required to be an effective communicator, but following are several that I believe are essential for new leaders to develop early in their new role:
 - **Ability to adapt your communication style.** Be who you are but understand that different messages to different groups will require flexibility to influence others.
 - **Active listening.** Know when to talk and know when to listen. Give the person you are speaking with your undivided attention when listening. Take notes to ensure an accurate account of their feelings and opinions.
 - **Transparency.** Speak openly and honestly about your department and company goals, opportunities, and objectives. Acknowledge difficulties and mistakes when they occur but do so positively. Point out how associates can improve; don't place blame. Again, we are building trust in each other here. We don't do that by pointing fingers, but by overcoming obstacles as a team.
 - **Clarity.** When communicating with employees, be specific. The clearer you are, the less confusion there will

- be around priorities. Associates will know what they're working toward and feel more engaged in the process!
- **Empathy.** The better you understand your associates' feelings and values, the stronger the culture of trust you will build in your organization. When employees feel valued, they will fully engage in the process.
 - **Body Language.** Far too often underappreciated. If you want to convey your message, look and act like it when speaking. Make eye contact, show interest, build rapport, and *smile!* Convey interest, warmth, and trust when speaking with your associates. If someone has a question, stop what you are saying and encourage them to ask it to show them that their opinions are valued.
 - **Receiving Feedback.** Communication is a two-way street! Have the courage to ask your associates for feedback; it's a trust builder. When you ask for it, be prepared to act on the feedback you receive if action is required. If you can't act on the feedback you receive, be transparent about it and let your employees know why. Keep associates apprised of progress on suggestions they've made that can be implemented. They will appreciate that their ideas are valued by their organization and their leader—you!

I know we covered important aspects of communication skills in chapter three, but communication skills are such an important tool for new leaders to begin their careers successfully. Emphasizing key elements needed to successfully communicate with their teams is important to evaluating their skills to enter a leadership role.

5. **Humility and Self-Awareness:** Freedom from pride or arrogance. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your accomplishments as a leader, but there is plenty wrong with being arrogant about them. Practice humility as a leader. Say “thank you” to your people, listen actively and attentively to what they say, ask for their opinions when problem-solving, and most importantly, share any credit earned through strong performance with every team member and, when possible, celebrate the achievement.
6. **Accountability:** The obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions in a decision or situation. Accountability in the workplace means that all employees are responsible for their actions, behaviors, performance, and decisions. Establishing accountability is linked to increased commitment to work and employee morale, which usually leads to high performance. *No manufacturing organization can sustain high performance in the long term without establishing trust and accountability as a team.*
7. **Problem-Solving:** Do you possess at least the basic knowledge required in problem-solving? Are you aware of the steps involved in problem-solving and where to find the resources to solve problems as they occur? As soon as you assume your new leadership role, problems on your manufacturing floor will occur daily. Some will be small and easily remedied; others, more complex, requiring a stated action plan to resolve using various resources. Problem-solving is a critical skill for a production or manufacturing leader, so understand the basics before you take on leadership responsibilities.

8. **Dependability:** In manufacturing, dependability is delivering planned goals and objectives. Leaders get things done through their work and that of others. They are responsible for meeting work objectives for their teams and themselves, often overcoming obstacles in the process. Dependability also means completing all work associated with the leader's position. If a work shift is ten hours, expect to be there for eleven. If the work shift is twelve hours, expect to be on the job for thirteen hours. You must be prepared pre-shift and provide information post-shift to oncoming crews; it's simply the nature of the beast. We will discuss quality of work life in the final chapter of this book, but a new leader needs to prepare mentally for a new set of work requirements.
9. **Courage:** This definition comes from Harvard Business School Professor Nancy Koehn from a March 2020 article that describes leadership courage very well: "A courageous leader is an individual who is capable of making themselves better and stronger when the stakes are high, and circumstances turn against that person. Courageous leaders are not cowed or intimidated. They realize that in the midst of turbulence, there lies an extraordinary opportunity to grow and rise." For leaders who learn and exhibit courage in their job performance, personal and professional growth will be your long-term reward!
10. **Empathy:** Empathetic leadership means having the ability to understand the needs of others and being aware of their feelings and thoughts. Learning how to speak, act and think when interacting with your associates is a key skill in

developing trust with your work teams. Decades ago, this was considered a soft skill or a weakness by some managers. *It's not.* It's a strength and builds trust and commitment in your team members! What could possibly be more important than your associates having trust in and commitment to your leadership?

