

On Leadership

From Motivation to Inspiration Leadership



MOTIVATIONAL PROGRAMS are everywhere. There are motivational speakers, vision and values retreats, cash bonuses, and celebrations for achieving patient satisfaction or financial targets, and the list goes on and on. And does all this work? Maybe, maybe not. People usually perform when they are motivated by a large enough reward. But when the reward is gone, it is often hard to sustain the behavior that was driven solely by extrinsic rewards. Then the motivation fizzles. Is there a way to sustain high performance with other than extrinsic rewards? Inspired people perform with or without rewards because they are driven internally by a sense of mission and purpose. Inspired people

respond to the fire of a passion that drives them to make a difference. Leaders who motivate have short-lived results. Leaders who inspire their people and build self-sustaining communities of energized, caring people leave a legacy that continues long beyond their tenure. Our challenge for the next few years is to move out of the realm of motivating staff, and instead learn more about inspirational leadership. We need more inspirational leadership in health care and less motivational managers.

So what's the difference between motivational and inspirational leadership? Traditionally, motivation is what we do to others to get them to respond the way we want them. We motivate a trained animal to perform tricks with the promise of food.

We direct, delegate, and control to achieve the stated outcomes we need. By using external rewards, we motivate, manipulate, control, and even exploit people to achieve the organization's objectives. In addition to positive rewards that motivate, we can also motivate by fear and punishment. But people are often left without a sense of passion for what they do, and cannot sustain their performance when the external rewards or fears are not there. Inspirational leaders instill an intrinsic drive

that is fueled by a higher purpose, a sense of mission, and a commitment to a vast array of possibilities. Inspiring leadership unleashes creativity, enthusiasm, and passion that motivational leadership cannot. The passion an inspirational leader has is authentic, and surges throughout the organization. These leaders truly believe that their role is to serve the people and to enable them to reach their innate potential. When people are inspired, they feel the fire of passion that will drive them intrinsically and independently to achieve the right thing. People in an inspired organization feel passionate about the values and purposes, the commitment of the leaders to a higher good, and to the people of the organization and the significance of their work. They model the leader who lives and breathes passion for others and consequently see their work as serving others.

An inspired organization just doesn't happen. It is the result of a

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beautiful relationship between the leader and the people and is focused first on a bond of trust between the staff and the leader. Lucas (1999) points out that in some organizations you can feel the emptiness of the interior climate which is perceived as flat, dull, dead, and boring. There is no sense of fire and passion about what must be accomplished. And usually the outcomes aren't good and can't be sustained over a long time. In these lifeless places, Lucas states that people are trained to impersonate passionate people through programs such as customer training programs but you can't feel the fire of passion in these impersonators. Lucas also observes that when you meet the leader, you will feel the same sense of emptiness and lifelessness that will overwhelm your interaction with this person.

Of course, it doesn't do any good to talk about inspiration unless the basic human needs aren't met. Nurses will scoff at the mention of inspired leadership when they feel, for example, that the organization exploits them by not paying competitive wages when the organization is financially sound. To achieve success, there must be a basic level of trust and synergy between the staff and the leaders for anything to work. Establishing this sense of trust within the organization comes before anything else. Unfortunately many of the motivational programs have created this sense of distrust between staff and leaders.

But trust is also a two-way street. Staff who have a sense of entitlement and victimization will block any change that will lead to a passionate committed work force. Just as leaders should be selected for their ability to connect with the staff, establish trust, and enable staff to reach higher levels than they thought possible in their career, the same care must be taken in the selection and retention of people throughout the organization. If you want to create a passionate, committed work force, you have to hire

committed passionate and inspiring people.

Unfortunately, in a nursing shortage, often a warm body will do and then we pay the price later when that person poisons the culture. Most staff would agree that they prefer to work short than to work around the negative, complaining, self-centered people who create the death spiral of depression on a unit. Lucas (1999) recommends interviewing for passion when we bring new people into the organization and suggests that we assess on interview the person's passion for life, vision, values, work, variety, others, and leaving a mark. Herb Keller of Southwest Airlines states, "We can teach the job—we can't teach the attitude" (Chang, 2001, p. 158).

There is also the issue of "weeding" that the inspirational leader has to address. Unfortunately, unless the negative forces are addressed in an organization, they will take over. Flowers in a garden can bloom and flourish as long as there aren't aggressive weeds that take over and suck the life out of their beauty. The same is true in patient care. One negative physician, or unit secretary, or RN, or manager can spread her/his poison and damage all the flowers that are trying to flourish and bloom in a unit. It's very difficult to address this issue and take affirmative measures in a time of shortage. But if the weeding doesn't take place, the flowers on the unit will leave, or be immobilized. Weeding must occur even in times of shortages.

We in organizations must take the responsibility of creating work environments where committed people can easily feel energized and keep their passions alive. We can easily quench the flames of passion by thinking that we have to manage everyone, and know more about what needs to be done than those on the front lines. We constantly bring new enthusiastic people into our organization and put them through training programs that squelch their passion and cre-

ativity by telling them we know all the answers and they have to do everything our way. The results of our very fine ability to squelch passion are a very high degree of burnout within our managers and our staff. Just as we are now learning more about human factor analysis in the field of patient safety, we have a large body of largely ignored literature that documents the physical and psychological effects of burnout in nursing and patient care staff. We know that the way we structure units and workload intensity will create burnout in anyone who enters into these cultures. Chang (2001) tells us that energizing environments are built around making the environment engaging, comfortable, appropriate, and inspiring. He also notes that our communication, education, policies, and practices must also promote a positive, passionate outlook. We must take the responsibility to create these kinds of work environments.

Inspirational leadership creates passion. It is about human beings and their experiences, not about heartless processes that depersonalize people in organizations. Inspirational leaders truly love what they do, and sincerely love and care about the people who work for them. They unleash potential by inspiring people from within. Effective leadership is about serving others versus self-focused leadership. It's about serving, not dictating. And most importantly, it's about caring about people, reawakening and opening hearts, listening to the stories of the caregivers, and committing to make a difference in their lives so they can make a difference in the lives of those for whom they care. It's about inspiring, not motivating.\$

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