

Positive Inspirational Leadership Stories 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Coming in from the cold can help boost the creativity of leaders

As many of you know, especially those of you who are history buffs, Sir Ernest Shackleton was a great explorer who found himself and his crew in a life-or-death crisis when they had to abandon ship in the icy waters around Antarctica.

The year was 1914, and Shackleton's expedition had planned an unprecedented land crossing of the frozen continent. When the ship got stuck in the ice and sank, the crew began a harrowing 18-month survival test.

They stayed alive as they moved among the drifting ice floes until they eventually found an island, where they established a camp. When their provisions began to run low, Shackleton and several crew members boarded one of their salvaged lifeboats and made a daring 800-mile voyage to a whaling station. They returned with a ship, and all 27 men survived the ordeal. Their story is incredible and nothing short of miraculous.

Many books have been written recently covering the profound lessons found in this dramatic story of survival and endurance. I personally think there are many lessons we can learn about crisis leadership from Shackleton's experiences, specifically creativity.

There are two types of people during a crisis -- those who freeze, and those who focus. Shackleton and his men were stranded in one of the coldest places on the planet, but his creativity never froze. Instead, it was critical to the team's survival. His creativity was central to the survival of the lives of the men who had entrusted themselves to him for their journey.

As I have studied Shackleton's experiences, three principles about leading with creativity during crisis came to mind.

1. Creative activity increases creative ability. As you become active in creativity, you gain more creative ability. Many people would love to have creative ability, but they've never done creative activities. When we freeze, we stop creating.

Shackleton practiced 'routine' creativity, for himself and for his crew. So when problems presented themselves, he and his crew never gave up on their ability to come up with creative solutions. Creativity can be seen much like a muscle: The more you use it, the stronger it gets.

2. The rule book no longer rules. Everybody wants to give you the rule book. David Kelley was right when he said, 'The most important thing I learned from big companies is that creativity gets stifled when everyone's got to follow the rules.'

And Thomas Edison, probably the greatest inventor ever, would tell people who visited his laboratory, 'There ain't no rules around here! We're trying to accomplish something.'

Structure and rules serve us well, but legalism can choke our creative spirit to its death. Imagine if Shackleton would have followed the 'rules.' The story would have certainly had a different ending.

3. Creativity always finds a way. Imagine yourself stuck in the same situation. It would have been very easy to have simply looked at the first couple of options, realized they really weren't options and waited to perish.

Instead, Shackleton began to be creative. He began to think of things that were seemingly impossible. He had no other option than to consider all options -- impossible or not -- because it was a case of life-or-death. Most of the time in the life of our organizations, we aren't facing life-and-death and so we do not pursue creativity long enough to let it find a way for us.

Peter Drucker once said that the best way to predict the future is to create it. We, just like Shackleton and his men, can create the future we desire if we allow ourselves to begin to think in ways that we haven't thought before; if we allow ourselves to dream of new ways to do things.

In our fast-paced, competitive marketplace, few resources are more valuable to organizations than creativity, and this is especially true during a crisis. That is when real leadership either rises or falls, and unfortunately, creativity often finds itself swallowed by urgency. Who has time to think outside the box when the box is collapsing around you?

Shackleton, however, saw beyond the problems to the big picture. He recognized creativity's importance in keeping him and his crew alive and functioning as a team when they had little margin for error in the bitter cold and isolation of Antarctica.

Not just a skill, creativity was also an attitude in his life that enabled him to find the solutions to the obstacles they faced. When others would have frozen -- literally as well as figuratively -- Shackleton focused creatively on surviving the crisis.

So, use your creativity, letting it get stronger. Throw out the 'rule book,' and let creativity help you find a way, just as it did for Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Think big while also paying attention to the details . . .

. . . Just one of the Top 10 Qualities of an Excellent Manager

An excellent manager taps into talents and resources in order to support and bring out the best in others. An outstanding manager evokes possibility in others.

1. Creativity

Creativity is what separates competence from excellence. Creativity is the spark that propels projects forward and that captures peoples' attention. Creativity is the ingredient that pulls the different pieces together into a cohesive whole, adding zest and appeal in the process.

2. Structure

The context and structure we work within always have a set of parameters, limitations and guidelines. A stellar manager knows how to work within the structure and not let the structure impinge upon the process or the project. Know the structure intimately; so as to guide others to effectively work within the given parameters. Do this to expand beyond the boundaries.

3. Intuition

Intuition is the capacity of knowing without the use of rational processes; it's the cornerstone of emotional intelligence. People with keen insight are often able to sense what others are feeling and thinking; consequently, they're able to respond perfectly to another through their 'deeper understanding'. The stronger one's intuition, the stronger manager one will be.

4. Knowledge

A thorough knowledge base is essential. The knowledge base must be so ingrained and integrated into their being that they become 'transparent', focusing on the employee and what s/he needs to learn, versus focusing on the knowledge base. The excellent manager lives from a knowledge base, without having to draw attention to it.

5. Commitment

A manager is committed to the success of the project and of all team members. S/he holds the vision for the collective team and moves the team closer to the end result. It's the manager's commitment that pulls the team forward during trying times.

6. Being Human

Employees value leaders who are human and who don't hide behind their authority. The best leaders are those who aren't afraid to be themselves. Managers who respect and connect with others on a human level inspire great loyalty.

7. Versatility

Flexibility and versatility are valuable qualities in a manager. Beneath the flexibility and versatility is an ability to be both non-reactive and not attached to how things have to be. Versatility implies an openness - this openness allows the leader to quickly 'change on a dime' when necessary. Flexibility and versatility are the pathways to speedy responsiveness.

8. Lightness

A stellar manager doesn't just produce outstanding results; he or she has fun in the process! Lightness doesn't impede results but rather, helps to move the team forward. Lightness complements the seriousness of the task at hand as well as the resolve of the team, therefore contributing to strong team results and retention.

9. Discipline/Focus

Discipline is the ability to choose and live from what one pays attention to. Discipline as self-mastery can be exhilarating! Role model the ability to live from your intention consistently and you'll role model an important leadership quality.

10. Big Picture - Small Actions

Excellent managers see the big picture concurrent with managing the details. Small actions lead to the big picture; the excellent manager is skilful at doing both: think big while also paying attention to the details.

The qualities of skilful leadership

If you want to be a leader who attracts quality people, the key is to become a person of quality yourself. Leadership is the ability to attract someone to the gifts, skills, and opportunities you offer as an owner, as a manager, as a parent. I call leadership the great challenge of life. What's important in leadership is refining your skills. All great leaders keep working on themselves until they become effective. Here are some specifics:

Learn to be strong but not rude

It is an extra step you must take to become a powerful, capable leader with a wide range of reach. Some people mistake rudeness for strength. It's not even a good substitute.

Learn to be kind but not weak

We must not mistake kindness for weakness. Kindness isn't weak. Kindness is a certain type of strength. We must be kind enough to tell somebody the truth. We must be kind enough and considerate enough to lay it on the line. We must be kind enough to tell it like it is and not deal in delusion.

Learn to be bold but not a bully

It takes boldness to win the day. To build your influence, you've got to walk in front of your group. You've got to be willing to take the first arrow, tackle the first problem, and discover the first sign of trouble.

You've got to learn to be humble, but not timid

You can't get to the high life by being timid. Some people mistake timidity for humility. Humility is almost a God-like word. A sense of awe. A sense of wonder. An awareness of the human soul and spirit. An understanding that there is something unique about the human drama versus the rest of life. Humility is a grasp of the distance between us and the stars, yet having the feeling that we're part of the stars. So humility is a virtue; but timidity is a disease. Timidity is an affliction. It can be cured, but it is a problem.

