



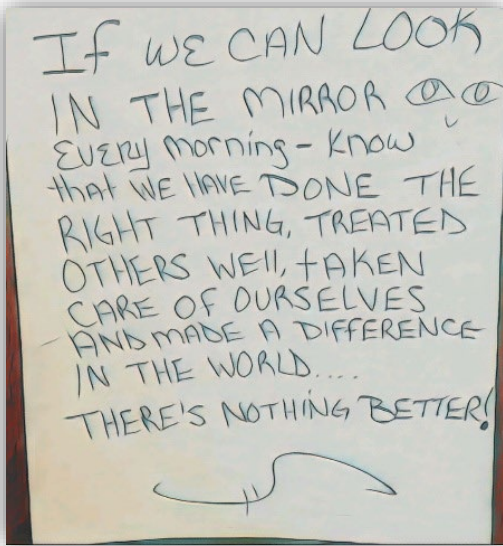
Proudly sharing two decades of
invaluable leadership insights and
lessons.

LEADING AN ORGANIZATION

BY: SHERI MILLER

*"Take responsibility for the life you want."
- Rick Tamlyn -*

LESSONS LEARNED ...BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION



When I began Charmm'd, I questioned whether I could successfully lead a group of people as my "soft skills" were not the greatest. I was a Type A leader who charged forward to get as much done as possible and with the hopes everyone else would follow. I micromanaged, had a short fuse, had a big ego, which meant I had to be right, and I held grudges. Heck! With all of that, I would have hated to work for this person myself! I began reading the cliff notes versions of leadership books, (podcasts hadn't yet been conceived and YouTube was not well known) and dove deep into the learnings offered at Charmm'd. What I learned made sense and changed my life. That was the start of me beginning to open my mind and learn so that I could create the culture I wanted to form. ...Below are practices put in place so Charmm'd, my team and I could succeed, and we did...

LEADING MYSELF

- **The poster at the top of this page** hangs in my office in its handwritten form. I use this to guide me as THIS is what makes me happy. When I am not happy, I go back to this and see what is not in alignment so I can make the change.
- **I work to be my best** so that I, my team, and our mission can succeed. To make that happen, I provide time for:
 - Self-reflection so I am aware of who I am
 - Breathing room so I have time to "just be"
 - Professional development in both hard and soft skills
 - Connections with others as connection is one of my highest values. These people are my teachers, friends, role models, confidantes, support, and what this high extrovert needs!
- **I often reflect on where I have a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset;** then I think of what I want to do about that, as I may be the one standing in the way of success.

- **Celebrate each win – no matter how big or small it is.** Knowing that our way of thinking – either positively or negatively - is an inside job, I focus on truly celebrating each win of myself, the team, and the community. This continually fills me with hits of dopamine that keep me in a positive mindset where I can think my best.

LEADING THE TEAM

- **Our job as a leader is to grow other leaders.** As leaders this “IS” a part of our job description; in fact, a very important part, and I regularly left time to grow my staff. This was for their own sake and to build them up so they can be the best they can be to best serve the community itself.
- **Create small goals.** Often, life can be challenging. By creating and then achieving small goals, we can help to build confidence and keep the energy and motivation moving forward.
- **Treat employees as your most valued customers** because they are. My reason for this is kind of selfish. It’s no secret that the work can’t be done without these folks, so if you don’t care about them as human beings, about their families, and about what is going on in their lives, if you don’t know what their goals and aspirations are, then why should they care about you and what you want to achieve? My selfishness has rewarded me with so much more than great employees. Not only do they challenge, support, and help me grow; when we closed the doors each team member was – and will continue to be - a true friend. That’s because we built mutual respect and trust with one another.
- **Treat each employee differently** based on what they want and need. Remember, one size fits one when it comes to how someone takes in information, what is important to them, what’s already on their plate, and what their goals are, etc. Together, come up with what will work for both of you.
- Diving a little deeper into communication, **communicate with each employee based on how they hear/take in the information.**
 - You may find your method is different for each one.
 - Your goal is to have them hear your message.
 - Ask them how they would like you to communicate with them so they can best hear your message.
 - Think about ‘What is in it for them?’ and speak to that.
 - Also, let them know what is in it for you and the larger mission (Think you/me/it.)
 - When talking with them, let them know what you are looking for from them, (ideas, answers, to be a sounding board, etc.)
- **Be clear with your expectations** so those that are following understand exactly what you are striving for. Truth be told, this is an area in which I never completely succeeded. ...I am still growing that muscle.
- **Have systems and structures in place** that allow all to be accountable for the expectations. Structures such as weekly 1 – 1 meetings, quarterly team meetings, and set agenda’s where day to day topics are discussed, as well as regular reflections about our mission, core values, manifesto, etc.

