Leading Others in a World of Change

In today's information economy, to prosper and even to survive, an organization must tap into the creativity, imagination, and decision-making capabilities of every employee. This means that the people – along with the information, knowledge, and skills they possess – are the most important resource in any organization. Consequently, the very nature of leadership has radically changed.

To succeed in the future, organizations and leaders must grow and change at least as fast as the world around them changes. In a world of constant change, organizations are struggling to meet the challenges of the new competitive landscape. The most important change for leaders is their view and understanding of the role of people.

During the Industrial Revolution and most of the 20th century, people were seen as cogs in a great machine. Organizations wanted workers who could do simple, repetitive tasks as efficiently and quickly as possible. Leaders were the "head" and workers were the "hands." To achieve this dynamic, the best form of leadership was a command and control process. The leader was responsible for all of the creativity, thinking, and decision making. The workers were expected to simply follow the orders of the leader.

Leaders should lead with one purpose in mind: to achieve

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increasingly positive results from the efforts of their team members. Highly effective leaders see the qualities of passion, trust, commitment, and loyalty as absolutely essential for improving results from their organization. Imagine the power of an organization where every team member has white hot passion, unwavering trust, total commitment, and enduring loyalty! These qualities are developed in team members as a response to specific values held by their leader.

Truly effective leaders also understand that no leader can convince team members to become something the leader is not. The old expression, "Do as I say, not as I do" carries no weight in a work environment that strives to motivate team members.

Leaders who want passion, trust, commitment, and loyalty from team members must first develop these values in themselves. Effective leaders understand that purpose is the ignition to passion, integrity is a prerequisite for trust, service to others generates commitment to the leader and the organization, and stewardship ensures that team members develop their potential, which fosters loyalty. To ignite passion,

trust, commitment, and loyalty, highly effective leaders base their leadership on a foundation of four cornerstone values: purpose, integrity, service, and stewardship.

▲ **Purpose.** Purpose provides the "why." Your purpose is why you are doing what you are doing. When you know why a person is doing something, it enables you to understand that person's intentions, motives, and priorities. People don't work just to have something to do, they want to make a difference, they want to contribute to something they believe in and are passionate about. Only a noble, worthy purpose will fan the flame of passion.

▲ **Integrity.** Leaders are required to be individuals worthy of trust and genuine respect among those they lead. Leaders at every level cannot expect followers to grow and develop unless they are willing to improve themselves. Leaders must first learn and master personal leadership – leading themselves – before they can truly master leading others. The root of the word "integrity" is integer – which means a complete, whole, indivisible number. Leaders with integrity live complete, whole, well-balanced lives. All great leaders display personal integrity by being dedicated to the pursuit of significant goals in all areas of life – not just goals for the organization. Numerous studies have shown that team members consistently regard integrity and honesty as the most important qualities of effective leaders. Leaders with integrity display consistent thoughts and actions; their words and deeds do not contradict each other. Team members want to know that their leaders will do what they say they are going to do, and that they will keep their commitments.

▲ **Service.** Highly effective leaders succeed because they desire to be of service. With today's global business climate shifting away from production of goods toward a knowledge and service orientation, leaders who respond to challenges with a commitment to service empower their organizations to grow and prosper. Organizations now recognize that customer loyalty is vital for ongoing success. To achieve this loyalty, businesses must offer the highest quality products and services and be responsive to customer needs. Leaders must also give the same consideration to team members to earn their loyalty. An attitude of service must start with the leader.

When top leaders demonstrate that they genuinely care about the people they lead, their team members will respond in the same manner. The end result: team members who want to be of service to customers and customers, who in turn, will continue to buy your product or service. Both customers and team members will go where they feel welcome and stay where they are valued and appreciated.