Be proud but not arrogant

It takes pride to win the day. It takes pride to build your ambition. It takes pride in community. It takes pride in cause, in accomplishment. But the key to becoming a good leader is being proud without being arrogant. In fact I believe the worst kind of arrogance is arrogance from ignorance. It's when you don't know that you don't know. Now that kind of arrogance is intolerable. If someone is smart and arrogant, we can tolerate that. But if someone is ignorant and arrogant, that's just too much to take.

Develop humor without folly

That's important for a leader. In leadership, we learn that it's okay to be witty, but not silly. It's okay to be fun, but not foolish.

Lastly, deal in realities. Deal in truth. Save yourself the agony. Just accept life like it is. Life is unique. Some people call it tragic, but I'd like to think it's unique. The whole drama of life is unique. It's fascinating. And I've found that the skills that work well for one leader may not work at all for another. But the fundamental skills of leadership can be adapted to work well for just about everyone: at work, in the community, and at home.

Simplicity - survival tips for managers

'Making the simple complicated is commonplace. Making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity' - Charles Mingus

My passionate belief is that simplicity - even in today's allegedly 'complex' world of business, leadership and management - is a legitimate, relevant and achievable aspiration.

I've been working since I left education at 16 and in those 39 years I've yet to meet anyone - boss, peer or subordinate - in my work who has pleaded desperately with me: 'Oh how I wish my work was more complex. I believe anything we do at work - and particularly if we are managers or leaders - can be made simpler.'

I worked for 35 years in healthcare management in the National Health Service (NHS). Let me assure you the NHS - the third largest organization in the world after the Chinese Army and the Indian Railways - has a complexity all of its own. If you want to test that hypothesis ask any person who doesn't work in the NHS to explain how the NHS works from government level down to your local NHS. If you find one person in 100 who can explain half of the structure correctly I would be pleasantly surprised. Actually if you ask most of the people (1.3 million) who work inside the NHS the same question the percentage of correct answers would probably not be much higher!

I believe many employees at the front line in healthcare - and I would say in most organizations - laugh behind the backs of managers who talk in jargon that leaves the people doing the work at the coalface bewildered, frustrated and sometimes demotivated.

The NHS is an outstanding example of an organization that has created a language of complexity all of its own. To be fair it is a language that was not perhaps designed to confuse but the fact is it achieves that objective. This language must have been created by managers and people working in the NHS - after all, who else would have invented it?

I think employees - particularly at the front line - want it in straightforward, plain language, not in the form of the latest management jargon. Put another way - 'If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck.'

So what can be done to begin to simplify management?

I think the answer is in the hands and the mouths of every manager in every organization. There are two easy and immediate things managers can do to simplify.

Firstly they can start to speak and write in plain language - it really is that simple. As a passionate advocate of simplicity I suppose you would expect me to say that.

In my NHS career I regularly challenged managers who persisted in speaking a language of unnecessary complexity. I remember asking one manager to repeat something he had just said in English, such as his awesome command of technical management jargon. I would not have had the confidence to do that in my early years as an aspiring manager but as I become more experienced, older and more confident I found it easier to challenge people but in a way that was neither hurtful nor personal. Quite often in my NHS career people sat around in meetings nodding knowingly at the right times, seemingly understanding the oratory of the manager holding court. And yet I had the feeling a number of people in the room had no idea what was being said.

I believe we are moving rapidly to a time when there will be less differential between what managers deliver and what the employees in his/her team can achieve. In fact I've always believed that.

Secondly the best advice I was ever given as a manager was to give away the power I was perceived to have. The best way to gain power is to let go of power. We all are naturally nervous about that concept because it makes us think: What about my job? If 'they' can do my job, what will I do?

Actually the truth of the matter is 'they' can do your job. If you let them do the bits of your job that you do not enjoy or do not stretch you enough then you can free up time to do more of the things you enjoy. You can make more time to reflect and plan - doing the visioning so that you can provide the leadership you are paid to provide and expected to provide by people who are in theory your 'followers'.

Try giving away some of the work you do not enjoy doing - it works and there will be surprises for you in that some people will love doing some parts of your job that you most detest!

Some of this may seem threatening. I believe we are moving rapidly to a time when there will be less differential between what managers deliver and what the employees in his/her team can achieve. In fact I've always believed that. In 2008, with masses of information at everyone's fingertips through Information Technology, all managers have to illustrate what is different and special about them. If they wish to be called managers and justify higher rates of pay and status than that of front line staff there simply has to be a unique selling point.

The question must be: What unique skills and expertise is it that I bring to the table as a manager?

And by the way, many years experience is not the right answer.

Finally, here are five practical steps that anyone can implement out there in Complex Management Land.

Simplicity Tips

1. At your team meeting every week or every month, depending on the frequency of meetings, ask someone to do a five minute presentation (without using PowerPoint) called 'My big simplicity idea for our team is ...'
2. Invite a customer to read three emails or letters you have sent in the previous week and ask them to give you feedback about the language you used
3. Invite two 16-year-old students who are friends to attend your team meeting and ask them to give the team members honest feedback at the end of the meeting about the language used.
4. Find a report about absolutely anything two sides of A4 long. Send the report to a colleague and ask him/her to return it to you reduced to one side of A4. Judge for yourself whether one side is adequate to get the message over.
5. Ask one of your team members to write a story on one side of A4 called 'A complicated problem in this department/team explained for an audience of secondary school students (11-16 year olds)'. Send the story to a local schoolteacher and ask for feedback from the students at his/her school.

Taking advantage of leadership opportunities will increase your visibility in a positive way

Everyone is a leader in his or her organization. Even if you don't hold a titled leadership position, such as supervisor, manager, human resource director, or CEO, you still have many opportunities every day through your actions and behavior to model "leadership" qualities. In fact, all employees must be able and willing to assume a leadership role when the need arises, regardless of their job title. That is why many organizations have eliminated titles like foreman, supervisor, and department manager to reinforce the belief that each employee is a contributing member of the team with leadership potential and opportunities depending on the task at hand.

If you don't see yourself as having leadership qualities, then you'll miss many opportunities to demonstrate your added value to your employer, co-workers, and customers. You will also be undermining yourself, because if you're not confident of your leadership potential, then why should anyone else be? Being a leader simply means you are willing to teach and support others, be a positive role model, and be ready to serve as well as lead when necessary and appropriate. Effective leaders can be found at every level in an organization. Even if you work under someone else's leadership, you can still be a leader in your ideas and attitudes about your job.

While it may be true that some people seem to fall into the role of leader more easily than others, it is possible for most of us to develop the abilities that will help us take charge, motivate others, and make good decisions. Below are some of the top qualities leaders possess.

1. Leaders are Trustworthy and Act with Integrity

In today's business environment where teamwork is crucial, there can be no doubt that all employees must be able to be trusted by their managers, co-workers, and customers. For example, good leaders do not criticize their co-workers behind their backs, and they don't take credit that belongs to everyone on the team. Instead, they build trust by openly admitting their mistakes rather than blaming others. They give credit where credit is due, and they help others celebrate their successes. Leaders build trust with customers and co-workers by acting with integrity. They make sure their words and actions are congruent all the time, not just when it's convenient. They can be counted on to do what is fair and right.

2. Leaders are High Achievers who Strive for Excellence

Many employers who talk about their employees' leadership abilities mention words like "perseverance" and "determination." Leaders keep working to be the best they can be. They stay focused on their goals, but they keep things in perspective and realize that there is always room for improvement. They continually strive to learn more about themselves and their jobs. They integrate excellence into every task. Do you see yourself as a hard worker-as a star performer? Even though you may not own the organization, do you own a sense of pride in your work and your ability to contribute? Do you see yourself striving to outperform others and set new standards of excellence for your department and your organization? A good leader must have a strong desire to be the best by providing outstanding customer service and working hard to create an excellent, cohesive, and productive workforce. Even if they don't succeed at the task, leaders keep working at it.

