

Developing the Culture of Prestige Design Group

By Elayne Leathers-Hill

Transformational Leadership For The 21st Century

Dr. Samuel R. Chand and Dr. Rodney Jackson

Final Paper

I am Elayne Leathers – Hill and I am the owner/operator of Prestige Design Group, Inc. We are a full service embroidery uniform and promotional manufacturing company that provides products for the transit and service industry. We provide embroidery, silk screen and promotional items to every market imaginable. Most of our business is generated from the film industry, car dealerships, corporate America and churches. Prestige has been in business since September of 1991. Forming Prestige nearly 26 years ago, was a dream come true. I have always been a business minded person and had an entrepreneurial mind set. As a young child I sold rabbits door to door; that my father would hunt, kill and clean to buy my school clothes. I sold Mary Kay Cosmetic for 4 years prior to owning and operating a store with my brother Donald Leathers. It was a High Fashion Boutique in Akron, Ohio called Hollywood Swingers. The boutique brought in customers from all over the state great and small. We were in business for 5 years. The store was located on Exchange Street it was a busy intersection. The city decided to make it a one way street, due to the high volume of accidents in that location. This decision hurt and impacted our business in a negative way and forced us to close. Having a business of my own, has always been my desire. I have my parents to thank for this, because I had seen my parents taking on extra jobs, and selling homemade items all my life. This was the beginning of my love for merchandising. I opened Prestige Design Group in a room in my basement and began making tee shirts for Shiners, as well as schools in my area. I eventually hired a young man from Africa (who was more of a workaholic then myself) to assist me in fulfilling orders. I developed one problem. I worked more in my business than working on my business. It was not long before the business expanded. I went from working on a machine that only printed one shirt at a time to a head machine to a machine that could produce four shirts at a time. Due to a lack of space I could expand as quickly as I needed to but the work kept coming and the business continued to

grow. By the time the machine arrived it was too small to handle the work load. My husband built an office and work room in the rear of our home to help with the growth of the business. My friends called it a shed but I was proud of my space and called it my office. It was a 1250 square feet space. It was just what I needed to house my new 12 shirt at a time multi embroidery machine. My business member of the Atlanta Business League, and the GMSDC, Georgia Minority Business Center. Through networking I was able to secure a contract with UPS, which enabled me to hire 75 employees. I partnered with a larger company making a bag for UPS called the Forever Living Bag. UPS used the bag to ship small parcel around the world. My business has seen growth in so many different areas. It went from making small sales to making sells to corporations who needed 300-500 items per order. Some of the challenges that I have with my business today are in the areas of stagnation, procrastination and not having the ability and understanding to change with my culture. My biggest challenge, is allowing my problems to control the success of my company. Staying focus on the growth of the business, and not the limitations of the business are areas that I need to improve and evolve.

Goals

The goal of my company is to move into the twenty first century and be a global marketer of promotional goods, and industrial uniforms. I have a vision of also being a cutting edge competitive competition for other promotional companies. My company is presently too small to embroidery 2000-3000 items a week.

However, It's a great size to serve, and to train others how to become a successful entrepreneur.

Teaching Embroidery, Silk Screen, Promotional goods, taught hands-on detail is a much needed tool.

All youth are not college material, but they are teachable, we must harness their energy and creativity, for those returning with PTSD, embroidery allow you to settle down and help you to solve a simple problem of where the next stitch should be placed, for it is an art of distortion, yet you do not want to destroy what you are designing. Teaching how many stitches goes down per inch, what to do, and what not to do need underlay. The Tajima embroidery machine, is like learning to read a foreign language. I believe we all have a natural creative power waiting to be birthed.

7 Keys of Culture

The seven keys of the Culture according to Dr. Samuel Chand, pp51 are

Control

People function more effectively if they are given control (or authority) with responsibility.

Due to the fact all of my people have been with me for a very long time, each is very comfortable with their niche, per (Dr Chand) pp52, If they are held to a task to accomplish it and have not the skill set, that's a serious bottleneck. So we are now cross training everyone. Because the right control system will cause you to better manage your work flow.

Understanding

Every person on the team should have a clear grasp on the vision, his, or her role, the gifts and contributions of the team members, and the way the team functions. Each person should be able to clearly, articulate each of these vital aspects of the team's life. (Chand) pp54

I have been working on the Who's, What and the Why's of our business and I can see according to Chand, some growth.

