



How to Be a Positive Leader

If you want your organization to achieve performance above the norm, you need to become a positive leader. According to Kim Cameron, author of *Positive Leadership: Strategies for Extraordinary Performance* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, www.berrett-koehler.com), doing so requires four strategies: 1. Create a positive work climate. 2. Build positive relationships among workers. 3. Foster positive communication. 4. Associate the work being done with positive meaning.

Positive leaders bring about extraordinary results by implementing these four strategies through a personal management interview (PMI) program. With such a program, managers meet individually with the staff members in their sphere of influence. At these meetings, managers clarify expectations, responsibilities, and standards. These one-on-one meetings are held on a regular basis, at least monthly, and aren't top-down discussions but collaborative conversations. Such meetings give leaders a chance to coach people and help them improve.

People respond remarkably better to positive, affirming leadership than to control-and-demand tactics. The guidelines in this compelling book will encourage everyone in the organization to model acts of compassion, feel a sense of calling, and work together to improve performance for the whole organization.

Positive Leadership Assessment

Answer each question with Never (1), Seldom (2), Sometimes (3), Frequently (4), or Always (5).

As a leader, to what extent do you:

- ___1. Provide a ratio of around five positive messages for every negative message to those with whom you interact?
- ___2. Give employees notes or cards complimenting their performance?
- ___3. Help people understand the long-term benefits of their work?
- ___4. Emphasize development of strong interpersonal relationships among staff?
- ___5. Offer regular personal-development opportunities for employees?
- ___6. Spend more time with strong performers than with weak performers?
- ___7. Clarify how the organization's goals mesh with people's personal values?

Effective leaders score in the 3, 4, and 5 range on each of these questions, with an average rating of about 4 per question. □

Bowling Together

When Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone* in 2000, he noted the decrease of social groups in the U.S. and concluded that one of our country's greatest assets was ebbing away. Scott Heiferman took this as an opportunity, and created Meetup (www.meetup.com), a portal that helps people with shared interests meet online and then get together in the real world. A host of such social-media tools, from text messaging to blogs, are revolutionizing group interaction, helping networking take off as never before.

Now, anyone with a laptop or a cellphone can spark a movement that will transform the world.

These new communication vehicles offer nonprofits a unique chance to advance their causes, as Clay Shirky explains in *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (Penguin Books, www.penguinbooks.com, www.shirky.com). The old model for coordinating group action required convincing people to care more so they'd be inspired to act. Today, only a few highly motivated people are needed, since they can use online tools to help slightly motivated people be effective without having to become activists themselves. Now, anyone with a laptop or a cellphone can spark a movement that will transform the world.

For more, see www.shirky.com, www.herecomeseverybody.com, and these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org: "Using Social Media to Advance Your Goals" (Vol. 27, No. 1), "How to Make Social-Media Fundraising Work for You" (Vol. 27, No. 2), "Using Web 2.0 Technologies to Connect with New Supporters" (Vol. 27, No. 4). □

Leading from Your Inner Self

Definitions of leadership tend to focus on outward manifestations—vision, innovation, results, drive, etc.—instead of getting to the fundamental essence of leadership: that it comes from within. Leadership is an intimate expression of who we are, arising from our values, principles, and life experiences.

Leadership from the Inside Out by Kevin Cashman (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, www.berrett-koehler.com) describes how we can improve our leadership skills by working on our personal development, discovering and developing our inner capabilities to make a more positive contribution. The key to exceptional leadership is growing the whole person to grow the whole leader. This means connecting core values and core talents to our organizations, to our constituents, and to our lives. □

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

continued on page 28



📌 The Power of the Volunteer Crowd

Using “crowdsourcing” (inviting people online to perform a task usually done by paid employees) is especially suited to nonprofits, since it’s much like managing any large volunteer group. Like all volunteers, crowdsourcing groups contribute their time and talents to benefit a cause that’s close to their hearts. Here are some crowdsourcing success keys:

- **Pinpoint your goal.** Do you want to find an illustrator to redesign your organization’s logo, raise money for a special project, ask your customers which of your services are most important to them, or get ideas for new services you should develop? Your answer will help you craft a message for your purpose and reach the people you need.

