



Creating Core Champions

Lessons from the Entrepreneurial Bubble

Beyond ideas and capital, as a leader you will only be fully successful if you surround yourself with people who are fully engaged in your business. This is especially true of entrepreneurs. In our work with fast-growth and early-stage companies, we have identified principles of leadership engagement that have direct relevance for leaders in all organizations.

Start-Ups Start with a Leap of Faith

Every successful start-up has a band of core believers who have faith in a dream and make it a reality. These are people willing to work 16-hour days, make sales calls, work in an open area with no walls, cut costs, and even stay in a Motel 6 on business trips. And, they do this for less money than they would get somewhere else. Whether it is Bill Gates, Paul Allen and Steve Ballmer leading the group of original 11 Microsoft employees, or Phil Knight and his band of believers starting Nike, they realized that they could not do it alone. They had to be surrounded by people with the same passion and drive they had, or what we at CMP call Core Champions.

How do you build this band of Core Champions? That is the question everyone launching a venture, leading growth, or initiating change needs to answer. Whether it is the person starting a business around a new patented product, or an enterprise manager rolling out a new program, they need to create a core group of champions that catalyze broader momentum, direction and buy-in.

You Can't Buy Love

The biggest mistake that entrepreneurs make is trying to buy a people's passion and loyalty. They extol the huge payout that everyone will receive when the product hits the market, the business is purchased, or when the company goes public.

The allure of money will work in the short-term, but it will not sustain drive and passion in the mid to long-term. When people are only going to work for the potential payout, they hope it happens quickly and then bail out when it doesn't. This is a big reason so many .com start-ups

failed. Their sole employee value proposition was the big payday. These employees were conditioned to hang on till the company was 'flipped' and they were able to get the payout they saw and heard others get. The actual work and mission of the enterprise was secondary, and it showed in the lack of sustainability of these short-lived enterprises. The "cool" vibe and team happy hours didn't alone create the needed employee loyalty and engagement.

To build your core champions you need to connect them to something deeper than money. Beyond possible riches, you will build your core champions by engaging them in the work itself. Quite simply, they must love what they do!

It almost seems corny and self-evident that people will be more engaged when they are doing what they love. However, 2017 Gallup study found that up to 67% of employed adults are disengaged at work and dissatisfied with their career. This, and similar studies, support our observation that most adults are in a mediocre career - with some ups and some downs. Many are wishing for a big payout, even day dreaming of winning the lottery, so they can stop working and finally start doing what they want and love to do.

Given this pervasive career dissatisfaction, it's clear that those entrepreneurs and leaders who get people fully engaged in work they love will have a huge competitive advantage. It is the difference between a flop and a success.

As a leader, entrepreneur and or employee, you will have profound success if you can answer the following question: "How do I ensure that people in my organization, including myself, are fully engaged in the work and doing what we love?"

Uncover the Core

In our book, "Don't Dread Monday," we introduce a powerful concept that is helping thousands of people re-engage and find sustained career success. And companies are realizing huge benefits. This concept is called "passionate core." Simply put, each of us has two or three unique needs that need to be met in our job. These core needs are really the source of our motivation. When these core needs are being met we have exponentially more mental and physical energy. When the core needs are not being met, we go through the motions, not really satisfied with our work regardless of the money or recognition that our company throws our way.

Given that everyone's core needs are different, uncovering them requires some introspection. By introspection we're not talking about delving into childhood experiences or taking a pilgrimage to Tibet. What we do mean is that you need to uncover the needs that your passions are helping fulfill. Let me explain.

Passions Point to Core Needs

Each of us participates in activities we are passionate about. Whether it is sailing, chess, golf, movies, reading, playing with your children, riding a Harley, swimming, jogging or cross stick, we love doing it. You know it is a passion if you think about the activity a lot, and you use your discretionary time and money to pursue the activity. You may even dream of making a living through your passion, but instead find yourself "stuck" in your job and company.

Now here is the critical yet largely unknown truth - you are passionate about certain activities because the activities are helping you fulfill your unique core needs. For example, your passion for travel, fixing old cars and skiing may be fulfilling core needs you have for challenge and experimentation. And another's passion for gardening, reading and cooking may be fulfilling core needs they have for learning and creativity.

Once you know what a person's core needs are, you gain incredible insight into what makes them tick - the source of their motivation. And, you will know what needs must be met in their work for them to be fully engaged.

What are Your Core Needs?

Start with yourself. You can uncover your unique core needs by listing the activities you are passionate about, and for each one asking yourself: what does this activity do for me personally? In completing this exercise, you will notice that each of the activities you love to do is meeting a couple of the same core needs.

This exercise may reveal that the accountant who spends her weekends mentoring young children and volunteering at science camps has a core need to learn and share knowledge with others . . . The manager with a passion for playing basketball and baseball, and volunteering as a youth councilor, has a core need for competition and new challenges . . . And the trainer who is constantly fixing old cars and completing cross word puzzles has a core need to solve problems.

In each case, discovering the person's core needs provides powerful self-awareness. You now know what makes them tick, and can answer the question – what will fully engage this person in their work?

Create Core Champions - Uncover and Align Core Needs

As a leader, your goal is to channel each person's core needs in benefit of the company. By bringing their core needs into the workplace, you are tapping into exponentially more of their mental, physical and emotional energy. This energy is free for the taking. People want to bring themselves and their core needs into their work.

Your core champions will be developed one champion at a time. By taking the relatively simple step of helping each uncover their passionate core needs, you will tap into the vast reservoir of energy that is sitting latent.

For example, you can engage the accountant with core needs to learn and share knowledge by asking her to research a topic or find and apply industry best practices. She would also be a great mentor to new employees . . . The manager who has a core need for competition and challenge would be very engaged by a stretch goal, or to be the "best" in a specific area . . . The

trainer who needs to solve problems could be asked to solve critical and complex issues that you and others don't have the patience for.

The passionate core is such a simple yet powerful concept. The level of satisfaction and engagement a person derives from their job is directly proportional to the degree to which their core needs are being met. To apply the power of passionate core needs, start with yourself by answering the following questions:

- ◆ *What do I love to do?*

And for each thing you love to do, ask:

- ◆ *Why do I love this activity - what does it do for me personally?*

After you surface your core needs you'll see that you have only been happy in your job and career when these core needs have been fulfilled.

When I went through this exercise years ago, I realized that my passion for running, writing, motor bikes and photography driven by my core needs for freedom and creativity. Once uncovered, I was able to ensure my roles at work fulfilled these needs. Both my company and I benefited from my full engagement. In helping my employees surface their core needs for things like structure, predictability and affiliation, I was able to establish the circumstances for them to be engaged and love what they do.

If you are a leader, entrepreneur, or in any way require other's engagement to get your work done, uncovering their core needs is critical. Work with each person to answer the two questions above. Be sure not to judge their response, everyone is unique.

For help in identifying the level of career satisfaction and engagement that you and your team have, you can complete a free survey called the Career Success Indicator (Csi50) at www.DONTDREADMONDAY.com. While at the site, send me an email. I am very interested in your experience.

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