Leadership

According to (Chand)pp55 There's a difference between Leaders and managers. Healthy teams are pipelines of leadership development. Training and managing are both very important, but developing people are far more important to secure the Culture of my business. I recently

Attended a training at The Coca Cola HQ, I have not been there in a while, they were presently remodeling, retaining and refocusing who they are. Talking about Healthy eating will bring on healthy lifestyle intern allow you to be more productive. Will allow better rates on there insurance coverage, due to less stress. In their work space you can eat healthier, workout,

Also you are motivated to manage your stress level. In their training they shared an app to help you manage your health. I notice everything was done faster, quicker less time, less waste.

More productivity.

Trust

Mutual trust among team members is the glue that makes everything good possible. Without trust a team quickly disintegrates into a gang of people protecting their turf and forming angry alliances (Chand)pp57 According to Chand Trust grows in a environment that is HOT; honest, open, and transparent.

Unafraid

Corporate courage is an incredibly appealing but slippery trait. You must be able to keep fighting forward, look pass my present, keeping my eyes on the word of God and know my faith is in Jesus Christ. This is one thing I know, God will make the corrected road straight. I am looking to see how not if, but how God will turn this around for me.

Responsive

Teams with healthy cultures are alert to open doors and ones that are closing. This is an area that I need to continually work on the ability to check the temperature of the doors, I call them the windows, and the times to move. Being proactive, move and not wait till things fall apart. OMG, I am still learning this lesson. According to (Chand)pp61, The larger the organization grows, the greater the amount of energy that needs to be invested in being responsive to people inside and outside the team.

Execution

Executing decisions is a function of clarity, roles and responsibility, and the system of accountability according to (Chand)pp62 Chand states we should have a clear accurate reporting team on the tasks they have been assigned We must do a ongoing training for our team members. Developing a culture of accountability takes the mystery and the sting out of giving reports.

The Culture of Prestige

According to (Chand) Culture is about the heart and head, and then it shapes what we do with our hands. I have taken the limits off the table by reaching out to 10 new clients a day.

(2) Developing a Social Media Strategy, (3) Register to do business with the Federal Government.

(4) Engage with my Minority and Women own Business Data Base, redevelop my relationship with Corporate America Companies that I once had business with. Continue to train others in

embroidery seek out opportunities to train others, If I can teach somebody, who teach somebody who teach somebody else. I will live forever.

Succession Plan

My niece Daisha Johnson, she is now 25, when she was 5 years old told me she could do everything on the machine I could do, so I set her on the machine and to my amazement, she knew how to thread, program, and to start the machine. Mind you she was not tall enough to reach the buttons, so I had to sit her on the machine. Proving to me, anyone could be taught to do what I do. Daishai, has a 2 year degree and she's very confident in what she wants. Just like I was raised in sewing making my own creations, I found my way back to the one thing I knew.

Sewing and embroidery was the first thing my mother taught me as a child. Today after all these years I don't look at this as a job, but something I love to do. Six months ago, Daishai, left to work at a bank, and I believe she will one day come back to run the family business, until then, I have a young lady who is much like a daughter.

Esther Francois, is trained to run Prestige to take it into our future. Her day to day operations

Skills are much like mine, except she has new age skill level, that I don't have, she's very pro-active, smart forward thinking.

She already knows where she wants to take the company, so I know she and Daishai, will be great ladder holders for each other.

She is great at, sales is the future of growing Prestige, that may be an area that we need to hirer

Some outside sales reps.



PRESTIGE DESIGN GROUP, INC.
TURNING SEWING AND EMBROIDERY INTO BIG BUSINESS

Elayne Leathers-Hill's summer activity as a kid was embroidering. Nearly a half-century later, embroidery is the core activity at Prestige Design Group, Inc., a \$7 million, full-service uniform and corporate casuals business she has stitched together in Atlanta.

Leathers-Hill's initial business experience involved motivational speakers and multilevel marketing. That all changed in 1991, when she decided to create a business out of her sewing and embroidery. With \$30,000 of family savings, she purchased a one-head embroidery machine and began working at home. Her first client? The Shriners. Business soon took off, and she acquired 1,250 square feet of workspace and added more elaborate machines. Today the operation consists of two manufacturing facilities and employs as many as 60 people.

Creating a large business out of a home project wasn't easy. "For a while we were managing finances on a daily basis. We had to decide every day who we were going to pay." The business transformation came from a relationship with UPS, which needed a supplier to manufacture reusable vinyl bags. Instead of contracting the business to a large firm, it put Prestige together with a company called Riverside Manufacturing, and the two launched a bag-manufacturing operation from the ground up.

The UPS support was a major boon for Leathers-Hill. She has other corporate clients, including Bronner Brothers, Coca-Cola, and Cobb County Transit. She now plans to use her improved infrastructure to provide new solutions to her expanding customer base. "When you're determined to grow, there are no boundaries," says Leathers-Hill.

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