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LEADERSHIP

Encouraging the heart

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Abstract   Because leaders influence others, a leader's sincerity is essential to his ability to influence. Leaders can augment their influence through five leadership practices, including modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, challenging the process, and encouraging the heart. Leaders have a tremendous opportunity to expand dignity, respect, and value and legitimately make the world a better place.

Encouraging the heart challenges leaders to care about their people while focusing on the team's final goal: results. Truly caring about your people means setting lucid values and anticipating the best. Encouraging the heart challenges leaders to pay attention, personalize recognition, relate stories about success and values, celebrate together, and be an example for others to follow.

We need to feel linked to others and, in turn, they to us because greatness is never obtained completely by ourselves, all alone. Encouraging the heart is the leadership practice that connects us with one another. It documents that we are in "this" together-whatever the project, course, congregation, division, and so on, may be. When leaders praise their followers for achieving the values or goals of the group, the leaders are giving them courage and inspiring them to practice their own skills to deliver-even when under stress. When we recognize people for their participation, we increase their awareness of their value to the organization and to their co-workers, and thereby impart a sense of connectedness that, being social animals, all humans seek. While we may all be linked, leaders have the responsibility to ensure that we are in touch.

We strongly suggest encouraging the heart for leaders who want to enhance their care of people and for those who know that supporting others is not their strongest skill. Some people are born encouragers — if you are not one of them, this article is for you!

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1. Introduction

Kouzes and Posner conducted a study in 1995 and found that performance was higher when people were led by individuals who offered encouragement. Only 40% of workers reported that they received recognition for a job well done, while another 40% claimed that they never received recognition. On the other hand, approximately 50% of managers reported that they give recognition for high performance [1].

The impact of encouraging the heart on the team is enormous. For example, results include increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, greater initiative, increased cooperation, stronger bonds among co-workers, better communication among team members, fewer conflicts in the work environment, and even reduced job complications. Many factors contribute to successful leadership. The Center for Creative Leadership found that the number one success factor for leaders is their relationships with subordinates. High performing managers exhibited greater warmth and fondness toward others than did managers in the bottom 25%. They not only expressed affection towards others, but they also wanted affection. Furthermore, they were more inclined to share their thoughts and to develop closer relationships with their subordinates. In other words, they care about their employees and that their employees did.

As a member of a team, I think of the attributes that make-up a motivating environment. For example, in a stimulating and motivating environment, I know what is expected of me; in the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work; my supervisor or someone at work cares about me as a person; someone at work encourages my development; in the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress; my opinion at work is respected; and my company makes me feel that my job, what I do, is important. A Gallup Workplace Audit found that if a work group has these attributes, they are 50% more likely to achieve customer loyalty, 40% more profitable, and have 10% less employee turnover [2].

An example of an individual who did extremely successful in encouraging the heart is Steve Harris who, as an advocate for improving the lives of people with HIV, helped people throughout the world fight Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Harris team members admired and respected him and were inspired by his leadership. During the 10 years that Harris served on the Board of Directors of the Ontario AIDS Network, he welcomed many people from all over Ontario who were HIV positive, and they quickly became his friends. When you knew Steve, you knew a man who cared deeply. He always encouraged people to become involved. While their work was not always easy, Steve was determined and he never gave up. He was someone who could be relied on to be there in good times and in bad times, and he could be depended on to share a laugh or a tear, or best of all, a joke. Steve was thoughtful and he was determined. He also had courage. He was not afraid to ask the tough questions or to defend an unpopular or conflicting point of view. He was also a mediator who was able to help his team find its way to higher ground. He was a role model and a man who led by example. He encouraged the heart, appreciated everyone, developed potential, enabled and empowered his team, responded with dignity, sought opportunities, listened to others, inspired a shared vision, and promoted inclusiveness [3].

Leadership development in the public health sector must include multiple factors to create consistent increases in exemplary leadership practices. A study that focused on the leadership development process itself, the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership (RIHEL) training, was reported as having an overall positive, significant impact on leadership development of the participants. There is a need for studies to further test the leadership development influence model as it is critical that public health training programs identify the specific training that will improve leadership development in the public health sector [4].

