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Empower your entire staff with your company's vision

by Carolyn West Price

How many times, when you worked for someone else (or if you still do), have you sensed that you and the management team were on separate pages? How many times have you felt that work is for the sake of work, with no appreciation, let alone a feeling of team camaraderie that you get when everyone huddles and knows they are headed toward the same goal...toward the same vision?



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Whether it's an overall corporate culture that promotes this "in the dark" feeling or it is department specific, it is incumbent upon managers to become leaders in order for the organization to move forward successfully in this new millennium. This takes two changes in our normal way of thinking about our organizations.

First, organizations need to recognize that all staff—and I mean "all"—must be informed of the organization's vision and marketing message (ie—what do you want people to think of when they hear the name of your organization?).

Second, they must be involved in the development of the strategy to promote this message, and be encouraged to do so, regardless of the "hat" they wear within the organization.

This means pulling together as a team with a shared mission...a shared message...a shared sense of pride...a shared sense of direction. Whatever you want to call it, it's leadership that creates synergy through respect and care for each member of the organization...a team effort.

Another way of describing this leadership-empowerment paradigm for the new millennium is the way Alan Dobzinski, principal of Howard County based Executive Development Group, put it at a recent leadership training workshop. He said, "A leader (of an organization or of a department) must see and treat his or her staff as individuals in totality."

He adds, "this takes making a commitment to internal communication, care for all members of the team, trust, focusing on strengths of the team members, and modeling (setting an appropriate example and confirming each members' role on the team)."

Mr. Dobzinski included a powerful quote from Ravens' Coach Brian Billick during his presentation to draw the parallel between coaching athletes and coaching members of an organization. Specifically, Billick said in a recent Baltimore Sun article, "There is a new-age athlete out here and that old, hard-line mentality doesn't work anymore. You have to deal with the athlete in TOTALITY, take into account when he leaves the field and what he might be dealing with at home."

He adds, "When he gets the fire, we get the fire. We're all in this together. He's like one of us, and that's all you can ask from a coach."

This brings me to my next point: owners and managers need to recognize that everyone is not only on the same team working toward a common goal, but everyone is able to be a marketer for the organization if given the proper tools and encouragement.

Additionally, we need to recognize that marketing opportunities exist way beyond the obvious. For instance, when a person serves as a PTA president or as a member of the church choir, the inevitable question arises: "what do you do for a living?" If given the right tools by the organization's leaders, each person in the organization, regardless of his or her role or job description, should give a very similar answer. I call this "singing from the same hymn book."

Unfortunately, it is included in my list of the "ten cardinal sins of marketing" because most organizations do not recognize the opportunities that can be missed if this empowerment and team-building is not part of their organizational development strategy. As a result, marketing is handicapped.

If your goal is to propel your organization forward with even more successes under your belt, perhaps it is time to re-think the way you share information internally and externally, as well as your methodology for creating synergy with such information and empowering your entire staff to see every engagement with another human being as a potential marketing opportunity.

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