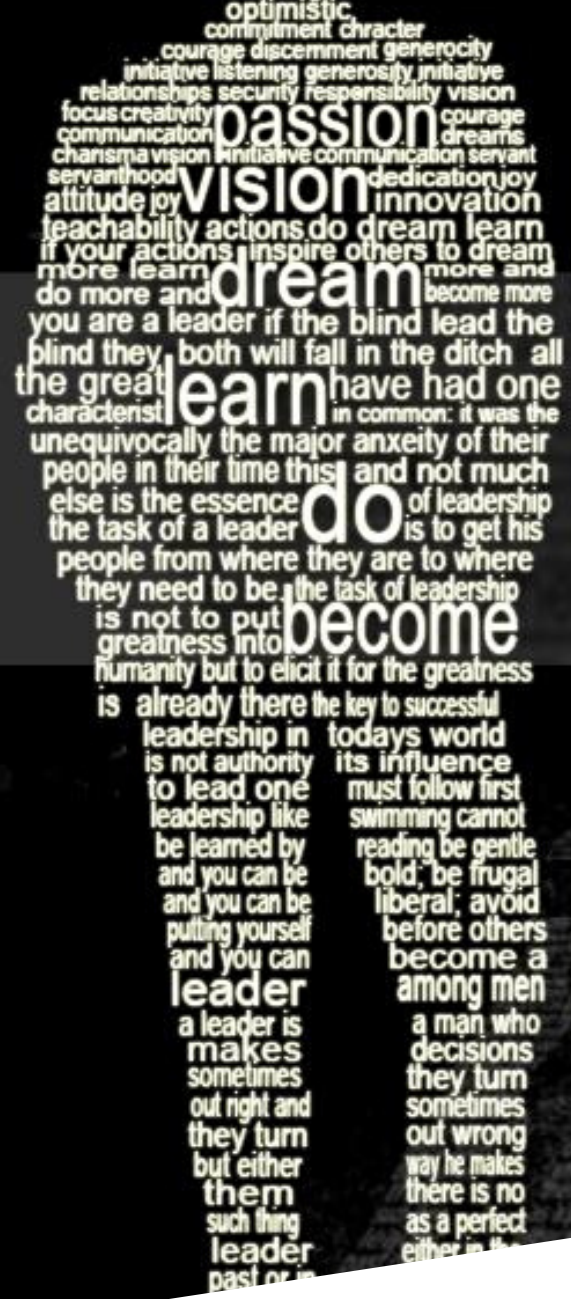


“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

-John Q. Adams



Leadership Tips: Intelligent Listening Skills and Not Motivating Others

FROM MY 20+ YEARS AS AN EXECUTIVE IN
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DAVID A MARSHALL CONSULTING INC.

AN IMPORTANT LESSON IN INTELLIGENT LISTENING LEARNED FROM THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP?

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Several (okay, many) years ago, I had a chance to attend the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina. I attended with many military and government leaders who were looking to improve their own leadership skills and better manage their staffs.

While I was there, I learned a lot of valuable lessons about how to communicate, how to manage, and how to lead. One of the biggest and best lessons I learned, and one that still stays with me all those years (okay, not that many) is the importance of intelligent listening.

As leaders, we oftentimes get so wrapped up in what our own accomplishments should be and how we should achieve them, we really don't listen to people around us. Whether it's our own associates, customers, and even our rivals, we focus less on them and more on ourselves. Intelligent listening means not reading a document while someone else is talking.

We need to listen more closely to find the real messages we should be getting, and figuring out how to separate those from the noise. We can get so mired in other people's talking and chatter that we never get to the real message, whether sending or receiving. (Remember, your important communication is someone else's chatter.) Intelligent listening also means learning some of the fundamentals of sound communication.

For example, engineers require data, which means they're usually more interested in long emails with a lot of information. Meanwhile, executives don't need all that data, they want executive summaries and bulleted lists. And salespeople focus more on the "bright and shiny objects" and they think more in terms of features and benefits, so you should focus on "what's in it for me?" information.

