

The character of Santa Claus was introduced by Troy Sentinel's Broadsheet in 1830 which was taken from Henry Livingston's version in 1823.

Minor changes were made to a few words to improve the rhyme and flow. Here is the poem.

1 It was the night before Christmas, when all through the house,
2 Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
3 The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
4 In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
5 The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
6 While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads,
7 And Mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
8 Had just settled down for a long winter's nap;
9 When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
10 I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
11 Away to the window I flew like a flash,
12 Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash,
13 The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
14 Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,
15 When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
16 But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny rein-deer,
17 With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
18 I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
19 More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
20 And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
21 "Now, Dasher! now, Dancer, now Prancer! now Vixen!
22 On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Dunder and Blixem!
23 "To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
24 "Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
25 As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly,
26 When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
27 So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
28 With a sleigh full of Toys - and St. Nicholas too.
29 And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof,
30 The prancing and pawing of each little hoof-
31 As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
32 Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
33 He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
34 And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
35 A bundle of Toys was flung on his back,
36 And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack;
37 His eyes - how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
38 His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
39 His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
40 And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
41 The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
42 And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
43 He had a broad face and a little round belly,

44 That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
45 He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
46 And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
47 A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
48 Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
49 He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
50 And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
51 And laying his finger aside of his nose,
52 And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
53 He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
54 And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle;
55 But I heard him exclaim, as he drove out of sight,
56 "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

It's not easy being Santa Claus and managing a toy business. I need to smile, have a great attitude, and wear a heavy red-wool suit. The demands of the day will drain you. I am the manager and leader. I am responsible to gift-getters and gift-makers. There are workers to lead, letters to read, orders to fill, processes to manage, stuff to buy, stuff to make, standards to maintain, new technologies to adopt, skills to develop, elf problems to solve, and reindeer dropping to scoop. Market trends rapidly change. We were geared to make dolls and board games and then a movie came out in September and every one wanted video games. We had to do some last-minute scrambling! We were working 24/7 and had to deal with production and motivational challenges.

Two of my reindeer got sick and Prancer retired. My delivery staff was reduced by one third. The population increased 17%. They were exhausted Christmas Eve and were tired and ticked off. It takes a year to train new harness-team members. I was faced with reviewing reindeer resumes. Like most managers I have to deal with marketplace fluctuations. Here is an example: "Dear Santa, I thought I wanted that, but now I want this." I am faced with budget cuts, staff reductions, employees who are either unwilling or unable to adjust to change, technology advancements, increasing demands for higher quality and better service, fluctuations in the economy, competing priorities, ever-growing performance expectations and a whole lot more.

You think your job is tough. You try recruiting in, and for, the North Pole; retooling your plant, and retraining your people every year to produce the newest fads in toys. You try delivering tons of presents all in one night.

It is not easy being Santa Claus, but I love what I do. People need me and depend on me. We are doing something important and that gives me the energy to carry the sack, lead the pack, and keep coming back.

Our vision is to provide peace and joy and our mission is to deliver peace and joy. We are in the toy business. But how can we fulfill the vision? What is the secret to meet all these challenges and responsibilities? We have nine practical strategies for leading others and getting big things done all year long. They're called "The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus." They are my gifts to you.

You are not required to believe in Santa Claus to learn from his experiences.

Build a Wonderful Workshop
Choose Your Reindeer Wisely
Make A List and Check It Twice

Listen To The Elves
Get Beyond The Red Wagons
Share The Milk and Cookies
Find Out Who's Naughty and Nice
Be Good For Goodness Sake
Did We Accomplish The Mission?

Build a Wonderful Workshop.
Seek and receive a vision.
Make the mission the main thing.
Focus on your people as well as your purpose.
Let values be your guide.

Choose Your Reindeer Wisely.
Hire tough so you can manage easy
Promote the right ones...for the right reasons
Go for the diversity advantage

Make a list and check it twice

Plan your work, work your plan, make the most of what you have.

We develop our plans by answering 6 questions for each set goal.

1. **What** needs to be accomplished?
2. **Why** does it need to be done? (How does it contribute to our overall mission?)
3. **When** does it need to be accomplished?
4. **Where** am I/ are we now in relation to this goal?
5. **Who** will be involved in accomplishing this?
6. **How** will it be accomplished? (What specific steps and activities are involved, and what resources are required?)

Schedule frequent progress checks as part of the work-planning process. Meet with the team and individuals-and encourage them to meet among themselves, without me – to measure the status of our goals against predetermined progress “benchmarks.” Ask the following:

1. Is each goal still valid and doable.
2. Are we where we should be in terms of attaining each goal?
3. Have any conditions or circumstances changed since we originally set each goal.
4. Do we need to make any changes to our goals, our action plans, or our performance levels?

