

## Inspiring: a huge responsibility for Retail Managers

Retail Managers can influence the different moods and types of relationships, developing a service and results-oriented way of operating. How? Starting from an extensive awareness of their role, they can influence and inspire their collaborators to reach their objectives.

This time, I would like to talk about the Store Manager by addressing the Retail Manager. I'm starting from the accepted truth according to which the role of the Store Manager is key and enhancing his/her role can bring about that quantum leap - which is necessary to wonderful, exciting and attractive stores - that companies make to achieve expected results. These long-lasting results can be guaranteed thanks to the skills and the work of stores' stakeholders, Store Managers and Store Sellers, who become agents of a change that would be impossible otherwise.

This is where Retail Managers play their role. Being largely responsible for the stores' operational results, they can influence the different moods and types of relationships, generating a service and results-oriented way of operating for the entire Retail chain. How? Starting from an extensive awareness of their role by asking key questions: what do they do to influence their collaborators' behaviour? How do they inspire them to devote themselves to achieving their goals? What is their style? What do they achieve? What is their level of awareness?

### **The main ingredient is managing to inspire**

I would like use a film about an outstanding, world-renowned man to help answer these questions. The film is **Invictus** by Clint Eastwood, and it's about a specific time in the life of *Nelson Mandela*.

After 27 years in prison, having won the elections, he decided to invest a lot in rugby, a sport that was unpopular among black people but very popular with white people. The outcome of this initiative was uncertain and exposed him to a great risk: losing the support of his people, those who had voted for him.

His challenge was inspired by the idea that rugby could be a sign of openness to white people and, as a result, an opportunity for integration. Through great determination and leveraging on the fact that the next Rugby World Cup would be held in South Africa, he struck a strategic partnership with the Captain of the rugby team, who became the true agent of success.

### **How?**

The most logical solution would have been to summon him and ordering: "*You must win the World Cup! It's important for the Country*". That would have been too easy and, perhaps, ordinary. Mandela decides to work on *inspiration*. He summons him and, showing great communication skills, stands up and walks towards him. He asks about

his health - showing that he knows about his problem - and interacts with his personal assistant, enhancing her role in the eyes of his guest. Then he goes on highlighting the importance of the Captain's role: "You have a very difficult job, Captain of the Springboks".

Clearly taken aback and surprised, the Captain answers: "Not compared to yours".

At this point, Mandela decides to introduce the subject of the meeting, using one of the most important concepts in leadership's philosophy: "How do you inspire your team to do their best?". The conversation on inspiration goes on, giving both men the opportunity to compare their very different experiences and move towards a common goal ("we must all exceed our own expectations") that is never openly stated.

This strategy appears to be the winning one when the Captain goes back to his wife and tells her: "I think he wants us to win the World Cup". He clearly looks astonished, but also deeply **engaged**.

### **History tells us how it ends**

The relationship between Pienaar and Mandela will give rise to a series of events that will boost the Springboks' morale (after a long trail of defeats) and will lead them to an unexpected victory in the final against the fearsome All Blacks.

The squad's success will become the symbol of the greatness of the newly-born "Rainbow Nation".

What struck me in this scene - and in the entire film - was the clarity and the extraordinary nature of the message: helping the other to find in himself the energy and the willingness to face the challenge in order to achieve the goals, starting from the consistency in his words and his actions. Anyone can be other man!

### **How can Retail Managers inspire their collaborators?**

Going back to our own playing field, Retail Managers can become a source of inspiration for their collaborators (Area Managers and Store Managers), through their leadership and charisma, and adding coach-like behaviours to the usual managerial tasks (assigning goals, discussing them as little as possible and expecting results to be achieved only based on roles and responsibilities) in order to create the right conditions for a greater involvement, stimulate the emotional and motivational side, drive collaborators' energy, encourage them to challenge themselves and produce a cascade effect in the chain all the way to the Store Sellers.

I would like to use the following formula to explain this way of thinking in concrete terms:

**C:C=C:C**

*that is to say*

**Chief is to Collaborator what Collaborator is to Customer**

The odds that the final Customer will enjoy a customer experience so unique and unforgettable that he/she will want to come back to enjoy it again will be much higher if preceded by situations where also the Store Seller will enjoy a similar experience. The film describes to us this ongoing transformation, which is made possible by a positive influence: Mandela offers himself as an example of relationship with a collaborator and, in turn, the Springboks Captain will be able to pass on his message to his "collaborators"/players until they achieve their desired outcome.

Inspiring collaborators and influencing their behaviours through **Leadership**, creating involvement and results-oriented attitudes through **Coaching**.

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