Head & Heart

Head & Heart is a collection of ideas, resources and frameworks to support your personal and professional development in leading yourself, others and organizations with head and heart.

Summer 2008

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Our Summer issue of Head & Heart highlights the benefits of Positive Leadership and how you can concretely increase your Positive Leader capabilities.

Central to our thinking is that Positive Leadership is not simply smiling, acting happy, and playing "the cheerleader" in your organization.

Positive Leadership is more about the attitudes and efforts demonstrated and generated through the people you lead.

Being accountable, leading from your strengths, leading with positive and authentic feedback and engaging relationships are the DNA of Positive Leadership.

We're confident that with Positive Leadership in practice, no challenge is insurmountable.

Dan Norenberg

Look Inside

Thought Leadership

Positive Leadership

"Everyone's Accountable, All Of The Time."
Rudolph Giuliani

The quote comes from Giuliani's gripping account of the tragic aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in New York and captures the determination of people who through being **fully accountable** are **fully engaged**. We sense the commitment of people called to **account** for what they do, **owning** what they do, and knowing that <u>what</u> they are **responsible for** rises and falls on what they do. These people, as we well know, really did "run the extra mile" and did an exceptional job. This was positive leadership in action.

The other day I was working with a recently formed team of leaders charged with developing a plan for organizational change. The Chief Executive had described one of the team members as an effective leader based on his performance as a project manager and on the fact that results were being achieved. This assessment carried the assumption that if project objectives are being delivered, then the leadership is effective.

When the team was working, I noticed immediately how everyone in the group experienced a very tense dynamic around this particular individual. I learned later that this person, whilst having a driving style and "getting the job done" creates very negative working environments. This is **not positive leadership**. While it may achieve some short term gains, it will certainly not sustain high performance in the longer term which is the **essence of positive leadership**.

It is quite common for a leader to be described as effective when they achieve results but with no real assessment being made of how those results were achieved. To be acknowledged as a positive leader, you <u>must</u> both achieve results and develop followers who feel positive and emotionally energized.

The reality is that the more positive people feel, the more effort they are prepared to make to excel. To achieve this positive personal motivation, at the very minimum, leaders must recognize in individuals: **their strengths, the triggers required to activate those strengths and their preferred learning style** (analyzing, doing or watching).

Ultimately, positive leadership is not focused exclusively on what it can get out of its employees but more on how it can invest in everyone who works in the organization to achieve higher levels of performance and to develop. The key elements of that investment, as Giuliani demonstrated so graphically in New York, are in creating an organization, in which everyone is **fully accountable** and **fully engaged in performance management**.

Ed Norman

Leading Self

Are You Leading from Your Strengths?

"In general, society is fascinated by weaknesses (most employee reviews bear this out), and we take strengths for granted."

Marcus Buckingham, co-author of "Now Discover Your Strengths"

Give me two minutes and I'll demonstrate how to go from being Clark Kent to Superman.

In 60 seconds, name your greatest strengths and explain how you use them in your work every day to achieve great results. How many in 60 seconds?

Take another 60 seconds to name your weaknesses and how they hold you back at work and detract from your results? Being brutally honest, which did you find easier, naming what makes you Superman or what makes you Clark Kent?

Becoming a leader is one of the most exciting events in most people's career. For many young professionals, their development is a process of learning cognitive and emotional skills and competencies over time, with the goal of being rewarded with a leadership position. Yet many new leaders I work with have spent the majority of their development time before promotion focusing on "fixing" their weaknesses. They not only haven't developed their natural strengths further, many don't even know what they are. After all, most of us do what we're really good at with such ease that it's easy to take for granted. Sadly, by failing to realize that it was probably using their strengths that got them promoted, these new leaders respond to their promotion by becoming even more obsessed with their weaknesses. This costs lots of energy and often results in ever-lower levels of confidence in themselves at a time when they need it most. This leads to anxiety and even fear. Tragically, many choose to cover up this fear with a false "bravado" that is anything but authentic, which leads to negatively perceived behaviors and results in followers losing trust and faith in their leadership.

