

# The Total Leader®



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## Work Together to Rise Above Challenges

Innovation and creativity flourish when people challenge one another within good working relationships. But in the short run, even positive interactions among people can be stressful. When you face challenges with people, keep in mind that in every adversity is the seed of an equal or greater benefit. Whether you call them problems, challenges, difficulties, or differences, it is in working through these interpersonal issues that you, your organization, and your team members may be forced to better understand one another. You recognize previously overlooked strengths, abilities, and insights each person has to offer. You will also find that in resolving these difficulties, you can find the greatest opportunities to grow.

Some problems with people are preventable, but due to differences among people — perceptions, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and more — some difficulties simply cannot be avoided. You and your team members may not agree on everything, but when you can agree on the overall goals, sometimes how you get there is not so important. By measuring results, not necessarily activity, you can continue to monitor progress and take corrective action when needed, yet at the same time, set an example of tolerating differences in the way people approach their work. A pro-

ductive, effective organization can usually accommodate individual differences among team members when you, as manager, have clearly defined the overall goals and requirements of your organization. Rather than being a source of conflict, differences can be transformed into a wellspring of team creativity.

### An Ounce of Prevention

Most serious complaints from people in an organization stem from the lack of clear understanding and communication between employees and management. Because you represent the authority of management, you are in the position of being the first person in the organization who can either prevent the occurrence of complaints or resolve the underlying causes. As a leader, one of your vital

responsibilities is to take positive action in handling and, just as important, preventing problems with people.

When team members complain, they are usually concerned about some aspect of the work situation: work environment, wages, incentive pay, layoffs, performance reviews, training requirements, transfers, or actions of other team members. Complaints arise from any factor that affects satisfaction on the job and that an individual, acting alone, can-



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not remedy.

Complaints do not always imply that team members are ineffective or negative. For example, an employee may report that lighting over the work area is inadequate. If you view that person as looking for something to excuse poor job performance, you may forget that poor lighting is a major contributor to eye fatigue and errors. The fair approach is to investigate the possibility that the lighting does need attention.

Specific job descriptions and routine performance evaluations can help to minimize the number of complaints that come to you. They empower people to act and to solve some problems for themselves. The more people know what they are expected to do, the more likely they are to take personal responsibility to solve problems rather than blame others or the organization itself. Also, when people have a clear idea of how their most recent past performance measures up, they know the action steps they can personally take to improve the situation. When problems truly are beyond an individual's control and the complaints come to you, you can keep problems from escalating into serious disruptions by dealing fairly and consistently with the people involved.

### Prevent Issues with Right Attitude

Since your responsibilities involve making decisions, maintaining productivity, and interpreting organizational policy, you may occasionally experience a wave of unpopularity. If you view these occasional disagreements as part of your position rather than as personal attacks, you maintain professional, positive relationships with team members and enjoy personal satisfaction from doing your job well.

Controlling your emotions is easier when you remind yourself that you personally are not usually the cause of a team member's anger. An angry employee is usually upset with an organizational decision, policy, or rule you are required to carry out. You are simply doing your job. Remember that because of your position it is your function to protect the interests of the organization — not to protect yourself from personal dislike. Adopting this rational attitude helps you to think and act in a calm, professional manner without adding the fuel of your own emotions to an already explosive situation. Reacting emotionally to complaints may intensify and prolong the negative situation.

In discussing a complaint with a team member, even if emotions like anger or frustration come to the surface, limit your discussion to the issues and behaviors causing the problem. To keep from becoming defensive when pre-

senting your point of view, use “I” messages. “You” messages often come across as accusing and judgmental. For example, instead of saying, “You need to answer memos more promptly,” it is more effective to state, “I cannot make necessary decisions when you do not respond to memos promptly.” Or instead of, “You are not providing effective leadership for your team,” you might say, “I often see your team members idle when they do not know what you want.”

These “I” messages, as opposed to “you” messages, allow you to point out how an issue affects you, or they explain why the issue is important without attacking the person. When communicating about problems, also avoid judgmental words like should, could, ought, if only, and but. The word but negates whatever the other person is saying, and it conveys to the other person that you are not listening with an open mind.

Addressing problems promptly, rather than procrastinating, is also crucial. One large, nationally-known firm reduced the number of written grievances by 95 percent by implementing a concentrated effort to solve problems where they occurred, at the time they occurred. Promptness in solving problems lowers the production cost of goods and services, improves an organization's competitive position, and enhances customer satisfaction.

