

Chapter 14

Conclusions

I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

What has made the study of inspiration so formidable has in part been that it is complex. But there was more that got in the way. The concept of motivation was cloaked in mystery. Words like *charisma* that were used to describe it were a rather public acknowledgment that “we don’t understand this, and it is beyond the realm of analysis.” That combination of complexity and inscrutability placed this topic completely out of bounds until just recently.

One of the truisms about the art of magic is that when you’ve learned the secret to how the magician made the object vanish, the selected card appears in the sealed envelope, or the coin magically move from one hand into the spectator’s pocket, it’s most often very simple. You mentally chide yourself for not having either observed or thought of the simple method that the magician used. But until you’ve learned the secret, it continues to be extremely deceiving.

We find that this same phenomenon applies to our study of inspiration. When you deal with it as an unsolvable mystery, you can enjoy watching someone do it, but it doesn’t do much to help you. You make no progress in becoming inspirational, any more than the spectator who watches the magician cut the lady in half is making any progress in learning how to cut a lady in half.

But if the spectator knows the secret and has the equipment with which to practice, then watching someone else do it can be extremely valuable.

When you conclude that inspiration is not really a mystery, but something that can be understood and learned, then the topic takes on an entirely new dimension. So what's the bottom line? For the sake of simplicity, we'll attempt to boil down our conclusions to a relatively small number of ideas. We hope these are the primary messages that you have extracted from this book as you have read through it.

CONCLUSIONS

Stripped to their bare bones, the conclusions are as follows:

1. *Inspiration is a powerful component of the leader's repertoire.* It is the most powerful of all the differentiating competencies based on several different ways of determining importance. That is,
 - It is the competency that is most predictive of which leaders are given the highest overall ratings by their direct reports, peers, and boss.
 - It is the quality that employees most value in their leader. It is what they wish their leader to be.
 - It correlates most highly with employee commitment and satisfaction scores.
2. *It works as a catalyst.* It is not sufficient in and of itself. Its power comes when it is placed in combination with other leadership attributes. When inspiration is combined with behaviors like "drives for results" or "strategic thinking," then nearly miraculous things begin to happen.
3. *Inspiration is seldom "one thing."* It is the combination of many behaviors on the leader's part. You can picture these elements as rungs on a ladder, but without regard to order. The more rungs there are, the taller the ladder. Each in turn enables the leader to climb to higher and higher levels of influence.

These rungs include:

- Setting stretch goals
- Creating vision
- Setting clear direction
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Innovation

Because these are rather specific behaviors, they lend themselves to being learned as skills. No single one of them is mystical or impossible to attain. Indeed, some leadership development programs have been addressing these components of inspiration separately for some time, with reasonable success.

4. *While each rung is able to stand alone, it appears that the combination of several of these rungs is responsible for the more dramatic improvements produced by the highly inspirational leader.* You can arrange the rungs in varying combinations and permutations and get extremely positive results. The real power of these elements is in the effect of their combined interaction.
5. *Leaders vary in the inspirational techniques they prefer to use, and different techniques appeal to different colleagues.* Some approaches are obviously more comfortable than others for any given leader. Beyond that, the actions that inspire one person may not inspire another. Different people respond to different methods of inspiration.
6. *Inspiration works best when it has an end goal or purpose.* It brings positive changes into the behavior and attitudes of the entire organization. Specifically, it lifts productivity, increases self-confidence, enhances optimism and hope, expands the amount of initiative, and encourages higher levels of responsibility on the part of everyone. It also generates higher levels of enthusiasm and enables people to be more resilient and bounce back from any adversity.

7. *Inspiration is highly contagious.* Humans are highly influenced, both negatively and positively, by the emotions of other people who are proximate to them.
8. *Because of the formal positions of leaders, their emotions have a dramatically compounded degree of influence upon their subordinates.* The “role power” of leaders multiplies the effect of both their behavior and their emotions, almost as if others were experiencing them through a magnifying glass.
9. *Highly inspirational leaders have some attributes that reflect their acceptance of their leadership role and what it entails.* Specifically, they realize that all eyes are upon them. Like it or not, they are role models. Along with that, they must be the ones who champion change and keep the organization fluid by continually taking the initiative. Leaders who are not willing to accept the roles that leadership imposes upon them are not highly inspirational.
10. *The central core of inspiration is human emotion.* Inspiration primarily affects how people feel inside. Getting there may entail giving them new ideas or triggering new actions, but the end result has to be some stirring within the individual. It uncorks energy and passion that had been bottled up.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

Finally, here is our list of some actions that every leader should consider as ways to inspire and motivate the troops. We’ve chosen some of our favorites from earlier chapters in the book.

1. *Use emotions more frequently.*
 - Express heartfelt appreciation.
 - Get excited about a success in the organization.
2. *Reach out to people.* Initiate conversations and interactions.
3. *Set an aggressive target.* With the involvement of your team members, set a target that will stretch the group.

4. *Create a vivid picture of the organization three years from now.* Get each person to identify how this affects her job.
5. *Practice lavish communication.* Set up mechanisms by which you get feedback on how people are reacting to your communication.
6. *Delegate tasks with the development of the other person in mind.*
7. *Create positive consequences for having a personal development plan in place and for pursuing it.*
8. *Schedule regular coaching sessions with each subordinate.*
9. *Involve more people in decision making* on every important issue.
10. *Immediately identify and resolve conflicts within your team.*
11. *Set the expectation for innovation from everyone.*
12. *Shower positive attention on new ideas.*
13. *Schedule sessions with customers expressly for listening to their ideas.*
14. *Be the example.* Demonstrate to your colleagues with your actions what is valued by the organization.
15. *Take the first step.* Be the one to initiate changes, projects, or communication that is necessary for the organization.

Implementing even one of these suggestions will elevate your influence and inspire your subordinates to produce at higher levels. Implementing several of them will have a compounding effect on your ability to inspire and motivate others.

At the start of this book, we noted that considering all a leader has to do is a daunting task when you look at a job description that includes meeting financial objectives, achieving organizational or divisional goals, implementing changes, and managing a team, and then realize that while doing all of this, the leader also has to be inspirational.

Our sincere hope is that as you have read this book, we were able to decode for you just what it means to inspire and motivate others, and also provide you with practical and tactical methods for doing so. Now it is up to you to put it all into practice. The research is unequivocal: if you put the effort into developing your strength in this area, it will have a dramatic impact on your effectiveness as a leader and the results that you and your team create. We wish you great success in your journey to become significantly more inspirational.