

A Consultant's View

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Managing with Hope

Hope - a vital part of humanity. With every new birth, we celebrate the hope. Without hope, we fade away. As managers, we can motivate people with hope, attempt to motivate them with their own greed, or we can drive them with fear. The choice we make depends on the type of organization we want to have and if we are facing a crisis or if we are boldly going into the future.

In World War II, the Soviet Army drove troops very hard. They were in a fight for total survival. Individual soldiers didn't matter as long as they could be pushed into battle and keep on fighting. In some battles, casualty rates reached up to 90 percent or more and yet, they kept pushing.

Driving people with fear has several results. When people are afraid, they operate at a lower level. People become more conservative - in attitudes, learning, trying new things, etc. when they are afraid. Driving people with fear works when we can achieve the results we want with behaviors people already know. Thus, the Soviet Army often operated with standard behaviors and lost many a time because of that. It was only when they got desperate that they supported unorthodox tactics and strategies and won.

Secondly, history shows that driving people with fear can work. Many a corporation has been rescued from collapse by a team that was very afraid of that collapse. Numerous corporate restructurings have been done by putting fear into the people who were there.

The limits of driving with fear are also clear. People driven by fear rarely invent new products, find new scientific discoveries, or learn new behaviors. Those all come from people who have hope.

Managers set the environment for either hope or fear and hope is a lot more fragile than fear.

Walking into the future requires hope. We offer hope to people by sharing a vision of where we want to go.

The vision has to be believable. People need to believe that it can be achieved. There is a thin line between a "huge, audacious goal" and delusion. Not everyone will believe our audacious goal, but some

will.

Hope is offered when we act consistently with the vision we espouse. One of the fastest ways to kill hope is to state one goal and act towards a different goal. When management has a pattern of presenting a new program and not sticking with it, many people treat new initiatives with a yawn and "wait this one out, it will be gone in a year".

We offer hope when we address the concerns people have. We offer hope when we listen to people's ideas and incorporate them into what we are doing. We offer hope when we take action against those who are fighting our common goal.

Hope and fear are the two most common ways to build community. We build towards the future when we offer hope.

Hope Offers a Future

Copying Silicon Valley

The financial success of Silicon Valley has been viewed with envy by numerous other states. Many have tried to duplicate Silicon Valley. They have set up "incubators", had conferences, and changed laws to try to duplicate the place. Silicon Valley still reigns. Why?

Many an analysis has focused on the financial environment or the legal environment or the fact that there are a couple of major universities nearby. However, every attempt to duplicate that environment has failed to some degree.

All these attempts have focused on the "supply" side. They have ignored the "demand" side. One of the key reasons that Silicon Valley exists is due to the human climate in the San Francisco bay area. People there are much more likely to try something new. Any new business needs customers who are willing to take the chance with that new business and new products. New businesses fail. New products have bugs. The customers have to be willing to take the chances.

Other places in the country don't have as many people willing to try new products or services as you find in Silicon Valley. Some places are almost hostile to new companies and celebrate instead those companies that have been around for a long time. In such a place, founders have a hard time building a new company.

This human climate can be easily seen when comparing two major university towns in Texas. Texas A&M is in College Station and celebrates Tradition. University of Texas is in Austin which celebrates the new and weird. Austin is booming with new companies. College Station is not.

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