

Coaching You Straight To The Top!

*Personal Leadership & Business
Transformation*

By

Timothy J. McCarthy, Ph. D.

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Preface

This book is meant to be a coaching guide for all those having sincere interest in personal leadership self-improvement. It takes one on an inner journey to developing critical leadership skill areas that can "make or break" career success and directly improve business performance. It shows how to make significant life changing leadership changes that are not superficial but far-reaching in impact. Not a quick fix, this is a serious developmental process.

The purpose of this book is to take some of the personal insights, self-reflection and exploration that are normally found in an intensive executive coaching process and recreate this experience as much as possible for the reader. The mission is to stimulate and support your efforts to become a better leader in whatever ways you have desire or interest.

Special care has been made to respect the business leader's time by making the style of writing to-the-point and easy to read, eliminating unnecessary theory and abstract discussion. This purposefully reflects what actual face-to-face conversational coaching would be like. Research findings are noted but highlighted only.

The end goal is to give you a gift—something of true personal worth to directly use and apply in your own unique leadership situation. Good luck in this exciting path to personal leadership growth and development. You most certainly will succeed with a little desire and a lot of good work!

Coaching You Straight to the Top!

Have you ever wished you had a coach to help you in trying to become the best leader you can be? Someone to support you and challenge you in your personal leadership development? Far too little emphasis has been placed on the *systematic* individual coaching development of leaders. For example, you have likely been given very little emphasis upon learning the specific competencies and skills of good leadership that would guarantee your success in your job and improve bottom-line financial as well as customer service performance in your area of business responsibility.

Most training seminars typically offer a group classroom format, rather than individual coaching. However, the difference between group training and individual coaching is a distinction of huge importance. And it could be the single most important aspect to whether you achieve the level of career success of which you are truly capable.

Leadership “Skills Coaching” Neglected

Why would you risk falling short of all the success you desire by not getting the intensive coaching in specific skills that are needed to accomplish the highest levels of achievement in any profession. For example, you can bet that a professional sports team will give its players a great deal of one-to-one coaching in their needed skill areas. A baseball team gives its players countless hours of practice under the watchful eyes of a batting coach. The competencies of each player’s swing, fielding, and so on are carefully assessed, problem areas are indicated and coaching advice is prescribed. This happens even in grade school baseball. Yet, why have you not received that same kind of attention to the practice and coaching of your leadership skills?

You have probably already amassed far more practice time and personal coaching in your life for skills in other activities of far less consequence, such as childhood sports and/or music lessons, than you have at being a leader.

So how likely is it you will achieve everything you are really capable of—your highest career aspirations—when you have not received the needed skills practice? What are your chances? Well, research shows that 30-50% of high potential managers “derail,” meaning they end up failing to meet the expectations of others and end up either reaching a premature ceiling level for any further advancement, leave prematurely, or are fired.¹ Ouch, those odds are pretty high!

Specific Skills Needed For Real Change

Research indicates that one of the biggest problems in leadership development and coaching is that in most companies the set of competencies needed to help one become an effective leader are not defined specifically enough in behavioral terms for one to know exactly what to do differently in order to improve.²

However, the coaching model offered here defines specific behavioral skills for critical competencies of exceptional leadership. Subsequently, most of the *9 Core Competencies* of leadership outlined in this model are not new, but are familiar to most. But what is new is how each is defined by very specific, behavioral skills offering a detailed blueprint to follow. The 9 most critical general competencies are broken down into a total of 36 “Specific Action Skills” that include practical personal change techniques, strategy and tools.

The practical experience of coaching is integrated with the best of objective scientific knowledge from research and other experts. These are not “touchy feely” but “hard” skills directly aimed at triggering the key organizational business drivers that fuel the fire for creating an exciting, visionary, successful business culture. Improved customer and financial performance are attained through exercising these skills.

Your Personal Transformation

One quick note before starting this process. Watch out for the phenomenon of self-sabotage which refers to the continued practice of unhelpful, self-limiting and even sometimes destructive personal patterns of leadership. Such self-limiting patterns of leadership are often not obvious but very subtle, contributing to derailment or simply holding one back from going to the next level.

