The *Total Leader*®

Build the Business Together as a Team

Over the past few decades, teamwork and team concept have become buzz words for business and industry. While many organizations have enjoyed success in implementing a team environment, others have found it difficult to move beyond theory to practical application of teamwork.

What makes the difference? Even companies, managers, and employees whose attitudes are favorable for the success of a team environment are sometimes at a loss to know what specific behaviors support teamwork. In general, we do know what successful teams, whether in sports or in business and industry, define the vision and mission of the team and its members, and they excel at setting goals and implementing a plan of action. All team members have the responsibility to motivate themselves, and they share the responsibility of creating a climate conducive for motivation for other team members.

The events over the past couple of years have left people troubled about tomorrow. The world is going through massive, constant change. Technology and global competition are resulting in different organizational models, restructured businesses, and new ways of doing things. Most companies are getting leaner and flatter. Businesses are redistributing power and information, giving employees at all levels more influence on results than ever

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before. It is exactly in this environment that high-performing, self-managing teams will not only excel, but are essential to success.

A team is defined as a small group of skilled people who work together toward a common goal or purpose. The team's primary responsibility is to focus on accomplishing the goal that brought the team together — and focused on high performance. To reach that goal as quickly as possible, use the following five keys; they are highly effective, time-tested, and proven to work, for both individuals and teams:

Crystallize your Thinking

Just as you have a destination in mind when you begin a trip, you need a "destination" or goal in mind when you are hired to do a job or assigned to a team. Determine what goal your organization wants your team to achieve.

Only when you know what the goal or destination is can you apply all your best thinking and your best efforts to reach that goal. Nothing is more discouraging to an employee than to have worked hard for days or weeks on a certain project only to find out that he or she did not have a clear understanding of what was expected.

Once you have a clear understanding of what the

goal of the team is, then you can dedicate yourself to its attainment with unswerving singleness of purpose. Just as you probably do on a road trip, you need to check your map occasionally to make sure you are traveling the right route. Ask your team leader and check any written instructions that were given to you to make sure your thinking is crystallized and you are focusing on the goal.

When all team members know what the goal is and clearly understands what role they play in the overall success of the team, then you are on the road to success. Most problems that teams encounter can be traced to a lack of crystallized thinking.

Develop an Action Plan

A plan of action is simply an outline of the goals and the action steps required to reach your team's overall goal. The plan of action is where your team gets its day-to-day focus, direction, and stability.

Though simple, a detailed plan of action is one of the most effective tools a team possesses. A clear plan of action enables team members to remain focused on the action steps required to reach the goal. You can work with more enthusiasm and commitment when you know exactly what you're supposed to do, and you will be more competent as you progress toward the team's desired destination.

Four steps are required to develop a meaningful plan of action: • Make an outline of the steps your team will take. • Create short-term goals toward which your team focuses. • Make a detailed schedule of the dates you plan to accomplish your team's small and large goals. • Develop an individual action plan for each team member showing what each person needs to accomplish to help the team reach the short-term goals and ultimately the overall long-term goal.

Develop Desire

A burning desire is the greatest motivator of every human action. The desire for success implants success consciousness, which in turn creates a vigorous and ever-increasing habit of success. Desire is the difference between a goal and a wish. Desire puts action into your plans. Without it, you will never succeed – no matter how worthy your goal nor how workable your plan.

Enthusiasm is the outward reflection of your inner desire. More than any other characteristic or trait of human personality, enthusiasm is the companion of success in every achievement, every worthwhile venture, every upward step in human progress. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Your enthusiasm will be contagious. As you develop desire and enthusiasm to reach your goal, your teammates also will begin to feel this energy. As more team members develop desire, the momentum builds and your team will be unstoppable.

Develop Confidence

Nothing gives you more confidence than knowing exactly the actions you plan to take and the order in which to take them. When you have crystallized your thinking so that you know where you stand and where you want to go, you have laid the groundwork for supreme confidence.

When challenges arise, and they inevitably will, maintain your focus on your goal and on your ability to reach that goal. Keep your eyes straight ahead and distractions will not slow you down. Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal. Remain confident that you will reach your goal – and you will!

Develop supreme confidence in yourself and in your own abilities. Enter every activity without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat. Concentrate on your strengths, instead of your weaknesses – on your powers, instead of your problems.

Develop Determination

Develop a dogged determination to follow through on your plan, regardless of obstacles, criticism, circumstances, or what other people say, think, or do. You may expect to hear negative comments from certain people, but when those certain people are on your team, what should you do?

