

# LEAD WELL

THE TEN  
COMPETENCIES  
OF  
OUTSTANDING  
LEADERSHIP

TIM SCHNEIDER

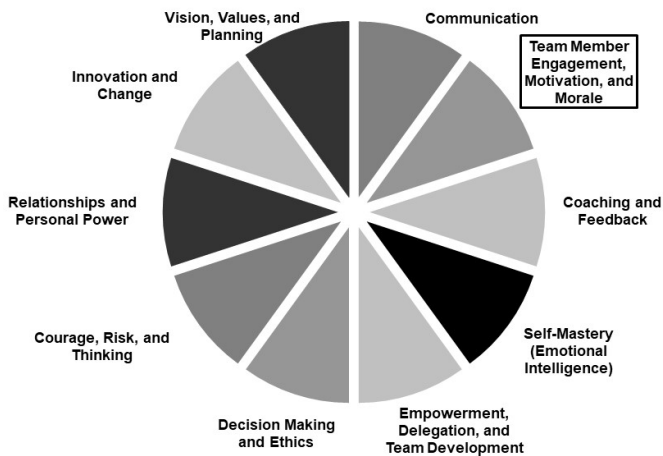


## Chapter 2

# Team Member Engagement, Motivation, and Morale

*"I try to make every player on my team feel he's the spark keeping our machine in motion. On him depends our success."*

Knute Rockne



- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Turnover                 | ✓ Morale                      |
| ✓ Benefits of Tone Setting | ✓ Mechanics of Tone Setting   |
| ✓ Optimistic and Upbeat    | ✓ Relationships               |
| ✓ Consistent and Fair      | ✓ Open, Available and Visible |
| ✓ Tone Setting Penalty     | ✓ Organizational Culture      |
| ✓ Your Role in Culture     | ✓ Celebrations and Rituals    |

Leadership is the art of getting people to do something because they want to do it for you. This points to a personal

connection in leadership in which followers, and other leaders for that matter, are *drawn* to work for an effective leader, not *compelled* to work for that person.

One of the questions we routinely ask in leadership training programs is, “Who do your people work for?” Common responses are the company name, a division within that company, or even the parent organization. Occasionally we hear a response about working for themselves, painting a picture of self-motivated team members. We rarely hear the correct answer that they work for you.

That’s right. They work for you. The company logo may be on the paycheck but, at the end of the day, they work for you. This leads to an interesting phenomenon about the condition of your working team. If they work for you, and leadership is a personal connection between the leader and follower, then who will bear responsibility for team morale or turnover problems?

## **Turnover and the Role of the Leader**

Many organizations have an exit interview process that is usually administered by the human resources department. Almost without fail, the exit interviewer asks why the person is leaving. Almost equally without fail, the exiting team member says something about compensation or better job. Box

checked. Exit interview complete. Statistics now tell this organization that turnover is due to compensation issues.

Unfortunately, most organizations are asking the wrong questions in exit interviews. Rather than ask about why someone is leaving, ask why someone started looking for a new job. Why did they put themselves through resume updates, interviews, and background checks for just a few more disposable dollars per year? With this line of questioning, you receive significantly different responses and ones that are more connected to the leadership within an organization.

With the “why were you looking” question, you will tend to hear more about how they were unappreciated by their boss, not connected to the group, or never built a relationship with the leader. All those answers point directly back to the personal connection of leadership and the impact it has on turnover.

The finance department does not have a turnover problem, it has a leadership problem. There is not a turnover issue in the Denver branch, there is a leadership problem in that location.

Reasonable stability in employment is a good measure of leadership quality within a working unit. There are some

economic factors in play, especially with entry level team members, but turnover is largely about the immediate leader.

We can further extrapolate on this topic. Good people want to work for good leadership. Conversely, poor team members will often tolerate poor leadership. Poor and difficult team members will struggle with good leadership because it challenges them and undermines their power over the working environment.

## **Morale and the Role of the Leader**

Just as with turnover, the personal connection of leadership plays an important part of team morale. The marketing unit does not have a morale problem, there is a leadership failure in the marketing unit.

