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# THE TAZIE EFFECT

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**Turning Life's Defining  
Moments Into Personal and  
Professional Greatness**

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**Heather Whittaker**

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**Pen-Tech Professional**

The Tazie Effect  
by Heather Whittaker

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# Table of Contents

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	<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Be an Optimist</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	Optimism—The Secret to Success .....	2
	Will I Have A Job? .....	3
	Lesson Learned .....	4
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Put People First</b> .....	<b>5</b>
	Jumping and Spinning .....	6
	The First 30 Days .....	7
	Know What’s Important .....	7
	Make A Connection .....	8
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Be the Boss</b> .....	<b>9</b>
	Create Some Distance .....	10
	The Company Comes First .....	11
	Only “Friends” Welcome .....	12
	Be Careful of the Dog Sitter .....	12
	Lessons Learned .....	13

## The Tazie Effect

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Training, Training, and More Training . .15</b>
	Ready, Set, Go . . . . .16
	Sure, I Remember That . . . . .17
	I Can Do That Too? . . . . .18
	Leader As Trainer . . . . .19
	Training is Part of Life . . . . .19
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Provide Plenty of Positive Feedback . . .21</b>
	Individual Accomplishments . . . . .23
	Individual Recognition Ideas . . . . .23
	Team Accomplishments . . . . .23
	Team Recognition Ideas . . . . .24
	Constructive Feedback . . . . .24
	The One Day Push . . . . .24
	Keep ‘Em Guessing . . . . .25
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Let Them Have Fun . . . . .27</b>
	Goofy Goes a Long Way . . . . .28
	Everyone Likes a Challenge . . . . .29
	Team Building . . . . .29
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Pay Attention to Detail . . . . .31</b>
	Favorite vs. Most Respected . . . . .32
	Connect with Your Team . . . . .33
	Managing Up . . . . .34
	Know What You’re Talking About . . . . .34
	Life Goes-on During Vacation . . . . .34

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Think Outside the Box</b> .....	<b>37</b>
	Find New and Better Ways .....	38
	Be Creative .....	39
<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Tenacity</b> .....	<b>41</b>
	Never Let Them See You Sweat .....	43
	Tenacity is your Strength .....	44
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Be an Optimist</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Coaching Tips for Learning Development and Training Managers</b> ..	<b>49</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>51</b>

## Chapter 2

# Put People First

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*“To get the full value of joy, you must have people to divide it with.”*

**—Mark Twain**

## The Tazie Effect

**M**ost dogs get excited when you arrive home from work, someone new arrives at the house for a visit or a delivery driver arrives with a package. Some pee on the floor because they can't control their excitement. Some instinctively want to protect their owner and attack the visitor. Someone new at the door can be either a positive or negative experience.

For little Tazie Rooper, it doesn't matter who you are or why you are visiting, it is ALWAYS a welcome surprise. She starts with a high pitched, shrill bark which is enough to send you searching for ear plugs. When the door finally opens, her little half inch long stub of a tail wiggles so fast you would think it was going to fall off. She then begins a combination of jumping and spinning while continuing to bark. Combine that with her floppy ears and it doesn't matter who you are, you are compelled to either bend down and start petting her or grab her mid—jump to cuddle. If you choose to bend down and pet her, beware...she will jump up on your arm before you know what happened, and you will find yourself dropping whatever package, purse, or bag you were holding. There is just no two ways about it. Taz LOVES people. And as a result, people LOVE Taz. I have witnessed her win over the hearts of even the most determined of dog haters.

## **JUMPING AND SPINNING**

Now, as a professional, I do not suggest that when someone comes to your office, you greet them by jumping and spinning.

I do, however, suggest...

- Smile and show enthusiasm when in the presence of your team.
- Get to know your employees along with the issues that impact them and the things that inspire them.
- Ask for and provide feedback from all levels of your organization several times a year. Employee's opinions are important as is your opinion of the employee. Open, honest, two-way communication goes a long way.
- Make time to listen whenever an employee needs the time.
- Celebrate your employee's successes and recognize the importance of their contributions.
- Say "Thank You"...a lot!

Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, leaders are only as great as their team. Managers are judged by their team's productivity, quality, sales, and overall performance. Leaders, on the other hand, are judged by all the same criteria with one exception. They are also judged by their effectiveness to inspire and motivate their people. It's important to recognize as the leader that you are not just the manager of the process but also the cheerleader of the people.

## **THE FIRST 30 DAYS**

During your first 30 days leading a new team, take the time to meet individually with every employee. Tell them your expectations. Your new to the group and do not necessarily

### The Tazie Effect

have the same expectations as the previous manager. Your employees deserve to hear your expectations up front vs. finding out through trial and error. Ask for their expectations as well. Employees have expectations of their leaders and they vary from person to person. You will be one step closer to earning your employees respect if you not only ask, but allow time for each employee to share their individual expectations with you.

Learn about their personal lives. Find out what impacts them and what is most important to them during the course of a day. Give them a chance to ask you questions. Find shared experiences. Maybe you both love Italian food. Maybe you've both taken vacations to Europe. Finding the little things you have in common helps build a bond from the start and showing an interest in your employee demonstrates your dedication to not just the team but the individual.

### **KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT**

One of the best ways to put your people first is to know what's important to each individual. Before leaving for the day on Friday, ask what your employees have planned for the weekend. On Monday morning, ask how they enjoyed their event. For example, one employee may be having a birthday party for their child. Nothing shows you care more than asking about the party on Monday morning. It means the world to an employee when their leader remembers little details. (If remembering is a struggle for you, write them down and leave yourself a note. Monday morning, it will be the first thing you see reminding you to go out, walk the floor and say good morning.)

For some employees, their children or spouse may be what's most important. Keep in mind, however, that not all employees have children or a spouse. Some employees may have season tickets for the local baseball team, so time off may be what's of most importance. Letting them go home an hour early on game day tells them you care.

### **MAKE A CONNECTION**

One of the first managers I ever had was especially skilled at making everyone feel connected to the team. In my cubicle, I had no personal items, no decorations. On one particular day, my manager sat down on my desk and emphatically proclaimed, "Heather, you need a picture." She proceeded to draw a stick dog on a piece of copy paper and pinned it on my wall.

"There, that looks better. Next week I'll draw you a brother or sister." She then walked away leaving me and my neighbors laughing.

She continued to check back once a week asking if I had any new pictures or did I want her to draw another. She was just quirky, but that quiriness connected me to the team. Eventually, I brought in a personal picture which led to a personal connection with my peers and I felt connected to the team.

Taz makes every visitor to our house feel special because she puts them first. You can encourage top performance in your team if you also put your people first. Be glad they are part of your team and express your appreciation. If you LOVE your team, your team will LOVE you.

Ok, and, an occasional "jump and spin" might not hurt. Employees like to see their boss act weird once in a while. (Just make sure it's "once in a while".)



## Chapter 3

# Be The Boss

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*"To be able to lead others, a man must be willing to go forward alone."*

— Harry S Truman