

Real Life Management

How Do You Motivate People?

Motivation is an important key to sustained individual and team performance — perhaps the top key! Can we directly motivate another person? Not really — but we can intentionally foster a climate that helps people motivate themselves. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said it well: “Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.”

The secret to effective motivation is to promote intrinsic motivation — that internal motivation people can have to perform well for psychological reasons that go beyond external rewards. Modern day motivational expert Daniel Pink asserts that, “Intrinsically motivated employees find more personal satisfaction in their work, and are consistently more motivated, with less prodding and cajoling from management.”

How do we intrinsically motivate employees? We can get some guidance by reviewing the findings of the classic motivation research of Dr. Frederick Herzberg and validated by numerous studies since then. Let's review the basic findings of Herzberg's “Two Factor Motivational Model.”

Two Factor Motivational Model:

Satisfiers versus Dissatisfiers

Herzberg and other researchers have found that work environments contain “hygiene” factors that if not done well lead to job dissatisfaction (i.e. are “dissatisfiers”). Two key points are 1) not doing well on these hygiene factors will contribute to job dissatisfaction and 2) doing well on these factors will NOT lead to job satisfaction — but will keep motivation neutral. The primary hygiene (dissatisfiers) are:

- 1) Company policy and administration
- 2) Supervision
- 3) Relationship with supervisor
- 4) Work conditions
- 5) Salary

The key here is to participatively engage with employees and develop policies, practices, and work conditions that are viewed as fair and positive. By itself you will not be contributing much to the satisfaction and motivation of your employees. But you will avoid fueling dissatisfaction and demotivating them.

Satisfiers (Motivators)

Herzberg and other researchers have also discovered a set of factors that are considered “satisfiers” or “motivators.” Assuming the hygiene factors are being satisfactorily met, these factors are what truly inspire and motivate employees. And these factors have a strong “intrinsic” bent to them — they speak to our heart-felt psychological needs and can be intrinsic to the job. There are six major motivators:

- 1) **Achievement:** Employees need to have a sense of achievement, and that they are accomplishing something that matters.
- 2) **Recognition:** People desire to be appreciated and recognized by their bosses and others for their contributions.
- 3) **Work Itself:** The work should be meaningful, interesting, and challenging for the employee to perform and feel motivated.
- 4) **Responsibility:** The employee must hold themselves responsible for the work. The supervisors should give them ownership of the work and minimize control but retain accountability.
- 5) **Advancement:** Employees should feel that by excelling in their current work, they have the opportunity to advance in responsibilities and into other positions that they find appealing.
- 6) **Growth:** Employees should feel they have opportunities to grow their skills and develop as value-added members of the organization.

External rewards do have their place and can help motivate under some circumstances. But what is interesting about the above list is these are not external, reward-driven factors, but involve intrinsic elements that can be cultivated by intentional job enrichment and motivational management practices.

All generations in the work force desire and can be inspired by these intrinsic motivators — especially the younger generation. For example, I am a baby boomer who has been with the same company from the day I graduated from college years ago. In contrast, my oldest daughter left her first job after only working there less than a year — and took a small pay cut! Why? She wanted to work someplace where the motivators above were more evident — she now has been at her second job five years and loves it!

Principles for Putting Satisfiers (Motivators) Into Practice

The key to applying the satisfiers is to enrich jobs to make them psychologically appealing and inspiring. Following is a table of principles to help us enrich jobs:

Principle: Remove some controls while retaining accountability.

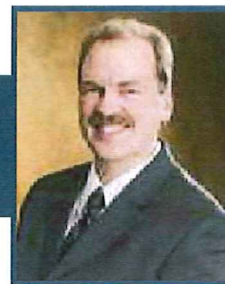
Motivators Involved: *Responsibility & Achievement*

Principle: Increase the accountability of individuals for their own work. Greater personal responsibility for quality of work, less scrutiny by supervisors.