- As Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* stated, **“Get the right people on the bus, then find the best job for them”**. You can probably see things in them that they may not see in themselves. Let them know you believe in them by giving them the opportunity.
- **Realize what most people want/need** is for their voices to be heard, to be seen, to know they have made a difference, and that they are cared for. Be the safe place they can count on to make that happen.
- **Do all you can to keep a good employee.** Sometimes this is money; usually, it is not.
- **Leaders don’t have to know it all.** What a gift it can be to hear a leader say, “I don’t know.” Ask questions, learn from others, and continually be curious.
- **Depend on the team to help make things happen.** You and your team both know your strengths and the strengths they bring to the table. Utilize that knowledge to accomplish the tasks and do it better than anyone could have done alone.
- **“Nose in, fingers out”** is a wonderful visual to abide by when wanting your team to have ownership and grow. Be interested and then stay out of the way and allow them to focus on the work itself.
- **When looking for buy-in,** address each team member one at a time.
 - Share your ideas and ask them to shoot holes through them.
 - Learn what’s important to them.
 - Learn about their concerns.
 - Learn what they would like to change, add, delete, tweak, etc.
 - After getting their input, take your idea along with the changes you agreed on to the next person. Keep the other thoughts filed away, still at your disposal.
 - Repeat with the next employee.
 - When having heard from everyone:
 1. Share the “new plan” with all.
 2. Point out what is added to the plan based on their input.
 3. Assign a champion to make it happen.
 4. Step back and let that person run, being there to support them along the way.
 - **Note:** This was possible at Charmm’d as we had a small team. If you have a larger team, I suggest doing this with your leadership team only. They then can do their own version of this with their team members.
- **Start/Stop/Change/Continue** is a reflection each team member would do quarterly. I would use as many suggestions as possible that made sense.
 - What would you like us to start doing to make the work more efficient?
 - What makes sense to stop doing because it is no longer serving us?
 - What change/tweak can we make to improve our success?
 - What is working great, and you want us to continue doing?

BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION

(Note: Much of what is noted above is true here too.)

- **Always keep the organization's focus in mind:**
 - The vision
 - The mission
 - The values
 - The specific purpose of the project
 - Your internal and external customers
- **Create time for white space.** That means allowing your mind space just to be. Not having an agenda allows for your creative thoughts to emerge, for better processing, big picture thinking, and for us to be our best for all that lies ahead.
- **Build your culture** by role-modeling the values that are the north star of your organization. Discuss those values regularly. Acknowledge others on your team when you see them living those values and celebrate when the external community calls you out on it as well.
- **"Leaders are experience makers. Every touch point is designable."** I 100% buy into this quote. No matter what is going on in our lives, it's best to remember we are creating an experience for others. It can be as magical as we'd like it to be.
- **"Go slow to go fast"** is also a mantra we often use. It allows time for processing thoughts, getting buy-in from others, and getting something right before it is presented in all its glory.
 - A perfect example of this was when we created our Leadership Academy. We knew the events we were offering our partners weren't getting the results we were hoping for. Our time vs impact wasn't there. So, we stopped the events and took a year to interview our community partners and find out what they needed. After a number of phone calls, we heard that 'professional development for emerging leaders' was wanted. As we continued to have conversations, many leaders would give us ideas around this concept. The ones that made sense for us and our mission were then shared with the next group of leaders to test out the idea and get more feedback. Conversation after conversation occurred in the community and with our team. Finally, The Leadership Academy was presented to our community and quickly took off to rave reviews and a full house each year.
- **Walk the talk** - do what you say you will do. It's that simple.
- Listen to the community and work hard to truly understand what they are saying and what's in it for them (WIIFT); then **go with the choice that is the best for the mission and the team.**
- **Stick to the mission** – even when everyone else says you're crazy.
- At the same time, **don't stick with something because of ego.** Admit your mistake; in fact, celebrate it, as you obviously learned from the experience and can now move in a new direction.

- Think about **time versus impact**. Is the impact worth the time you will have to spend on something? If not, make the time spent more effective or say no to the work itself.
- **Be open to flexing** because what works today may not work tomorrow.

Finally, love what you do, as so much of your time is spent here. Why not enjoy the journey? Note: When having this chapter proofread, the question was asked, “How do you love what you do, especially when work starts to just feel like work?” Here’s my answer to that. This doesn’t mean everything you do has to be something you love.

- It means to believe in the culture of the organization and be sure its values line up with your own.
- It means knowing that your voice is being heard and you know that you are making a difference.
- It means knowing “why” you are doing something and “how” this fits into the bigger picture.
- It means remembering why you took the position, what goals you want to achieve, and then, step by step, working toward those goals.

P.S. I can’t finish my chapter without talking about our community partners themselves. Knowing that my job was to build the team and the organization, a lot of time was spent focusing on the big picture and strategically creating opportunities for the best results. This meant going into the community itself to learn and work with our community partners. I loved this, as not only did I learn what was needed, I had the joy of working alongside so many community partners, watching them flourish, and building strong, caring relationships with them. All of this has been a gift to me and something I will cherish for years to come.

P.P.S. If you’re interested in diving deeper into any of these thoughts, I’d be happy to talk with you. Contact me. 847.710.9590.

Here’s to you and all you want to achieve,



Sheri Miller, Founder and Executive Director



As a team, this was our manifesto, our guiding light, and what we strived for every day...

Let's face it, we aren't here for a long time so let's create the best life we can!

Search for your ideas in the clouds. Go slow to go fast. Find love in helping others succeed. Challenge yourself. **Value those around you...even those you don't like.** Set big hairy audacious goals. Act with intention. Feel free to be you...every time. Be wildly curious. **Welcome and honor the diversity of others.** Push the boundaries. Show passion in all you do. **Be a leader.** Focus relentlessly on your vision and make your ideas realities. Laugh, a lot. Know you are not alone. You belong. **Stay humble.** Embrace the unexpected. Be uniquely you! Act ethically. Make your best even better. Dream big. Receive others with a heart of peace. **Reflect on how you affect others.** Collaborate. Go all-in. Welcome white space and relish in the pause. Be honest from your heart and your gut. Seek to learn from your failures and move on. Grow those around you. **Hold safety in the highest regard.** Aim to exceed expectations. Be accountable. Welcome feedback. Say what you're going to do and do what you say. **If you're not learning, you're not growing.** Ignore what's normal and play in the unknown. Act with compassion. Celebrate. Ask the hard questions. **Imagine the possible not the impossible.**

Together we can make a difference.

Let's make it happen!