1.1. Encouragement increases productivity

Corporate kindness positively impacts profits. There are six characteristics of kind managers: compassion, integrity, gratitude, authenticity, humility, and humor. Managers who offer encouragement to their employees attract better quality candidates and increase employee retention. The 100 best companies to work for America are all led by leaders who recognize the value and importance of their people to their success and thus the success of the company. Researchers have found that employees who are treated by their managers with kindness, respect, and fairness perform better in the workplace [5,6].

In another example, a nurse unit manager and her senior nursing team introduce action learning sets (ALSs) to the nursing staff of an inpatient medical unit. During the process, a creative visioning exercise was also presented. A key finding of the exercise was that the process enabled others to act while challenging the process and encouraging the heart. In other words, effective leadership by the senior nursing team enabled the staff to be engaged in the process thus promoting growth among the entire nursing staff [7].

There are seven essentials components to the encouraging the heart practice that increase productivity among the team:

1. Set clear standards.
2. Expect the best.
3. Pay attention.
4. Personalize recognition.
5. Tell the story.
6. Celebrate together.
7. Be an example.

1.1.1. Set clear standards
This can be achieved by creating clear goals and allowing employees to provide input with respect to their goals, and by giving consistent feedback that allows employees to know if they are meeting their goals and that guides them to correct their course. Encouragement is feedback. Successful managers help their employees understand how

their values align with the company's goals and help them to take pride in their work.

Critical initiatives stall for a diversity of reasons-employee disengagement, a lack of direction between functions, compound organizational structures that obscure accountability, among others. To overcome such problems, managers must rethink how work is accomplished. Most of the challenges at the organizational level stem from broken or poorly made obligations. This is because every company is essentially a dynamic network of promises made between and among employees, colleagues, customers, subcontracting partners, and/or other stakeholders. Executives can overcome many difficulties in the short-term, and adoptive creative, consistent workforces can do so the long-term by engaging in what the authors call "promise-based management," which requires educating employees and organizing obligations in a systematic way. Good promises share five qualities. They are public, active, voluntary, explicit, and mission based. To develop and achieve an effective product or service, the "provider" and the "customer" should engage in three stages of discussion. The first stage is to reach a "meeting of the minds," which involves consensus regarding the essential queries of a co-ordinated effort: What do you mean? Do you understand what I mean? What should I do? What will you do? Who else should we talk to? In the next stage, making it happen, the provider implements or acts on the promise. In the final stage, finishing the loop, the customer publicly states that the provider has either conveyed the goods/services as promised or the provider has failed to do so. Leaders must weave their nets of promises with great care by encouraging iterative discussion and ensuring that promises are achieved. By doing so, they can improve the coordination and cooperation among colleagues, form the organizational agility needed to attract new business opportunities, and exploit the business potential of employees [8].

1.1.2. Expect the best

High expectations lead to high performance, and high self-esteem equates to high performance. Leaders must set high expectations for themselves. In Greek mythology, Pygmalion, the sculptor, carved a statue of a beautiful woman and brought it to life using the strength of his perceptions. Metaphorically, leaders play a Pygmalion—like role in developing people. In support of this, there is abundant research on self-fulfilling prophecies that find that if we expect others to fail, they probably will. Furthermore, leaders understand that when a person feels appreciated, it increases the person's sense of self-worth, which in turn precipitates the person's success at school, home, and work. Accordingly, a defining characteristic of a good leader is that he/she is able to see and then bring out the best in others.

There is an old adage that says, "We get what we expect." When leaders assume that they are surrounded by incompetence, that is precisely what they will find. Conversely, when leaders assume that their subordinates or followers are highly skilled, that is the characteristic that will dominate the environment. In other words, people have a tendency to live up or down to the expectations of their leader [9].

A leader can communicate these high expectations in several ways. Giving words of encouragement to employees, such as "I know you can do this!" builds confidence and encourages the employee to work harder. Envisioning success is another effective way to attain goals. Another way to subtly communicate high expectations and create a positive culture is by strategically posting a few inspirational posters throughout the work facility.

1.1.3. Pay attention

Put your staff first, support them, and ensure that they have what they need to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. Listen with your ears and your eyes and show that you care. Spend time with your employees and schedule time daily to walk around the work area. Catch them doing something right or something well and take notice of it by giving them credit, both privately and, if appropriate, publicly. Far too often, leaders spend their time in the field identifying problems and coaching or correcting weaknesses. When this occurs, the number of lost opportunities to celebrate employees' successes is immense. Kouzes and Posner take the familiar concept of MBWA (management by walking around) to a new level in what they refer to as CBWA (caring by walking around), two different concepts due to a significant one word variance. Quality leaders not only notice what employees are doing well, but they further distinguish between the consequences of their actions [9].