A sign on the wall states: **IF WE WANT TO HEAR JINGLE BELLS RINGING ON THE 24TH WE NEED TO SET AND LIVE BY OUR GOALS...ALL YEAR LONG.**

The purpose of the group is to identify and eliminate inefficient/wasteful business practices. Here are few strategies.

Making the most of time:

Prioritize tasks (do the most important thing first)
Start and end meetings promptly – and issue agendas in advance.
Teach time-management skills and techniques.
Take advantage of time saving technology.

Making the most of money

Buy in discounted bulk whenever possible.

Shop for the best prices on materials, supplies, equipment, and services.

Use email to reduce postage and long-distance charges.

Think pennies as well as dollars – a few cents saved here and there quickly adds up.

Making the most of materials and equipment

“Measure twice, cut once.”

Reuse and recycle whenever possible.

Be religious about preventative maintenance.

Invest in extended warranties.

Making the most of employee talent and expertise

Involve the people with knowledge in the decisions.

Match jobs with worker skills and interests.

Enhance employee expertise through training and developmental assignments.

Encourage employees to share their knowledge with others.

Listen to the Elves

Open your ears to participation

Pay attention to how you’re perceived

Walk awhile in their shoes

Get Beyond the Red Wagons

Help everyone accept the reality of change, Remember: The customer is really in charge, Teach “The Business” of the business.

1. Compliment the elves on the excellence of making red wagons and their pride in their past accomplishments

2. Introduce the change we are facing and explain why it is necessary.

3. Allow time for discussion.

4. Discuss the benefits to be gained

a. Staying in business.

b. Staying employed.

Santa’s commitment:

1. To provide the training and support that the employees would need to make changes – and feel good about themselves in the process.

2. To demonstrate patience and understanding as they work their way through the learning curve.

3. Make sure everyone understands the reason for the change.

The more employees understand about how the business works, the more likely they are to accept and support change.

Brainstorming:

Having different elves and reindeer attend, observe, and participate in non-confidential senior-staff meetings;

Cross-training and rotating assignments within departments so employees can understand and appreciate the functions and challenges faced by, their coworkers;

A departmental “swap” program that allows individuals to experience how other businesses operate... and how we’re all interdependent in achieving the overall mission.

Remember: The customer is really in charge

Teach “The Business” of the business.

Share the Milk and Cookies

Help them see the difference they make.

Do right by those who do right.

Expand the reinforcement possibilities

Find out Who's Naughty and Nice.

Confront Performance Problems Early; Coach "The majority in the middle;" Don't forget "The Super Stars."

Examples of Mistakes:

I overlooked tardiness of Joe hoping that it would magically go away.

I sent out a memo to the entire work staff hoping that Joe would read it and get the message and correct the problem without my involvement.

I looked for every excuse to avoid a confrontation with Joe and then one of the elves asked me when was I going to talk with Joe.

I was furious with Joe and called him into my office and unloaded on him. We were both angry and tensions were high.

Then Joe asked a question: If this was so important why didn't you come to me sooner.

Coaching: Helping the elves and reindeer avoid problems and do the best work they can. Allowing my "Middle Stars" to do the following:

Making sure that they know and understand the performance expectations that come with employment;

Providing the training and resources they need to meet those expectations;

Giving frequent and specific feedback on how they're doing;

Identify any obstacles they may be facing, and then doing something to eliminate those barriers;

Teaching them how to set, manage, and achieve goals;

Helping them learn from mistakes...and successes;

Hooking them up with mentors from the super-star ranks;

Staying aware of what they're doing and "nipping in the bud" any problems that start to surface.

My role is to be Santa the encourager, the developer, and cheerleader. Here are some things I must do:

Get them involved in decision making, strategy setting, procedure development, and problem solving;

Delegate extensively and avoid 'Micromanaging' them;

Encourage them to teach and mentor others...including me;

Celebrate their accomplishments and successes;

Provide them with highly specialized training and other career-growth opportunities;

Show interest in their work...and their lives away from work;

Hold their coworkers accountable for doing their jobs so that the super stars don't have to pick up the slack;

Avoid punishing them for good performance (You did such a good job at handling that mess).

As the leader, the key to dealing with the super stars is to demonstrate – through words and actions – that you know and appreciate the fact that they are the nicest of the nice,

Be Good for Goodness Sake

Set the example; Establish Guidelines and accountability; Remember that everything counts.

I must model the behavior that I expect from others. I must take the lead and walk the talk when it comes to things like:

Following all rules and procedures;
Treating everyone with dignity and respect;
Always telling the truth;
Never breaking a promise or commitment;
Building superior quality into everything I do;
Continually giving my best effort;
Consistently taking a stand for what is right.