This observation comes from coaching with many different types and levels of leaders, finding that most seem to have one or two primary critical skill areas that, if not developed, serve as barriers. And if successfully developed, help them make major jumps in leadership effectiveness. So it is exceedingly important for you to reflect on and look for those critical developmental “trigger point” areas of greatest importance to your own leadership transformation as you go through this process charting your own development course.

Let’s begin this journey together, focusing here on helping you achieve your highest aspirations for becoming the best leader you possibly can. The purpose is to help you make changes that will create an indelible mark on your people and organizational area.

If you are worried about your capability of changing yourself or changing your own work area culture, remember as you change yourself, your influence will become more and more strongly felt by those around you. Your efforts will be the catalyst sparking their latent desire to improve. The seeds for creating your business improvement are already here, lying within the very hearts and minds of employees’ who need simply to be charged up, revved up and pointed in new directions to harness the greater capacity hidden inside. The simple but powerful maxim applies here: *Self-change synergistically creates change in others!*

So let’s not waste any time! Sit back now, relax, and perhaps even imagine we are in an actual coaching session, sitting in comfortable chairs, chatting and collaborating. Feel free to interject, stop the coach to slow down, contemplate and challenge yourself in discovering new ways of doing and being in leadership!

Competency #1

Inspirational Vision

Sam walked cautiously down the hall to the CEO's office for an early morning meeting. A year ago he had been hired to head up research and development within this software company. Once a major player and market leader, the company managed to fall from grace over the past three years under challenge from competitors, leaving its position now precarious. Sam had been hired to help turn around and re-energize his division, to create new products and ideas, the goal being to help restore the company. Many had great hopes for him and he wondered how many were disappointed, especially concerned that the CEO might be one of those.

Sam sat down, sinking into the soft cushioned chair, they engaged in some initial, polite chit-chat. Then, with a serious look on his face, the CEO said, "You know we're in trouble. The competition continues to steal away our market. I don't have to tell you how important it is for us to come up with ideas that are more creative, new products that are better than other's and design new features for our old ones to make us stand out. I know you've been trying, but we're getting eaten up out there."

The sharp edge of worry hit Sam. He knew coming in that the company had achieved early success, but somehow had lost momentum, becoming complacent. They were still technically competent, so they had the wherewithal. No one was lazy, but he sure didn't see much excitement, enthusiasm or sense of urgency. Over the past year, he had reached deep into his bag of tricks trying to motivate his people—pep talks, cajoling, even threatening. It was so personally frustrating to him because nothing seemed to work. However, his motivation was at an all time high, fueled by desire to prove himself. He knew one thing for sure—he did not want to fail and would do everything he could to succeed.

"I don't want you to feel alone," the CEO took some of the heat off him by saying. "I'm also pushing the sales force more, and I'm driving the marketing team to come up with new approaches to create 'sizzle.'

We all have to do this together. I'm counting on you; others are, too. I hired you because I have faith in you to do the job here. So don't let me down." Making one final statement, the CEO said, "All the time we really have is six months. Just bring me results by the next time we meet."

After a quick handshake and being escorted out, Sam felt relieved that this seemed more of a pep talk than chastisement. Yet, on the way back to his office, he couldn't help but focus on his CEO's words that he was "counting on him." This was the most powerfully motivating thing he could hear from his boss because he really did not want to let him down, or anyone else for that matter. However, the six months deadline troubled him in light of the past year's efforts.

As he sat down at his office desk, he made a critical decision. A friend had recently given him the name of an executive coach with a reputation for being effective in achieving business results and career advancement for those coached. He went right to the rolodex and without hesitation dialed the number...

The need to bring about a profound change in the organizational structure of any department, workgroup, team or company as a whole rests upon one very powerful tenet in the science of organizational business systems. It guides the development of any business unit of people and ultimately determines its level of excitement, commitment and ability to get things done. Namely, "vision"—the special role, direction and unified purpose for a business unit. It is a major factor influencing whether performance is good, bad or even just mediocre.

