The Leadership Imperative
What does great performance look like?

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Introduction

The Leadership Imperative was originally published as a series of articles on creative leadership in The CEO Refresher online @ www.refresher.com/ceo.html.

The series was initially inspired by the work of James Belasco and Ralph Stayer on self-directed actions in Flight of the Buffalo, Warner Books, New York, 1994, then expanded to embrace several supporting leadership concepts and principles.

“What does great performance look like?”

I attribute that powerful question to the authors and have lived by it ever since. It is the question all leaders need to ask, then figure out, and then communicate and inspire others who, by their understanding, commitment and self-directed and aligned actions will bring the vision to life.

There is a better way – and the articles in The Leadership Imperative will hopefully “twist your head” a bit (and perhaps more) to provide you a new, more engaging and more mindful construct of what the greatest leaders can do to truly inspire and create breakthroughs in performance.

“What does great performance look like?”

It’s time to take a good look in the mirror as yes this is all about leadership – and ultimately … it’s all about you.

Enjoy!
Leading is learning
... and learning faster!

Belasco & Stayer
Beyond Leadership!

Where is the concept of leadership going?

The traditional view of what a 'leader' is has changed. The typical 'picture' - the great individual, the hero or heroine, the inspiring, charismatic figurehead, the 'special' individuals that set the direction, make the important decisions and energize the 'troops,' just doesn't seem to capture the 'complexities' of leadership today.

We've seen a shift to coaching, mentoring, enrolling, inspiring, engaging, shared visioning and a host of related 'ings' that add new dimensions and round out a more contemporary skill set for 'leading' enterprises and individuals.

But these new concepts and perspectives also seem to lack the 'bite' - the 'gem' - the 'juice' - the simple and profound insights that work - in the sense of clarity, purpose and focus.

What comes close for me is the notion of the leader or CEO as 'pilot-in-command.' The series Pilot Performance explores the metaphor of the leader having the ultimate, singular and personal sense of responsibility, accountability and stewardship any one individual can be entrusted with. But seeing leadership as being 'in command' is still not complete.

Other aspects, metaphors and dimensions …

How about strategist, architect and designer?

What about coach, mentor and teacher?

What about the boss as the banker?
What about coordinator, integrator, broker, builder, developer and talent scout?

How about pilot, navigator, captain and general?

And how about hero or champion?

They all 'fit' to a degree and yet all describe a facet of the gem.

Perhaps superman or wonderwoman is appropriate to capture more of what is needed today.

The bottom line?

All of the above and as many more as you can think of - at different times and in different situations.

The ultimate - whatever works, whatever it takes.

What lies beyond?

More of whatever works and therefore more that we have to learn and learn faster, perhaps with a serious dose of the spirit of adventure to go and grow well beyond what we know today.

**Leading is learning ... and learning faster!**
Great Performance!

A set of contemporary operating principles for leaders at every level in any organization to learn what it takes to win today and create the circumstances to win tomorrow.

The Principles:

- Great Performance
- Ownership
- Self Directed Actions
- Learning Faster

Transfer ownership for work to those who do the work.

Create the environment for ownership where each person wants to be responsible for his or her own performance:

- Paint a clear picture of what great performance looks like for the organization and for the individual;
- Focus individuals on those few factors that create great performance;
- Develop the desire for each person to be responsible for his or her great performance;
- Align organization systems and structures that send a clear message as to what is necessary for outstanding performance for the individual and the organization;
- Engage individuals - their hearts and minds, as well as their hands - in the business of the business;
- Energize individuals around the focus of the business.
Coach the development of individual capability and competence.

Learn faster;

Learn themselves;

Create the conditions within which every person in the organization is challenged to continually learn faster.

Ask powerful questions:

Is this the best we can do?

Where do we go from here?

What must we do to be effective in the future?

What must we learn to stay ahead?

What does great performance look like?

... and get ready to learn a new set of principles tomorrow!
The Vision Thing

What’s wrong with this picture?

An executive took his direct reports out for an afternoon to create alignment to his vision of the future. As they stood at the top of a hill overlooking the city the executive described his vision for the firm and how the support and commitment of every individual was vital to achieve the objectives.

