

# A WEEK IN *Learning*

## The People First Approach

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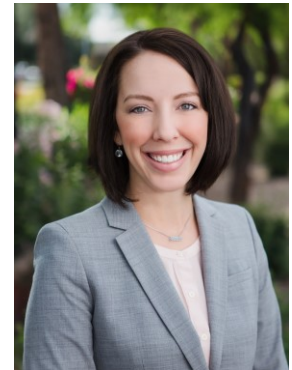
For us, as an organization, Team Enrichment is a new concept. We implemented an enrichment department at the beginning of this year, and kicked off this exciting initiative with a mindset of opportunity and growth. For other organizations, a culture of enrichment for their employees is part of their DNA. After the Great Recession, many companies looked to their team members to be the lifeblood of what kept their organization running. Leaders recognized that their greatest asset was their people, and *that* was going to differentiate them from their competition. This distinction would help build a foundation for their business growth strategies. They call this, the **People First Approach**.

The Forum for People Performance Management and Measurement conducted a study on the elements of leadership, performance, and enriching employees (Won-joo Yun & Fran Mulhern, 2009). They found that when leaders are genuinely concerned about their teams' professional growth and personal wellbeing, everyone is better able to contribute to the successes and advancement of the organization.

Employee enrichment, as defined by the study, suggests a people-centric approach where leaders are called to ignite their organization by authentically attempting to "enrich" their team member's lives. This method focuses on the inherent significance of addressing quality of life challenges, with the expectation that if an employee is enriched, he or she will naturally perform better at work. The development of our teams, and their own self-development, is what connects performance to success.

So, you might ask, *how do we achieve an enriched workforce and where does it all start?* It all begins with our business leaders. Leaders are often charged with strategic thinking and goal setting, as well as ensuring general key performance indicators are met. The concept of looking at leadership as a direct influencer of bottom line results often undermines the opportunity to demonstrate balanced responsibility of people and projects. If we want the projects done, and done well, we have to put the people *first*.

The best way to put our people first is to demonstrate a type of leadership called "enrichment leadership". Our company's performance is built on a foundation of our people. If we look at how our



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leaders would exhibit the qualities and components of enrichment leadership, you would see:

1. *Vision Development* – Leaders incorporate their team members in their vision, showcasing their social responsibility to their people. Think of GCNA’s vision: Ending Poverty through the Power of Work.
2. *People Alignment* – The inclusion of all employees with reliable communication to produce an empowered workforce.
3. *People Enrichment* – This is personal and professional development opportunities, which creates strong, relational ties between our organization and our people.
4. *Performance Assessment* – These are the metrics that will tell the story of employee engagement, and how effective the organization is at satisfying its team. (GCNA will be sending out a survey this year that will provide those baseline questions for our organization.)

When these four fundamentals happen in a workplace, with a leadership team putting its people first, you will see an enriched work environment. If the focus of business leaders is *people above everything else*, the workplace would resemble the following:

- Customized and enhanced benefits that are designed to address individualized and personal concerns of a company’s employees.
- Technology that provides information and is immediately accessible to its team members, therefore driving empowerment.
- Linked workplace activities to real world, societal challenges to improve the community they live in.
- Changing the way we conventionally look at the Human Resources function and choosing to go above and beyond the regular employee experience.
- Innovative, new ways to structure the organization to best align its people to its purpose.
- Measurements of the well-being within an organization through people-centric ways that tread through the traditional standards of the past.

Successful businesses are built everyday by enriching the lives of its team members - we just need to remember that the responsibility of that foundation rests on the shoulders of the leaders. To sum everything up in the simplest way: **it begins with leaders and ends with people.**