1.1.4. Personalize recognition

Every employee appreciates recognition, which is one of the few free currencies we have to give, and as a manager, there is no better place to put one's energy. However, it is important to craft recognition according to the employee's needs because impersonal recognition can actually have an adverse effect by demotivating employees. Offer the recognition in the way that the person wants to receive it and do not hesitate to ask them. Furthermore, tie the recognition and reward to the person's values as well as the company's values and consider the individual's preference when giving recognition. This can be achieved by giving recognition either publicly or privately, awarding recognition to a team or to an individual, offering it either via a written commendation or a verbal statement. Additionally, recognition can be either spontaneous or formal and can be awarded by a supervisor, by one's peers, or by the supervisor's leader. It is further suggested to be creative when rewarding individuals for their accomplishments. Formal rewards, such as promotions and raises, offer only a limited range of options and tend not to be as immediate as they are scarce resources and cannot be applied frequently. Intrinsic reward, such as a challenge, is a powerful motivator as it instills a sense of accomplishment. Intrinsic rewards can be as simple as the leader stepping in and offering assistance to complete a task. It is important to keep in mind, however, that intrinsic rewards work as motivators only when given with genuine respect and sincerity.

To improve in the area of personal recognition of employees' efforts, companies should consider administering a survey to employees that evaluates how the company and the company's leaders are doing and what the company

should do with respect to the following: offering educational opportunities for employee learning and development; providing meaningful, exciting, and challenging work opportunities; offering career growth opportunities; hiring leaders who inspire and motivate employees; recognizing, both formally and informally, employee successes; promoting pride in the organization, mission, product and/or service; encouraging autonomy and freedom; promoting creativity, allowing for flexibility with respect to work hours and dress; providing opportunities for fun; encouraging teamwork; offering cutting edge technology; and being a family friendly company.

Effective Praise should be:

a. Timely — do not wait. Give praise as soon as possible following a good performance. Praise tends to lose its effectiveness with the passing of time.
b. Specific — tell the person exactly what he/she did that was good. Avoid general statements such as "good job." Being specific lets the person know what it is that they did that is appreciated, and it encourages them to continue with such behaviors.
c. Sincere — insincere or manipulative praise is worse than no praise at all. Be honest. Tell the person what his performance means to you personally and to the organization.
d. Proportional — match the amount and intensity of the recognition to the achievement. Excessive praise for a minor accomplishment will cause the person to question your motives.
e. Positive—do not negate praise by following it with "but …" People will not even hear the praise if it is followed by "but …" Rather, they will think that you created something positive as way to ease into criticism.

Personalized recognition can be given by way of personal thank you notes, and it is important that for feedback to be effective, it must be immediate. To ensure immediate feedback, a recognition card or personal note can be used. Furthermore, to successfully reinforce desired behaviors, the ratio of positive to negative feedback is generally 5 to 1, respectively, and in times of change, it may increase to 10 to 1, respectively. Incorporating a system for recognizing good performance is often an effective way to ensure that employees are rewarded for behaviors that benefit the organization [10].

1.1.5. Tell the story
The language of leaders is stories as stories teach, inspire, and motivate. Stories also clarify expectations. Telling great stories includes identifying the people, giving the context, outlining the situation, highlighting the actions, showing the causality, and including any surprises, if applicable. We use the soldier's story as an example. The story involves four groups. Group 1: Soldiers were told the exact distance they would march, 20 km, and were regularly informed of their progress along the way. Group 2: Soldiers were told, "This is the long march you heard about." Nobody knew exactly how far they would march, nor were they informed of their progress along the way. Group 3: Soldiers were told they would march 15 km. After

marching 14 km, they were told they still had 6 km to go. Group 4: Soldiers were told they would march 25 km. After marching 14 km, they were told they only had 6 km to go. Which group did the best and suffered the least? It is no surprise that Group 1 performed the best. Knowing how far they were going and receiving regular updates were the keys to achieving the highest ratings. Group 3 came in second. When they learned they had much further to go, they pulled together and worked harder. To some, this result was surprising. Group 4 finished third. Apparently, it is more of a psychological letdown to think you have farther to go and then learn you have less, than to learn you have more. Such circumstances seem to demotivate rather than motivate. Group 2 performed the worst. Not knowing how far they had to march and receiving no information along the way yielded poor results. Group 1 soldiers not only had the best march time, but they also had the best test results, thus indicating that they experienced the least physiological stress [11].