Just as children will follow the tonal lead of their parents, team members will derive their queues for attitude and morale from the work leader. If the leader is consistently upbeat, the team will demonstrate the same. By contrast, if the leader is sullen, unresponsive, abrasive, or hidden, that will suck the life out of the team.

Another question we often ask in leadership training programs is if you can motivate someone else. About half to two-thirds of a typical group will respond in the affirmative while the remainder believes that motivation is an individual and personal function. The second group is correct but the

example of how to be motivated is provided by the group's leader. Motivation is personal but the role model is always their leader. Motivation is personal but the spark to ignite motivation is often provided by the leader.

In the absence of a high quality, tone setting leader, other voices become stronger. The complainers set the tone. The whiners are the tone makers. The pot-stirrers become powerful. Team morale is not slightly dependent upon the leader; it is wholly dependent upon the leader. D This is true by action and inaction.

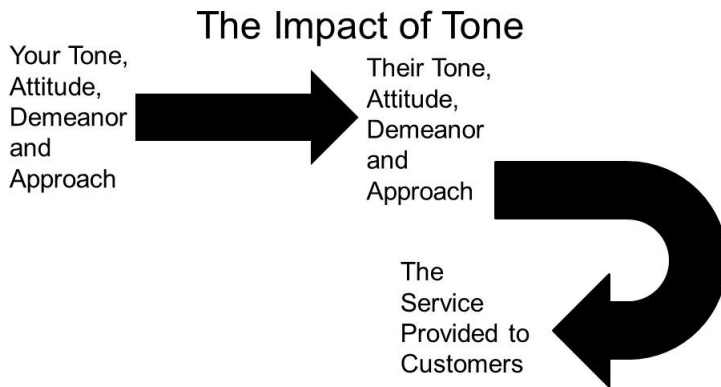
### **Other Benefits of Tone Setting**

In addition to the impact on morale and turnover, good tone setting has a powerful impact on customer service. When we treat our people well, they will treat our customers well. Conversely, when we are cold, distant, and detached from our team, that attitude and approach comes across loud and clear to our customers. It's no coincidence that the best service providers often are organizations in which tone setting by leaders is practiced regularly and often.

Closely related to morale and turnover is tone setting's impact on stress. Most team members report that the stress level in a working environment is influenced, in large part, by the leader. When the leader is tense, stressed, and chipping at people, the team feels it and embodies that stress. When

the leader is spirited, upbeat, and friendly, stress levels in the workplace are reduced.

Leaders who are good at tone setting find their ability to influence and their sphere of influence becomes significantly greater. This is no accident or coincidence. People like being around someone that exudes a great tone. You will be more welcome and more invited to decision making and influence generating events. Conversely, the leader with poor tone setting skills is often “worked around” in an organization because no one wants to be around his grim demeanor.



The tone set by the leader has a direct impact on the service provided to both internal and external customers.

## **The Mechanics of Tone Setting**

Good tone setting requires a couple of basic behaviors and skills that are applied on a consistent basis. Some leaders utilize these skills on an almost naturalized level, while others must embrace the skills on a more mechanical level.

The first step of good tone setting is the initial greeting of team members. For most environments that is the “good morning” at the start of the workday. To pull this off correctly, the greeting must sound sincere, upbeat, and not forced on any level. The great tone setters also include some relational dialog about family, interests, or even the drive to work.

An epiphany moment exists in the initial greeting of team members. Leaders have a significant choice at the start of each day. On one side they have their office or cubicle where all their work lives: new email, yellow sticky notes, files, and miscellaneous stuff. On the other side is the team. You know, the people who do the work so you can be the leader.

When a leader chooses to take a few minutes and go to his office prior to greeting team members, he’s telling the team that, at best, they are secondary in importance. Don’t be naïve. Your team notices that choice.

Another great tone setting skill is to demonstrate interest in team members. One of the many exercises we administer in leadership training is to test the depth of knowledge about team members. Most leaders can recite the family

composition of team members. Some leaders can talk about the interests, passion points, and motivations of team members. A few can provide insight into location of origin, pets, or other details.