- **Offer the right incentives.** Crowdsourcing projects are often launched in the form of a contest with prizes for the best ideas. Even token amounts of money can make people feel rewarded for their efforts. As with any group of volunteers, the important thing is to understand what motivates them, whether it’s the chance to interact with like-minded peers, improve their skills, or learn something new. If you don’t meet people’s needs, they won’t contribute.

- **Divide every task** into its smallest components so people can choose to do a lot or a little. At iStockphoto, for example, people can simply upload a photograph or two, or become “inspectors” spending hours examining the uploaded photos to ensure they meet basic standards of quality and don’t violate copyright.

- **Remember the Benevolent Dictator Principle**, which suggests that all groups need leaders (called “benevolent dictators” in open-source software projects) to provide direction. But the “dictator’s” authority is moral and persuasive, not absolute. The best crowdsourcing projects are collaborations between crowds and their leaders.

- **Make your appeal clear and simple.** People are more likely to contribute when they understand exactly what’s needed. 📌

– adapted from *Crowdsourcing*
(Crown Business Publishers,
www.randomhouse.com/crown/business)

📌 Urgent Patience: An Oxymoron?

People must see change before they can act on it. Without urgency, people don’t look hard enough, as John P. Kotter tells us in *A Sense of Urgency* (Harvard Business Press, www.harvardbusiness.org).

Urgency means “of pressing importance.” When people have a sense of urgency, they’re eager to come to work each day, ready to take action on critical issues. Here are tips to create a sense of urgency in your organization:

- **Send out “scouts”** to bring back information about the world. Invariably, they’ll return with the kind of stories and excitement that inspire an urgent response.

- **Bring in outsiders**, such as consultants, experts, new hires, or new board members, to provide new perspectives.

- **Share relevant data** with others in your organization in a way that’s eye-catching, surprising, interesting, or dramatic, and that appeals to the heart as well as the head.

- **Constantly scan the environment** inside and outside your organization for information relevant to success.

- **Listen to staff** who work directly with customers, and widely share what they tell you.

- **Purge and delegate**, focusing only on key issues. Cancel distracting projects and unnecessary meetings. Eliminate clutter from meetings that you must attend, and never end a meeting without clarity about who’ll do what and when (the sooner the better).

- **Talk frequently** about the need to move, adapt, and change. Be sure people feel a sense of urgency about looking for your organization’s critical opportunities and hazards. Don’t allow contentment with the status quo.

- **Watch that you don’t create a false sense of urgency**, and don’t mistake frenetic activity with productivity. Dashing from meeting to meeting is counterproductive and undermines real urgency. People motivated by true urgency don’t waste time or add stress by engaging in irrelevancies. Truly urgent behavior is determined, nonblaming, passionate, competent, and highly fulfilling. It also demands patience. While “urgent patience” may sound contradictory, it’s not. It means working hard each day to advance your goals while understanding that great accomplishments can require years. 📌

📌 Donor-Advised Funds Offer Good News

In the midst of declines in giving, here’s a small but positive sign of growth: The National Philanthropic Trust notes that donor-advised funds (DAFs) grew by 3% in 2009.

Donor-advised funds let people donate to a public foundation and direct their money to charities of their choice. Such funds are increasingly popular because they’re an easy-to-create alternative to giving directly to a charity or donating to a private foundation.

Other key findings of the 2010 Donor-Advised Funds Report:

- More than 152,000 donor-advised funds now exist, outnumbering private foundations by more than two to one.

- In 2009, donor-advised funds’ grants to nonprofits exceeded the amount of contributions into donor-advised funds.

- Indications are strong that donor-advised funds will continue to experience even greater growth.

The full report is available at www.nptrust.org/pdf/2010_DAF_Report.pdf. For more on donor-advised funds, see “Will Donor-Advised Funds Revolutionize Philanthropy?” (Vol. 19, No. 2) at www.snpo.org. 📌