Motivators Involved: *Responsibility & Recognition*

*Principle: Giving a person a complete natural unit of work (e.g. let employees sign a letter they produced or present a report they prepared). **Motivators Involved:** Responsibility, Achievement & Recognition*

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Principle: Granting additional authority to employees; job freedom.
Motivators Involved: Responsibility, Achievement & Recognition

Principle: Sharing some reports and information directly with workers rather than through the supervisors.
Motivators Involved: Internal Recognition

Principle: Introducing new and more difficult tasks not previously handled. *Motivators Involved: Growth & Learning*

Principle: Assign individuals specific or specialized tasks, enabling them to become experts.
Motivators Involved: Responsibility, Growth & Advancement

Principle: Bring employees to some meetings; give employees credit for their work that goes to people outside the team.
Motivators Involved: Recognition, Growth

Principle: Give a person opportunity to lead special projects and assignments. *Motivators Involved: Recognition, Growth, Advancement*

Let me close with a quote from Homer Rice. "You can motivate by fear and you can motivate by reward. But both of these methods are only temporary. The only lasting thing is self-motivation."

P.S. Hope to see you at the National Postal Forum March 17-20 in San Francisco and/or MAILCOM April 28 – May 1 in Atlantic City! ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCM, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric. Wes teaches university classes and would like to thank his students in the George Fox University Organizational Theory class for their contributions to this article. Wes would love to hear your feedback and article ideas and can be contacted at Wes.Friesen@pgn.com. Check out his personal website for free information (www.wesfriesen.com).

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Checklists – A Simple Tool with Complex Benefits

Looking for a simple tool that will drive your operations to higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness? The checklist may be what you are looking for. I recently read Atul Gawande's *The Checklist Manifesto* and was inspired to read real-life examples from the medical field, construction, aviation, finance, and others to show how simple checklists — coupled with timely and effective teamwork — can vastly improve the quality and effectiveness of what we do, and in some cases, literally make the difference between life or death.

Gawande is a surgeon, and he shared how he and his team developed a two-minute checklist that covered some basics for surgery (e.g., do we have enough blood and antibiotics?), as well as some basics for good teamwork (e.g., does everyone in the Operating Room know the name of each person in the room?). They then tested these lists in eight different hospitals. The results were stunning. When they took the time to make introductions and follow the checklist, they had a 35% decline in deaths and complications related to surgery!

The Problem: Avoidable Mistakes

The problem is that mistakes are being made that harm people and our organizations. Why? The reality is that our know-how and sophistication have increased remarkably across almost all our realms of endeavor, and as a result so has our struggle to deliver on them. You see it in the frequent mistakes authorities make when hurricanes or tornadoes or other disasters hit. You see it in the increase in lawsuits against attorneys for legal mistakes — the most common being simple administrative errors, like missed calendar dates and clerical screw ups, as well as errors in applying the law. You see it in flawed software design, in foreign intelligence failures, in our tottering banks — in fact, in almost any endeavor requiring complexity and significant amounts of knowledge.

The communication world — including print, mail and e-communications — has not been exempt from errors. We have recently seen a large company mistakenly mail out thousands of mailpieces with sensitive customer information; unfortunately, information was sent to the wrong customers and a security breach transpired. Sad to say, this example within our industry is not an isolated one.

Avoidable mistakes are common and persistent, not to mention demoralizing and frustrating. And the reason is increasingly evident: the volume and complexity of what we know has exceeded our individual ability to deliver its benefits correctly, safely, or reliably. Knowledge has both saved us and burdened us. We need a tool to help us navigate complexity and avoid unnecessary and harmful mistakes.

The Solution: Checklists

Checklists by themselves are not the proverbial "silver bullet" that will eliminate all mistakes — but they will help reduce mistakes

and improve our quality and effectiveness. I have had multiple teams earn Quality certifications like the MPTQM (Mail Processing Total Quality Management) from the Postal Service and ISO-9001. A key component to earning these certifications and ensuring consistent quality in our operations is the use of checklists. Our ultimate goal is not just to have people ticking boxes on a checklist. Our ultimate goal is to have our teams embrace a culture of teamwork, discipline, and quality — and checklists can be a useful means to that end.

