

THREE LEADERSHIP LESSONS



Every now and then you are lucky enough in our line of work to come across a leader who not only understands and appreciates the art/science of effective influence, but they redefine it. For us, Alan Mulally, former CEO of Ford Motor Company, is such a leader.

In a world that seems to be increasingly dominated by business executives orchestrating financial crisis for personal gain or political debates that rival The Jerry Springer Show (no offense to Jerry Springer), we find in Alan a leader who serves as a positive role model for us all.

We were honored in that regard to collaborate with Alan on recent projects. Here are three leadership lessons we learned from Alan that underscore his principles and practices of working together.

THE FACTS WILL SET YOU FREE

Quite often we recognize leadership as a function of vision and motivation (i.e., the charismatic figure who sees the world differently and gets people excited about it). But vision and motivation in the absence of tangible and meaningful progress leave us in a wake of fads or "flashes in the pan."

Leaders add value by producing tangible results while positively impacting the commitment of the people who are actually producing them. To truly lead, you have to be an "execution animal." You have to be driven by metrics that

objectively track your progress or signal you have somehow gotten off track. Who has access to those metrics? Anyone who is a stakeholder in your journey.

ALLOW/ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO "OWN THEIR PERFORMANCE LEVEL"

Employee engagement has been a hot topic for quite some time. Most organizations address engagement challenges by consuming and conducting research, then developing company-specific programs that primarily target senior leadership and all levels of management.

So far, according to just about every study we have reviewed on the topic, worldwide levels of employee engagement are at an all-time low. This would lead us to conclude that perhaps engagement has far more to do with employees actually taking responsibility and ownership for their own contributions and morale. To effectively pull that off, employees (at all levels) need to:

- Understand and be directly connected to business strategy.
- Have the opportunity to assess their own performance level to perform against the established by that strategy.

CELEBRATE TRANSPARENCY

The only way employees at any level of an organization will ever "own their

own performance level" is if they feel 100 percent safe in doing so. One way to create an environment where that sense of safety exists is to acknowledge and celebrate employees who transparently publicize challenges the same way you acknowledge and celebrate employees who publicize progress or positive migration.

CELEBRATE EMPLOYEES WHO TRANSPARENTLY PUBLICIZE CHALLENGES.

If the consequence associated with transparently alerting your boss to a problem is a boss who directs his/her energy to help you find a solution, guess what you wind up with: A team full of people who transparently articulate reality, and a long list of challenges that are effectively resolved in a timely manner on the road to accomplishing results of significance.

In closing, our advice would be to research independent accounts of Alan's many contributions. If you take us up on that suggestion, we think you will find a commonsense approach to leadership that unfortunately is anything but common. 🔄

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