

LEADERSHIP GEMS

BY:

FELLOW TRAVELLER

**(Collections of “What Good” and “What Not Too
Good” from the Leaders).**

Be Nice: It's Good for Business

How positivity can enrich individuals and companies

A GMJ Q&A with Tom Rath, coauthor of [*How Full Is Your Bucket?*](#) (Gallup Press, August 2004)

We all know that negativity is harmful. But did you know it costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$300 billion a year? Or that the effects of intra-office negativity can scare away customers? In contrast, **businesses that encourage positive personal interactions can gain a lucrative advantage over their more negative rivals.**

Organizational positivity may seem like a new concept, but ideas on it have been churning for some time. A half-century before the American Psychological Association honored him as the "Grandfather of Positive Psychology" in 2002, Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D., was studying the effects of positivity on people and organizations. His research led him to believe that **positive human interactions had a vastly greater effect than anyone had ever realized.**

To explain his insights, Dr. Clifton created the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket. To put it simply, we all have a metaphorical bucket. The bucket is filled by positive interactions and emptied by negative ones. We feel great when our buckets are full, rotten when they aren't. We also have a metaphorical dipper that we can use to empty or fill other people's buckets -- but when we fill others' buckets, we also fill our own. Thus, an organization populated by people with "full buckets" would have much more positive energy than one of people with "empty buckets" -- and would be more productive and profitable.

The analogy developed a life of its own. Eventually, 5,000 organizations and more than 1 million people put the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket into practice. By the late 1990s, mountains of hard science had accumulated that proved the theory was correct. People all over the world were asking Dr. Clifton to write a book describing the research behind the theory and suggesting practical ideas for using it.

In 2002, Dr. Clifton was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of cancer. He knew his time was growing short, and he spent his last few months working on the book that so many people had requested. Dr. Clifton asked Tom Rath, The Gallup Organization's global practice leader in strengths-based development -- and Dr. Clifton's grandson -- to help. They finished the book shortly before Dr. Clifton died, and the fruit of their collaboration, *How Full Is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life*, was released this month by Gallup Press.

In the following conversation, Rath explains what negativity actually costs American businesses and describes the right and wrong ways to recognize employees' good work.

GMJ: *When you say "fill someone's bucket" or "empty someone's bucket," you're speaking metaphorically. What do you mean literally?*

Tom Rath: I'm talking about **the momentary interactions we have with people every day.** These interactions can be positive, negative, or neutral. One of Gallup's senior scientists, Daniel Kahneman, suggests there are approximately twenty thousand moments in a given day, and each one lasts about three seconds. [*Winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in economic sciences, Dr. Kahneman is Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology and professor of public affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. —Ed.*] In our book, we point out that those three-second interactions are rarely neutral; they're almost always positive or negative. And we can deliberately choose to make them positive or negative.

GMJ: So what does this theory have to do with the workplace?

Rath: Our relationships with people are formed by small moments -- and relationships are crucial in business. Data from the U.S. Department of Labor show that the main reason people leave their jobs is because they don't feel appreciated. A Gallup Poll shows that in the last year, 65% of people received no recognition for good work in their workplaces. So clearly, there aren't enough positive moments or interactions happening in the workplace. As a result, our economy suffers, companies suffer, and individual relationships suffer.

GMJ: What's the financial aspect of positivity?

Rath: Gallup polling has revealed that 99 out of 100 people say they want a more positive environment at work, and 9 out of 10 say they're more productive when they're around positive people. Employees who report receiving recognition and praise within the last seven days show increased productivity, get higher scores from customers, and have better safety records. They're just more engaged at work.

On the other hand, people who are actively disengaged -- employees who are not only unhappy with their own roles, but are also scaring customers off -- cost the economy between \$250 billion and \$300 billion a year. And when we add injury, illness, turnover, and other factors associated with negativity or active disengagement, the cost could be closer to a trillion dollars, and that's nearly 10% of the U.S. GDP.

GMJ: Let's say you want to boost positivity in your workplace. How do you do it?

Rath: Wanting a more positive environment isn't enough. You need to do something, and it doesn't require a great deal of effort or some huge change in the way you approach things at work. It really just requires a little bit more concentration in the moment, and I think you can start with a few building blocks and go from there.

GMJ: What would those building blocks be for managers?

Rath: Well, don't overwhelm people with positive emotion in the workplace by cutting out negative emotion. Ignoring negative things that need to be changed is destructive and does nothing to alleviate negativity. Instead, we should focus on the way we're treating other people in our brief interactions with them.

Barbara Frederickson [director of positive emotions and psychophysiology at the University of Michigan] and Marcel Losada [M.I.T. mathematician] have been looking at scoring positive exchanges. They've discovered a 3:1 ratio. When a work team has more than three positive interactions for every one negative interaction, it is significantly more likely to be productive. When the team is below that line, it's significantly less likely to be productive.

GMJ: When I was in junior high, our principal would stand in the hallway and clap at us all day. "Go team!" over and over. I'm sure he was trying to increase positivity, but it was weird and annoying.

Rath: That would be downright annoying. I would absolutely recommend against excessive positivity and optimism. Any positive emotion that you're infusing into a workplace needs to be grounded in reality. If it's not realistic, sincere, meaningful, and individualized, it won't do much good. Telling someone "great job" is not specific. Saying "great job" and "here's exactly why I appreciate your work" takes it to an entirely different level. Not only does this fill their bucket a little more, it makes them more likely to repeat that behavior.

GMJ: Does recognition received in front of the whole company do more to fill a bucket than just a kind word from the boss?

Rath: It varies from person to person. Public recognition will motivate some people but not others. That's why **the best recognition is tailored to the person who's receiving it.**

I think anyone who manages another human being or is responsible for recognition programs needs to ask questions. **Recognition is a very, very personal thing. Some people want their name in lights, and others just want a quick pat on the back.** Much of the recognition that's given at a big ceremony or awards show is not as individualized as it could be, and it's often misguided.

GMJ: Your book is really tough on Employee of the Month programs. Why?

Rath: Often, these programs start with the best of intentions. Someone in charge wants to promote more recognition in the workplace, so he starts a monthly recognition program. In the first few months, a few people who deserve recognition get it -- and even though it's not individualized, it might seem helpful. Eventually, however, the list of employees who really deserve recognition ends, and management has to figure out what to do next. So the manager puts *someone's* picture on the wall, giving recognition to an employee who doesn't deserve it. Instead, it was just his or her turn. This kind of recognition doesn't fill anybody's bucket.

Some of the better recognition programs I've seen include awards developed for different roles -- **specific awards created just for the person and the task they've accomplished. Usually, the more variation, the more individualization.**

GMJ: How should a manager handle an unpleasant conversation with someone without emptying his or her bucket?

Rath: I think it's most effective **to focus on the outcome.** Often, when a negative topic needs to be addressed in the workplace, the discussion gets personal -- it's all about an employee's *attitude*, what she *should do*, what she's done *wrong*. It just gets ugly at an emotional level, when it could have been a more positive conversation.

Another problem is that a lot of performance reviews focus on an employee's "areas for improvement" or "things you need to fix." **Managers who start the conversation by focusing on a few good things that the employee has accomplished, then moving on to areas that need improvement, set up a more positive framework.**

GMJ: What impact do managers really have on workers' positivity?

Rath: A huge impact -- usually for the good, but not always. In the book, we covered a study done in the United Kingdom about what I like to call "boss-induced hypertension." The researchers found that people who harbored real dislike for their bosses over long periods of time increased their risk of heart disease and stroke by one-third.

GMJ: So when you come home and say to your spouse, "My boss is going to be the death of me" . . .

Rath: That actually might be true.

