



Staff Report

Administration

Report To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: August 22, 2016
Report Number: FAF.16.83
Subject: Update re: Senior Staff Leadership Development
Prepared by: Troy Speck, CAO

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive report FAF.16.83 entitled "Update re: Senior Staff Leadership Development" for information.

B. Overview

This report is an overview of steps being taken regarding leadership development at the Town of The Blue Mountains.

C. Background

Goal #4 in the Town's strategic plan is to "Promote a Culture of Organizational and Operational Excellence", which includes the Objective of becoming an "Employer of Choice". Organizational excellence requires that the organization have in place leaders with the skills to lead and manage the Town's staff.

Leading in the 21st century requires possessing and developing certain skills and qualities associated with the human aspects of the Town's business, skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use information in an effective and meaningful way.

This report will outline some of the work that has been undertaken with the Town's senior management to develop and nurture those leadership skills.

D. Analysis

Why is it Important?

Leaders create the context within which employees work. Leaders can create a productive, happy, healthy context where employees feel valued, inspired, motivated, and where they feel they can produce their best work. Likewise, leaders can create the opposite environment where employees feel dread as they think about entering the work environment.

The distinction is even more important at this time, as demographic changes are starting to create significant competition between municipalities for staff, especially professional and skilled technical staff. In recent years, the Town has experienced this directly. As a smaller, lower-tier municipality, competing on the basis of salary and benefits alone can present a challenge, as we often do not have the capacity to match the salaries of larger or upper-tier municipal organizations. And there will always be individual situations where an opportunity elsewhere is simply too good for someone to pass up. But this challenge mandates that we look at other avenues to try to attract and retain staff. Becoming an “employer of choice” – a place where municipal workers want to be – is one of those avenues.

If we think in terms of leadership skills, important skills include an array of competencies that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with the demands and pressures of leading people in a corporate environment. While these skills aren’t the sole predictor of human performance and development potential, they are proven to be a key indicator in these areas. And they are not a static factor either – they can be developed over time.

To create increased awareness and clarity and to further develop the skills of the core leadership team (Directors, Fire Chief, Manager of HR and CAO) as effective leaders and help them learn more about self-management and relationship management, two (2) day-long workshops were held with the assistance of Executive Leadership and Career Coach, Carol Ellis. The leadership training and all associated elements took place over the course of the period between September 2015 and the end of April 2016.

Prior to the workshops, each member of the core leadership team (CLT) completed an individual psychometric assessment (EQi) that measures emotional intelligence (EI – the types of skills identified above) and how it can impact people and the workplace. It is a scientifically validated assessment tool. Not only has the Town now used the EQi in training for its senior staff, but we have also begun using it as a tool in the recruitment of senior managers.

In addition to all of the above, members of the CLT received an individual debrief of their assessment results and a coaching session with Ms. Ellis, resulting in the development of their own personal plan of action. The assessment also generated a group report for the CLT as a whole and those results were also used by each member of the team in the development of their personal goals, helping them to identify which goals might result in the best improvement of the team overall. The goals developed by each of the CLT members will become a part of ongoing discussion, both as a group and in their regular and performance discussions with the CAO.

The final piece of the discussions with Ms. Ellis involved the core leadership team discussing and developing a set of agreed-upon behaviours and values under which members of CLT will operate. This document not only establishes a set of clear expectations surrounding how the existing group will work together, and a tool by which to hold each other accountable, but will also serve as a guidepost in the orientation of new/future members over time. A copy of the final CLT agreed-upon behaviours is attached to this report as Appendix “A”.

Moving Forward - Coaching

A lot of good work has been done through the efforts described above. But as days go by, and other operational and organizational issues need to be dealt with on a day-to-day basis, it can become all too easy for the good leadership development work that has been done, to fall to the “back burner”. As follow-up to the leadership training with Ms. Ellis, and to help consolidate the learning for members of CLT, additional coaching support has been made available for members of the CLT group for whom it would be of additional benefit, and who are open to it. Professional coaching brings many benefits, including fresh perspectives on personal challenges; enhanced decision-making skills; greater inter-personal effectiveness; and increased confidence. Those who undertake coaching can usually expect appreciable improvement in productivity, satisfaction with life and work, and the attainment of relevant goals.