Now, what determines its presence or absence? You do. Not many are naturally talented at this. It is the ability possessed by the most exceptional leaders to inspire others with a greater sense of vision and common purpose, serving to excite and motivate people. This is an ideal place for any manager to start making a big impact on culture—to increase motivation, interest and involvement of employees.

Much hidden opportunity resides here, quietly lying in wait in most companies. Why? Because anecdotal observation as well as studies utilizing employee surveys show a pervasive lack of sufficient communication of corporate vision, mission, values and strategic goals in companies of all types and sizes.¹

Business Success Founded on Vision

At the same time, it has been demonstrated that companies that are the most consistently successful over time in retaining higher profitability and industry dominance have stronger communication of their vision and core ideology.² This is the philosophy that guides a company, giving it a special sense of identity and purpose, indicating where it is headed and/or the values guiding it.

Hence, it has been well established that a strong vision is characteristic of the best organizations. Of course, there is an interesting parallel in the study of individual leaders. Experts agree that “sharing the vision” is one of the definitive characteristics of the best, top leaders. It is easy to see the connection here between how an organization’s development of vision will depend directly upon its individual leaders’ skill in being able to communicate that vision. Unfortunately, most leaders are not very adept at doing this, as confirmed by research.³

Subsequently, employees often do not know where their company is headed and its special purpose. If they did, there would be greater feeling of ownership and commitment. Without this, where is the special motivation to overcome their natural complacency in order to do something really special or face a difficult challenge, as in the case for Sam and his people.

Jumpstart Culture with Vision

Because it is likely to be absent or minimally present in most organizations, it is relatively easy to go into any organizational area, no matter how large or small, and begin to make substantial impact by communicating vision to your people. And this can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time. The trick is, it has to be done effectively. The skill of how to do this does not come easy to most.

This involves for more than just reading the vision/mission off its poster on the wall or giving occasional references to it. Rather, this means talking to your people every day about how important they are to accomplishing the company’s vision and unique purpose. The underlying

secret behind the best leaders is that they instill in each employee the feeling of a special sense of importance to their company for helping it achieve success. Specifically, this involves helping each employee understand how his or her job is absolutely critical to the company's larger success.

If you're thinking, "But I'm not a charismatic leader" or "I'm not good at being the center of a crowd or extroverted," don't be fooled. This doesn't take being a super-salesman nor having an exciting, rah-rah podium-pounding delivery. On the contrary, it simply involves "giving meaning" to the everyday importance of one's job, which for anyone has the potential to become boring over time. It does entail thinking strategically about your business area and looking at its critical functions relative to the larger corporation. Then, it involves communicating this special purpose by putting it into language and phraseology that is compelling. And yes, it might mean a personal stretch for you in showing more enthusiasm, passion and excitement within the boundaries of your normal personality style.

Who Are Visionary Leaders?

Just look at leaders such as Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines, Jack Welch of GE and most any manager who works for Disney. It is the constant communication at all levels within these companies by management as to their vision and special purpose that creates their super special employee culture. This is what, for example, gives the feeling: "Yes, I'm proud to be a part of this company and help my customer walk away with a very spectacular, special experience." This doesn't come from a president or senior executive just "getting the task done," it comes from the daily emphasis upon the special mission of one's company and the role each department's group of employees plays to that larger mission. Every manager must walk the talk, or in this case constantly "talk the talk" of the vision.

Any of you can become the Herb Kelleher of your small department or your large company. It just means that you have to truly inculcate this shift in your thinking about leadership.

Leadership Revolution

What is really being suggested here is a very different way of looking at the usual job requirements of a manager. The old 1950's traditional model of management focuses on "insuring that tasks are done." However, business is in the midst of a revolution brought about in particular by the demands of employees, especially those younger, who are asking for their managers to lead them to deeper fulfillment and satisfaction in their jobs. It's definitely harder and more demanding to be a leader now than it was just 20-30 years ago.

This change in the commonly accepted model of leadership has involved movement away from a simplistic "task orientation" to a multi-competency model requiring one to also be a skilled motivator and coach. Now, a good leader must know how to pull people out of their own inertia to feel special meaning for contributing to a greater cause.