The executive asked his key reports, “Do you see that knoll down there just below the crest?”

They replied, “Yes, we see it.”

He then asked, “Picture a house on that knoll overlooking the city. Can you see it?”

“Yes, yes, we can see it,” they replied.

“Now picture a swimming pool on the left and a tennis court on the right of the house. Can you see it?”

“Oh yes, We can see it,” they exclaimed.

The executive then said to the group, “If you work hard for the next five years and we achieve our vision and the company does well, someday that will all be mine.”

An inspiring vision? Worthy of commitment? Work hard so the leader’s program will succeed. How typical is this in organizations in one form or another? Ever wonder why people have difficulty with commitment - and what is really wrong with this picture?
The Vision Thing - Checklist

Vision is the starting point.

Vision focuses - our sights and actions on what we want to be tomorrow, not what we were or are today.

Vision is the painting of a picture of what we must be.

Vision flows from contact with customers and suppliers.

Vision with focus causes us to think strategically working backwards from the objective to today.

Vision provides the framework for action.

Vision is clarity, and clarity is power. Clarity allows people to evaluate their actions in terms of the vision. It insists that everyone direct their energies toward creating the tomorrow we want.

Vision inspires - us.

A vision must be worthy of commitment. People need to see the personal benefit from their vision of great performance.

An effective vision is a shared vision - a collaborative effort of individuals that fosters genuine commitment rather than compliance.

The shared picture of the future is what binds, and the power is in the shared development of that identity and common purpose.
Extend Your Hand

What does being ‘of service’ really mean in the hard nosed reality of business, and business relationships?

How can I reach you? What can I do to gain your confidence and loyalty? What is it that you value as a customer in these tough and turbulent times?

What does great performance, in terms of being ‘of service,’ really look like?

I think the answer is very simple, if you keep it uncluttered and you stay clear.

How can I contribute to your success? Period!

Extend your hand!

What do you do?

What are the few keys to success in your unit or business?

What is your advantage in the marketplace?

What would great performance for your unit, your business, and yourself in the coming year look like?

What current or future developments will change the way you do business?

What developments are impacting your unit’s activities and the company’s?

What do you see coming in the future that will change the way you and your company will do business?

What do you and your unit plan to do to prepare for these developments so you are ready before they occur?
What are the biggest problems you face?

What prevents you from achieving great performance?

How can I help you?

How can we help you achieve great performance today?

How can we help you remove the obstacles that prevent you from achieving great performance today?

How can we help you prepare to achieve great performance in the future?

How would you define great performance for me in the coming year that will best contribute to your great performance?

What would I have to do this week to earn a rating from you of 10 out of 10 for perfect contribution to your great performance?

It all starts with a good look in the mirror

- and then extending your hand.
A Quick Look in the Mirror

Mirrors are often the most effective tools to identify issues and gaps, and solve problems. Mirrors often provide profound insights into significant opportunities for change and performance improvement.

We are often trapped by the images we hold of ourselves and are well advised to step out and beyond, from time to time, for an objective reality check.

And if what you’re doing isn’t working - do something different!

Consider the following ...

I got what I asked for but I wanted something different!

I got what I wanted but I need something different now!

Why don’t things work the way they used to?

If this situation were funny, what would I be laughing at?

How would I view this problem if I were 20 years older? Or 20 years younger?

What would I do, say, or think differently if this problem was an opportunity?

What would happen if this situation meant exactly the opposite of what I think it does?

How did the old solution work in the past? Is the solution now the problem?

What is the larger issue for which this is only a part?

What does the person creating this problem really want?

Am I reacting out of habit and old brain programming?
Am I blocking emotions or feelings which limit my freshness and creativity?

How must I be different to be effective?

What would a great solution really look like?

Is this the best we (I) can do?

What would my great performance look like?

What do I need to learn to be effective and prepare for tomorrow?

What do I know that just isn’t so?

Am I part of the problem? And how do I move to be part of the solution?

