



# Three Top Tips to Attract, Energize, & Retain Winning Employees

By David Casullo

How can you get the best people on your team and keep them?

**I**f you're like most nonprofits, you're operating with a pared-back workforce. At the same time, your benefactors have tightened their belts, and those you support with your services need you more than ever. The burden is on the people who remain, making your job as a leader more difficult and challenging than ever.

“Potential disciples often remain below the radar.”

As a leader committed to seeing your organization through these times, you can make your job easier by being sure you have the best possible performers on your team — and, in doing so, attract more of them! Here are three sure-fire ways to do so.

## Tip #1: Seek out your disciples.

Leaders that excel at attracting and retaining the best people to their organizations have one thing in common: They have a team of disciples — people they know they can count on to influence others, create energy, and drive results.

Such leaders seek input from their disciples and know how to inspire and motivate through communication. The result is a

“Diagnose where people are in the development cycle.”

high-performance culture and a winning team. And the best performers want to play on a winning team.

## Tip #2: Leverage the energy of these disciples.

For starters, remember that there are four basic types of employees, according to where they are in the development cycle (as Ken Blanchard describes in his model of situational leadership):

- **enthusiastic beginners**, who are low in competence but high in commitment
- **disillusioned learners**, who are still relatively low in competence and also low in commitment
- **reluctant contributors**, who are relatively high in competence but low in commitment
- **peak performers**, who are high in competence *and* commitment.

“Take your disciples on the same journey of seeing, being, and leading change.”



It's that fourth group — the peak performers — who are your potential disciples. Your job as a leader is to get more of your people into this group. To develop those self-reliant achievers, you need to continually diagnose where people are in the development cycle. Then flex your leadership style to meet their specific needs.

Ironically, these potential disciples often remain below the radar precisely because they're so reliable! You can delegate to them and forget about them. Since they're so self-sufficient, you can focus your scarce time on other important issues, knowing they'll take good care of the projects for which they're responsible. However, these are the very people who deserve your attention most! They *yearn* to be recognized and challenged further. Seek them out! Challenge them!

### Tip #3: To keep your disciples energized, remember, “contagious” is a good word.

We all share a desire to be inspired. Kiran Bir Sethi founded a groundbreaking school in India called the Riverside School. She gave a riveting talk at a TED conference in India (check it out at [ted.com](http://ted.com)). The theme of the school is teaching leadership and “infecting” children with the “I can” bug. Inspired children who learn the concepts take important issues into their own hands, lead other young people, and even educate their parents into action. Yes, the children become motivated to lead adults! According to Sethi, there are three steps in each child's journey at Riverside School:

- **Be aware:** See the change.
- **Enable:** Be the change.
- **Empower:** Lead the change.

In a powerful example, Sethi describes how she taught children the concepts relating to child labor. But this was abstract and insufficient. So she brought them to a factory and had them spend a day rolling incense sticks. They learned firsthand what it was like to work as a child in difficult conditions. They didn't just “know” that child labor was unfair or wrong; they could feel it in their very being. Then they set out to change the world and took steps toward convincing leaders that something had to be done.

In the process, Sethi emphasizes the word *contagious*. “Even in the times of H1N1, I like the word!” she says. “Laughter is contagious. Passion is contagious. Inspiration is contagious.”

Take your disciples on the same journey of seeing, being, and leading change.

Communicate with them often. Motivate, encourage, coach, and mentor them. Use your personal energy to make inspiration contagious. 

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## Leading with High Energy

For the next step in developing leaders within your organization, take a look at these *Nonprofit World* articles ([NonprofitWorld.org/members](http://NonprofitWorld.org/members)):

**Put Top Talent to Use in Your Organization** (Vol. 28, No. 1)

**How to Create a Motivating Environment** (Vol. 28, No. 5)

**Keeping Your Best and Brightest Workers** (Vol. 28, No. 6)

**Manage for Today, Mentor for Tomorrow** (Vol. 23, No. 5)

**Hiring a Concern? Learn What Talent Magnets Do** (Vol. 24, No. 5)

**Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation — and What to Do about It** (Vol. 29, No. 4)

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