Team leaders who adopt a pattern of consistent, positive attitudes and behaviors reduce the confusion and frustration that often give rise to complaints among team members. Here are a few practical guidelines:

- Treat all employees fairly — that is, make sure all team members receive the positive or negative consequences their performance merits. Being fair with employees does not mean always treating people equally. People who make an outstanding contribution deserve extra rewards and recognition. Enforcing rules is the only area in which every employee must be treated equally.
- Learn to say exactly what you mean. Don't expect team members to guess or to read your mind. Demonstrating what you want or giving verbal examples can be essential in training and communicating effectively.
- Deal with specific behavior — not just attitudes. Identify the specific behavior you want team members to develop, train for that behavior, and reinforce it with positive feedback.
- When you receive two different stories about a situation, get the two people together and ask them to tell you.
- Coach for improvement. Describe behavior you want, not what you do not want.

Prevention is the most productive strategy to handle problems with people.

## Appreciate Benefits of Managing Time

Improved time management offers one of the quickest, easiest, and most effective strategies for improving productivity and increasing results. Because it does not require additional technical skill and job knowledge, everyone is capable of learning how to manage time more successfully. Here are benefits of time management:

- Completing the same work in fewer hours per week
- Finishing more work in the same number of hours each week
- Recognition, rewards, and additional compensation for improved results
- Helping other people increase their productivity
- Reduced frustration, hurry, and stress
- More time for planning
- More time to spend with family
- Time to enjoy hobbies and recreation
- Decreased tension, improved health, and an added sense of purpose in life
- More control over your personal and professional life.

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## Use Power to Strengthen Others

Using your power effectively creates a motivational climate in the organization that moves you closer to your personal goals, moves your team members closer to their goals, and brings the goals of the organization within reach. In your role as leader, you can choose the methods you will use for motivating team members. You are free to make work assignments that maximize the use of team member potential.

You also serve as the role model for building and maintaining positive personal relationships. Because team members emulate your personal style, you can design the type of working climate you want in your part of the organization. As you gradually build a synergistic atmosphere, you enjoy the benefits of growing respect and trust from team members. Their loyalty to you gives you added power, not only among your team, but among your peers and supervisors in the overall organization.

Your authority and power are leadership tools which, when properly utilized, help team members grow and improve. Some team members may see little need for personal growth or for increased productivity. Avoiding risks and seeking security, they prefer to continue in the same groove they have filled for years. Even though they may resist your efforts at first, persistence pays off in the long run as team members begin to enjoy new levels of personal productivity and increased self-esteem. The judicious use of your authority and power support them in the practice of new behavior patterns until they have time to develop the new attitudes and willingness to change that combine to make the new behaviors permanent.

Not only do your team members experience personal growth as a result of your exercise of authority, they also respond to its use with increased motivation. As you develop greater expertise in providing leadership in the work responsibility and activity of others and in using authority and power wisely, you discover new depths of personal potential that you can use creatively to bring your goals and the goals of the organization into reality.

Exercising authority and power within the organization help to satisfy your ego needs for status and recognition. These needs are entirely legitimate, although they are often unexpressed for fear of appearing to be self-serving. When these needs are fulfilled, you gain self-confidence. Your self-image becomes increasingly positive. You are free to use even more of your potential, to take greater risks for additional growth, and to move on to the satisfaction of higher needs.

Additionally, the positive use of your authority and power strengthens your self-image and your sense of personal competence. When you know you have succeeded in making a positive impact on the lives of a large number of team members, you experience a reinforcement of your own standards and personal values. Effective motivational leadership provides concrete evidence that you have fulfilled your need to make a contribution to the lives of others. This satisfies the social needs all people experience, and it moves you into the area of self-actualization—of making the fullest possible use of your own unique talents and abilities.

Enjoy your power. Think of it not as a manipulation tool, but as a means of expressing your own inner self in a way that is meaningful to you and your people.



# Helping Others Develop Their Potential

The organizational climate has a direct impact on your people. In an atmosphere designed to reinforce productivity, tension and fear are at a minimum and people feel free to use their full potential for creativity and achievement. As a leader, you bear the primary responsibility for establishing the climate in your organization, department, or work group. Give people the freedom to be who they are, and encourage them to become all their potential allows.

At the heart of a positive motivational climate is open, constructive communication. To maximize its effectiveness, remember that communication is always a two-way street. Listen to your people. Listen with your ears, your eyes, and your emotions. Not only do you discover the personal needs that motivate people, you benefit from hearing their valuable ideas. When you listen to people, they feel comfortable about sharing ideas and information.

