

# Motivational Leadership: A Guide to Building a Congruent Team

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*People in legitimate authority positions are expected to use their authority. But most newly appointed executives are afraid to exercise the limited authority they have. Their anxiety and uncertainty make the ones who say, "Wait a while until I get the lay of the land." By the time they realize their mistakes, it's too late. This initial uncertainty has long-lasting effects on the executive's ability to assume power. – POSITIVE POWER, Your Path to a Higher Leadership Profile, by James Fisher*

## Introduction

The purpose is to introduce leaders to motivational leadership, which is an orientation of leadership whose main agenda is to positively influence their culture. This provides leaders with clear strategies for developing relationships, employee motivation, and overall morale and performance.

## Wisdom from Retired IBM CEOs

Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM, promoted three basic principles: excellence in everything IBM does, superior customer service, and respect for all individuals. These three principles will have a convincing impact if modeled throughout a culture.

Louis Gerstner promoted several core leadership principles in his book *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?*:

1. Never lose sight of a company's strategic vision; the lack of focus on this detail is one of the main reasons for corporate failure. He believed that effective companies must be smart and take the time to develop a clear strategy for achieving their vision.
2. To be sensitive to the needs of all employees and to the communities in which we operate. For this to be achieved by all employees, each must have a clear understanding of the company's core values and mission. In addition, there is a need for strategic communication and a process to monitor the effectiveness of communication throughout the company.
3. Teams need each and every person to be committed, so that the implementation of tasks and potential can be achieved.

4. Gerstner's number-one principle was the concept of self-leadership. He promoted the idea that great companies are not managed; they are led. Peak performing companies have clear accountabilities with challenging and rewarding goals.
5. Leaders cannot carry themselves as being hard and cold! Great leaders for today are personal, have great integrity, and act in a manner that is fair, firm, and consistent.
6. Great leaders do not bend rules or policies, because they know that this will erode their ability to lead.

## **Motivational Leadership**

Motivational leadership is an art form where a leader implements a model and strategy for influencing people to follow them. They are interested in building a safe and trusting environment, as well as ensuring the company is positioned to be successful in the marketplace. Motivational leadership's core principles explain that the leader must first have in place strong ethics, clear vision, definable values, authentic communication, and be genuinely motivated to promote collaboration and positive energy throughout the company.

Motivational leadership is committed to developing an environment for people to work in that is predictable, safe, and consistent. It promotes the core concept that great leaders can only provide an opportunity for employees to become motivated. In the end, it is each employee's responsibility to take charge of their own motivation. Motivational leadership also promotes that leaders manage systems and lead people.

For leaders to be successful, it comes down to building positive relationships and consensus. This is by far one of the most important variables for any leader's success. Without relationships, leaders will be speaking to deaf ears. Any leader can use fear to get compliance, however, great leaders want comprehension and for that to happen people must be safe to learn and grow. The content in the section below is intended to assist leaders to develop the foundation for building healthy and safe relationships.

### **Motivational Leaders' Messages:**

1. Must be strategic in nature.
2. Must be communicated to every person in the organization, and is clearly aligned to operational roles, process, and systems.
3. Must be monitored and continually promoted and developed.
4. Must promote the art of creativity.
5. Must have discipline to follow through.
6. Must start at the CEO level and work its way down to have clear understanding of the company's goals, internal and external cues, and corporate values.

7. Must have a process to guide strategy for knowing how and the steps needed for formulation and implementation of ideas and beliefs.
8. Strategy is built on response from a few critical questions. Ineffective communication is the end for many organizations, and to have effective communication there needs to be a clear criterion for communicating vertically and horizontally.
9. Define common language so all parties (front line to board) have a clear understanding of the meaning of all communications.

## **Stages For Implementing Motivational Leadership Framework**

*Stage one – Discovery of Individuals’ Resources and Needs* – Leader spends time, resources, and energy to learn about their team. Based on the principles of knowledge management, the leader asks the questions:

- What and who is the talent pool?
- What expertise and skills make up the team?
- Where are the team strength and weakness?
- What does the team want and need to be successful?
- What roadblocks need to be removed for the teams to work more effectively (e.g., communications breakdown in reporting)?

