

Leadership is an Attitude

If natural disasters teach us nothing else, we can all continue to learn that many of the attributes of leadership are the direct result of a mindset, which is what attitude is all about.

Last week I was in Houston, Texas, working with a client, and helping to facilitate a two-day workshop. Through a series of events, the workshop scheduled was amended and finally suspended mid-morning of the second day, due to the impending storm, Hurricane Ike.

There was no panic among the participants, some planned to leave the area, others went home to 'batten down the hatches' and ride out the storm.

I, along with numerous other travelers, hurriedly canceled hotel reservations and changed flight arrangements. Having been through two hurricanes, while living in Hawaii, I was in no hurry to experience a third. And here's a bit of shocking news: even the airlines 'stepped up to the plate', not charging for changing flight arrangements . . . they actually had a 'Hurricane Ike Waiver' . . . very cool, I thought.

In fact, as I talked with the cab driver, sat in the airport, talked with fellow travelers, etc. I was amazed at the difference in attitude pretty much across the board. No one was overly frustrated or demanding, everyone was helpful, conversation was civilized and friendly. It was almost like there had been a 'magic spell' cast over the area. Everyone 'stepped up' and did their part, easily and naturally, to insure that we all remained calm and felt secure. Leadership demonstrated at a variety of levels.

Since the storm, I have managed to connect with several friends and clients in the area, and over and over I hear stories of how neighbors are pulling together, helping each other with clean-up, childcare, food, water, and other necessities that we all take for granted every single day. They have talked of how the weather has even cooperated and been relatively cool and pleasant. Since many are still without power (read no air conditioning in a hot and humid part of the planet), the break in the weather has been another blessing. Gratefulness for families being together, despite the circumstances, is another common theme. Collaboration, communication, taking action, using good judgment, accepting responsibility, are all leadership attributes that are being demonstrated in ways both big and small, because the attitudes of cooperation, support, and encouragement have surfaced.

Yes, it will be a long time before Houston, Galveston, and other places in the path of Hurricane Ike will be back to 'normal'. In some instances a 'new normal' will emerge. Yet it will all be a direct result of the attitudes and leadership attributes that are demonstrated every day that will allow neighborhoods, communities, cities, and towns to recover, to grow, and to contribute once again.

It's funny how humanity seems to 'step up' in times of major crisis and disaster, to work together and move forward. Yet, we often act very differently on a day-to-day basis, getting caught up in the everyday issues and incidents of our lives. Our future depends on how we lead; our leadership depends on our attitudes and values. How are we leading in our challenging environment of a down economy, global warming, and an uncertain global future? Will it take a major crisis or natural disaster for our attitudes and perception of others to be more collaborative, and dare I say it, kinder?

The stories that will continue to be told in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike will undoubtedly be many. Based on lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, there should be many more positive stories; such as those I've already heard. What stories are being told in your business, your team, among your family and friends that demonstrate an attitude of leadership

and human kindness?

Aloha,