

Put Your Passion into Execution, Please

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One of the ways that leaders lose trust with their constituency is that they promise a lot and deliver little. Think about your work, or your church, or even your family members. How many times are you promised something and it not come through before you start doubting the next promise?

The presidential election is now only a month away. At the same time, our nation is facing an economic meltdown. If you've been watching the news associated with either of these, you've certainly seen some passion expressed!

Unfortunately, we're not seeing the passion applied toward execution. Instead, we are seeing the energies of many individuals expressed in emotional response to the circumstances or in making promises, neither of which is particularly helpful.

First, we have seen frustration and anger expressed at the failed efforts in Congress to generate a bailout bill that everyone can support. Over the past two weeks, we've received daily reports about the progress that's being made, followed by anxieties expressed at the lack of progress being made. We've heard partisan stories about who has withdrawn from the discussions, or who now has a proposal that wasn't offered when new ideas were being welcomed.

Meanwhile, the presidential campaign continues, with each side making promises about what will be done and what the other side can't possibly deliver. Perhaps the goals are honorable, but presidents have never been able to fulfill on campaign pledges unilaterally. We, the people, become upset months later when the promises aren't kept, but they really were "intentions," not promises. The candidates don't call them intentions because that sounds weak. Yet to accomplish just about anything of value, the president must engage the support of Congress.

As a leader in your organization, you can learn something from what we've been observing. First, avoid passionate reactions to circumstances. I'm not suggesting that you be insensitive. However, strong emotions expressed before you give serious consideration to generating and evaluating options merely encourages conjecture and rumor among your team members.

Second, generate your options creatively. Logically analyze each one. Consider which to reject because of poor fit with your organizational values. Evaluate the remaining options seeking which is most likely to give the outcome you desire with minimum side effects. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to offer suggestions and provide their perspectives. Seek a clear direction for proceeding, then communicate thoroughly to ensure that everyone is engaged in the plan.

When it is time to execute, that's when the leader's passion is appropriately unleashed. Offering a clear, vibrant vision for the desired outcome stimulates cooperation among those doing the work. Modeling the appropriate behaviors encourages others to participate fully.

This approach uses the strengths of each individual on your team. Some have a naturally analytical outlook and others have an emotional approach. One group can figure out the most appropriate response to the circumstances, and the other can passionately drive the execution of the plan.

A small but powerful application of this interaction is a marriage. One person remains logical and subdued in determining how to address a given situation. The passionate, expressive individual can then lead with the energy to execute the agreed action steps. When each person values the unique capabilities of the other, a productive synergy results that far exceeds what one might generate alone.

When passion is precisely applied, it has great value. Resist expressing emotional reactions to the situation. Remain logical when evaluating potential responses to the circumstances. Then release your passion, executing with your team members the chosen behaviors.

As your leadership coach, Dennis Hooper will support your organization's move toward genuine excellence. Call Dennis at (478)-988-0237, or e-mail him at dhooper2@juno.com.