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## Blind Spot: Not Tying Personal Goals to Corporate Goals

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*Can you name the most important personal goals (not business goals) of the people who report to you?*

*Can each of your senior managers name the most important personal goals (not business or financial goals) of the people who report to them?*

**S**ometimes, leaders fall into the trap of believing that people are going to work harder for their employer than they will for their families or their own futures. This is simply not true. Human beings always have been and always will be driven to improve their own personal situation. You must tap into that motivation.

You set your corporate goals, you get excited about those goals, and you believe that because you pay people's salaries and they are dedicated, professional employees that they're going to get excited, too. You assume that that they'll put in 1,000% each and

every day, 24/7, just like you do. And then you're surprised when that doesn't happen.

Of course, you do have to identify corporate goals clearly, set the key performance indicators, and figure out how compensation fits in. All that's essential. But you also have to take into account the reality that people will always work a whole lot harder for themselves and their families than they will ever work for you. That's not any reflection on the employee. That's human nature.

Think about it. I'm your employee. What scenario am I most likely to take action on?

- Scenario A: You tell me I could earn a \$10,000 bonus as part of doing my job well.
- Scenario B: I realize I have to find a way to save \$10,000 in order to send my child to college, or I want to take a \$10,000 company-paid vacation to some destination I've always wanted to visit.

I will always come up with faster and more efficient ways to take care of business in Scenario B. Once I'm engaged on a personal level, there's a powerful driving force that takes over. Your job as the leader isn't to repeat the corporate performance goal to me. It's to help me connect the dots, to link that corporate performance goal to my personal goal.

As a leader, you know that, day after day, your people are faced with doing things that are possibly uncomfortable for them. You want to make sure that they're motivated to get done what needs to be done. You want to make sure that they're not stuck in their comfort zones. You also know that it's very common for people to

## Words of Excellence to Live By

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"All who have accomplished great things have had a great aim, have fixed their gaze on a goal which was high, one which sometimes seemed impossible."

—ORISON SWETT MARDEN

reach a plateau, a place where they're comfortable, a place they're not really learning and growing very much and they're not asking themselves the tough questions. Guess what? When people are comfortable, they work at about 60–70% of their capacity. If you don't connect the dots for them, that's where they stay: In that 60–70% zone.

You want your people to have the best possible perspective about how to invest the hours in their day. As a leader, you know that if it's a Friday afternoon and it's sunny out, even though golf or tennis or something else you love to do during your leisure time might look good that day, that doesn't necessarily mean those options are the best possible use of your time. You want to make it easy for your people to reach the same conclusion, but based on their own goals. If they're only tied into a corporate goal that's coming to them from a third party, they may accept that goal at an intellectual level, but there's not going to be much emotional attachment to that goal. (Some team members may

buy into the corporate goal on an emotional level because they have strong internal competitive drive, but you can't count on that for everyone.)

To avoid the stressful situation where you are the only person who's emotionally invested in attaining the corporate goal, we strongly suggest that you learn to tie corporate goals to personal goals. Let's take the example of Juanita, a salesperson who is working on commission. Let's say Juanita's annual quota is \$1 million dollars, and her commission on this would be \$100,000. You could simply sit Juanita down and say, "Here are the numbers: your quota is a million dollars, and your commission rate is 10%. You've got a great territory. Go for it." What's going to happen? Chances are that there would be pushback at some level. If you are lucky, you'd hear about that pushback during the meeting and perhaps be able to deal with it. But if you aren't lucky (and who is, all the time?), you'd end the meeting thinking you'd accomplished something, Juanita would smile politely as she left, and you'd have no idea that she was spending every coffee break complaining to her coworkers about how unfair it is that she has absolutely no input about her annual sales targets.

But suppose that meeting went a little differently. Suppose you said, "Look, if you make your goal, Juanita, you're going to receive \$100,000. Let's pretend for a second that you achieved that goal. What would you do with your \$100,000?" Suppose you let Juanita think about that possibility and process it on her own. What would she come up with?

She might say something like this: "Well, I would put money toward retirement. I might put a down payment on a vacation

home for my family, and I'd be able put some of the money away for college for my daughter; she's only eleven, but I know she's going to need a good education." Now you can have a better discussion!

Knowing what Juanita's goals are, you know what to manage to when you're talking to her over the course of the year. You can meet with her on a quarterly basis and talk about her goals—which happen to be your goals, too. If you find a way to remind her about her vacation home, about her retirement plans, about saving for her daughter's college fund, that's going to be far more motivating to Juanita than another lecture about the importance of hitting quota. If you do that, you'll find that Juanita will work harder. She'll be much more aggressive and focused in trying to achieve her goal, because now it connects to something personal.

I've given you a sales example, but the basic principle I'm talking about connects to every single manager/employee relationship in your organization. This powerful connect-the-dots discussion (which saves you immense amounts of time later on) really does need to happen. Your managers must gain a deep understanding of the personal aspirations of all those who report to them. That means you must lead the way by gaining a clear understanding of the personal aspirations of all of your direct reports.

## TAKEAWAY QUESTIONS

- What are the top three corporate goals and objectives of your organization?
- If you were going to share your most important corporate goals with your direct reports, what would that sound like?
- What are the top personal goals of your direct reports?