What actions am I prepared to take to remove the obstacles that I create?

What about you reminds me of what I don’t like about me?

Am I creating owners or dependents?

Is anyone having fun yet?

What is it that we really want to create here?

How many individuals have I inspired today?
Self-directed Actions

The business is operating far below potential. Something is wrong. Every day I see people being disinterested in their work. I have to push, demand, follow up, double check - it’s like pulling teeth to get what I want, and to get it fast and right the first time.

I see carelessness, wasted time, effort and materials, and a lack of responsibility. People come into work, do as they’re told, cover their asses, and go home.

I don’t see much enthusiasm or initiative, and when I do, it doesn’t seem to last very long and I always end up with the monkey on my back to get things done right. I should turn up the jets, get rid of the dead wood and get moving once and for all! There must be a better way.

There is ... **Lead the Journey!**

There most certainly is, and James Belasco and Ralph Stayer ‘nail it’ in an articulate and compelling guide to the fundamental principles of leadership. **Flight of the Buffalo** provides a guide to ‘leading the journey’ to self directed action, commitment, and great performance.

The leadership imperative - transfer ownership, create an environment where each individual wants to be responsible, coach the development of personal capabilities, learn faster, and encourage others to do the same. This is beyond ‘hairy fairy’ empowerment, fuzzy new paradigms and buzz words. The authors strike to the root of the obstacles and issues, and provide the insight and framework to move beyond. The book is about leadership, learning, focus, and customers. It is also about performance - and what it takes to achieve great performance all the time.

Here are the key words - the clues ... so go ahead and lead your journey!
Determine focus and direction

Vision
Customers
Great performance
Value added strategies

Stimulate self directed actions

Develop ownership

Remove obstacles

Systems
Skills
Structures
Attitudes
Values
Information

“Leading is learning.”
Removing Obstacles to Great Performance!

Unleash the creative talents of individuals and allow your people to deliver great performance to your customers.

Identifying the ‘right’ direction is the first step. Removing the obstacles that prevent great performance is the second step.

Obstacles are generally in two areas: mind-sets, and organization structures and systems. We tend to focus on the mind-set issues of motivation, teamwork, attitude, and communication and wonder why efforts stall when you stop ‘pushing’. Perhaps the attitudes are outcomes - of the systems, structures and practices of the environment.

So focus on what you can directly influence - especially in how performance is defined, measured, and rewarded.

Set standards between performers and their customers - performers must meet regularly with their customers to agree on the standards of performance;

Reduce expectations to simple, specific, and measurable numbers - measure the ‘right stuff’, which is what makes the difference to customers;

Make performance visible to every employee - let performers get the feedback directly, in real time, not through third parties; ensure that those who have to perform measure their own performance - do your performers know how well they are doing?

Performance must have consequences - performance must matter to individuals; ‘A’ for accomplishment, ‘F’ for effort. (period!) Reward those who achieve, and ensure less desirable outcomes for those who don’t.
Involve the performers in the design of the reward systems - as long as someone else is responsible for the design, fairness, and motivational aspects of rewards, someone else will also be responsible for performance.

Decentralize decision making to the point of customer contact - those closest to the customer have a more complete understanding of what great performance looks like for their customers!

Manage the present and the future - the past can’t be managed - it’s gone! What information do we need to manage and improve what is happening today, and plan for the future?

Make teamwork happen by structuring important work in teams and cross functional groups and rewarding team performance;

Ask yourself - what systems are causing my people problems? Then change the system to change the people.

And better yet - what’s the best way to identify and remove the obstacles that prevent great performance?

**Ask your people** what prevents their great performance and get to work on those obstacles!
Empowerment

Let’s redefine ‘empowerment’ into self directed action and take a ‘nuts and bolts’ approach to make it happen. Here is a quick list of ‘do’s’ and an exercise to create your own action plan.

1. Confront people with reality.
2. Focus on actual performance.
3. Insist on meeting tough standards.
4. Transfer ownership of performance to the performer.
5. Have productive conversations.
6. Support and coach.
7. Ask questions and don’t give the answers.
8. Ask the following questions ...
   Is this the best we can do?
   Where do we go from here?
   What does great performance look like?
9. When asked, ‘What should I do?’
    ... go to page 22 for the answer.