▲ **Stewardship.** Leaders who are committed to service develop a strong sense of responsibility, or stewardship, over the resources and assets they have in their charge. A steward places emphasis not just on the financial assets, but also on the invaluable, intangible assets of an organization. The collective talent of team members is recognized as the core resource of any company or organization. True stewardship acknowledges human potential as the organization's most important asset. In organizations that fail, effective stewardship has been the Achilles' heel of management. Some leaders are simply unable to sacrifice their own needs and desires for those of their team, even if that sacrifice would be for the good of the group. Short-term pressures easily crowd out long-term concerns for developing people and their talents. The inevitable result of this short-sighted approach is that you will have team members who feel unappreciated and unwanted, and who fail to deliver their maximum contribution to the organization. Successful leaders believe stewardship is a vital, permanent part of their management effort. This is because they see their team members as repositories of human potential. As stewards of this incredible untapped potential, highly effective leaders feel an ongoing responsibility to help team members grow and develop in all areas of life. An organization can grow only if its people grow. Great leaders are able to mold a partnership that enables all team members to dream great dreams, make noble plans, and daily pursue those plans together.

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Leading an organization and embracing these core values on a daily basis is not easy. It takes clear focus, unwavering commitment, and supreme self-confidence. Most failings of leadership are a direct result of a leader's lack of clear and consistent values. A strong value system forms the foundation of a positive self-image.

Believe in Yourself and Your Abilities

Your mental picture of yourself, the image you would like to project to others, and what you truly are all dramatically affect your productivity because your self-image controls how you use time. You act like the kind of person you think you are. It is impossible to act otherwise for any length of time – no matter how much willpower you have.

People who think of themselves as failures inevitably fail regardless of the amount of time they spend working. What appears to be "trying hard" to succeed may actually be unproductive busywork that reinforces a negative self-image and produces failure. In contrast, people who expect to succeed focus their attention and efforts on constructive activities that produce results.

When you are no longer chained to self-defeating attitudes from the past or fears about what other people might think, you can experience the exhilarating challenge that makes every hour productive and success possible.

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Boost Team Productivity

A tourist was walking by a construction site and saw three brick masons busy at work: The traveler stopped, watched the workers for awhile and asked, "What are you doing?" The first mason immediately replied, "Laying bricks, what does it look like?" Still curious, the tourist turned to the second brick mason and again asked, "What are you doing?" The mason stopped working, looked at the tourist and said, "Building a wall." Not satisfied, the traveler went up to the third worker and asked, "What about you, what are you doing?" The third brick mason turned to face the tourist and said, "I'm building a magnificent cathedral where my children and grandchildren will come to worship."

Of course this is a fictional story, but its message echoes through virtually every organization in the world. Team members with exactly the same job and responsibility can have totally different views and attitudes toward their work. The attitude and productivity of people in your organization will be, in large part, determined by their understanding of what they are trying to accomplish.

If people only see their job as completing a simple task, or blindly following someone's orders, they will be filled with apathy and boredom. If, however, people see their work as an important and integral part of helping the team or organization accomplish a worthwhile objective, their work takes on an entirely different meaning. The key to this difference is for everyone to have the same clear vision for the team or organization.

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A vision is simply a picture of a desired future. In other words, a vision is a vivid description of where you want to see the organization at some point in the future. One of the primary characteristics of all high-performance teams and organizations is a clear and shared commitment to a specific objective or vision for the future.

One of the best metaphors to help understand this concept of vision is a puzzle. A puzzle is a picture that is cut into a number of pieces. Imagine each team member as one piece of the puzzle. It's impossible to see the total picture just from seeing one piece. In fact, it's difficult to even guess where the piece would fit in the puzzle without being able to see the whole picture.

Only by being able to view the entire puzzle is each person able to understand where he or she fits in the total picture and in what role in the organization. The clearer the picture of the completed puzzle, the easier it is to put the puzzle together by placing the various pieces in the correct position.

Great leaders are totally focused on their vision. They think of it by day and dream of it by night. Continually focusing on the vision induces action. Both organizational leaders and team members need to understand and internalize the vision of the company. What separates effective leaders from mediocre leaders, or from no leadership at all, is a clearly defined vision and sharing that vision with members of the organization.

It is crucial that all team members feel the emotion and the potential of the vision and be totally committed to it. The leader's role is to develop in associates a zeal for the organization's vision. When team members fully grasp and share the vision, they dedicate the full power of their potential to the company's future. Vision is the gift of clearly seeing the possibilities. Vision expands your horizons.