Some may laugh at this and say, "Ha! If I spent all my time doing that, then we'd never get anything done." However, this is the shortsighted, subconscious mental programming of the 1950's style of management for which we are right in the midst of a paradigm shift. Those with foresight and openness to new learning can get on this fast-moving train and be a model "leader among leaders"; those hesitating will be left behind.

Every employee seemingly wants more from their job as the widespread problem of finding and retaining good employees can attest to. In all probability, your company as well as others you have heard about, has a primary concern currently about how to keep one's best employees from jumping ship and going to new jobs that offer more money or some other apparent tantalizer. However, if you see how deep and profound this leadership competency of inspirational vision is for giving employees special purpose for everyday jobs, even those that might normally not be very exciting, then you'll see how immensely powerful this leadership competency is for solving the problem of employee retention.

At this point, it is certainly clear that becoming a leader who can inspire vision has many exciting possibilities.

...Sitting across from the coach in his first meeting, Sam had just finished telling him the entire story about needing to motivate his R&D people within just six months. The coach without hesitating, said:

“The seed of all change is vision”

He continued, “Put yourself in your employees’ shoes. What would it take for you to suddenly get more motivation, energy and focus? Doesn’t your own individual sense of importance and the relevance of what you’re doing in the job make the difference? If I feel somehow very important, that my actions, even in a routine job, bear a significant impact on some larger purpose, then I can begin to tap into my own higher levels of emotional states of motivation. Leadership, at its best, is very psychological.

“For example, you will have to change your people’s whole sense of purpose for doing their job. In this instance, you have to start with the larger vision of the company as a whole and help them understand it, feel a part of it.”

Sam sat back realizing that the requirements of being a good leader were taking on new meaning for him. Eagerly expressing new insight, he said: “You mean, what I really need to do is give my people a better reason for getting up in morning and coming to work--make them each feel they are on a special mission that relates to the whole company’s bigger vision?” The coach responded affirmatively, saying, “That’s exactly the point.”

“In order to do this,” the coach explained, “you have to make the vision resonate inside of them, so they feel an integral part of the whole. Who is the company, where is it headed, what is our special mission with customers that distinguishes us from the competition? How is my job important in any way to the big picture? These are the essential questions that must be answered and deeply internalized. You must light the emotional spark to help them tap into their reservoir of latent potential.

“Most all your people are capable of doing more. Your employees can be more creative, have more energy and contribute in ways they may not

have even know they were capable of. Research even backs this in surveys of employees saying they are capable of being far more productive.”⁴

*“All this is easy to say, but how do I do that?” asked Sam. Quickly responding, the coach replied, “Through mastering the first of the **Straight To The Top—9 Core Competencies of Exceptional Leadership**, namely Inspiring Vision.”*

Before proceeding further, however, the coach asked him, “How serious are you about learning and embarking on this process. You should know that it takes commitment and practice.” Only after receiving Sam’s agreement, did the coach continue, noting that it was important to first start by clearly stating the end goal of inspiring vision, namely to:

“Instill an emotional charge of special purpose and importance”

“Every aspect of this competency and its skills set is to accomplish this end,” explained the coach. He then said, “This emotional state is the special motivating factor that distinguishes employees in high performance workgroups, teams and companies. And it is engendered directly through what a leader consciously says to his/her employees on a daily basis. Thus, this is a competency of communication—specific verbalizations and phraseology of language designed to create motivation. Most managers don’t take the time to do this and/or may not be naturally inclined in this regard.”

The coach went on to say, “Most leaders have a false sense of effectiveness about their ability to express vision because they do this every so often at larger employee meetings or significant events. If you ask them, in fact, they will tell you that they think they do a fairly good job of sharing vision because they have communicated it in such meetings in the past, expecting that others have listened, walked away and will react with a similar level of commitment and excitement about that vision. However, the problem is that the motivational energy and meaning of the vision needs to be communicated every day in many different variations and forms to one’s employees. It is the

frequency of this communication that is 90% of the problem—most leaders simply don't talk it up enough.”

