Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about one very important part of leadership. Getting everybody on the same page. Singing from the same sheet of music. This is so important to the success of the organization. You know, you can't be a great leader without having followers, and you can't have followers without people understanding where you're going and everybody being on the same page. And so, how do you achieve that? How do you get everybody on the same page? Whether it's for an initiative you're trying to get accomplished, or whether it's a specific assignment you've given. Meeting deadlines or whatever it might be.

Well, there are a couple of characteristics in your leadership that are going to lead you to be better at this, better at getting everybody on the same page. The first thing is, when your meeting is over, make sure that there's clarity on what you've discussed, where you're going, what everybody's assignment are, what needs to be done, et cetera. For an effective organization, you've got to be able to implement. You've got to be able to get things done. And that clarity is super important.

So, when you start a meeting and you're in this meeting, make sure you're soliciting ideas, that you have an open sort of culture where people feel welcome putting their ideas forward. Never, never lead with your own ideas. When the leader leads with their own ideas, that stifles discussion, because people know where they're going, and they start to think their opinion doesn't matter. And then they don't bring up what might be good ideas or good alternatives. So, make sure you solicit ideas, and when those ideas come in, use your questions.
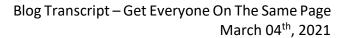
Instead of saying, "Well, that's a stupid idea." Say, "Huh, that's interesting. Have you thought about this?" "What would happen with your idea if we did this or we went down this road?" And let's just say that exposes a weakness in that person's thought. They might say, "Oh yeah, I guess that wouldn't work for that." And they might have an answer for it. And they might say, "Well, I think if it went that way, we could overcome that." And the leader might say, "Huh, I hadn't thought about that." And again, this is how you come to the best ideas.

So, by talking through these other ideas, maybe to a certain extent poking holes, but you can't be so obvious that you're headed toward a pre-ordained pathway. You have to make sure this is a true bantering about of ideas. So, make sure you solicit theirs before you lead with yours. That's so important for people to feel heard. And again, have that open culture where they bring ideas.

Number two, a little bit of politicking doesn't hurt. So, let's just say you're running a board meeting and you got a key influencer that's on your board. Well, having a preliminary discussion, tossing it by them to see what their thoughts are. Seeing if they feel the same way. Well, you know when you're going into a meeting that you got a couple of people feeling the same way, and then they bring that support to the meeting. It's easier to get everybody else on board at that point to bring everybody together.

Again, you got to be careful that, again, you're not stifling ideas by your preordained thought pattern. You've got to still make sure you go through the process of people being heard and finding the best solution. But a little bit of politicking doesn't hurt also to make sure that you've got some people to support an idea.

Confirm understandings. So, I might have an assignment, and make me, before the meeting's over, "Bill, tell me what your assignment is now. How you understand it?" And make a person say it. By saying it, they're committing to it. And you find out that maybe their understanding of what they wanted to accomplish could be a little different than what you think it needs to be, and you can get it on the right track. But confirm understandings. Don't just, "Do this, do that, do that." Walk out of the meeting and people are like, "Well, what was I supposed to do again? I can't remember." You got to make sure you confirm understandings.

Number four, have an action plan. Put it in writing. Hold people accountable. Set timelines. You can't hold people accountable without timelines. Get them to make a commitment. Get them, "How long do you think this will take you to get it done?" "Well, let me give you an extra three days. So, get it done by Wednesday the 17th. We'll put that as your finish date for this." That kind of written plan brings accountability and gives you an outline to create accountability.

Next, revisit. Don't let too much water go under the bridge. Sometimes you have long-term objectives that you're working toward and people have assignments that aren't going to be completed in two days or in three days, in four hours. So, a lot of water's going to go under the bridge. There's going to be a lot of other priorities come along. There's going to be a lot of distractions come along.

So, revisit these things. Don't just send Neha out with a three-month assignment and show up on day 91. Say, "Okay, Neha. What have you got?" Revisit that along... Or, "How you coming along, Neha? What's your thinking so far on this?" "How are you feeling about your deadline on this? Do you feel like you're going to be able to get it in on time?" "Do you need any resources? Do you need any help?" Again, stay with them through the period. Don't just expect it to show up done and perfect on the final day. It doesn't happen. And to do that, make sure that all of the ideas are out in the public too. That everybody's sharing these deadlines, sharing the objective, everybody knows. And that helps a lot.

One final tip. Make sure there aren't meetings after the meetings where things really get decided. If you're having meetings and the ideas are worthy, you come to a conclusion, everybody has their assignment, walking out of there, thinks they know what they're doing. And then there's the meeting after the meeting where somebody goes directly or around, does the end around to the boss and says, "No, I think we should do this, this way." And all of a sudden everything changes. Well, not only does that ruin the initiative you're working on, but it ruins your ability for the next initiative and the initiative afterwards. Get it all decided in the meeting. Public, agreed. Get everybody on the same page, marching to the same set of music.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in.