-- Interviewed by Jennifer Robison

The Impact of Positive Leadership

How seemingly small interactions can dramatically boost your team's productivity

by Tom Rath

Coauthor of [How Full Is Your Bucket?](#) (Gallup Press, August 2004)

This could be a typical morning in the life of one of your star employees:

*Suzie walks into the office at 8:00 a.m. The affable receptionist greets her with a smile, calls her by the name she prefers ("Suzie," not "Susan"), and strikes up some small talk. **Suzie's Positive-to-Negative Ratio: Positive 1, Negative 0.***

*As Suzie rounds the corner, she notices that the elevator door is beginning to close. So she speeds up, knowing there is usually a wait for the elevator first thing in the morning. It looks like she will miss the elevator, but at the last moment, an arm shoots out and stops the door from closing. As the door reopens, Suzie thanks the unknown woman who held the elevator for her. **Suzie's Ratio: Positive 2, Negative 0.***

*A few minutes later, Suzie settles in at her desk and starts to read her e-mail. One of the first messages is from her least favorite coworker, Greg. Even before opening the message, she knows what to expect: relentless complaining. As if on cue, Greg's note starts with a one-liner about how bad traffic was coming in to work. Then he breaks into a tirade about having to "pick up the slack" for the rest of the team. "Yeah right," Suzie mutters to herself. She knows that Greg's constant negativity is the real drag on her workgroup's productivity. And reading his note is a lousy way to start her day. **Suzie's Ratio: Positive 2, Negative 1.***

*Instead of venting her frustration to others, Suzie decides to grab a cup of coffee and settle down. In the break room, she sees Amy, one of her closest friends. Amy smiles and immediately tells Suzie that she "loves the new shoes." They end up chatting for about 10 minutes, and Suzie feels much better. **Suzie's Ratio: Positive 3, Negative 1.***

Suzie loses track of time while she happily chats with Amy. But then she discovers that she's running late for her 8:30 meeting. As Suzie rushes down the hall to the conference room, she feels guilty. She is rarely, if ever, late to meetings. Suzie finally makes it to the conference room -- about seven minutes behind schedule, according to her wristwatch.

Meanwhile, you -- Suzie's boss -- are sitting in the conference room, along with five other people who report to you. Everyone else had arrived on time and was ready to go by 8:30. By the time Suzie walks in, your patience is running thin.

*The first thing Suzie does -- before even taking her seat -- is to apologize to the group for wasting their time. Then you decide to kick off the meeting by saying, "Well, now we can get started, albeit ten minutes behind schedule." This jab hits Suzie like a brick. She already felt guilty and had apologized to everyone. Your comment only exacerbated her bad feelings. **Suzie's Ratio: Positive 3, Negative 2.***

In the span of just over 30 minutes, Suzie, your best performer, had three interactions that were positive and two that were negative. Put another way, her positive-to-negative ratio, or PNR, was 3:2.

Sound good? Well, it's not good enough for her -- nor for anyone else you lead. And beware, manager: Unless you are actively working, today and every day, to make sure Suzie has more positive interactions, you may soon have a disengaged employee on your hands -- or worse, you could lose one of your best people.

"The magic ratio"

Over the past decade, scientists have explored the impact of positive-to-negative interaction ratios in our work and personal life. And they have found that this ratio can be used to predict -- with remarkable accuracy -- everything from workplace performance to divorce. This work began with noted psychologist John Gottman's exploration of positive-to-negative ratios in marriages. Using a 5:1 ratio, which Gottman dubbed "the magic ratio," he and his colleagues predicted whether 700 newlywed couples would stay together or divorce by scoring their positive and negative interactions in one 15-minute conversation between each husband and wife. Ten years later, the follow-up revealed that they had predicted divorce with 94% accuracy.

So what is the optimal positive-to-negative ratio in organizations? A recent study by psychologist Barbara Fredrickson and mathematician Marcel Losada found that work teams with a PNR greater than 3:1 were significantly more productive than workgroups that did not reach this ratio. Positive emotions, however, need to be grounded in reality: Their research also uncovered an upper limit for positive-to-negative ratios of 13:1. When workgroups exceed that PNR, things are likely to worsen; completely blind optimism can be counterproductive -- and downright annoying -- in some cases.

But managers shouldn't worry about breaking the upper limit. The levels of positive emotions in most organizations are woefully inadequate and leave substantial room for improvement.

Consider the effect your comments had when Suzie walked in late. Had you simply told her "It's OK" -- or maybe even offered a few encouraging words -- her PNR would have been a healthy 4:1. (She is a top producer who's never late -- you could have cut her some slack.) And instead of sitting through the meeting feeling guilty and disengaged, Suzie might have added a few more ideas to the discussion. Perhaps she would have inspired or praised someone else -- thereby passing her positive energy along to others. Had you decided to handle Suzie's tardiness differently, it could have had a ripple effect.

When leaders display positive emotions, others take note -- and take action. Positive leaders don't sit back and wait for things to get better on their own. Instead, as they walk around the office, make calls, or write e-mails, they are always trying to catch excellence in action. When they spot a job well done, they call attention to what is right. This in turn raises the entire organization's PNR and its productivity.

Ken, the CEO of a large organization, calls positive emotion his secret weapon as a leader. As Ken travels around the globe, he stops by his company's local offices. And he doesn't visit to spy on his employees or check in with top brass. Instead, his goal is to energize every employee in each office.

Before arriving at a location, Ken recalls the successes and achievements he has heard over the past few months involving people in that office. As soon as he arrives, Ken casually visits with these individuals and congratulates them. He may offer kudos to an employee who recently got married or had a child, or praise someone who delivered stellar customer service. His favorite line is: "I've been hearing a lot of good talk behind your back."

Ken just loves to "watch the energy move through the network" once he sets it in motion. He realizes that he can light up an entire office building with a few brief -- but very energizing --

conversations. As a result of this approach, thousands look to him for motivation and guidance.

What positive leaders accomplish

Indeed, the litmus test of a positive leader is the *esprit de corps* he creates with his troops. Positive leaders deliberately increase the flow of positive emotions within their organization. They choose to do this not just because it is a "nice" thing to do for the sake of improving morale, but because it leads to a measurable increase in performance. Studies show that organizational leaders who share positive emotions have workgroups with:

- a more positive mood
- enhanced job satisfaction
- greater engagement
- improved performance

What differentiates positive leaders from the rest? Instead of being concerned with what they can *get out of* their employees, **positive leaders search for opportunities to invest in everyone who works for them.** They view **each interaction with another person as an opportunity to increase his or her positive emotions.**

The Best Ways to Recognize Employees

Research says praise should be individualized, deserved, and specific

by Tom Rath

Coauthor of [How Full Is Your Bucket?](#) (Gallup Press, August 2004)

Do you receive too much recognition at work?

Over the past year, I have posed this question to a few hundred people. And I have yet to hear a single "yes." Not one. So it's not surprising that a recent Gallup Poll found that almost two out of three people receive *no* workplace recognition in a given year.

This underscores a recent finding from the U.S. Department of Labor that the number-one reason people leave their jobs has nothing to do with pay or promotions -- they leave because they "don't feel appreciated."

There are probably many reasons for this. Some managers seem allergic to giving recognition -- maybe they don't get praise from *their* bosses -- while others may simply prefer a "tough love" approach that equates praise with "softness."

However, it's quite possible that people do get more recognition from their managers than they report -- but perhaps it's not meaningful enough to stick in their minds and make a difference.

Think about the greatest recognition you have ever received. Let this memory play out in your mind for a moment. Did this recognition make you more positive? More productive? Did it change the way you looked at your job?

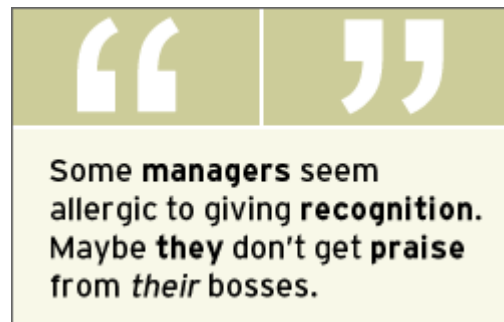
Ask the right questions

Now, think about how you recognize your employees' great work. Do you provide them with the same recognition that you like to receive? If so, *it's no wonder most of them feel underappreciated.*

According to Gallup's latest analysis of 10,000 workgroups in 30 industries, when it comes to recognition, *individualization is key*. In order for recognition to be meaningful, it must be tailored to the recipient's preferences, not the giver's preferences. Many people prefer tangible rewards or gifts, while others are more moved by words and acknowledgement. And while some people want to receive kind words in front of a crowd, others prefer a quieter, one-to-one commendation or compliment from someone they admire or respect.

Not sure how to individualize recognition? Just ask your employees questions like these:

- By what name do you like to be called?
- What are your "hot buttons" -- hobbies or interests you like to talk about a lot?
- What increases your positive emotion or "fills your bucket" the most?
- From *whom* do you most like to receive recognition or praise?



- What type of recognition or praise do you like best? Do you like public, private, written, verbal, or other kinds of recognition?
- What form of recognition motivates you the most? Do you like gift certificates, a title for winning a competition, a meaningful note or e-mail, or something else?
- What is the greatest recognition you have ever received?

