



HR STAR



Leonard Glick: Executive Professor of HR Management at the College of Business Administration at Northeastern University

[By Robin Salisian]

Professor Leonard Glick teaches undergraduates and MBA students the ins and outs of HR. However, when he received his doctorate from Harvard in “Research on Instruction,” Glick admitted, “I’m not even sure I knew what HR was.”

And yet, years later, Glick is an executive professor of HR Management at the College of Business Administration at Northeastern University.

Glick’s previous careers, while not in the HR field, related to HR in various ways, the most ironic example, perhaps, being his previous work in the field of education.

“I worked for a consulting firm in education and helped create a very powerful approach to helping educational leaders become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Then, in the late 1970s, I was hired by Digital Equipment Corporation in their Corporate HR group to help evaluate and improve some of their educational programs.”

“In the early 80’s, part of this group adopted a new focus on ‘high performance/high commitment work systems’ (HPWS),” continued Glick. “For me, it was love at first sight. The underlying values and principles, the creativity, the outcomes-and the chance to learn how to ‘design and implement’ this new form of organization all appealed to me. I learned about organizational design, new forms of pay, process redesign, culture, self-managing teams, and more.”

Fortunately, his early interest in learning, combined with his newly acquired expertise in HPWS provided him with

Q. What do you like to do outside of work? Any odd hobbies/interests? Are you married? Do you have children? Can you explain a little about your personal life outside of your company?

A. I am married and have two children, both of whom are in graduate school. I like sports (although now I watch more than I play) and travel. I have served on a school committee for six years and am a member of the Board of Directors of Camp Bauercrest, a not-for-profit summer camp. I was a camper and counselor there and have been on the board since 1971.

Q. Throughout your lifetime, what movie have you watched the most?

A. Without question, *Twelve Angry Men* because I show and discuss it in many of my courses! I’ve probably seen it 50 times. I think I have it memorized.

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. *The Tipping Point* by Gladwell and *The Street Lawyer* by Grisham.

Q. What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

A. Chocolate Chip.

a foundation and desire for teaching.

Now, as a professor, Glick teaches both undergrads and MBA students in courses ranging from “Strategic Human Resource Management” to “Organizational Behavior” to “Great Companies” to “High Commitment Organizations.”

Packed with hands-on projects, group discussions, simulations, and more, Glick’s classes not only inform students, but force them to interact with real people, real companies, and real situations.

“I’m a believer in learning through doing,” said Glick. His interactive and relevant class projects range from creating an organization and running a business (where students “encounter most of the issues we discuss in organizational behavior class, such as leadership, motivation, structure, etc.”) to having students serve as consultants to real companies-researching, conducting interviews, and presenting their findings and recommendations to the clients. Of the latter, Glick admitted, “It’s challenging, ‘messy,’ and requires a flexible class schedule, but seems to be a good learning experience.”



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Glick has also put his degree in psychology from the University of Massachusetts to use, teaching introductory psychology, developmental psychology, and research methods. But whether he is teaching psychology or HR, Glick’s motto remains: “My intent always is to teach what I enjoy.”

Glick also enjoys serving on the undergraduate programs (curriculum) committee and helping “plan and moderate an annual HRM forum, in which both senior operating and HR managers discuss the ways in which HR practices directly impact their competitive position.”

While teaching continues to excite Glick, his greatest and most influential work experience was the period of about five years when his small group at Digital Equipment Corporation was focusing on high performance work systems: “We were

learning, consulting, championing...et cetera.”

“All of us were fully committed to the value of our work. We literally became a self-managing team-working together, learning from each other, supporting each other, and having a lot of fun. At the time, I remember thinking that it was a rare work experience. While I have always enjoyed what I do,” continued Glick, “I was right. It was special.” Now, 25 years later, Glick and his team are still in contact.

“We got together a few months ago.”

So how does a knowledgeable HR professor pare down his advice? By keeping things simple.

“If you want to teach it, I suggest you work in it. There’s no substitute for real work

experience. If you want to work effectively in HR, I strongly suggest that you fully understand the strategy and work of the organization. To add value, you need to deeply understand the business.”

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