

Member's Quarterly

Summer 2017 Edition

Feature

Leaders Help Others Aspire to Something

Take your employees' passion pulse and fire them up!

Through meaningful conversation, you can help each team member — and your team as a whole — discover what matters most. Once people face their deepest desires, they will naturally move toward them, especially with your support and guidance. So what will that do? Fire them up, of course!

Exploring your employees' aspirations is an important first step to deeper, more meaningful leadership conversations, as aspirations function as the North Star for many other issues, opportunities and decisions. As I have seen in the past, these conversations led to dramatic changes on the team. Many team members left but I also gained many talented and passionate people. It was a true win-win.

Learning about your team's aspirations is key to fostering purposeful engagement. When people understand how today helps create tomorrow, they are naturally motivated to give fully of themselves. Knowing that you, as their leader, understand the connection and will support them in building further connections is also powerful. Our most meaningful goals take time to execute, so when your leader supports your journey, it uplifts and encourages your heart.

Disconnection from aspiration

Once you know what people aspire to, you can help them form links between their personal sense of purpose and their work goals and/or opportunities. A word of caution: When you start to have such conversations, don't be surprised if people are unclear about their long-term goals. Sadly, many of us are completely disconnected from our own aspirations. In my experience, there are three common reasons for the gap: falling into, giving up and overspending.

Falling into

People fall into jobs, get on a particular track and become comfortable with the status quo. Soon, it's easier to stay than to leave. In fact, many people don't explicitly choose to either leave or stay. They simply saunter down the easiest path largely oblivious to the fact that they've left their dreams and aspirations behind in the dust. Then, when they revisit their deepest desires, they believe they can no longer achieve them. Challenging that kind of assumption can lead to fruitful discussions.

Giving up

People give up on their truest aspiration because they decide it's not realistic. They do not see how they can make it happen. Because they do not know what steps to take to get to their end goal, they settle for their current situation. Leaders can help people see new paths forward.

Overspending

People overspend, acquire debt and then feel stuck. Making a change that requires a temporary or even permanent reduction in income becomes too overwhelming so people feel they cannot make a move toward their aspirations. Living within one's means and leaving room for choice enables one to live a more fulfilling life. Once people see alternatives, they can make healthy financial choices.



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Feature continued

Helping employees who are disconnected

What can you do as a leader to empower an employee to make choices rather than feel like a victim of circumstance? How can you help your employees reconnect to their aspirations?

Asking the right questions at the right time helps. Here's the sequence I have found works best.

Step 1: Get the picture

Always begin by helping the individual paint a picture of his or her desired future. Sometimes this is pretty straightforward. Ask variations of the following: "If you had no limitations, what would you most like to be doing in 10 years?" (Retirement is not an option.)

Asking questions to flesh out these goals is equally important. You want the employee to paint a full picture so you can really get a sense of it. The more detail, the better. Ask more questions.

Step 2: Find the motivators

Once people have tapped into an aspiration, the next question is "Why?" so you can get a sense of the underlying motivations and the extent to which this long-term picture speaks to authentic desire. For example, why does the person truly want to create this life?

Step 3: Offer support

Once people paint you a picture of their long-term goals and connect to authentic desires, then you as a leader can offer clear support. You can be one of their champions along the road, supporting them in various ways. The best question at this point is, "How can I best help?"

Once your employees know you are supportive of their long-term goals, they will trust you even more. They will also support you in your goals and objectives. People do not want to let down those who help them. It becomes a mutually supportive work environment through which personal and corporate goals move forward.

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