The workshop “What’s Right?” test

Is it legal?
Does it comply with our workshop rules and guidelines?
Is it in sync with North Pole values?
Will it be comfortable, guilt-free, or even jolly to do it?
Does it support our goals, commitments, and mission?
Would I do it to my family or friends?
Would I be perfectly OK with someone doing it to me?
Would the most ethical person I know do it?

Building Accountability:

Keeping my eyes and ears open to what is happening.
Providing on going feedback.
Displaying “zero Tolerance.”

Do we focus on integrity issues and examine our ethical standard?

The way we talk about each other;
The type of jokes we share;
The little whit lies we don’t (or do) tell;
The commitments we make and keep or don’t keep;
The workshop supplies we don’t (or do) take home;
The unimportant rules we follow or break;
The level of quality we put into our toys;
The fact that we don’t or do use the sleigh for personal business;
The way we respond or don’t respond to the letters we receive;
The credit we appropriately share or don’t share with fellow workers.

Our customers: Our vision of providing joy and peace needs to be addressed. (Need slide with elves, Santa and rein-deer in a circle talking)

Our mission of delivering peace and joy on Christmas Eve had changed. Our customers were experiencing anger, hatred, and crime. We had to re-evaluate our products. We found the video, star wars, and Dungeons and Dragons games were changing the attitudes of the children. School shootings, disrespect for authority, teenage pregnancies, pornography were climbing. I gathered the elves and reindeer to discuss our dilemma. We strayed from the vision and mission. We needed help. One of the elves said “There is a group of businessmen in Anchorage, Alaska, telling stories that are changing the lives of the citizens.” Let’s invite them to the North Pole. These businessmen are talking about a personal relationship with a man that has the power to change the heart of man, grant a gift of eternal salvation, give power from within, and had a sack of spiritual gifts. Santa these gifts bring peace, love, joy, patience, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. Santa do you think this man would give us wisdom on how to improve the attitudes of our customers and help us to change our toys and games?

Santa how could we distribute this man's gifts? Could we ask this businessmen's organization to partner with us in helping fulfill our mission? We understand that they are in 160 nations of the world and flow in the gifts of the Spirit.

A strange thing happened at the workshop. Our attitudes changed and we had peace, love and joy. We had experienced our vision and mission. Santa thank you for introducing us to this Man.

Words to Remember:

People need me...they depend on me. We're doing something important here. And knowing this gives me the energy to carry the sack, lead the pack and keep coming back.

How do I keep everyone on track and motivated? The answer is through an unwavering and uncompromising focus on our mission.

You can't focus on the mission without also focusing on the folks that make the mission happen.

The workshop is more than a building it is what it stands for that makes it special.

Making sure that everyone knows what values are important and helping everyone turn those good beliefs into everyday behavior.

The time I spend hiring the right way is nothing compared to the time I'll have spend dealing with the wrong reindeer.

New employees brought new skills, perspectives, and ideas. They gave us more than one way of thinking, planning, producing and problem solving. They made us better and stronger.

Our success – and resulting reputation for excellence – is the result of clearly defined goals combined with well-thought-out plans to accomplish our goals.

Our goals are specific yet flexible – allowing for changing conditions and circumstances.

Once a reasonable plan is made, we implement it...We get things going fast, and then make midcourse corrections as necessary.

We would go out of business if we didn't make the absolute best of our resources: time, money, materials, and the talents of our elves and reindeer.

Involving workers in running the operation, and in making decisions that affect them.

I pay attention to what my elves feel.

I knew we had to abandon the status quo. And as a the leader, I had to make it happen with both decisiveness and sensitivity.

Our job is to give our customers what they are looking for. And as their wants and needs change, we have to change along with them.

The more our employees understand about how our business works, the more likely they are to accept and support change.

Nothing motivates employees more than knowing they're making a difference.

I've learned to recognize employees that are doing right.

In order for us to be successful, it is imperative that our middle stars avoid falling backwards. They need to stay good performers and move to the superior performance level.

Don't take your employees for granted. A good coach will involve the players, recognize and reward them.

Avoid punishing for good performance.

Since I am the leader my actions whether good or bad are the performance standards they will follow.

I must model the behavior I expect from others. I must take the lead.

I make sure that all staff members are well-versed in the laws, rules, and procedures that apply to them. I make sure they understand what is ethical.

All guidelines we provide are valuable and important. But for them to have true meaning they must be backed with accountabilities and consequences.

Being good means being good all the time.

To survive and prosper, you and your organization must be able to achieve “big things” throughout each year and you can’t get the big things done without effective leadership.

Your job comes with many challenges and responsibilities, but it is necessary and important.

Your elves and reindeer are depending on you – just as you are depending on them. Don’t let them down.

Getting the big things done all year long isn’t magic. It’s about leadership.

Our customers: Did we accomplish our mission of providing peace and joy?

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What did we learn?:

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Don't take your employees for granted. A good coach will involve the players, recognize and reward them.