In addition to being individualized, *recognition should be deserved*. Simply giving an Employee of the Month award in an attempt to energize your workplace won't cut it. Leaders and managers must ensure that recognition programs don't turn into "Whose turn is it next?" events. When this occurs, everyone usually ends up getting the award at some point -- even if they don't deserve it. Not only does this feel like a sham to the person delivering the award, but to the recipient, such recognition is about as uplifting as being picked last in gym class.

Finally, *recognition works best when it is specific*. Sure, telling someone "Great job!" might help a little, but telling him or her "That was a great job on the proposal," or better yet, "You did great work on the graphics in section three of the proposal" would mean a lot more.

So when it comes to recognizing people for accomplishments, whenever possible, try to go beyond a simple pat on the back. Not only will this have more meaning for the recipient, but it also serves to reinforce the positive action you are rewarding.

Fixing the wrong approach

Let's take a look at the difference that individualized, deserved, and specific recognition can make.

Warren, a high-performing IT project manager, had received the same type of recognition for years. Every time his team completed a major project, Warren was honored at the company's monthly awards ceremony. Someone would call his name, and when he walked up on stage -- in front of a room of applauding colleagues -- a woman from the company's human resources department would talk about "what an amazing job Warren had done" and how his "top-notch work had moved the company forward." But this had little meaning to Warren and was not a great motivator.

Even though Warren's company and the woman from HR had the best intentions, the regular recognition they provided was not individualized. For starters, Warren does not like to be up in front of a big crowd -- under any circumstances. And even though the woman in HR tried hard to shower him with praise, Warren was not exactly motivated by her fluffy descriptions of why he was receiving the award. He barely knew her.

After this scenario repeated itself a few times, Warren's manager realized this recognition did not have the desired effect. So he asked Warren a few questions and quickly learned that his star employee did not like to receive recognition in front of a crowd (even though he did want people to know about his accomplishments). What's more, he would rather receive praise from someone he admired and respected, and he preferred kudos in writing.

So the next time the opportunity arose, Warren's manager asked Jim, the company's chief information officer and a long-time mentor of Warren's, if he would write a note to Warren in recognition of his latest success. Jim wrote Warren a detailed e-mail message explaining exactly how his leadership led to this success. He explained how Warren's work added value to the company and their clients and made life easier for thousands of users. Jim also copied several of Warren's friends at work, his boss, and even his wife on the message. Then he printed a formal copy on company letterhead and had it framed for Warren.

What was Warren's reaction? He described this as the "most meaningful" recognition he had ever received. And for months, he described how this event increased his energy and productivity.

Warren's story illustrates what we see time and time again when organizations create meaningful and memorable ways of recognizing excellence. According to Gallup research, regular recognition and praise leads to:

- lower turnover
- increased engagement among colleagues
- better safety records and fewer accidents on the job
- higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers
- an increase in overall productivity

What are the keys to making this happen in your workgroup? Simply ask a few questions, listen, and remember that it just takes a little effort on your part to make recognition meaningful.

Coaching: No More Mr. Nice Guy

The most effective executive coaches offer blunt advice -- and focus relentlessly on the numbers

by Barry Conchie

To understand a big problem with executive coaching, let's start by replaying a recent conversation between a management consultant and an executive coach:

Consultant: "What does executive coaching involve?"

Executive Coach: "I get to work one-on-one with senior-level executives in different organizations."

Consultant: "Yes, but what do you actually do?"

Executive Coach: "I get paid to coach them, to sort of help them. It's difficult to describe."

Consultant: "What kind of coaching do you do?"

Executive Coach: "I try to help leaders discover themselves, to encourage them, to make them feel better about their work, to keep their spirits up. They have a tough job, and I just try to make it a little easier for them."

Consultant: "How do you know you're making a difference?"

Executive Coach: "Well, the leaders I work with say that they feel better when I help them, and they keep asking me back."

Consultant: "No, I meant, are you able to measure the difference you are making? Do major numbers shift as a result of your work? What scores do you track?"

Executive Coach: "Look, my work is far too important to reduce to numbers. I help leaders grow. If they want numbers, they should ask an accountant!"

Sadly, in the growing field of executive coaching, exchanges like this are common. A cadre of well-intentioned coaches peddles their wares in a "feel-good" market that caters to the upper echelons of corporate America. Coaches like these are able to make a healthy living by providing a "solution" to a perceived gap between senior managers' development needs and their businesses' needs. They work closely with leaders and develop strong, long-lasting relationships that endure. The problem is, the results just might not make a difference for the leaders' businesses.

My own extensive experience of working with top executives reveals that coaching that focuses on business performance is key to improvement in executive performance. The



contrast between a "feel-good" approach and one that is candid, objective, and incisive, is stark. As executives search to address their vulnerabilities by seeking out an independent voice, feel-good feedback can give them a nice emotional boost, but the results may leave them wondering whether it was worth it. For some, feeling good becomes synonymous with feeling *comfortable*.

Understand the business strategy

What sets performance coaching apart from feel-good coaching? What should leaders consider before embarking on what could be either a lifelong business-building relationship or an expensive journey toward mediocrity?

First, a productive performance coaching relationship shouldn't start with an analysis of the individual leader. Instead, it should begin with an evaluation of the leader's business goals and responsibilities. Coaches must possess more than business or market savvy. They also must grasp the specific short-term and medium-term business issues that the executive faces.

The best executive performance coaches start a coaching relationship with a careful analysis of the company's business strategy. Then, they help leaders get specific and real in translating big ideas to ground-level activity. Step-by-step, they work with executives to understand and develop the measures and numbers that must be achieved to attain significant performance outcomes.

A real-life example illustrates how this process should work. In mid-2004, an executive took over a global product development team for a multinational manufacturer. Upon assuming this new role, he said that the last thing he needed was to have his head filled with big ideas.

"I have goals to meet, and I just need help with three things," he said. "First, our overall product market is declining. I have to source and then develop new product to achieve 5% growth targets in 2005. Second, this team costs too much for its current productivity. I have to cut headcount and increase per-person productivity by at least 12%. Third, this team operates in silos, and we are missing too many cross-selling opportunities. I have goals to expand our product ratios in our top five markets from 5:1 to 3:1 by the end of the fiscal year." For this executive, improving ratios means equalizing the balance of sales between two products through better cross-selling, while continuing to grow overall revenue.

Once his leadership performance coach understood the executive's business goals, the coach could use that knowledge to push and guide him toward meeting them. In this example, deftly deploying and managing personnel would be key to his success. His coach asked questions like: Who is best to position where? Who has the talent to succeed? What do you need to communicate, and when?

The best performance coaches help leaders connect the future to the present by breaking down the steps that lead toward success. Then, they help leaders think through the implications of their decisions and actions. Coaches should help leaders anticipate and strategize by presenting alternatives, taking the contrary view, articulating the strongest points of resistance, and connecting the leader with external experiences and insights.

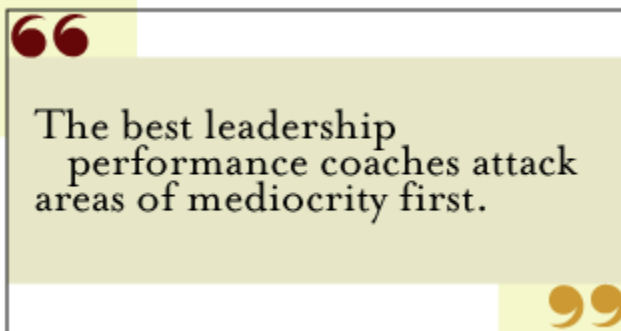
Know the leader's strengths and weaknesses

Once the performance coach has a firm grasp of the business and where it's going, the next step is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the leader and the teams with which

she works. What does she do best? What innate talents can she leverage? What blind spots might prevent success?

For example, the product development executive above was not cut out to be a slick communicator. He continually stumbled to recover from a stream of inept and ill-timed messages. He tended to over-elaborate information about upcoming meetings; when he finally sent information, it arrived too late for team members to be able to fully consider options. His poor communications threatened to undermine his efforts to meet his team's goals.

To help him overcome this problem, the performance coach had to provide clear analysis of the problem and how it could be solved. After an analysis of team strengths, the coach recommended that the executive delegate the task of handling team communications to a team member who had the most natural talent in this area.



Without insights from his performance coach, this leader would not have reached this decision on his own; in fact, he did not want to let go of the communication responsibilities. Ultimately, his coach persuaded him to make the change by focusing on the desired outcome.

"This team won't reach 12% per-person productivity growth if you keep sending unclear messages immediately before important meetings," the coach said bluntly. "You're better at setting the goals and dealing with customers; get someone else to do the communication."

