

Good leaders know they don't reach success by themselves

Different motivational needs can lead to corner office or possible failure

I know it's a little early to be thinking about the beach, but bear with me. I want to use a metaphor that invokes the ocean and the rapidly approaching summer season to make the distinction between managers who make ripples and those who make waves.



LEADERSHIP VALUES

William Sparks

Think back over your career and reflect on the following: Do you like challenging assignments and immediate performance feedback?

Do you often come across to others as rude and impatient? Are you willing to cut corners in order to win?

NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT

If you answered yes to those questions, chances are you're a classic overachiever.

And while your Type A personality may serve you well today, it can create a roadblock, or undercurrent as the case may be, on your quest to the corner office.

Recent research in leadership and organizational dynamics has led to an interesting and surprising finding — overachievers are superb contributors but lousy managers.

Overachievers are usually successful in sales positions or as entrepreneurs, but they are less effective in leadership positions in larger organizations.

They have mastered the art of individual accomplishment, but they are often novices when it comes to motivating and managing a team.

Herein lies a paradoxical truth — a strong need for achievement results in an equally powerful fear of failure.

Fear of failure leads to micromanaging

others — inspecting their work and, often times, doing it over.

That style of management becomes less effective as one assumes more and more responsibility.

Seminal research into human motivation by the late Harvard psychologist David McClelland found that we have three primary motive needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation and the need for power.

Everyone's behavior is motivated to a certain degree by his or her unique motivational profile — with an individual's dominant need dictating his or her management style.

NEED FOR AFFILIATION

Although the need to achieve is predominant in the United States, it is not the only need that drives human behavior.

Managers who have a strong need for affiliation or acceptance prefer warm, friendly work environments.

Those managers need to be liked by their coworkers, and they look for ways to create harmony in their teams or departments.

The dark side of affiliation is a fear of rejection — which often leads to avoiding conflict or ignoring performance standards.

Those managers have difficulty moving up the corporate ladder because they place more importance on relationships than performance.

Over the long term, that manager creates a dysfunctional climate where conflict is avoided, goals aren't met and candid communication is censored.

NEED FOR POWER

The third human motive is the need for control and authority. Managers who crave personal power like to influence others, maintain their reputations and manage up.

The dark side of power is a fear of letting go — which leads to a controlling, sometimes coercive style more focused on looking out for themselves than on their subordinates.

Over the long run, those managers often

create a dysfunctional dependency where members are afraid to think for themselves, take risks or disagree with the boss.

While McClelland and his colleagues focused on those three needs, they began looking for a healthier approach to leadership — and, as a result, a more productive style of management.

Abraham Maslow, McClelland's contemporary and friendly rival in the field of human behavior, found it. "Self-actualization" refers to the highest level of human development.

ACTUALIZED LEADERS

Actualized leaders are motivated by the need to reach their potential, while at the same time helping their subordinates reach their potential, too.

They are not afraid to exert power, but they do so for the best interests of the organization, not for themselves.

Those types of leaders, though quite rare, are spontaneous, creative and able to laugh at their mistakes.

Actualized leaders operate in a peculiar dichotomy: They are hard-working and lazy, trusting and suspicious, energized in a group while longing for solitude.

Perhaps the most important distinction between actualized leaders and the others is that they realize they can't do it alone. They empower and trust their subordinates without micromanaging or manipulating them.

Those leaders recognize that while they have risen to a certain level on their achievement, the corner office is for those who can ride the wave of exceptional performance of their team, division or department.

In corporate America, the choice is yours. You can micromanage your own ripple or ride the wave of your team's performance. Either way, surf's up.

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