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Being good means being good all the time.

To survive and prosper, you and your organization must be able to achieve "big things" throughout each year and you can't get the big things done without effective leadership.

Your job comes with many challenges and responsibilities, but it is necessary and important.

Your elves and reindeer are depending on you – just as you are depending on them. Don't let them down.

Getting the big things done all year long isn't magic. It's about leadership.

Here's a thought to consider:

Many make the mistake of only seeking God's blessing instead of celebrating His presence. It is important to seek God's face, not his hand. We love God because of who He is, not because of what He has done or can do for us. God is not an eternal Santa Claus. We should chase His presence, not His presents. It should not be just "I want blessings from God." It should be, "I want God." The marvelous thing about seeking the giver is that when you find Him, you also receive His gifts simply because He loves you.

How Did Santa Get Into Christmas?

There was a man named Saint Nicholas who was a priest and lived in Asia Minor, (Turkey), during the fourth century A.D., ("A.D." is a Latin abbreviation for the words, "anno Domini" which means, " the year of our Lord" or "since Christ was born."). According to legend, Nicholas furnished dowries for three poor girls who's fathers could not afford to pay them.

St. Nicholas would throw sacks of coins into the girls bedrooms during the night. This is how the custom of night

time visits from St. Nicholas originated.

Another story says that St. Nicholas wanted to give money to the poor without them knowing who had done it, so he climbed on to the roof of a house and dropped a purse of money down the chimney. A little girl had earlier placed a stocking near the fire to dry and the purse full of money fell into it. From then on children have hung stockings by the fire in the hope that St. Nicholas will fill them, and somehow he always seems to manage it!

And, another story of how the legend of Santa Claus began says that the modern Santa finds his origin in a young pastor named Nicholas. His parents died when he was still a boy, leaving him a fortune. He loved the Lord and cared deeply for those in need. Not wanting to receive any glory himself, he went secretly, during the night, to the homes of poor families. There he left gifts and money because of his love for Christ. In some countries children receive gifts on St. Nicholas Day (December 6th) instead of on Christmas.

When was Jesus Born?

Was it on Christmas Day?

The celebrating of the birth of Jesus on 25th December is quite a strange custom and it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible that Jesus ever celebrated His birthday, nor did God command us to celebrate the day of Jesus' birth. The date of His birth is not known for sure, however it is clear from the scriptures that it was not in December. Shepherds did not spend the chilly December nights on the hills in that part of the world, they took their sheep inside to shelter overnight and out again in the morning.

The 25th December was a date picked by the Catholic church to appease the pagans who they were trying to convert, but who were not willing to give up their traditional holidays and festivals. Saturnalia was one of the popular Roman pagan festivals of celebration, drunkenness and making merry which ran from the 17th to the 24th of December. Gifts were exchanged on the 23rd and 24th. On the 25th December they would celebrate "The Birth of The Unconquerable Sun."

It was decided that this would be a day for celebrating the birth of Jesus instead. Many of the pagan traditions such as decorating the house with trees and greenery were banned at this time, but they have crept back into our Christmas traditions.

If December 25 is a pagan holiday, when should we celebrate the Savior's birth? Let's look at scripture and Jewish history. The Feast of Tabernacles starts on the 15 day of the 7th month of Tishrei and runs from Sabbath to Sabbath. They were commanded by God to rejoice - Deut 16:14. Today shelters line the Joplin gate to accommodate the people. Every day the priest would pour water and wine on the altar. Isaiah 12 talks about the birth of the Messiah. During the Feast the crowds would get louder and louder as the days passed. The last day is called Hoshana Raba and translated as Day of the Great Hoshana.

Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit being poured out John 7:37-39. On the last day of the feast everyone brought a torch to the sanctuary and Jesus proclaimed I am the light of the world. Jesus came that we might have life. What if Jesus was conceived the last day of Hanukkah (there was only enough oil to last one day, but God extended the oil to last 8 days). Forty weeks would bring us to the last day of the Great Feast (Sukkot).

In Luke 2:10 the angel tells the shepherds "I bring you good tidings of great joy (great joy). Isaiah 12 uses the word joy (great joy). There are 3 words used for joy.

Numbers 24:16 is the "Prophecy of Balaam from Peor - the Messianic kingdom."

The Essenes, Jewish historians, took scriptures and made 2 columns - one for the suffering Messiah and one for the reigning Messiah. When scripture said that the Messiah would be the Son of Joseph, I got excited.

All seven Jewish Feasts point to the Messiah – The Lord Jesus Christ. Make the “Day of Great Joy” special in your life by inviting Jesus Christ into your Heart. Lord Jesus come into my heart and be number one in my life. Forgive me of all my sins and trespasses. In Jesus Christ I pray. Now you can celebrate for eternity.