

Accept the Challenge of Becoming an Effective Motivational Leader

By Paul J. Meyer

Every leader's role is unique. It differs from similar positions in other organizations and from individual roles in a particular work environment. Even the titles given to leaders vary widely. But positions of leadership, no matter how they differ in the details, have one important common denominator: They all must depend upon the fundamental need to work with and through other people.

Leadership is really about relationships. Leaders who work most effectively with and through others produce the most outstanding results. The extraordinary challenge facing leaders today in all areas of business and industry is that they must develop and maintain positive and productive personal relationships with associates and team members.

Most leaders are concerned about two types of results: their own personal success and the success of the team or organization. Although the two areas may seem distinct, in a practical sense they cannot be separated.

The purpose of a leader is to achieve positive results in coordination with the activities of others. These "other people," together with the leader, make up the team or organization. If this group of individuals fails, the leader shares in that fate. If the leader fails, the organization's goals are not achieved. On the other hand, when the leader succeeds, the organization benefits directly; and when the team reaches its goals, the leader shares in the rewards.

The Responsibilities of Leadership

Peter Drucker has said, "Leadership is not rank, privilege, title, or money. It is responsibility." For you to achieve optimum results through others, you must be willing to take on the following responsibilities:

Values – A clear value system is the very foundation of effective leadership. Values define what we believe in, what we consider important, what we truly care about, and what we stand for. Team members will only follow a leader they trust and believe in. Trust is developed through a common or shared set of values that is adhered to with strict integrity. A shared set of values inspires and motivates people. When people care deeply about something— when they place a high value on it – they are energized



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to give their best effort. The most spectacular results happen when team members are motivated to achieve something that is consistent with their highest and most important values.

Vision and Communication – A leader, by definition, is in the forefront of action. A firm understanding of the goals of the organization and a thorough knowledge of what must be done to achieve those goals are essential elements of effective leadership. In the context of the goals and vision of the organization, effective leaders have both the opportunity and the responsibility to give direction and purpose to the actions of team members. Real

leadership goes beyond just giving orders and demanding unquestioning obedience. Genuine leadership involves gaining commitment from those you lead so that they understand their part in the overall vision of the organization and are committed to achieving success. Leadership involves the ability to communicate, to persuade, to encourage, and to inspire people to take meaningful and productive actions. Powerful results flow from team members who are enthusiastically committed to a clear vision.

Motivation – It is sometimes believed that motivated people are born that way. Either a person is motivated or not and there's little that can be done to change that. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no "self-motivation" gene that people inherit. Self-motivation is an attitude; it is a habit of thought. Like any other habit, self-motivation can be learned and developed. To be an effective leader, you must provide the right conditions, opportunities, and environment for your associates to develop self-motivation. More than any other quality, your ability to inspire self-motivation in team members will determine your level of success as a leader.

Learning and Development – The most practical and cost-effective approach to increasing production is, in most cases, to become a developer of people. You could, of course, hire additional people in hopes of achieving greater production, but the results of this approach rarely justify the cost. The most effective leaders see development of associates as vitally important to the success of the organization. They recognize that people, not capital spending and technology, are the primary source of productivity. Effective leaders make their team members their priority. They fully realize that people are truly the organization's most important and valuable asset.

Empowerment – The world of business is getting more and more competitive. Organizations are on a never-ending search for any and every small advantage over competitors. One of the most significant changes that organizations are undertaking is a shift from a slow moving, hierarchical, bloated, command-and-control structure to a quick response, horizontal, lean, interdependent, and empowered structure. The key to succeeding with this shift is

empowering team members to share responsibility and take ownership of the success of the organization. Empowerment is the creation of a motivational climate that releases the power, resources, and responsibility of team members. Unfortunately, most leaders do not understand the necessity of this change and have not yet mastered the process of empowering team members.

Team Building – Sometimes the people in an organization all work hard, they believe in the purpose of the organization, and they are committed to success, but the organization still fails to achieve its goals. Team members may possess a similar vision of the organization's ultimate goals, but they move along different paths toward achieving those goals. This is a sure sign that the people involved are not working as a team. Effective leaders are able to build a diverse group of people into a smoothly functioning team.

Change and Innovation – If quality and efficiency were the keys to success in the last century, change and innovation have become the signposts of success in the 21st century. In today's hyper-speed world, the ability to adapt through change and innovation is crucial to survival, let alone to achieving success. In fact, the ability to change and innovate better and faster than the competition may become the only real competitive advantage. Change and innovation cannot just be the leader's responsibility, it must permeate the entire organization. Effective leaders develop an environment that fosters and supports creativity, change, and innovation from every single person.



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