Benefits of Checklists

Here are some of the benefits of checklists. Checklists:

1. Help with memory recall and clearly set out the necessary steps in a process. This provides verification and helps ensure consistency.
2. Establish standards of good performance and helps ensure proper execution.
3. Help defend everyone — even the experienced — against making mistakes. Help combat complacency.
4. Serve as a "cognitive net." They catch mental flaws inherent in all of us — flaws of memory, attention, and thoroughness.
5. Serve as a great training tool to help ensure people are completing tasks correctly.

For me the bottom line is that checklists can help eliminate "stupid" mistakes. In some fields like medical, aviation, and construction, these avoidable mistakes have not only cost organizations millions of dollars — they have also cost people their lives. In our industry normally lives are not at stake — but service to our customers, avoiding risk, making money for our shareholders, and creating a high performance culture for our employees is on the line.

Checklist for Developing Checklists

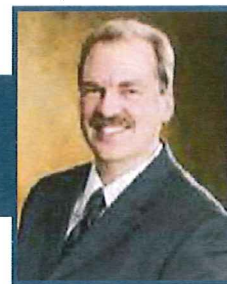
A key to successful checklist development is participation, especially with the end users of the checklist. Participation builds buy-in and support and will result in better quality end results.

You can go to www.gawande.com and download Atul Gawande's "A Checklist for Checklists," and also see a few sample checklists. Let me share some key questions (guidelines) in building effective checklists:

Step One: Development

- Do you have clear, concise objectives for your checklist?
- Is each item: a critical step and in danger of being missed? Not adequately checked by other mechanisms? Actionable, with a specific response needed?
- Have you involved all relevant team members in the checklist creation process?

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Step Two: Drafting

- Does the checklist: utilize natural breaks in workflow (pause points)? Use simple sentence structure and basic language? Have a simple, uncluttered, and logical format? Fit on one page? Minimize the use of color?
- Is the font sans serif, upper and lower case text, large enough to be read easily and dark on a light background?
- Is the date of creation (or revision) clearly marked?

Step Three: Validation

- Have you: tested the checklist with front line users (either in a real or simulated situation)? Modified the checklist in response to repeated trials?
- Does the checklist fit the flow of work? Detect errors at a time when they can still be corrected?
- Can the checklist be completed in a reasonably brief period of time?
- Have you made plans for future review and revision of the checklist?

Checklists aren't the total solution to eliminating mistakes. But they are an important tool to helping us and our team members from making those "stupid" mistakes — which are easy to make when we're working hard and trying to keep up with the many details of getting the work done. Good luck to you as you expand the use of checklists and lead your team to an even higher level of quality and performance! ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCM, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon that serves over 825,000 customers. Wes leads his teams with the able assistance of Supervisors Allison Rowden, Jessica Eberhardt, Heidi Fouts and Matt McHill. Wes teaches university classes and is a featured speaker at national Conferences like MAILCOM, National Postal Forum, FUSION and others. Check out his personal web-site for free information (wesfriesen.com).

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Love Works

Want to be a more effective leader? Want to help your team be even more successful? Learning how to consistently lead with love is the key you are looking for! It's one thing to want to lead with love, and another to know how to do it and then live it out. I recently read an outstanding book that can help us — let me share some of the key ideas.

"Undercover Boss" is one of my favorite shows and usually ends with me choked up with emotion. Some of the CEOs featured are already caring and inspiring leaders, others less so, but all end up learning valuable lessons when they work with front line staff and supervisors and realize that people are truly the most valuable resource of any organization.

I remember watching the episode featuring Joel Manby, CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment, which owns or operates about 20 family themed attractions across the country such as Dollywood, Silver Dollar City, and Stone Mountain in Georgia. After seeing Joel on the show I told my wife that this guy really understands what servant leadership is all about, and knows how to add value to all of an organization's key stakeholders (employees, customers, owners, and community). Recently I heard that Joel had just written a book on leadership called *Love Works*, so I got my copy and read it with great interest.