Another important factor in establishing a motivational climate lies in your attitude toward mistakes and failures. When you constantly encourage your people to accept new responsibilities, to risk personal growth, and to increase their productivity, it is inevitable that they will make some mistakes, miss some goals, or make an occasional bad decision. If they never make mistakes, they are not trying anything new; they are merely going around and around in the same old rut. When mistakes occur or obstacles arise, choose to coach—not punish—the person involved. Use setbacks or missed goals as opportunities to teach better methods, improved thinking, and more effective procedures. Then allow time and opportunity for the team member to make adjustments and to restore the work to schedule. The benefits of this approach are unlimited:

- The needed correction is made;
- The team member learns and grows;
- You gain the respect and loyalty of the individual concerned, and
- The person you coach gains stature and increased competence.

Establishing and maintaining a motivational climate in the work place requires a great deal of sensitivity to indi-

vidual differences and a great deal of creativity in structuring work assignments to maximize overall productivity. Because individual needs differ, how you lead people must differ. At the same time, the necessary procedures connected with the organization's needs must be met, and the difference in the way you lead people must avoid any appearance of preferential treatment. Give careful consideration to these factors:

◆ **Structure and freedom.** Some of your people are highly structured. They want to do things “by the book.” They want an explicit process to follow in every situation because this helps them feel safe. Give them training that makes it possible to do their jobs accurately and promptly, but do not burden them with the responsibility for making decisions in unusual situations. They will follow your instructions to the letter with a minimum of supervision. Others, however, like more freedom to devise their own work plan; they want to feel that their judgment is trusted and that they are free to exercise initiative.

◆ **Creativity and conformity.** It is to your advantage to encourage team members to use as much of their creativity as possible

as long as it is focused narrowly on productivity. Your responsibility is to direct creativity toward appropriate targets and demand conformity in the type of situations where no deviation can be tolerated. The ethical policies of the organization, for example, are so vital to its existence that conformity must be maintained. No “creative” deviations can be allowed. Safety regulations must be followed to the letter. But many other areas easily lend themselves to experiment.

Encourage your people to grow and to develop. When one person in the organization grows, the whole organization benefits. Express approval of their efforts and praise their successes. Structure the organizational climate to make growth as easy as possible and to make it popular. Set the example by following your own program of personal growth and development. Some of your people will catch your enthusiasm and begin to use even more of their potential for success and achievement.



# Believe in Your Ability to Succeed

Nothing contributes to a positive self-image quite like competence. One who seems uncertain of information, skills, or self quickly experiences an erosion of self-image. To become more competent, do your homework. Learn more about your job and your organization. When you know what you are talking about, it is easier to be self-confident and courageous. Your positive self-image is a natural consequence of your competence.

The image you portray to others is often initially determined by appearance. In fact, so many people function primarily in the visual zone that how you look can be the deciding factor in whether or not you, your position, and your authority are accepted or rejected. How you look

and what you wear often have more impact initially than what you say no matter how logical, well organized, or reliable your ideas are.

Generally speaking, the best attire to portray a positive self-image reflects authority and is a slight cut above that worn by other team members. Women face a unique challenge in wearing just the right clothes for projecting a positive image. If their clothing makes them come across as strong and abrasive, they are perceived negatively. In contrast, if their clothes make them appear too gentle or soft, the image portrayed is one of weakness. Men and women alike should select clothing that projects a crisp professional and attractive image and one that is appropriate for the occasion. Besides affecting the attitudes of others, the right clothing also affects the wearer. Feeling dressed just right for the occasion boosts your positive self-image, your confidence, and your courage.

Integrity is one of the most important traits you can cultivate to reinforce your positive self-image. Work hard to earn a trustworthy reputation for honesty, reliability, and high moral character. In this way, you bring closer to reality your image of what you want to become. Others see in you what you see in yourself. When these images match, you have achieved full integrity.

Your self-image is the key to your future. Develop it and use it to help you capture your dreams and to achieve your goals. An ancient Scripture says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Crystallize your vision of what you want to be. Work hard to fulfill the positive self-image that



you were created to enjoy. Make use of your unique strengths instead of merely conforming to circumstances. You may have some unique strengths that for some obscure purpose you have kept hidden, even from your own view. Encourage yourself to bring them out and act upon them. A previously unrecognized strength put to work is imagination. It is resourcefulness. It is energy. It is insight. What is more important, it is distinctly your unique gift to others and to your organization.

