

## Leaders As Motivators

### Adding A "Why" To The "What" Equals Wow In Performance.

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Has the workforce lost its work ethic? As I conduct managerial workshops, I continually hear comments about the absence of both enthusiasm and a sense of urgency in today's workforce. Attendees and acquaintances bemoan their associates' apathetic orientation toward goal accomplishment. Here's an observation sure to incite intense introspection - I find those comments (complaints) are most often made by leaders that are, at best, mediocre in the science/art of leveraging multicultural talent.

It is my humble, yet enlightened, thesis that most of our employees are mirrors of the leadership around them. In general, employees echo what has been said, shown, or served to them. Their attitudes, behaviors and dispositions are reflections of the examples we as leaders have presented day after day, year after year.

Let's face it; if it were simply a morale issue, all departments would suffer equally. Department C, in XYZ Corporation, would have a similar down turn in productivity and profitability as did departments A and B. Yet, department C has thrived during these same challenging times. What's different about department C? I contend it's the leadership. When we see situations such as the one just described, the difference is very often whether leaders are also operating as motivators.

In today's workforce, leaders who can't motivate are as useful as an automobile without an engine. While you may very well find some interesting uses for such an anomaly, but those contrived applications won't be in line with its intended purpose.

Leaders who can't motivate are throwbacks to the "Industrial Age." These throwbacks are simply fulfilling a role of overseer. Today's individual contributors and team members have rejected, and will continue to reject, leadership that is itself unmotivated. Today's workers will not respond favorably to leadership that lacks the willingness or ability to motivate others.

In order for leaders to be effective motivators, there is one key distinction that must be understood. If leadership is defined as getting things done through other people, than having those others operate in a state of motivation is in the best interest of all concerned. Motivation, however, has often been mistakenly matched with animation. Motivation is better understood as finding and having a reason to take action. Leaders can help motivate employees by applying the following five techniques:

**Share the big picture.** When people more fully understand how their contribution fits into the larger picture they can feel a sense of pride and ownership in the final product. There is a world of difference in just stitching panels of silk together as proscribed by a pattern versus knowing that you are assembling parachutes for our troops. The big picture can be very motivating.

**Share your faith and belief in the team.** The classic psychological concept, known as the Pygmalion Effect, has been proven time and time again to have a measurable impact on employee and team performance. The leader who shares his or her genuine belief and confidence in the team's ability to actualize the goals will position the team for a win.

**Share clear expectations and objectives.** A double-minded person can never plow a straight furrow. Few things can diffuse a "can-do-attitude" as quickly as confusion. The employees need to have a sense of where they are going and why. Such information allows them to bring their most creative energies to the table. Expectations and objectives serve as the guide mark on the horizon to ensure a straight furrow.

**Share frequent feedback.** Whether positive or negative, feedback can serve as a significant motivator to behavioral modification. The leader uses the good news of positive feedback to inspire duplication of current behavioral patterns. Negative feedback is used as an alarm to prompt the corrections needed to achieve the agreed upon objectives.

**Share the credit.** Debate and ignore this point at your own peril. Sharing the credit goes a long way in motivating your staff. What could be more inconsistent than to talk about T.E.A.M., yet your behaviors indicate T.E.A.L., "Thinking Every Accomplishment is Leadership's." Sharing the credit will encourage the individual contributor to do just a little more in hope that her/his name might be mentioned in the monthly, quarterly or even the annual report.

The motivating leader is an indispensable asset to the 21st century organization and will prove to be even more so as corporate restructuring, global markets and technology continue to change the ways and whys of business.

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