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Focus

A Newsletter published for clients and friends of Wagner Consulting Group

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The 90% Solution, Part 1

Over 90% of all organizational problems are systemic. They arise because of systems or structures. So said W. Edwards Deming, legendary quality improvement guru.

Over 90% of all communication problems are caused by differences in either semantics or perceptions. So says Stephen Covey, noted "7 Habits" author and consultant.

90% of all leadership failures are character failures. So said Dwight D. Eisenhower, WWII Supreme Allied Commander and President of the United States.

Wow! Does that imply long-term success if we design our organizations properly (with the end user in mind), communicate clearly, and behave within an honorable value system? Well, in the long run we're all dead, but following these principles greatly improves chances for success.

I will begin with Dwight Eisenhower's observation because successful leadership in our democratic, free-enterprise America begins with character issues.

Character Matters!

We are born with The Freedom to Choose, and we become a product of our choices. As for the old "Are leaders made or born?" question, the fact is - while both Nature and Nurture/Situation play a role - the main factor is choices they make. Dwight Eisenhower also said,

*"The history of free man is never written by chance
but by choice - their choice."*

The choices we make reflect our character, and our actions are our character's visible manifestation. People whose behavior reflects significant character weaknesses have much less influence than those whose life exemplifies noble thoughts and virtues.

Trust is Vital

According to Stephen Covey, **trust is the glue that holds organizations together.** After decades of research and work with people and organizations, Dr. Covey developed a continuum of choices people make in response to directions from others. These choices are made in response to motivations ranging from anger to a search for meaning.

Traditional "management" techniques (think carrot and stick), based on anger, fear, and reward motivations, result in the following behavior choices of subordinates.

Motivation & Behavior

Anger - Rebel or quit

Fear - Malicious obedience

Reward - Willing compliance

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Compare the previous behavioral choices to those engendered by a "leader" who

- 1) Describes a compelling **vision**,
- 2) **Models** the behavior necessary to get there ("Walks the talk"), and
- 3) Frequently **aligns** individual's needs and wants with the organization's goals.

Motivation & Behavior

Duty - Cheerful cooperation

Love - Heartfelt commitment

Meaning - Creative excitement

Dr. Covey says, "Most organizations are vastly over-managed and desperately under-led."
Amen!

To integrate these concepts of character, trust, and management versus leadership, consider the following:

- Trust is earned, and personal integrity is the first step
- Modeling the desired behavior inspires trust in a leader
- Managers are usually good at modeling (work ethic), but poor at providing focus and direction
- You "manage" things, like inventory or cash flow
- You should lead people. As a corollary, try to "lead" a thing!

Tom Wagner

We help clarify options so our clients
identify the Right Questions
and solve the Right Problems.

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