3. Leaders Make Others Feel Important and Valued

Leaders value other people's worth and opinions and take the time to let them know they are important. They take the time to pay someone a compliment and keep criticisms, complaints, and negative comments short and sweet. They also make both their co-workers and customers feel important by asking questions, listening, and tuning in to their needs. They realize that such questions as, "Do you need some help?" and "Do you want me to listen for your phone while you take a break?" demonstrate their ability to tune into others' needs as well as their own. In your leadership role, how generous are you with positive words and actions? Are you committed to helping others feel better about themselves? Do you value people and their ideas? Making others feel important and valuable could help make you invaluable to your organization.

4. Leaders are Willing to Serve Others

To some people, serving others may seem like the role of a subordinate, not a leader. But in fact, a good leader believes in service to others. If that sounds contradictory, think of words such as "cooperate," "help," "work collectively," and "share" because they more accurately reflect the true nature of service to others. Organizations need employees who are willing to help each other, not whine and complain saying, "That's not my job." The future will demand that people learn new skills outside their area of expertise and use them to support other team members, even when it's "not their job." Are you willing to do what is needed even if it doesn't fall under your specific job description? Leaders support their co-workers when it counts, not just when it's convenient.

5. Leaders are Relationship Builders

An effective leader knows how to build good relationships so that individuals care more about the good of the entire team than about themselves and their own personal glory. In the workplace, employers need employees who can "run with the ball" by themselves when necessary, as well as build and maintain good team relationships. Do you work actively to build good team relationships? Hopefully so, because it is an important part of being an effective leader. Equally important are good relationships with clients and customers. In today's world, many companies do business with people they barely know, sometimes people they've never met. But the most successful and rewarding transactions, more often than not, involve parties who have developed a solid business relationship. Good leaders understand the importance of building good relationships with their colleagues and their customers.

6. Leaders Communicate Effectively

Every CEO, manager, human resource director, employer, and employee must be able to state what they need, want, or prefer with confidence and in a manner that is clear, honest, and forthright. But good leaders must go even further. They must be able to interpret the needs, wants, and preferences of their colleagues and customers to create a cooperative and successful work environment. Effective communication is the cement that binds an organization together. It is the foundation upon which successful teamwork and good customer relationships are built. It is no accident that employees who can communicate effectively and assertively soon find themselves in leadership roles.

While leadership may come naturally for some, for others developing strong leadership skills takes thought, practice, and hard work. But it's definitely worth the effort, because these skills will benefit all of your personal and professional relationships. Leadership skills are life skills.

Being a good leader is a 24-hour a day job. If these are skills you've been neglecting, start developing them now. Today's organizations need employees who are ready and willing to lead at a moment's notice. Your leadership skills and abilities will help determine your present and future employability.

'Leadership and management - chalk and cheese'

'There is a difference between leadership and management. Leadership is of the spirit, compounded of personality and vision; its practice is an art. Management is of the mind, a matter of accurate calculation - its practice is a science. Managers are necessary; leaders are essential.'

Field Marshall Lord Slim, when Governor-General of Australia

Leadership and management are as different as chalk and cheese. My views have formed over many years as a UK healthcare manager and, particularly, as a result of my research on leadership from the perspective of family doctors (1997-1998).

Good managers do not necessarily make good leaders, and good leaders do not necessarily make good managers. Each has a distinct role. Leadership qualities are far less tangible and measurable whilst most management processes can be measured. Perhaps this is best summed up by Warren Bennis:

'Managers do things right . . . leaders do the right things.'

There is clearly something about effective leaders that makes them stand out from the crowd. I find it impossible to identify and quantify that elusive quality. When I look back through my own career, I have had superiors who are clearly leaders and those who are clearly managers. From my experience with my own past bosses, I have noted that . . .

Leaders:

- 1) Have high levels of integrity
- 2) Are focused on the bigger picture
- 3) Are not comfortable with "intense detail"
- 4) Make me (their direct reports) feel part of their vision
- 5) Do not punish mistakes - but, rather, see mistakes as learning opportunities
- 6) Challenge the status quo
- 7) Are not afraid of being unpopular

Managers:

- 1) Are process driven
- 2) Are comfortable with detail
- 3) Are more interested in the bottom line than the wider vision
- 4) Want to measure everything
- 5) Are not comfortable challenging the corporate view

I think the difference is around the words 'hard' and 'soft.' My experience of effective managers is they tend to be very good at the hard stuff. They are concerned with measurable outcomes - sometime obsessed with process at all costs. They appear to be driven by the need to prove their effectiveness in some tangible way. But leaders, on the other hand, are also interested in the soft stuff - the immeasurable, the anecdote, the story.

One downfall of focusing only on the hard stuff can be seen in the following example.

One day, a manager was very stressed and volunteered up information to a colleague that he was worried about the annual staff appraisals he ' had to do ' for his department. A few days later, the pair met again and the manager was now relaxed. He explained that he had completed all of the appraisals - he had taken out appraisal files, ticked boxes, and updated them without speaking to members of his staff. As far as he was concerned, he'd done what was expected of him - he had ' done his appraisals, ' literally filling in forms and ticking boxes.

Effective leaders, in my experience, are generally not as interested in the detail of process but, rather, they need to be assured there is a process. Paradoxically, oftentimes, the effective leader will be interested in some things that may appear trivial to 'non-leaders.' For example, many of us have worked in organizations that proclaim:

'We value our staff'

'We are an equal opportunities employer'

'We value diversity'

Picture a wet, cold, and dark winter morning - a 6 a.m. early morning shift for a cleaner who parks his or her car in the staff parking lot 200 yards from the staff entrance. As he/she fights her way through the cold wind and rain to the building entrance, the cleaner notices the empty car park spaces reserved for Directors, Consultants, and Chief Executive, positioned immediately outside the main entrance.

The cleaner cannot help him/herself from thinking that the company's mission statement somehow just doesn't ring true.

The effective leader will be interested in the feelings of that cleaner. Quite often, the leader will solve the problem. But even if the leader cannot solve the problem, the fact that the leader is interested at all will spread around the organization quicker than the speed of light. Small things are important - leadership is not only about the big picture.

In my experience, good leaders surround themselves with people who buy into their vision. And leaders always seem to be striving for improvement and, though not a 'change junkie,' good leaders constantly question the status quo. We can learn a great deal about management and leadership - particularly about leaders' unquenchable thirst for improvement - by studying sport.

It is interesting that in the first media interview with Alex Ferguson, leader of Manchester United, after United won the Premiership Trophy for the eighth time in eleven years, Ferguson was full of references to 'how we need to improve this team for next season.' Ferguson is formally called the 'Manager' of Manchester United; however, to me, he is clearly the 'leader' of the team. I suspect he is not interested in the intricate processes involved in running one of the biggest sporting organizations in the world. But at the same time there are legendary tales of his detailed knowledge of what goes on in and around the club. It is also interesting that he has achieved his current high standing without formal management training - aside from 'The University of Life.'

Another famous football 'Manager' was Bill Shankly of Liverpool Football Club. Shankly spoke the immortal words 'Always change a winning team' - an interesting variation of the better-known saying 'Never change a winning team.' Again, Shankly was a leader with an impressive list of achievements - yet his formal management training was probably nil.

Both of these leaders possess an ability to inspire others to sign up to their vision, which separates the leaders from the managers. Somehow these leaders inspire followers who will go the extra mile. I suggest it is not - in their case - an academic understanding of the science of management or leadership. It is probably some personal characteristic that is not tangible.

