

## Do You Need to Back Up?

Welcome back to Guidestone University and a new session. This session we're going to be looking at four practices that will help you to move forward with your team together.

Several years ago, I was sitting with a friend of mine, talking about some of the challenges that we were experiencing in leadership, and they made this observation about my work. They said, "You know, because you're so visionary, you're often way ahead of people in your thinking. You should consider slowing down a little bit."

As I look back on his advice, even today, I've learned that it's not only important for me to slow down or to allow people to catch up at times. Sometimes, we even need to back up. The truth of the matter is, as leaders we struggle slowing down or even backing up, because it's humbling. It sheds light on the fact that maybe we didn't plan appropriately. Maybe we didn't look ahead adequately. Maybe we didn't communicate as effectively as we thought that we were or maybe we didn't execute appropriately.

Now, we're suddenly faced with this harsh reality that we moved ahead with a major project, or a major initiative, or with some new ideas and we didn't have key people on board. So, whether you're in a non-profit or whether you're in a large company, or even whether you're an entrepreneur, people weren't able to keep up, so, your desired result or the desired outcome hasn't happened or hasn't come to pass like you thought that it would or even like you projected.

Several weeks ago, I've spent some time with some good friends, and I listened while they talked about some of the things that they were experiencing and some of the things that they were moving for; and during this conversation, he said sometimes, it's necessary for him to occasionally back up and ensure that the entire team understands the vision and the project before they move forward any further. He said that there were times when he would start explaining the initiative, and he would start at step F or step G or step H or I, and his colleagues or his team needed him to back up and start at square one to start at step A.

The absolute last thing that we want to do is press forward without everybody on board; and yet, we do, and when we do, it's not going to end well. So, I want us to look at these four practices that will help us to move forward together with our team.

What I'm not saying is that if you have somebody who is being belligerent or somebody who's being a road block, or keeping things from moving forward, keeping the team from reaching consistently moving forward that you should cater to them. I think at times it's appropriate to set boundaries and to move forward if somebody is simply just being a road block. But, in most situations, that's not the issue. The issue is really our responsibility; we didn't make sure to communicate effectively and we moved forward without ensuring that everybody was clear or without ensuring that there was clarity in the team.

Number one, **encourage other people to lead**. Wait a minute, I thought we were talking about our leadership and moving ahead. At first glance maybe this seems like it doesn't fit here. After all, if you or I are leading a project or leading a team or leading an organization, shouldn't we be the ones leading? But, this is important. Remember, **the goal of leadership is to develop more leaders, not more followers**.

If the goal of leadership is to develop more leaders, then your team member should be leading the effort most of the time, not you. So, give people — give them every chance you can to lead out in the work. To be most successful, to be most effective in your life, and in your work, and in your leadership, **make the success of others your top priority**.

Yes, there's going to be times when people take advantage of you. When they try to run out their own agenda, but more often than not, they'll place high value on your transparency and on your authenticity and on your servant-leadership.

Number two, **start at the beginning**. You start into a new initiative, or you start into planning something. You've been thinking about it and you've been planning the project for weeks— maybe even months, if not years. This is something that has been in your heart, and in your mind; but the team hasn't had that runway or hasn't had the same planning horizon that you did. It's not going to make much sense for you to rush through the presentation of the research and the data that brought the project to this point. See, everybody that's involved needs to understand it also. They need a chance to process it. They need a chance to provide feedback. They need a chance to take ownership. Then throughout the execution phase, they need you to regularly refer back to the purpose or the vision, back to the beginning.

You've heard the phrase that was popularized by Stephen Covey, "Begin with the end in mind." Many of us would do well to also end with the beginning in mind, too. Sometimes, as we work through the process, and even if we get near the end we need to go back and say, "Okay, this was our vision. This was our purpose. Are we still on track? Are we accomplishing what we set out to accomplish?" And bring as many people as possible along with us from the very beginning.

Number three, **be clear**. We talked about these things before here in 201. We want to talk about and just touch on them real quickly again. With all that's going on in the market place, we're occasionally drawn into things to attempt to compete with anything and everything that resembles our service or our product. This is simply not productive. There are so many things that you feel like, or at first glance you may imagine that you're competing with, and you're not.

To be successful, most initiatives don't require all these bells and whistles. They don't require pulling out all the stops. They don't require introducing too much complexity into the mix. If people can't understand what you're doing, if people can't understand it with clarity, then, they can't champion the cause. They won't have the opportunity to buy or they won't have the opportunity to give, because they can't see the value; it's not clear enough.

**Great systems are simple. Great products are simple. Great services are simple. Great communication is simple.**

Although most products don't require bells and whistles, they all require clarity. Clear and compelling communication, you can create wow experiences and you can create great products and services without complicating the message. So, be clear.

Number four, **be patient**. The most effective leaders don't expect everybody to get excited about their excitement. Why is that? Because they know that there is going to be times when your intensity confronts the passivity of other people. Some people would be inspired by the vision and they'll buy in, and they'll take ownership, and they'll champion the cause and support it all along the way. These are the people that you want to ensure that they're on board. But, other people are going to be intimidated; they're going to mask their discomfort with criticism. So, patience with your team, or your key stakeholders, the people who are buying into the vision, patience may be the most important of these four disciplines, and it maybe the most difficult to live out.

If your team is lagging behind, maybe you need to slow down, maybe you need to just throw it in reverse, maybe you need to back it on up, maybe you need to go all the way back to the beginning and start over. It may feel like it's going to take you forever to get moving again. It's going to be a little bit humbling, but with the right people on the team, it will always be worth it.

**Action Step**

As you think through these four practices that help you move forward with the team together, and you think about the work that you're doing right now, is there any area where you need to either slow down or back up?

I want you to take a few minutes to think about that and write it down.

We'll see you in the next session of Guidestone University.