

## FAST TRACK TO...

## BECOMING A TOP PERFORMANCE LEADER

**Graham Jones**, author of *Top Performance Leadership*, reveals his top tips on how to be a good leader

In a recent survey conducted by Top Performance Consulting Ltd, more than a third of 520 employees in UK organisations across a wide range of industries described their boss as a poor leader. Even more disconcerting is that nearly half of the respondents believed that they could do their leaders' jobs better than them. As I explain in my book, *Top Performance Leadership*, this is largely because too many organisations get it wrong by promoting people into leadership positions simply because they are good at what they do day to day (accountants, scientists, engineers etc) rather than being good leaders.

The book describes how a leaders' core responsibility is to oversee the delivery of top performance that is sustainable. There are three core stages that must be followed if you are to become a top performance leader; (i) start with perfect clarity on the performance aspired to and when, (ii) define and create the environment that will deliver the performance and in which your people can thrive, and then (iii) lead accordingly.

Worryingly, the TPC survey shows

that many leaders are woefully lacking in the basics required to be a top performance leader. On the other hand, this chasm provides a great opportunity for you to step into if you develop and implement the know-how, skills and motives described below that underpin top performance leadership.

#### BE CRYSTAL CLEAR ON THE PERFORMANCE YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR PEOPLE

Nearly 70% of the employees surveyed said that their leader does not provide a clear picture of what top performance looks like. And two thirds of them said that their leader does not plan how to deliver top performance that is sustainable. This is especially concerning because this is the very starting point! Define the what, why, who and when and ensure that everyone has a common understanding and that it is the same as yours. Being clear about the performance expected is insufficient without having a detailed plan of how to deliver it. Ensure that your plan is bullet proof in terms of its logic - it must make perfect sense to your people - and thoroughness;

Professor Graham Jones is the Managing Director of Top Performance Consulting Ltd ([www.tpc.uk.net](http://www.tpc.uk.net)). His latest book, *Top Performance Leadership*, was published by How To Books in June 2014.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY  
 “DON'T JUDGE  
 EACH DAY BY THE  
 HARVEST YOU REAP,  
 BUT BY THE SEEDS  
 THAT YOU PLANT”

ROBERT LOUIS  
 STEVENSON

leave no stone  
 unturned in  
 addressing every detail  
 that will and might be a factor.

#### CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOUR PEOPLE CAN PERFORM AT THEIR BEST

Leaders may have great people around them but if the environment is not 'right' for them then they risk their performance dropping off or, worse, losing them. More than a third of the survey respondents say that their leader fails to create an environment where they and their colleagues can perform at their best. Define and create the conditions in which your people can thrive and excel. In particular, ensure that crucial enablers in the form of the appropriate incentives, information and instruments are in place to deliver the top performance aspired to.

#### HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE REAL

In *Top Performance Leadership* I distinguish between real leaders who act in the best interests of the organisation and make things happen, and safe leaders who act to look after their own interests and are risk-averse. Half of the employees surveyed said that their leaders 'play it safe'. Two thirds said that their leader does not make the necessary changes when top performance is not being delivered. And nearly 40% said that their leaders are slow, or simply fail, to address underperformance. Make sure that you are real by innovating, challenging behaviours that are unproductive and making those decisions that might be unpopular but are the 'right' things to do. And be quick to make things happen when performance veers off course; tackle the hard issues and confront them head on.

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#### ALWAYS ON?

In ILM's recent Future Trends research (20:20 vision: future trends in leadership and management) we explored managers' perceptions of flexible working and the technological and globalisation drivers behind it. Some were positive, 'My clients do not have to know where I am, except for the phone number they dial, if they dial into a local number. With some clients I work through Skype, which means that they don't even have to dial a number. This flexibility is fascinating.'

Others reminisced over the days when having just a fax and phones meant they could take time to give a considered response. Now, 'my customers know now that I will be maintaining a listening watch on multiple channels, and will expect an immediate response in a manner that suits them.' But this comes at a price, 'your time is no longer your own. Global markets demand 'globally friendly' responsiveness.

'A Middle Eastern customer will anticipate Sunday availability (despite recent moves to align weekends). A Chinese or Russian customer will anticipate suppliers working 16 - 18 hours a day in order to meet their needs. Is this reasonable? Maybe

not. Is this the face of business in today's environment? Absolutely.' This same person spoke of a 'need to have your 'game face' on all the time. Gets a bit wearing after a while...'

So what exactly can managers and senior leaders do to show their people that they can leave their work email and calls unchecked overnight, at weekends or when they are away on holiday? Can they be brave enough to lead by example or has that time

gone forever?

**TOM MAY** on the ILM Community

#### MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Motivation is one of the key ingredients to bring out the best from any one. Motivating your employees will influence the business to a great extent. However, with tough times and demand, it is natural for people to become disengaged with their jobs at some point of time. At these times, it is important to inject some motivational tonic.

Salary is often enough to keep employees working for an organisation, but not necessarily enough to capitalize on their full potential. But a motivated employee will always be a highly productive staff, which will help you achieve your business goals.

A few thoughts on motivation:

1. Motivated employees will retain a high level of innovation.
2. Motivation leads to looking for better ways to do a job.
3. Motivated people are more quality conscious.
4. Employees become more productive and efficient if they are given the right dose of motivation.

**ELAN VAL**

on the ILM community

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