Supervisory skills training for middle managers

Leadership training for the core leadership team has not been the only focus over the past year or so. Having well trained supervisory and middle-management staff is also important to the municipality for a number of reasons, including: ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements; ensuring the adequate and effective supervision of the Town’s various departments and activities; and ensuring a strong base of trained supervisors and managers for succession planning purposes.

To that end, in 2014 the Grey County CAOs group worked collaboratively with Georgian College to develop and establish a municipal supervisory skills series of training. An outline of the program that has been developed is attached to this report as Appendix “B”. Each module is comprised of 6 hours of class work, with one class every two weeks until the seven (7) modules are completed.

Members of CLT worked together to identify a number of staff across the organization who might benefit from this training. The program has been run twice per year. Class size and the number of municipalities involved have limited us to sending two staff per session. To date, six (6) managers/supervisors have completed the program, and we will continue to make this course available to identified staff as long as the demand from all county municipalities for the program continues.

Moving Forward – Corporate Staff Governance

In the Town’s new Strategic Plan 2016 – 20, Goal # 4 is to “Promote a Culture of Organizational and Operational Excellence”. That Goal includes an Objective of: “Improving internal communications across our organization”, which objective in turn identifies an action item of reviewing and redefining corporate staff governance process.

Proper flow of information within an organization requires clarity with regard to process, roles and responsibilities. In 2014, at the request of the CAO, a review of the Town’s senior management team was conducted by an external Human Resources expert Mr. Garth Johns and, over time, a number of changes have been made based on the recommendations found in the review’s final report.

The Town's current Senior Management Team (SMT) has historically functioned largely as a vehicle for communications (i.e.: following-up on Council direction; sharing information). In continuing to implement outstanding recommendations from the Johns report, two recommendations of note were to: a) reduce the size of the senior management team into what can be referred to as a "core leadership team", which would focus on issues of organizational development and not just be a vehicle for communications; and b) to do a better job of communicating organizational issues and direction from senior management, down to front line staff, through the creation of an intermediary group of managers from across the corporation.

As identified earlier in this report, the Core Leadership Team will be comprised of the Directors, Fire Chief, Manager of HR and the CAO. Often, as organizations get larger, it becomes more difficult to ensure that corporate goals and messaging make their way from Council and senior managers, to front line staff. It has been shown that staff who are engaged in an organization's activities and who understand why the organization is doing what it's doing, and how that impacts them in their daily work, are much more likely to be able to provide good service.

Direct, face-to-face communication is often the best method to ensure that front line staff are informed and engaged, which is what we have used staff "Town Hall" meetings for in past, and will look to continue again in future. However, getting all Town staff together at one time, in the same place, is not always practical more than a couple of times per year. The next best way to help ensure that communications reach front line staff on a face-to-face basis, is to ensure that their direct managers are well informed and capable of spreading the message at regular staff meetings and discussions. In fact in an internal communications survey, staff identified their direct supervisor/manager as their preferred mechanism by which to learn about what is going on in the organization.

We will be working in the coming months with middle managers to identify how we can better engage them in the organization and its decision making, so that they can, in turn, keep their staff better informed and engaged. A report to Council is expected to follow that work.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational & Operational Excellence

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impact

Information report only.

H. In consultation with

N/A

I. Attached

Appendix "A" CLT Agreed-upon Behaviours

Appendix "B" Outline of Georgian College Supervisory Skills Program

Respectfully Submitted,

Troy Speck
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:

Troy Speck
tspeck@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 extension 234

Town of The Blue Mountains

Core Leadership Team Agreed-Upon Behaviours

We want to be part of a core leadership team where:

