

# cover SHEET

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| Case Study Title:    | <b>Building Relationships &amp; Getting Results: Using an actionable and adaptable approach to establish a leadership philosophy and achieve greater effectiveness in Downers Grove, Illinois</b> |
| Case Study Category: | Organizational Design                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Jurisdiction Name:   | Village of Downers Grove, IL                                                                                                                                                                      |
| City Manager Name:   | David Fieldman                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Consider for Award?: | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Presenter            | David Fieldman                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| Presenter:           | Marcia Giesler                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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# EXECUTIVE summary

This presentation will demonstrate how the Village of Downers Grove has introduced a simple but powerful leadership philosophy that has taken hold and is transforming the organization. The basic elements of the leadership philosophy are being actively implemented and reinforced on a daily basis through the use of recommendations and actions obtained from a series of online podcasts on managerial and organizational effectiveness called Manager Tools. Based on this approach, the Village can point to many specific ways that our employees have built strong working relationships and improved results and performance for the Village. We are excited to show the TLG audience how and why we feel these efforts have been so successful.

## BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2011, the Village of Downers Grove adopted a leadership philosophy that includes the following key components:

- Communication makes us better.
- Good ideas come from anywhere and everywhere.
- Let's be tough on issues and easy on people.

We believe that it's up to all employees to understand and carry out their duties in a manner that exemplifies this philosophy. The Village Manager likes to say that there is actually very little he can do to direct the extensive amount of work that occurs within the organization. However, if he is able to effectively establish this leadership philosophy by encouraging employees throughout the Village to understand and appreciate it, and ultimately exercise and adopt behaviors that reinforce these concepts, we can become far more effective as an organization.

This presentation is intended to explain and demonstrate the many tools, techniques and approaches that we have used in Downers Grove to establish and reinforce this leadership philosophy. Attendees to our session will be able to easily identify and adapt the most appropriate techniques that might benefit their own organizations. Specifically, we will define and explain how we have successfully applied techniques such as:

- Pre-wiring
- Hotwashes
- One-on-ones
- Feedback
- Effective meeting management
- Visual meeting capture
- Basic project management
- Dry-run presentations

Many of the techniques identified above have been adapted from on series of free online podcasts called Manager-Tools. They offer a low-cost, highly relevant and easily to implement

set of interrelated recommendations that have noticeably improved our managerial and organizational effectiveness. At the heart of the podcasts is a fundamental message that all managers in an organization have the following basic responsibilities if they truly want to perform in the most effective manner: :

- To know their people exceptionally well
- To encourage effective behavior
- To regularly ask for improved performance
- To build organizational capacity

The content from these podcasts also offers specific actions anyone can take to strengthen professional relationships between supervisor and direct report, along with relationships among employees across the organization. As a result of these efforts, which were initially modelled successfully by the Village Manager and Deputy Village Manager before being rolled out more broadly, we have built trust among staff, strengthened the relationships between staff and the elected officials and established a stronger organization.

In addition to the nuts and bolts techniques that attendees will observe and be able to take away, we will also link them back to the broader leadership philosophy to show how simple concepts, effectively introduced and practiced in a routine and predictable manner, can bring about lasting and permanent change within an organization, creating an environment that promotes greater innovation and adaptation through heightened levels of trust and understanding.

In addition, we will draw a direct connection between the actions associated with supporting the leadership philosophy and the bottom line results on the Village. Basically, through these approaches, we have been able to create a more sustainable and well-run organization based on effective behaviors that can stand the test of time. In other words, this is not a structured program that can be dismantled following an unpredictable change in political or administrative leadership. These behaviors are helping to elevate the performance of all managers and individual contributors throughout the organization in a lasting and permanent manner.

It has been an evolutionary process and we have learned a great deal along the way (with much more work to be done), but we believe that this approach is the most effective in the long run and will position the Village of Downers Grove to be successful now and into the future, as new challenges and opportunities arise and demand the creative talents of people who can effectively work together and get results.

**Program Intent:**

The intent of this effort (we have been very deliberate about not calling it a “program” because we think that will minimize its effectiveness and permanence) has been to acknowledge and further instill a leadership philosophy in employees that contribute to improved working relationships and organizational performance.

