



Hat Tricks

Pete and Cy were just finishing their meeting with Nic and Monica, the company bankers, to review the company's latest financial statements.

"Pete, hats off to you," Nic said. "We're very impressed with what you've done. Thanks to your leadership, NMTS is back on track."

"Thanks, Nic. I appreciate that. But it wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for Cy's mentoring years ago and his solid support and counsel to me over the past few months."

Pete and Cy had scheduled regular weekly meetings or conference calls to discuss issues and progress. This helped keep Cy in the loop and gave him confidence that Pete's approach was actually working. Because of this, while Pete continued to build from within, Cy took on extensive client relationship building and worked to keep the board, corporate executives, suppliers, bankers, the press, and other key outside players onside.

“I did get badly off-track with Doug,” Cy said. “Pete’s transformed and inspired leadership was exactly what we needed. There were times I squirmed through tough conversations as difficult issues were being addressed. But the proof is certainly in the results we see here today. And I know this is just the beginning. Our conservative projections for the next four quarters show us sharply accelerating our profit. We’re going to be generating so much cash, we’ll start lending your bank money – if your leadership plan is up to snuff!”

Everyone laughed.

After the bankers left, Pete and Cy continued with their weekly meeting.

“I understand you’ve rehired Damali,” Cy said.

“Yes, and I’m really excited to have her back on-board. She’s such a strong accounting executive. She stayed in touch with people here and heard good things about what was going on. When I approached her about returning, she was quite receptive.”

“It’s another great example of that research showing how people join a company and quit their boss,” Cy said. “We lost a lot of good people during Doug’s reign of terror – my reign of error.”

“We’re rebuilding and either getting some of the good ones back or bringing on even stronger replacements,” Pete said. “The exodus of our best techs has stopped. We’re not yet a ‘magnet organization’ – attracting and retaining the best people – as described in our vision, but we’re well on our way.”

“I can’t get over the change in Rhonda. She was so loyal to Doug. You’ve really turned her around.”

“She did offer to resign the first week I was here. I must admit I was tempted to accept after the way she gloated when Doug fired me. But I also knew she had a lot of experience and organizational knowledge that we could really use. So I

sat down with her and had a clear – and tough – conversation about my expectations for her behavior. She was badly tainted by Doug’s blustery style and abuse of power. I had to have two follow-up conversations with her about The NMTS Way when she was drifting back into old habits in dealing with some people. She responded well and has proven to be invaluable to the teams working on our management processes.”

“Well, it’s been fabulous to see your rebirth as such a strong leader. The next few years are going to be really interesting around here. You’ve really grown to fill the hat of leadership.”

“Or my head is swelling,” Pete chuckled. “I certainly agree with you. We’ve only just begun.”

“Your personal and organizational turnaround is quite a story. I know many people are inspired by your courageous leadership.”

“Thanks, Cy. It’s been quite a ride over the past six months. The process wasn’t very pretty and even quite bizarre as I headed down a path of elf ... uh ... I mean self-destruction. But eventually some much needed learning – and re-learning – did get through to me.” Pete glanced at his watch. “Whoa, look at the time. I’ve got to get going.”

As Pete left the office building, he caught his reflection in the first-floor office windows. He stopped dead and stared. Alfred’s hat was on his head! The black-and-white feather was waving merrily in the light breeze. Pete put his hand on his head. It was bare. He gazed intently at his hat-topped reflection. Then, with a knowing smile and a wink, he continued on his way, walking straight and tall with confidence and purpose.

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JIM CLEMMER is a bestselling author and leading international practitioner of improving personal, team, and organizational performance. As a popular keynote speaker and consultant, he delivers presentations on practical leadership and organizational effectiveness to audiences around the world.

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