



CREATING MAGIC

10 COMMON SENSE STRATEGIES FROM A LIFE AT DISNEY

by Lee Cockerell



REBECCA SKAGGS
PRL 497

OVERVIEW

“

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

”

Creating Magic outlines the common-sense strategies for managers and leaders to use to improve themselves, their employees, and their company. Having served as the Executive Vice President of Operations for the Walt Disney World Resort for 14 years, Lee Cockerell is extremely well-versed in what makes an organization both effective and efficient.

Many of Cockerell's stories and situations stem from his real-life experiences at Marriott and Disney, but his emphasis on inclusion and clear communication apply to all types of businesses. By following these leadership strategies you can create magic for your organization, family, or community.

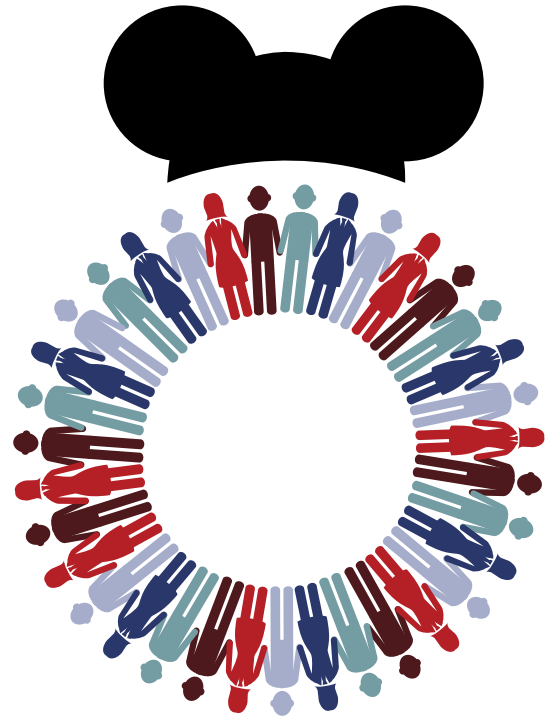
COMMON SENSE STRATEGIES

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Remember, Everyone is Important | 6 Learn the Truth |
| 2 Break the Mold | 7 Burn the Free Fuel |
| 3 Make Your People Your Brand | 8 Stay Ahead of the Pack |
| 4 Create Magic Through Training | 9 Be Careful of What You Say and Do |
| 5 Eliminate Hassles | 10 Develop Character |

According to Cockerell and his experience in leadership, these are the key factors to being a great leader. Elements of each of the chapters may seem repetitive, but actually emphasize how necessary certain leadership traits are. Out of the ten strategies, they can be reduced down to two main ideas: inclusion and clear communication. These areas incorporate the interpersonal elements and the importance of constructive ways to deliver vital information that a leader must possess. A focus on inclusion and clear communication creates a positive and productive work environment. Ensuring that everyone feels important and knows what is expected of them allows for a healthy culture and overall improvement of the company.

INCLUSION

An area of emphasis throughout the entire book is the inclusion of all employees. Inclusion has become a hot topic as businesses have tried to diversify and improve their workforce. But Cockerell (2008) defines true inclusion as “engaging and involving your employees and showing them that each one is important.” (p. 35) This approach is reflected in a Forbes article by Rasmus Hougaard, where he described it as the “people first” approach. “When people feel valued and cared for, they do their work with stronger intrinsic motivation, a deeper sense of meaning, and a greater level of engagement.” (Hougaard, 2019) If a leader develops an environment of respect, individuals will be involved in the work leading to better results.



“When everyone matters and everyone knows he or she matters, employees are happy to come to work, and they're eager to give you their energy, creativity, and loyalty.”

