

Commitment—# 3 of Eight Keys

Commitment is the ability to follow our vision without wavering; staying true to the course. You first need to be an action oriented person. You need to be someone who sees something and then almost immediately goes after it. I used the word “almost” before the word “immediately” because you have to have a goal. Stephen Covey stated, in his “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” start with the end in mind. There needs to be a vision so that you don’t start off on the wrong path or wander through the forest of decisions and never see the light of day. You must have a vision and that vision needs to be clear. Then, and only then, is your action purposeful. If your action is purposeful, then it is much easier to make a commitment and see it through. Commitment occurs when someone is willing to set off on a course and stick to it until it is finished. James Michener, a famous writer, once said, “I hate writing! But I like the finished product.” He would make a long range commitment to start and finish a five year project that would result in a best seller.

It is much easier to make a commitment yourself. Just the very action that you have taken to read this article suggests that you are a doer, a researcher, someone who is open to growth and learning with a natural desire to become the best that you can be. The tougher questions is: “How, as a leader, do you go about getting commitment from others?”

To get commitment from your employees (followers,) they must have the same vision that you do. They need to see it as clearly as you do. They must be action oriented people too. They need to see that the goal (vision) is worthwhile for them too (What’s In It For Me—WIIFM.) Then they have to break up the project into doable parts, put them in order, get started and don’t finish until it is done.

Consider what your employees need of you as a leader. In the book **Values Shift**, authors John Izzo and Pam Withers describe a whole new set of expectations people now have of their workplaces. Employees today



expect to be supported, encouraged, patted on the back and given very clear expectations of the work framework.

Unemployment is soaring; yet, even exceptional employers are struggling to fill vacancies. Employers are struggling to get and keep the best people. For years, I have recommended Mentor, Coach and Leadership Programs and training for these organizations so that employers could retain their best people. It is well researched that the really good people move on to better scenarios, not because of the money, but because of the way they are treated. When you read the literature on, “Mentor, Coach and Leadership Training Programs” through Peer Mentor.net www.peermmentor.net, companies report that, “mentor support will in fact reduce turnover and most importantly gain company loyalty.” Leaders need committed employees and this is one way to do it.

There are new expectations that employees feel supported in the work setting. Employers need to make a commitment to their employees, to support them, to recognize them, to acknowledge and praise them publicly, to challenge them in a supportive way, and to be clear about vision and goals so that all can work toward the company targets. Leaders of all organizations can't afford to ignore these changing expectations. As a leader and manager you need to be constantly aware of how you measure against these expectations and how you can meet and even exceed them in day to day practice.

Employers need to commit to six emerging expectations:

1. Workers today expect a better work-life balance and synergy.

This is one of the strongest and most consistent expectations, rejecting the all-consuming nature of work as it was for many of the baby boomer generation. This extends earlier concepts of balancing the spread of time between ‘at work’ and ‘out of work’ life, to include a better variety and balance of roles and activities within work hours, as well as ample time-

out of work for a full and varied lifestyle. Commitment needs to be redefined to meet this balance.

2. A sense of community and connection at work.

With trends such as greater mobility and dual income families, we see less traditional neighborhood connection or sense of community for many people. This has created an expectation that the workplace will help overcome isolation and offer its own sense of community and connection. Plan activities in the work setting that somehow connect, engage and commit the workers to the work setting.

3. Opportunities for personal (as well as professional) development.

This becomes particularly important in flat workplaces where there is little opportunity for employees to work their way up a set career ladder. People still yearn to be challenged and stimulated and to grow and develop and expect that you will facilitate that through the workplace. Mentor, Coach and Leadership Training programs focus on goal setting for the company and the employees. Synergy between the two happens when there are common goals being met. Commitment occurs as a result.

4. The opportunity to contribute to a more noble cause.

Employees expect corporate objectives to be broadened beyond making money to incorporate a more diverse bottom line including a commitment to the betterment of society. They are looking for meaning and purpose in what they do and expect to find it in their work. More people today are thinking about, “What is the meaning of life?” “What is the meaning of work?” “How will we get a better balance between competition and cooperation?” An example facing politicians and large corporations is the debate between bigger business and protection of the environment. Commitment occurs when all of these are taken into consideration. Synergy between these issues must be sought.

5. A more democratic partnership role.

Information is now ubiquitous and there has been a shift in the balance of power. The ‘decline in deference’ means that employees expect to be able to question authority, share opinions and say what they think - and they expect to be listened to and involved in decisions, as would any partner. Again, a strong mentor/coach program is designed to provide a mechanism for listening. It is all about empowerment. Some of the best ideas for many of the Fortune 500 companies have come from the rank and file of employees because there was opportunity to speak and be heard.

6. A relationship based on trust.

Past breaches of trust have generated suspicion and distrust. Organizations need to consistently demonstrate they are trustworthy and leaders will be held accountable for any breach of trust. Employees expect to trust, respect and even like the companies and leaders they work for—or they'll move on.

While you may not have total control over any one of these areas in your organization, as a leader and manager you do have significant influence within your own team over aspects of every one of these areas of leadership.

By deliberately doing what you can within your sphere of influence to meet these six expectations you will not only be better placed to retain and attract good employees and team members, you will begin to enjoy more your own role as a team leader.

Not only do you need to consider your own commitment to what lies in front of you, but also, to those that you lead. What have you done to empower and support them to make their best commitment to the goals and vision of the company environment? Engage them and you gain commitment. This is the “Commitment Key” for true success in life.

This is the third of “Eight Keys For Success In Life.”