

MOTIVATION - ENTHUSIASM

A T R U S T W O R T H Y S A Y I N G

NO. 20

Nothing engages followers like enthusiasm. And nothing kills followers' zeal like leader lethargy. A leader who is genuinely excited and actively engaged in his or her work will inspire and motivate followers. Enthusiasm is the magnet that attracts and holds followers. The lack of a leader's enthusiasm devalues the vision and signals to the followers that the cause is really not that significant.

A vision should engage not only a leader's intellect and will, but also his or her emotions. It is not enough for the mind of a leader to conceive a plan and the actions of a leader to implement the plan, the emotions of a leader must inspire and motivate followers to help accomplish the plan.

I recently heard a story about an irate man at a family camp who thought the staff members were being much too rowdy and rambunctious. After hearing the camp leader's explanation that he was trying to build some staff enthusiasm, the grumpy camper's parting shot was, *"If you have Jesus, you don't need enthusiasm."*

Well. Let me unpack that comment and respond just a bit. The word *enthusiasm* has within its Greek root the preposition *en* (in) and noun *theos* (God). Contrary to the curmudgeon's comments, I'd say, *If you have Jesus – you will be enthusiastic.*

During the good times, enthusiasm is easy to generate and sustain, but relatively unnecessary. When systems are running smoothly, progress is being made, people are cooperating, and adequate resources are available, enthusiasm can be taken for granted. But when the wheels come off, obstacles block progress, and conflict threatens team unity, a leader must be the fountainhead of enthusiasm. An optimistic spirit keeps hope alive and generates the energy needed to forge ahead in spite of the challenges.

A wise and effective leader knows that the good times provide opportunities to make deposits into the "enthusiasm bank." During seasons of smooth sailing, a wise leader celebrates victories, rewards service, applauds team work, and honors individuals for their contributions. Genuine approval from a leader during the routine flow of life authenticates the pep talks and inspiration needed during times of adversity.

Effective leaders understand that all of us are creatures with intellect, will and emotion. Leaders rarely fail for lack of vision. They seldom fail because they do not have an action plan. Too often leaders with excellent vision and workable plans fail to ignite the emotions of their

followers. As important as it is, enthusiasm alone will soon burn out. Vision and planning as well as emotional engagement are all essential. Continued progress and the successful accomplishment of a challenging vision requires solid planning and emotional, enthusiastic engagement.

The great historian, Arnold Toynbee understood the importance of enthusiasm coupled with an inspiring vision and a workable plan. He said, *"Apathy can be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal, which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice."*

Enthusiasm is contagious; it is very difficult to stymie and tough to stop. Emotional engagement is infectious and a leader must have the full-blown disease to pass it along to his or her followers. But each leader displays unique symptoms. Both Vince Lombardi and Tom Landry were great coaches who won Super Bowls, but they displayed their emotions in very different ways. No one doubted their enthusiasm for the game and for achieving their objectives.

Although emotions can be demonstrated in many ways, enthusiasm is essential to leadership. Roadblocks, obstacles, setbacks and fear can stall progress toward a vision. Enthusiasm in the face of hardship fights through disappointments and keeps people excited about the benefits of realizing vision. When faced with significant internal and external challenges Nehemiah said, *"The joy of the Lord is my strength."*

This lesson written by Dan Bolin is a part of a larger series on leadership called "A Trustworthy Saying." Find more teaching/lessons available for download for free at: www.refuelinginfllight.com/trustworthysaying