

Monthly Message from John Duncan

November 2017 Transcript

Hi folks –

As we continue to grow into our new Flight Standards culture and structure, I want to talk about expectations for our leaders. So I'm going to use the November and December monthly messages to share some of the pointers Administrator Huerta offered to Senior Leadership Development Program participants awhile back.

In many ways, leadership is about letting go. To be effective, a leader has to consciously let go of several things.

First is to let go of the notion that a leader's job is about technical expertise. Technical know-how may be helpful, but real leadership is about identifying broad organizational interests, and envisioning the path required to achieve them.

Second, leadership means letting go of detail. If you've ever tried to look at an impressionist painting at close range, you see nothing but dabs of paint. You have to step back to actually get the picture. To ensure senior leaders in our new structure focus on big picture interests and not on day-to-day details, they don't have the kind of large staff they had before. The details will get done by the people who know the details.

Third, once leaders have established the vision and interests or organizational intent – the "what" – and the direction – the "where," they let go of trying to control the method – the "how." When leaders let go of the micromanager's myth that they know the details best, we get the kind of innovation and engagement we need from every single employee.

Fourth, and most important, leaders have to let go of any idea that employees are there to serve them. On the contrary. We expect our leaders to take care of the people by looking out for their well-being, using mentoring and coaching to help everyone meet their potential, and letting the best and brightest go on to other things when the time comes.

As our leaders learn to behave in new ways, I'm asking you to do the same. In the culture we are trying to achieve, most issues should never even come to senior leaders' attention. So please continue to use interdependence and critical thinking to ensure that we work issues and make decisions at the right level.

Happy Thanksgiving to all, and thanks for the great work. See you next month.