



How to In -Vision Your Team

I heard a speaker at my local Chamber of Commerce this month say "Good is the enemy of great." He was quoting Jim Collins' best seller *Good to Great* and referring to organizations, schools and companies that settle for good work, good employees and good service when they could be GREAT. Too often we let satisfaction seduce us into settling for efficient rather than excellent. My daughter's school uses the motto: "Reaching Beyond Excellence." There is a spirit among the teachers, administration, students and parents that we are trying to go beyond having just a good school. It says "We want to go beyond expectations." So how do you reach beyond excellence? It all goes back to a great leader who casts vision. John Maxwell says that everything rises and falls on leadership. A great leader will instill the vision into the team. A good friend of mine, Dan Southerland, who consults with organizations out of Charlotte, NC showed me an acrostic for instilling the vision in the team. You can use this "VISION" to help you remember how to reach beyond excellence and build a great team.

V - Vision the Team. Keep putting the vision before them, at least once a month. If you don't have monthly meetings, find ways to remind the team of the vision. The tendency of individuals is to drift away from the purpose. Often workers are just doing a job without any thought to how it affects the overall performance of the organization.

I - Investigate your Target. Do some Management by Wandering Around (from *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr., 1981, Random House). Ask some of your employees who the most important person in the organization is. If they don't say, "Our customers." you're in trouble. Better still, go out into the field and ask your most loyal customers why they do business with you. What are you doing that keeps them coming back? How can you apply this to your new and prospective clients?

S - Strategize with your Team. People will "back" the strategy they design themselves. Empower them. Give them ownership. Hold worthwhile team huddles (meetings). Use this agenda to help you hold better team huddles: *Urgent Items*: Items of interest such as calendar events, human interest stories revolving around your vision, good news. (Time: 5-10 minutes, with no wandering); *Rush Items*: Items that need a lot of thinking, brainstorming and discussion time. (Time: 1 hour, with no vote taken); and *ASAP Items*: Items to be voted on. Only become action items after they have been the previous month's study items. (Time: 15 minutes, with no surprises) By the way, if you find the team constantly having to vote on immediate problems and needs, then maybe you should re-evaluate your planning and prioritizing. You may be

functioning in a defensive mode. Nothing will kill your enthusiasm or vision faster than operating from the defense!

I - Inventory their Abilities and Gifts. Let the team function at their best. Use a personality profile assessment (like the DiSC(R) that we use at Leading With Spirit!) to discover their styles, gifts, strengths and weaknesses. Other tools you can use are the Team Dimensions Profile, Work Expectations Seminar and Discovering Diversity training. Go to www.jimmathis.com/page3 for more information. Whatever steps you take, find a way to let the team's strengths rise through the group. Create an environment where the "doers" are rewarded for performance. Let people discover their strengths and weaknesses in a climate of creativity.

O - Ongoing Training and Evaluation. Use every opportunity to train your team to do better. Send them to seminars. Encourage them to listen to tapes/CDs that better them. Build a reputation for life-long learning. Evaluate progress and make corrections immediately. I like what the Director of NASA said the day the shuttle Columbia was destroyed on re-entry: "This is America. We find the problem, we fix it and move on." Bravo! May that be said about all of us!

N - kNow how to celebrate (read that "Party")! Okay, okay, it starts with a "K", but if it helps you remember it, so much the better. Let people have fun. Productivity goes up sharply when people enjoy their work, co-workers and work environment. A recent cover story in Fortune Magazine listed the top 100 Best Companies to work for. J.M. Smucker was #1. Why? Because their employees feel it is a fun place to work. How would your people rate your environment??

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