Clarifying further, the coach added, “This competency involves a clearly defined set of very specific skills within it that will take some time for you to work on.” Over the ensuing weeks, the coach proceeded to take Sam through each of these skills, laying out the details for how to practice each. He watched as the changes began to occur...

Inspiring Vision—Specific Action Skills Set

1. Inspirational Communication of Company Vision: Giving special meaning and purpose by communicating the larger vision of the company.

Carefully examine your company's written vision, mission and/or values statement and search for compelling purpose and meaning stated within it. Sometimes you'll find it, if it's well-designed and written, and sometimes you won't. Also, listen for it in what you hear the CEO and senior executives communicate or simply ask them directly.

Aligning yourself to the company's formal vision, mission and values statement can be of great help to you in this overall effort, but only if it is really compelling enough to rally employees around. If it's not, then make an attempt, if appropriate and not politically dangerous, to recommend to senior executives its revision and modification. You may be surprised in finding the CEO and senior executives impressed by your interest.

If this isn't feasible, that does not change things because you still must determine in your own mind what you think is particularly inspiring about the company's future plans, how it distinguishes itself from others, satisfies customers, its employee culture and so on. Then, sit down and take the time to find the key words to describe the special purpose. Commit these specific words, language and phrases to memory. Begin to use them throughout every day at every opportunity for motivating and creating unity in your people, especially when addressing critical issues, problems and struggles.

If you have not communicated some brief encapsulation or aspect of the vision at least three to four times a day to your people, then you are like a coach who takes his team out on the field and fails to give any pep talk during the entire game. You can bet those players will not perform at their best. In fact, they are likely to be a rather dry and lifeless bunch of players.

Remember, your job is to be a motivational leader, not a “manager of tasks.” That is the difference between mediocre and the best leaders. Watch out for the old style management paradigm which implies: “My job is to just tell people what to do, they are paid to do their job and should just do it without me having to motivate them.” That will make one a dull, uninspiring leader who never gets the best out of their people, who consequently, will not be enriched or fulfilled by their work.

By practicing this action skill, you truly become a leader of vision and inspiration. There is some initial work in this exercise to find and construct your own personal language system of inspiration, but it is a critical skill factor missing in most managers that is essential to this overall competency. This is the first step in creating genuine culture change.

...Practicing the first action skill, Sam convinced senior management to revise their corporate vision and mission statement with more input from other lead employees on down through the ranks in order to create greater ownership and buy-in. Changes were made in the content and language of the vision/mission statement so as to become more compelling in meaning. The vision statement now read: “To become the leader in our industry by reflecting the highest degree of creativity and innovation for customers, giving them technology and personal service outshining all competitors.” He posted the corporate vision, mission and values statement in every major meeting room throughout his division, frequently referring to it.

Sam changed his viewpoint about what was important to him in going about his typical workday. He led off all meetings by making at least a quick reference as to how some aspect of the new vision related to the central agenda issues for that meeting. This added greater significance for what may have been treated as a routine meeting in the past. In addition, he began to stop frequently throughout the day to talk to various employee groups

about central aspects of the vision, mission and values of the company, always relating what he said to their unique business challenges.

In his own words, with variations on theme and phraseology (not just parroting back the wording of the posted vision statement), new motivation was communicated. For example, he told his people, “We want to be known at our company in another one to two years as the most innovative, with new features, higher quality and better service to customers, compared to anyone else! We want to give a truly ‘out of the ordinary’ customer experience they won’t forget!” It was words like these that he took special effort every day to frequently communicate. The effort was infectious. People began to perk up, show more interest and make faster headway in the pressure-laden goals before them...

2. Inspirational Communication of Business Area’s Mission: Giving special meaning and purpose by communicating the unique mission of your specific business area (e.g. dept., division, special workgroup, etc.).

This second action skill step is an extension of the first. It attempts to help give you further firepower for motivating your people around a special mission that distinguishes your specific business area from others, setting it apart by its own unique identity.

