

# THE MYRDDIN GROUP

## **Developing Leaders for a Team Centered Company**

*"For many managers today, the greatest business challenges are no longer technical: rather they involve figuring out how to put more "soul" into the workplace."*

Source: Harvard Business School Bulletin - December 1996

## **Managers provide both a philosophy and a method**

The older I get and the more I experience and observe others managing, the more impressed I am of the weakness and vagueness of our understanding of this field. A philosophy alone is not enough. Managers and leaders have to inject systems theory and systems thinking into the traditions of their organizations. It is through these systems and processes that we institutionalize our values. Without them we are still relying on a top down approach to management and are only getting started in this critical concern in our present times.

The industrial revolution is over and the information age is well underway. The number of years a company has been in business, its size, location, financial assets, and even technology all mean less today than they once did. Doing the same things faster is no longer a substitute for doing the right things. The development of new knowledge and deploying that knowledge with speed is the new charter for management. There is a new model that goes with this charter and that is resisting the temptation to micro-manage and over-control in managing people with access to this massive amount of new information. To quote the poets, if you truly love them, you have to learn to let them go.

We have to learn how to maximize the energy available in our organizations and the old model just does not do this. The motivational drive for life found in the biological sciences is also reflected in the drive for life found in a company. Just as a biological organism has a drive to reproduce and a fear of death, companies are also naturally driven to replicate themselves and grow and they also fear their extinction. In my view these forces can only be facilitated, they cannot be sped up. Holding a sun lamp over a seedling will encourage more rapid growth but only to the point that the plant can assimilate that solar energy on its own. There is a point of exposure beyond which not only is further exposure not beneficial, it starts to inflict more harm on the plant than if it were not there at all. The continual added stress can actually cause the plant to wither and die rather than grow.

In some any companies today, this motive force to organizing has taken some strange forms. Some companies that need to generate more capacity do so but through the limited view of a small group in management with their designs and prescriptions of just how to do it. Going back to the days of Frederick W. Taylor, companies have continually tried to "engineer"

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human contribution. Clear expectations have been set for performance. Companies predetermine the required levels of profitability a firm requires and then production roles are designed around those requirements. After all these predictions and prescriptions are made, people are asked to conform to them about their levels of contribution. They are frozen into their functions with little to no regard of the potential or lost opportunity for further gain.

This is in stark contrast to the coaching or facilitative leadership model that has emerged as being quite effective. This is because in the emerging world of greater self-determination, this type of engineered typecasting can best be described as a form of mental illness. Instead of encouraging the expanding capacities of people, we often find they are confined in the predetermined boxes of these predictions. There is little emphasis on the creativity of the people nor are there anticipated levels of contribution that are higher as a result of their becoming fully engaged in their work. The fear that people will not accomplish as much when left on their own is a large limiting force on a group or organization.

Today many people will tell you they are under led and over managed in their work activities. Hidden in statements like these is the implication that they are not reaching their potential in terms of producing results. A true leader capable of injecting "soul" back into their workplace is what they need. The development of these types of leaders is a primary concern of those running organizations today.