

Turbo Leadership Systems™

The **TURBO** **Charger**

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Issue 208



To our clients and friends

January 13, 2009

Right Way to Right Size



Larry W. Dennis, Sr.
President,
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Systems®

*In times of
dramatic
change, over-
communicate*

Bob, coalition leader for a paper mill in northern Ontario, Canada, told Session 7B of the Leadership Development Lab:

“Recently the mill was downsized due to fiber supply shortages caused by saw-mill shutdowns. For this reason, there was a lot of movement of people to different departments and bumping back by seniority. Junior people had to move down and in some cases unfortunately, out. Reassignment movement affecting several departments across the mill can be very complicated. In a union environment, seniority must be respected. What makes things even more complicated is there are three kinds of seniority: company seniority, department seniority, and job seniority. It is complex, hard to understand, and even harder to explain.

In the restructuring, some people felt that the rules for seniority were not being followed. Things got pretty tense. I heard and observed that some people were not even talking to each other. Their emotions were running too high. To put it mildly, our operation was no longer working as a team.

I had two meetings with one of the departments to be sure everyone was included no matter what shift or schedule they were working. I explained to the crews the value of seniority and how it had to be applied consistently over the years. I drew out a sketch on the white board of

the seniority process and of bumping to help them see and better understand how the process works step-by-step. I visually showed the members how the process works in our union and then even did a comparison to other unions in the plant.

After the meetings, the crews seemed okay now that they had a clear, easy to understand explanation that they felt they could trust. The next day, I noticed the people in the department talking to each other again. That was a relief. Most of the tension seemed to be gone and they were working as a team once again.

The lesson I learned from this experience is that when I listen to the concerns of members and explain the ground rules so people can really understand them, most situations are resolved. It really is all about communication. As Larry, our instructor, said, in times of disruptive change and uncertainty, it is important to over communicate. The action I call you to take is to listen (LP#6 – Be An Active Listener) to your team members, try and understand their point of view (LP#5 – See Their Point of View), and explain any and all changes, the reason for the process, the rule, the standard, or the change. Be sure all the ramifications are clearly understood. Use illustrations, sketches, and where appropriate, analyze and compare to other similar organizations. The benefit you will gain is people will respect you and your leadership even if and when they may not fully agree.” **###**

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