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How To Save Your Struggling Business With Personal Leadership Practices

Leaders perform best when aligned to a vision that inspires and motivates them to act.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

The mark of a company able to adapt to a changing environment and to seize opportunities are leaders that lead the business, lead others, and most importantly lead themselves. Leaders perform best when aligned to a vision that inspires and motivates them to act.

Successful companies that maximize the talents of their leaders build personal leadership into their cultures, focusing intently on developing and communicating a meaningful vision and strategy; aligning

the motivations of individual leaders to the direction of the firm; and effectively strengthening leaders' skills and abilities to prioritize and make decisions that deliver the intended results--both for themselves and those they lead.

Entrepreneurs can build a culture of personal leadership by emphasizing the vision and strategy of the firm, and helping leaders to identify their personal goals and objectives.

Ask yourself:

- What counts as success for your firm? How, and how consistently, is that message conveyed?
- What do individual leaders care about that will motivate them to achieve success for your firm, for clients, and for themselves?
- What do leaders need in terms of support for effectively prioritizing activities, developing action plans and managing their time?

Questions like these can help leaders align their efforts both to the firm and to their personal motivations, leading to a greater ability to leverage existing talent and sustain performance over time.

If the firm has decided to place its bets on its talent and make that its competitive advantage, then it's got to do better. How do you do that? You get very clear about the vision, make sure everyone is aligned to it, clarify the strategy for the firm, and teach individual leaders to make their *own* personal and uniquely-motivating visions and goals for themselves. Then empower them to deliver on those visions and goals with skills related to action planning, prioritization, time management, and so on. The idea is that the individual leaders are so excited and energized by what's in it for them personally that they align all their efforts to that achievement, and that achievement rolls up into the vision of the firm.

The image is one of, let's say, a subway station. People are milling about, on their cell phones, individually getting things done but in no particular direction. One could stand on the balcony and say, "Look at all those busy people! So focused on their work... Everybody getting stuff done in their conversations and on their laptops even as they wait for the train..."

But compare that to a pack of marathon runners--all lined up and running the same direction at the same time toward the same finish line. They need to put their efforts into making sure everyone was running the same direction, for the same reason, and doing their best to stay focused on the same finish line. *Then* they could focus on minimizing the distractions that come from a lack of focus (such as poor decision making skills, poor prioritization, poor time management) and building up the leaders to do even more, better, faster (through coaching and mentoring).

Personal leadership assumes that leaders *perform* best when they are *at* their best, personally as well as professionally. So in addition to getting organized around vision, strategy and goals, it's important to foster

a strong appreciation for what it means to be a high performer and what it takes to sustain that level of success.

If your firm wants to capitalize on the investment its making in its leaders, it would recognize that to get the best results out of these kind of talented individuals, it needs to help them not *just* achieve but find a sense of personal motivation and fulfillment that will inspire and motivate them to over deliver not just for the firm, but also for themselves. That way, everyone wins.

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