

Work Samples Series

The Assignment:

The Bank Administration Institute (BAI) each year puts on the industry's biggest trade show, the Retail Delivery Conference & Expo.

BAI hired MarshComm to write an essay on leadership, the conference theme, to help advertise its powerhouse quartet of keynote speakers for the 2002 Retail Delivery show: Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; Bank of America CEO Kenneth D. Lewis; Jack Welch, former CEO and Chairman of General Electric; and Sir George Mathewson, Chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group.

The essay, featuring quotes and anecdotes of the four well-known leaders in action, ran as half of a two-page ad for the conference in magazines nationwide.

Now More than Ever, Strong, Effective Leadership Is a Necessity

This season of scandal, financial turmoil and economic malaise
is fairly screaming for Leadership, with a capital "L."

"Business leaders have to stick to the fundamentals of good management and leadership regardless of which way the winds of change are blowing." – Kenneth D. Lewis, CEO, Bank of America

Today, the winds of change are howling from all directions – for corporate and executive accountability, for revenue and earnings growth, for economic stimulus, for righting the stock market roller coaster.

This season of scandal, financial turmoil and economic malaise is fairly screaming for Leadership, with a capital "L." Rallying, purposeful, empowering, strategic leadership. The kind that exemplifies the careers of the ultra-successful quartet of keynote speakers at this year's BAI Retail Delivery Conference & Expo.

Leaders rise to the occasion. They set the tone for their followers through words and actions. They motivate, they enable – and they teach. If we watch and listen, we can learn from them. And in the process, we can become more effective leaders. Leaders of companies, of divisions, of teams, of ourselves.

“We unite under the banner of E Pluribus Unum (‘Out of Many, One’). We find strength in our diversity. We’re a city where people look different, talk different, think different. But we’re a city at one with all of the people at the World Trade Center, and with all of America. We love our diversity, and we love our freedom.” – Rudolph Giuliani, former Mayor, New York City, at the citywide prayer service at Yankee Stadium, Sept. 23, 2001

No leader at any level more truly embodied successful leadership over the past year than Time magazine’s 2001 Person of the Year, Rudy Giuliani. He led the most diverse city in the world, scarred and stunned, out of the darkness through his unwavering example.

Heeding the lessons of his role model, Winston Churchill, Giuliani was tirelessly optimistic in rallying New Yorkers. He spoke at prayer services, at memorial services, at funerals. He set the tone for all New Yorkers to follow: we are bruised but unbowed, and we will get back to work and build an even greater city than before 9/11.

In corporate parlance, he built a team of 8 million. Like a corporation, Rudy’s team came from all social and ethnic strata, educational backgrounds and experience levels. But like an effective CEO, he infused them with purpose and a common goal. And they responded.

“Bureaucracy strangles. Informality liberates. Creating an informal atmosphere is a competitive advantage. ...It’s about making sure that everybody counts – and everybody knows they count. ...Passion, chemistry, and idea flow from any level at any place are what matter. Everybody’s welcome and expected to go at it.” – Jack Welch, from *Jack: Straight from the Gut*

Of the many leadership pearls Jack Welch left with G.E. after his 40-year career, this manifesto of empowerment might have the most meaning in today's environment.

Indeed, business success – and the greater economic good – is fueled not just by the brilliance and effectiveness of corner-office honchos, but by anyone and everyone in a company who contributes ideas, innovation and action.

Creating an atmosphere of informality in the Welch style – whether for your entire company, or even just a project team – might be the best piece of leadership advice you've ever cribbed.

“While focus on key issues and excellence in delivery are necessary, they are not sufficient to create ongoing shareholder value. We believe that corporate strategy should also include the constant creation of options for future growth.” – Sir George Mathewson, Chairman, Royal Bank of Scotland Group

In short, this is the opposite of standing pat, which no company – especially in the hyper-competitive and -acquisitive financial services industry – can afford.

Instead, a “strategic option” for Sir George Mathewson, upon becoming CEO of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group, was to successfully attempt a hostile acquisition of a bank more than twice its size, NatWest.

Your company's strategic options need not be so grand. But the constant pursuit of them should be ingrained in employees from the bottom to the top of your organization – starting with you.

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