

**“Because I said so...” or “One, Two, Three...” - Tough Positive Management!**

**Preface:** This is the fifth in a series of eight articles on issues of importance to the management of organizations and the leadership of people. The first article created a Management “Jambalaya” using various ingredients - “leftover” ideas that still have application in the world of people and work. The articles that follow will use the same series of ingredients and a “fresh” approach to create an entrée – nutritious food for thought.

**Disclaimer:** This article includes the term Management in the title. The originator of this column suggested this name and I’ll honor his request. In my opinion, it is more about Leadership. I believe things and processes are managed and people are led. I believe all of business at its most basic level is about PEOPLE. PEOPLE who buy and use what we make (customers) and PEOPLE who make or deliver or provide what customers buy and use (manufacturers, distributors, providers, etc.).

If you disagree with this basic premise, that’s fine. People differ – that’s what makes business a challenge. You say pot\_to... I say pot\_to.

**The Ingredient / Entrée – Tough Positive Management**

The question is: Can management (leadership) be tough, positive, and effective?

I’m 56 years old. I stand 6’2” and weigh about 220 pounds. My mother is 4’11”. I’ve been taller than Momma since I was in grammar school. Momma wasn’t physical in “managing my childhood” – she didn’t have to be. Intuition told me that I didn’t want her to get physical. She was firm. I respected that.

Geronimo (Mr.) and Kilroy (Mr.) were the daddies of some of my best friends. Both were Combat Veterans. When I was a boy, if I went into their houses, I’d take off my shoes at the door and lower my voice for fear of disturbing them. Today if I walk into their houses, I do the same.

These men never spoke a harsh word to me in my life and as a child I wasn’t about to give them a reason to do this. They were bigger than me and an awesome presence in my life. We weren’t friends; they were parents (family leaders). We didn’t negotiate their orders. If we asked why, they simply stated “because I said so.” There was no ambiguity in our world. That was positive. I respected them.

Today, I’m bigger than both of them and yet I still stand in awe of them. As a boy, I respected their physical presence. As a man I respect them – who they are, what they know, and what they did and do. Most of all I remember the structure they provided in our world and I (we) respect them for it. It was positive.

That was then, this is now. As I walk through the mall, I see women taller than Momma and men bigger and “badder” than Geronimo and Kilroy negotiating with

their children. These “kids” are running wild and their parents are attempting to rein them in with those most feared words, “Get over here now before I count to three. One, Two, Three...” Ambiguity.

Our world had structure. Parameters were clearly defined, expectations were created that we would honor these parameters, there was oversight of the process, we were held accountable, and the consequences were real and applied. It was tough but we respected our parents and the process.

Too often in today’s world in the name of fair, political correctness, kid’s self-esteem, popularity, consensus, etc. parents don’t provide clear parameters, expectations are not communicated, oversight is not consistent, accountability is “iffy”, and consequences don’t always “track” behavior. For the kids it’s a much easier process but it does not build the respect for the parents or the system.

Effective Organizational Leadership is similar. It’s about creating (leading) in the establishment of an environment (parameters) for an organization and establishing a process (expectations, oversight, accountability, and consequences) where all members of the organization can contribute to the shared Vision and achieve the Mission.

It’s a process of defining a current reality, establishing a future ideal, bridging these two points, and motivating, organizing, and energizing the followers to cross the bridge - no ifs, ands, or buts.

Let’s dissect the process not to know more but to understand better.

The current reality (just the people issues - if the people are OK, the things will work themselves out) is who we are as an organization and who we are as individuals as members of this organization.

The future ideal (just the people issues – if the people are OK, the things will work themselves out) is the Vision and the objectives / results we the people and our organization want and need to achieve.

The bridge (just the people issues – if the people are OK, the things will work themselves out) is who we need to be as an organization and who we need to be as individual members of this organization.

Let’s now dissect the parts of the process.

What is our current reality? As an organization what is our history, our present, and our culture? Are we entrepreneurial or bureaucratic? Do we make things happen or do we “sit on” what has already happened? Do we search for excellence or seek to sustain mediocrity (the status quo)? Do we look to the future with enthusiasm or trepidation?