There are certainly many other important personal characteristics for a leader to possess that will impact their professional and career growth. However, the ten we just discussed—confidence, honesty, integrity, communications skills, humility, accountability, problem-solving, dependability, courage, and empathy—represent the core, in my experience, that will be necessary to be successful and to grow as a new leader. As you begin your journey as a new leader, you will be stronger in some of these characteristics and skills than in others. That's expected. Know your strengths, use them, and develop your weaknesses until they become strengths!

Situational Leadership

When you initially assume your new leadership role, it's critical to assess the culture you have just agreed to lead. Do not establish a leadership style because you think you must right out of the gate; that's a mistake. Take some time to understand the makeup of your team and the culture that existed when you arrived on the scene.

The previous leader may have been excellent and managed your department well. You have time to establish your style while manufacturing performance in your department is acceptable or even strong. If the promotion to your role is within your company and department, you have a strong knowledge of the people you will be leading and

their strengths. Again, this is an enviable situation for a new leader and one you can build on. However, if you just inherited a team and department that had a weak leader and was poorly managed, you may have chaos and an undisciplined work team that will require considerable direction—and quickly! *Do not panic.* We will discuss leadership styles that apply well to different environments and people, and that even a new leader can apply quickly and successfully.

Understand one important leadership truth as you begin your leadership journey: No *one* leadership style will apply well to all your team members. They are different people with different abilities, confidence levels, values, and motivation to work. Given that truth, you will need to understand your associates and develop various Situational Leadership skills to bring out the best in all your team members.

To expand on Situational Leadership for the new leader, I cite a 2011 article by Vorne Manufacturing Systems, “Leadership in Manufacturing Operations.” They write: “Effective leadership in manufacturing creates positive change by inspiring and motivating your production team. It creates an environment where colleagues love their work and strive to perform at their highest capability. Developing production leadership skills will help you engage and inspire your team to achieve their very best. *Production leadership is largely a learned skill.* Although some people seem to have a natural ability to inspire others, everyone can develop leadership skills over time. In fact, most of us can become very effective leaders.”

Having led production and manufacturing teams for over twenty years in different industries and work cultures, I strongly agree that production leadership is most definitely a learned skill, but one in which many of us can achieve success, given the desire to do so.

Given that all new manufacturing leaders strive to become effective leaders in their organizations, let's look at how Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard describe Situational Leadership in their 1977 book *Management of Organizational Behavior*. "The theory suggests that the most effective leadership style is affected by the circumstances leaders find themselves in. They found that leaders would have to modify their leadership styles as their associates changed in terms of their ability and willingness to perform the required tasks. A leader's relationship with associates is therefore likely to go through different stages as these abilities and willingness can change over time."

This theory is very similar to what I stated in chapter seven and was my experience in the production management roles I assumed in both the beverage and glass industries. I had four plants, three production processes, and four work teams with vastly different demographics and experience to build an effective work team. *It can be done, and you can do it!*

Because I strongly believe that Situational Leadership is the most effective approach to leading manufacturing facilities, let's take a further look at what leadership styles can be employed with team members who have different levels of ability, experience, willingness, and motivation. The leadership styles again come from Ken Blanchard in his 1977 work. Blanchard stated, "The goal as a leader is to adopt the style that best matches the associates you are leading for current performance and for skills growth." *Current performance and skills growth!*

Again, we are not in a sprint; we are in a marathon. While current performance is always critical, so are the skills and confidence you develop in your associates to meet their future goals and those of their organization.

