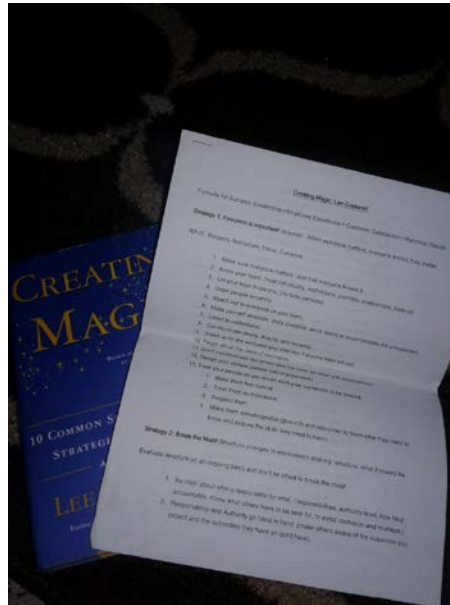


## Creating Magic

Lee Cockerell's *Creating Magic: 10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies from a Life at Disney*, is a book that was gifted to me, by my former Camp Director Tony Sharillo, the year I ascended to a summer Leadership Team position at Camp Ingersoll. *Creating Magic*, the first time I ever read a self-help book about building professional relationships. I didn't just read it. I diligently took notes, wondering why I hadn't looked into a book on leadership styles sooner. After I finished, I even typed up and printed my hand-written notes.



*Creating Magic* became my go-to for the professional interpersonal skills I wished to hone. Effectively building a team takes gumption, the initiative to dedicate yourself to the cause. It also needs imagination, hope, and faith. Keep all of that invisible magic deep in your pocket. Reach in by believing in it and committing to it. Speak the words correctly. Spread it around. Expect it to work and you WILL get out what you put in.

In January 2019, I was invited by the Y of the USA to facilitate a workshop on Staff Empowerment in New Orleans. One night, while preparing, I started researching other leadership resources (online and otherwise). I noticed there are several repeated trends and terms around building staff relationships. I dug out my original *Creating Magic* notes and started listing all of the empowerment words on the back of them. Then I grouped them by synonym. I further categorized them and rearranged them. Some intense color-coding/highlighting/circling/crossing-out/re-writing later I looked at my editing-riddled sheets and laughed. I was no closer to a cohesive thought than when I had started. So, I went to bed.

## Guzz Wuzzle and Learn to Endure

I woke up the next morning thinking about Guzz Wuzzle Dust, as I often do, with a Staff Empowerment acronym for my presentation: L.U.R.E.

L: Listen and Learn  
U: Utilize  
R: Recognize  
E: Encourage

You start by learning and then you can start earning; trust, respect, and commitment. I then thought, If one can L.U.R.E., one can E.N.D.U.R.E. as well.

E: Empowerment  
N: Nurturing Environment  
D: Dedication  
U: Unification  
R: Recruitment/Retention  
E: Expansion

This model has application potential for team building within all professions, not just OST. I urge you to let L.U.R.E. to E.N.D.U.R.E. guide your team-strengthening decisions while in your leadership role. Pack it in your tackle box, cast your line, and take pride when you reel 'em in.



## Learning How You Can L.U.R.E to E.N.D.U.R.E

### L: Listen and Learn



While you are communicating your own goals, expectations, vision, policies, procedures, boundaries etc. with your team, be sure to find out what your team members' goals and purpose are for choosing this line of work and their role in your program.

Don't limit conversations to "work-only" related topics. Commit to **learning** more about the people you are working with on a personal level. What is their background? What are their hobbies and interests? What is their family life like? etc. Use planned and "multi-tasking moments" to initiate conversations. Take advantage of all opportunities to learn about your team.

Empathetic intentional **listening** is the key to learning how your staff member fits into the team, the program, the organization. Seek out commonalities among your staff members. Help them forge relationships among each other, in the same way that you help children make friends.

The first activity that every staff member should complete at your program is a Staff Sheet that can hang at the program, for parents and participants to see. This staff sheet should include a picture and items like: Name/Nickname, Years in OST, Educational Background, Hobbies and Interests, and a Fun Fact. This information is important for families and participants for identifying staff, but crucial to you as a team leader for **learning** valuable informational nuggets.

