

Member's Quarterly

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Feature

Motivational Leaders: Mastering the "C Sweet"

The recipe for success on making the difference



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If you are a middle manager, you have a really tough job. You are among the many if you were promoted without any professional development to help your transition into the world of management and dealing with people. Managers are the meat in the middle of the sandwich stuck between higher ups who want productivity and results and employees who want to make a meaningful contribution in a healthy workplace. Employees expect a lot from their managers. Some managers are very successful in building strong results-oriented, satisfied teams. How do they do it?

First, they start with an understanding of who they are and how they show up in their role. They are motivational leaders. They rigorously practice what I call the C Sweet. The C Sweet is a way of being and includes caring, compassion, courage and conviction, clarity, communication and conversation. This way of being produces confidence and competence. Confidence and competence produce results.

Highly effective leaders work on themselves first. Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence* says:

"The ability to manage yourself – to have self-awareness and self-regulation – is the very basis of managing others, in many ways. For instance, science has found that if you are tuned out of your own emotions, you will be poor at reading them in other people. And if you can't fine-tune your own actions – keeping yourself from blowing up or falling to pieces, marshalling positive drives – you'll be poor at handling the people you deal with. Star leaders are stars at leading themselves, first."

Through every interaction we create an impact. Sometimes it is a positive one- other times not. The opportunity is in discovering our unintended impact. How do we present to others? How do we know what others think of us and our leadership? Are they with us because they want to be or because they perceive no other choice? What strategies can we use to find out?

Here's a simple way to find out. Ask only four questions. These are known as **keep; tweak; stop and start**. Ask your staff or have someone ask them and anonymously present you with the results.

Considering my management style:

1. What do I do that I need to keep doing because it works and adds value to our relationship?
2. What do I do that is a good idea but needs tweaking because my delivery falls short?
3. What do I do that I should stop because it is not value added and may actually do more harm than good?
4. What am I not doing that I should start because it would really make a positive difference?

Depending on your ability to lead and manage people, your employees may not want to answer these questions directly. This is when we reach out for help because to be effective, we need the answers. Then we need to work on a plan to develop the stuff that surprises us. Changed behaviour comes first from the courage to ask the questions and then the desire to make a difference. We need to be self-aware, exhibit self-control and self-mastery.

There are a few other characteristics that make a significant difference. We'll start with **caring**. Caring means to start with the heart. Managers keenly involved in team building who are collaborative and can

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create ground rules for behaviour go a long way in building a supportive and trusting culture. Caring also means holding people capable. It does not mean micromanaging. It means enabling people to be responsible and accountable by giving them the autonomy and flexibility in their work. Caring managers treat employees as adults who know what to do, how to do it and when they need to deliver. If they don't, then the culture of trust and support enables them to ask in a way that creates and inspires their growth.

Successful managers live **compassion**. Compassion helps shape how employees think of you as a leader and influences the lengths they are willing to go for you. It's not hard to be compassionate in the face of catastrophic life events. That's not only what this is about. Compassion for the small stuff is also important. All too often, this is met with resistance from the manager. Saying no to the employee in difficult circumstances is not forgotten when the moment passes. It sets a tone for the relationship. If you say no to the special requests, this shows you are not receptive when someone needs a break - not the thing trust is made of.

Courage and conviction are game changers. All too often, courage means truth to power. It means going against the grain. It's often out on a limb saying the hard thing that needs to be said for the sake of the greater good. True conviction is sometimes tough. It is the state or appearance of being convinced; a fixed or firmly held belief, opinion; and the act of convincing. How do we strike the balance between believing you are right and sticking with it and not alienating others in the process? It is a fine but critical line. Successful managers are courageous and speak with conviction and humility. They deal in facts and invite others into the conversation. They also listen with heart.

Motivational leaders know how to **communicate**. They think of their communication skill like a muscle - the muscle of communication. They are exercising the muscle to develop it all the time. They also know what to communicate. They are present to others. They find the time to say hello to their staff. They engage in small talk about what matters to their employees. They get to know people on a personal level.

Another take on communication is conversation. Sometimes, we need the soft skill of communication to do the hard skill of conversation. This is where empathy, clarity and conciseness are key. Motivational leaders are **clear**. They take the guesswork out of it. They put as much energy into what they want for the other person as they do thinking about what they want for themselves. They are other-centred - they behave in such a way as to promote the good of others rather than their own good.

Finally, motivational leaders demonstrate **confidence and competence**. This is not about knowing it all and coming across as arrogant. It is about being confident and competent in your dealings with people and trusting that the answers are in the room. It is about coming up with the right questions to coach and coax people out of their comfort zones, take risk and grow. It's growing with them.

In summary, we start with caring. Through our caring, we can show compassion. Our demonstration of compassion enables courage. When we have courage and can strike the balance with conviction, we can communicate. When we master communication, we are able to have the hard conversations in a respectful, caring and compassionate way. When we have the hard conversations with care and clarity, we build confidence and competence both in ourselves and others. Motivational leadership **starts and ends with the consciousness of self**. Now ask yourself what you are doing to master your contribution as a motivational leader. When you work on yourself first, then you can truly motivate and lead others.

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