A leader's ability to show interest is a powerful tool. When you're able to follow up on a sick spouse, inquire about the results of a soccer tournament, or check on vacation plans, team members feel connected, respected, and valued. Those are the team members that will work harder, faster, and stay with you longer.

Another weapon in successful tone setting is the ability to laugh and lighten the mood. We always do serious work but often take ourselves too seriously. When the leader laughs, especially when times are challenging and tough, the team will respond in a positive manner. Tense people do not work well and are not very productive. That message of tension is sent by the leader.

### **Optimistic and Upbeat**

Remaining optimistic and upbeat is an important factor in good tone setting. The leader must review situations with optimism and remove all negative and defeating language. I marvel when I hear leaders respond to a question with, "What's so good about it?" or "Another day in paradise

(dripping in sarcasm).” Responses like these indicate a lack of optimism and spirit in the leader.

People do not want to follow someone who’s miserable. They do not want to follow someone who has the same complaints and gripes as they have. People want to follow someone who offers hope and solutions to the challenges that the group faces. The leader’s job is to exude a demeanor of consistently optimistic and upbeat energy that can feed the team’s need. If you want to quickly suck the life out of your team, complain openly with them. Fail to offer silver linings or see potential opportunities.

One great challenge to a leader is when a working situation affects them in an adverse way. For example, a company goes through difficult financial times and cuts all management pay. These are often the defining times when a leader must fight off the urge to be downcast or victimized and embrace the overcoat of optimism (“I can recover”) and an upbeat attitude (“I still have a job.”).

## **Relationships**

Building appropriate, genuine relationships with team members is an important skill and competency for leaders. These relationships are built on establishing commonalities, listening effectively, providing respect, and knowing a little bit about each team member. These relationships represent the

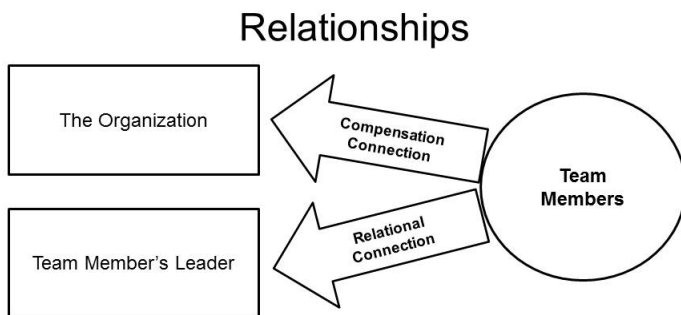
core ingredient in team member loyalty and the desire to do their best work for you.

When building relationships with team members, remember to spend significantly more time finding out who they are rather than telling them who you are. To paraphrase Covey: seek first to understand and then seek understanding. Also, be tuned into the clues your team gives you. Look for pictures, bumper stickers, or clothing themes that provide a hint about someone's interests, passions, or family composition. Most people enjoy talking about their family, their pets, where they're from, and what interests them. Let them talk and use that information for future follow-up.

Being an effective leader does not require superhuman memory skills as much as it requires the desire to be interested and the desire to remember team member information. In the pre-proliferation-of-computers era, leaders made index cards that included key information from relationship building as well as important dates such as work anniversary, promotion date, and birthday. That information was reviewed periodically before interacting with team members. In the more modern world, many leaders note key information about team members in contact management software and databases.

One challenging dividing line for new supervisors is the difference between being friendly and becoming friends.

Effective leaders bridge the pitfalls related to the appearance of favoritism, clouded judgment, and poor perception by being friendly with all their team members but friends with none of them. This is an important distinction that often requires the use of, “No, I’m sorry I can’t,” when responding to an after-work drink invitation.



Team members are connected more strongly to leaders when the relationships are built.

## Consistent and Fair

One of the challenges associated with tone setting is the need to be consistent and fair. It is painfully easy to be upbeat, build relationships, and greet those team members that have always been nice to us. For the team members that have been supportive, complimentary in 360-degree reviews,

and volunteer for more work, tone setting is a walk in the park. Just like talking with treasured friends and family.

