

Five Things Inspiring Leaders Always Do



VIEWPOINT: How to Close the Inspiration Gap – in the second part of the series Kevin Murray, Chairman of the Good Relations Group, reveals five key characteristics of inspirational leadership:

Having interviewed dozens of the UK's top leaders on what it means to be inspiring, and backed it up with research among 4000 workers, I believe there are five key things the most inspiring of leaders always do.

1. They are transparently passionate with a visible morale compass

Authenticity as a leader is crucial. Followers will not commit if they do not trust you and believe that you have integrity. So, even if you are a highly introverted individual, you will have to learn to speak with more passion, talk to your values and stand up more often to speak to your beliefs. The ability to draw on and display passion and commitment, consistently and predictably, is the single most important behaviour of effective leaders.

2. They focus on creating shared value and shared values

Too often, leaders use financial goals to motivate people, when employees say they don't get out of bed in the morning to achieve financial objectives. They want to be inspired by a sense of doing something important, something that makes a difference to society and the world. When leaders speak about a purpose that creates shared value, it is more motivating than money, especially when coupled with a set of values that your people know to be true. In this world of radical transparency, values have assumed far greater importance, for many reasons. Values define how people in the organisation behave in pursuit of their objectives, and their actions define a business to the outside world.

3. They are addicted to progress towards a crystal clear intent

Every leader I spoke to use the future to drive the present. They knew precisely where they wanted to be in a given timescale, even if they did not know exactly how to get there. They were never satisfied with the status quo, and their restlessness was a tangible force. Every question they asked had to do with how people were progressing to the goals, and they kept those goals under constant review. They painted a vivid picture of success.

4. They are possessed by customers and always mindful of relationships

Leaders have to live outside their organisations, constantly bringing stories of success and failure in external relationships into the organisation to keep everyone fixed on what needs to improve. Successful leaders know that relationships are the engines of success. They set up 'quivering antennae', as one leader described it – a radar system that keeps you in touch with the outside world. Customers, these leaders said, when brought in to talk to people in the organisation, were more inspiring to staff than their managers ever could be.

5. They obsess about creating engaged employees

More and more leaders are now measuring levels of employee engagement, and using this measurement as a strategic tool to find the ways to keep people motivated and committed to the cause. Companies with high levels of engagement outperform their competitors by some margin. Engagement is achieved through conversations – structured, potent conversations that allow employees to fully understand the big objective and work out with their leaders what they have to do to help achieve the goals. Too often, these conversations are neglected, and middle managers are neither trained for nor measured on their ability to hold these critical conversations.

Further Information



Kevin Murray is Chairman of The Good Relations Group and author of best-selling business book 'The Language of Leaders', in which he interviewed more than 70 chairmen and CEOs from some of the world's leading businesses and charities, examining how leaders communicate to inspire; and 'Communicate to Inspire' which reached No 2 on the WH Smith business books chart. Read Kevin's full bio

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