Situational Leadership Styles

- **Directing:** The employee is new to their role, new to the task, or has performance issues. Demonstrate how the task should be completed and incorporate the responsibility for quality in their work. Aim to build confidence.
- **Coaching:** The employee is becoming competent at the task but could be more efficient or effective. Discuss and set objectives and provide regular feedback. Keep responsibility for a high quality of work as an objective. Good coaching increases motivation.
- **Supporting:** The employee consistently completes the task effectively and is engaged in their work. Provide some guidance but leave more choices to the employee. Help them understand how their choices affect the business.
- **Delegating:** The employee is highly skilled and engaged, consistently achieving outstanding results with limited guidance. Provide considerable freedom to the employee. Delegate stimulating tasks that will help make a real difference to the business.

Directing, Coaching, Supporting, and Delegating are four styles of leading associates based on their skill levels, abilities, motivation, and values. On any manufacturing team, you are going to have associates who need to be directed, who are competent but require coaching to improve, who are consistently excellent and only require your support to grow their skills, and who are highly skilled and engaged and to whom you can delegate to improve business performance.

Your job as a leader will be to evaluate your team, know each associate's skill levels, motivations, and values, and make certain you match your associate's overall talents with the positions on your manufacturing lines as well as with their job interests. Your goal is to maximize your production performance and provide job satisfaction to your work teams. Over time motivated associates will increase their skill levels and likely seek positions of more responsibility. When the opportunity presents itself, reward their efforts with a higher-level position.

In assessing your team associates, refer to chapter two of this book about knowing your people, specifically about having individual meetings with your associates.

In those individual meetings, have candid discussions with team members. Ask them what their long-term goals are within the company so that you understand their current and future motivation for their working careers. Discuss the work it will take to achieve those goals and the responsibilities of more difficult positions. Also discuss the company's future and how and if the positions in your department may change and provide new opportunities. Be honest and do not sugarcoat anything. We are discussing the future of a person who will spend a third or more of their life with you, and it's very important to understand each other thoroughly. Establish this kind of honesty in your relationship with your associates, and you will enjoy years of working with high performing, engaged people who enjoy working with and for you and their organization.

Your ability to successfully work with and develop the skills of your work associates as it relates to manufacturing will be your ticket to future leadership promotional opportunities, should the time come

when you seek new and bigger challenges. As the old saying goes, “The cream always rises to the top.” Talented leaders are the cream in manufacturing organizations and have earned that distinction because of hard work and selfless dedication to those they serve and their organizations.

Key Takeaways Chapter Seven

- Understand the responsibilities of leadership before making the decision to become a leader. It will change your life.
- Do an honest skills and character assessment to determine whether you have the maturity, abilities, and character traits for leadership. You want to go into a leadership role with confidence, not self-doubt.
- Understand the importance of communication skills in leadership. Always work to improve your communication skills in all areas of your role as a leader.
- Understand what Situational Leadership is and understand that your team members will respond best to the leader who understands them, their goals, and their reasons for coming to work every day!
- Work each day to build your skills as a leader who has the interest of the associates and the business at heart, and enjoy the growth of your team, their skills, and your success as their leader!

Final chapter ahead—quality of work life!

8

Quality of Work Life

You are ready to begin working on your life-changing decision to become a leader and are comfortable that you have the skills and desire to lead people and organizations. One final but critically important consideration to think about and discuss with your family is quality of work life (QWL). It will become an important factor in your job satisfaction and maintaining the quality of life you enjoy with your spouse and family.

When you were a single performer for your company, you had a work schedule that you could likely count on aligning with your partner and family to make sure that there was balance in your life between your working time and the more important time you spent with your spouse and children. Certainly, there were those periods when you likely worked overtime when needed, and those periods could stretch out into weeks or months. But you always knew that you had a measure of control in making your work-life balance what it needed to be for a healthy and happy lifestyle, accommodating a satisfying family and working life.

