

Insights from NIA's YPAC Mentor Program

NIA's Young Professional Advisory Committee (YPAC) kicked off its new and unique mentor program this past fall. NIA Past President David Dzina and YPAC member John Freeman started the program off strong after meeting virtually for several one-on-one sessions, and then created an informative Q&A presentation for YPAC during the Virtual Fall Summit.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP through Example

By John Freeman, Project Manager, Petrin, LLC

David Dzina was one of the first members of NIA that I met and was one of the integral figures in starting up the YPAC, so I was excited when I found out that I would be going through the inaugural YPAC Mentorship Program with him as my mentor. I knew a little bit about him through previous conversations and hearing him speak, but I was definitely interested in learning more about his career path, lessons learned along the way, and any advice he could provide for someone in the YPAC group.

We focused on the assigned topic of *Leading and Managing Teams*. Throughout our four virtual discussions, including one in front of the YPAC group at the recent Virtual Fall Summit, we discussed his career path and touched on each of the major aspects of management, including planning, organizing, leading, and conflict resolution.

I learned that after graduating from Baylor University in 1989, David started working as an Assistant Manager for a branch of the Luby's restaurant chain. In 1994, he answered a newspaper advertisement for a position at an insulation company, PBI Supply, which he would later purchase with a business partner in 2003. He owned the company for 12 years before he sold it to Distribution International.

One thing that is evident when speaking with David is his strong faith, which not only guides his life decisions, but also his management style. He speaks often about the importance of being humble, not worrying about anything out of your control, and how his faith gives him confidence. It is hard to imagine that early on in his career he had to convince himself that he belonged in the room.

Regarding his management style, he wants his employees to have the freedom to make decisions. He uses a golf analogy to get that point across: If you are in the fairway, you should be able to handle it yourself; if you are in the rough, you need to keep him informed; and if you are behind a tree, let's discuss the problem and figure out a plan together to solve it. This thought process helps him handle the often-tricky balance of avoiding micromanaging yet still being involved and aware.

When discussing culture, he states that hiring the right people is the key, especially in sales. If someone does not fit the culture, they should not be allowed to linger. He states that a "culture check" needs to occur annually at a minimum, but a good leader is constantly performing one. When presenting a vision for the company, he says to avoid focusing on the negative and provide three big bucket goals each year to keep it simple.

His philosophy is to never surprise employees with negative news. When someone is struggling with their work, you need to find out what the root cause is. They may be in the wrong position, wrong company, or it may not even be work related. While it is okay to be friends with your employees, it should never get in the way of your decision making. He joked that you may later realize when employees leave the company and you are no longer their boss, you are no longer a friend.

In regard to motivation, ask yourself: How do we want to reward people? David refers to the five relationship love languages. For example, some people respond to money, some to recreational outlets, and some to seeing that the little things are being noticed. Just as employees have different interests outside of the office, such as sports, hunting, music, etc., they also are motivated to excel based on different rewards.

For me, as a young professional in middle management, David provided great insights, examples, and advice throughout each of our conversations. Even though David emanates a positive outlook and attitude, he was open about his struggles and the roadblocks he was able to overcome to become the successful businessman he is today.

YPAC's Reading List Recommendations

As part of the Virtual Fall Summit session, mentor David Dzina and several YPAC members shared a few of their favorite books on leadership, business, and personal improvement.

FROM DAVID DZINA:

*Switch, How to Change Things
When Change Is Hard*
by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

FROM MIKE HILL:

*Influencer, The New Science
of Leading Change*
by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, et al.

Emotional Intelligence 2.0

by Travis Bradberry, Jean Greaves, et al.

FROM COOPER KILLION:

*The Power of Habit: Why We Do
What We Do in Life and Business*
by Charles Duhigg, Mike Chamberlain, et al.

Good to Great
by Jim Collins

FROM ASHLEY LUSE:

Traction, Get a Grip on Your Business
by Gino Wickman

FROM THOMAS MACKINNON:

The Truth About Negotiations
by Leigh Thompson

FROM SANDY SHATTLES:

*The Richest Man Who Ever Lived:
King Solomon's Secrets to Success,
Wealth, and Happiness*
by Steven K. Scott

*High Performance Habits: How
Extraordinary People Become That Way*
by Brendon Burchard