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# Focus

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## What Good Looks Like

Santa and Bjugnakraekir (nicknamed Bunny), Santa's Infant Research Department Chief, sat companionably in front of a toasty fire on December 27, enjoying steaming mugs of hot mulled cider. They were basking in the afterglow of a flawless Christmas toy delivery, and the busy months preceding it, when Bunny piped up, "Nick, things ran especially well this year, and have been for some time. How do you keep all the toy production elves on their pointy little toes?"

"Bunny, now that's a good question, so let me tell you of a time when we really struggled," said Santa as he nibbled on a Candy Cane Crisp. "You'll recall that ages ago there was no Christmas. Back then I baked pastries. Then, about 2,000 years ago most of my baking elves quit working and left the North Pole. So I shifted to toys. Mercy, was that first year tough! We continued to struggle with quality for years."

"So what did you do?" asked Bunny.

Santa paused briefly, and had a far-away look in his eyes, before he replied. "Bunny, the stress was awful! I tried everything: team-building, contests, carrots and sticks, but nothing worked. Then, one evening when I was complaining to Mary, she said something that changed my life." "Which was . . ." Bunny prompted.

"Bunny, my lovely wife simply asked me if I had shown the elves what I wanted them to do."

"But you had been telling them exactly what to do," offered Bunny. "Yes," Santa replied, "but that wasn't enough for most elves. So I resolved then and there to change my

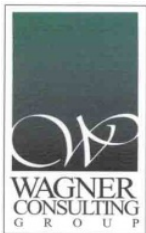
management approach."

Santa went on to describe to Bunny how he showed the elves, individually and in groups, exactly what good looked like. In every case, someone -- Santa or another expert elf -- demonstrated excellence in preparation, process, and outcome. Usually the outcome was a toy, but support elves also received training on toy-making support. As Santa put it, "If you're not making toys, or helping elves who do, or keeping our reindeer healthy, then you don't belong here."

Santa also explained two vital aspects of his new management approach: leading by personal example and repeating the training during the year. "Bunny, I learned the importance of keeping the most important things front and center. And -- this is critical -- you must keep striving to do better, and that means retraining on what good looks like."

Bunny replied when he knew Santa was done speaking, "Thanks for reminding me why you wear the big red suit." Santa grinned and said, "Don't suck up, Bunny. That's Baxter's job!" Then he reached for another Candy Cane Crisp.

*Tom*



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May your Christmas be merry and bright

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