*Stage two - Preparation for Motivation* – In this stage, the leader goes to the next level of understanding and focuses on the team’s motivation, morale, and accountability. This step is often assumed or forgotten under the assumption that since people are professional they will be motivated, positive, and accountable. The leader asks the following:

- What is the level of motivation in the organization?
- What is the history?
- What is the present morale and why is it this way?
- How are people being held accountable and what are the consequences for not performing?

*Stage three – Strategic Action Plan* – The first two stages provide the foundation and credibility that the leader is interested in the people and their personal success. The challenge for a leader is to take the first two stages and to package them into a universal template called strategic vision action plan.

A leader has three main elements that they also need to keep in mind: product and/or services, market demands and current business volume, and the profit and loss statement. Each of these elements has its own action plan and goals that need to be connected. The death of many companies is that they do not have a format that connects the business of business with its human capital. Below is a model to assist the leader to develop an effective action plan for

creating a *strategic vision action plan*, which will assist in the development of consensus and agreements throughout the team. This process will be important and helpful in reinventing employee motivation, morale, and accountability. Motivational leadership is committed to building a culture that assists everyone to have input.

Some employees may resist and not partake in this process, and in the end that is fine because it is their choice. I believe that each and every employee has the right to choose his or her own destiny. North America is based on a democracy model, which promotes the concept that the majority votes determine the law of the land. The same system may not be perfect for companies; however, what is the alternative?

The below seven steps outline the process for building a *strategic vision action plan*:

1. **Confirm Research from Stages 1 and 2** – This helps the leader ensure that they have determined current trends and changes within the company. This is easy to verify if the leader asks for it and is interested. The leader may use email, focus groups, team meetings, surveys, town hall meetings, and getting out to the front lines. The key is to make the effort to get the information and be interested in what is obtained.
2. **Assessment of Business Competitiveness** – Determine critical areas of focus, which will come out of an in-depth evaluation of the company market share and current competitive edges. The key is to determine what drivers (employees, budgeting, projections, etc.) are impacting the company in a positive and negative manner. It is important to remove all guessing and judgment from the process and be clear of all realities of the business. The P & L shows the end of the story, not how it was written. This step assists in the process of developing team values and goals, personal goals and needs, as well actions needed for success.
3. **Core Business Determinants** – It is important to develop clear timelines and measurement for assessing the team's core business determinants, which include but are not limited to profit, ROI, targets, cash flow, and criteria for success. Business planning comes out of research done in assessing business competitiveness.
4. **Guiding Template** – This is the quality assurance check for operations and process. Clear criteria for decision-making are endorsed or established and then implemented throughout the entire team, regardless of size. This may be in the form of an in-depth policy manual, standing protocols, decision-making trees, and protocols for actions. A guiding template is a process that guides everyone to the same place. Systems need to have a way to be consistent and to have one set of rules for everyone. Too often too many do not have a congruent role model; a universal template assists the culture to develop a standard of excellence.
5. **Master Template** – In this step, the leader starts to combine all information collected and put it into one master template. An effective strategy to present the template is in the

form of a visual matrix with an assigned legend that will track the progress of the core business. This exercise assists the leader to package and get an effective protocol in place for monitoring day-to-day business. The next step is to work on implementing this important information throughout the culture and develop a meaningful and living success statement, which will be the underpinnings for a social contract.

6. **Implementation** – Once the master template is in place, the next step is to implement a strategic system for building a congruent set of agreements throughout the team (see Appendix A for a process for building a team vision statement that can be done in an *E-course format*).
7. **Follow up** – Follow up on all items on a regular basis to ensure that the leader stays current and connected with the team. One of the biggest faults of many leaders is that they get something working and do not spend time to keep it going. Employees need consistency and the test for this is time!

## **Conclusion**

This process assists leaders to develop a strategy to increase relationships with employees and to increase motivation in the workforce.