This is an extension of the first action step by simply aligning even more the specific purpose of one’s work area with that of the larger the expected. So, directing the spark of the larger company’s vision down to your area’s unique role it plays can only serve to enhance the motivation of your people.

Typically, the way one does this is to again stop, take the time to sit down and contemplate. Think about the primary functions and purpose of your area and how it supports the larger company’s vision. Examine those things it does that are particularly unique or special in the service provided to the company, other departments/divisions, external or internal customer groups, and so on. Define exactly what it does that actually is of vital importance. Then, begin to search for the inspiring language, words and phraseology to express this with impact for your people.

Very importantly, this is not just for the leader of a large department or division, rather it is for any size department or small workgroup of even just a few people. And it does not matter how apparently “unromantic” the functions of your group, whether it be accounting, administrative, or whatever area it might be.

In fact, ideally, you may do this as a collective exercise with people in your area. You can lead them through this exercise and engage them in a participative process, creatively designing a distinctive local area mission statement or slogan. It is not absolutely necessary to take this latter step. You may simply choose to just communicate with your own personally formulated language about what you consider the area’s special purpose is. However, it is just another great way to pool the effect of your group’s motivational charge and enhance it further.

If you decide to do so, here are the steps. First, you may want to consult with your key people and obtain their buy-in. Make sure they also feel it would be a helpful exercise. Then, initiate the brainstorming design process. Meet with representatives of your most significant employee groups, or most all employees from your area if small enough. This is a way to build further collective excitement among your people. Take them through a series of formal brainstorming sessions.

Arrive at some degree of final consensus about the wording for the inspiring mission statement or slogan for your area. Have it nicely printed up, posted at strategic places in your area and talk-it-up frequently from that point onwards, encouraging your lead people to do same. By doing this you will have added another dimension to your leadership impact of inspiring vision in your workplace.

...Sam attempted to motivate his people further by aligning the function of his group more directly to the larger company’s vision. He began expressing the special purpose of their R&D group by communicating in varying ways how the company’s vision depended on their creativity and new ideas. For example, he said it was up to them to “change the future for our customers and the industry itself.” He was especially inclined to express this when leading his staff through thorny issues and problems. Mentally, his people began to really believe the critical role they played and that how well they performed could actually determine the success of the company.

In fact, Sam began a series of meetings with groups of employees throughout his division for the purpose of defining a formal “local mission” statement. This would state their division’s unique purpose in alignment with and supporting the larger corporate’s. Getting input from many groups of employees and managers in brainstorming sessions, a new divisional mission slogan was decided upon. Namely, “Unbeatable innovations are our only life’s work.”

This slogan was put up around the area in different colors and in complimentary visual designs. Rarely did a day go by without Sam referring to the slogan. The effect was significant. He noticed further change in his people as they showed even greater self-esteem and renewed vigor...

(3.) Inspirational Communication of Individual Employee’s Job

Importance: Giving special meaning and purpose by communicating to each employee the unique importance of their job.

This third action skill step takes one’s effort at being effective in inspiring vision to a higher level of potential impact. The two previous action skill steps show how to inspire people through communicating the special purpose that your employee’s engage in as a collective group. But what if someone still does not get all that charged up about doing their job, feels it is not all that important or is just plain bored with it. Then your motivational efforts may still be limited to some extent.

This action skill establishes the direct link of aligning each individual with the larger vision, providing the needed “line of sight” to how their unique contribution helps determine the success of their entire area and the company as a whole. Each individual can and must be led to see how paramount the performance of their job is to their local business area’s mission and the larger company’s vision. This also means taking time to stop and take a few minutes to think about the wording and phraseology of how to communicate each employee’s importance to the company/area’s success.

The personal motivation felt by your employees, whether they be on the line, engineers, clerks, foremen or subordinate managers, may all be

brought to new internal motivational states. One's sense of personal importance and esteem can be boosted through instilling the belief of being vital to the larger cause.

...Every individual in Sam's area became an opportunity for practicing the third action skill step. During issues that arose in his area throughout the day, or just at opportune moments, Sam began to talk to each person about how indispensable and critical they were. For example, one day he stopped Karen Smith, an administrative support person, who had not seemed to be affected much by the excitement over the new sense of R&D's area mission that he had been communicating.

