

Top 10 Things to Know about *Lead With Purpose*

Lead With Purpose: Giving Your Organization a Reason to Believe in Itself (AMACOM Books) demonstrates how leaders can discover and develop organizational purpose in order to help teams and individuals achieve intended results. *Lead With Purpose* is based on real-life stories from more than a dozen leadership authorities, including CEOs and noted consultants. It also draws upon research with over 1100 managers and employees who were surveyed by the American Management Association.¹

1. Purpose can be a driving force for an organization to achieve its intended results. Purpose forms the backbone of what an organization exists; upon you can build vision and mission.
2. Leaders instill purpose through their words and their actions. Their communications demonstrate a commitment to vision and mission, but their behaviors underscore its real importance. What a leader does is far more important than what he or she says.
3. Organizational purpose must be clear and it is up to leaders to make it so. It is up to them to make the vision clear. One way to do it is to communicate it regularly but also link the vision to the mission and by extension to results. A good way to do is to enable employees to see the fruits of their labors, that is, let them know how their products and services impact the lives of customers.
4. Setting the right example and living up to it reinforces a leader's authority to lead. Employees want to know that those in charge do what is asked of them and more. Leaders too need to radiate confidence. Employees like to know their leaders are up to the task.
5. Leaders instill purpose in people by putting them first. This means the entire organization is focused upon harnessing the talents and skills of the organization. Behavior matters. When employees see their leaders go out of their way to speak to employees, listen to them, invite their suggestions, and encourage them to think and do creatively, they believe that the leader has their best interests at heart. That is a form of purpose that resonates most clearly.
6. Putting people first is a platitude unless its intention is put into action. Recognition and rewards are essential especially when done in timely fashion. Over and above this employees want the opportunity to grow their careers; that is why promoting from within resonates. Leaders reinforce the possibility of promotion when they give employees the opportunity to develop their talents and learn new skills. Compensation is important of course; employees want to feel as if their labor is valued.

¹ Conducted by NFI Research in association with the American Management Association in November 2010.

7. The pace of change only quickens with time. Rarely does the status quo remain static. Leaders need to find ways to assure employees that change is not something to fear but rather to embrace. Easy to say but when a leader backs that concept with a vision that is backed by clear expectations he or she provides an avenue for employees to see possibilities and then assess what is in it for them. Leaders who urge their employees to meet with customers, vendors and shareholders gives employees an opportunity to learn for themselves. Watching trends, too, is critical. It provides perspective on factors that may influence the present and future of the organization.
8. The acceleration of economic development is putting new stresses on companies and societies alike. We can no longer count on what we once did to help us achieve what we need to do. Ambiguity therefore is a certainty, that is, it is with us. Good leaders capitalize on ambiguity and challenge their people to embrace it. There is no point in fearing it. You have to find ways to make it work for you.
9. Innovation is applied creativity; that is, it is ideas focused on making things better. Anyone in the organization can come up with a good ideas; it is up to management to harness it. Therefore, leaders can make it known that ideas are welcome; they are not the sole purview of research and development. Think time can be creative time; some organizations give employees time to work on their own projects. Managers can ask their teams to be creative when it comes to problem solving, process improvement, or simply doing things differently. Think tanks are good ideas; these are designated spaces where people engaged on a project can come together to think and talk collaboratively. Creative concepts are only the first step; putting them into action, and providing employees with the resources to act upon them is essential. Once employees see their ideas implement it stimulates further creativity.
10. Preparing the next generation to lead is an essential task of management. Identifying those who can lead is a first step that must be following by opportunities to develop talent and skills as well as assume greater levels of responsibility.
11. Emerging leaders benefit from development plans that they work on with their managers; the plan can provide a roadmap to acquiring the skills and experience necessary to assume greater responsibilities.
12. Action learning projects developed internally give emerging leaders the chance to grow their skills. Job rotations accomplish the same intentions. Professional development outside the organization is good, particularly when leaders have the opportunity to meet fellow leaders from different organizations. Coaching is an essential management responsibility; employees need feedback. Mentors, particularly those high up in the organization, can provide an emerging leader with valuable perspective that can be integrated into a leader's development process.

13. Purpose becomes the door opener to innovation. It gives leaders permission to say, hey let's try something new. Then in turn leaders push that door open further to allow people to innovate at their own pace. To innovate you need to allow people to think and do differently. You need to give them the freedom to purpose different points of view as a means of discovering new ways of doing things. It falls to the leader to create conditions for people to innovate.
14. Purpose is an inner compass that points us in the right direction. The ability to overcome obstacles and challenges is daunting but when accomplished gives us a great feeling of achievement. At the same time we need to nurture purpose by exposing ourselves to new opportunities. We need to learn continuously and we need to teach what we learn to others.
15. Accountability lies at the heart of leadership and will be discussed in following chapter but ways that leaders can ensure that they hold themselves accountable is to think about the consequences of their behavior. Employees are watching to see how leaders behave. When leaders act for the benefit of others, employees notice. If they put themselves first then employees notice that, too. The concept of teaching others accountability must be grounded in practicing it first. That is why the concept of linking executive compensation to results resonates. If the organization succeeds, its leaders deserve rewards; if it does not, then no rewards should be forthcoming. Accountability matters.