Finally, I would suggest that leaders are generally born - not made. I doubt that people can learn how to be a leader from reading, studying, or listening to lectures. There is something that makes leaders stand out from the rest of us. Leadership training is worthwhile - it is possible to teach leadership techniques, and leadership competencies are becoming more widely used in management academia. I suspect that what emerge through the 'leadership development' process will be good managers who become good leaders. But the outstanding, natural leader will not need that training. Some of the greatest leaders in history never received training in the art of leadership - it came to them naturally and we should celebrate that mystical quality - even if we cannot measure it.

At the same time, let us remember that leaders are in the minority and most of us mere mortals are very effective foot soldiers (and we should celebrate this!). Many would argue that wars are won by foot soldiers - not colonels. There is no question that managers and leaders are both important - both play crucial roles in organizations. But likewise, it is important to acknowledge that good managers and good leaders are not one and the same.

'Leaders say this is where we are going' and 'Managers say this is how we are going to get there'

A Radical Approach to Becoming a Great Leader

... do something about it that nobody expected and the team will do it all!

Each and every one of us has the opportunity to be a leader at different times of our lives, whether it's a leader in our business, our home or our community. The challenge for many of us is that we don't have the fortitude to step up to the plate to become the type of leader that people trust. This true story below is an inspiration to anybody ready to make real changes in their life.

As a regional manager at a major brokerage firm, Michael had been working on his own leadership skills for several years, but despite his efforts, his retail branch region had been consistently ranked last or second to last in his company's employee opinion survey, and in this rare company where surveys are taken seriously, the results are published and ranked and this was bad news for Michael's career. He was losing his credibility as a manager.

Then he had the epiphany.

Even though the surveys specifically reflected the views of front-line branch employees whose lives were affected by their immediate supervisors, Michael assumed that he was the problem, not the supervisors. Just allowing himself that realization was a risky endeavor: suddenly, responsibility rested squarely on Michael's already sore shoulders, the 'blame game' was no longer an option, and he launched himself irrevocably into do-or-die mode. Then he cranked up the risk factor one more notch. He gathered his management team together, stood up in front of the conference room and said, 'I'm screwing up; the numbers show it, so I want you to tell me what I'm doing wrong and what I need to do to improve'.

'I'm going to leave the room,' he went on, 'and I'd like you to get very specific and write down your ideas on flip-chart paper. When I come back, we'll talk through each item.'

And he walked out.

A half-hour later he came back and knocked on the door.

'We're not done yet,' they said.

Finally, after ninety minutes, they let him in. All the walls were covered in flip-chart paper: list after list of suggestions for his personal improvement as a human being. He kept his balance, took a deep breath and proceeded to:

'Accept What You Hear and Show It'

Michael knew that his reaction in that moment would make or break the whole exercise, as well as his personal credibility. So he took a radical approach and responded authentically.

'I'm really disappointed,' he said, 'in myself and I had no idea there'd be so much.'

He didn't defend, justify or make excuses. All he did was ask some questions to make sure he fully understood each item and then they talked together for the next couple of hours. Imagine the intestinal fortitude that Michael needed to keep that conversation going for that long. 'And another thing, boss' was said more than once, I'm sure.

And then, at the end of the day, with rolls of flip chart paper tucked under his arms and a pounding sensation behind his eyes, Michael looked at his team and said two words straight from the heart:

'Thank you'

Michael told me, that night and the next couple of days, were the most difficult of his entire career. He was devastated and overwhelmed by the severity of the feedback and the immense challenge to follow through. He recovered from the initial shock and went on to do something about it that nobody expected.

Michael started at the top of list one, item one and start fixing them all. But they saw him try and he proved through his own actions that the session hadn't been a consultant-assigned exercise that he had been forced into tolerating.

The next round of business surveys ranked Michael's organization second from the top in the entire company, with jumps of eighty to ninety percent in some performance measures. That's a radical leap no matter how you look at it, but the funny thing is, the improvement had relatively little to do with Michael's follow-up actions.

It had everything to do with his team.

Becoming a motivational leader

Create a Big Vision

To become a motivational leader, you start with motivating yourself. You motivate yourself with a big vision, and as you move progressively toward its realization, you motivate and enthuse others to work with you to fulfill that vision.

Set High Standards

You exhibit absolute honesty and integrity with everyone in everything you do. You are the kind of person others admire and respect and want to be like. You set a standard that others aspire to. You live in truth with yourself and others so that they feel confident giving you their support and their commitment.

Face Your Fears

You demonstrate courage in everything you do by facing doubts and uncertainties and moving forward regardless. You put up a good front even when you feel anxious about the outcome. You don't burden others with your fears and misgivings. You keep them to yourself. You constantly push yourself out of your comfort zone and in the direction of your goals. And no matter how bleak the situation might appear, you keep on keeping on with a smile.

Be Realistic About Your Situation

You are intensely realistic. You refuse to engage in mental games or self-delusion. You encourage others to be realistic and objective about their situations as well. You encourage them to realize and appreciate that there is a price to pay for everything they want. They have weaknesses that they will have to overcome, and they have standards that they will have to meet, if they want to survive and thrive in a competitive market.

Accept Responsibility

You accept complete responsibility for results. You refuse to make excuses or blame others or hold grudges against people who you feel may have wronged you. You say, 'If it's to be, it's up to me.' You repeat over and over the words, 'I am responsible. I am responsible. I am responsible.'

Take Vigorous Action

Finally, you take action. You know that all mental preparation and character building is merely a prelude to action. It's not what you say but what you do that counts. The mark of the true leader is that he or she leads the action. He or she is willing to go first. He or she sets the example and acts as the role model. He or she does what he or she expects others to do.

Strive For Excellence

You become a motivational leader by motivating yourself. And you motivate yourself by striving toward excellence, by committing yourself to becoming everything you are capable of becoming. You motivate yourself by throwing your whole heart into doing your job in an excellent fashion. You motivate yourself and others by continually looking for ways to help others to improve their lives and achieve their goals. You become a motivational leader by becoming the kind of person others want to get behind and support in every way.

Your main job is to take complete control of your personal evolution and become a leader in every area of your life. You could ask for nothing more, and you should settle for nothing less.

Action Exercises

Here are two things you can do immediately to put these ideas into action.

First, see yourself as an outstanding person, parent, co-worker and leader in everything you do. Pattern your behavior after the very best people you know. Set high standards and refuse to compromise them. Second, be clear about your goals and priorities and then take action continually forward. Develop a sense of urgency. Keep moving forward and you'll automatically keep yourself and others motivated.

Truth and trust - they go together

We've lost trust. How do I regain the trust of my employees after six rounds of layoffs? How does my organization regain the trust of the community after we dumped toxic waste and covered it up? How does my management team regain trust of each other after a nasty political battle?

Do you trust me? Good. The truth is, you can't regain trust. Period. You doubt? Think hard about the times you've been betrayed. Did the villain ever find their way back into your heart? If you're like the thousands I've asked, the answer is never. Trust can be gained once and lost once. Once lost, it's lost forever.

So let's ask how we can keep trust from the start. It's really quite easy; if you want to be trusted, simply be trustworthy. The pressures will be great to act otherwise, and if you succumb, well, you'll lose trust and you'll never get it back.

Tell the truth

I've heard countless discussions about how customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, or communities can't be told the truth. Maybe we believe that they can't handle the truth, or that the truth will make us look bad, or maybe we don't want to take responsibility for the consequences. So we 'position' our statement. We 'frame it' carefully. We 'massage it.' We use careful 'spin.' In other words, we lie.

