



What is Leadership?

Transcript for Lessons from Laura Lane

Speakers

- Laura Lane, Chief Corporate Affairs, Communications, and Sustainability Officer, UPS

Session Transcript

Hi everyone. I'm Laura Lane. I'm the Chief Corporate Affairs, Communications and Sustainability Officer for UPS.

For many of you that may not be aware of all that UPS does, we deliver three percent of global GDP and six percent of U.S. GDP. We are about delivering for the world, and I have to say that through COVID-19, we've seen a lot of challenges in grappling with the pandemic and trying to really be there for everyone across the United States and around the world. We knew that we were essential service providers and that everyone was counting on us to deliver that critical PPE, [and] to be able to support communities as they followed the stay-at-home orders. We knew everyone was counting on our drivers, on our pilots, on all the workers around the globe, and we have a half a million of them that knew that every one of you were depending on us to deliver.

Through all those challenges, we learned so much about what it takes to be a successful company. I will share with you that I also learned a lot about what it takes to lead through that kind of situation, how to really inspire and motivate people. I had to manage through some of my own personal challenges. I had to manage through the issues surrounding my kids and how they were going to be learning remotely. I had to support family members who were having to be kept in safe quarters because they were vulnerable because of their age. And then I had to make sure that I kept being there for my team because UPS had to keep delivering. So I needed to make sure that I was showing up for work every day and supporting all of the efforts, and it wasn't easy.

I learned a lot about what it takes to lead during those times, and I will share with you that it wasn't the first time that I had to work through a crisis. I'd learned a lot in my previous career. For many of you maybe that may not know about my background, I actually had to lead through the crisis of the Rwandan Genocide, and I learned so much about how important it is to lead with courage in the face of incredible uncertainty and also to remember that what really matters when you're leading through that crisis, is all the people that are looking to you to find the answers about how they're going to find their way forward. I definitely had to do that when I was in Rwanda with the Foreign Service. But fast forward, I had to also do that when I was serving at Citigroup in the middle of the financial crisis as you see the world collapsing around you in terms of financial terms and the world asking so many questions about how we're going to rebuild the financial basis for the global economy. Having to lead through some of those challenges when people weren't all that high on the financial services industry, and you're one of the lead representatives in that industry sector trying to identify the solutions for



recovery, while at the same time recognizing that in many ways your industry sector had been responsible for so many of the challenges. In those moments of leadership, you have to find ways to really connect with people and build trust, that even though you don't know all the answers, you will find a way with them to solve whatever whatever problem or challenge may emerge.

I have to say serving at UPS now, as part of this amazing organization where the world was counting on us, it meant that we had to lead well together. I had the opportunity to serve in a capacity where, because of the work that I was doing in global public affairs, it was my responsibility - and I would argue my moral obligation - to all of our drivers and pilots to find a way to keep the network going, but also making sure that we could keep all of our people safe. That required really good collaboration with government officials, so that they understood the essential role that our company was playing, but also ensuring that we were messaging out to our people how they could keep themselves safe and ensuring that they had all the supplies and to be able to deliver as well as keep the communities they were delivering to safe. So, in so many ways, it required real flexibility and kind of learning as you go because with the pandemic, there was so much uncertainty and a lot of different government responses were changing over time. So they had to be really agile and flexible in terms of the responses that you'd advance and then how you communicated them, how you kept people motivated to keep coming to work.

I think about that in the context of Nelson Mandela, who was such a transformational leader and some of the lessons that he learned in his role as an incredible leader, not just for his country but also for the world, and some of his leadership principles are so incredibly poignant for all of us. He said leadership is behavioral; it's not positional. That's something that's really key. It's not about the position you hold. It's not about your title that defines what makes a great leader. In fact, I think in many ways, it's the ability to integrate, motivate, mobilize others around a common purpose that defines what is great leadership, not holding the positions of formal authority. In so many ways, throughout my career, it wasn't the title I held, it was the fact that I found ways to emerge as a leader to bring others around that common purpose, whether it was getting innocents out of Rwanda at the height of the fighting, finding ways to advocate for solutions in the middle of the financial crisis to help rebuild the economic recovery, or it was working across the global network that UPS has in partnership with customers that we're trying to still deliver for consumers with governments trying to find ways to keep their population safe and with our people - our UPSers - finding ways to keep everything moving so that everyone had the critical ppe that they needed, and they had the support that they needed to stay safe. That didn't depend on a title. That depended on bringing people together and helping them see that common purpose that we had in getting through this pandemic as well as we could.

