"It’s not the magic that makes it work; it’s the way we work that makes it magic."

CREATING MAGIC
10 COMMON SENSE LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FROM A LIFE AT DISNEY

BY LEE COCKERELL

As leaders, the “magic” we create is often closely tied to the culture and environment we create for employees. In churches, this might look like how we tie Scripture to a sermon series idea, how our team makes people feel when they walk through the doors, and what makes people come back.

In his book Creating Magic, Lee Cockerell asserts that outstanding leadership is the key in creating “magic” in our organizations. Cockerell ran operations for Walt Disney World Resorts for over a decade. Creating Magic outlines the practical leadership strategies and lessons and the business wisdom he’s picked up in his career.

When we recognize the importance of inclusion on our teams, we should take it beyond diversity. Inclusion engages and involves your staff, showing them that they’re important and that their role matters to the organization. It’s making sure that every employee is respected, valued, involved, and treated with dignity.

Disney’s approach to inclusion is the acronym RAVE: Respect, Appreciate, and Value Everyone. Other guiding principles for a culture of inclusion include:

- Make sure everyone matters and everyone knows it.
- Know your team and let your team get to know you.
- Make yourself available.
- Forget about the chain of command.
- Treat people the way you would want your customers (or guests) to be treated.
What’s the best thing an organization can have? It’s not a great brand, a well-designed logo, or even a fantastic product. It’s great people.

“You can’t achieve true excellence unless you attract great people, develop great people, and keep great people.”

The hiring and promotion processes are where the “magic” happens. Who you decide to invest in has tremendous effects on the current and future health of your organization. Cockerell suggested a few practices for making great people decisions, including:

- Define the perfect candidate. What do you want them to be able to accomplish?
- Don’t settle for a clone. Each open job is a chance to redefine the role rather than fill it with a clone of the previous person.
- Ask revealing questions. Instead of predictable questions, try questions such as, “How do you plan your day?”

“When people feel valued for the talents and skills they bring to the team, their level of commitment soars. And committed people feel a strong personal connection to, and responsibility for, the work that they do and the teams they’re a part of.”

There are opportunities all around to encourage your employees, but you have to find them. It means more than you may realize as a leader, but it may mean the world to the people you lead and help make them better leaders themselves.

“Appreciation, recognition, encouragement: ARE. Together they make up a cost-free, fully sustainable fuel, one that builds self-confidence and self-esteem, boosts individual and team performance, and keeps an organization running cleanly and smoothly.”

Are you giving enough “ARE” fuel to your team? A few tips Cockerell suggested for identifying and following up on ways to do this include:

- Spend meaningful time with employees.
- Catch them doing something right.
- Include their families.
- Make “ARE” a natural part of your routine.
What church leaders, what church leaders share with the world, and who church leaders invest in goes well beyond the Sunday service.

From hospitality to the sermon, the "magic" that happens behind the scenes has eternal impact.

That's why it's so important to apply the excellent leadership strategies from Creating Magic with Scripture in mind. God has already given us a guide for how to treat our staff, volunteers, and congregation. Doing this well can influence how people see God in us.

Romans 12:10 instructs us in saying, "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

It's a privilege to lead others in service to God and His Church. It's an honor to glorify God by caring about the health of His Church. It's not only "fuel" for our teams when we appreciate, recognize and encourage them ("ARE"). For the Church, it's discipleship.

A combination of formal training and informal learning is ideal to help your team grow as individuals and learn to perform their roles. Educating your team is an investment that pays off big-time when your team moves beyond simply knowing what's expected of them to wanting to be there, reaching above and beyond, and consistently raising the excellence bar.

A simple purpose statement helps a team remember what the outcome of their work should be. It's your job as a leader to teach, coach, train, and communicate in ways that reinforce and illustrate the purpose statement. As Cockerell put it, "Give people a purpose, not just jobs."

A clear purpose in their role is inspiring to team members as they grow, learn, and develop a higher sense of purpose overall.

**MINISTRY INSIGHTS**

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3. That's why it's so important to apply the excellent leadership strategies from Creating Magic with Scripture in mind. God has already given us a guide for how to treat our staff, volunteers, and congregation.

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What guiding principles does your team have to foster a culture of inclusion? What should you add?

2. How does your team attract and develop great people? Where do you have room to grow in your hiring and promotion processes?

3. How do you currently fuel your team with "ARE"? How can you make showing this appreciation a normal part of your leadership style?

4. What type of development opportunities can you introduce to help your team grow in an informal learning environment?

5. How does your church "create magic" through the people on your team? How can you do better in developing people and using the talents available?