It turned out to be a smart move because it liberated the leader to focus his efforts on product diversification -- an area in which he excels. In fact, a turnaround in cross-selling growth occurred after the leader delegated his communication responsibilities. Currently, with four months still remaining in his company's fiscal year, the team's product ratios are at 3:1 or better in its top five markets, with growing revenues. His team's employee engagement levels have also increased.

Challenge every assumption

Executive performance coaches who focus more on how leaders feel than on how effectively they perform rarely step into uncomfortable territory. But challenging fundamental assumptions is essential if leaders are to confront obstacles and achieve professional and business growth. Knowing what buttons to push and when requires good judgment -- but the best leadership performance coaches attack areas of mediocrity first. They challenge leaders who want to creep toward goals through incremental gain. They recognize that excellence rarely results when leaders spend too much time doing things they don't do well.

Effective leadership performance coaches drive improvement by challenging leaders to expand their scope of what is possible for the organization to achieve. They might do this by bringing in case studies and benchmarks to help the leader learn and grow. But more often, they start by challenging any assumption -- like the assumption that a 12% growth in per-person productivity is sufficient.

A great executive coach isn't a "Dr. Feelgood." Rather, he or she delivers incisive analysis and brutally honest, detached advice and feedback. Effective coaches -- the kind that really want

to help leaders and businesses grow -- use an array of tools and objective assessments to inform their advice. They operate close to the edge of executive tolerance, knowing how far and to what extent to push for change. And they measure their success not by how good they make executives feel, but by how far each leader moves the numbers.

The Basics of Mentoring

Six steps to building successful developmental relationships

by Donald O. Clifton

Not every person wants to be a mentor. Many have the talent to be effective mentors, but in many cases the "match" makes the difference for success. Leaders who want to develop their organizations or constituencies need to implement the basics of mentoring. Most people in leadership positions already have a mentor and probably are mentoring someone.

For leaders who are interested in developing the people in their organization, and I believe that all leaders should be interested, mentoring can be a very effective process. Many organizational developers believe that talent develops best in response to another human being. I agree. Developmental responses to another person may be described in terms of relationships, and for the purpose of this article, mentoring is defined as building a developmental relationship. By matching two people who have highly correlated beliefs and attitudes, the likelihood of success is greatly improved.

This article is based on 30 years of selection and survey research, seminars, and focus groups. Seventy-eight seminar discussions have been held over that time, in which over 800 persons identified as leaders who had mentors, were mentoring, or both, contributed ideas. The survey involved a national sample of 800 adults who were chosen because they were judged to be effective mentors and because they also claimed that their mentoring was successful. Focus groups were conducted with both mentors and mentees.

There are at least six basics of mentoring on which leaders agree:

1. **Mentoring is building a relationship.** As one mentor put it, "Nothing happens until the mentee looks forward to seeing you."
2. **The mentor must believe that he or she has something important to offer to the right person.** All agreed that the mentor should be a role model for the mentee, and help the mentee know the right things to do.
3. **The mentor must express genuine caring to the mentee.** Mentors said, "You must tell the mentee that you care about her or him."
4. **Discussing and helping develop goals were rated as essential to facilitating the mentee's growth.**
5. **The mentor should listen to whatever the mentee wants to talk about.**
6. **The mentor should do all the things he or she can to develop trust with the mentee.**

Does it seem a bit pie-in-the-sky that one person can naturally express these six basics? While such behavior is to be greatly admired, there are people who resonate to doing these things because of their talents -- recurring patterns of thought, feeling and behavior that can be productively applied -- in five specific areas, or themes:

1. **Belief.** Mentors high in the Belief theme value facilitating the growth of another person. They take a satisfaction from seeing another person's success, specifically individuals with whom they have a relationship.
2. **Arranger.** Mentors strong in the Arranger theme resonate to setting others up for success. They can design growth experiences for others by helping them have the materials and equipment they need or by teaming with others who have complementary talents.
3. **Self-Assurance.** Mentors high in the Self-Assurance theme have the inner strength to know that they have something to offer to their mentee, can help them know the right things to do, and can be a role model for them.
4. **Developer.** The developer not only knows that building a relationship with a person is essential to his or her growth, but actually takes satisfaction from helping the individual grow and resonates with the building of the relationship.
5. **Relator.** Mentors high in the Relator theme care enough to do things with the mentee for the mentee's own good. As the relationship develops, the mentor recognizes what is confidential to the relationship and then is absolute in maintaining that confidence. At the highest level of relationship, the mentor shares confidences and risks with the mentee. Trust grows.

Mentors who are particularly talented in these themes not only practice the basics, they enjoy expressing their mentoring talents. The results? The mentors keep mentoring. The mentees keep growing. According to Gallup's research with more than 1 million people in the workplace, mentoring can fulfill the conditions that lead to profitability, retention, revenue, and work satisfaction. It does this by ensuring that each employee has someone who is interested in his or her development and cares about him or her as an individual.

The Seven Demands of Leadership

What separates great leaders from all the rest?

by Barry Conchie

Who wants to follow someone who's going nowhere? Or someone who's unreliable or untrustworthy? Organizations wrestle with these questions and many others as they confront the elusive challenge of defining effective leadership.

Most people are certain that leadership is about direction, about giving people a sense of purpose that inspires and motivates them to commit and achieve. Leadership is also about a relationship between people -- leaders and followers -- that is built on firm ground; enduring values build trust. Few would disagree with these views.

Not everyone, however, offers the same answer to this question: What's the best way to develop talented leaders to achieve sustained high performance? Indeed, Gallup Organization researchers have long been intrigued with this question. Having studied leadership talent for more than 40 years, Gallup set out to discover the demands that leaders must meet to be successful. We also wanted to uncover the developmental framework that would enhance leadership performance.



Our research confirmed the importance of two rather obvious demands -- visioning and maximizing values. What was surprising was the presence of five other important demands that are essential to the development of all great leaders.

The research

First, a few words about how we arrived at these demands. Our study drew from a wide cross section of leaders who had a proven track record of success; we had evidence that they all delivered the goods. They were measurably the best when compared to others in similar roles. Their performance could be tracked to significant improvements to the bottom line. They enjoyed the endorsement of their bosses, peers, and direct reports. And they sustained high performance, often through adverse times.

For our initial leadership-development research, we identified and studied 100 leaders. They were drawn from general management, human resources, marketing, sales, manufacturing, research and development, and finance. They represented distinct levels of hierarchy, from managers to directors to vice presidents and senior executives. They had all faced significant demands that built and developed their leadership talent. Indeed, it was in researching this group that we uncovered the seven key demands that every leader must meet to achieve high performance.

We then expanded our study to include an additional 5,019 leaders from a wide range of industries and sectors, including education, healthcare, the military, government, finance, insurance, and retail. Our analysis directly linked those leaders who developed their talents by encountering the seven demands to significant improvements in their overall leadership performance. Their companies achieved specific business outcomes such as financial growth, customer and employee engagement, employee retention, and safety. Our continued tracking of more than 40,000 leaders continues to affirm these findings.

The demands

It's no great surprise that *visioning* is one of the seven demands. Successful leaders are able to look out, across, and beyond the organization. They have a talent for seeing and creating the future. They use highly visual language that paints pictures of the future for those they lead. As a result, they seem to attain bigger goals because they create a collective mindset that propels people to help them make their vision a reality.

These leaders also recognize that through visioning, they showcase their *values* and core beliefs. By highlighting what is important about work, great leaders make clear what is important to them in life. They clarify how their own values -- particularly a concern for people -- relate to their work. They also communicate a sense of personal integrity and a commitment to act based on their values.

As a result, employees know where they stand with these leaders. Their values -- consistent and unchanging through time -- operate like a buoy anchored in the ocean, holding firm against the elements while indicating the way.

By galvanizing people with a clear vision and strong values, the leaders we studied were able to challenge their teams to achieve significant work goals. In fact, those leaders themselves had been assigned significant *challenging experiences* at key points in their careers while being given the freedom to determine how they would achieve outcomes.

Confronting challenges produces beneficial effects for leaders. It accelerates their learning curve, stretches their capacity for high performance, and broadens their horizons about what is possible for an organization to achieve. As one of the leaders we studied said, "Our company had experienced three cycles of negative revenue growth, but I knew that our next cycle would give us the opportunity to turn in our best figures ever. Everyone thought I was crazy, but we did it, then did it again."

But great leaders aren't simply hard charging and highly driven. They also understand the importance of personal relationships. Indeed, the leaders we studied consistently had a close relationship either with their manager or someone in the best position to advise them. This is often someone from outside their organization who serves as their *mentor*. These mentoring relationships are not the product of formal company-wide mentoring programs -- not that these aren't helpful. Instead, these informal, yet successful, mentoring relationships enable each individual leader's needs and differences to be taken into account.