Once you leap into a leadership role, it's almost guaranteed that the dynamics of QWL will be very challenging and, in some cases, nearly impossible to control, depending upon the type of industry you are in, and the demands placed on manufacturing leaders in today's 24/7 world. As a part of your decision to become a leader, know what

the demands on your time are going to be in your new role and discuss those demands with your superiors so that you enter your new responsibilities with your eyes wide open.

If the manufacturing facility you will be working in has a five- or six-day operating schedule with three shifts covering twenty-four hours each day, consider yourself fortunate. If you will be leading one of those production teams each day, you will likely be able to lead your team and manage your processes effectively by working a fifty-hour week, plus or minus a few hours.

Expect to arrive sixty minutes prior to your shift and leave thirty minutes or so following the end of your shift. You will want to know that all is ready for your shift to begin and be ready to adjust to changes or schedule and personnel issues that often occur. At the end of your shift, you will do a hand-off to the oncoming manager to discuss production issues that will facilitate a smooth shift for the team following you. This should be your minimum expectation to lead your team effectively. This equates to roughly a ten-hour day or fifty-hour routine workweek. During busy weeks an extra shift may make it a sixty-hour week. Still a manageable schedule with time each day to spend with the family.

Even if you become the manufacturing manager responsible for all three production teams, covering all manufacturing requirements of the plant, you can still effectively lead manufacturing operations as you have reliable, effective leaders capable of leading their operations and teams when you are not in the plant.

Suppose the manufacturing facility you lead runs a 24/7 operating schedule with twelve-hour shifts seven days a week. This is a manufacturing world that presents new and challenging obstacles to overcome. Many leading manufacturing companies have employed

the 24/7 operating concept for nearly forty years now. Some of the best and most successful companies in the food and beverage industry exclusively use 24/7 schedules to run their plants. These schedules present considerable challenges for employee retention, the expected working life of manufacturing equipment, the effectiveness of equipment maintenance schedules, and numerous raw materials procurement and supply chain issues.

According to a Circadian Shiftwork Practice Survey cited in an August 2012 *EHS Today*, 28 percent of US companies were using a twelve-hour work schedule in 2002. The same study found that by 2017, 55 percent of US companies were using the twelve-hour schedule. As it applies to manufacturing or production operations, there are both pros and cons for businesses and their associates for utilizing twelve-hour work shifts.

In my experiences over seven years in the glass and beverage industries utilizing twelve-hour work shifts, the pros and cons created both positive and negative outcomes.

Pros:

- **Increased productivity** (fewer shift start-ups and decreased downtime associated with shift changeovers)
- **Improved communication** (fewer team changes on production runs)
- **Reduced raw materials loss** (due to continuity of process flow)
- **Improved morale** (more time to attend to family issues without having to take time off work when working three or four twelve-hour shifts per week)
- **Lower turnover** (more specific to a younger workforce)

- **Convenience and savings** (fewer long trips to work each week and substantial savings in fuel costs, not having to travel five days each week)

Cons:

- **Physical fatigue** (demanding twelve-hour work shifts, fatigue issues for associates of all ages, demographics of work teams is a significant factor)
- **Disruption of family routine** (frequently have different work schedules than spouse, difficult to spend much quality time with family on workdays during the three- or four-day twelve-hour schedules, miss out on children's activities)
- **Sleep deprivation** (sacrificing a few hours of sleep to spend time with family on workdays, working a difficult twelve-hour work schedule, creating problems over time with associate performance and health)

These pros and cons are just a few issues I experienced with my work teams utilizing a twelve-hour work shift. Many of the comments came from associates when conducting meetings to discuss the change from an eight-hour to a twelve-hour work schedule, as well as in safety meetings.