By providing a clear sense of direction and feedback along the way, effective leaders encourage people to reach inside themselves and do their best. If giving accurate information can be so powerful, just think of the power of praise!

1.1.6. Celebrate together
Celebration reinforces company values and goals, and builds community and communication, and by improving communication, the level of productivity improves. Celebrating success builds momentum and commitment and energizes people to do well. Furthermore, celebrating success provides a forum for iterating standards and values, while also providing employees an opportunity to come together and establish closer bonds. The latter is important given that people often state that one of the primary reasons they go to work is because of the people with whom they work. Organizations often fail to provide sufficient opportunities to nurture social interactions among co-workers. In fact, many leaders view public celebrations as wasteful given that there is so much work that must be done. This thinking, however, ignores the important fact that satisfied, happy employees are also more productive employees.

Accordingly, organizations should find creative and imaginative ways to recognize others' contributions to the success of the company. One way to do this is by publicly acknowledging those who demonstrate commitment to shared ideals and by collectively celebrating collective accomplishments. Above all, however, remember that encouragement does not need to be elaborately, but it does need to be just sincere.

1.1.7. Be an example
Start the morning or the shift by encouraging yourself, and then encourage your staff and employees. Genuinely caring about your employees naturally improves your communication with them. Communication, in turn, creates credibility, and it is credibility that serves as the foundation of strong leadership. Therefore, be genuine and connect on a personal level. Solicit, gracefully receive, and act on feedback from your staff.

Leaders must model expected behavior. To create a culture of celebration, the leader must celebrate the actions and behaviors of his employees. As a leader, it is critical to know the people whom you lead, find out what is important to each individual and take note of what they do. This is not an easy task as it takes diligence and effort to establish clear standards and to then support others as they strive to achieve them. As Kouzes and Posner state, "When leaders do get personally involved in encouraging the heart, the results are always the same: the receiver and the giver both feel uplifted. The reflection in the mirror is the one you portray."

1.2. How can we encourage the heart?

To encourage the heart, one must take action. There are many ways to do this. For example, smiling and saying good morning or asking a person what he thinks and listening deeply tell others that you care. One of the most important characteristics of a supportive leader is objectivity or open-mindedness. A good leader should also wear a smile on his face, believing that a smile is a curve that can set many things straight. A smile helps to put subordinates at ease and communicates that their leader cares about them as individuals. A successful leader is charitable and gives generously both morally and materially. It is highly recommended that leaders who want to improve productivity provide regular feedback and be responsive to their employees because nothing is more demotivating than not receiving feedback. Simple forms of recognition include posting customer letters that praise an employee or a department, highlighting an employee's contribution or success in a newsletter, and offering sincere appreciation often. Become someone who sets out to find people doing the right things right, and increasingly more often, you will get what you look for.

Encouraging the heart can also be achieved by using encouraging language such as "I know you can do it." This can be achieved by adding it as a meeting agenda item or by saying, "I heard something good about you." The caring leader provides opportunities for his employees to professionally compete among themselves. This encourages most of the employees to produce better work as competition raises their level of enthusiasm. Increased creativity and innovation are often the results of such attempts.

As a highly skilled leader, *evaluating yourself* is a good way to encourage the heart. To do this, make two columns on a sheet of paper and label one values and the other actions. Then, list your values and your actions. You must then ask yourself if your actions match your values. Ask for feedback from colleagues and staff regarding your encouragement skills.

An effective leader helps his employees align their responsibilities with their values. To do this, however, as a leader, he must clarify his expectations and ensure the employee that the assigned goals are attainable and that if they are unattainable he will help the employee to modify the goals. This is an important step toward helping the employee be successful, and it might be achieved by certain decisions, such as establishing successive steps for awarding tangible benefits. Such tangible rewards include

giving gradual allowances and benefits after a certain period of good work, offering a percentage of the profits achieved by the employee, allowing the employee to make suggestions and to participate in making decisions, and giving reasonable gratuities and good pensions at the end of an employee's service.