Inspired by their positive experiences with mentors, the leaders we studied have become intentional mentors themselves. They selectively pick one, two, or three highly talented individuals and invest greatly in their growth and development over a significant period of time. They see the success of these "mentees" as a reflection of their own success. These leaders practice a form of succession planning that cultivates the next generation of leaders.

Beyond close one-to-one relationships, leaders also create rapport at many levels across their organization and beyond. They know the benefits of *building a wide constituency*. One leader said, "My work forces me to have a relationship with certain people. I just think about those I don't yet work with and figure out who might be useful to know. I nearly always find

that relationships built this way bring dividends." These leaders understand networks and the importance of networking.

In all their relationships, effective leaders enlighten others because they can ***make sense of experience***. They also learn from their mistakes and their successes, and -- as they seek out a range of experts across their wide constituency -- they ask questions and listen.

What's more, these leaders are able to deal with the complexity of business life and help those around them make sense of it. They do this by keeping things simple and making information accessible. This way, these leaders help individuals understand what's going on so that they are better able to achieve success. As one leader put it, "There's so much happening that affects our work. I make sure, at each meeting, that we understand all the important factors and ensure that the next steps are clearly laid out."

The most revealing discovery was that effective leaders have an acute sense of their own strengths and weaknesses. They ***know who they are*** -- and who they are *not*. They don't try to be all things to all people. Their personalities and behaviors are indistinguishable between work and home. They are genuine. It is this absence of pretense that helps them connect to others so well.

Organizations are struggling to build and grow their leadership capacity. Our research suggests that talented leaders require the very best development experiences to realize their potential. And for this potential to be converted into sustained, high organizational performance, these experiences must be framed around the seven key demands of leadership.

Shaping Leadership Development: Key Questions

Visioning

- Who contributes to, controls, or communicates the "big picture"?
- Are leaders encouraged to "paint pictures" of the future?
- What opportunities do leaders have to talk about and shape the future?

Maximizing Values

- How do corporate values align with individual values?
- Are leaders encouraged to lead with their values?
- Are leaders asked to describe the values that are important to them?

Challenging Experience

- Are leaders free to think outside of conventional approaches?
- How much latitude are leaders afforded in decision making?
- Are leaders given significant responsibilities with wide-ranging delegation?

Mentoring

- Is value attached to mentoring outside of the organization?
- Are leaders expected to accelerate highly talented individuals through the organization to their optimum levels of performance?

Building a Constituency

- Are leaders expected to grow networks beyond their immediate work relationships?
- Does your organization promote the growth of networks through measuring their business impact?

Making Sense of Experience

- Are leaders able to meet with peers to share understanding and learning of new issues?
- Is there a clear leadership focus on "lean" communication?

Knowing Self

- Is every leader clear about his or her strengths and weaknesses?
- Does your organization sponsor individualism in leadership through role models?

Leadership Discussion Questions

by Curt W. Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina
 Authors of [Follow This Path](#) (Warner Books, 2002)

Leadership

What will you do in the next two years to lead your team to revenue and profit growth? How will it be significantly different from what you've done in the last two years? (Roundtable discussion)

What is your communication strategy as a leader? What are your communication beliefs?

What are the strengths of our company's leadership team?

What are the strengths of the team that you manage?

What is your mission? (Roundtable discussion)

How have you evolved as a leader in the last five years? What insights have you gained about your talents and strengths? What are the greatest lessons you've learned as a leader -- lessons that spur the profitable growth of your company?

Who are the emerging leaders who could succeed you in your role some day? (Roundtable discussion)

Who are the disciples of your vision?

As a leader, talk about your views on community involvement. What opportunities have you chosen to participate in, and what opportunities have you turned down? What opportunities led to your company's sustainable growth? (Roundtable discussion)

If you could teach one thing about "leadership that drives growth" to a group of new employees, what would it be?

What are your values or beliefs about balancing work and home life? How do we integrate these into our corporate culture around the world?

What talents or strengths do you rely on most in your daily life as a leader?

How do you align individuals' expectations with your organizational or team strategy?

When selecting someone to join your team, what talents or qualities will you not live without?

When hiring, what are some absolutes in your decision?

Think about the individuals on your team. What is your philosophy and strategy for horizontal development (growth within a role) versus vertical development (growth out of a role and into another or to higher levels of responsibility) for these employees?

Do you help people get what they want, or do you help them get what is right for them?

Do you enjoy taking risks? Talk about a risk you've taken in your leadership position. How does this risk relate to the growth potential of your company? (Roundtable discussion)

What is your greatest personal satisfaction?

What makes you passionate about your company? About your role or work? How can you use your passion to drive corporate growth? How can your colleagues use their passion to drive growth?

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Leadership Discussion Questions

by Curt W. Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina
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Finance

What should our company do with \$100 million in cash?

When, if ever, do we lower a price to win a bid or a customer?

What are the real incentives for your most productive employees? How can you increase the emotional value of these incentives?

What are the real incentives for your most profitable customers? How can you increase the emotional value of the incentives?

What are your thoughts about implementing pay-for-production or pay-for-performance plans in countries where pay customs or regulations are different?

What would you think about paying a half a dozen "rock stars" -- our highest-producing or highest-profile employees -- \$1 million each?

What are your feelings about stock options? Do you understand them?

What is our company's responsibility for funding benefit plans? How much funding should we provide?

What is the right percentage of pre-tax profit for our company? Why?

What is our company's responsibility for funding retirement plans? How much funding should we provide?

What is your definition of "wealthy"? Write it down, and share it with the group. (Roundtable discussion)

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Strategy

What vision do you believe our executive leadership communicates for our company? Is it a vision based on real, sustainable growth?

Fill in the blank: "I can't imagine a world without [person's name]."

Name three employees (not at the table) whom we all need to assure we have "emotional insurance policies." (Roundtable discussion)

Who are your most profitable customers? What makes them return and buy more from your company? What is present in their emotional memory that makes them feel passionate about your company?

Who are your most productive employees? What makes them stay and be more productive? What is present in their emotional memory that propels them to even higher performance levels?

What kind of clients or customers do we want more of, and why?

How can we -- as individuals, teams, and as a company -- attract more profitable customers? How can we retain our most profitable customers?

How can we -- as individuals, teams, and as a company -- build stronger emotional bonds with our most profitable customers?

How can we attract high-performing employees?

How can we retain our most productive employees? How can we build stronger emotional bonds with them?

Now think about the future. How will our company's customers change? What will they want from us in the future that will be different from what they want today?

How much "face time" have you had with clients or customers in the last year? Do you want more, or less? In what capacity?

How much time should corporate leaders spend with our clients or customers?

How much should we involve our clients or customers in new product development? More than we currently do? Less?

What are the greatest challenges you face? What are the challenges facing your team?

How will positions within your area of expertise change within the next three years? The next five years? The next 10 years? Reflect on your answer for a few moments, and then ask two other people to share their responses with you.

How do you actively attract and recruit the best potential employees to our company?
(Roundtable discussion)

How do we create an ongoing recruitment process to attract and retain the most talented employees for our company's future?

What are the greatest challenges facing our company?

Please describe your vision for our company. What does this vision look like for our customers?

What structure or organization needs to be in place to make this vision a reality, domestically or internationally? What are your strategic priorities for realigning resources for this company?

Now think about our company's competitors. Who is our competition? What are their strengths? What have been their successes? What can we learn from them? What should we do differently from them? Do we have global competitors?

Do you feel that our objective performance measurement data is tied to key business outcomes?

List the roles that are key to our company's success in the future. What are the characteristics of the top-performing people in these roles?

What does it take to be successful at our company? (Roundtable discussion)

What is the one thing about our company that you would like to change in the next year?
What is the one thing about our company that you hope will never change?

Where do untapped opportunities lie within the organization?

What are our company's shortcomings? Are they something that can be ignored, or do they need to be fixed?

What do you do to stretch communication across the company and around the world?

What are our best-run departments, divisions, or product/service lines? Can their strengths be transferred to other departments, divisions, or product/ service lines? Please explain.
(Roundtable discussion)

How does our company's culture affect how people perform? Are there positive effects?
Negative effects?

Do we have enough of the "right people" to achieve our business goals? Where do we fall short? Do we have talented individuals whose strengths are under-used?

Do you believe that people are valued and developed within our company's culture? What managers or departments are best at this? What managers or departments could do better?

How is our company culture evolving? Please describe the changes you see. What factors are driving this change?

