



## Stanford eCorner

### Listening to Employees

David Neeleman, *JetBlue*

April 30, 2003

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/295/Listening-to-Employees>

In 2002, we received negative feedback from employees regarding the leadership within the company, says Neeleman. We realized that there was not a leadership training program--we weren't training the managers to be the conduit for the company culture as we brought on new people, so we implemented a leadership program with 5 principles of leadership, he says.



#### Transcript

Last year, when we got this statistics back, it was a bit alarming that we had a lot of negative comments about leadership in the company that the leaders aren't living the values. They're dictatorial. We were growing so quickly that we didn't have a leadership training program in the company. We would kind of tap someone on the shoulder and say hey, you show up to work on time with a good attitude so you go be a supervisor. Okay, well, what do I do when I'm supervisor? Well, just make sure everything runs all right. Okay, you do this and you do that and you do this and why is your hair messed up and why don't you comb your hair? So we actually were kind of drifting down because of that. I knew that we could never duplicate this feeling if the biggest thing I worry about here at JetBlue is dilution of the culture then we were doing a pretty poor job of training our leaders to be the conduits for that culture as they brought on these thousands of new people that were coming on every year. So we came up with a new leadership program and we have 800 people to put through it. I teach a module every week and one of the interesting things about the leadership program is that when everybody leaves the program, they get the five principles of leadership that they have. These are our IDs that we have to wear.

The leadership principles are in their IDs that we give to them and then they're in their IDs and they pull them out everyday and they read them and they have subsets and they read through them. Servant leadership and communicate with your people and do the right thing. It's not what's right for the occasion. We go all the way through all of those and you have to read them. Inspire greatness in others. Then I'd say if you were smart, what you would do is you would go sit down with the people that you lead and you would say, look, I just learned these principles of leadership. Because I said everyone in the company knows what they are because they're on the intranet. I've learned about these five principles and I think I know that I haven't been perfect. I know that there are some things here I need to work on. So I want to kind of just go over these with you and make sure you have a copy of this.

If ever in our interaction you feel that I'm not living to these principles, would you please point it out to me because I really want to become better at what I do? Together, we'll be a great company. So those are the types of things that we teach as being upfront and it doesn't mean you're a milk toast, it doesn't mean you'll let people run over you, it doesn't mean that you don't keep them accountable for what they have but it's very, very important. This is like very, very important. If you were to say what's the most important thing you have going on in your company today, it's this whole leadership principles and being taught and how we're trying to get that culture and make sure that it's imprinted in people and that...