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## Engaged Leadership™: A Comprehensive Approach to Leadership

Leadership has always intrigued me. I'll never forget my first experience with it. I was sitting in my little bitty desk in Ms. Tucker's fifth grade homeroom class when she walked in one day and announced, "Next week we're going to have elections for class president." I was so excited I bounced up out of my chair and said, "I want that job!" I have absolutely no idea what you campaign for to become the president of your fifth grade class ... perhaps more recess time or a vaccine for cooties! I have no idea. All I know is I wanted to lead.

The next week we had the election. The good news is some of my classmates voted for me. The bad news is I came in second place in a two-man race! This little fellow in my class just whipped me. I don't know what happened to that kid, but I'm sure little Billy Gates is doing just fine wherever he ended up! That was my first recollection of leadership. I just knew I wanted to lead.

While I learned a great deal about leadership throughout my education in high school and college, I got my real-world experience in corporate America. I was fortunate to be a part of the Leadership Development Program at SBC Communications. While this experience taught me many things about leadership, perhaps the most significant was that there is a lot of management, but not much leadership.

I saw good things in good people, but many were missing the whole package. Some were great managers, but they constantly criticized the vision of the organization. Or they had great vision, but couldn't lead a group in silent prayer! Or they were so inspirational they could talk a wolf off a meat wagon but couldn't actually do any of the work!

If you examine any organization you will find that most of them have strength in one of these areas. Those organizations that would be considered highly successful have done one of two things: they have been fortunate enough to find leaders who have the personality and skill to perform well at all three, or they have developed a team of leaders who ensure all three areas are covered. Either way, they have proactively covered all three aspects of leadership, an approach I refer to as *Engaged Leadership™* ... a hands-on approach to leadership that involves being engaged at all levels, including the *vision*, the *inspiration* and the *expertise*.

### Directional Leadership

The first aspect of *Engaged Leadership™* is Directional Leadership. It involves setting the vision of the organization. Many companies have been created from a great idea, but ultimately failed because the leadership got caught up in the day-to-day challenges of putting out fires instead of focusing on the long-term vision. Perhaps worse they assumed someone else was responsible for setting the vision ... someone at the top of the organization. *Engaged*

*Leadership™* is about assuming responsibility for all three aspects of leadership, regardless of your management level.

Employees look for Directional leaders to clarify the overall mission, to create a culture and keep the team on task.

### Motivational Leadership

The second aspect of *Engaged Leadership™* is Motivational Leadership. It involves providing the inspiration for others to want to pursue the vision. Many companies have been created by incredible visionaries, and failed within the year because they didn't have anyone within the leadership ranks with the ability to inspire others to reach the target.

While some employees may stick around because they like the vision of the company, most leave because they simply weren't motivated. In fact, if there is an aspect of leadership that is missing in many companies, it's Motivational Leadership. Motivational leaders have a responsibility to inspire performance toward the vision, cultivate the culture created by the Directional leaders, and develop the human capital to be successful.

### Operational Leadership

The third aspect of *Engaged Leadership™* is Operational Leadership. It involves having the expertise to run the business. All the vision in the world will get you nowhere if you don't have people in place to make it happen. While many organizations lack Motivational Leadership, they tend to have an abundance of Operational Leadership.

Employees expect Operational leaders to run the personnel end of the business, and to enhance communication throughout the organization. Perhaps most importantly, they expect Operational leaders to help them do their job.

From the beginning of time people have depended on leadership. While we all need direction, employees hate to be managed, but they love to be led. Successful leaders don't just focus on those aspects of leadership they're good at or they like. They focus on being engaged at all levels.

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