Studies have been done for decades supporting and criticizing the use of twelve-hour work schedules. Manufacturing companies continue to utilize twelve-hour schedules in growing numbers and, to their credit, are being creative with the twelve-hour schedule to produce an improved quality of work life for their associates. There are many financial benefits to manufacturing companies utilizing the twelve-hour schedule, which I cited.

In my opinion, maintaining a quality of work life with a spouse and family is a viable option for manufacturing associates who choose to work for companies that employ twelve-hour work schedules. There are considerations, such as the nature of the tasks being performed, workforce demographics, shift arrangements, and the personal preference of associate teams, that will always need to be a part of the equation in a decision to accept or maintain employment with firms who decide to utilize twelve-hour work schedules.

For manufacturing associates and manufacturing leaders who are or will be working in facilities employing the twelve-hour schedule, *here is the rub!* To the extent that companies commit to sticking with three- and four-day, twelve-hour schedules each workweek, there is sufficient time off for associates to physically recover from their demanding schedule and spend quality time with their families. However, anyone who has worked in manufacturing processes for an extended period knows that there will be weeks when things occur that require their plant to work additional production schedules to meet consumer demand. When that occurs, those thirty-six- and forty-eight-hour schedules become forty-eight- and sixty-hour weekly schedules for team associates. For the manufacturing leaders, that equates to fifty-five- or seventy-hour workweeks in a very demanding and often stressful working environment. There are times when these extended schedules can continue for months due to the demands of the business and companies have little choice but to meet consumer demands.

I personally experienced this in the beverage industry in the late 1990s. I was a production manager of an inexperienced production team in a flagship facility that experienced substantial product growth requirements. The plant decided to change from an eight-hour, three-shift operation to a twelve-hour, 24/7 operation to meet the demand.

After considering all the options and benefits of twelve-hour continuous shifts, a twelve-hour, four-team operation was decided to be the best option. I was hired to lead one of the new teams because I had considerable production leadership experience, most of which was in beverage bottling operations.

Of the four production teams in the plant, two worked the day shift from 6:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., and two worked from 6:00 p.m.–6:00 a.m. The shift assignments did not change.

The four teams were scheduled to work the thirty-six- and forty-eight-hour schedules, rotating each week to cover seven days. The two 6:00 p.m.–6:00 a.m. teams had the least experienced associates—many new employees with no prior experience running high-speed beverage lines. What occurred with the two night-shift teams in that factory during the first year or two was predictable. High-speed filling and labeling machines require experienced and skilled associates to meet demanding production schedules. Those machines were the drivers of the production lines. Our productivity was dismal during the five- or six-month process of training new employees to run complicated equipment. Add to that increasing product demand and the plant's commitment to meet that demand, and our thirty-six- and forty-eight-hour schedules quickly changed for many associates into very demanding forty-eight- and sixty-hour schedules. Additional lines had to be added to make up for increased demands and inexperienced teams' inefficiencies in meeting their scheduled requirements.

What that meant for associates on those two teams was non-stop overtime on days they were scheduled to be off. This dynamic continued for an extended period until the production teams became proficient in running their lines and meeting plant production requirements. This meant sixty- and seventy-hour workweeks

for supervisors and managers to coordinate the extra shifts and the needed personnel to run them. To make matters worse, during the first year of this expanded operation, the two 6:00 p.m.–6:00 a.m. teams experienced upward of 45 percent associate turnover.

Many new employees could not cope with the extended work demands of five or six twelve-hour weekly shifts in a difficult and stressful production environment. It takes getting used to!

Using this personal example is not to criticize facilities or companies utilizing twelve-hour, 24/7 manufacturing schedules. If a twelve-hour, 24/7 schedule or a twelve-hour, 24/5 schedule is the most efficient schedule arrangement for companies to meet their production and financial requirements, they will and should use them. As it relates to the QWL for production associates or new leaders, however, *there are very real challenges and considerations* for both the balance of work and family life and the physical considerations associated with working an additional four hours each shift in such a stressful environment.