Empowerment exercise

Make a list of the next twenty five decisions you make or problems you solve for others pertaining to your work. Include all problems passed to you from any source, all requests for permission or approval, and any intervention you undertake to solve a problem.
Note the task or detail, and the dollar magnitude of the item. After completing the list, answer the questions that follow.

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Questions:

Are you busy?

Are you busy with the right stuff?

Are you doing what you’re being paid to do?

Is this the best you can do?

Where do you want to go from here?

What would great performance look like?

What should you do? (Go to page 22 for the answer)

Are we having fun yet?
Make Something Great!

Attributed to Nintendo's President Hiroshi Yamauchi
by Tom Peters.

One of the Nintendo game designers asked the company's chief,

"What should I make?"

He replied, "Make something great!"

Can there be a more powerful response?
Ask Simple Questions

The simplest questions are usually the toughest to answer, however, living in the question for a time can often lead to very meaningful insights and very powerful activities and outcomes.

Customer service questions:

How do I look to my customer?

What do my customers want that they are not now getting?

What should I do?

Talk to customers in their own language;

Sell customers what they want;

Learn from customers what they need;

Do what customers need differently or better than anyone else;

Get every employee responsible for getting and keeping customers - every person, every day, every activity, every procedure, every process is viewed in terms of what great performance is for my customer!

Turn all of the above into simple questions for your employees;

How do we talk to customers in their own language? (I seem to be repeating myself!)

How do we sell customers what they want?

How do we learn from customers what they need?
How do we do what customers need differently or better than anyone else?

How do we get every employee responsible for getting and keeping customers?

How do customers see us now?

Is this the best we can do?

**Turn all of the above into simple questions for your customers;**

How do we talk to you in your own language? (One more time!)

How do we sell you what you want?

How do we learn from you what you need?

How do we do what you need differently or better than anyone else?

How do we get everyone of our employees responsible for getting and keeping you as a customer?

How do you see us now?

Is this the best we can do?

**N.B.#1**
If you listen closely enough you can hear your customer!

**N.B.#2**
If at first you don’t succeed, you’re not with your customer!
Lessons from the Farm

Metaphors can be used to communicate very powerful images to guide behaviour. The ultimate effectiveness of metaphors and images appears to be related to their simplicity, as the following lessons from the farm illustrate.

Here are six simple tenets that provide simple yet important 'country' wisdom in application to a variety of more 'enlightened' contexts.

1. Never use cheap seed

Seeds are like ideas. In the final analysis the cost of the seed is a very small part of the cost of a farming operation. The cost of an idea is also a very small part compared to the investments that will be made to develop that idea. So use the best seed you can find, and do whatever you can to obtain the best ideas before you invest in their development.

2. The secret of gardening is to prepare the soil

We look at what grows above ground but most of what a plant is doing is out of sight. The best seed will not grow in poorly prepared soil. And usually, with well prepared soil, and good quality seeds, it is very difficult to make it go wrong. The preparation before planting makes most of the difference in success.

3. Timing is critical

The best seed planted too early may be killed by an untimely frost. The best seed planted late will not reach maturity and will not bear fruit. Farmers spend a lot of time looking at the sky, feeling the soil, and doing whatever is necessary to determine the right time to plant. Timing is critical.
4. **The plants that hold firmest are the ones that develop their own roots**

You cannot develop strong roots by packing the soil. Prepare the soil, put in the seed, and let it hold on for itself. You may have to protect the plant when it is small but the less protection you give it the hardier it will ultimately be. The healthiest plants are those that develop their own strong roots and capabilities.

5. **Excessive watering produces weakness not strength**

Too much water weakens a plant as it will not need to extend its roots deep into the earth. Similarly, too much fertilizer will develop plants that produce all leaves and no fruit. Ideas, and people, like plants, thrive with a degree of challenge and struggle.