The answer is to move forward toward your goal. Construct your determination with sustained effort, controlled attention, and concentrated energy. Do not allow negative or complacent attitudes from teammates to slow you down. Those individuals in time either change and go with the team, or they will remain unchanged and most likely be taken off the team.

Do not let others distract you. Hang on, do not quit, and you will win. Opportunities never come to those who wait – they are captured by those who dare to develop dogged determination.

No matter what the goal might be, one step at a time will see it come to pass. That is why knowing what you need to do on a daily basis – and then doing it – is so important.

Overcoming Obstacles One Step at a Time

Discover innovative ways to go over, around, or through any roadblocks to your goal. After you have identified obstacles or barriers and formulated solutions, you are ready to develop written action steps.

Use the following four steps to overcome obstacles to your goals:

- Clarify the problem. Work together as a team to make sure you know all the facts about the situation.

- Present possible solutions. After looking at all the facts as a team, work together to present and review all the possible solutions.

- Evaluate the solutions. Consider the solution that will achieve the maximum benefits in the shortest time.

- Make a decision. Work together as a team to decide which solution is the best one for the team to use. Then, act on your decision.

Table of Contents

Create a Climate of Motivation

The most effective system of motivation is based on the satisfaction of individual needs. Become sensitive to the needs of the people you wish to motivate and help them fill their ever-expanding appetites for achievement, recognition, self-expression, and a sense of belonging. True motivation comes from within and is the responsibility of the individual. You can, however, create a climate in which people are more likely to develop self-motivation and direct it toward personal productivity on the job.

No single test or formula can consistently and accurately predict the intricate patterns of human desire, emotion, and reasoning. Only one prediction is certain, and this is how even apparently illogical and unreasonable behavior always has a cause. People may not consciously understand their own actions, but one sure principle is woven throughout the complicated pattern of thought and feeling: all human action is aimed – effectively or ineffectively – at satisfying some need.

Simple human needs are: air, food, water, rest and sleep, sexual satisfaction, freedom from worry, and reduction of tension. Biological needs cannot always be clearly distinguished from psychological or social needs. For example, you could satisfy your need for food with a hamburger and glass of milk at each meal and stay alive; but you prefer variety from meal to meal. Obviously, you are motivated by needs other than the pure biological need for food. This same principle operates when you buy a home or look for a new automobile. Factors other than shelter from the elements or the ability to move from one place to another enter into your choices.

Psychological needs are equally as strong in their motivational force as physical needs, and when physical needs are fairly well satisfied, psychological needs become even more important. The needs for self-esteem, acceptance, status, and security are so important that people often voluntarily take extreme risks to keep or acquire one of these. But different people use different approaches to fulfill the same needs.

Everyone needs self-respect. Your recognizing the achievement of individuals is more powerful than you may imagine. When you help people increase their self-esteem or their status among their peers, you add a new dimension of power and effectiveness to your position. You automatically gain their respect and loyalty, and they will work hard to accomplish anything you ask of them. In contrast, those who destroy the self-respect of others are progressively destroying the possibility that these individuals will make any special effort to be productive.

A team often provides the means for satisfying the need for social approval and the feeling of belonging. Team members act or fail to act in order to win or hold the approval of co-workers, family, and friends. As with other psychological needs, social approval may be sought in various ways. Self-image and the characteristics of the group to which one looks for support determine what actions are taken in an effort to win approval.

Helping people to see how their needs are being met through productive work on the job builds the satisfaction derived from doing work well and being compensated fairly. If the company deals fairly with employees and customers alike, produces a worthwhile, high-quality product or service, and recognizes the contribution of every person, everyone takes pride in being associated with the company.

Become a Developer of Successful People

The specific method or process for developing skilled team members varies with what is to be taught, the learning abilities of the people involved, and their prior experience. This basic approach can be followed as a general outline for instruction on any type of development:

◆ Explain what is to be done and why. Tell team members what the task involves and why it is important. Answer any questions in a friendly, positive manner. Point out how the individuals will benefit. If they can expect to receive higher pay, increased job status, or become more valuable to the organization in some other tangible way, tell them so. Describe to them how their efforts help reach the organization's goals. Remind them that by receiving further training and development, they can better meet their personal goals for increased responsibility and greater compensation.