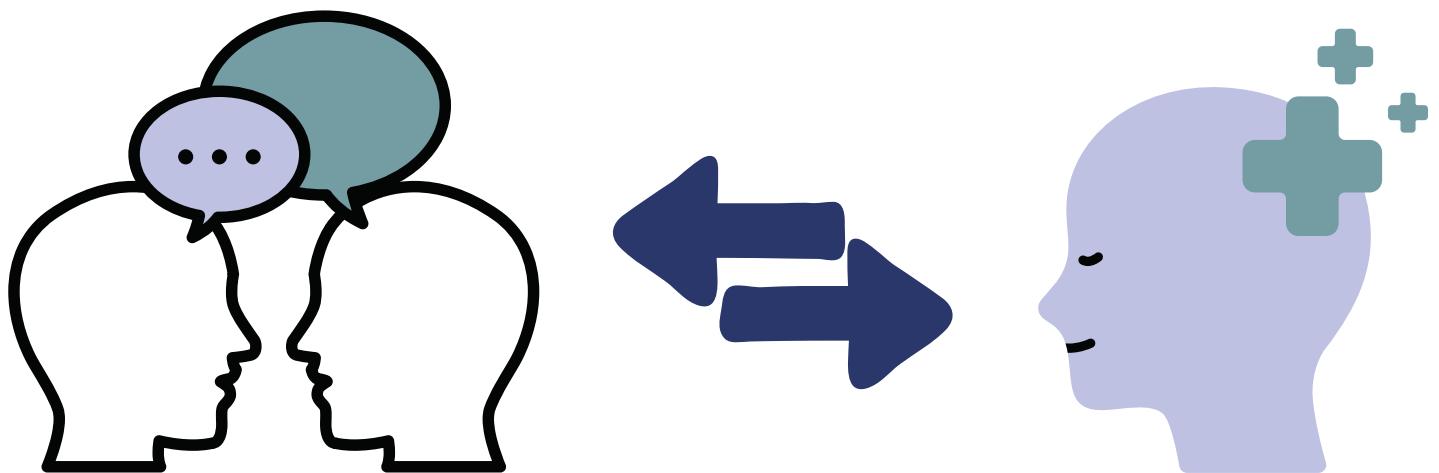
LEE COCKERELL

The best practices for fostering inclusion are utilizing RAVE, getting to know your employees, and treating people how you want your customers to be treated. Disney's approach to inclusion is represented by RAVE: respect, appreciate and value everyone. Similarly to Hougaard's article, doing these three things will make people want to work for your company because they feel good about the job they are doing. In terms of getting to know people, Cockerell suggests greeting individuals sincerely and by name, observing employee desk areas that have pictures, posters, or other information, and finally just talking to employees. Lastly, at Disney, the Guests are the number one priority. Therefore, treating employees as you would treat guests guarantees a level of respect. Overall, when employees feel respected at the company by connecting with their manager or leader and are treated as valuable members of the company, it will lead to positive energy and higher quality work, making your company more effective.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

“Make an effort to communicate one-on-one in person whenever you can. Nothing makes people feel more valued than a face-to-face meeting.”

The second area of emphasis of the book is clear communication between leadership and employees. This is another issue that many companies are trying to constantly improve. For Cockerell (2008), “good communication is clear communication... if you communicate clearly, directly and honestly all the time, people will understand what you want them to know and what you want them to do.” (p. 47) In a study by Alicia J. Hart (2016) about the influence of management communication on employee engagement, she found that “clear, concise, honest, and consistent in daily interactions with employees” were effective communication techniques used by managers that resulted in a more engaged workforce. (p. 82) When a leader prioritizes clear communication, the employees and company benefit greatly by feeling more confident in their roles and motivated to complete their tasks.



The best practices for fostering clear communication are allowing employees to propose solutions and informing employees multiple ways such as one-on-ones, handwritten letters, weekly newspapers, pre-shift meetings, and bulletin boards. Cockerell is a huge proponent of allowing employees to recognize issues and propose solutions. When decisions come directly from the top, especially when they affect day-to-day processes, they can be ineffective because the leader may not be well versed in what occurs at a lower level of an organization. Therefore, input and solutions from employees are more likely to address the issue more effectively. Allowing for this two-way exchange encourages your employees to communicate with you and they will feel better as a part of this process. Lastly, with all the forms of communication available today, it is in your best interest to utilize as many as you can to disseminate information. Formal meetings can be conducted through one-on-ones or a handwritten letter, while company information such as Guest satisfaction scores, staff parties, or any other pertinent news can be displayed on a bulletin board or distributed in a weekly paper. Cockerell started the weekly Disney paper that included anything from leadership information to tips on maintaining a safe environment. It served as a clear and consistent way to provide information. Keeping employees up to date with clear communication allows them to better understand what is expected of them which leads to better work. The clarity of communication allows for a straightforward approach to assignments, which benefits both the employee and the company as a whole.

“ Use every means available to teach new lessons, share promising ideas, reinforce important principles and keep everyone up to date on organizational developments. ”

CONCLUSION

Overall, *Creating Magic* by Lee Cockerell is an excellent book that conveys successful practices for leaders to follow to ensure an effective and conducive organization. His focus on inclusion and clear communication are the foundation of what makes Walt Disney World Resort magical. Even though it was written by a man who was in charge of one of the largest hospitality companies in the world, he manages to make the reading experience warm by offering the perfect amount of personal storytelling. I would recommend this book because it shows just how important **everyone** is in a company, which is something I think people and specifically leaders and managers forget.

SOURCES

Cockerell, L. (2008). *Creating Magic : 10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies from a Life at Disney*. Ebury Press.

Hart, A. J. (2016). *Exploring the Influence of Management Communication Behaviors on Employee Engagement*. Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies.

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