



# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

## 10 Traits to Lead Your Team on the Path to Change

By Paul Picciurro, CHESP

**“O**K, this ain't working. Time to make a change, so from now on we're going to...”

A quick, reactionary decision is almost always fatal to any department, especially environmental services (EVS). Sometimes leaders don't know where to begin, and sometimes, leaders don't want to make the change for fear of the conflict it brings.

Following the basics of transformational management can make change easier. By definition, transformational management means studying current ideas and making alterations to their form, nature or process. Once you have evaluated what steps need to be taken, you need a clear vision so you can lead the execution of your plan.

Clear communication is critical to your vision's success. Meet with your staff and take the time to explain why your change is needed and important to the success of the department. More importantly, meet with the C-suite and your internal customers who will be affected, and share your vision with them. Having support from leaders outside the department will make transitions go smoother.

In EVS, the transformational management philosophy can be a great tool when changes are necessary in your department.

Introducing new ideas is never easy in EVS, but clear communication and strong determination will take you to your end result. When planning and executing, keep these 10 traits in mind.

**1 Current.** An EVS leader must stay updated on new trends in the industry, and not just in the area of new products and equipment. A transformational EVS manager reads trade publications and white papers and researches new methods and procedures that may benefit their department. Networking with other EVS leaders at EXCHANGE or on discussion boards such as MyAHE is another great way to stay updated on new trends and ideas.

**2 Open minded.** Staying away from “this is the way we've always done it” and being open to new ideas is a key trait for a transformational manager. Even if a specific idea doesn't work out, the willingness to try new products and procedures usually results in a better process than before. Investigate new ideas and consider whether they would benefit your department.

**3 Flexible.** Be firm and stay aligned to your vision, but be flexible enough to vary how you communicate the changes and teach your staff. Everyone learns differently, so you will have to use different strategies to get complete buy-in from all of your staff. Be prepared to modify and update your plans as the change progresses.

**4 Creative.** Hospital consolidations, reduced budgets and staff cuts always challenge EVS. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of your team and place them in areas and situations where they can be successful. Consider breaking up routines and offering different shift times to be better staffed for busier days or peak times.

**5 Motivational.** One of the cornerstones of transformational management is being able to motivate your staff and boost morale. Support your staff and encourage their ideas for bettering the department. When staffing is tight and census is high, you have to be the champion, showing enthusiasm and support to your team.

**6 Good planner.** Be proactive and look ahead to plan changes before they become a serious issue. Anticipate questions and setbacks and plan to work through them as you implement your changes. Keep track of your progress so you can prove the results of your changes to your staff, the C-suite and your internal customers.

**7 Hands-on.** If your changes are going to work, you need to be the one out on the floors showing the staff they can work. Being visible and showing your buy-in

demonstrates to staff that you believe the changes will better the department. Giving personal attention to staff and showing your enthusiasm for the change is critical for success.

**8 Good listener.** You have to be able to listen not only to your staff, but to the C-suite, your internal customers and your managers. Before you start the process of your changes, listen to those affected and encourage their feedback and ideas on the process. Base your changes off their feedback and communicate the progress, proving you have listened to and incorporated their ideas into the process.

**9 Risk taker.** You can't implement changes without some degree of risk. Be confident to take calculated risks and stay committed to your vision. Any change involves risk and potential conflict, but if the end result betters the department, the reward will be worth the risk. Throughout history, all successful leaders have been brave enough to take the risks needed to achieve their vision.

**10 Dedicated.** Ride through all the peaks and valleys of implementing your new idea, stay

100 percent devoted and work to get others to buy into your idea. Stay positive through the setbacks, showing your staff and your internal customers you wholly believe in the change.

New ideas always bring conflict and challenges, but they are often necessary. Be prepared to be the champion of your vision and get support from leaders outside of your department. Questioning and pushbacks are a given, but the end result of a better process is always worth the challenges.

Transformational management requires total commitment and relentless energy. Staying motivated and working hands-on with your staff to show the change works is key to the success of any change. If you see a new process or a new idea, keep these 10 traits in mind as you develop your vision. ●



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