

**Maximizing Results Through People**  
**A CEO to CEO Quarterly Newsletter -- 2-15-02**  
**How to Improve Top Team Results**

Dear Fellow CEO:

I was recently asked to speak before a group of about 100 CEO's. Looking for direction on how to structure my presentation to best satisfy the audience, I asked the association's leadership to list the most common complaints heard from their member CEO's. Their complaints frequently centered on the performance of their top management teams. Trying to address the source of the most common of these complaints, the following outline for a presentation was developed. I hope you can gain some useful insight into your own team's performance from these thoughts.

We find that leaders of the most successful teams do three things exceptionally well. They:

1. Develop, communicate and operate on a day-to-day basis with a clear, consistent strategy, plan and vision.
2. Assign tasks to advantage the strengths of the person given the assignment.
3. Manage people to satisfy their individual needs.

The more vigorously you work to integrate these three behaviors into your daily management style, the more likely you will be successful at getting both the strongest commitment and the best results from your team. The most convincing argument for personally adopting these behaviors is reflecting on the negative outcomes generated when they aren't practiced.

**1. Develop, communicate and operate on a day-to-day basis with a clear strategy, plan and vision.**

Lacking a strategy and vision, whipsawing between one direction and another, and / or failing to consistently communicate what the vision of the organization is have real, consistent and negative consequences we see in top management team behavior. If you see some or all of the behaviors listed below amongst your top management team, you likely want to evaluate whether or not you are being effective at "developing, communicating and operating on a day-to-day basis with a clear strategy, plan and vision".

- Specific departments have become immobilized. Not knowing specifically where they're going, they choose instead to do nothing new. It's safer.
- Two departments that need to work together follow different paths because their leaders have different agendas that aren't brought together by a common goal.
- Inordinate amounts of management time are wasted arguing about competing versions of where the organization should be heading.
- The same problems are unknowingly being attacked by different departments yielding conflicting outcomes and inappropriate allocation of resources.

**2. Assign tasks to advantage the strengths of the person given the assignment.**

This is one of the primary lessons of Predictive Index®. It doesn't make sense to force a task on someone who will not do it well when there is someone else available who has the skills and / or personality to succeed. In spite of the lessons of P. I. and the inherent logic involved, we still see many managers struggling under the burden of trying to perform an assigned task for which they are ill equipped. The following symptoms are indications that the assignment you have given to a subordinate was not suited to their individual strengths:

- A = D conflict behaviors. When you ask a lower A higher D to take significant risks or a higher A lower D to administer a system, it sets their natural decision making system against itself – creating personal immobility, stress and sometimes, stress-related illness. When you witness people who had previously been action oriented stop acting, it raises a flag suggesting they may have been assigned work ill-suited to their strengths.
- Uncharacteristic irritability and frustration from a member of the team. Working against their grain frequently causes stress and “acting out” on the part of the people who are forced to significantly change behaviors from what is normal for them.
- Uncompleted projects from a manager who historically has always been on top of their responsibilities. People always put off until last those projects they are least suited to perform.

### 3. Manage people to satisfy their individual needs.

This is another primary lesson of PI© – different people are motivated differently. Marcus Buckingham of “First Break All The Rules” fame says, “*The single most important determinant of individual performance is a person’s relationship with his or her immediate manager*” and how you craft that relationship has great import on each individuals’ performance. Disregarding the individual needs of your senior team members causes some common, negative consequences like these:

- Whining. Whining is the first and most prevalent symptom a person exhibits when they are not receiving that which they need.
- Disengagement. Employees, even senior managers, who do not get their needs met at work, withdraw and simply contribute less. Where you see senior managers who just don’t seem to be as committed as they used to be, ask yourself, “Have I given this person what they personally need to be successfully motivated?”
- Passionless performance. Senior managers tend to be the most likely people in an organization to go about their work with passion (when we’re really on top of our game as a leader, the majority of our people operate with passion). Where you start to see the passion depart and the look of drudgery take its place, ask yourself, “Have I given this person what they personally need to be successfully motivated?”
- The top management team gives enough effort to get by – a similar symptom to those above.
- You become less confident in those you have historically placed significant trust. Sometimes we lose confidence because we fail to see enthusiasm in our next tier of leaders. Have we been hoisted on our own petard? Did our inability to motivate dampen the enthusiasm of our top team performers?

We are the leaders of each of our respective organizations. Our beliefs, and more importantly, our actions tremendously influence the will and energy our team generates in our behalf. If we operate consistently with a plan, manage toward individual strength and motivate towards personal need; we create an earth-moving force aimed at accomplishing whatever goals are placed in front of us. Every day we have the capability to add to or detract from the power of the team around us. By committing to the three behaviors outlined above, you will improve your team’s overall performance in specific measurable ways.

Thanks for reading and I hope there is something you gleaned from this that you can put into effect with your team today that improves its’ performance.



Robert S. Wilson, President  
Bob Wilson & Associates, Inc.

P. S. Please stop by and visit our new offices in Carmel if you’re in the neighborhood. We’re at 210 N. Rangeline Road and someone is generally here between 7:30 and 5:30 during the week. We’d love to show you around!