Love Works — "Leading with Love"

Joel and other successful like minded leaders understand and promote the concept of servant leadership and "leading with love." Talking about "love" in business makes some people squirm. Part of the problem is that our English language has only one word for love, while our friends the ancient Greeks had four — one of which is "agape" love, which is the one that is most relevant for business settings.

Agape love is not about feelings and is not emotion-based. Agape love is unconditional and is behavior based — it's about choosing to care and following up with actions. When we look at love in action, love works — at work. And it can be a powerful tool to help us strengthen our teams and improve the value we add to our stakeholders.

Key principles that explain this kind of love come from one of the oldest and most respected authorities on human behavior: the Bible. Joel elaborates on seven key principles of practical love that the Apostle Paul outlined in chapter 13 of his first letter to the Corinthians. This is a passage that is often used at weddings, but it can also be used as a leadership philosophy.

Seven Key Principles of Leading with Love

1. Be patient — demonstrate self-control in difficult situations. Key points include: don't be patient with poor performance, but be patient with how you respond to poor performance. Praise patiently in public — including being specific, exact, and legitimate. Admonish in private with specifics, then reaffirm the person's value and help them "get back on the horse" and move on. Praise more than you admonish. Some studies found the ratio should be at least 4 to 1.

2. Be kind — show encouragement and enthusiasm. Kindness is the root of encouragement, encouragement leads to enthusiasm, and everyone benefits from enthusiasm. Remember that kindness, encouragement and enthusiasm start with us in leadership roles. When a leader is kind, it will influence front-line employees who will in turn be more likely to treat customers well.

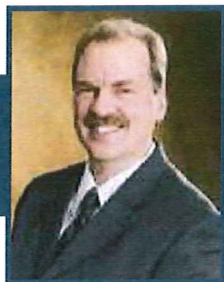
Every time we contact someone, we can make their day better or worse — so make it better. I like the Sam Horn quote: "Anyone who consistently makes you feel bad is not helping you be better." Finally, break through the email clutter and use hand written notes of thanks. Over the years, I have received hand-written notes of appreciation from a CEO and also a President of my company — both notes are framed and will be mementos that I enjoy well into my retirement years.

3. Be trusting — place confidence in those around you. Leading with love isn't possible if you don't trust people. And when you trust people, leading will be more effective than ever. Listening carefully is a sign of trust — interrupting people is a sign of distrust. Another way to show trust is to avoid micro-managing and let others make decisions they are responsible for. Then we need to avoid overriding a decision that has already been made unless it is absolutely necessary.

4. Be unselfish — think of yourself less. Being unselfish doesn't mean thinking less of yourself — it means thinking of yourself less. Unselfish leaders aim to make as few decisions as possible. They also deploy a Socratic rather than autocratic leading style. Socratic leading involves asking questions, facilitating rich team discussions, and then making the best possible decision based on that rich discussion. Margaret Thatcher has a great quote that supports the Socratic and participate approach: "Being in power is like being a lady. If you have to remind people that you are, you aren't."

5. Be truthful — define reality corporately and individually. Highly respected CEO Max DePree said, "The first respon-

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sibility of a leader is to define reality." Practical guidelines include: Don't shoot the messenger or confuse disagreement with negative conflict. Don't assume people see the truth — speak up. As a leader, it's usually best to speak last. Be open to hearing the truth — find an accountability partner or partners that will always tell you the truth about yourself. Finally remember the adage to "speak the truth in love."

6. Be forgiving — release the grip of the grudge. What was done to you doesn't matter in the end — all that matters is how you respond. If someone has wronged your team or organization, consider giving them another chance if it is a one-time offense, they are aware of their shortcomings, they want to improve, and if you have doubt about letting them go.