Changing manufacturing scheduling arrangements will continue to challenge US corporations as the competitive nature of manufacturing practices and efficiencies, including foreign competition, grows. Automating many manufacturing jobs helps alleviate the human factor of long work shifts—it also takes jobs from the workplace.

For the new leader, this will require *setting your own standards* for what is an acceptable QWL and one that provides job satisfaction and career growth opportunities yet allows for enough time away from the job to maintain a satisfying family life and, just as importantly, your long-term health.

As a young new leader, full of vitality, energy, and a desire to succeed in your career, long-term health issues may not be an immediate

concern; they weren't in my case. However, the years pass quickly. Thirty turns to forty, forty turns to fifty, and the eventual thought of retirement and how to spend it becomes part of your thought process. When you get to that point, you want to be healthy and able to pursue the life that you and your family spent many hard years working to enjoy.

I use myself as an example. As a very healthy thirty-three-year-old entering my manufacturing career, I thought my health was a given. Four factories, several promotions, establishing or reestablishing new work teams, three relocations, and twenty-two years later, I moved on from my manufacturing life and became a corporate recruiter. My physical inventory then included degenerative disc disease, A-fib, and high blood pressure, all very difficult and potentially dangerous health considerations. I made the move to leave manufacturing just in time, in my opinion. There were certainly some genetic factors associated with my health issues, but without question, the very long hours and high-stress factors associated with my work life leading teams in manufacturing were key factors in my physical issues. The physical changes can insidiously sneak up on you, even when you believe you are taking good care of yourself through a good plan regarding diet and exercise.

In my case, and I believe in many others, here is what happens.

When you become an effective leader of people and manager of processes, you get tremendous satisfaction from your accomplishments and the fact that you are a valuable contributor to your work teams and your company. You have met one of the most important motivational reasons for choosing a challenging occupation: You are good at what you do, know it, and *make a difference*. While earned, that personal sense of long-term accomplishment can often obscure impending physical issues, your QWL with your spouse and family is

suffering, and the balance of your work and personal life is broken. Unless you take the time during your career to periodically stop and reflect on the balance of your work and personal life, you run the risk of suffering the fate that many in the manufacturing industry have faced and a fate that you never intended to create. *Do not let that happen to you!* Have the good sense to have a serious discussion with your spouse and children periodically or at the first sign that your commitment to your job is causing problems with what gives you the most joy in your life, your spouse and family!

A very good outcome comes from your strong commitment to your growth as a leader and manager. The skills that you now have as a leader and effective process manager are not only valuable to your current employer, but they are also highly transferable to other organizations who are always looking for effective leaders. If you conclude that your work schedule no longer supports QWL in your life and cannot be altered, you now have the option to move on to another career opportunity. That new opportunity may prove to both enhance your family life and commitment, as well as breathe new life into your career. *It happens all the time!* Take my word for it as an executive recruiter who placed many manufacturing, engineering, quality, maintenance, logistics, and other managers in top companies over thirteen years.

If you are a proven leader and manager, you have the skills and knowledge to decide where you will work, how hard you will work, and how long you will work. Your efforts throughout your career have built job security, financial security, and a high-quality personal life for you and your family. And you have earned it because, at the start of your leadership career, you built a solid foundation of leadership skills.

Key Takeaways Chapter Eight

- Before entering a new leadership position, make sure to know what the physical requirements are and what a typical work-week will look like in terms of time requirements. Discuss them with your spouse and family, so everyone knows what to expect with the new responsibility. If working off-shift assignments, family considerations may require adjustments and need to be discussed.
- As your competency in your position grows, look for ways to creatively adjust your schedule to maintain both excellent work performance as well as a healthy QWL for you and your family.
- If working twelve-hour shifts, rotating shifts, extended overtime shifts, etc., make sure to make time for recreation and exercise regimens, get adequate rest, and maintain a healthy diet to give your mind and body what it needs to regenerate. (I know, I know; much easier said than done!)
- If the time comes when your position no longer supports your career goals and a high QWL, start making plans to market your skills and qualifications to a company that can meet your needs. Things change in businesses, and there are many great companies to work for. You only get one family (in most cases), and you should protect the love and peace of mind your family provides. Again, always discuss potential changes with your spouse and family; you're all on this journey together.