When you set and achieve goals to improve your self-image, to commit yourself to their attainment, and to take action to bring those goals into reality, you begin to develop a more positive self-image than you ever dreamed possible. A positive self-image, in turn, reinforces your courage and confidence. You are then capable of undertaking even more lofty and challenging goals.

Developing a positive self-image is based on the principle that each of us is the product of what we think and what we believe about our abilities. The only practical world is the one within ourselves—the world in which we develop courage and self-confidence and a more positive self-image. It is here that we motivate ourselves to transform goals into tangible realities.

The magnetic force of a positive self-image is a leadership tool, drawing for its power on your courage to become all that you can be and also bringing out the best in your team members. Your unique quality of self-confidence will generate many benefits, including the following:

- A contagious enthusiasm for life
- Genuine concern for others
- A positive personality that people enjoy being around
- Enhanced people skills
- Clarity of purpose
- Firm commitment to worthwhile goals
- Increased productivity
- An aura of power and authority which enables you to inspire and lead others

Developing your self-image can be the most rewarding adventure of your life. As you begin to develop goals for your organization, remember to set the worthwhile goal of building your self-image. A positive self-image is the first step toward the achievement of goals that will benefit yourself, your team members, and your organization as well.

# Bridging the Gap Between Potential and Performance

Since 1966, Leadership Management® International, Inc. has been bridging the gap between potential and performance by helping organizations and individuals evaluate their strengths and opportunities through implementation of the unique and proven LMI Process™.

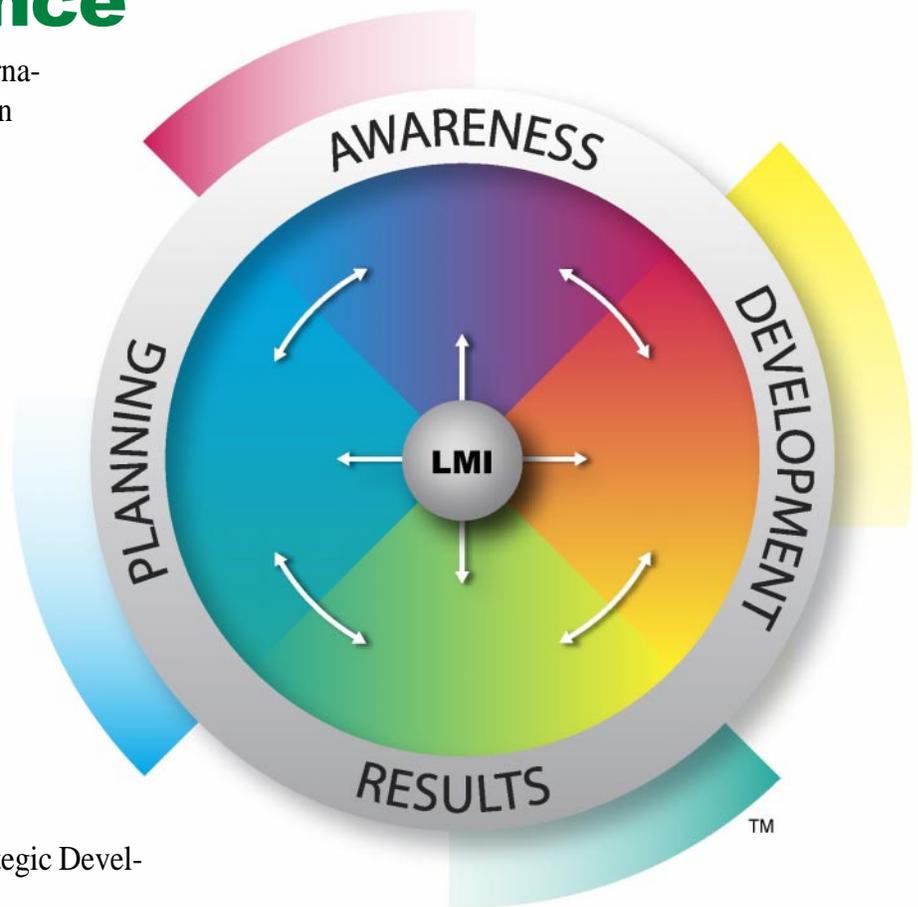
The LMI Process™ ...

- Develops leaders who, in turn, empower their people to use their untapped talents and abilities.
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