How do you see finance, operations, human resources, and marketing working as a team to build stronger emotional bonds with customers and employees?

How can we align the performance of products, services, systems, processes, and engaged employees? How can we streamline our delivery system to enhance the emotional experience for our most profitable customers?

What are the first words that come to your mind that describe our company's culture? Does this vary between departments or divisions? Around the world? (Roundtable discussion)

Which of our products or services are your favorite, and why? Which products or services, in your opinion, have the brightest future? Which products have more potential in our country? Which have the most potential outside our country?

What are the strengths of your division or area of responsibility?

What are our company's strengths domestically? What are our strengths internationally?

Do you believe we have a strategy for all of our accounts or customers?

What are the linkages between our clients' or customers' business strategies and our business strategy, products, and services?

Which sales strategies succeeded in winning our best new clients or customers in the past year? What specifically did we do that moved them to commit or purchase? What plans do we have in place to replicate that success in the coming year? What plans need to be developed and implemented?

What marketing strategies are netting us the most new customers?

What moves people to buy? How do we move them to commit?

What is our strategy for research and development? How do we prioritize the work that nets us the most gain in brand recognition or visibility and corporate profit?

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Leadership Discussion Questions

by Curt W. Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina
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Workplace

Item 1: Expectations

- What are your expectations of yourself? What do others expect of you? (Roundtable discussion)
- How do you use expectations to drive the performance of the people you manage? How do you know when to raise or lower the bar?
- Talk about your three best employees and what you expect of them. Does their pay plan complement or reinforce those expectations?
- How do you use your strengths to meet your own expectations? (Roundtable discussion)

Item 2: Materials and equipment

- Discuss your beliefs on "status items" at work. For example, how important are perks to you? How important are perks to other employees in our company? Are we too frugal in giving out perks? Are we too generous? How do we communicate our philosophy on perks and spending to our employees? (Roundtable discussion)
- How often do you review equipment needs with your employees? Do you tie their requests to measurable performance outcomes?
- Do you encourage your employees to think about equipment improvements that could enhance their productivity, the productivity of their department, or the company?

Item 3: What I do best

- Choose three group members and tell them what they do best.
- What do you do best? How do you use your talents and strengths to do what you do best? What prevents you from doing what you do best? How can we help you focus on your strengths?
- What are your priorities? How do you prioritize what you do best while ensuring that someone is accountable for what you can't do? What are some things you've put on the back burner?
- How does our company's growth -- or lack of growth -- affect your opportunities to do what you do best?
- Which individuals in our company seem to have the opportunity to do what they do best every day?

Item 4: Recognition or praise

- What is the best recognition you've ever received?
- What commitment can you make to increase recognition? What plan should we put in place to increase how we recognize employees formally or informally?
- Think about the people who are gathered here today. Which two people have helped you achieve a goal or have helped you grow? Recognize their contributions by sharing them with the group.
- How often do you recognize individuals outside your department or team? What plan can you put in place to recognize individuals like these regularly??
- What are your beliefs about recognition? How do you act on them? (Roundtable discussion)
- What are the most creative recognition ideas that you have read, seen, or heard about? What is the best recognition you've given or the best recognition event you've coordinated?
- Which groups within our company are the best at giving recognition? Which groups need help?
- How much bigger should recognition be? Would spending more on recognition help us increase employee retention and per-person productivity? What events or activities for clients or customers, vendors or suppliers, or employees could we dream up that would recognize what they contribute to our company?
- Are there times that you're better at giving recognition than others?

Item 5: Someone cares about me

- As a leader, how do you demonstrate or show that you care? How far does your "caring leadership" reach? How do those who don't work directly with you know that you care? What formal systems or plans are needed so that every employee in our company knows that we care?
- How do we ensure that every workgroup has a caring environment and a manager who cares?
- How do you know when someone needs more attention or caring? Give a specific example.
- When do you/we back a person to the hilt, even in times of weakness or wear-down?
- How do we keep a caring environment as we grow?

Item 6: Development

- What development do you need to excel as a leader or manager? What do you need from members of this group to aid in your development? (Roundtable discussion)
- What are your plans your own growth and development over the next year? List the people who help you think about your future and push you to greatness.

- Who has been your best mentor or supporter?
- How do you measure or describe your own development? How do you define development?
- Who are you developing to be a leader in the company? (Roundtable discussion)
- Who are the three people at our company, outside this group, that you spend the most time mentoring, guiding, and directing?
- Whose development have you delegated to others? Who have you paired with a mentor?
- What are the benefits of a formal mentor program?
- Which teams or groups are best at helping people grow and develop?

Item 7: My opinions count

- How do you manage your constituency's opinions while leading with yours?
- As a leader, what do you do to encourage employees to express their opinions?
- How good are we at listening to our clients or customers? Do they feel like their opinions are heard?
- How do we ensure that we encourage people to express informed opinions?
- Are you seen as an open person who will listen to anyone, or are you seen as a person who has strong beliefs who is unwilling to listen to others? How open are you to the opinions of others? (Roundtable discussion)
- Do you ever suppress opinions? When and why?
- Who is someone you admire for their ability to listen to controversial opinions and manage them?
- What systems or activities should be put in place for hearing employee opinions?
- How can we ensure that we are open with each other about ideas and issues?
- Which teams seem best at listening to team members' opinions? Who in the company is best at listening to the opinions of others?

Item 8: Mission or purpose

- What is this company's purpose in the world?
- What is the greatest impact this company has made on the world to date?
- What values or beliefs are important in creating sustainability?
- How will you communicate your mission in the coming year?
- How do we help communicate our corporate mission outside the company?

- What is your greatest contribution?
- How do you create opportunities to communicate and discuss mission?
- How is mission important in our workplace culture?
- Do we consider a strong mission to be an important trait in hiring new associates?
- How can we communicate what we have contributed to the world? What success stories can we tell?
- Which groups seem to be the most mission-oriented?

Item 9: Quality work

- How do we define quality at our company? What drives quality at our company?
- What needs to be changed or improved within your department or division to increase quality service to our clients or customers?
- How do you encourage quality performance from others in our company?
- How do you use our employee feedback measures?
- How do you regularly communicate the importance of value and quality service to the people you lead or manage?
- What ideas have you read, seen, or heard about quality service that we should consider implementing?

Item 10: Best friend

- In your opinion, what makes a best friend?
- Who are your best friends outside of work? How long have you know them? What are your common bonds? How do you stay in touch? (Roundtable discussion)
- What guidelines or promises should we make to each other to maintain trust?
- How do you help others create lasting friendships and bonds within our company?
- Think about a situation in which two or more people were disagreed about something important to them. How did you help bring them together?
- Which groups seem to have the most "best friends"?

Item 11: Progress

- Are you diligent about talking with your employees about their progress? Tell us what you do and how you do it. (Roundtable discussion)
- What measurements do you use to track your progress? The progress of your employees? (Roundtable discussion)
- How do you feel about your own performance over the last year? Over the last three years? How often do you want your performance reviewed? Who else do you want to be aware of your progress/achievements? (Roundtable discussion)
- How often should strengths coaching be done in conjunction with performance reviews?
- Do you combine performance reviews with salary reviews, or do you do review them separately?
- What do you believe is your greatest achievement at our company? How has your progress as an employee influenced the company's progress?
- Who are your greatest partners? Who helps you drive performance?
- How do we make performance a tried-and-true value in our organization?
- Which managers in our company seem to do the best job at talking with their employees about their progress?

Item 12: Learn and grow

- In your career, what have been your best opportunities for growth? (Roundtable discussion)
- Are "learning" and "growth" different?
- What are our "best practices" for learning?
- What are our "best practices" for stretching an individual's growth? How can we balance encouraging high productivity for new employees while pacing individual development?
- Which is more likely to increase learning: a winning moment with reflection and recognition, or a classroom training experience? Which is more likely to aid in development?
- Describe your philosophy on learning.
- Describe the systems you've implemented to enhance learning.
- Describe how you individualize learning.
- Which groups in our company seem to have the most opportunities at work to learn and grow?
- What are the best ways our company can use online learning or e-learning?

- Are there competencies that do need to be "trained in" at our company?

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Power from Empowerment

A good way to think of leadership is the process of *freeing* your team members to do the best work they possibly can. I have followed NBA basketball coach Phil Jackson's career.

Like Phil Jackson who moved from the record setting Chicago Bulls to the Los Angeles Lakers. Jackson says his principal task is creating an environment in which his players can *flourish*. In communicating with his championship teams, Jackson convinced them that they had the talent to win championships, and that the main goal of the coach was going to be freeing them to use that talent.

