

Synopsis of the keynote presentation, “Slope side Leadership: The ABC’s of Ski Patrol Leadership” given by Ted Schick of Schick Corporate Learning to the attendees of the 2011 Western Region Ski Patrol Fall Meeting, Saturday, Sept 24, 2011 at the Edgewater Hotel, Duluth, MN.

Ski patrollers are all servant leaders. We ski, we train, and we show up—to serve. We serve our fellow patrollers and most importantly, we serve and care for our patients. Below is what I consider the ABC’s of our slopeside leadership:

- 1. You’re being watched.** You are, you know. When you are in a position of leadership, people follow your every move. And as a ski patroller, you are leading. Leading you or leading others. When times are chaotic or stressful, stay calm. You are being watched. The people around you need you to be calm.
- 2. Be competent.** Be tactically and technically proficient. None of us wants to serve next to a patroller that is unsure or worse, incompetent. Competency = Respect = Leadership. Work on your competency—it defines you.
- 3. Accountability.** Is there a place for accountability in volunteer work? You betcha! We are accountable for ourselves, each other and our patients. Hold our patrollers accountable who are not performing to their ability. Have those difficult conversations with them or the morale of the ski patrol team will suffer. Intervene early, intervene often.
- 4. Teamwork.** Ski patrol is the epitome of teamwork. A popular recent trend is these “flash mobs”—seemingly impromptu orchestrated groups of people who break out in dance on a city street or in the mall. Ski Patrol is “flash teams!” From out of nowhere with a squawk of the radio, we’re there. The team composition is never the same and yet we click like we’ve known each other forever. Ski patrol teams support each other and never undermine each other and never ever, air our disagreement to the patient.
- 5. Recognition.** In many cases, it’s all we got to appreciate our fellow patrollers. It sure isn’t for the money! Give praise and feedback lavishly. To make it meaningful, make the feedback and appreciation as specific and detailed—tell them *why* you appreciate them.
- 6. Develop and challenge your people.** To grow your patrol, you need to grow your people. People stay committed when they find what they do interesting and challenging. Challenge them to do more than the usual. Challenge them to serve on a committee, mentor a new patroller, or be an instructor. To challenge them, ASK THEM! They just may surprise you and say yes.
- 7. Motivate!** Right along with developing, we need to motivate our patrollers. Reach them with what matters to them. We serve to contribute for the personal satisfaction it gives us. Address those *intrinsic* motivators—the relationships, the purpose, the contribution. Give the feedback and appreciation flowing to motivate.
- 8. Teach and Mentor.** The futures of our patrols are the new candidates for this year. Are we working to make them feel welcome? Have we set them up for success? If not already in place, consider a mentor program for this year’s class. Teach well and teach thoroughly. Done correctly and you’ve done #6 & 7 above!

9. **Take Charge!** Act. Make decisions. Do. Lead. When you find yourself first on the scene of an accident, take charge. Be calm, be the leader, and do. Be thorough and consider your steps but remember, hesitation kills.
10. **Have a vision. Communicate that vision.** All leaders, even Ski Patrol leaders, do not have the luxury of living only in today. Have a vision for your patrol--- what's changing and how are you adapting? Have a vision for yourself as well. Communicate that vision or the vision means nothing.

As eloquently stated by Robert K. Greenleaf, the father of Servant Leadership, "One of the primary works of love is to pay attention to people." Pay attention to your patrollers. Pay attention to your patients. There is a place for love in leadership--- it is the way we respond and behave towards our people. Lead on servant leaders, lead on.