He said, "You know Karen, you are one of the most important people in our group." Looking puzzled, she replied, "I don't understand how that can be so, most everyone else is an engineer, programmer or an MBA. All I do is administration—paperwork, scheduling, typing, ordering and stuff like that. It's not very important, certainly not earth shaking."

Sam paused only a moment, saying, "Ah, but that's where you are so wrong, Karen! Did you know that you are like the superglue that holds the whole bunch of us together, especially as disorganized as some of us are. Without your efforts, we'd be up a creek without a paddle. Our R&D's mission of creating unbeatable innovations and our need in particular to develop the new Z-Tech software package over the next few months is critical to the company's regaining lost market share. You are indispensable in this regard. We need you to help us in getting this to market fast through those very administrative details you mentioned. In fact, we need your help in looking at overhauling the work flow processes involved in meeting our next development deadline. I'm looking for your input next week at our first meeting to discuss this topic."

Interestingly, Sam noticed that Karen seemed to have a bounce in her step after his brief chat with her. She was more assertive in that next meeting giving some great ideas for the group in how to streamline their work processes. Paying attention to periodically reinforcing his initial talk, over the next months the changes in Karen continued, showing a different person, more involved and enthusiastic about her job.

Practicing this same action skill with all his employees, Sam began to effect similar change in each one of his employees' sense of personal value and level of motivation, taking it to a new level...

(4.) Coaching Subordinate Leaders' in Communicating Inspirational Vision: Directing one's people in lead positions to similarly communicate inspiration about the company vision, their area's mission and their individual employees job importance.

Your own individual practice of action skill steps 1-3 will have a far-reaching impact on your area's culture. However, the larger the area of your business responsibility and the greater the number of subordinate managers who report to you directly, the more important it is to encourage and teach them how to similarly inspire their people. Transferring this learning to them will help create a "cascading top-down wider-based communication effect of steps 1-3.

...After honing his own skill in the first three action steps, Sam began to encourage his own managers to do the same. He had to watch carefully and coach them. The philosophy he conveyed to all his subordinate leaders was that "if you come into work and leave at the end of the day without having taken time to communicate in some way the company's vision, your area's mission and make your people feel important about their job, then you haven't done your real job." It took some considerable time for him in overseeing this transfer of practice to his people. But the payoff was big in seeing the domino-like impact of spreading vision more intensively into the culture.

(5.) Leading with Passion: Conveying enthusiasm and feeling in communicating vision.

This is an important skill of communication style and delivery. Whatever one says in words is important, but remember, it is the subtle message you give in the passion shown that kindles the fire of interest in

your people. To motivate them to rise above their normal steady state of doing things in the same old way, you must pass on your own genuine enthusiasm, energy and passion.

How to convey this is a skill that specifically rests on the usage of one's voice tone and inflection, as well as body language, such as gestures, facial expressions, emotion and general show of animation. The latter factors are more influential in speaking than content of words. This subtle use of voice and body language is the electricity that will help light up the inner feeling level of motivation. Turn the electricity up, and the motivational level goes up—tune it down, and the opposite occurs. Achieving a culture state of peak performance requires some degree of expressing passion.

This skill actually must be practiced in conjunction with each of first four action skill steps. It will help support your efforts with each one and make your communication optimally effective. So, begin to practice it right away with the first step.

...From the onset, self-analysis and help from his coach identified a growth area for Sam, namely learning to show more passion and enthusiasm. Being more introverted in personality temperament, he at first resisted somewhat saying to the coach, "But that's not the way I am. I'm not into showboating or making myself the center of attention."