Little white lies can work - they help life run smoothly. But bigger lies compound. We end up committing beyond our own moral comfort. This action is recognized in a social psychology principle called 'commitment and consistency.' That is, once we have taken a position, we are motivated by various pressures to behave consistently with that position, even if it is eventually proven wrong. Our ethical standards slip a bit more each time we hold on to our original stand. Pretty soon, our relationship with the truth is arms-length at best. (For more on commitment and consistency, see the wonderful book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, by Robert Cialdini.)

When people find out you've been lying to them, they know your words can't be trusted. If it's your spouse, they may give you a second chance. If it's your community, they may tell you they're giving you a second chance, but don't count on it. Of course, there can be genuine reasons you can't tell the truth. Sometimes you're legally bound to remain silent. Sometimes you're negotiating and can't reveal your position. In those cases consider saying, 'I can't discuss that.' People won't like it, but they won't feel betrayed when the outcome is revealed.

Keep promises

Keeping promises is an especially powerful form of telling the truth. If you say you'll do something, do it. If you promise you'll show up, be there. If you say you'll deliver high quality, don't skimp. We all know business people who eagerly promise anything to a customer or colleague rather than face their disappointment. They rarely remember what was promised, which is just as well because they couldn't have delivered. Over time, their credibility drops so far that no one in their company believes a word they say.

Your marketing material makes promises, by the way. As a response to the low-carb craze, some cereal companies made 'low-sugar' cereals. Read the label carefully and you'll discover they have as many carbs as high-sugar cereals. If you're targeting health-conscious consumers, don't promise them health and then deliver junk food. Keep your promises and you'll keep trust.

Their interests before yours

One powerful way to sustain trust is to put the interests of others ahead of your own. When people know you're looking out for them, they'll believe in your intentions even when you have hard news to deliver or need them to put in heroic efforts.

In the book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins introduces the 'Level 5 leader' who puts the needs of the organization ahead of his or her own ego. Such leaders really inspire us to give our all because they demonstrate by example that with personal sacrifice we can achieve greater success as a group. Putting others first means knowing their goals and concerns, and helping them. Is a colleague a passionate baseball fan? Give them your Red Sox tickets some afternoon, for no reason at all. Is that the game where the Red Sox win the World Series? Even better! You'll suffer real pain at giving up your tickets. Public sacrifice, if it's real and visible, builds huge credibility when it's in the service of others. And the sacrifice must be real. Reducing your bonus from \$2 million to \$1.75 million just doesn't count.

Behave ethically

At its core, people trust you when they know you're safe to deal with. They observe how you treat them and others. Do the right thing in all your dealings and people will get it. They'll know you're trustworthy. If you get a reputation for taking advantage of others, however, even people whom you have treated well can start to doubt. One CEO wrote articles trumpeting his ethical behavior. Employees knew otherwise; they'd seen him cheat distributors and shirk on his commitments to his partners. So the more the CEO crowed, the more the grapevine passed anonymous notes highlighting his lies.

Changing players to gain trust

Trust isn't one-way, of course - trust happens between two people, or between a person and an organization. You can trust a person while distrusting their organization. I love my trusted bank manager; she fixes my problems even when I feel like the bank is hell-bent on alienating me at every opportunity. (They charge how much for a bounced cheque?) You can trust an organization while distrusting its people. Think politics. We can trust our country's integrity even when individual politicians make our stomachs crawl.

In business, one bad manager rarely destroys trust in the entire company. But several bad managers, armed with policies that clearly treat people as disposable implements, can destroy trust in an entire organization. At that point, bringing in a new management team that takes clear, visible action might have a chance of rebuilding trust. These actions will be hampered because employees have learned to distrust the organization as a whole. But at least the new leaders will have a chance to gain one-on-one trust and translate that into the organizational changes needed to build trust throughout.

Is this really necessary?

I must confess that this article has been hard to write. 'Do the right thing, treat people with respect and don't lie.' Do these things really need to be said to adults? Apparently so. As business people, we're not trustworthy. The June 2002 Conference Board Commissions on Public Trust and Private Enterprise Report found that somewhere between 37 percent and 76 percent of employees 'observed misconduct they believe could result in significant loss of public trust if it were to become known.' Of course, the employees are the public, so public trust is losing on an ongoing basis.

It's up to us to fix the situation. We need to regain the public's trust, which means we need to regain our trust in each other. And it will only happen if we become the most trustworthy people we can become.

Your action challenge this week

Pay attention to how often you tell the truth, how often you make decisions as if other people (customers, employees, suppliers) don't matter, and how often you put the well-being of others ahead of your own. Then ask yourself: Am I someone I would trust?

The power in praising people

One of the keys to success is to have successful relationships. We are not islands and we don't get to the top by ourselves. And one of the key ways to grow successful in our relationships is to be "life-giving" people to others. Every person we meet, we either give life to or take life from. You know what I mean. There are people who encourage you and when you are done being with them you feel built up. Then there are others who you feel torn down by. Successful people are people who have mastered the art of building others up.

One of the ways we build people up is to praise them. There is power in praising people! Something begins to happen in them, in you, and in your relationship when you praise someone. Remember a time when someone told you something about yourself in a praising manner? It was great, wasn't it?

You probably liked that person more after they praised you, didn't you? Now I am not talking about praising people for the sake of praising people. I am talking about honestly looking for and praising positive character traits and action of others around you. Don't lie to people. If they have done something wrong, correct it, but when they do something right, Praise It!

With that said, here are benefits of and ways to start praising people.

Benefits

* Your relationship grows. Life is about relationships. Family relationships, friends, and co-workers. When we begin to praise people for their positive aspects, our relationships grow. It puts them, and us, on the fast track.

* Your leadership and influence grow. Who is going to have greater leadership and influence capacity in the lives of their followers: the one who tears down or the one who builds up?

* Stronger relationships and loyalty. When the person is appreciated and praised, they become fiercely loyal, because they know that you care for them, love them, and appreciate them. This will take you to success.

* Happier, more fulfilled people. I truly believe it is our job to build others up and that they need it. It is a good thing, in and of itself, to invest in the lives of others by praising and encouraging them. Even if we never get anything in return, it is the right thing to do to build up other people. Someone else will always come along to tear them down; then successful person will instill in them the power of praise!

Some ways to praise:

Character traits

Is there someone you know who is joyful? Hard-working? Honest? Then let them know how much you appreciate that in them. You can do it with a word, or a card, or a phone call. Say something like this: "You know, Tom, I think it is great that you are such a hard-worker. It seems like you are always the first one here and the last one to leave. You really set a good example and I want you to know how much I appreciate that." Simple!

Action

Same idea as above. "Sue, I don't know if anybody else has told you this, but your work on the Johnson account was excellent. You have a wonderful ability to communicate the vision of the project and that helps all of the rest of us out in our roles and tasks. Thanks for that. It is greatly appreciated."

* Other ways you can show praise and appreciation is with a card, a gift, or time off from work. Make it your goal to praise at least five people a day. If you can, praise ten people a day. Or perhaps you can try to praise everyone you come in contact with. It will take work, but it is possible. It just takes discipline and a little work.

Any way you cut it, though, there is power in praising people. First for them, then for you!

'The Maximus Principle - Casualties are Acceptable'

If you have seen the movie 'Gladiator', you will remember the scene at the beginning of the movie when Maximus and his army are preparing to go to battle. In this scene, we see Maximus out on his horse riding through the woods scouting the enemy. He is developing his strategy for leading his organization, so to speak. Being an extraordinary leader, Maximus knows that timing is everything and he comes to the conclusion that in order to execute (no pun intended) his strategy, his organization needs to move on their vision now.