What many leaders find a challenge is providing the same amount of tone setting behaviors and skills to those team members that have been a little problematic. Those team members that question, challenge, or irritate are a tough crowd and it's easy to justify why you would not tone set with them. After all, they are a bitter and nasty bunch.

Another challenge to consistency is the team members that rebuff tone setting. The ones that do not open up when you try to build a relationship or the ones that may even tell you, "It's none of your business." In reality, these two populations need your tone setting more than any other. These people are screaming to be engaged by the leader. Here, your resilience will play a big part in continuing to reach out to build rapport.

Think about the impact of your eyes for a moment. Too frequently our eyes point out what is different about others and not what we may have in common. Look at the little pockets of team members in a parking lot or break room and you will see that groups often form around age, gender, or ethnicity. The effective leader has to ignore the messages of the eyes and reach out to all populations, regardless of difficulties, and build an excellent tone base with each of them.

## **Open, Available, and Visible**

The tone setting competencies of openness, availability, and visibility incorporate communication tone, situational responses, timing, and physical environment.

Openness describes your approachability as a leader. Are you open to questions, comments and ideas in a one-to-one environment? Are you dismissive or are you accommodating? Openness is also one of the core service qualities associated with effective leaders. Leaders with a genuine heart for service and concern for their team will often be more open and approachable.

The first step in achieving openness is to carefully manage your response to requests for your time. This is much more about the tone you choose than the words you use. When interrupted, you need to ensure that you don't sound hurried or aggravated. Although the interruption is not the most important thing going on with you, it is the most important thing going on with your team member. Be polite, appreciative of their time, and control the urge to hustle them through a response. The hurried or huffing response is a complete openness killer.

Another dynamic of openness is your response to ideas and suggestions. It is extremely important not to be dismissive of any idea, no matter how unrealistic it might be to

implement. Thank people for their ideas, commit to think about it, and encourage them to keep thinking and coming up with ideas. One surefire way to keep ideas from coming to you is to dismiss one in a patronizing manner. One more idea flow killer is to constantly reply in a justifying manner, including responses that you're aware of the idea that was presented and are already working on it. That sends the message that you're all seeing, all knowing, on top of everything, and there's no need for the team member to share future ideas or suggestions with you.

As a competency, availability is much more physical and logistical than it is attitudinal. Beginning with the work environment, availability is greatly hindered when your desk or workspace is set up in a way that puts your back toward people. Many of your team members will pass by and dismiss any interaction with you because you look busy. With you facing forward, many more people will stop and interact. The long-term value of this is that the flow of direct and accurate information to you will be much greater and your ability to evaluate the culture and tone of the environment will be much more accurate.

Availability is also about your approachability in informal settings. If you are always seen with a phone to your ear or responding to email, your availability is hurt. Another behavior to avoid is the walking in packs syndrome that many manager types embrace. They stroll down the hall in a group of other

managers. This will absolutely condemn any approachability from your team. Some of the best interactions and information gathering you'll achieve will be during hallway walks, break periods, and other informal settings. You must ensure that you appear available during those times.

Some people will misinterpret availability as an opportunity to micromanage. Being available and approachable is not your chance to tell people what to do as much as it is your chance to interact and aid them in finding the correct answers themselves. In another leadership competency we talk about breeding and not breeding sheep. This will be an important tool set to remember when you improve your availability.

Michael Eisner, the former chairman of the Disney Corporation, may have pioneered the programmed and systemic approach to visibility. He calendared a block of time each day to interact with a different area of his company. In some cases, he used more than an hour in this “management by wandering” style. The reason he performed this ritual was to make sure he was connected to almost all team members in his organization, ensure the culture which he visualized was being lived, and to improve the accurate flow of information needed to run the company. His visibility also demonstrated that he was connected to the line level of the operation and was in tune with the needs and challenges facing his team members.

No supervisor, manager, or executive can lead their area via email or through a spreadsheet. You cannot hide in your office and expect your vision to be realized. You must be the highly visible symbol of everything that you want from your team. They must see you, see you caring, and see your engagement in order for them to be engaged and caring. Over the years we have seen some stark, and sometimes painful, examples of the difference between the impact of good, visible leadership and those environments that only see the leader when something is wrong.