Forgive someone who has wronged you — I agree with Jeff Henderson, who says "the longer you hold a grudge, the longer the grudge has a hold on you."

7. Be dedicated — stick to your values in all circumstances. Choosing to lead with love may be the single most difficult decision a leader can make, but a wise leader dedicates herself to it because it is also the best way to lead an organization.

If you lead anything or anyone, you are in a position of power. As leaders we need to use the power given us to get things done such as setting stretch targets, holding others accountable, asking for resources, making tough decisions, rallying people to common goals and getting results. Great leaders do all these things and at the same time lead with love. Martin Luther King Jr. understood this well when he said, "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic." Dr. King understood that love and power must be harnessed together to get the most important things done.

My final encouragement is to follow Gandhi's charge to: "Be the change you want to see in the world." Good luck to you as follow the path of leading with love and setting a positive example for others! ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCM, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon that serves over 829,000 customers. Wes leads his teams with the able assistance of Supervisors Allison Rowden, Jessica Eberhardt, Heidi Fouts and Matt McHill. Wes teaches university classes and is a featured speaker at national Conferences like MAIL-COM, National Postal Forum, FUSION and others. Check out his personal website for free information (www.wesfriesen.com). He can be contacted at wes.friesen@pgn.com.

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The Management Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin

Earlier this spring, I had the privilege to speak at and attend the Spring MAILCOM conference (mailcom-conference.com). One of the presentations by industry expert Marlene O'Hare focused on how the practical wisdom of Benjamin Franklin can help us manage our operations well.

Benjamin Franklin was not only a founding father of our country — he was also the first Postmaster General of the United States and a very successful businessman, leader, inventor, writer, and person. He was considered one of the smartest and wisest men our country has ever produced!

There is a lot we can learn from Franklin that can help us be better managers and help our operations be even more successful. Following is a list of some tips inspired by his wisdom:

Benjamin Franklin's Keys to Management and Operational Success

Strive for Excellence. "Whatever you become, be good at it." Excellence does not happen by chance. We must intentionally choose to excel at what we do, including making the choice to become more effective leaders and managers.

Be Prepared. "By failing to prepare, you prepare to fail." A plan is needed to accomplish our goals. Charging in without any thought to the end result and how to achieve it is a sure way to fall flat on your face.

Don't Fight Change. "When you are finished changing, you are finished." Change is inevitable. Focus on proactively making positive changes — and avoid being only reactive and having changes thrust upon you.

Less Talk, More Action & Actions Speak Louder than Words. "Well done is better than well said." We all know that talk by itself is cheap. Talking about a project doesn't get it done — we must take action to see the work through.

Don't Procrastinate. "Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today." It's easy to fall into the procrastination trap. One tip to avoid this trap is to have time-specific and measurable goals. And when you achieve key milestones or goals remember to take time to reward yourself and enjoy the sense of achievement.

Be Organized. "For every minute spent in organizing, one hour is earned" and "A place for everything, everything in its place." To maximize our productivity and achievement of our goals, we need to take the time to plan and to organize our resources.

The time we spend planning and organizing our work really does come back to us with interest.

Avoid Busywork. "Never confuse motion with action." Our time is limited and the expectations on us keep growing. We need to use our time well by avoiding unnecessary tasks, delegating when it makes sense, and focusing our attention on the highest value work.

Give Yourself Permission to Make Mistakes. "Don't fear mistakes" and "You will know failure. Continue to reach out." Fear of making mistakes can immobilize us. Taking risks and making mistakes provide us a special learning opportunity — provided we learn from the mistakes and grow from them.

Know Yourself. "There are three extremely hard things: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self." Self-awareness is the first tenet of emotional intelligence. Be honest with yourself, and seek input from others regarding your strengths and areas for further development.

Get Moving. "All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are moveable, and those that move." Which class do you fall into? The most successful people in life are those that actually move and get things done.