- We treat each other as equals, and respect the unique experiences, skills, viewpoints, strengths and weaknesses each of us brings to the table.
- We bring the knowledge and experience of our departments to the table, and wear our “corporate hats” when we make decisions as a Team; focusing on what is best for the corporation and community as a whole.
- Our discussions with each other, and as a Team, are honest, genuine and meaningful:
For example:
 - Each of us comes to Team meetings prepared for the discussion.
 - Everyone is present, engaged and contributes to the discussion.
 - Each of us listens to the others with an open mind. Anyone with a dissenting opinion is to at least feel his or her point of view has been heard.
 - We address/confront issues head-on with each other; we will not leave things unsaid.
 - We can vehemently disagree, and will still respect and work with one another.
 - What we discuss stays with the Team, until the Team decides otherwise.
- We treat each other with respect, and professionalism.
- We support each other. The Team is a safe place to share information and challenges, and to seek guidance and assistance.
- We model the behaviour and principles outlined herein, for our Staff, Council and for the Public; and expect and accept them holding us accountable for them
- We hold each other accountable, for:
 - Abiding by the principles set out herein.
 - Following through on our commitments.
 - Consistency between our statements and our actions.
 - Supporting Team decisions, even if we individually have a differing opinion

Team Decision-Making

We will strive to make Team decisions by consensus. Where meaningful efforts do not result in consensus, the decision will be made by the CAO, and supported by the entire Team.

We agree that "Consensus" means a decision that the entire Team:

- a) can at least "live with", even if their individual opinion was one of dissent; **and**
- b) will support/own publicly.

However, we will respect and be open to reconsidering any Team decision where a member of the Team has a good faith concern or that a certain decision or action may:

- Result in detriment to anyone's safety, or
- Be in conflict with a statutory duty or obligation of any municipal official.
- Be contrary to Council direction or a by law

At no time will either consensus or the opinion of the CAO override a decision that is the statutory obligation of a specified municipal official to make.

Supervisory Series

Modules Descriptions

Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities

- Differentiate between leading and managing.
- Recognize the importance and impact of supervisors/managers on individual, group, and corporate success.
- Describe the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours required for successful supervision.
- Identify leadership and management styles and behaviours.
- Identify personal supervisory/leadership skills and planning for the continuous improvement of those skills.

Effective Communication

- Describe and demonstrate the effective communication skills that can impact staff motivation, morale, and productivity.
- Develop improved business relationships through communicating effectively.
- Learn how to eliminate communication barriers.
- Learn how the impact of body language and voice inflection on communication.
- Recognizing how the listening process works and applying effective listening techniques.
- Using reflection and questions to confirm understanding.
- Demonstrating how to politely disagree.

Leading Effective Meetings

- Recognize the importance of conducting effective meetings.
- Identify the function of positive role players in a meeting.
- Identify what is required to prepare for a meeting.
- Identify the steps necessary in conducting an effective meeting.
- Understand the importance and the variety of tools used in conducting an effective meeting.
- Identify ways to follow-up after a meeting.

Building and Leading Teams

- Identify what is a team by uncovering the benefits of team work, the top 10 things employees want, and the characteristics of a good team.
- Learn how to build their group into a team by learning about the tasks and trust model, review appropriate behaviours in a team setting, and learn about team decision making.
- Learn about the importance of trust within a team setting.
- Understand conflict in teams by reviewing styles of conflict, how to resolve conflict and tips for managing conflict.
- Solve problems in your team by identifying the difference between problem and decision
- Learn how to lead your team effectively with teamwork
- Reflect on their personal take away from the course.

Coaching as a Motivational Tool

- During this session, participants will have the opportunity to discuss, develop, and share ideas on coaching and mentoring in the workplace.
- Increase awareness of coaching as a strategic tool and how it impacts individual and corporate performance.
- Identify characteristics for effective coaching initiatives.
- Understand the impact of coaching on staff retention and corporate loyalty.
- To prepare participants to foster employee commitment, satisfaction and dedication.
- To explore motivators and barriers and their application in the workplace .

Conflict and Anger Management

- Identify sources and types of conflict
- Identify and apply strategies that help prevent and manage conflict within a team
- Recognize and be able to better control the anger in others
- Determine what strategies are effective in dealing with difficult people and apply these strategies to workplace situations

Leading a Multi-Generational Workforce

- Identify and understand the values and characteristics that determine workplace behaviour for each of the five generations.
- Recognize effective strategies to engage and motivate employees from each generation, both in the context of individual and team work.
- Identify appropriate approaches to managing and coaching the Generation Y / Millennial employee.