A cautionary note must be made about the difference between visibility and an inspection tour. Some leaders use the impetus of visibility to note and point out things that are wrong. There are plenty of opportunities for inspections and quality control. When you're working on visibility, you're building relationships, setting the tone, getting to know your team, and demonstrating support. After you launch down the path of an inspection tour, you'll be amazed at how quickly people will hide on your future attempts at visibility.

From a programmed and systemic perspective, the best way to ensure that your visibility remains high is to plan and calendar the activity, just as you would any other appointment. Prioritize it with the same urgency you would give any other activity. Some managers, supervisors, and leaders will struggle with visibility activities because they do not see them as productive actions. Remember, as a leader,

your role is to ensure the productivity of others, and visibility is an ingredient in their production.

## **The Great Tone Setting Penalty**

As many of you have already figured out, the most difficult challenge associated with all of the tone setting actions is being consistent. Being upbeat every day. Being optimistic, visible and approachable every day. Greeting team members every day. Showing interest, listening, and being open every day.

This also leads us to one of the most significant penalties associated with leadership: You don't get the luxury of having a bad day. We allow our team members to have bad days. We even compromise performance expectations when someone is struggling at home. You don't get that. Not that you are immune to problems or even feeling ill, you just don't get to share it with others or intimate you are struggling.

Many leaders come to work no matter what's going on at home or how poorly they feel. One of the most underutilized tools available to a leader is sick time. Compare for a moment the damage you cause by setting a poor tone compared with taking a single sick day to get yourself well. Contrast the poor morale you create when instead you could take a personal day to get your act together. Stop dragging yourself to work when it could have a significantly negative long-term impact.

## **Organizational Culture**

The culture of any organization is hard to define but you can always feel it. You can feel it if it's a good culture. You can feel it if it's a bad culture. Culture is best described as a combination of the general tone and demeanor of the organization, the organization's defined values, and the personality of the organization's leaders. Each of those three ingredients plays an integral part in building and maintaining organizational culture.

Before we discuss your role in the culture equation, there are three common cultural drivers. Each organization uses combinations of these drivers to build their own culture. The most successful organizations recognize these drivers and manage their personal influence on a regular basis.

The first and most important cultural driver is Customer Focus. As an influence, Customer Focus places great weight on how all actions and decisions impact the customer and builds all organizational structure around the customer's needs. Some common traits of Customer Focus include decisions made at operational levels, team members that are recruited more for personality and communication skills than experience or education, and a clearly defined mission that calls attention to the importance of customers and customer service. You will also tend to see a close connection from a

company's leaders to the customer base and a frequent measurement of customer comments and service levels.

Far and away, those organizations that maintain a high level of Customer Focus as a primary driver become the most successful and resilient organizations. From the perspective of ratios, the best run organizations have at least a sixty percent Customer Focus as a cultural driver.

The second most prevalent cultural driver is Results Focus. This is found in an organization that is driven by bottom line results or performance metrics. It's more common in publicly traded companies because of the pressure from investors and stockholders. Unfortunately, it's often found in struggling organizations as they try to rebound financially or from a difficult economic period.

In Results Focused organizations all activities are equated to a return on investment. If that return is not short term or not very positive, the activity is discarded. Results Focused organizations often move at a rapid pace and operate with very high and quantified performance standards. Environments with emphasis on sales or manufacturing are common examples of Results Focus. If not moderated, Results Focus can interfere with or override Customer Focus in an organization. Another common element of Results Focus is the great level of control related to costs,

expenditures, and investments. The higher control, the higher the Results Focus.

The third organizational cultural driver is Team Member Focus. Team Member Focus is the placement of high value on team member satisfaction, growth, and comfort. Organizations that place high importance on this often become the employers of choice in many communities because they offer the best benefits, highest compensation, great flexibility in working time, and many other perks.

The connection with this focus is that, when team members are happy, performance and customer service will come along for the ride. While it's generally true that Team Member Focus will connect with production and service levels, it can morph into a culture of convenience when team member needs and wants trump organizational effectiveness.