Maximus goes to his VP of Operations and informs him that now is the time to move. The second in command is a little worried. He isn't quite the big picture guy that Maximus is. All he can see is that not everybody is ready to move now. Next is the interaction where we learn the Maximus Principle. Maximus says that it is time to strike.

His second in command begins to say, 'We can't do it yet. The men aren't ready and the casualties will be too great.' That is what he begins to say. You can tell from the context. But what he actually gets out before Maximus interrupts him is, 'We can't do it yet. The men aren't ready and the casualties will be...'

How does Maximus end the sentence? 'Acceptable'.

For every 'Chainsaw Al' we hear about in the popular media, there are hundreds and thousands of leaders who do care about the welfare of the people who follow them. In fact, I would say that most leaders I know genuinely care about the people who follow them. This is good, but it can be bad when we begin to misunderstand a basic principle of life and allow the realities of life to keep us from boldly leading and taking our organizations to the next level.

Here are the facts:

Anytime you move your organization to the next level; there will be casualties. Many leaders try to take their organizations forward with no casualties. But this is the fact: It cannot be done.

Why is this? Human nature. Some people will not buy into your vision. Someone will think they can do it better than you. People will get discouraged and mad at you. People who you thought would support you will betray you. You will have to fire people because they can't go to the next level with the skills they have.

Somewhere along the line, somebody will break down and they won't be able to make it to the next level. This is exactly the point where our leadership breaks down.

Most leaders, having some sense of compassion, will wait until they feel they can get EVERYBODY to make it to the next level. As a result, four things happen that shouldn't:

- **One, you miss an opportunity to become a better leader.**
- **Two, the organization misses its chance to move ahead.**
- **Three, the people in the organization miss out on their own advancement.**
- **Four, the casualties miss out on their opportunity to leave the organization and find a better spot for themselves in another organization.**

Everybody loses when we don't accept that casualties are a part of an organization's advancement!

The extraordinary leader accepts casualties. Don't get me wrong. I am not in any way, shape or form suggesting that we look for casualties or even take glee in the casualties. No, casualties are a sad fact of life, but a fact of life nonetheless. We wish they didn't have to happen, but accept that they do and act accordingly.

So let me ask you this: What have you resisted moving on because you are afraid of casualties?

Here is your choice: Would you rather have your organization and your leadership be the casualty or have a few people in your organization be the casualties? Those are the only options.

So where do we go from here? As I see it, we are left with this:

- Accept casualties as a fact of life.
- Find and develop the vision of where we want to take our organizations.
- Lead boldly.
- Try to minimize casualties.
- Let some people go.
- Enjoy the next stage when your organization gets there.

You know, this is not just theory for me. I learned this lesson the hard way. Early in my career I had a strategic employee that I knew I had to let go. I mean, I KNEW it! But he was well liked and I figured that it would cause problems with others if I let him go, so I put up with a lot of junk for 6 years. I just didn't want any casualties.

Finally, he had to go. The problem was that now, because he had ingrained himself into our organization even further (even though he had a poor work ethic, he was a nice guy and people liked him), there would be more casualties than had if I let him go years before. About 8 people got very angry even though they knew objectively that it had to happen. But they struggled with the human part of it.

In the end, we had about 8 casualties because of the situation. It was upsetting. These were people who were friends who had worked alongside of me for years. Now they had to go. Casualties. Jump forward a few years. Where are we now? Our organization is stronger than ever. The people who left are doing great things. The casualties for our organization were the seed of our success - a little pruning, if you will. The people who left learned some things as well. Even the gentleman who was the focal point of all of this is doing well. He went to work for a friend of mine and seems to have learned his lessons.

It was in accepting and allowing casualties that everything got better for everyone. It seems contrary to reason, but that is the way life works.

I want to challenge you to take a long, hard look at your mindset as it relates to casualties. No matter where you find yourself, you can improve, you can move forward, and you can take your organization to the next level.

Oh, and in case you didn't see 'Gladiator' Maximus lost some men but won that battle!

Lessons from Geese

'Individual empowerment results from quality honking'

Lessons from Geese provides a perfect example of the importance of team work and how it can have a profound and powerful effect on any form of personal or business endeavor. When we use these five principles in our personal and business life it will help us to foster and encourage a level of passion and energy in ourselves, as well as those who are our friends, associates or team members.

It is essential to remember that teamwork happens inside and outside of business life when it is continually nurtured and encouraged.

Lesson 1 - The Importance of Achieving Goals

As each goose flaps its wings it creates an UPLIFT for the birds that follow. By flying in a 'V' formation the whole flock adds 71 percent extra to the flying range.

Outcome

When we have a sense of community and focus, we create trust and can help each other to achieve our goals.

Lesson 2 - The Importance of Team Work

When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back to take advantage of the lifting power of the birds in front.

Outcome

If we had as much sense as geese we would stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Lesson 3 - The Importance of Sharing

When a goose tires of flying up front it drops back into formation and another goose flies to the point position.

Outcome

It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks. We should respect and protect each other's unique arrangement of skills, capabilities, talents and resources.

Lesson 4 - The Importance of Empathy and Understanding

When a goose gets sick, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to the ground to help and protect it.

Outcome

If we have as much sense as geese we will stand by each other in difficult times, as well as when we are strong.

Lesson 5 - The Importance of Encouragement

Geese flying in formation 'HONK' to encourage those up front to keep up with their speed.

Outcome

We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups and teams where there is encouragement, production is much greater. 'Individual empowerment results from quality honking'

Another story about Geese

A flock of wild geese had settled to rest on a pond. One of the flocks had been captured by a gardener, who had clipped its wings before releasing it. When the geese started to resume their flight, this one tried frantically, but vainly, to lift itself into the air. The others, observing his struggles, flew about in obvious efforts to encourage him; but it was no use.

Thereupon, the entire flock settled back on the pond and waited, even though the urge to go on was strong within them. For several days they waited until the damaged feathers had grown sufficiently to permit the goose to fly.

Meanwhile, the unethical gardener, having been converted by the ethical geese, gladly watched them as they finally rose together and all resumed their long flight.

Great Expectations

A primary responsibility of leadership is to communicate expectations, both with words and actions. When leaders carefully and consistently set expectations, they engineer a flourishing work environment. However, when leaders abdicate their duty to communication expectations, chaos ensues. Here are six rules of thumb to follow as you set expectations in your organization.

1. Set them for yourself first

Leaders must set the bar the highest for themselves. They must go first and give the most. Leaders who demand more of their people than they do of themselves quickly lose credibility with followers. However, leaders who commit to taking the first step demonstrate their belief in the vision, and they earn the right to ask others to follow.

2. Set them early

Have you ever boarded a train without being entirely sure if it was the correct one? If so, then you probably didn't feel at ease until the conductor announced its destination. Once you knew the route, you could relax and enjoy the ride.

Uncertainty causes anxiety. People have an innate need to know where they're headed. They want goals to guide them and targets to hit. By communicating expectations early, leaders provide direction. People feel secure when they know the plan and have a good idea of what the future holds.

3. Set them clearly

Confusion breeds frustration. When a leader fails to communicate clear expectations, people must guess at what he or she wants. Oftentimes those assumptions do not line up with the leader's desires, causing followers to mispend time or squander energy.

Clearly communicated expectations spell out a leader's vision and define everyone's roles and responsibilities. Unambiguous expectations also align activity, provide structure and promote harmony. Serving as a reference point, clear expectations allow people to evaluate their performance and gauge whether or not they succeeding.