Encourage Your Team to Be Successful

You are the leader of your group or department because that position is delegated to you by the organization. You might be called a "formal" leader. But often others function as "informal leaders" for smaller groups. When you recognize these informal leaders, you can use their power and influence to enhance the results and productivity of the group.

Although informal leaders are not designated by the organization, they frequently wield extensive power and influence because of their ability to help other team members satisfy needs and reach goals. They are automatically sought out for advice and help when a colleague experiences a problem. They often are outstanding team members with common sense and loyalty to the company. They can contribute a great deal to your success when you delegate to them and help them develop their abilities even further.

Occasionally, however, informal leaders are troublemakers who seek followers to satisfy their own desire for power and glory. They may work against the goals of the organization. Still other informal leaders are competent and possess a great deal of undeveloped potential. Whether they become an asset or a liability to your department depends on your ability to help them find a constructive way to satisfy their needs for personal growth. Otherwise, they may become disgruntled troublemakers, or may move on to another job in an attempt to cure a vague dissatisfaction with the work situation.

In a department or work group of any size, smaller groups begin to form along the lines of common needs and desires. You can often observe these groups during breaks or lunch time. Workers enjoy being together because of similar interests, problems, work, or other factors. You can antagonize informal leaders and their followers and see productivity sabotaged, or you can harness the power of informal groups to increase productivity.

In an atmosphere where people are motivated to produce at their peak, a great deal of friendly competition evolves. Usually 10 to 15 percent of the people produce significantly more than anyone else because of their superior abilities. Respect and look to these outstanding individuals as leaders, for they are prime candidates for accepting delegation. Not only will they perform well whatever tasks you assign, but they also encourage among the other team members an attitude favorable to accepting delegation. Because of the influence of this outstanding person, other team members are also willing to learn new jobs and accept new responsibilities.

In contrast, people who feel mistreated and fearful may distrust high producers. They fear that management expects everyone to produce at that high level. Groups of disgruntled individuals sometimes follow an informal leader in using various pressures to force the top producer down to a lower standard. Derogatory terms are powerful demotivators when applied to those who exceed group standards. One of the worst punishments of all can be rejection by other team members. In such situations, you need to identify their informal leaders and find a way to neutralize their power. These leaders may be people with high potential whose basic needs and goals are not being met. As a leader, you are responsible for knowing these people well enough to discover their unsatisfied needs and helping them motivate themselves to become productive.

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Directing the energy of these groups into constructive work can turn the force and authority of informal groups into a benefit for the organization. **You can enhance your career success by reinforcing your formal authority with appropriate action to fulfill these leadership functions:**

◆ Acceptance by the group

A leader is trusted by the group members to have genuine understanding and empathy for their problems.

◆ Risk taking

A leader takes whatever risks might be involved in expressing group grievances to management and seeking solutions for them.

◆ Communication

The leader contributes to the security of the group by providing information. The informal leader may provide inaccurate information based on rumors. You are, in contrast, a channel for accurate information and thus give employees the feeling of security they need.

Welcome the emergence of informal group leaders. Win their loyalty and support. Delegate meaningful responsibility to them. Using these powerful strategies expands your influence and encourages maximum motivation among your team members.

Solving Problems at Work Productively

Approaching this part of your job with the willingness to listen, understand, and offer assistance yields more positive results than demonstrating a primary intention to punish and enforce rules. Although team members are frequently vocal in requests for organizational attention to their needs, you must maintain a rational point of view. Developing the potential of team members and increasing productivity is more important than winning a verbal battle and proving the strength of your own authority.

The first step in dealing with a complaint is to discover whether you are dealing with a personal issue that is actually the team member's responsibility or with a situation more appropriate for management to address. Although they may be unpleasant to face, openly and directly expressed complaints are the easiest of all to handle. All too often, complaints are hidden from view and are expressed as symptoms that must be analyzed and interpreted.

Unexpressed complaints can produce several symptoms. Sometimes an increase in absenteeism, tardiness, or job turnover indicates dissatisfaction of some type. Irritability, gossip, grumbling, and arguing also arise from unexpressed complaints. Decreased productivity may also be a symptom caused by unexpressed dissatisfaction. More specifically, decreased quality of customer service, increased errors and waste, and slower response to organizational needs may all be symptoms caused by unexpressed dissatisfaction.

