

Dr. Steve Cathcart

Chief Human Resources Officer

Next-Step Leadership

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INTRO for Website Content:

- **Dr. Stephen “Steve” M. Cathcart, Chief Human Resources Officer, he has facilitated workshops all over the United States as well as internationally. He is an expert in many areas of employee development including leadership, diversity, and performance management. Steve has a unique blend of experience in both the public and private sectors. He has worked and consulted for Fortune 500 companies, government entities, and non-profit agencies. He is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Leadership Studies and Adult Education at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University.**
- **A lifelong resident of North Carolina, Steve was educated in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Master of Science attained from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, where he is currently an adjunct professor in the Masters of Adult Education Program. Also, he earned a Doctor of Education in Adult & Community College Education from North Carolina State University.**

Questions

Opening

A. Who IS Dr. Steve Cathcart?

An extroverted introvert! I am equally comfortable being the life of the party or sitting at home binge watching a Netflix series. I'm super friendly but also not as social as people may think. I'm people oriented, but like fast, efficient processes. I'm empathetic but, not very emotional. I can be loud and animated and also be totally aloof. I score very evenly on most personality tests and always have. I have a wide variety of interests and generally have something in common with most people I encounter.

B. What are your current goals?

My current work goals are to build a world class HR dept in my current organization.

My current personal goals are to improve my health. I'm well on the way to achieving all of my personal and professional goals.

1. What is it like, having to fire, or let someone go? Does this type of energy transfer take a toll on you?

It's the absolute worst part of my job yes it takes a toll on me.

2. Before letting someone go, or being fired, what is the process like? How do you approach difficult conversations and improvement plans?

In general there are many steps to firing someone if you have a good process. You always want to give employees an opportunity to improve. My approach to terminations or performance improvement is factual, empathetic, consistent, and DOCUMENTED.

3. HOW do you create a strong team? HOW do you assess talent for positions?

You create a strong team by creating diversity of thought! People often wonder why they spend so much time spinning their wheels in organizations. One major reason is because leaders pick employees that think just like they do.

I think one of my talents is assessing talent 😊. I have the ability to look at what skillset is needed and find that skillset. All I'm concerned about is can this person do what I need done in a timely, quality and ethical manner. I think most leaders have a difficult time assessing talent because they make emotional decisions or have unrealistic expectations.

4. Managing staff virtually, what has this been like? (Considering COVID-19 and the influx of Zoom and Microsoft Teams as a way of work life)

I actually had a virtual staff in the early 2000s. I managed a team of nurse case managers in California for a couple of years. I've always thought a hybrid way of working would be more productive in many organizations. I know that this isn't necessarily a popular opinion but one of the only good things about Covid-19 is that it forced many organizations into a new way of working.

5. What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster diversity competence and understanding?

I've played a lead role in diversity and inclusion in every organization I've been a part of the last 10 + years. I think the biggest role I play is that I know how to be empathetic and look at things from multiple points of view.

6. What are you reading right now? What is on the night stand? Or on the Kindle?

I'll really concerned about my health and health issues right now so I'm reading Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal by Eric Schlosser

7. What would you say is the BIGGEST Misconception people have about you? How do you work through it?

I feel like there are so many! You talk to one person, and they think I'm mean you talk to another and they think I'm too easy going. The fact is you can't worry about misconceptions. You have to be authentic, stay ethical, stay true to yourself, treat people right and let the chips fall where they may.

8. What was YOUR path to leadership?

Unconventional! I've probably done more different types of jobs than most people. I've been at the lowest end of the employment spectrum to very high end of the spectrum. I think having those perspectives have helped make me a good leader.

9. Tell us about a time you failed as a leader.

In second management role I tried to manage and lead that team the exact same way I managed and/led my first team. That was a huge mistake and a lesson learned. The second team had an entirely different set of needs than the first team and it took me a while to realize that.

10. What is the TRUE Goal of ANY Human Resources Department? Many will say things like: "HR is NOT your friend".

The actual "goals" are pretty well known. HR goals range from recruiting to mediating employee disputes.

In my opinion the real goal of HR is to advocate for employees and provide the best possible environment for them to be productive while also protecting the organization from possible missteps relating labor law and employment issues.

11. Last Question: What thoughts or ideas do you want to leave Lessons in Leadership Leader-Cast watchers with?

We spend a ton of time talking about leadership but very little time talking about followership! Great leaders know how to play a support role and be good followers.