

Santa Claus is a bad role model for managers



Since Christmas is quickly approaching and Santa Claus is busy running North Pole Inc., it would be a good time to take a look at the way he operates.

There are lessons to be learned from the big guy.

Truth is, like most managers, his heart is in the right place. But as you can see, as a leader, there's room for improvement.

He does not help out in the trenches. The great delegator that he is, Old St. Nick lifts nary a finger in the production of the goods he distributes. Elves, toiling for what could be low or no wages (it's never been discussed), take on all the grunt work, including loading the sleigh. It would be nice if Santa himself put down his pipe once in a while to show the staff that he's a team player.

His performance review system is shallow. Naughty or nice. That's it? Boys and girls worldwide are expected to perform by standards that really amount to just "good or bad" for the entire year without any feedback or definitions. How naughty was he? Under what circumstances? To whom? How many times was she nice? Was it sincere? Did it have any meaningful results? C'mon, Santa, the kids are in the dark. A little more guidance would go a long way to improving behavior.

His answers to tough questions are condescendingly blunt. *"How do reindeer fly, Santa?"* "Magic," he says. "Ho ho ho." One-word answers to a person who wants a little more explanation, depth or perspective, are lame.

"Hey, boss, how did we do on that Simmons contract?" "Great. (Now get back to work.)" You see where this is going? Put a little tact in your communication.

He hogs all the credit. One night of hard work and few weeks of taking children's orders and he's featured in all the songs, cards and displays. Santa Claus is coming to town! The heck with everyone else who made it happen.

He's mired in tradition. For centuries, the jolly old CEO has run things pretty much the same way. Where's the innovation? Progress? Growth? Can presents be delivered more efficiently? Can the sleigh be updated? How about an easier way to get inside of a home? Maybe Santa can get away with the "if it ain't broke" model, but you can't.

He offers no promotional opportunities. It's all about the star performer Rudolph. Does Prancer have a shot at leading the team? In fact, it might be beneficial if Santa brought an elf or two with him on the big night as part of a mentorship program.

Seriously, Santa does have one great quality that every manager covets: He can make everyone smile.

How?

That's magic.