Often an expressed complaint is not the true source of difficulty, so you must always treat causes rather than symptoms or risk the problem flaring up again later. Just as asking questions can help you apply common sense to decision making, asking questions is vital in the midst of problems involving people. Ask carefully phrased questions to make sure you learn the real problem – not just a symptom. Ask questions like these:

▲ When did this problem begin?

▲ Who else is affected?

▲ What do you think is the cause?

▲ How would you like to solve the problem?

▲ What resources are available?

While a team member describes a problem, your appropriate role is listening; later you may offer concrete assistance, seek the cooperation of higher management, or – if the issue is really a personal one – refer the employee to a qualified agency or person for help or counseling.

If you determine that you are dealing with a minor issue that affects only one person, all that may be needed is one or two sessions in which you listen and help the person develop a solution.

During these sessions, listen to what the team member has to say without offering judgments, solutions, or opinions. Enable the person to work out a solution in a supportive atmosphere.

When serious personal issues such as physical illness, suspected or known alcoholism, or strongly neurotic behavior affect a team member, you may make a referral to a support organization. If your organization maintains some type of employee assistance program, encourage the person to consider finding out what resources the program offers. Your concern and interest assure the team member and acknowledge the organization's need of that person's skill and knowledge. In such a climate, employees willingly use their potential for productivity.

If you determine that the complaint presented is not rooted in a personal problem of the team member, you know that you are possibly dealing with an organizational concern.

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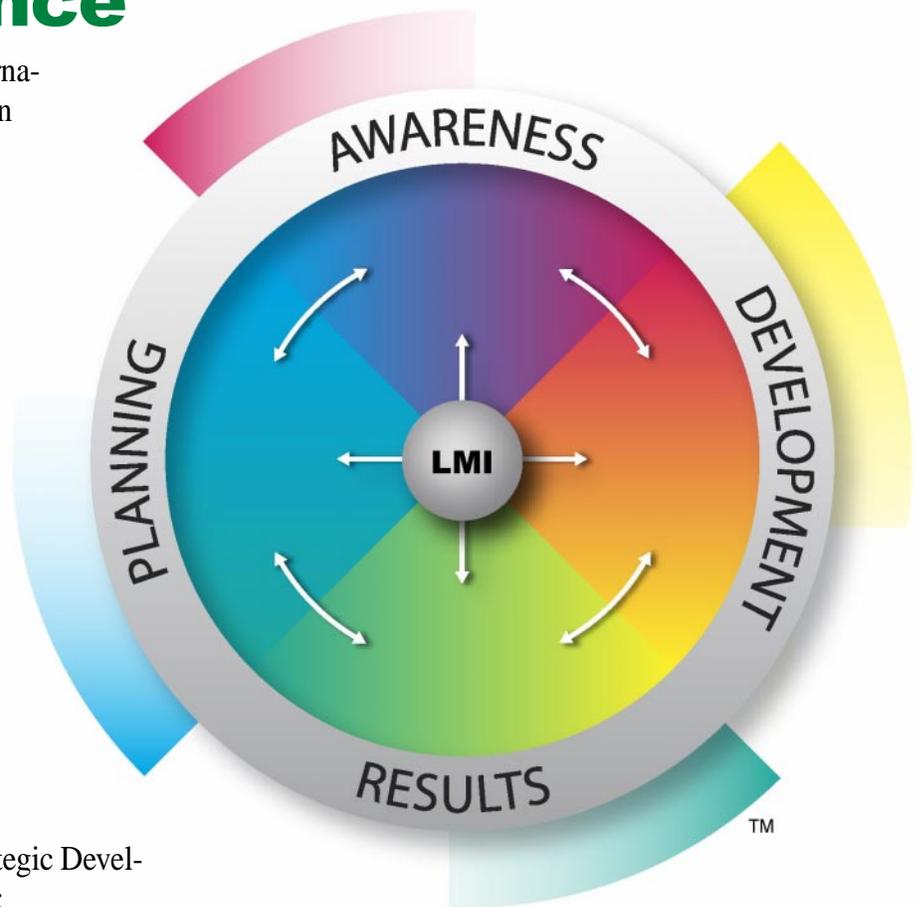
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