As baseline rules, the best organizational culture is comprised of sixty percent Customer Focus, twenty percent Results Focus, and twenty percent Team Member Focus. With that balance, the organization tends to achieve the greatest combination of focus elements and associated results. As with any ratio, an increase in one focus will cause a decrease in another focus area.

Without the benefit of detailed assessments, surveys, and observations, take a look at a couple of areas to determine

your organization's cultural drivers. What values are sought in hiring? Are the policies and procedures designed for customer convenience? Does the organization support learning and growth opportunities for team members? Do routine purchases require high levels of approval? What is the scope and tone of senior management communication? With these questions, you can get a pretty clear picture of organizational cultural drivers and the ratios that are in play.

## **Your Role in Organizational Culture**

There are four primary functions that you, the leader, must play in reference to organizational culture. Your first role is to determine organizational culture and the impact of that culture on your sphere of influence within the organization. This is no easy task, and you will occasionally receive mixed messages on culture. Some people around you and above you will walk the talk while others balk at it. You will have to gauge key objectives, vision, mission, core values, and the tone of leaders to determine the culture.

When the culture is built on solid ground and clearly defined, your second role is relatively easy. Simply support it and build upon the strengths found in the organization's culture. The one challenge point in this area will be your ability to subordinate some of the strong feelings you've related to how things "should be" rather than how things actually "are." Your support of the organizational culture is

critical to how your team responds within the culture and your overall leadership message of support and oneness.

When an organization's culture is a little fuzzy or you are unable to reconcile what the culture really is all about, you will need to provide some fine tuning for your team. This requires you to determine the strongest, most positive messages within the culture and constantly reinforce those messages. It also requires you to quash the messages that are counterproductive or not helpful to the organization and redirect team members to the strong and positive points of the organization's culture.

The final role you may have to play related to organizational culture is that of Definer. You may be the one that establishes values, connects to the vision, and provides clear messages related to the organization. Many new, emerging, and growing organizations lack an organizational culture. Leaders at all levels must work to define that culture and produce an environment where cultural drivers have the correct balance. This is also seen when there's a change in senior leadership and the previous keepers of organizational culture are replaced. When in the role of Definer, it's important to see the needs of team members, customers, and all stakeholders in order to determine what cultural elements will produce the highest degree of success for all.

## **Celebrations and Rituals**

One final method to ensure the culture and morale of your organization is through celebrations and rituals. Now don't get the wrong idea, we aren't talking about crazy dances or chants, but some commonly celebrated and widely known events that tie team members together and give them something additional to look forward to.

For years, many companies have used traditional holiday parties and summer picnics as their ritual base. This is a fine start as long as you absolutely guarantee you will continue to have them at all possible costs. The consistency of these events is important to give team members a sense of security and the long-term looking forward phenomenon.

For larger organizations, using a set day of the month to celebrate birthdays and employment start anniversaries is a great ritual. It gives those team members with a birthday during a particular month a chance to be celebrated by their team members.

Another significant, but rarely celebrated, ritual is the organization's birthday. Some places call it Founder's Day or something similar, but it's a great opportunity to reconnect people to the core of the organization by celebrating the day it was born.

Milestones are another chance to celebrate. When certain financial targets, key objectives, or positive comparisons to prior periods are reached, it should be time for a party. Looking forward to a celebration will help energize people and produce results for years to come.