## **Appendix A – Strategies for Building Teams**

Each employee is asked to respond to each action. It is important to provide clear explanations around confidentiality and how the process will work. I recommend that each action step be sent out to all employees and that the turn around period be three working days to get all employees' responses. Each section is combined into one response, which represents the team's best collective thinking. The below process is straight forward; each action step clearly states what is being collected from all team members.

It is the leader's responsibility to collect and collate all responses and then return them to all team members.

## **Building a Congruent Team Through Establishing Common Values and Vision**

### **Action 1 – Define What Team Means**

What is a team? What does team mean to you? It is important to develop a frame of reference for a common environment so that each team member can excel. The outcome is to define clearly what team means to provide a common frame of reference.

### **Action 2 – Surveying the Team's Individual Views**

- How committed are you to adhere to the efforts to enhance vertical and horizontal communication?
- What do employees need from a workplace to be successful?

- What is the employee’s role in this success?
- What are the criteria for a highly functioning team?
- How can your team stop mind reading what others are thinking?
- How does mind reading impact the overall mental health of a team?
- How does mind reading lead to fear?

**Action 3 – Exploring Roles of Employees and Managers**

The purpose of this step is to explore day-to-day behaviors and expectations of each other. To do this we will explore an activity called *My job is/My job is not*. Below are a brief introduction and a few questions. Please answer in bullet form. To achieve this, you need to clearly define all your roles, so that there is no ambiguity or confusion. This is not a job description. It is day-to-day behaviors of what your role is and how you are expected to behave to each other. For example, an employee’s job is to be “honest” and is not to be “aggressive.”

Each employee is asked to respond to these two questions for every role in their immediate department. The definition for each role is a behavioral description of activities that represent the written and non-written rules.

The job of the [INSERT TITLE] is to be:	The job of the [INSERT TITLE] is not to be:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

**Action 4 – Defining Core Values**

A successful vision statement first needs the team to share its common core values. Each team member is to come up with ten responses to the following question: “What are the most important aspects for you in the workplace?” Write a brief behavioral description that defines each word. The rationale is simple: we all have different meanings for words. For example, if your team was asked to write out definitions for quintessential, nihilistic, inefficacious, and de novo, the results would be different definitions. The same happens with everyday words such as respect. For example: Core Value: Respect – when a person is showing respect to another they will do this congruently and honestly in the person’s presence and out of their presence. Each person often has a different definition for respect, so what does that mean?

Repeat the process with nine more words. In the end, the team will have developed a glossary of common terms to improve accuracy and understanding among its members.

### Action 5 – Success Statement

Many companies put in place a corporate mission statement that originates from the corporate head office. The purpose of this success statement is to provide a map and a standard that the entire team can strive for. This action step is not intended to replace the company's mission vision; it is to support it. The true power of a team success statement is that every member has a say! Each team member is asked to write a sentence that represents the kind of company they want to work for and one sentence that represents exactly the kind of team they would like to be a part of. From the statements collected, the team leader and members representing each department work together to develop one statement based on important themes reported from each team member. Once this is completed, it is sent to the entire team for feedback. This process is repeated until the majority of team members accept the success statement.

### Action 6 – Developing Daily Success Actions

In this action each team player is asked to identify **five key drivers** as to what they need to do on a daily basis for the team to achieve its success statement. Drivers are terms that will determine a team's success (e.g., will adhere to the POP on a daily basis). They represent the action and commitment of each and every employee each and every day. The team leader and members representing each department work together to pick the top five drivers to develop one statement based on important themes reported from each team member. This is then sent to the entire team for feedback. This process is repeated until the majority of team members accept the success statement.

### Action 7 – Final Action Social Contract

Once all six actions are collected, the final action is to combine all the information into one social contract: Building a Congruent Team: Through Establishing Common Values and Vision, which is connected directly to the strategic action plan. The company will then need to determine how it will present the end product to the team (e.g., in a social contract format that each player signs to acknowledge their accountability).