Today's business team members, say they want, more than anything else, the autonomy to do their jobs without the boss's interference. In the new century, it's already clear that the CEOs of our best-run companies believe that the more power leaders have, the less they should use.

The job of the team leader is to set a mission, decide upon a strategic direction, achieve the necessary cooperation, delegate authority --- and then let people innovate. To do that we all could take a hint from the late football coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant. Before his retirement as one of the leading coaches in college football history at Alabama, Bryant observed:

I'm just a plowhand from Arkansas, but I've learned how to put and hold a team together. I've learned how to lift some individuals up and how to calm others down, until finally they've got one heartbeat together, as a team. To do that, there's just three things I'd ever have to say: If anything went wrong, I did it. If it went semi-good, then we did it. If anything went real good, then you did it! That's really all it takes to get other people to win for you.

The key to authentic leadership is to listen to your followers, and then open the door for them to lead themselves. The secret is empowerment. The main incentive is genuine caring and recognition.

The five most important words a leader can speak are: "I am proud of you."

The four most important are: "What is your opinion??"

The three most important are: "If you please."

The two most important are: "Thank You."

And the most important single word of all is: "You!"

Constructive Criticism

Most people are very tense about giving discipline or what is often called, "Constructive criticism." However you can make it a low stress occasion by focusing on the behavior and the performance rather than on the person. This requires that you report what you see, rather than what you feel, or your interpretation of events.

Focus On The Behavior

For example, a person comes back from a luncheon two hours late. Instead of getting angry with the person, you could say, "I see that you took more than two hours for lunch today. This causes us some disruption in the office because of the work that doesn't get done. Is there a reason this long lunch?"

In other words, what you are doing is reporting on the individual's behavior and leaving the door open for a variety of interpretations or explanations. The individual may have had a car accident or a medical appointment or a family emergency.

Think About The Future

One of the best ways to deal with poor performance is to focus on the future over the past. Instead of becoming angry over what has already happened, or not happened, you should explain clearly to the individual what you want to see done differently. Get agreement from the individual that the job will be done differently in the future. Agree to meet on a regular basis to review progress.

Build Self Esteem

Always end a disciplinary interview with an expression of faith and confidence in the individual. Always do everything possible to preserve the individual's self-esteem and self-image. End the conversation with a positive statement that causes the person to go back to work feeling better about himself or herself.

Aim At Improved Performance

Remember, the only purpose of a session of constructive criticism is to improve performance. If you lose sight of that and instead you attack or criticize the other person, his or her performance will not improve. In fact, if you criticize a person too often, the individual will stop doing that job altogether. Their performance will deteriorate and they will become less and less willing to contribute to the goals of the company.

Action Exercises

First, always criticize or correct a person in private. When someone has made a mistake or done a poor job, arrange to see them alone, explain your concerns and ask for their explanation - before you say anything.

Second, no matter what has happened, always focus on the future over the past. Focus on what can be done now rather than what has already happened. Focus on what the person should do next time rather than the mistake that has already been made.

Communication/Persuasion Tips

- Better understated than overstated. Let people be surprised that it was more than you promised and easier than you said.
- For effective communication, use brevity. Jesus said, "Follow me." Now that's brief! He could be brief because of all that he was that he didn't have to say.
- You cannot speak that which you do not know. You cannot share that which you do not feel. You cannot translate that which you do not have. And you cannot give that which you do not possess. To give it and to share it, and for it to be effective, you first need to have it. Good communication starts with good preparation.
- The goal of effective communication should be for listeners to say, "Me, too!" verses "So what?"
- Learn to express, not impress.
- Be brief on the logic and reason portion of your presentation. There are probably about a thousand facts about an automobile, but you don't need them all to make a decision. About a half dozen will do.
- Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know.
- What is powerful is when what you say is just the tip of the iceberg of what you know.
- It's not the matter you cover so much as it is the manner in which you cover it.

Maximum Productivity

By re-energizing and renewing yourself frequently, you will avoid burnout and become much more motivated and productive. Don't keep your nose to the grindstone for years and wait for retirement to travel. Balance and consistency are the keys. Enjoy the process, not just the result. Don't fight the passing of time. Don't fear it, squander it, or try to hide from it under a superficial cosmetic veil of fads and indulgences. Life and time go together. Do enjoy each phase of life. Do make the most of each day, and draw maximum joy from each moment.

Many people today are concerned with quality time – time generally defined in part as that spent on recreation, personal pursuits, time with children, spouses and friends. While I certainly believe quality time is important, I believe two other aspects of time are equally important.

First, one must also spend quantity time. The average father spends less than 30 minutes each week in direct one-on-one communication with each of his children. How can we possibly expect good family relationships with so little communication?

Second, one must spend regular time. Many supervisors and company presidents go for weeks, even months, without seeing many of their employees. There's no substitute for regular meetings and open forums in which managers and team members can share ideas.

Time has a dual structure. On one hand, we live our daily routines meeting present contingencies as they arise. On the other hand, our most ambitious goals and desires need time so that they can be assembled and cemented. A long-term goal connects pieces of time into one block. These blocks can be imagined and projected into the future as we do when we set goals for ourselves. Or, these blocks of time can be created in retrospect as we do when we look back at what we've accomplished.

It's not in the image of our big dreams that we run the risk of losing our focus and motivation. It's the drudgery and routine of our daily lives that present the greatest danger to our hopes for achievement. Good time management means that you maximize the daily return on the energy and mental effort you expend.

Ways to maximize your time productivity:

- Write down in one place all the important contacts you have and all of your goals and priorities. Make a back up copy, preferably on CD, DVD or Zip disc. Write down every commitment you make at the time you make it.
- Stop wasting the first hour of your workday. Having the chat and first cup of coffee, reading the paper, and socializing are the three costliest opening exercises that lower productivity.
- Do one thing well at a time. It takes time to start and stop work on each activity. Stay with a task until it is completed.
- Don't open unimportant mail. More than a fourth of the mail you receive can be tossed before you open or read it, and that includes e-mail.
- Handle each piece of paper only once and never more than twice. Don't set aside anything without taking action. Carry work, reading material, audiotapes and your laptop computer with you everywhere you go. Convert down time into uplink time.
- Spend twenty minutes at the beginning of each week and ten minutes at the beginning of each day planning your to do list.
- Set aside personal relaxation time during the day. Don't work during lunch. It's neither noble nor nutritional to skip important energy input and stress-relieving time. Throughout the day,

ask yourself, "What's the best use of my time right now?" As the day grows short, focus on projects you can least afford to leave undone.

- And as we said at the beginning of this message, take vacations often, mini-vacations of two or three days, and leave your work at home. The harder you work, the more you need to balance your exercise and leisure time.

Action Idea: Plan a relaxing 3-day vacation within the next three months without taking any business work with you. Reserve it on your calendar this week.

Building Your "Bench Strength"

Practical guidelines for designing an effective succession management process

by Guido M.J. de Koning

Selecting and developing future leaders is critical. Yet most organizations apply little or no rigor to identifying and grooming their top players. This article discusses how to change that.

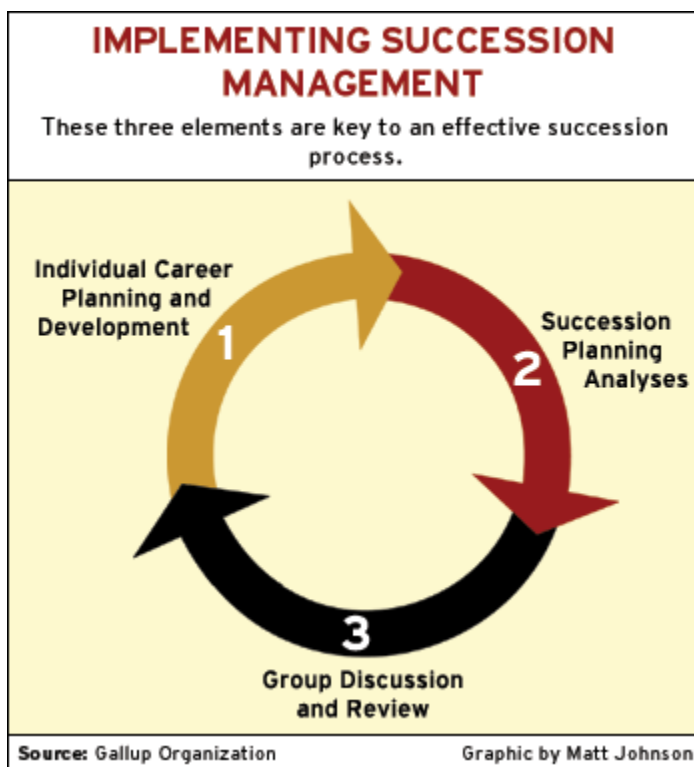
As noted in the first article in this two-part series, there are three fundamental requirements for effective succession management. Companies that have an effective succession management process:

- quickly anticipate and fill succession gaps
- identify employees with high management potential and actively plan their careers and development to build "bench strength"
- align their people strategy with their business strategy

Only a few companies perform these activities consistently well. When you study these organizations, their practices are impressive and insightful. But how do they implement those practices? And how can you make a similar approach work in your own organization?

