

What Happens At The Top Filters Down to All

by Judi Moreo

In a recent survey by the American Management Association and reported in Psychology Today, 500 CEO's were asked, "*What must one do to survive in the 21st Century?*"

The top answer across the board was, "*Practice creativity and innovation.*" And yet, only 6 % felt their organizations were doing a great job of it.

According to Training & Development Magazine, the biggest roadblock to creativity and innovation within organizations is: 12% Lack of ideas, 35% lack of motivation from management; and 53% fear.

The extensive changes we are currently experiencing throughout the globe are going to demand a particular style of leadership so utterly revolutionary that it will challenge any and all existing paradigms. New thinking must become the norm in any organization where high quality and effective leadership will be the competitive edge. It must supersede outdated and obsolete management paradigms. When there is truly effective leadership, team members are mobilized to be and do their very best. It is the catalyst for transforming the organization and galvanizing everyone towards a common purpose.

Walk the Talk

The potential for greatness and innovation in your organization already exists. It's up to you to recognize, retrieve and redeem this competitive capital. The answer lies in uniting your team and being able to create an environment that is conducive to creativity.

Effective leaders know that their employees are their greatest assets. They cultivate, encourage and engage the talents and skills of these employees' to be able to consistently find new and better approaches that will ultimately improve bottom-line results. They believe that understanding, participation and involvement of their team members is essential to earning respect, loyalty and commitment. There is no better way to do this than by "walking the talk." A true leader teaches by example. Yet, there are so many leaders who practice, *"Do as I say and not as I do."* When you are preaching one thing and doing another, you are influencing in an adverse manner which diminishes respect and trust.

To generate a culture of creativity, a company's vision, core values, mission and purpose must be articulated in a way that employees see them as being a high priority. Vision stimulates and fosters creativity. This vision, along with your company's core values, must be infused into everything you say and do, so that everyone can accurately anticipate the future and avoid repeating past mistakes.

You must become the model of the transformation that you are envisioning. Leaders set the tone or tempo of the organization. Powerful leadership requires that the leader model the right behaviors. Employees “copy” a leader’s behavior! The single most important way to ensure your employees become the best they can be is to “walk your talk”. If you want to be effective, don’t just set values or talk values. Instead, practice and demonstrate values. Your employees make judgments about you based on what they see you do instead of what they hear you say. Actions really do speak louder than words! Make sure your actions demonstrate what you say. The failure to walk the talk results in distrust and low morale.

People will believe you when you model the behaviors that you want them to practice. The most natural method of influencing people is by example. If you want your employees to be more creative then show them by being creative. If you want them to be more organized, then you must be more organized. If you want them to be more enthusiastic, then enthusiasm must begin with you. If you want punctuality and you start your meetings late, that’s saying its okay not to be punctual. If you want your employees to be more disciplined, then your responsibility is to begin with your own discipline.

There’s not a company that doesn’t have a communication problem of one kind or another. And yet senior managers of many organizations don’t even speak to employees by saying a simple, “*Good Morning.*” If you want the communication in your organization to be effective... then the communication

begins with you. Your behavior has to correspond with whatever expectations you have of your employees. It's that simple.

Leaders can't lead others unless they lead themselves first. In his book, *Sacred Cows Make The Best Burgers*, the author, Robert Kriegel tells the story of an outstanding individual Frank Pacetta, a sales manager at Xerox, who took his district from the bottom ranking performer to number one in his region. He says, *"I believe in the power of personal example. At the minimum, a leader has to show his troops the route of the march and the destination."* Employees who have a strong leader will look out for fresh ideas, take on new challenges and learn new things.

Suppose you announce you are committed to customers. However, in your day-to-day actual behavior, you find your customers to be bothersome and you ignore or avoid customers whenever and wherever possible. Your behaviors are demonstrating the opposite.

For the past 20 years, Carol Scott, Managing Director of Imperial Car Rental in South Africa, has spent every Tuesday between 8:00 am and 10:00 am serving customers herself. She knows that satisfied customers drive her business profits. This weekly habit has clearly and positively demonstrated to all her employees as well as her customers that they are important. The result: a very successful

company that has both loyal customers and employees. She has set a positive example!

If your employees see that your behavior exemplifies a specific behavior you want them to have, they will do as you do. The most important way to communicate your commitment is your behavior. How you spend your time, the behaviors you model, the goals you set, the ways you reward performance, as well as your verbal and non-verbal communications all send a message.

We're all dealing with some primary business issues and challenges including: reducing turnover, retaining employees, attracting talent, raising performance at all levels, obtaining commitment, improving communication, accountability, overcoming roadblocks to change, doing more with less resources and reducing negativity. These are the day-to-day issues most of us have to handle. They have to be dealt with in the appropriate manner and ultimately it boils down to two words: *effective leadership!*

We only have to take a look at the leadership of an organization to understand why certain companies flourish and others merely tick over.

Victor Goncalves, former co-founder of the very successful Villamoura Restaurants states, *"When an organization is thriving, look at the top. It's the leader. When an organization is stagnant, look at the top. It's the leader."*

Similarly, you can walk into any business and within a few minutes you know by the kind of service you get.....what kind of leader the company has at the helm. What happens at the top filters down to all employees. A leader's ability to lead is critical to the establishment and continuity of creativity, increasing productivity and keeping good employees.

(Excerpted from Conquer the Brain Drain: 52 Creative Ways to Pump Up Productivity, by Judi Moreo and Fiona Carmichael)

Judi Moreo and Fiona Carmichael are the founders of Turning Point International, a performance improvement company with headquarters in Las Vegas. In addition, they are the co-authors of “Ignite the Spark: 52 Creative Ways to Boost Productivity” and “Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Success.”