

Previous to the poor management incident that was previously examined, there was actually an incredibly good case of Pharaoh Management. This example is a great illustration of how an innovator can establish a very successful business, but later generations of management who have lost the corporate memory and don't "get it" end up destroying everything.

Remember that Joseph's family sold him to slavery and he ended up in Egypt. After some initial success, he was targeted by the wife of his employer, Potiphar, and was put into prison. Even in that environment he was very successful, and became a trustee. Then Pharaoh had a strange, and you might say, absurd dream<sup>1</sup>. Think about poor cattle / corn eating up good cattle / corn. You would think the opposite would happen, that the good would eat up the evil, as when the snake that had been Aaron's staff ate up the snakes of the magicians<sup>2</sup>.

Most dreams don't leave such a lasting impression: I rarely remember mine for more than a few minutes. The hand of God, though, made these images stick in Pharaoh's mind so that he could replay it like we do a movie recording. But the great magicians of Egypt could not decipher the dream.

The evident frustration of the Pharaoh led the butler to suggest Joseph as an interpreter of the dream, as he had correctly interpreted the baker's and butler's dream while in prison. Joseph proved his submission to God, who was the true interpreter, and showed his ability to remain honest and trustworthy even when giving bad news<sup>3</sup>.

He cleaned himself up so as to make a good impression before Pharaoh, but then he told him that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God, and not man. He did not appear to ask God about the dreams, presumably because he knew that God Himself had sent them. Unlike the Egyptian magicians and priests, he did not go into any elaborate rituals to contact God, perhaps because as a prisoner, he needed to get the message across immediately.

Joseph delivered a stunning pronouncement: there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. So Joseph advised Pharaoh to use the seven good years to store up enough food for the nation to endure the seven lean years. Then he recommended that Pharaoh find a wise manager and put him in charge of the collecting this reserve and storing it. Later this person would have to dole out the food to a starving world<sup>4</sup>.

Now here's where the good management comes in: Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's pronouncement and honesty (and his connection with God) that he immediately proclaimed that Joseph would be his prime minister, second only to the great leader himself<sup>5</sup>. An amusing image is presented when Pharaoh says that without Joseph's approval no one would be able to life a hand or foot<sup>6</sup>!

Amazingly, there was no professional jealousy shown by Pharaoh at all! Nor did Pharaoh show any prejudice concerning a different god. Pharaoh was committed to the truth he saw in this interpretation. And he knew, as Joseph knew, that this had to be a government program because most individuals would not prepare on their own<sup>7</sup>. Joseph executed the plan to perfection, and was even able to save his own family as a bonus. Joseph proved out Pharaoh's decision, as he was a compassionate steward who chose to work for the common good and betterment of others

Pharaoh did not let racial, national, class, or religious prejudice stand in the way of good leadership. This is much better Pharaoh management than what occurs later, when a leader came around that "did not know Joseph"<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps they did not teach their own national history in school, and did not know that once their nation saved the world in time of great famine. Smart managers are always able to learn from the past!

1. Genesis 41:1-7
2. Exodus 7:12
3. from notes of Craig D. Atwood
4. Genesis 41:33-36
5. Genesis 41:37-40
6. Genesis 41:44
7. from notes of Craig D. Atwood

8. Exodus 1:8

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