I'd also say Mandela spoke about how you have to choose collaboration over retaliation, and I think that's really important. Sometimes people think that if you lead, you have to have a heavy fist in terms of how you motivate people to do things that you that you need them to do. I've always found that if you embrace everyone's hopes and dreams and aspirations in a collaborative kind of way, you can create so much more purpose among people that you need working with you than by being that heavy fist when you're trying to lead. I think in many ways, collaboration brings people together especially in difficult circumstances. I will share with you that so many of our UPSers were concerned about what it meant for them to keep delivering. They were worried about their families as they were on the roads or in the air, and it was really important that we conveyed to them that we were all in this

together and not having kind of that retaliatory approach saying, "You have to show up to work," but instead, motivating them behind the mission. Because all of us had a purpose, all of us had a mission that we were going to deliver on. All of us had the mission of delivering hope, and we did that leading together, by collaborating with everyone across our network.

I also think Nelson Mandela understood that better than anybody else. He understood that the power of courageously choosing to forgive those who have wronged you and humbly seeking reconciliation with them is the way that you advance forward with any situation. I will say that I have learned that from all of my experiences in Rwanda. I think back to what it took to move Rwanda forward. Going through a genocide and witnessing all of that firsthand, initially I thought, "How could we ever foster that kind of collaboration again? Of bringing Rwandans together as one people?" I watched it happen after the genocide. I watched the country come together, and they did it, not through retaliation but through forgiveness, through advancing justice, but doing it in a forgiving way. That has now allowed Rwanda to emerge on the world stage so much stronger and in so many ways as being a model for how you move from genocide to economic opportunity, from genocide to greater equity, from genocide to greater opportunity for all. I'm not saying any country is perfect. We all are striving to improve within our own organization at UPS, as countries, and as a global community. But I've found that you have greater strength together when you do it with that spirit of collaboration.

The last point that I think is so powerful about what Nelson Mandela led with is this idea that if you never give up on the seemingly impossible ideals, you can accomplish anything. He had this really fabulous quote that is really inspiring to me, and it's about "It always seems impossible until it's done." I'd say to all of you: you have to keep that in your heart because in so many ways, you have to believe in the impossible because that's how you change the world. I tell my team often that if you actually break down the word impossible, it actually breaks down to "I am possible." That's that spirit about the fact that all of us have within us the ability to come together around greater values, greater ideals and work together to achieve them. It's when we do that in that common purpose that truly the impossible becomes possible. I've seen it happen time and time again, but you have to lead with that spirit. Because otherwise, you're told too often that can't be done and sometimes, that makes you want to give up. I am someone who challenges my team: never give up. Because if you say that to yourself, if you never give up, you can never fail because you're always still trying to achieve that next ideal. There's many in Washington, D.C. in fact that say nothing's getting done and nothing will get done, and I want you to know I challenge my team to never think that way. Because if you think that way, you're already done, you've already failed. I tell my team and I try to lead in this way that we can do anything because we're not red or blue. We're not Republican or Democrat. We are brown. We are UPS, and when we come together in common purpose like we have through COVID-19, we can accomplish anything.

So I want to leave you just with one parting thought: a lot of times I'm asked who are some of the inspirational leaders. For me, Nelson Mandela most certainly is one. I'd also say that another one for me was President Reagan. One of his most powerful quotes - and I have so many of his quotes in my office - it's the one that says, "The greatest leader is not the one who does the greatest things. He's the one who gets the people to do the greatest things." I will share with you that I am blessed to be in this amazing new role at UPS, and I have the opportunity every day to work with incredible people. I know that I accomplish nothing, but I accomplish great things with them. When we do things



together, we accomplish the impossible as UPSers, not just within our network but within our communities and within our world.

So I want to challenge you in the spirit of those ideals that Nelson Mandela has left for all of us to learn from. In the words of a great leader like Ronald Reagan, I ask all of you to be those kinds of leaders. Being a Mandela Washington Fellow positions you for leadership. Think of how you want to inspire those around you to thrive, to grow, and empower them to be the change, to be that positive change that we all want to see in the world. I wish you great success, and I know as Fellows, you're going to lead well in this world, and I'm going to be right there by your side making that difference together. Thanks everyone.