6. **In spite of your best efforts some plants will die**

You will always be disappointed if you expect every plant to be a prizewinner. If you count on all plants to live you will go hungry. Farmers deal with reality, learn to live with failure and not take it personally. They also learn, adapt, and take success and failure in stride and in a longer perspective, in harmony with their environment.

*Perhaps as the pace of what we do accelerates we should seek wisdom in simple truths and in the realities of life. The metaphor is attributed to Gerald Weinberg, in The Secrets of Consulting, Dorset House Publishing, New York, 1985.*
Observations and Insights

On the gaps in performance:

It is relatively easy to identify the gap between what you have now and what you know you must have. What needs to be done can be seen clearly. It’s how to do it that is the challenge.

On having the worst of both worlds:

Larger competitors can out-muscle us. In head to head competition they can out-advertise us, out-price us and put us out of business. Smaller local and regional competitors can out-perform us in terms of superior service and quality, and can out-hustle us in the local markets. We are too big to have the advantages of the smaller competitors, and too small to have the advantages of the bigger ones. We are therefore very vulnerable.

On the fruitless search for the ‘fix’:

The awful truth is that there is no perfect outside ‘fix’. Each person and every organization must write their own unique ‘cookbook’.

On the misguided attempts to ‘fix them’:

Leaders do things to ‘fix’ the organization and the people in it. Much of their self worth comes from their personal singular accomplishments. Creating the agenda and then motivating ‘them’ - perpetuates the self fulfilling prophecy.

I got what I wanted, but I need something different now:

I built this place, I set it up, they were my brilliant strategies, my innovative product ideas, my customer service mentalities. If I was personally responsible for all
the good ‘stuff’ of the past success, I am also responsible for what I am getting right now.

If it isn’t working right, right now, it’s my responsibility. My not-so-brilliant decisions, the structures and practices I put into place, and my style and needs as the leader are causing the effects that frustrate me today. If I want different results, I have to change the way I lead.

**On the fallacy of ordering change:**

It is difficult for loyal and committed ‘soldiers’ to meet new expectations immediately. They’ve been trained one way and now you expect them to behave another way. Making the same decisions you would in a situation is more of the same - since everyone knows you like your decisions better than anyone else’s.

Change takes time.

**What am I about to do that is probably wrong?**

Instinctive reactions, based on past learning and especially past success, can lead to great difficulty when the current reality is different.

Instinctive reactions, which got you to where you are now, will not get you to where you need to go from here.

**Success is often the enemy:**

Yesterday’s success can compromise the work that is necessary to meet tomorrow’s challenges. What we want to become is the ticket as opposed to what we were or even what we are.

**On the ‘visioning’ of leaders:**

Leaders are responsible to develop a vision. Leaders take the responsibility to implement it. Leaders ‘empower’ their people to use the vision. The fundamental mind set of
leaders having the responsibility for performance creates the self limiting cycle where performers are not responsible for their performance. The solution is to turn it upside down.

**On how to be an effective leader:**

Become a more effective leader by increasing the effectiveness of the people you lead!
Unleash Ownership and Creative Talent

Soaring With The Phoenix by James Belasco and Jerre Stead is a handbook of solid logic and thoughtful prescriptions for organizations and individuals to break free of traditional management practices and create effective change by unleashing ownership and creative talent.

Phoenix leaders, according to the authors, make five essential contributions to the interconnected networks they lead. The Phoenix contributions provide a very useful framework for leaders at any level of an organization to engage individuals, focus energy, creativity and resources, and develop high performing teams.

And beyond the notion of a 'framework', the contributions describe a set of 'values' and an empowering 'approach' that works in any setting. It's an invaluable 'tool', and it works!

Phoenix leaders make the following five important contributions to their companies.

1. They surface issues that confront the organization. The Phoenix leader 'slays the moose' others have been afraid to confront by providing people with three Ps: the power to search out the facts, the protection to spend time and resources necessary to ferret out the real issues and get them on the table, and the permission to make mistakes along the way.