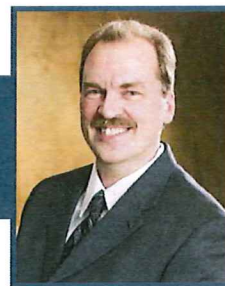
Act Quickly on Opportunities. "To succeed, jump as quickly at opportunities as you do at conclusions." Opportunities are everywhere. Our challenge is to be quick enough and smart enough to seize them when they arise.

Engage Your Staff Actively. "Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn." Experiential learning is at the core of developing ourselves and our team members. Give people a chance to learn by doing real work — and reinforce what they did well and patiently coach them when they could do better.

Don't Give up. "If at first you don't succeed, try again" and "Energy and persistence conquer all things." Striving to achieve our goals can be downright exhausting, right? There are times when we all feel like throwing in the towel. But pushing through those down times will eventually result in significant achievements — and when we look back we will say it was worth the effort.

Wise Up. "Life's tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late" and "I wish I knew then what I know now." We can accelerate our acquisition of wisdom by intentionally seeking out growing experiences, and by taking time to reflect on what we have learned from our experiences. We can also tap into the wisdom of others who have gone before us by reading their words, listening to them speak into our lives, and observing their actions.

With Wes Friesen



Be smart. "The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance." Franklin modeled being a life-long learner. We can take advantage of traditional education sources like colleges and universities, and can attend conferences like MAILCOM and National Postal Forum. We can also read trade journals (like this one!) and good books. It's not enough to hear a good idea — the real value comes when we put it into practice.

Keep Trying. "Diligence is the mother of good luck." One tip is to break down our bigger goals into small units of work and then completing them one at a time. Another tip is to choose to forego some of our time spent in front of the TV, PC or iPad and concentrate on getting our priority goals completed.

Seek Knowledge and Wisdom. "If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it from him" and "The doors of wisdom are never shut." We have many potential sources to learn and

develop more wisdom — take advantage of them! In addition to our personal life experiences, we can learn from the experiences of others through mentoring, involvement in professional associations, attending conferences, taking classes and workshops, and reading what they write about their experiences and lessons learned.

The final piece of advice I wanted to highlight is the encouragement to continue to grow as a person. Franklin said, "Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man." Good luck as you continue on your journey to be a better manager — and person! ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCM, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon that serves over 829,000 customers.

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Does Your Team Work?

For us fans of team sports, isn't it exciting to see our favorite teams blend together their individual talents and abilities and achieve success as a unified team? The good news is that our teams in the business world can also achieve success — and a key to make that happen is **teamwork**.

What is teamwork? I like Andrew Carnegie's definition: "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. ***It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results***".

How can we develop stronger teamwork? Let me share Ten Principles of High Performance teamwork that I think can be helpful*.

Ten Principles to Build High Performance Teamwork

1) Build Trust with Integrity. As a leader of a team, when we need to walk with integrity and build trust for us — and build trust among all team members. Building trust comes down to being a person of good character. Marsha Sinetar said it well: "Trust is not a matter of technique, but of character. We are trusted because of our way of being, not because of our polished exteriors or our expertly crafted communications." We model integrity and build trust as we walk our talk, listen to others, always be honest — and be humble enough to admit our mistakes and ask for forgiveness when needed.

2) Put the Team First. In the middle of every high performance team is a common purpose — a sense of vision and mission that unites and inspires each individual team member. Make sure you solicit participation from the team when developing the common purpose, remembering the principle that "change imposed is change opposed" and Ken Blanchard's quote that "none of us is as smart as all of us."

Alexander Graham Bell summarizes well when he said, "All winning teams are goal oriented. Teams like these win consistently because everyone connected with them concentrates on specific objectives. They go about their business with blinders on: nothing will distract them from achieving their aims."

3) Communicate Openly and Candidly. High performing teams are empowered teams and information is a great source of power. Sharing the team's key performance metrics and indicators and on-going status is crucial. Ask yourself, "What do team members need to know on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to manage performance?" Tools such as balanced scorecards, dashboards, team work review meetings and one-on-one coaching sessions can be helpful.