There are three elements you need to manage effectively:

- First, make sure the organization understands and nurtures each employee's unique talents and potential through individual career planning and development activities. Best-practice organizations don't leave leadership development to chance; they actively drive a potential leader's growth and development.
- Second, aggregate and evaluate the organization's talent pool to identify potential leadership gaps and suitable candidates.
- Third, ensure that executives make the necessary succession and development decisions through group discussion and review sessions so that the talent requirements of the business are met.



These elements form the architecture of an effective succession management process. This article will discuss each element of the process and provide specific guidelines on how to implement them effectively.

Individual career planning and development

This phase of the process takes place primarily between an employee and his or her manager. Its purpose is to connect the two so the right decisions are made about the employee's career and so the manager can provide needed coaching and support. This phase entails:

- **Promoting an ongoing dialogue.** The best way to begin the development process is by talking with an employee about her successes, strengths, needs, and aspirations. In most organizations, though, managers don't have these discussions with employees regularly, if at all. All too often, an employee learns that the company has decided it's time for her to move into a different role, yet she's never even talked about this kind of opportunity with anyone. Naturally, this increases the likelihood that the new position is not at all in line with her talents or aspirations.

Best-practice organizations, in contrast, are intentional about initiating development discussions. For instance, several companies use a performance review process that focuses less on a traditional appraisal and more on a developmental conversation. Some call it a *discovery interview*; others refer to it as a *discussion guide*. These organizations are increasing the frequency of the discussions as well, with sessions on at least a quarterly basis.

- **Avoiding the Peter Principle.** Named after Laurence Johnston Peter, the Peter Principle states that in a hierarchy, employees tend to rise to their level of incompetence. And employees will continue to do so if the main criterion for promoting them into a new role is how well they've done in their current role.

Too many companies reward excellent performance by promoting a person out of the very role in which he or she has excelled. Whenever possible, organizations should promote top performers *within* their roles by stretching their goals, expanding their responsibilities, or providing them with challenging assignments. This encourages them to develop their talents into real strengths, deepening their abilities and enhancing their performance. This strategy promotes world-class performance in every role. (See "Giving Them What They Deserve" in the "See Also" area on this page.)

A manufacturing company implemented this practice by creating five ascending levels for its sales representatives. A junior account rep could be promoted five times while remaining within the sales rep role -- and retire as one of the company's best rewarded top performers.

A healthcare organization divided a previously homogenous nursing function into three levels. The third level carried the most prestigious title and managed the most challenging, complex cases -- cases only the best nurses would be able to manage. This provided well-deserved recognition as well as a new challenge to the top nurses, and it offered a career growth path for all others.

Encouraging employees to grow within their roles does not necessarily mean an end to traditional, hierarchical promotions. High-performing employees with leadership potential and aspirations should expect to grow into more senior positions -- fast. Promoting future executives into positions with more challenging responsibilities is a great way to develop them. To grow, they need a variety of experiences, including meeting a range of challenges while working in different areas of your business and for different managers. To avoid the Peter Principle, however, organizations should diligently assess employees' talents, capabilities, and fit for the *new* role, not just how they perform in their current role.

- **Instilling a coaching culture.** Development must be ongoing, not a once-a-year event. It needs to be ingrained into organizational culture, and employees at all levels should expect informal coaching, mentoring, and ongoing feedback. Some companies foster such a culture by introducing "career boards" or encouraging mentor relationships between proven leaders and employees with leadership potential. Others have instituted an effective induction practice that helps managers and employees clarify expectations and build their relationship as employees take on new roles. Again, a well-thought-out discovery interview or discussion guide can provide structure to this process.

Building Your "Bench Strength" (Part 2)

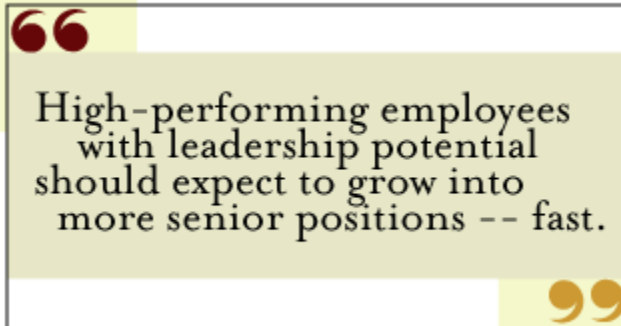
Practical guidelines for designing an effective succession management process

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Succession planning analyses

With today's software capabilities, many organizations put their succession management systems online. They make their associates responsible for maintaining their own succession profile and encourage managers to search the online talent pool for potential candidates. These systems also make the process more open and transparent. In one company, for example, employees can see the exact positions for which they could be considered. This level of transparency isn't appropriate in every organization, but it benefits those that can provide it.

Some organizations use software systems to analyze their demographic balance and identify gaps in the succession pool. These systems allow the human resources team to fine-tune their hiring plans. Another important method is mapping various team members against a performance and potential axis. These are common and necessary tools that are used for discussion in the staffing review process.



“High-performing employees with leadership potential should expect to grow into more senior positions -- fast.”

Group discussion and review

Every leadership team should periodically discuss the talent and performance levels in its organization. (See "Evaluating Employee Performance [Part 2]" in the "See Also" area on this page.) Group discussions or staffing reviews are an effective way to create accountability and plan for succession management.

In the review sessions, a leadership team discusses employee performance and the strengths, values, unique capabilities, and growth potential of the employees on the teams that report to them. The review process usually starts at the top, actively driven by the CEO. The leadership team then takes it to the next level in the organization as the process cascades toward middle, and sometimes even front-line, management levels, as it does at IBM, for instance. GE has practiced staffing or talent reviews rigorously for years, and a growing number of leading organizations are adopting the practice.

Here are a few key reasons why your organization should consider making staffing reviews a required element of its succession management process:

- **Creating transparency and accountability.** Asking executives to discuss employees' performance and potential enhances the rigor and validity of the review. It also significantly increases accountability for employee performance and development. When reviews are conducted annually or semi-annually, the senior leadership team can see who the company's top, middle, and bottom performers are. And, it will become transparent who is effectively developing their top players, filling the gaps in their succession plans, and repositioning employees who don't perform. In several companies, CEOs have instituted quarterly business review meetings, asking executives to report the progress they've made on the priorities and goals that were set during the previous quarterly meeting. Predictable reviews like these keep managers focused and accountable and ensure the necessary follow through.
- **Driving strategy.** When leadership reviews a team's performance and potential, it is important that they link the succession process to the organization's goals and strategies. They can do this by expanding the discussion to evaluate the team's strengths and vulnerabilities against its business goals and priorities. Questions like these are a good starting point for the discussion: Given our strategy, what are this team's strengths and vulnerabilities? Does the team have the talent and capabilities to deliver on the strategy and accomplish its business goals? Do we need to alter the talent or capability requirements of new hires?

Discussions like these can be invaluable, particularly when the succession management process is centralized and senior leaders from different business units meet with each other in the staffing review sessions. High-potential employees can be brokered across regions and business units, underperforming managers can be more easily recast into roles and areas in which they may perform better, and best practices can become more visible.

Succession management is a delicate practice, but one that is highly valuable if your company aspires to be a leading organization in the future. It requires a solid understanding of the strengths, limitations, and aspirations of employees. And it demands transparency and a disciplined review process that involves all of your organization's leaders.

The bottom line is, strong leadership today doesn't guarantee strong leadership in the future. Leading organizations don't leave succession management to chance. It's one reason they don't just survive -- they thrive.

Winner

I'd rather watch a winner, than hear one any day.

I'd rather have one walk with me, than merely show the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear.

Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear.

And the best of all the coaches are the ones who live their deeds.

For to see the truth in action is what everybody needs.

I can soon learn how to do it, if you'll let me see it done.

I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true.

But, I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.

For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give.

But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

I'd rather watch a winner, than hear one any day.