Conclusion coming up!

Conclusion

We have nearly completed our journey through *Jumpstart Your Future*, and I hope you have found it to be a useful and informative blueprint to help you build your foundational skills as a leader of people and an effective manager of processes. As I mentioned in the preface, our goal is to provide you with *effective strategies* to build a solid foundation for your leadership career.

You did not review complicated charts and graphs to decipher; you read direct verbiage to describe the principles and strategies, which, if implemented, will help you to build your leadership career from a position of knowledge and strength.

Though there was a bit of external research done for this book, nearly all the information I shared came from working with fellow leaders and manufacturing and production associates for over twenty-two years in four different manufacturing facilities in three different states and cultures. I don't know if there is a better method to learn the complexities of a manufacturing process or how to troubleshoot manufacturing line problems than by working through problems to keep your production lines running at 10:00 p.m.–3:00 a.m. on a graveyard shift. Everyone on your team must pull together, utilizing their collective skills and knowledge to solve problems. That process breaks down the barriers between associates and leadership and, over time, helps to form outstanding work teams committed to the same goals. It also teaches new leaders *how* to be leaders.

The other most effective research method for this book came from the many excellent food and beverage company executives and

management candidates in production, engineering, quality, maintenance, logistics, and executive positions with whom I had the good fortune to work for thirteen years. Their willingness to share their experiences and knowledge with me as leaders and process managers was the catalyst for me to write this book. Their shared experiences made me aware that many new leaders or managers come into leadership positions with limited knowledge of their new role and that, in many cases, their new employers don't do enough to augment those skills before holding them accountable for results they are not prepared to deliver.

In the dog-eat-dog world of manufacturing management, that knowledge or skill deficit can make the difference between success or failure for a new leader. Our goal with *Jumpstart* is to improve on that dynamic.

Consider the content of the eight chapters we covered in this journey. Though some "management experts" will disagree with my opinion of what is important to learn in your first few years as a leader, trust me, if you dedicate yourself to working on the knowledge and skills discussed in the eight chapters of *Jumpstart*, you will have built an excellent foundation as an effective leader of people and a very knowledgeable process manager. You will understand your business and be an asset to your company and work associates.

Let's review the basic content of the eight chapters of *Jumpstart* one more time before we part company. As we do this, understand that different companies you may decide to work for will have different problem areas or priorities that you may have to tackle upon taking over your new responsibilities. That's a given.

You need to improve the areas that need the most work first. However, don't ever lose sight of the fact that to be the best leader you can

be, strength and knowledge in all eight areas give you the knowledge and skill to move your career forward.

- I. **In the Beginning:** Know the content of the job you are assuming. Welcome aboard and get to know your leadership counterparts. Learn and know your operation thoroughly. How can you lead what you don't understand? Thorough daily and weekly planning.
- II. **Know and Care about Your People:** Meet individually with team members. Utilize the talent of team members effectively—it's a business. Know what your associates can and WANT to do. It makes a difference.
- III. **Communicate, Communicate, Communicate:** Become an effective speaker and communicator. Learn how to hold effective meetings: large group meetings, management group meetings, small group information meetings, and individual associate meetings. Learn how to listen! All meetings are important and have a purpose; prepare for them.
- IV. **Follow the Money:** Obtain information on raw materials and direct operating costs. Understand budgeted standards and production line performance requirements. Structure standards and accountabilities into line performance and communicate them to associates. Understand your operating budget to the degree that at the end of each workday, based upon your finished case counts, you know whether your teams came in under or over budget and why.
- V. **Planning and Scheduling for New Leaders:** Production scheduling, resource (associate) scheduling, raw materials

scheduling, product changes, and equipment maintenance planning. Great planning and execution lead to success.