4) Be Part of the Solution, Not the Problem. There is no substitute for personal ownership, responsibility and self-control. These are traits that we can model — and intentionally encourage in our team members. Also, recognize that problems will arise — and they may be blessings in disguise if we learn and grow from them. Mark Victor Hansen encourages us with "Problems are good, not bad. Welcome them and become the solution."

5) Commit to Excellence. One of my sayings is that "we can choose to be mediocre — or we can choose to strive for excellence. The choice is ours." The reality is that if we don't intentionally choose to strive for excellence the default choice is to settle for being mediocre. I resonate with Mario Andretti when he says, "Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal — a commitment to excellence — that will enable you to attain the success you seek."

6) Promote an Atmosphere of Respect. One way to show we really respect someone is to actively listen to them and then respond appropriately. Socrates once stated, "You have two ears and one mouth. Use them appropriately." James O'Toole explains a benefit of active listening when he said, "Almost all employees, if they see that they will be listened to, and they have adequate information, will be able to find ways to improve their own performance and the performance of their work group."

Showing respect also includes positive encouragement and expressing our appreciation and approval. I like Charles Schwab's quote, "I have never seen a man who could do real work except under the stimulus of encouragement and enthusiasm and the approval of the people for whom he was working."

7) Ask and Encourage the Right Questions. The art of questioning is an important management skill. It is a "pulling" technique — challenging people to think, to probe, to investigate, to challenge assumptions and to seek answers. John Chancellor illustrated the importance of this skill when he says "If you take a close look at the most successful people in life, you'll find that their strength is not in having the right answers, but in asking the right questions."

8) Use a Rational Problem-Solving Process. Albert Einstein supports the need for rational and thoughtful problem solving processes when he said, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

With Wes Friesen



There are a number of rational problem solving processes to choose from. One such approach is to follow these steps:

1. Gather data
2. Review facts
3. Define the problem and desired end-state
4. Ask questions and identify alternative solutions
5. Evaluate each alternative
6. Select "best" alternative
7. Implement chosen alternative
8. Evaluate after the fact the effectiveness of solution; make changes if necessary

9) Promote Interdependent Thinking. The key here is to promote "we" thinking — not "me" thinking. Vince Lombardi encourages us to "Build for your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another and of strength to be derived by unity." Having talented team members and encouraging development of individuals is important — but Michael Jordan puts it into perspective when he said, "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships." Phil Jackson adds "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

10) Pull the Weeds. Most people on a team are willing and able to "play by the rules" and be a value added member of a successful team. But the reality is that sometimes we may have a team member that is either not capable or is not willing to meet expectations — even after we have tried to remedy the situation. We are then faced with the choice of allowing the "weed" to remain and hold back the team's success, or to remove the weed so the rest of the team can grow.

Let me close with a quote from soccer great Mai Hamm. "I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team. I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion." ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCM, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon that serves over 829,000 customers. Wes leads his teams with the able assistance of Supervisors Allison Rowden, Jessica Eberhardt, Heidi Fouts and Matt McHill. Wes teaches university classes and is a featured speaker at national Conferences like MAILCOM, National Postal Forum, FUSION and other regional and local events. Check out his personal web-site for free information (wesfriesen.com). He can be contacted at wes.friesen@pgn.com.

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Real Life Management

Are You Connecting?

"The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present." James Kouzes and Barry Posner, leadership experts and authors of *The Leadership Challenge*

Henry Kissinger said, "The task of the leader is to get his/her people from where they are to where they have not been." How can we help our co-workers be successful here in the present — and to move with us towards a better future? A big key is for us as leaders to build strong connections with people.

How can we build strong connections and earn trust so that we can effectively influence our people to be successful? Let me share 10 principles of connecting with people that I think can be helpful.

