**Empowering Association CEOs & Staff for Future Success**

Great leadership is about understanding and activating the strengths of the people you lead. Consistently seeking, giving and incorporating excellence at every level of your organization will direct everyone towards common goals. In this special feature of Boardroom, our wealth of contributors, from ESAE to AC Forum, from IAPCO to AIPC and the Global Association Hubs Partnership, share their views on how to best ensure a sustainable future from a human perspective.

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**The Zone of Genius, Excellence & Leadership**

**Estefanía Zárate Angarita**, Marketing Communication Manager at Kenes Group & IAPCO member, explores the ways leaders can recognize and set the strengths of their team in motion.

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Why would you make a great effort to do something that doesn’t come naturally to you, probably not achieving satisfactory results – when there is somebody else out there who’s a genius at it? The ‘zone of genius’ is a concept often used in the field of human resources to highlight that everyone has a unique quality that makes them natural at achieving remarkable outcomes for specific tasks.

Understanding and activating the strengths of individuals within a team consolidates leadership that allows for the incorporation of excellence at every level. Being able to identify and put to great use these unique skillsets is a prominent characteristic of transformational leaders, who are known for having the ability to perceive, use, understand, manage, and handle emotions through strong essential interpersonal skills such as active listening, decision-making, rapport, assertiveness, and empathy.

In addition, having a clear strategy that is well communicated to the team brings a strong sense of connection among co-workers who are then driven by a common goal. Overall, individuals who are seen and valued for their authentic gifts aligned by a north star set the strengths of their team in motion.

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NO PERFECT RECIPE

Nevertheless, there is no perfect recipe. Especially in an ever-changing market, being prepared to fail – and be okay with it – is key to driving innovation. To create new things is a process of exploration and experimentation that ultimately will bring in new knowledge and know-how regardless of outcomes. And this also is excellence.

Louise Gorringe, Director of Association Management at Kenes Group has vast experience leading teams. In the following short interview, she shared her views on how she does it.

“How to understand and activate the strengths of the people you lead? How do you identify them in the first place?”

Watch, listen and learn about your team. Give them the opportunity to give their input and feedback. Recognize that no one is good at everything, and everyone is good at something and try to harness that strength. Involve the team in activities and projects outside of their role so there is space for their light to shine and you can see beyond their day-to-day performance.

How do you see, give, and incorporate excellence?

Be clear about what excellence means for your team and share that vision. Lead from the front; reward efforts and strengths – not just results. Recognize that sometimes people have made enormous efforts, but circumstances might have impacted the results. See and respond to the small things, the everyday impact, and the small improvements and impacts the team is making in their daily role. Take the time to listen to the team and share their successes no matter how small; it is still progress.

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