

High Performance Leadership for a Tough Market

By Danny Cox

The longer a slow market is in place the more likely bad habits have been developed in both team members and managers. This can cause a slower than necessary re-entry into an improving economic climate. These habits, which can take many forms, need to be identified and rooted out quickly by the manager both in self and in the team.

To accelerate this re-entry the leader must be sure that the four elements of a high performance organization are in place. Those are inter-active trust between the coach and the team, a sense of purpose, focused action and clear communications.

The first, inter-active trust is initiated by the leader's commitment to personal growth, thereby setting a good example for the team. The leader doesn't set this example so all can be copies of him or her but only to prove that the leader is on a growth curve and improving in the role.

When the leader then coaches the individual's strengths into better job performance the reward is trust from the team member. The individual, the coach, other team members, the customers and, most importantly, the person's family, see this growth.

As this trust and respect spreads it makes an inter-active statement that "You have my best interest at heart." A by-product is high morale and a camaraderie that each knows there is something very special going on.

The second element, a sense of purpose, is bigger than just a goal or even a vision. Purpose makes a long-term statement that through the years a number of visions will be achieved. A single vision is made up of numerous goals well aimed at the eventual achievement of the vision.

The leader knows that true enthusiasm is built by the accomplishment of smaller goals that are part of a larger plan. These periodic achievements build team energy in the march toward the vision.

The high performance leader also knows that as soon as a vision is attained it should be celebrated and immediately replaced with another vision lest there be a let down in morale.

Focused action is the third element. The leader is aware of where the team is and the course to be maintained for goal and vision accomplishment. The leader is precise and up to date on progress and keeps the team aware of it. This keeps energy and motivation high in each individual.

The fourth element is effective communications. A high performance leader has inventoried each person's weaknesses and strengths. He or she knows that to be effective in coaching you must be aware of the weaknesses but talk to the strengths.

Another important phase of communications is to adapt a policy of "never quit selling your company to your company." Often, the last time a team member has heard anything good about the company was during the recruiting phase. Keep selling them!

A final reminder: When a team has made it through a storm because of good leadership the cohesion that takes place is hard to break.

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