◆ Explain the major steps. Break down the task into steps that are easy to understand. Provide a written description and guidelines in addition to your verbal explanations. Providing a written procedure saves you and the team member time later in answering questions. Written procedures also demonstrate your confidence in the abilities of your team members to follow written instructions, to answer their own questions, and to learn independently.

◆ Have the trainee explain to you the procedure. Encourage the trainee to "talk through" the procedure. This helps you and the trainee to identify any misunderstanding about the procedure. When all the trouble spots are eliminated and trainees can accurately and confidently describe the procedure, they are ready for the next step.

◆ Demonstrate the procedure. Teach one step at a time. Demonstrate what to do by performing the activity, explaining as you work, while they watch and listen. Remember that people learn differently. Nearly all learn best by watching the successful performance of the skills you are teaching and then by actually performing the skills themselves.

◆ Help trainees to perform the procedure. When you first allow the trainee to perform the procedure independently, remain available as a resource. Avoid assuming too much responsibility. Remember, you are there to help the trainee succeed.

◆ Evaluate progress. Praise satisfactory performance and point out ways to improve still more. Always emphasize what a person does right. Show what could be done better, and ask questions that lead the trainees to expand their understanding of the process and to develop the knowledge to perform correctly. Give major attention to the aspects of the performance you want to be repeated. Wrong behavior will then be eliminated, and good performance will take its place.

◆ Provide a tracking system. Set up a method of tracking performance. Always inspect what you expect. This approach encourages people to become accountable for their own success and adds to the respect they feel toward you as a good coach and mentor. As soon as possible, put learners on their own to perform with only routine checkpoints. Let them know you have confidence in their ability. The efficiency and effectiveness of nearly every task in any organization can be enhanced by providing a written procedure for it. Written guidelines require careful analysis of a task, a description of the best way to do it, and a tracking system for determining how well the task is being done. Use a tracking system to enable people to measure their success so they can assume responsibility for their own continuous improvement.

Remember that you can never transfer years of knowledge and skill directly to another person. If you assume a condescending, impatient attitude, people quickly detect it and cannot do their best. Use the advantage of your expertise to facilitate the learning experience of the other person.

You are constantly teaching, training, and developing other people. Every time you give someone an assignment, or tell a person what to do, how to do it, and when it must be completed, you use some technique of instruction. By becoming more aware of these everyday opportunities for training and development, you can turn informal instruction into powerful learning experiences for both yourself and your team members.

View Feedback as Potential for Growth

Providing feedback on performance is a continuous process. Feedback has a greater impact on productivity when these principles are observed:

Give feedback as soon as possible. The purpose of feedback is to reinforce desirable behavior and to discourage undesirable behavior; its effect is most powerful when it follows behavior immediately. When praise for a specific task well done occurs promptly, it does more to encourage continued high level achievement than a good rating on a semi-annual performance review several months after the good work is first accomplished.

Give feedback on both positive and negative factors. Giving feedback only to correct errors causes people to become discouraged. They may believe that the only way to gain your attention is to do something wrong. Since most people crave recognition, a lack of positive feedback often encourages negative performance. Being criticized is better to some people than being ignored. Attention of any kind can be a form of reward. Be sure you are rewarding positive behavior, not just negative behavior, with attention and recognition. Watch for outstanding performance, improved performance, and continued quality performance in your team members, and at least mention that you have noticed it. Visibly reward positive performance when possible. Give extra compliments for work well done, for innovative ideas pursued, and for extra effort expended to meet a deadline. People who regularly receive praise and recognition for work well done are less likely to react defensively when you find it necessary to correct errors.

Regard feedback as coaching for growth. Keep in mind that if a team member's behavior is inappropriate, avoiding confrontation usually prolongs and intensifies the negative situation. As long as the behavior continues, you, your organization, and your clients suffer from the person's less-than-effective performance. And by persisting in current habits, the person misses a valuable opportunity to reach higher levels of development and achievement. Ideally, you should give much more positive than negative feedback to your team members. Keep these guidelines in mind: • Address the situation as privately as possible. • Give the person the benefit of the doubt. • Avoid sarcasm and joking about serious issues. • Avoid words like always and never. • Confront only specific factors the person can change.

• Give the person ideas for fixing the problem. • Affirm the individual as a valuable team member.

Make feedback specific to behavior. Effective feedback focuses on a specific situation, action, or decision and the consequences. Praise and correction alike are most effective when they are specific. Non-specific over-generalizations, on the other hand, are confusing and counterproductive. In addressing negative situations, dealing with specifics helps separate the unacceptable behavior from the person. Listen carefully. You may learn that the cause is beyond the person's control. But if you decide that the person's behavior is the cause, first explain why it is unacceptable. State what you expect in the way of changed behavior, and the benefits for making this change. Emphasizing the benefits increases your ability to gain the person's commitment to change.

