

# Shackleton's Lessons from *Shackleton's Way*

## Hiring the Right Behaviors and Traits

- Start with a solid core of workers you know from past jobs or who come recommended by trusted colleagues.
- Your No.2 is your most important hire. Pick one who complements your management style, shows loyalty without being a yes-man, and has a talent for working with others.
- Hire those who share your vision. Someone who clashes with your personality or the corporate culture will hinder your work.
- Be a creative, unconventional interviewer if you seek creative, unconventional people. Go deeper than job experience and expertise. Ask questions that reveal a candidate's personality, values, and perspective on work and life.
- Surround yourself with cheerful, optimistic people. They will reward you with the loyalty and camaraderie vital for success.
- Applicants hungriest for the job are apt to work hardest to keep it.
- To weed out potential slackers, choose workers who show a willingness to tackle any job, and will take a turn at the unpopular tasks.
- Hire those with the talents and expertise you lack. Don't feel threatened by them. They will help you stay on the cutting edge and bring distinction to your organization.
- Spell out clearly to new employees the exact duties and requirements of their jobs, and how they will be compensated. Many failed work relationships start with a lack of communication.
- To help your staff do top-notch work, give them the best equipment you can afford. Working with outdated, unreliable tools creates an unnecessary burden.

## Team Development

- Take the time to observe before acting, especially if you are new to the scene. All changes should be aimed at improvements. Don't make changes just for the sake of leaving your mark.
- Always keep the door open to your staff members, and be generous with information that affects them. Well-informed employees are more eager and better prepared to participate.
- Establish order and routine on the job so all workers know where they stand and what is expected of them. The discipline makes the staff feel they're in capable hands.
- Break down traditional hierarchies and cliques by training workers to do a number of jobs, from the menial to the challenging.

- Where possible, have employees work together on certain tasks. It builds trust and respect and even friendship.
- Be fair and impartial in meting out compensations, workloads, and punishments. Imbalances make everyone feel uncomfortable, even the favored.
- Lead by example. Chip in sometimes to help with the work you're having others do. It gives you the opportunity to set a high standard and shows your respect for the job.
- Have regular gatherings to build esprit de corps. These could be informal lunches that allow workers to speak freely outside the office. Or they could be special holiday or anniversary celebrations that let employees relate to each other as people rather than only as colleagues.

### **Creating a Motivational Environment**

In order to get the best from every individual, Shackleton:

- Believed in the importance of creature comforts in maintaining morale and let each man put his personal stamp on his surroundings.
- Insisted on healthy diet, exercise, and reasonable safety measures, believing physical and mental acumen were closely linked.
- Made sure each man had challenging and meaningful work.
- Matched personality types with work responsibilities.
- Gave his men constant feedback, praising their efforts and correcting their mistakes.
- Related to every person under him as a human being, not only as a worker.
- Held small celebrations that recognized the individual.
- Was tolerant of people's quirks and foibles. He didn't hesitate to pamper his men.

### **Change Management and Getting the Group Through a Crisis**

- When crisis strikes, immediately address your staff. Take charge of the situation, offer a plan of action, ask for support, and show absolute confidence in a positive outcome.
- Get rid of unnecessary middle layers of authority. Direct leadership is more efficient in emergency situations.
- Plan several options in detail. Get a grasp of the possible consequences of each, always keeping your eye on the big picture.
- Streamline supplies and operations so they won't slow you down.
- Give your staff an occasional reality check to keep them on course. After time, people will start to treat a crisis situation as business as usual and lose their focus.
- Keep your malcontents close to you. Resist your instinct to avoid them and instead try to win them over and gain their support.

- Defuse tension. In high-stress situations use humor to put people at ease, and keep your staff busy.
- Let go of the past. Don't waste time or energy regretting past mistakes or fretting over what you can't change.
- Ask for advice and information from a variety of sources, but ultimately make decisions based on your own best judgment.
- Let all the people involved in the crisis participate in the solution, even if that means doling out some work that is less than vital.
- Be patient. Sometimes the best course of action is to do nothing but watch and wait.
- Give your staff plenty of time to get used to the idea of an unpopular decision.

### **Staff Development**

- Create a work environment comfortable enough to entice professionals to spend the greater part of their waking hours there. Allow for some personal preferences.
- Be generous with programs that promote the well-being of your staff. Healthy bodies and minds are more productive.
- Make sure each employee has challenging and important work. Even the lowest-ranking workers must feel they are making a valuable and appreciated contribution to the company.
- Match the person to the position. Be observant of the types of people who are working for you and what jobs might best suit their personalities as well as their experience.
- Give consistent feedback on performance. Most workers feel they don't get nearly enough words of praise and encouragement.
- Strive for work relationships that have a human as professional element. No matter how large your company, get to know as many employees as possible. Memorize their interests so you can chat about something other than work.
- Reward the individual as well as the group. Public acknowledgement of a job well done—a birthday or a work anniversary—will make an employee feel appreciated.
- Be tolerant. Know each employee's strengths and weaknesses, and set reasonable expectations. Occasional indulging intervals, even if you think they're being too needy, can have powerful effect, especially in high-stress situations.