Ten Principles to Connect with People Well

- 1. Commit to Connect.** The starting place for developing strong connections with people is to make a conscious choice to do so. Do you really want to connect better? If yes, commit to taking intentional steps to build deeper connections. The other principles will give you ideas to consider.
- 2. Develop a genuine care for people.** We can only connect well with people when we value and care for them. We need to not take people for granted and let them know we care and appreciate them. Valerie Elster reminds us that "Expressing gratitude is a natural state of being and reminds us that we are all connected."

Every person is important as Bill McCartney emphasizes when he said, "Anytime you devalue people, you question God's creation of them." Part of caring for people is to be honest, genuine and transparent. Let people see your heart of caring and compassion — and they will respond and feel closer to you. One of my often used quotes is that "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."
- 3. Be proactive — initiate movement towards them.** It's tempting to sit back and let others try and connect with us. But as leaders we need to be proactive and take the initiative. Management experts Tom Peters and Nancy Austin concluded that "The number one managerial productivity problem in America is, quite simply, managers are out of touch with their people and out of touch with customers."
- 4. Look for common ground.** Probably my favorite leadership expert is John Maxwell. I agree with John when he says, "Anytime you want to connect with another person,

start where both of you agree. And that means finding common ground." There are lots of potential areas of common ground — ranging from personal interests to life experiences to values and beliefs. The key to finding common ground? Listening.

- 5. Be a Good Listener.** Rachel Naomi Remen advises that, "The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention ... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words." I like the practical advice from Dale Carnegie (author of the classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) who said, "You can make more friends in two weeks by becoming a good listener than you can in two years trying to get other people interested in you."
- 6. Recognize and Respect Differences.** While we should be looking to find common ground with others, we also need to acknowledge that we're all different. Our differences and diversity make our lives more interesting, and can strengthen our team performance as we blend our diverse backgrounds and abilities together to make us stronger.
- 7. Share common experiences.** To really connect well with others, we need to find a way to cement the relationship. Joseph Newton said, "People are lonely (disconnected) because they build walls instead of bridges." To build bridges that connect you to people in a lasting way, share common experiences with them. Share meals. Go to a ball game or other events together. Take people to meetings with you. Participate on work projects together. Anything you experience together helps create a common history and build connection.
- 8. Get out of your office.** Reality is that there are increasing expectations on managers to produce more results with the same or fewer resources — and that can drive us into our offices to get our personal work done. But we need to intentionally carve out times to practice MBWA (Management by Walking Around). I have to admit that I'm not as consistent in getting out of my office and touching base with people as I would like — how are you doing?

With Wes Friesen



9. Be a giver — provide help and share knowledge and resources. Commit to being a servant leader who gives of oneself to help meet the needs of others. We can give of our time, knowledge and resources to help people around us. Giving of ourselves is the ultimate win-win that benefits both the receiver and the giver. Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Anne Frank reminds us that, "No one has ever become poor by giving."

10. Once connected, move forward. There is value in building deeper connections with people just for relationship's sake. But there is even more value when we use our connections with people to add value to our team's key stakeholders (investors, customers and employees) and drive towards a better future. Someone once said, "Leadership is cultivating in people today a future willingness on their part to follow you into something new for the sake of something great." Connection helps create that willingness.

Building deeper connections with people will enhance your influence and help you have a greater impact. How will you use your greater impact? I resonate with Jackie Robinson when he said, "A life isn't significant except for its impact on other lives." I wish you the best as you pursue deeper connections with people and add even more value to the lives of people around you! ■

Wes Friesen, MBA, CMDSM, MDC, EMCMI, CBA, ICP, CCM, CMA, CM, CFM, APP, PHR is the Manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon that serves over 830,000 customers. Wes leads his teams with the able assistance of Supervisors Allison Rowden, Jessica Eberhardt, Heidi Fouts and Matt McHill. Wes teaches university classes and is a featured speaker at national conferences like MAIL.COM, National Postal Forum, NACUMS, FUSION and other regional and local events. Check out his personal website for free information (www.wesfriesen.com). He can be contacted at wes.friesen@pgn.com.

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