

# ***LeaderPerfect Newsletter***

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## **Inspirational Leadership**

by Dr. Mike Armour

Effective leaders appeal to both the head and the heart. They engage the mind through vision and planning. They engage the heart through a process we generally call "inspiration."

As leaders, what tools do we use to inspire? Here's a partial list. And since we are speaking of Emotional Engagement, we'll maintain the alliteration by using key words that begin with the letter "e."

### **Enthusiasm**

Few things are more contagious than a leader's enthusiasm. When leaders feel passionately about what they espouse, others know it immediately. And people are drawn to it. You don't have to be a "high energy" personality to convey enthusiasm. You can convey it just as fully through the lilt in your voice and the light in your eyes when you talk about your commitments. But people are unlikely to be enthusiastic about things that do not fuel enthusiasm in their leaders.

### **Expectations**

People have a tendency to live up to what we expect of them. Expect mediocre performance, and you'll get it. Expect stellar performance and people will stretch to reach it. For high expectations to succeed, however, at least three elements are essential. First, leadership must have a clear definition of what actually constitutes "stellar performance." Second, leaders must regularly communicate this picture of stellar performance to their people. And third, leaders must demand stellar performance of themselves and do so in such a way that their people see it.

### **Encouragement**

Thirty years of counseling and coaching have convinced me that most people are struggling with far more self-doubt than even their closest friends realize. Early in life most of us become expert at hiding our self-doubt behind an air of confidence. Leaders must never be seduced by those masks. Always presume that every person in your organization needs constant recognition and encouragement. That they need to feel appreciated. When it comes to inspiring people, there's no such thing as too much encouragement.

### **Example**

Stories inspire. Which is why the influence of a leader's example is powerful beyond words. The leader's life is in fact a story being acted out before those being led. Leaders

must therefore embody the qualities, attitudes, drives, and dreams they want their organization to evidence. People can only aspire to things they can clearly envision. And the leader's example is one of the most effective ways for people to catch a clear vision of what is expected of them.

## **Excellence**

For most people, knowing that they've done a truly great job fires off an extraordinary sense of pride and enthusiasm. When leaders insist on excellence everywhere in their organization, they are optimizing the number of times people can feel such pride. Unfortunately, everyone seems to talk about excellence, but few organizations doggedly pursue it. Otherwise, we should have moved beyond the oft-heard complaints about shoddy products, poor service, and insensitivity to customers. As a leader, go beyond lip-service to excellence. Build every critical function around it.

## **Environment**

People are obviously more inspired to attain their highest potential in settings that are creative, constructive, harmonious, and trusting. No job is more important for leadership than to establish the kind of "emotional energy field" in which each worker or volunteer feels safe, empowered, valued, and respected. A quality environment alone, of course, cannot assure success. But without it, most other ingredients in the success formula are doomed to poor results.

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