Surfacing the issues is the first step to resolving them, and by doing so directly, honestly, and openly, you can get the 'monkey' off your back and onto the table - in full view. It's the first step in inviting the ownership you truly need to take effective action. In its simplest form it shows
up as telling the truth - the whole truth - and getting to the fundamentals.

2. They **engage people** in resolving those issues. The Phoenix leader involves, not demands, for better results. He or she asks, cajoles, listens, and nourishes people-to-people connections. The leader taps the power of people, so that they're passionate about the business of business.

Engaging people is not telling or directing or demanding or asking for lip service. It is inviting, and encouraging, and participative. It is not comfortable, and if it is - you're probably getting lip service. You need to invite and insist on the full participation of individuals, and accept as a contribution all they have to offer. 'Engaging' steps out beyond traditional roles and boundaries - to invite individuals to share in the effort and contribute with their hearts, head and hands. Engaging creates disciples who carry the passion to the rest of the organization.

3. They **prioritize and allocate resources** to address those issues. The Phoenix leader focuses on the customer and the associate. He or she grows the business by growing people. When rationing scarce resources, it's people first, second and third. Cut training and you limit the future. Create tomorrow and invest in people - because only people will take you there.

Prioritizing and allocating resources is something like - taking action - doing something, and doing it through the impassioned actions of your associates. Committing resources in this context becomes a powerful act of trust, support, faith and resolve to create a new future and 'make it so.'

4. They **unleash ownership** so everyone accepts responsibility for dealing with those issues. By unleashing an ownership mentality, the Phoenix leader releases energy and competence so that the best decisions are
made for a company's success. Aligning capabilities with requirements, continuous feedback and focusing on purpose help unleash ownership.

Unleashing ownership starts with the very empowering assumption that ownership is already there in individuals and needs an opening and permission to emerge. And when aligned with the organization's purpose and mission it becomes a very powerful force. It gives 'work' purpose, and it can launch the creative talent of individuals toward common and shared objectives.

5. **They energize learning** for everyone. The Phoenix leader is a Chief Learning Officer, making learning part of every job assignment. The Phoenix leader knows people who seek learning opportunities grow ... and use what they know for the benefit of the company. The Phoenix leader designates knowledge more powerful than rank. He or she creates an information infrastructure that captures and shares the use of knowledge, since knowledge is the only true sustainable marketplace differentiator today.

There is learning in successes, as there is learning in failures and setbacks. By energizing learning you create a culture of fearless action and learning in the best interests of the organization. It speaks to unleashing the full competence and talent of individuals and teams to set out and to accomplish great things.

So ... when in doubt ... be a Phoenix leader and make the five important contributions.

"*Helping great people do great things is really fun.*"

*Jerre Stead*
We Need a Severe Outbreak of Common Sense!

I could be taking all this revolutionary stuff too seriously but it seems that you hear and read more and more of all the admirable intentions and nice rhetoric but see very little of it applied.

It might have something to do with some of the extraordinary neurophysiological mechanisms operating in the mosaic of the minds of executives - but then again it might just be case of insecure egos and a fear of the unknown. Is it really so %$$# complicated?

What on earth would we do if it were indeed - more simple?

We need a serious outbreak of common sense.

What on earth is so complicated and complex about treating people with dignity and respect, providing information so they can make informed and intelligent choices, giving people the tools, resources, and authority to do their jobs, and trusting them to get it done right and on time?

And is it really that much of a leap of faith to see that if you treat your employees that way - they will tend to treat their customers that way too?

Is it really that obvious and simple?

Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop has this to say about her success, "... what’s so hot-shit about putting up products that are good and visually exciting and effective and having staff well trained and loving the product?" "It’s not extraordinary. It’s obvious!"
Is it really so simple? Absolutely! We need a severe outbreak of common sense - and perhaps a ‘common sense revolution.’

Want to solve your multi million dollar ‘positioning’ problem? Ask a group of eight year olds what they think of shopping in your store. "Boring," was the response I got and they were right on the money.

Mega bucks on media advertising? How about a critique from an eleven year old that the ads were quite dumb and not at all believable - not even funny.

The creative talents of an agency and $1.2 million later to discover what a bunch of kids from around the corner could have told you in a five minute conversation.