**Are new customers seen as an opportunity or a task? Do we use our processes and systems as tools to leverage relationships for positive change or do we use these as weapons to kill innovations? Are employees (team members) seen as an investment or an expense? Are employees told what to do or are they encouraged to think and risk? What do we reward? What do we punish? Who are our heroes?**

**What is our future ideal?**

**Do we like who we are? Is it getting us the results we need? Is the marketplace we compete in static or dynamic? Is staying where we are, like we are, who we are, and doing what we do an option? (If you answered yes – you don't need leadership – just manage the status quo!)**

**AS AN UNSOLICITED SECOND OPINION – IF YOU ANSWERED YES, YOU NEED YOUR HEAD EXAMINED. THE WORLD IS CHANGING RAPIDLY AND ALL PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS WILL NEED TO CHANGE TO SURVIVE AND PROSPER. CHANGE REQUIRES LEADERSHIP.**

**Based upon the leadership analogy developed in this article – what are the parameters of our organization? Our Values are the foundation of the organization we build. These are the X Commandments and the Constitution. When ambiguity arises, we can measure issues against these and know what is right – appropriate.**

**Our most important first step is to be certain that the Values we have are the Values we need for the future. Establish these – share them – live them.**

**Our Vision is the future ideal and the Mission is the organization we need to be to capture it. These and our Values create the parameters for our world. If what we do is not compatible with this framework DON'T DO IT – no ifs, ands, or buts.**

**Now the leader must be certain that everyone (EVERYONE) in the organization understands these parameters and will work within these. If anyone can't or won't the relationship between the individual and the organization needs to end sooner rather than later. These are absolutes.**

**In terms of expectations, everyone who stays has a role. The role should be clearly understood by the leader, the team member, and other members of the team. Although most members of an orchestra play only one instrument each and all instruments differ, everyone knows how the various the sounds (roles) fit together to make GREAT music.**

**I REPEAT – EACH ROLE SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE LEADER, THE TEAM MEMBER AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TEAM. (Ask people in your organization to write their job description, what is the most important thing they do, what gets rewarded, and what gets punished.)**

**Then you do the same exercise in terms of your expectations of them. DO THESE TWO DESCRIPTIONS LOOK LIKE THE SAME JOB, COMPANY, INDUSTRY, ETC.? If you really want a challenge ask team members to define the roles of others that they work with and then compare all three!**

**Obviously this expectation management process is critical. Before you begin your venture into tomorrow, you, the individual team member, and members of the team must make the individual and collective roles “fit together” in a manner to facilitate achievement of your Vision and Mission and simultaneously not violate your Values.**

**Oversight is the next critical step. Oversight is an ongoing process, not an event. It seeks tough answers to simple questions. Does the existing organizational culture and infrastructure facilitate our Vision and the expectations of our team? If no, are we willing / able to change the culture? (WARNING – CHANGING CULTURE IS VERY DIFFICULT!) If no, change the Vision or Mission!**

**Does each individual fit in the organization in terms of compatibility with and commitment to our share Values and Vision? Are they in the right role? Are they responsible? Do they have the authority to do what is asked? Are they better suited in another role? Is each individual willing and able to do their job? If they aren't able, will we develop them? If they aren't willing, will we create an environment where they will motivate themselves to do the job? If they aren't willing and able can / will we terminate them? Why not?**

**Is the plan right? Are we on track? If yes, can we move faster? If no, what must we do to get back on track? What are our contingency plans?**

**Accountability and consequences close the circle – a result of ongoing oversight. Are the system, plan, and processes working? Is the organization doing as promised? What about individual team members? What is the market doing?**

**If team members are meeting expectations and honoring agreed commitments are they being rewarded? If expectations not being met, is the team member being rehabilitated – further developed / trained or encouraged with environmental changes that results in them being more motivated (motivation is internal to each of us – the leader can only manipulate the environment not change the individual)?**

**If the team member is not meeting or exceeding expectations, can a change be made? Do they understand the futility of their efforts? Will they quit? Can you help them find a better future for themselves? Can you terminate them?**

**Can Management (Leadership) be tough, positive and effective? The only answer is YES and the process and leader will be respected. Can Management get positive results without this format? Occasionally yes! Even a blind hog will find an acorn every now and then. It works but “not because I said so.” It works because it's what people want and need – STRUCTURE.**