So how can you tear off your Clark Kent clothing and reveal the Super Leader underneath? Start with my first question: What are your strengths? Imagine yourself when you are at your best, when you feel powerful, full of energy and absolutely confident in yourself without being arrogant. What are you doing in that vision? How are you doing it? These reflective questions will not be answered in 30 seconds but they need to be answered. After you have found your answers, involve others and ask them the same questions. What do they see as your strengths? When do they see you at your best?

When you get a clear picture on your strengths then spend time developing them further and stop taking them for granted! Devote 50% of your development time to becoming not merely "good" at something but becoming exceptional, best in class even, and watch the Superman in you come out.

Michael Couch

Point of View

Weathering the Storm

Dark clouds are gathering on the business horizon. A bleak economic outlook, driven by higher oil and food prices and a falling dollar is enough to make any leader cautious right now.

It is not a time to be splashing out on unnecessary expenditure. Corporate belts are likely to be tightened. There is a real chance of cutbacks and closures, restructuring and job losses.

If this process is poorly managed, leaders risk losing employees' goodwill. The existing trust that has been built up over years evaporates.

A method that all but guarantees a poorly managed strategy is to take a mechanistic approach. In an attempt to avoid the uncertainty, planning and execution become an exercise in rationality.

And while it all looks great on paper, it ignores the emotional drivers in the business. Crucial conversations may not happen. People often conform with company policy, too afraid to speak out for fear of a backlash. Discussions can get cut short; empty words are used simply to fill the silence.

When this state exists at work, toxic emotions (see Head & Heart Spring 2008) infect the whole work environment and negative leadership is more in evidence. The alternative is embrace uncertainty; accept the situation for what it is.

Find time to praise and celebrate the small wins that people have everyday. This sincere, positive attitude can make a huge difference to how your company weathers the looming storm.

Steven Hunt

Positive (Leadership)

Positive (leadership) is characterized by the presence rather than the absence of distinguishing features. Positive (leadership) expresses or implies affirmation, agreement, permission, optimism, or confidence. Last, but not least, positive (leadership) means no possibilities of doubt, certain.

The origin of positive, according to the Oxford Dictionary, comes from the Latin word ponere, meaning "to place." How can you use this word's origin and definitions to improve your positive leadership impact?

Let's take a few of these key words and bring them into a feedback context that you can use with people who either observe or experience your leadership efforts. Ask a few people around you the following questions:

What's present in my leadership that's distinguishing, or makes an impact?

What's absent in my leadership that if it were present, I'd be more effective?

In what areas do I display confidence or certainty in my leadership approach and behaviors and in which areas do I need to improve?

Certainly few of us would say that we aren't positive people or positive leaders. However it's how others see us and how we "place" our positive leadership behaviors that create the environment where all can profit from them.

I'm certain that if you place this definition of positive (leadership) in your continued leadership behaviors, you'll enhance both your relationships and your business results.

Dan Norenberg

The Magic Ratio

"Write people's accomplishments in stone and their faults in the sand."

Benjamin Franklin

Ask your employees to name the factors that make them happy at work. Praise and positive feedback will feature prominently in a list of the top factors: to "see and feel supported by the boss" is a typical comment you will hear.

Yet, surveys consistently come to the same conclusion: most employees do not get the recognition they seek from their leaders. More than 50% of employees believe that senior managers see them as "part of the machine," according to a 2007 global survey by Towers Perrin. All this is a guaranteed recipe for de-motivating the people you lead. The long-term consequences are not hard to imagine. People are physically present at work but mentally switched off. They seem to survive by criticizing everyone and everything, apart from themselves. Your best people leave for more rewarding, satisfying jobs

elsewhere. And your business goals disappear in an atmosphere of toxic emotions – thinly disguised hate, envy and selfishness.

So why is positive leadership – a simple notion – so hard to transfer from theory into everyday office behavior?