But still we need focus groups and more research to guide our thinking. (because it’s so complicated!)

Where does all this complexity and clutter come from? Are the minds of senior managers and executives just so complex that they can no longer grasp fundamentals - the simple truths - the basics?

Is it because it just has to be complex to appear to be important, or astute, or executive?

Can simple co-exist with exalted?

The answer must be to simplify and apply ... our common sense; to stop strangling ourselves with information, research, statistics and superfluous jargon.

Solving any problem requires stripping away all of the extraneous information - the clutter - and getting to the heart of it - the meat - the fundamentals. And believe it or not, those with less experience in the complexities of the executive suite often have the clearest perspective.
So do your customers - *(if you asked them)* - and your suppliers *(if you asked them too.)*

It’s really not all that complicated!

Jack Welch - mega value creator at GE gets to the heart of it in the following quote:

“Insecure managers create complexity. Frightened, nervous managers use thick, convoluted planning books and busy slides filled with everything they’ve known since childhood. Real leaders don’t need clutter. People must have the self-confidence to be clear, precise, to be sure that every person in their organization understands what the business is trying to achieve. But it’s not easy. You can’t believe how hard it is for people to be simple, how much they fear being simple. They worry that if they’re simple, people will think they’re simple-minded. In reality, of course, it’s just the reverse. Clear, tough minded people are the most simple.”

Thanks Jack.
Ten Keys for Success

Personal effectiveness is a matter of style and substance. It’s also a matter of personal values, character, humanness and confidence in the creativity, initiative and capabilities of others. Above all it’s a matter of ‘engaging’ other human beings.

Here are ten keys for effectiveness and success.

1. Develop a vision!

Planning for the longer term pays off, and working backwards from a vision of the desired end result creates clarity and purpose.

People want to follow someone who knows where he or she is going.

2. Simplify!

You need to see the big picture in order to set a course, communicate it and maintain it. Keep the details at bay. You also need to then simplify reality and identify the essential activities and action steps to get there. Keep the incessant ‘busy-ness’ at bay.

Focus on what really matters in terms of customers, value added and performance.

3. Trust your people!

You can’t expect them to go all out for you if they think you don’t believe in them. And they definitely will not go all out if they don’t trust you. Be trustworthy and build trust by ‘trusting’.

4. Keep your cool!

The best leaders show their mettle under fire. Stay ‘in command’ with full attention to all of what’s going on.

The Leadership Imperative
5. Be an expert!

Everyone had better understand that you know what you’re talking about. And even when you don’t know you’re an expert in finding out.

6. Encourage risk!

Encourage individuals to take chances and to accept error and failure as an inherent facet of learning and growth.

Encourage and unleash the creativity of those around you.

7. Invite dissent!

You’re not getting the best or learning how to lead if people are afraid to speak up and engage themselves in what you’re up to.

Heat and friction are natural ingredients of energized and high performing individuals and groups.

8. Remove obstacles!

Remove obstacles and barriers, and provide the tools, training, systems and structures to act and to grow.

9. Develop ownership!

Stimulate self directed action and transfer responsibility and ownership to those who do the work.

10. Tell the truth!

There is no more effective method of engaging individuals and making a difference than telling the truth - about what is happening, what you want, how you want to get there, and what you want, need and expect from others.
A ‘ruthless commitment’ to telling the truth is perhaps the most liberating and refreshing approach to effectiveness in any context.

All part of ‘the quiet work of leadership.’
Up is never where you are now!

Belasco & Stayer
What does great performance look like?
About the Author

Rick Sidorowicz is a business strategist, executive and consultant with over 25 years of experience in business turnarounds and revitalization, performance improvement and creating customer-focused cultures. His current activities include:

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- Editor of 1001 Ways to Wow Your Customers! [www.refresher.com/wowyourcustomers](http://www.refresher.com/wowyourcustomers)
- Minister of Culture of High Performance Retail – [www.refresher.com/highperformanceretail](http://www.refresher.com/highperformanceretail)

Book References

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Thank you for your interest!