Collective Passion

A friend of mine in the commercial real estate business, I'll call her AF, and I had a dialogue on email about the need for more passion in the workplace. She had this to say:

> ***There surely is not enough passion in the work place. I find that the more someone feels they have "ownership" of what they do, literally or figuratively, the happier and more productive they are. This really opens the doors for creativity, passion and leadership. I also believe that in order for an organization to be alive and competitive in a changing market there needs to be both individual as well as "collective" passion. And how does an organization create that sort of collective passion? Hmm, now you have me thinking...***

AF had me thinking too, about "ownership" and "collective passion". It seems to me that these two concepts are intricately linked. When a leader involves their teams and individuals in strategic as well as tactical discussions and decisions, those individuals and teams naturally feel more ownership for their functions and for their collective outcomes. If done consistently, this leads naturally to the desire to contribute more and, over time, leads to passionate efforts — individually at first, but then
As is so often the case, the path leads back to the leader and how they interact with their teams. Yes, once again, it's all about you. In 25 years of leading and watching others lead individuals and groups large and small I have come to recognize a few consistent elements that we should pay attention to about our leadership styles and methods. Steven Covey taught us years ago to always "Begin with the end in mind." With our goal being "collective passion" lets begin with that end in mind.

While not an exhaustive list, here are six key leadership methods to move toward "collective passion":

1. Assess your team's talents & roles

Whether this is your first day with a new team, or the 10th year with the same group you must assess your team's talents regularly – I recommend 2x annually. This allows you to ensure your people are in the roles that make the best use of their unique talents (good for them, good for you). This process, when done correctly, provides the format for a meaningful discussion with each individual about what they find enriching and what they find unnecessary about their roles and a rich dialogue about how <u>they</u> imagine how they can contribute most effectively. Over time, people migrate to where they are most effective, on their own or with your courageous coaching. In the end you have built an environment of trustworthiness.

2. Trust your team

To be effective you <u>must</u> trust your team. Always assume they deserve it until they prove otherwise. I have always trusted my teams and have rarely been disappointed. It is liberating when you finally trust. And don't think trusting you is automatic just because you are the "boss". <u>Earn</u> their trust through trusting them, through honest dialogue, and through consistency.

3. Listen – with all your senses

We all know we are supposed to listen. Most of us were taught at some point "listen twice as much as we talk – that is why we were given two ears and one mouth". But most of us don't, either because we are too self-absorbed or too busy or both. I know you're brilliant and that your people desperately need to know everything in that brilliant brain of yours… Or do they? To develop collective passion, you must listen – and not just with your ears. Listen with your eyes (body language), and with your heart. If you pause and really "listen", you can often "hear" what your people are not saying but desperately need you to hear. It is one of the basic human needs we all have – to be heard. Start listening today!

4. Provide challenging, meaningful work

Despite popular belief, people do not find satisfaction in a job due to the size of their paycheck or due to their titles. They find satisfaction when they believe their work is meaningful. The good news is that all work is meaningful in the right context. Your job as a leader is to articulate to your team why their work is meaningful. Workers driving rivets into steel panels can feel their work has meaning when they know these steel panels will ensure that buildings will be safely constructed due to their diligence. Garbage men & women (sanitation engineers in the PC parlance) feel their work has meaning when they know they are contributing to a beautiful city. A medical files clerk can feel his work has meaning when he knows that he's potentially saving lives by enabling doctors to ensure accurate diagnoses due to accurate records. Surely you can determine why the work your team is doing has meaning.

5. Recognize and acknowledge – or put more simply, say *"Thank you!"*

I have found that the two most powerful words in my leadership vocabulary are "Thank you". Even when a leader knows practice recognition, they tend to only recognize outstanding performance and unusually strong results – and ignore the quality work their people are producing every day. On the other hand, they also tend to focus on the smallest of errors and the occasional poor performance. Spend your communication time recognizing everyday good work and results – not in a theatrical way. Just say thank you. Do this for a week and you will see an amazing difference in morale, productivity and smiles!

6. Give your team the successes and own the setbacks

When discussing your team's performance with others, a true leader allows the team to take credit for all victories and takes responsibility for all setbacks:
"My team produced a 10% sales increase." And "I missed sales target by 5%."
You will, of course, hold your team and individuals accountable for their performance. But when speaking to others, your team will know you put them first and never publicly speak ill of them.

To summarize, when people are in appropriate roles based on their talents, are trusted, are "heard", have meaningful work that is recognized with simple thanks, and when public victories are theirs, but public failures are yours…magic happens. People actually show up to work, on time, and get to work to produce amazing results! None of the six points are difficult and they don't need to be attempted in any particular order. Just start! Take action today on one of the six areas and watch your team move to ***collective passion***!

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