

Lazar, Keith (1948- )

Keith Lazar (1948- ) enjoyed a 41 year career in the banking industry, 35 of which was in the top leadership position. The last 25 years he served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Washington State Bank, Washington, Iowa.

Following his retirement, he was encouraged to share his philosophies, successes, and failures in building a positive workplace and developing staff following a staff survey indicating the highest staff satisfaction results ever witnessed by an outside consultant. Early in his tenure, the results were mediocre.

The book is geared to provide a step by step workplace culture improvement process for those in any supervisory position whether it be a crew foreman, a department head, a President/CEO, anyone aspiring to achieve such, or even those merely seeking self improvement. His premise emphasized that the staff, and not the customer, was number one and is should be your primary focus.

The bank was featured on the front page of the Washington Post on January 2, 2012 as written by Eli Saslow, a Pulitzer Prize winner. In addition, following the 2008-2010 financial crisis, the bank was one of 70 banks interviewed nationwide by the Federal Reserve Bank that was determined to be a thriving bank. The report, "The Future of Community Banks: Lessons Learned From Banks that Thrived During the Recent Financial Crisis", April 2013 by the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, was intended to provide a guide to future success for community banks. The Fed had divided banks into two categories, either thriving or surviving. The Washington State Bank was Interviewed to determine why they thrived before, during, and after the crisis. They were the only bank interviewed in Iowa. The interview committee said they knew the financial statistics, they wanted to know the bank's other secrets to success. Ten states had only surviving banks. During his tenure at the Washington State Bank, the bank increased market share to a high of 61.7% in a market with a total of 6 financial institutions. Staff turnover averaged 3% and the bank enjoyed record profits with the highest bank regulatory ratings possible. In addition, record dividends were declared and a waiting list developed for those wishing to buy more stock. All results were with an efficient, exceptional staff numbering 70% of the norm for the asset bank size.

Lazar served the banking industry as Board Chair of the Community Bankers of Iowa, Board Chair of the Iowa Bankers Insurance and Services, Board Chair of the Iowa Bankers Benefit Plan, Iowa Bankers Association board member, as well as numerous committees for the American Bankers Association and the Independent Community Bankers of America. Today Lazar remains active in the community as a member of Kiwanis, twice president, volunteering on the Washington County Hospital and Clinics Board of Trustees, substitute teaching in the school system, and teaching Personal Finance at Kirkwood Community College.

About the book:

Think about the last time you assembled a model airplane, a bicycle, a piece of furniture, a jigsaw puzzle, or something as complex as a home theater system. Any of those tasks would be much easier if you had an instruction book-and the same is true when trying to build an excellent workplace culture. Keith W. Lazar shares the results from a company survey he conducted twenty years apart, focusing in on the findings of one key question: On a scale of one to five, with five being the best, how would you rate your satisfaction with working here? The first time the survey was conducted, respondents came back with an average response of 2.8. The second time, however, the result was 4.5. By identifying the challenges, failures, strategies, and successes on the road to 4.5, Lazar gives you the tools you need to truly dedicate yourself to the well-being of staff, advance your career, improve yourself, develop leadership skills, and build a transformative workplace culture.