It helps to look at relationships from another perspective - marriages. A respected psychologist, Professor John Gottman, has spent over 35 years observing thousands of newlywed couples in conversation. Gottman

compared the number of positive comments to negative comments in each couple's conversation. In all cases the conversation lasted only 15 minutes. And he made a surprisingly simple discovery.

In conversations with a positive-to-negative ratio (PNR) of 5:1 or higher the marriage endures the test of time. For couples with a lower ratio, heartbreak is staring them in the face; Gottman's magic ratio predicts divorce with 94% accuracy.

Gottman identifies four relationship killers: contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling and criticism. So while you are wise to avoid these, blind optimism has its limitations too. A PNR of 13:1 also harms your relationship, because the gushing praise ignores the hard facts of daily reality.

Here lies the challenge: managing the real-life tensions between flattery and facing reality. Excellent leaders start by being open, honest and sincerely engaged with their colleagues. They strike a balance between praise and criticism. Faults are pointed out, but more time is spent in a balanced dialogue about how to correct the mistake, and ensure it doesn't happen again. Above all, leaders find time to praise people when they see behaviors that are leading to the goals they want to achieve.

Steven Hunt
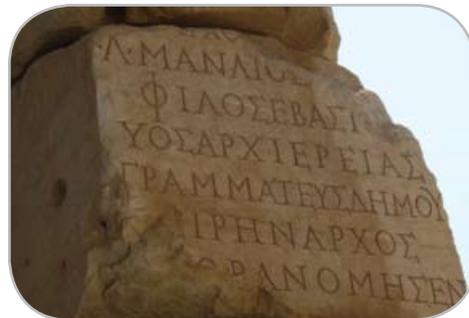
Leading Organizations

Energy Managers at Work

The current energy crisis is challenging us to take a long overdue look at how energy impacts global and national energy policies and practice.

Are you suffering from an energy crisis at work? A major challenge facing leaders today is managing energy. The future might bring new titles to leadership roles, such as "Group Energy Manager."

Leaders play a unique role in contributing to a positive or negative energy environment. Positive leadership encourages people to bring their best efforts to work. Positive leadership stimulates people to bring their engagement in all forms, physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social to the workplace. The Energy Manager manages energy, first in themselves and then in those around them.

Positive leadership is not playing cheerleader; it's not about looking reality in the eye and simply putting a superficial spin on things to create a happy picture of what might be a dire situation. The true test of your positive leadership skills can be measured in the "energy outputs" of the people that you interact with.

The key to creating positive energy outputs through leadership is relationship. It is impossible to be a positive leader if you don't tend to the relationships you have with those you interact with. Name one example of a leader who models the way as a Positive Leader who doesn't develop deep and meaningful relationships and I'll buy you a ticket to Augsburg.

Carl Rogers, one of psychology's most effective practitioners said it best: people need a relationship in which they are accepted. Rogers felt that if he could provide and help create this type of relationship, the other would discover within him or herself the capacity to use that relationship to grow, in other words, profit in the N Vision sense of the word.

Acceptance, empathy and positive regard are tools of the trade used by top energy managers. Additionally, give positive feedback on what people are doing well and give specific suggestions for building their skills.

If you remember that the "r" in energy stands for relationship, you'll have a good learning anchor on your journey towards positive leadership.

Dan Norenberg

Food for Thought

"The last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitudes."

Viktor Frankl,
Austrian psychiatrist
and psyhcotherapist

Leadership Facts and Figures

Nine out of ten people say they are more productive when they're around positive people and research has shown that increasing positive emotions could lengthen life span by ten years.

Adapted from the book
"How Full is Your Bucket?"
by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton

For more interesting **Leadership Facts and Figures** go to our Leader's Toolkit at http://www.nvision-learning.com/leadersedge_toolkit.php

Challenging Situations?

What challenging situation would you like us to deal with in a future issue of Head & Heart? Get our perspective.

Send us an e-mail at:
headandheart@nvision-learning.com

We will of course ensure that your challenging situation remains anonymous.

N VISION
LEARNING SOLUTIONS GMBH

Leaders Learning for Profit ®