



Leading Through Crisis and Beyond

Frank Ashmore believes in putting people first and tapping into individual talent.

Story by **Mark Ray**



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ABOVE: Frank Ashmore, standing, believes in empowering employees and setting them up for success.

“*n the Chinese language, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters—one representing danger, and one representing opportunity.”*

— President John F. Kennedy

Like his colleagues around the world, Frank Ashmore faced the crisis of a lifetime when COVID-19 upended the hospitality industry in March 2020.

As managing director of 1440 Multiver-

sity in Scotts Valley, California, he had to shepherd the nonprofit learning destination and retreat center through the pandemic; then, a few months later, through wildfires that ravaged Santa Cruz County.

Ashmore responded to those twin crises the same way he’d responded to other crises, large and small, across 30 years in the hospitality industry: by putting other people first.

“We had the largest commercial kitchen in the county, so we essentially became a food production facility for 30 homeless shelters,” he said. “We served over 30,000 meals in the first two months and ended up with 60,000 meals by the end of the summer.”

That was just the beginning. In 2021, 1440 Multiversity launched its Healing Our Healthcare Heroes initiative, which has now offered dozens of free three-day, two-night retreats for frontline medical workers.

“When they leave us, they feel some



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Frank Ashmore, Managing Director, 1440 Multiversity

hope toward renewing their careers and reenergized to want to keep doing the work that they’re doing,” Ashmore said.

1440 Multiversity pivoted smoothly, in part, because programs like the health-care worker retreats fit its vision of “creating hope for living well.”

But Ashmore’s brand of authentic leadership can also be credited for the organization’s smooth pivot. Here he shares five lessons in leadership.

ALIGNING VALUES

Every organization has core values, and so does every employee. The magic happens when those values match.

“I’ve always worked for really great organizations that had really great core values, but they never quite exactly aligned with my own,” Ashmore said. “Now I’m in a place where we can do that, and it’s really special.”

Values come up in the hiring and orientation processes at 1440 Multiversity, which helps in finding employees that are a good fit.

“If we did our job selecting the right people and they did their job telling us the truth and they’re passionate about where they work, there’s no reason why we can’t be successful,” Ashmore said.

SETTING PEOPLE UP FOR SUCCESS

Ashmore recognizes that employees are not interchangeable parts in a hospitality machine. He has all applicants complete a talent assessment.

“Some may be greater than others when it comes to certain skills, but everybody resonates on the scale with some level of talent,” Ashmore said. “Then it’s up to the organization to put the person in the right job.”

He believes it’s up to employers to make people successful once they’re in place. He’s intimately involved in new-hire orientations and makes sure all employees experience ongoing learning. “Talent, plus fit, times investment, equals growth,” he said.

ACKNOWLEDGING MISTAKES

Some leaders are afraid to admit that they’ve messed up or that they don’t have all the answers, and others can be quick to point out and punish their employees’ mistakes.

Ashmore has a different approach. He’s willing to acknowledge his mistakes and view those of others as learning opportunities.

“The people that I do employ are real and they value what they bring.

“When they fall short, I accept their shortfalls because I have my own, and we just find ways to complement each other,” he said.

ASKING FOR HELP

And he’s not afraid to ask for help.

“If I need something I don’t feel I have the skill to do, I won’t be so egotistical and narcissistic as to think that I’m going to fake it and try to do it myself,” he said.

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EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES

Finally, Ashmore believes good leaders harness their employees’ energy and passion.

“We value the way people think; we value what they feel,” he said.

A good example is the organization’s employee-led Helping Hands Committee. The organization offers employees

Award-Winning Leadership

AS PART OF THE 2021 Adrian Awards program, Frank Ashmore was named a Hospitality Recovery Hero for leading 1440 Multiversity’s response to COVID-19. Nominator Erik Newton of Milestone Inc. wrote, “He is a recovery hero with heart who gives to the people in our society who need it most. Frank’s inclusiveness and large-heartedness to embrace military veterans, health-care workers, farmers, the local community and unhoused people in the healing program inspires us greatly.”

paid time off to volunteer in the community, and this committee chooses the organizations.

“In some cases, we were introduced to nonprofits by employees themselves,” he said.

Ashmore’s approach to leadership helped earn 1440 Multiversity a place on The NonProfit Times’ Best Nonprofits to Work For list in 2023. It has also helped the organization earn remarkable guest-satisfaction scores.

“The last year we averaged a 9.83 (out of 10),” he said. “I’ve never had scores that high anywhere I’ve ever worked.” ■



Founded in 2017 by Joanie and Scott Kriens, 1440 Multiversity seeks to help people find purpose in the 1,440 minutes of each day.