

Whose Dream are You Encouraging?

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For today's article, I'd like to call upon two highly esteemed authorities in the field of leadership.

First is Marcus Buckingham. His book *The One Thing You Need to Know* contains some interesting points about the distinction between managing and leading. "The one thing all great managers know about great managing is this: discover what is unique about each person and capitalize on it."

In contrast, "the one thing every great leader knows he must do is: discover what is universal and capitalize on it." Managers look for what is unique, and leaders look for what is universal. Interesting distinction, huh? Note that both make maximum use of the information they obtain!

Few of us serve as only a leader or only a manager. So, your role is to both explore what is universal among those you influence and determine how each person is unique. Then make the most of both.

Now, let's move to John Maxwell. In his book *Put Your Dream to the Test*, he points out that "Dreams are valuable commodities. They propel us forward. They give us energy. They make us enthusiastic. Everyone ought to have a dream."

So, leaders, having a dream--at least the potential of having a dream--is universal. And, managers, each person's dream is unique. Your opportunities to support and encourage are great!

It's likely that everyone under your authority has some kind of dream. It may be career-related. Or their reason for working may be to finance their dreams outside of work. I encourage you to envision each individual you influence and ask yourself, "Do I know about, and do I encourage, this person's dream?"

If there is someone for whom you haven't a clue, don't totally blame yourself. Maxwell writes about "the five most common reasons that people have trouble identifying their dreams." Knowing these, you could choose to help those you influence discover and more openly express their dreams!

Some people have been discouraged from dreaming by others. Maybe a parent or a previous boss dragged them down. "The world is filled with dream crushers and idea killers." Don't be one! Rather, choose to encourage your team members to dream and to pursue their dreams.

Some people are hindered by past disappointments and hurts. The gap between expectations and reality can be huge. "Disappointments can be highly damaging." Be a role model and a mentor, teaching and encouraging perseverance and resilience.

Some people get in the habit of settling for average. "You can't reach for a dream and remain safely mediocre at the same time." Leaders I've interviewed advocate supporting an employee's dreams because anyone who will stretch to reach their dreams will usually stretch to meet today's demands, too.

Some people lack the confidence needed to pursue their dreams. Confidence comes from knowing strengths and limitations, and that comes from practical experience gained in the workplace. You can contribute to building that confidence by providing challenging work assignments and very specific and immediate feedback.

Some people lack the imagination to dream. Healthy children are creative. They make things up because they haven't lived long enough to have experienced real events. Many people are taught, however, to set their imaginations aside, cautioned instead to "be realistic." Further, the imposition of rules prohibiting creative thoughts and approaches also stymies many imaginations.

So, as a manager and leader, what can you do to encourage your team members to dream? Talk privately with each person and ask, "If you were not limited by this job, what would you be doing right now and in future years?" Follow up with appropriate questions that invite the person to share further.

Are you required, as a leader or manager, to support the dreams of people under your authority? Nope, it's a privilege. Your current circumstances in life afford you this joy. Serve as if it were your dream!

Maybe you've been looking for someone to support your dreams. Consider contacting Dennis Hooper at dhooper2@juno.com or (478)-988-0237. Visit his website at www.buildingfutureleaders.com.