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Costs:                                                  | 10 members of the leadership team have attended a one or two day Manager Tools conference at a cost of approximately \$1,000 per person. These costs are by no means a requirement to gain access to the recommendations, since much of the same content is available in the online podcasts at no cost.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Savings:                                                | Difficult to quantify, but substantial. Mostly comes through the ability to more effectively manage people and work cooperatively across departmental lines. Considering that we are resource constrained due to the recent recession and that over 75% of our operating costs support our personnel, improvements in productivity have a dramatic impact on the bottom line.                                                                                                                                         |
| Innovative Characteristics:                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of online content delivered via podcasts as a primary source of management development within the Village.</li> <li>• Introduction of specific actions and behaviors based on the online content and tailored to support and reinforce the basic elements of the leadership philosophy.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Obstacles:                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A heavy workload that can make it difficult to commit the time required to undertake this “Quadrant 2” (important but not necessarily urgent) work.</li> <li>• The time and effort required to identify and confront aspects of individual and group performance that can be improved (while noticeable improvements have been made, there are still many opportunities)</li> </ul>                                                                                          |
| Outcomes/Applicable Results & Real World Practicality:: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved policy-level discussion by the elected body (because there is greater trust in staff to effectively carry out day-to-day to day operations due to more effective management of people and responsibilities)</li> <li>• Improved financial decision-making (because people understand the importance of working together more effectively for the good of the entire organization)</li> <li>• Improved efficiency and better use of limited resources</li> </ul>     |
| Use of Private Consultant                               | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Other - Additional Information                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager Tools content available at <a href="http://www.manager-tools.com">www.manager-tools.com</a></li> <li>• We have included a picture of a white-board in the Deputy Village Manager’s Office to that was used to develop and refine this presentation concept. This is used to illustrate the somewhat unique, but ultimately highly effective, approach used in the Village of Downers Grove that the audience will experience throughout our presentation.</li> </ul> |

# Presentation STYLE

The Downers Grove Team will present to in a dynamic manner that informs and entertains a diverse audience consisting of a range of professionals, from chief administrative officers to department heads to entry level management professionals and interns. This will be accomplished through the following elements:

- **Prezi:** we will develop a visually attractive as well as concise and coherent presentation using this online tool, which will be made available to audience members after the presentation via the Internet (and portions of it may be released in advance to build interest and curiosity)
- **Stories and Actionable Recommendations:** the presentation content will consist of several stories woven together by broader themes and interspersed with actionable recommendations. Audience members will take away several useful concepts related to the presentation, along with a clear understanding of how to apply and adapt several specific actions to improve the effectiveness of their own organizations.
- **Demonstrations:** Our team will enact several of the techniques that we will be introducing in the presentation to show people how easily they can be implemented with minimal training and preparation. Demonstrations will include opportunities for audience participation and basic role playing.

EXAMPLES (SUCCESSSES)  
(AND FAILURES)

# LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

[AND WHAT IT MEANS]

EFFECTIVE...  
...IS WHAT THE DOES CONTROLS  
...IS LISTENING, EXERCISE BETTER  
...SOMETHING ON DISC  
...COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

1) COMMUNICATION MAKES US BETTER

CAUSE/EFFECT

REINFORCES NOTION OF INDIVIDUAL CONTROL

2) GREAT IDEAS COME FROM ANYWHERE & EVERYWHERE

MANAGERS MUST BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE & IMPLEMENT

3) LET'S BE TOUGH ON ISSUES, NOT PEOPLE

MANAGERS MUST MODEL BEHAVIOR/ SET THE EXAMPLE

PEOPLE

WHERE "SOFT SKILLS" CAN BE WIDEN DELIVERED  
...EMPHASIS ON RELATIONSHIP POWER

\* ONE-ON-ONES  
\* EFFECTIVE MEETINGS  
\* HONOLAH  
\* PROT MANT (wobisw)  
\* FEEDBACK  
\* MT GOALS  
\* COACHING  
\* PROCESS REPORTING

↓ EMPHASIS ON ROLE/EXPERIENCE POWER

↓ IMPORTANCE OF FORMAL HIERARCHY  
...DELEGATION  
...INTERDEPTAL TEAMS (MANAGED EFFECTIVELY)

TOOLS/TECHNIQUES (\* IN USE)  
\* FEEDBACK  
\* PREQUIRES (two-way w/ council)  
\* DISC  
\* MEETING  
\* FACILITATION  
\* PRESENTATIONS  
[GREAT MANAGERS...]

KNOW THEIR PEOPLE EXCEPTIONALLY WELL (ONE ON ONES)

ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOR (FEEDBACK)

REGULARLY ASK FOR IMPROVED PERFORMANCE (COACHING)

GROW ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (DELEGATION)

"THROUGH OUT OR A DIACT"  
...APPLIES TO STAFF & COUNCIL  
...DOING RIGHT, DOESN'T PROMOTE MICROMANAGEMENT