A highly capable leader should create rapport and promote an environment of understanding. He should be able to relate to his employees and empathize with them. He should disclose information about himself as it conveys to his employees that he is human. An effective leader shares in his employees' joys and in their sadness. Furthermore, good leaders frequently remind their employees that they have confidence in their (the employees') abilities. Finally, to be good role models, effective leaders should continuously focus on raising their own self-esteem because people who feel good about themselves find it easier to notice and feel good about others. It is also important for a good leader to involve his employees and ask them to give each other feedback. Ask employees to write thank you notes to each other and mentor your employees to become strong, supportive leaders. Remember that leaders also encourage and support their superiors. By putting the four essentials into practice (building self-confidence through high expectations, connecting performance and rewards, using a variety of rewards, being positive and hopeful) and recognizing contributions, leaders can stimulate and motivate the internal drives within each of us. Successful leaders have high expectations of both themselves and their constituents. When you ask for feedback, be very clear about what you want the person to comment on, and how and when you want the feedback to be given. When you receive unhelpful, general feedback, ask questions to clarify specifics and meanings before responding. When giving positive feedback, avoid comments that emphasize the absence of the negative ("Not bad." "Better than last time!" "Thanks for not screwing up." "I see your acne has cleared up.") Instead, comment on the presence of the positives. ("I admire…" "I enjoy…" "I like the way you did that, especially… "). Give less negative feedback than you do praise. When you have negative feedback to give, follow it with a greater quantity of positive feedback. If you explain in advance, they will be more inclined to listen.

Some people make the mistake of assuming that individuals respond only to money. Although salary increases and bonuses are appreciated, individual needs for and appreciation of rewards have great significance.

1.3. Coaching questions

Leaders should not ask questions about what will impede further progress in encouraging the heart as these questions will elicit responses such as "Positive messages are foreign to my work environment," "I don't have time," "I will forget," "People will not recognize me" or "It is too late to change." Such responses do not contribute to creating an encouraging culture. Conversely, it is important to create a supportive and encouraging culture, and thus, a first step in doing so is to assess management using an encouragement index and coach them on improving their encouragement skills. A next step is to hold management accountable for

improvement by adding this component to their job description and performance appraisal and having their staff and employees provide feedback and take surveys that assess the encouragement actions of their supervisors. An organization should adopt the philosophy that leadership is everyone's business, as opposed to the view that leadership is only for the highest echelon in the organization.

Such actions and behaviors will achieve the goal of encouraging the heart. That is, they will contribute to the building of a strong and good administration and will facilitate in the growth and development of a productive and successful leader.

1.4. Important cultural variations to be considered by good leaders

From previous studies, it is noted that character/integrity, altruism, collective motivation, and encouragement are the four components that describe ethical leadership in western societies.

Thus, these characteristics or values are commonly reinforced and are considered important qualities that effective leaders must possess. At the similar time, however, values varied in degree of confirmation for each measurement, thus suggesting that the dimensions of ethical leadership comprised in some research signify a vermiform universal, which occurs when a principle is observed or perceived similarly throughout the world.

With respect to the character/integrity dimension, the highest level of endorsement was found among Nordic European societies. In contrast, these characteristics were endorsed to a lesser extent among Middle Eastern societies. A probable reason for this result is the importance of maintaining one's image in Middle Eastern societies.

With respect to altruism, Southeast Asian societies highly value altruism as an essential characteristic of good leaders. This emphasis is perhaps the result of the cultural beliefs of the Southeast Asian societies. On the contrary, altruism as an important characteristic of effective leaders was endorsed to a lesser degree among Latin European and Nordic European societies. Again, cultural values and features of these societies likely explain these results.

In comparison, Middle Eastern societies are inclined to endorse collective motivation and encouragement to a lesser degree than other societies. This can be attributed to two factors. First, theories may vary about the characteristics of an effective leader. Furthermore, protecting one's name image are critically values among Middle Eastern societies. Second, the behaviors that are characteristic of ethical leaders according to the Middle Eastern perspective may differ from other countries. For example, Islamic religious beliefs are deeply fixed aspects of everyday life throughout Middle Eastern societies [12], and ethical leadership likely incorporates specific components that address maintaining Islamic values when conducting business [13].

This paper speculates that ethical leadership likely has a strong relationship with unit performance, perhaps due to an interactive effect with more performance-focused aspects of leadership, such as leader-member exchanges.

Conflict of interest

None.

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