Understanding communication fundamentals means knowing how to send messages the way your audience wants to receive them. So intelligent listening means listening for the clues that tell you how to respond to the different people you work with.

If someone is more creative and not interested in too much data, you can't bog them down with details. If someone is thoughtful and considered, they probably want more proof and details. One way we learned intelligent listening was through a 360 degree personal assessment by your classmates.

The average class size is about 24, and there are 8 participants for one instructor, which means your assessment comes from your core 8. Essentially, everyone gets a shot at you, but you get a shot at everybody else. It's amazing, eye opening, and even a little painful, because there's stuff in there that you didn't want to know, or may have even have a blind spot to.

But now you know it and you have to learn to deal with it. We hear over and over from productivity and HR consultants that active listening is important to clear and effective communication. But intelligent listening goes even deeper to paying attention to how someone else prefers to receive information and process it.

If you can practice intelligent listening, you have a greater chance of successful business relationships with the people who work all around you.. End

LEADERS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO MOTIVATE OTHERS

I recently read an article on LinkedIn about how leaders shouldn't have to motivate others, and I had a bit of an "amen!" response. To me, motivating someone means applying some kind of pressure to get someone to do something they might not otherwise do.

As author Maurice Evans said: Motivation has to do with having the interest in doing something and then having the willingness and ability to see it through to completion. Motivation however is not the same as emotion or personality. Motivation is instead a dynamic and temporal state of mind. A person who is motivated can be motivated to accomplish a long-term goal or a short-term goal and both have value.

In other words, people should have internal motivation. They should be driven by an internal force to want to achieve more, do better, and meet the goals they've set for themselves. Extrinsic motivation is manipulative. Extrinsic motivation comes from a carrot-or-stick approach by most managers — usually the stick — and people will most likely do what they're told, but they'll do so grudgingly and without enthusiasm.

Think of personal health. People who exercise regularly are internally motivated to do it. Whether they're afraid of becoming sick, or they love the results of their efforts, they're motivated by an internal force. People who use a personal trainer are often not internally motivated, and rely on an outside force to pressure them to exercise regularly.

'If you want people to become internally motivated, you have to sell your ideas and concepts, not tell people what they have to do. You need emotional buy-in, not the threat of termination or penalties if they don't do it. This actually starts with the hiring process.

I've said in the past that you should hire slow and fire fast. That's because hiring people is an art, not a science.

You should hire people who can be intellectually and emotionally engaged, not only in what they're doing, but enough to want the best for the enterprise. And within 90 days, you'll know whether you have an individual who is intellectually engaged and moving toward an emotional engagement with the enterprise and your goals.

If they aren't engaging, you should just let them go and get someone else who is actually motivated and will emotionally engage with your goals and mission.

Of course, this isn't always possible. I've heard from people who work in government that many employees there lack the motivation to do their jobs with any enthusiasm.

And it's only the threat of reprisal that keeps them from not actually doing anything. This is why I've been less concerned about a person's accomplishments and the length of their résumé and more concerned with their enthusiasm, their ability to communicate, and their passion for their work.

If they had that, then I felt they could outperform people who may have been more accomplished, but weren't passionate or interested in their work. End

About David A Marshall

David Marshall is a Senior Manufacturing Executive with Corporate Culture Development and Operational Excellence Expertise. David most recently was President and COO of Robroy Industries and Board Member where he oversaw this manufacturing organization with four locations in the USA producing high quality electrical products and oilfield products. During his tenure he worked hard on implementing cutting-edge technology into these facilities during renovations of several of the plants and build out of one ultra-modern 130,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Texas.

With David guidance, these companies saw a remarkable seven record years of profitability; eleven consecutive years with profitability exceeding 20% of revenue; and more than \$300 million added to the equity of the business since going private in 2001. David earned his MBA from the University of Virginia: Darden School of Business.

He currently consults manufacturers looking to achieve operation excellence. His motto is: "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."

He has been a manufacturing executive, as well as a sales and marketing professional, for a few decades. Now he helps companies turn around their own company by making the right decision. If you would like more information, please visit my website and connect with me on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn. <https://damarshall.consulting/>