## U: Utilize

Once you have started to learn more about your staff members, you can plan ways they can excel in your program. How do their skills, background, and expertise translate into your afterschool program? How might their background and education be **utilized** to benefit the team?



Someone who is interested in sports, played in high school or is going to college for sports medicine might find themselves succeeding in gym-based games. Let them shine there.

Someone who enjoys art and music as a hobby may do well teaching arts and crafts. Give them free reign of your art supplies and watch what happens. Does someone on your staff sing in a choir? Let them start a chorus.

Do you have a teammate who enjoys service learning and can run projects of that nature with ease? Connect them with local community agencies and guide them to start a project in your program.

Video games and computers are an interest of another staff member, a coding club?

Take an interest inventory of what everyone has to offer, skills and knowledge. **Utilizing** the staff team in effective commonsense ways that complement their skills ensures their personal/professional success, improves their confidence within the program and, in turn, leads to program successes.

Remember...You cannot encourage someone to ever step out of their comfort zone if they don't have a comfort zone to begin with, which is why the "U" of L.U.R.E. is so important to this process.

## R: Recognize

Now that you know your staff team a little better and you have settled them into their comfort zones, you need to guide them and strengthen them. This means taking the time to genuinely **recognize** their efforts and offer guidance as needed.



When you see something going well, **recognize** it verbally in the moment. Find other creative ways to acknowledge their efforts. Make sure they all see each other recognized positively and encourage them to **recognize** each other, formally and informally.

The same goes if you notice something they may be struggling with at the moment. If they need your immediate attention, of course, step in. Otherwise find a time afterwards to debrief about the situation. **Recognize** what went well and what needed attention. If done consistently and respectfully, the negative won't appear so.

Your team should know that their success is your priority. Don't forget the three most important letters in the simplest, most effective **recognition**, I. C. U. (I see you!).

## E: Encourage (Educate, Evaluate, Energize, Etc)

It is your job to further **encourage** your team.



This can include offering additional ways to **educate**. Offer training opportunities beyond the normal scope. Contact your state agencies and see what types of professional development is available. You can also find online resources to share in a group texts or social media group.

“E” also includes **evaluation**, discussing next your team’s next steps. You should have weekly check-ins with everyone on your team so that any discussions about performance at evaluation time aren’t a surprise (positive or negative). Work with your team to establish individual and group goals.

“E” could also include finding ways to **energize** staff who may feel burnt out, by offering some self-care suggestions and techniques. These can be shared daily before the program begins or at the end of the day before leaving. Incorporate these strategies into your staff meetings as well.

But mostly this “E” stands for **etc**. The most important thing to remember is that your professional relationships are ongoing. There is no end-point. L.U.R.E. steps are never complete. They evolve and revolve throughout the duration of the professional relationship.



This work should always come from a place of caring and earning trust with the people in your workplace. Once you can effectively L.U.R.E. as a leader, your program can E.N.D.U.R.E.

### **E: Empowerment**

Staff feel empowered to handle their job responsibilities and take initiative within the program to complete more. Staff are bringing their ideas and skills to the team. They are more likely to try new things. Their confidence is palpable.

### **N: Nurturing Environment**

When you start your team relationships from a place of caring and empathy, everyone knows there is mutual trust. This shows in the physical and emotional environment of your program. The climate is one of caring. Your program culture improves. This trickles down to the children in your care. Parents feel it when they walk through your doors.

### **D: Dedication**

Staff are dependable and committed to the cause. There is less lateness and call-outs. There is more personal initiative to improve programming.

### **U: Unification**

Your team feels like a family. You are a unified front, with shared goals and expectations. This empathetic demeanor that brought you all together, brings other people together and/or closer; children, parents, school staff, community partners, etc...

### **R: Recruitment and Retention**

When staff feel valued, they are more likely to stay and encourage others to join the team. People talk. If they are happy, they will talk about it. If they are unhappy, they will talk more about it. The relationships you foster can combat issues of recruitment and retention.

### **E: Expansion**

Your program's reputation is known. Community members tell other community members. You get higher enrollment. It's as easy as that. Expansion also applies to practices from your site being adopted and applied at other sites and those locations benefiting from the initial work of your team.