4. Set them optimistically

People generally perform in a way that's consistent with our expectations of them. That's why it's important to believe the best about those around you. When we give others a worthwhile reputation to uphold, they will stretch to meet our expectations. However, if we view others negatively, then we're likely to treat them without respect. In turn, sensing we dislike them, people are apt to put in minimum effort and to confirm our suspicions of them.

5. Set them realistically

Inexperienced leaders have a nasty habit of offering more than they, or their teams can give. In doing so, they damage their character, sever relationships with customers and discourage those they lead. In making exaggerated claims to gain business, they actually lose business in the long run after failing to come through.

Under promise and over deliver. Be sensible about your commitments and diligently follow through on them. You don't get credit for intentions, only for accomplishment. Set your people up for success by setting aggressive but attainable goals for them.

6. Exceed them consistently

Go above and beyond what others expect from you as a leader. People expect you to be fair, but be generous as well. People expect you to respect them, but show you care for them, too. People expect you to be judicious when you exercise authority, but be willing to serve also. Over time, as you exceed expectations, talented people will flock to your organization. Everyone wants to work for a leader who has his or her best interests in mind and leads with excellence on a consistent basis.

The foundations of leadership

The most important quality of leadership, the one quality for which you want to be known, is extraordinary performance, with the goal of achieving extraordinary results. These results then serve as an inspiration to others to perform at equally exceptional levels. People ascribe leadership to those men and women who they feel can most enable them to achieve important goals or objectives.

Why People Respect You

We develop great perceptions of those men and women we can count on to help us achieve what is important to us. Men and women who make great sales, or who establish admirable sales records, develop influence in the minds and hearts of their co-workers and superiors. They are spoken about in the most positive way.

The Halo Effect

Men and women who are responsible for companies or departments that achieve high levels of profitability also develop charisma. They develop what is called the 'halo effect.' They are perceived by others to be extraordinary men and women who are capable of great things. Their shortcomings are often overlooked, while their strong points are overemphasized. They become charismatic.

The Source of Charisma

Charisma actually comes from working on yourself. It comes from liking and accepting yourself unconditionally as you do and say the specific things that develop within you a powerful, charismatic personality.

Be Determined and Purposeful

When you set clear goals and become determined and purposeful, backing those goals with unshakable self-confidence, you develop charisma. When you are enthusiastic and excited about what you are doing, when you are totally committed to achieving something worthwhile, you radiate charisma. When you take the time to study and become an expert at what you do, and then prepare thoroughly for any opportunity to use your knowledge, skill or experience, the perception that others have of you goes straight up.

Accept Complete Responsibility

When you take complete responsibility and accept ownership, without making excuses or blaming others, you experience a sense of control that leads to the personal power that is the foundation of charisma. When you look like a winner in every respect, when you have the kind of external image that others admire, you build your charisma. When you develop your character by setting high standards and then disciplining yourself to live consistent with the highest principles you know, you become the kind of person who is admired and respected everywhere. You become the kind of person who radiates charisma to others.

Focus on Results

Finally, when you concentrate your energies on achieving the results that you have been hired to accomplish, the results that others expect of you, you develop the reputation for performance and achievement that inevitably leads to the perception of charisma.

You can develop the kind of charisma that opens doors for you by going to work on yourself, consistently and persistently, and becoming the kind of person everyone can admire and look up to. That's what charisma is all about.

Action Exercises

Here are two things you can do immediately to put these ideas into action.

First, ask yourself every day, 'What is the one thing that I and only I can do, that if done well, will make a real difference to my company?' Whatever your answer, go to work on that.

Second, decide upon the most important results you can get for your company and make sure that you and everyone else is working on those results every hour of every day.

Communicating Vision

Nothing motivates an organization like a clear and compelling vision. But it can be tricky to paint a picture of what's in your mind so that others can see exactly what you're seeing. As a leader, how do you enable others to glimpse your vision and how do you inspire them to adopt it?

1. Connect relationally

Leaders err when they believe the content of their vision will sweep others up by itself. Don't focus on the mechanics of your message to the point where you disregard connecting with your team. People buy into the leader before they buy into the leader's vision. Touch a person's heart before you appeal to their head and ask for a hand.

2. Simplify the message

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address has a place among the great speeches of American history, yet it was barely three minutes in length. As leader, we can learn a lot from Lincoln. When communicating vision, what you say is important, but how you say it determines whether or not the message sticks. Slice and dice your vision until it can be shared in a single sentence. The more concise you make your vision, the more memorable it will be.

3. Embody the vision

People need to see a vision to connect with it, which is why the great communicators harness imagery to amplify the power of their message. Storytelling gets much more mileage than fact-spewing. However, the best representation of a vision occurs when a leader embodies it. People sooner follow what they see than what they hear. When a leader is ablaze with passion, people invariably are attracted to the flame.

4. Prioritize Influencers

Leaders treat everyone with respect, but they certainly shouldn't spend equal time casting vision to each person. To make sure your vision catches on in your organization, prioritize sharing it with key decision-makers. Set up one-on-one meetings. Field questions and respond to concerns. Don't rush this step. If you convince key personnel to buy-in to your vision, often times they will sell it for you to the rest of the organization. On the contrary, if you cannot gain their support, implementing your vision will be an uphill struggle.

5. Honor the Process

Speechmaking has merit, but vision casting happens daily, not just on one occasion. It's a process rather than an event. To communicate vision effectively requires continual reminders to keep it in the forefront of people's minds.

Once the vision begins to take shape, every victory is an opportunity to celebrate and reinforce the vision. Also, each defeat must be evaluated and put into perspective lest the setback dishearten people. Unless a leader actively and continually champions a vision, with time it will evaporate.

6. Call to Action

Leaders don't impart vision to make people feel good, but rather to change something. Communicating vision should motivate people to take action by enlisting them in a focused strategy. The goal isn't simply to get people to agree with a vision, but also to take responsibility for translating it into reality.

A short course in human relations

The six most important words:

'I admit that I was wrong'

The five most important words:

'You did a great job'

The four most important words:

'What do you think?'

The three most important words:

'Could you please. . .'

The two most important words:

'Thank you'

The most important word:

'We'

The least important word:

'I'

People who make a difference in life have

Initiative - being a self-starter with contagious energy

Vision - seeing beyond the obvious, claiming new objectives

Unselfishness - releasing the controls and the glory

Teamwork - involving, encouraging, and supporting others

Faithfulness - hanging in there in season and out

Enthusiasm - providing affirmation, excitement to the task

Discipline - modeling great character regardless of the odds

Confidence - representing security, faith, and determination

The parable of Brother Leo

A legend tells of a French monastery known throughout Europe for the extraordinary leadership of a man known only as Brother Leo. Several monks began a pilgrimage to visit Brother Leo to learn from him. Almost immediately, they began to bicker about who should do various chores.

On the third day they met another monk going to the monastery, and he joined them. This monk never complained or shirked a duty, and whenever the others would fight over a chore, he would gracefully volunteer and do it himself. By the last day, the others were following his example, and from then on they worked together smoothly.

When they reached the monastery and asked to see Brother Leo, the man who greeted them laughed. 'But our brother is among you!' And he pointed to the fellow who had joined them. Today, many people seek leadership positions, not so much for what they can do for others but for what the position can do for them: status, connections, perks, advantages. They do service as an investment, a way to build an impressive resume.

The parable about Brother Leo teaches another model of leadership, where leaders are preoccupied with serving rather than being followed, with giving rather than getting, with doing rather than demanding.

Leadership based on example, not command. This is called servant leadership.

Can you imagine how much better things would be if more politicians, educators, and business executives saw themselves as servant leaders?

Managing and Motivating - Five Ingredients

Thousands of employees were interviewed about what they considered to be a 'great place to work.' The answers they gave were different from what the managers expected.