Many organizations have established procedures for performance evaluation to provide feedback. When performance evaluations or merit reviews for all associates are made at the same time, managers who must complete these reviews often become emotionally torn. Some individuals always out-perform others. The manager is then faced with the dilemma of how to be completely objective in deciding whose performance is fair, whose is satisfactory, and whose is outstanding. The result is often the "halo effect" in which the manager gives every team member the same rating.

Another challenge in providing fair ratings is the fact that some team members, because of factors unrelated to ability or attitude, have an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and productivity – or lack thereof – more visibly than others. As a result, these team members, due to factors beyond their control, receive ratings that are either too high or too low. To avoid this dilemma, some managers tend to rate almost all individuals as average and seldom give an outstanding or unsatisfactory rating.

If performance reviews are given on a person's anniversary with the organization or at some other random date rather than all at once, it is easier to be objective and fair. This procedure allows concentration on the productivity of individuals – not on their relative standing in the group. Unequal factors are more easily eliminated and it reduces the incidence of resentment and general dissatisfaction.

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™.
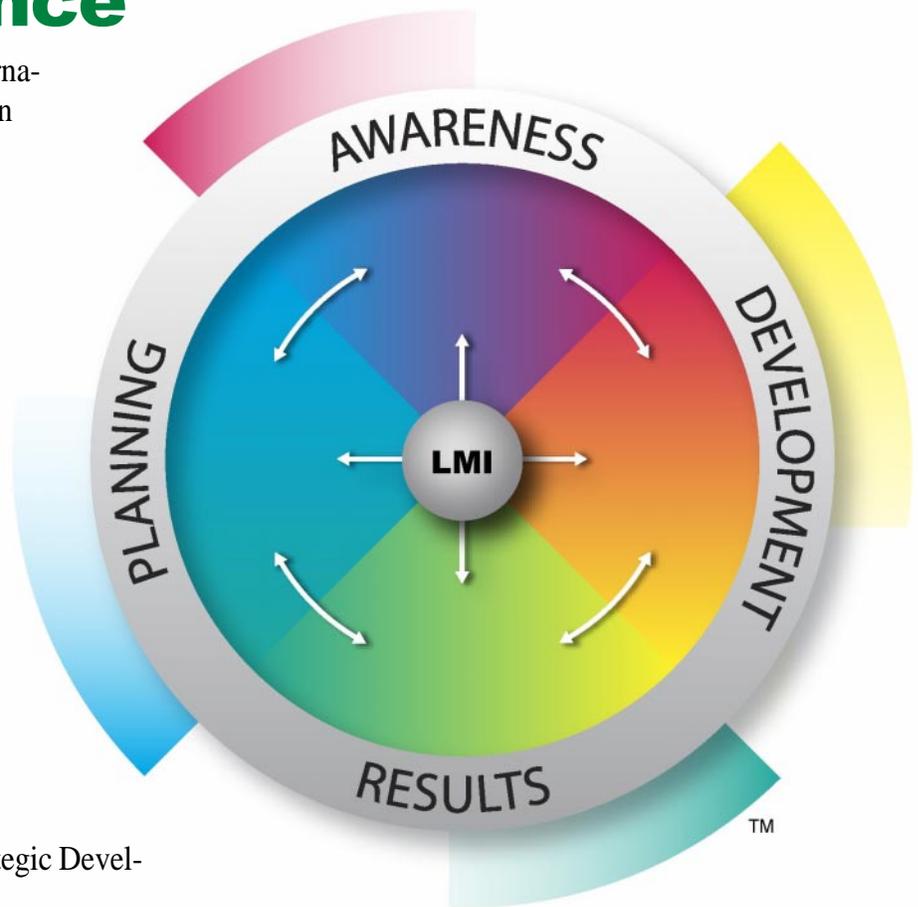
The LMI Process™...

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

● Identifies key areas the organization should focus on in order to reach the next level of success.

● Gives direction to an effective solution and delivers measurable results.

● Practices a 93 percent effective leadership model.

The LMI Process™ is designed around a Strategic Development™ model with four vital components:

● Awareness
● Planning
● Development
● Results Management.

LMI® tools and processes have been making a difference in organizations and individuals for more than 50 years in more than 80 countries.