The coach's reply helped put him more at ease that what was being asked of him would not betray his natural personality. "Introverted, extroverted, or in-between does not matter. This is not necessarily to make you an entertainer or extraordinarily charismatic. Rather, it is to help you maximize the impact you have in utilizing your own personality style. It only augments the power of who you are in communicating vision. Remember this":

"Nonverbal language delivers the feeling punch"

Sam was advised by his coach to smile more and show more emotional expression on his face when communicating anything relating to vision to his

people. In exploring his personal communication style, Sam admitted that those who know him well accuse him of not showing much emotion, being too reserved and perhaps somewhat distant or remote. The coach gave frank feedback that he looked overly serious and showed very little animation or feeling. He was given advice to stop being so “monochromatic” in his speech pattern and delivery—use greater range of voice tone, inflection and pace of speech to reflect excitement and enthusiasm.

This did not come easy for Sam and he had to carefully pay attention every day. Pushing himself to overcome his own personal inertia to communicate with passion and enthusiasm, things soon changed. Within only a few months of concentrated practice in all five action skill steps, new energy and momentum became readily apparent, taking hold within the culture.

He was now able to push people throughout his division to come up with the creative ideas, improvements and innovations in their software that had potential for giving them advantage over their biggest industry competitors. Moving quickly and clearly in this strategic direction, the company charged forth bringing new standout products to market faster than ever before.

Sam was particularly pleased and happy with his division’s new found achievements, giving him a sense of greater accomplishment. Summing up his experience in the last meeting with his coach, Sam commented, “If only I’d realized it was so simple—you get the level of performance from your people that is generated by how important and meaningful they think their job is. And it is my job and my managers’ to see that they understand and actually feel this from us—through our own passion and enthusiasm.”

Needless to say, Sam’s influence over the company’s new success did not go unnoticed. He was promoted a year later to corporate vice president. He went on to become one of the most significant contributors to the company’s long-term success, helping it face future struggles and challenges.

Summary Review:

Competency #1: Inspiring Vision

Communicating frequently and passionately the company's compelling vision, one's business area's unique mission and/or the importance of each individual employee's job—giving special meaning and shared purpose, inspiring people to a culture of higher motivation and drive.

Specific Behavioral Action Skills Set

1. Inspirational Communication of Company Vision:

Building a high level of employee motivation and peak performance through communicating frequently to employees throughout the day (minimum several times/day) a sense of special meaning and purpose regarding the company's vision, unique philosophy, mission, goal of establishing superior customer service, how it distinguishes itself from others, and/or intends to establish market dominance.

2. Inspirational Communication of One's Business Area's (Department, Division, Special Workgroup) Mission:

Building a high level of employee motivation and peak performance through communicating frequently (minimum several times/day) to employees a sense of special meaning and purpose about one's own business area's special mission, what sets it apart—the unique, vital service provided to internal/external customers.

3. Inspirational Communication of Employee's Job Importance:

Taking the time to boost each employee's self-esteem and motivation by frequently communicating to them the very special, critical importance of their job to the business area's mission and/or to the company's larger vision.

4. Coaching Subordinate Leaders' in Communicating Inspirational Vision and Individual Employee Job Importance:

Directing one's lead people to similarly communicate the company vision, business area's mission and individual employee's job importance (as noted above) at an equally high level of frequency.

Notes

Straight To The Top:

¹ M. Lombardo and Eichinger, *Preventing Derailment: What to Do Before It's Too Late* (technical report no. 138), (Center for Creative Leadership, 1989).

² Schippmann, Ash, Battista, Carr, Eyde, Heskoth, Kehoe, Pearlman, Priena and Sanchez. The Practice of Competency Modeling. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 703-740, 2000.

Competency #1-Inspiring Vision:

¹ *Management Review*. (American Management Association), July 1996).

² James Collins and Jerry Porras, *Built To Last*. (Harper Collins, 1994).

³ *Management Review*. (American Management Association), July 1996).

⁴ William M. Mercer, Inc., *Mercer Management Consultant Survey* (Mercer, August, 1999).

Competency #2-Empowering Others:

¹ Jeffrey Pfeffer, *The Human Equation: Building Profits By Putting People First* (Harvard Business School Press, 1998).

² Ibid.

³ William M. Mercer, Inc., *Mercer Management Consultant Survey* (Mercer, August, 1999).

⁴ Jeffrey Pfeffer, *The Human Equation: Building Profits By Putting People First* (Harvard Business School Press, 1998).