Failing to plan is planning to fail!

- VI. **Quality Assurance:** Establish strong relationships with QA professionals and understand all quality product requirements, testing criteria, and procedures. Communicate to all associates the importance of total adherence to product quality and safety standards and their responsibility in that process. *Never compromise quality for production numbers!*
- VII. **Leadership:** Thoroughly understand the responsibilities of leadership before you decide to become a leader. Take a personal skill and character assessment before you decide to become a leader. Communication skills are critical for leadership. Without them you cannot be an effective leader. Understand Situational Leadership and how to grow into it and use it effectively to become a great leader.
- VIII. **Quality of Work Life:** Before becoming a leader, understand the physical and mental requirements of leadership and discuss what that might mean for your quality of family life. As your competence as a leader grows, find ways to adjust your duties to give you additional time with your spouse and family. Don't be afraid to delegate; it gives your associates an opportunity to learn more about the business. **MOTIVATION!** Always make the time to maintain your health and that of your family; nothing is more important. If the time to move on becomes apparent, don't hesitate; do it. A new opportunity

can jumpstart your career and improve quality time with your family. Your hard work has provided you with the skills to be successful anywhere!

There we have it! As with any ending of an instructional book, the text should provide a specific call to action for the reader. My call to action is this: After completing this book, decide which of our eight strategies are most critical to your job at present and apply your new knowledge to those priorities. When you have the current situation under control, move on to the next challenge.

There is no set requirement to learn the eight strategies in any succession. They should be learned as needed, but they do *all* need to be learned. You should commit to a time frame to learn them all. It will need to be flexible as your business requirements allow. It may take you six months, one year, two years, or more, but learn them all thoroughly! My guess is that two to three years is a reasonable timetable to build a solid foundation for leadership and process management competence. You may want to get your immediate superior involved to hold your feet to the fire as you progress. When they see the progress you have made, they may decide to set up similar plans for other new leaders. The eight principles in *Jumpstart* work simply because they are the critical skills you need to learn to run a successful manufacturing operation and become an effective leader. Period!

The only thing left to say is thank you for joining me on this journey through *Jumpstart Your Future*. You have my very best wishes for career success. Now get out there and do it. *Make a difference* for your associates, your company, and most importantly, you and your family!

Dani R. Apple

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Finally, to the hundreds of manufacturing associates I have had the honor to lead and work with throughout my manufacturing career, I owe each of you a debt of gratitude. You taught me as much as I taught you, if not more. You challenged and taught me how to lead;

we became outstanding manufacturing teams and, in many cases, lifetime friends in the process. It doesn't get much better than that!

Thanks for your friendship and the memories.

Dani R. Apple

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Testimonials

Tom Brouillette—Retired Plant and Manufacturing Manager, Food and Beverage industries.

“Dani has a rare combination of experience in Operations, HR and Recruitment that makes him an expert at finding “fit” between organizations and candidates.” ”He serves businesses by researching and fully understanding their organizational needs and candidates by fully preparing them completely for their interactions with companies.”

Paul Barsamian—Logistics and Supply Chain Leader.

“While transitioning industries, I reached out to Dani for guidance navigating the difficulties of interviewing and quantifying my strengths. Dani was instrumental in my transition into the logistics industry. His wealth of industry knowledge and ability to understand the human element makes him an amazing individual to collaborate with.”

Milton Capel—Former Beverage Industry Manager, Managing Partner Palmetto Sleep Labs.

“Communications, Leadership, Planning, etc. Every facet that is faced by a first-time manager is covered in this book. It is a must read, not only for new manufacturing supervisors, but for any individual who is stepping into their first management position.”

