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“Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing” - Albert Schweitzer

This morning, while riding the lift together with employees, I grinned to myself, thinking back to when I first came here. Back then, just standing next to me was almost impossible for everyone, let alone joining the same short journey! The situation turned worse if I was there with Khun Vichai (Bencharongkul).

Initially, I thought it might be because I was new and also a farang, so staff could have felt a bit reluctant to come close to me. However, months passed by and things remained the same. So I discussed with Khun Vichai how to bridge this gap between staff and management.

It just happened to be around the end of the year, and DTAC, like other companies, usually had a New Year party during that time. Instead of wearing suit and tie delivering the normal New Year speech, we decided to do something to surprise the staff. We jumped on the stage in our rap singers' outfits, singing a brand new song, composed specially for the DTAC staff, and dancing like we're on fire!

Ear-shattering screams exploded. Some staff were screaming because they were shocked seeing the CEOs doing something they had never seen before. Others were laughing their heads off seeing us dancing and singing like crazy.

No matter what others said, I think we managed to show the staff that there was no difference between executives and others. Executives don't need to always look serious. Executives don't need to wear suit and tie all the time. Executives are just one of the normal employees in the company. So no need to be afraid of saying hello or having a nice chat with executives when seeing them around.

The following morning after the party, I was waiting in front of the same lift. But this time, staff said 'sawasdee' while some even told me 'Khun Sigve, you were very cool'. Then we joined the lift together.

I believe in one thing. To change the organization culture, it needs to come from the top. If we tell outsiders that we are a fun, active, modern, down-to-earth company, we need to make our own people believe and act accordingly. And to make over 4,000 people to be like that, the leader must lead by example.

Imagine that if I told staff to meet customers in the market but I myself sat comfortably in my air-conditioned office, who would have believed or followed my order? So I decided not to waste time telling them what to do, but rather showing them by doing it myself first.

Many people, when first saw me leading employees into the market, thought I just tried to create an image for myself. They thought I would do it only once or twice before giving up.

But over the past 3 years and a half, I led my staff into the streets, meeting with customers both in Bangkok and provinces for several hundreds times. This year alone, I visited customers in 63 provinces, leading what we called internally 74 'mob' activities.

The first year we did it, there were only executives and marketing staff. Later, I got all management involved while asking employees from all floors and all departments to participate. I did this because I wanted everyone in the company, regardless of position and title, to have an opportunity to meet, talk and listen to the customers. This is because everyone has a role to play in making our services better for the customers.

Several people asked me if it was necessary for the CEO to be that 'hands on'. I think 'yes'. If I didn't do what I preached, employees would not have seen the importance of this thing.

Although it is a hard work, using a lot of energy, we need to keep on doing it to create a direct communication channel with our customers. This doesn't only create brand recognition but is also one of the most effective marketing methods currently available in the market.

Importantly, when I told customers that we are the 'Pood Jing Tam Jing' company, I need to make our employees believe in it too, by showing them that I always 'Pood Jing' and 'Tam Jing' and they, too, need to be the same.