First Ingredient

The first ingredient of a good job was 'challenging, interesting work.' This is work that kept the employee busy and involved all day long.

Second Ingredient

The second ingredient was a feeling of being 'in the know.' A good job was defined as one where the employee felt that he or she was fully informed on what was happening in the company. The employee felt like an insider, like an important part of a larger group.

Third Ingredient

The third ingredient of a great place to work was a 'high trust' environment. This was defined as a job where a person could feel free to do his or her best and to make mistakes, without being criticized or fired. When employees felt that they were free to make mistakes with no punishment or hostility, they enjoyed their work much more, became more creative, and worked more effectively with other people.

Fourth Ingredient

The fourth ingredient in a good job was a caring boss and friendly co-workers. Often, the human environment was more important than anything else. People like to work in a place where they get along well with everyone.

The happier they felt their work relationships, the better they worked, the lower the level of absenteeism was, and the more productive they were.

Fifth Ingredient

The fifth ingredient for a good job turned out to be good pay and opportunities for promotion and advancement. To the surprise of many managers, the issue, of pay was number five among factors that constituted a good job or a great place to work. Psychologists have found that a certain level of pay is essential for people to feel comfortable with their jobs, but above that level, it does not have much motivational impact. It is only when pay is sub-standard or below what would normally be expected for such a job that it becomes a de-motivating influence.

Action Exercise

Take the time to study your workplace, pay special attention to see if you have all five ingredients of managing and motivating in your workplace.

10 tips for creating and running effective meetings

How many times have you thought about or heard it said . . . Oh no not another meeting! . . . *or* . . . what's this meeting for, it is sure to be another time waster!

Here are a number of practical suggestions on how to create and run effective formal meetings that do work and can assist in changing people's attitude to meetings, and most importantly their behaviour when they attend.

1. Schedule meetings well in advance, wherever possible at least a week ahead and at the time of day that best suits all involved
2. Meetings are best scheduled at times when those involved are at their most alert and productive, so it wise to agree on what is the best time to suit all that will be involved to maximise positive outcomes, if agreement is hard reach the best times are traditionally between the hours of 8.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.
3. The chairperson should ensure that there is an agenda which is circulate three days ahead of the meeting, this should include who are to attend, what is to be discussed and the information that needs is to be supplied or prepared for the meeting.
4. During the meeting stick to the agenda and allotted time frame, however, if you finish the agenda items early don't extend the length of the meeting - give everyone an early mark to allow them to get back to other important duties.

5. The chairperson should circulate the written minutes of the meeting within twenty-four hours of the meeting, clearly noting who is responsible for the agreed action steps and the time frame for completion of those action steps, plus details and timing of the next meeting, if it is required.
6. In a business meeting, the chairperson should estimate in advance the cost of running the meeting, ie: the wages and on costs of all who are involved the meeting. A 'what this meeting is costing us' statement should be included on the top of the agenda, eg: 'our people costs for this one hour meeting are \$1,750.00'. Equally a figure should be included indicating what a positive outcome from the meeting will generate for the business income eg: 'Secure an additional \$50,000 in new business'.
7. Include in the meeting only those people who have need to attend and who can make a worthwhile contribution as this saves the valuable time of people who simply need to have a copy of the minutes and outcomes in order to be kept update on what is happening.
8. Start and finish meetings on time, irrespective of everyone being in attendance
9. Take 5-10 minute stretch breaks every hour for meetings that go longer than one hour, but ensure that people don't stray away for the meeting venue or become preoccupied with taking and reply to phone messages.
10. All attendees at the meeting should have their diary, laptop or a print out of the weekly/monthly schedule, so that they can diarise the necessary action steps and dates for what they have to take action on after the meeting.

The appointed chairperson is responsible for:

- The conduct of meeting and those involved
- Keeping to schedule
- Preparation of minutes and agreed follow up on action items

Plus - It is a good idea to rotate the chairperson's role every few meetings, as this gives everyone valuable experience on running a meeting, as well as buy in to value of the effective meeting process.

Some key points on the conduct in the meeting

- Attendance is essential, both in person and in mind
- Start each meeting with a quick round table feedback on individual successes for the week or period since the last meeting, this gives the meeting a positive start and gets everyone thinking about good outcomes
- Avoid personal comments and attacks
- Always respect each others ideas and opinions
- If you think it, say it - but with your mind in drive, rather than neutral
- Only one conversation at a time
- We were born with two ears and one mouth - listen twice as much as we speak, in that way meetings will go twice as quickly
- At the end of the meeting allow around five minutes quiet time for everyone to document and plan the action steps that they need to take after the meeting
- Acknowledge and celebrate every success, as well as the learning experiences from a failure
- Focus all attention on the purpose of the meeting and the desired end results and outcomes
- Always remember that laughter is the canary in the coalmine of commerce, so keep balance in the meeting - all business activity is meant to be rewarding, fun and enjoyable!

Finally, here is an idea that really works in the right circumstances

Save valuable time by running Stand Up Meetings

Regular meetings with your team and business associates can be run in up to half the normal time, if everyone stands during the meeting. Prior to the meeting simply remove all the chairs from your meeting room and have everyone stand up around the boardroom table and watch how much quicker your meetings will go. This approach is ideally suited to daily or weekly team meetings that normally should be finished in 15 to 20 minutes but often drag on well beyond the allotted time.

What the best bosses do

Inspire Others to Peak Performance

A transformational leader is one who excites and inspires people to perform far beyond their own expectations of themselves. Transformational leaders practice certain behaviors that cause their people to feel stronger, happier, more confident and more committed.

Delegate Responsibility

The first of these behaviors is the delegation of high levels of responsibility for results. Transformational leaders pick the right people, match them to the right jobs, achieve mutual clarity on the desired results and then they get out of the way and leave the individual with maximum freedom to perform.

Let People Do Their Work

Lao-Tse, the great Chinese philosopher, had this idea when he wrote, 'A leader is best when people barely know he exists . . . when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, 'We did this ourselves.'

In a recent study, thousands of people were asked to describe their best bosses. Over and over, the respondents said things like, 'I hardly saw him' or 'He left me alone' or 'He gave me complete freedom to do the job.'

Give Them Freedom

There is something liberating and empowering to know that you've been entrusted with a major responsibility and that you've been given the freedom to fulfill it. When the right person has been matched with the right job, the conditions for exceptional performance have been created.

Confidently Expect Success

Another behavior of transformational leaders is their confident attitude of positive expectations. They radiate a belief in themselves and in the ability of their subordinates to succeed. They know that the leader sets the psychological tone for the whole organization, so they consciously project a positive attitude no matter how distressing the external situation may appear. They are in complete control of themselves and their emotions.

Action Exercises

First, delegate complete responsibility for results to your subordinates. Discuss and agree on exactly what is to be done, when it is to be done and to what standard. Then, get out of the way and let them perform.

Second, express complete confidence in your subordinate's ability to do an excellent job. Radiate an attitude of confident expectations. Even if you have personal doubts, never let them be seen by others. This is the role of leadership.

Building a team of Proactive People

How to get employees to think for themselves, take responsibility, and raise performance

Proactive Employees

In the endless drive for greater productivity, every manager wants employees to become more proactive. More proactively equals better productivity. And better productivity usually means improved financial performance, happier shareholders, and less sleepless nights for leaders.

What exactly does it mean to be a proactive employee? We answer that question in two ways: first, we examine who and what a proactive employee is. Then we look at what a proactive employee is not. This is the difference between 'self-directed' and 'other-directed.' The self-directed employee takes responsibility for her own decisions and actions. The other-directed employee adopts an 'I have to' mentality, and responds only to direction . . .

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