

**Maximizing Results Through People**  
**A CEO to CEO Quarterly Newsletter**  
**5/15/07**  
**Creating Organizational Confidence**

Dear Fellow CEO:

For the last several years we at BWA have focused our consulting efforts on building the confidence of individual people. We recognized through Predictive Index that individual confidence is the primary source of individual productivity and performance – the more confidence people have, the more profitable their efforts. We have built on what Jack Welch said, “Self-confidence gives you courage and extends your reach. It lets you take greater risks and achieve far more than you ever thought possible.”

At BWA, we’ve provided organizations with the knowledge and power (through our consultants and Predictive Index) to build that confidence in their people by offering specifics of what one can do as a leader to impact employee self confidence. We are very proud of the results our clients have been able to achieve.

On further examination, it became apparent that confidence has another, even more powerful dimension which goes beyond the individual and into the whole enterprise – we’ve coined the term the “Confident Organization” to describe it. A Confident Organization is a group of confident people operating as a team who bring another level of confidence to bear on productivity – one which is a true competition beater. They have the personal confidence that good management provides along with the vision and plan of action supplied by excellent leadership. A Confident Organization knows how to marshal and lead change.

It is in the best organizations where you see personal and organizational confidence come together to create this powerful force. That said, while you may know a Confident Organization when you see it, how can one tell specifically what created it and how it can be sustained. It’s obvious they exist and they are powerful when they are incarnated, but, what makes a Confident Organization? And, how does one create one? I wasn’t sure.

To try to come to some conclusions about what created Confident Organizations, I developed and sent out an email with one scenario and follow up question to 105 people. Those selected were simply the first 105 people in my email directory. They were all people on whom I had P. I. profiles. They were representative of all profiles – High A, B, C, and D and all walks of life – CEO’s, managers, workers, business associates, family and friends – I asked them the following question:

“I’d like you to take a moment to think. Close your eyes if it makes it easier. I’d like you to think of the time when you were the most excited about your work. It could be now or it could have been 25 years ago. It could be working for a profit venture or a non-profit venture. It could be work that you did on your off hours or work at a 9-5 job. But, it needs to be a time when you were excited and truly happy with your work. A time when you were most excited to come into work. What were you doing? And what made that specific time so good?”

My assumption was twofold. First, that most people, had at one time or another worked in a Confident Organization. And second, that there would be a consistency to the responses that would give me some answers to, “What creates a Confident Organization?”

Before getting into the specifics of the responses, let me give you a little information about what I received. First, I anticipated getting 10 – 20 responses – double the typical response to an unsolicited email inquiry. In fact, there were 55 replies – I was floored. Second, more than 10 of the people (the low end of what I was anticipating responding at all) thanked me for asking. They were excited to share their stories – and share their stories they did.

Here’s a typical one from a High B, C and D, who as you’ll be able to tell, is a teacher:

“I was most excited to get to work the day that the high school show was opening and I was going to let the kids run the show alone. I was excited that there was the possibility that they could pull off something that had never been done before at the school and that we, as a team, had only worked together for less than a week. I was nervous at that fact too, but just the idea of them using the skills we had built together to pull a great show off was enough to have me excited.”

This teachers’ story, like most of the others, had a number of consistencies – which together, help put together a framework of what makes up a Confident Organization – at least on a micro level.

1. **Change. Being tied to and specifically a part of something that is changing or being created.** Virtually everyone who responded (53 respondents) was involved in an environment that they were changing. More importantly, they were committed to the change. In spite of the fact that leaders regularly bemoan people's reluctance to change, it is change itself which most excites people about their work. While leaders talk about High C and D people being reluctant to change, the reality is that ***they enjoy work most when change is a part of it!***

2. **Ownership. Feeling ownership responsibility for the work to be done.** For change to be understood, bought into and participated in, it must be owned by the people doing it. The story conveys that this was the teacher's and the kids' show. They would succeed or fail as a team. It was, most importantly, their baby. This is the part that most results-based organizations fall down at – they're not real good at translating their direction to the execution of each individual worker.

3. **Job Fit. Doing a job that meets individual needs.** The story above was typical in that the job the person was doing when most excited about his work was directly suited to his strengths. As a Low A, High B and D person, helping a team be successful in a public event was plugging directly into the writers' individual core power. Organizational confidence (and individual confidence) requires job fit.

4. **Motivation. Being given individually-based motivation.** This individual was getting positive personal feedback from his team and (in retrospect) got the applause, admiration and positive feedback that he desired at the successful shows completion. Additionally, you get the feeling of family satisfaction (for the High C in his profile) in his story created by working on the show together with the students.

These four characteristics were woven throughout most of the responses I received – in varied and sundry ways. I believe they are the basic ingredients of The Confident Organization. But, the majority of the responses, like this one, spoke on a micro level. The people spoke of a specific group at a specific time – not referring to the whole organization.

In fact, in this particular situation the person in question actually works for a dysfunctional organization. He was excited about his work because his team and his job provided him with each of the four characteristics mentioned above – ***in spite of the organization!*** His was a confident team in an unconfident organization.

What is it that takes that confident team or individual to the level of a Confident Organization? What is the straw that stirs this potent elixir? Simply, leadership - leadership that does several specific things:

1. Creates a direction and communicates that direction and how it's changing in everything that is said and done.
2. Recognizes that change is the skill set organizations most have to develop and embrace.
3. Provides Ownership of change to every person doing work in the organization.
4. Puts people into jobs they'll succeed in.
5. Creates a climate where individuals are given the motivation that they need.

And, lest you think it's too easy to create this Confident Organization, let me throw something else into the mix. While all of these things work to create confidence, this elixir also creates significant pain. While change is exciting, it is also painful. The faster, more significant and more powerful the change (and change is only going to get faster, more significant, and more powerful) the more likely there will be misunderstandings; the more likely feelings will be hurt. Change takes you into the land of the unknown and that part is hugely exciting and exhilarating. Going into the land of the unknown, however is fraught with potential for missed communication, missed understanding, conflict and team breakdown.

Creating a Confident Organization can help you get through the pain of change. Be ready to apologize, sooth, understand, make mistakes and get up and try again. Creating a Confident Organization can help you as a leader do that and to help you assist others in the same.

If you need help in understanding the concept or in its execution, call your consultant. Now, we're in the business of not only building confident people but in creating the Confident Organization. Hopefully, this note will start you on your way.

Thanks for reading.



Bob Wilson, President  
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