## Quick Guide: Influence Equation

$$I = (RD + PF) + (.10 * EP)$$

I is Influence

RD is Relationship Depth

PF is Positive Feedback

EP is Expert Power or Technical Expertise

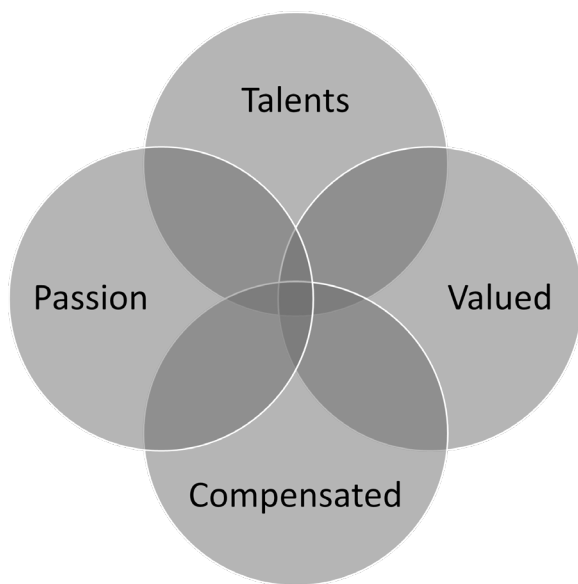
Influence (I) is how we get people to do what we want and need them to do, and relationship depth (RD) is our connection with our team members. Positive feedback is the coaching provided to them regularly including praise, appreciation and encouragement.

Expert power (EP) is your technical expertise and experience in your particular field. Only ten percent of it is valued in influence. The overuse of expert power by a leader can have a devastating effect on engagement, morale and motivation. Leaders do not have to be experts. Leaders have to generate influence through relationship depth and positive feedback.

## Quick Guide: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



**Quick Guide: Self-Actualization Intersection**



## **Quick Guide: Discretionary Effort**

Discretionary effort is the amount of work that a team member could supply above what they are paid to do or their minimum requirements.

The pay provided to a team member compensates for the lowest minimum requirement of performance and behavior.

To achieve more than the minimum level of performance, a leader must tap into, unlock and leverage the discretionary effort of team members.

## **Quick Guide: Team Member Relationships**

1. Spend time getting to know team members.
  - Family Composition (Relationship Level 1)
  - Interests and Passions (Relationship Level 2)
  - Location of Origin (Relationship Level 3)
  - Career Aspirations (Relationship Level 4)
  - Birthday and Work Anniversary (Relationship Level 5)
  - The Five Levels have Two Powerful Commonalities
    - They Are Owned Uniquely by the Team Member
    - They Are Valued by the Team Member
2. To build solid relationships work on:
  - Establishing Commonality
  - Listen Effectively
  - Make the Team Member Important and Feel Important
  - Compliment and Validate What You Learn
  - “That’s Interesting”
  - “How Cool Is That”
  - Avoid Sharing Your Experiences Immediately
  - Avoid “One-Upmanship”
  - Be Respectful of Differences in Lifestyle, Interests, Politics, Etc.
  - Become Comfortable with Personal Transparency and Provide Trust
  - Document What You Learn
3. Follow-up on things learned in the relationship levels and ask about things that are important to individual team members. Demonstrate genuine interest in them.

## **Quick Guide: Improving Team Member Engagement**

1. Words and labels matter. How you refer to someone is how they will respond and what they will grow to become.
  - Refer to Team Members As:
    - Team Members
    - Associates
    - Partners
  - Greet team members every day.
    - Prioritize This Above Personal Tasks and Work
    - Calendar and Schedule This Priority
    - Do Not Rely on When Time Allows
    - Interact in a Friendly and Warm Manner
    - Spend Time Interacting
    - Follow-Up on Relational Information
    - Be Consistent
2. Demonstrate respect for team members and team roles. Respect is reciprocal. It is not earned and must be provided to be received.
3. Communicate frequently and transparently.
  - One-On-One Meetings
  - Team Meetings
  - Openly Share Challenges and Status
4. Create an environment and culture that supports engagement and morale.
5. Encourage (and Certainly Don't Discourage) Social Interactions

## **Quick Guide: Improving Leadership Tone**

1. Lighten up
2. Manage approachability and become more approachable
  - Solicit Input
  - NEVER Dismiss Input or Ideas
  - Become a Possiblitarian
  - Look Where Things/Processes Can be Better
  - Positively Validate All Ideas and Suggestions
  - Manage Verbal Tone and Non-Verbal Signals
  - Manage Physical Position and Office Environment
  - An Open Door Means Nothing If Back is Turned
3. Prioritize Team Member Requests for Time
4. Be Visible in the Working Environment
5. Avoid negativity and negative behaviors. Remember, your team is what you project, and you don't get the luxury of a bad day.
6. Be optimistic and view situations with optimism.
7. Be polite and courteous.