

# LMI Journal



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## Influencing the Behavior of Others

By Paul J. Meyer

Earning the respect of your associates and learning to use your power more productively will increase the results you are able to get by working with and through people. Although your authority may come with your job, the power to use it must be earned.

How effectively you establish your authority and influence the behavior of others

is based on your ability to develop these characteristics:

- Treating all people with basic human dignity and respect regardless of their position
- Focusing on behavior, effectiveness, and results rather than personalities
- Caring about team members as people first and as workers second
- Having and using expert information about the work itself
- Using effective communication skills to understand others and to be understood
- Being open to new ideas for improving productivity
- Demonstrating a willingness for personal growth and change
- Living up to your commitments
- Making necessary decisions in a timely fashion
- Being on time for meetings and appointments
- Upholding policies and procedures fairly and equally
- Giving more help, encourage-



*“Positive discipline means training to produce skills, habits, and attitudes that lead to successful performance. It is within this context that you can most effectively carry out the responsibilities of your position..”*

ment, and praise than you receive • Bringing out the best in people and helping them succeed on the job.

### A Positive Approach to Discipline

A common misconception is that discipline is primarily punishment and penalties. Although discipline includes enforcing established performance expectations, that is just a part of a positive approach to discipline. Positive discipline means training to produce skills, habits, and attitudes that lead to successful performance. It is within this context that you can most effectively carry out the responsibilities of your position. When you train, instruct, encourage, and reinforce patterns of behavior that increase productivity, you are building a foundation for long-term growth and development.

Self-discipline is at the very core of success. Because it is central to gain mastery over one's personal and professional life, you can benefit from knowing what you can do as a

leader in your organization to ensure that each member of your work team develops a strong sense of self-discipline. You are responsible for your team members' knowing what

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to do, their having or developing the skills for how to do it, and guiding them and encouraging them to assume responsibility for doing it.

Your own attitude toward carrying out a positive approach to discipline determines how effectively you are able to influence members of your work team. Two important characteristics that command respect and earn you power to use your authority already have been identified. **Keep these characteristics in mind as you interact with your work team:**

- ▲ Always treat team members with dignity and respect. Harsh criticism or punishment creates short-lived fear motivation. Sometimes called coercive power, this kind of power may change the behavior momentarily but usually leaves the team member hurt, angry, and resentful. A person with this mindset rarely becomes self-disciplined. In contrast, individuals who make changes because they want to and are given clear instructions how to change are much more likely to provide their own internal motivation and assume responsibility for getting their work done.
- ▲ Focus on the behavior and take corrective action to help the team member get back on track. When someone has not followed the established procedures or has failed to meet productivity expectations, avoid harshly criticizing or punishing the person. Instead, focus on the behavior and identify the most appropriate corrective action to help the team member get back on the pre-determined track of performance.

Delivering an angry public reprimand or even discharging a team member on the spot may be tempting at times but offers more harm than good – for the team leader and the team member. Such action vents hostility, displays coercive power, bolsters the ego, and sometimes removes an irritating source of frustration momentarily. Some leaders may even rationalize that they are correcting a bad situation, but in reality they are only dealing with it impulsively and temporarily. Explosive, destructive reactions are clearly not treating a team member with basic human dignity and respect. It greatly diminishes the hard-earned respect of the team leader and generally destroys the motivation of the team member.



*“Your own attitude toward carrying out a positive approach to discipline determines how effectively you are able to influence members of your work team.”*

A positive approach to discipline offers a decidedly superior way to work with and through people to accomplish desired results.

### Attitude Is the Key

A person with a positive attitude and average skill is preferable to a person with a good deal of skill and a negative attitude, according to many organizational leaders. One department manager put it this way: “I can train someone to do what we need done, but I cannot change an employee with a negative attitude into a positive and productive team player. I just don’t have the time.”

Your attitude is the key element of your personality that will either help you move ahead or hold you back. Your attitude cannot be controlled by anyone else. Only you can determine the attitude you bring to your workplace.

Everything derives from attitude – friendships, relationships, commitments, faith, healthfulness, and achievements. Since mental transformation involves changing the way you think, any sort of forward growth or progress begins with your thought process. And, because all things begin with thought; attitude literally is everything.

But what is an attitude? Is it a mindset, a reaction, or a response to what is happening? Is attitude a way of thinking? These answers are partially correct, but a clear, concise definition of attitude is, simply stated: Attitude is a habit of thought.

A habit is something you do unconsciously, without thinking. Similarly, an attitude is a habitual way of thinking. Attitude determines to a large extent your health, happiness, and success. A negative attitude produces negative results just as surely as a positive attitude paves the way toward success and happiness. More than any other quality, your attitude exerts a profound effect on your self-image, accomplishments, and success.

## Encouraging Other People

As you focus on empowering team members, you cannot forget to empower yourself – to develop and use more of your leadership potential. Consider these opportunities you have as an effective organizational leader:

- ◆ Give of yourself. Life is a gift to you. Give back the best of yourself.
- ◆ Give of yourself to your family and friends. You are enriched by giving of yourself to your family and friends, revealing your innermost being and offering to them your unconditional love and support.
- ◆ Give of yourself to your community and your country. You have unique talents and abilities you can put to use to make society better for everyone.
- ◆ Give of yourself to your team members and other business associates. One of your richest sources of satisfaction and happiness lies in the close personal feelings you develop for the people with whom you work.

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## Examine Your Leadership

Every leader's job is unique. It differs from comparable positions in other organizations and from every other job in a particular work environment. Even the titles given to leaders vary widely. But these positions have one important common denominator: They all depend upon the basic need to work with and through other people. Leaders who work most effectively with and through other people produce the most outstanding results.

Most leaders are concerned about two types of results: Their own personal success and success of the organization. Although the two areas may seem distinct, in a practical sense they cannot be separated. The purpose of a leader is to achieve results through the activities of other people. Those "other people" together with the leader make up the team or organization. If this group of individuals fails, the leader shares in that fate. If the leader fails, the organization's goals are not achieved. On the other hand, when the leader succeeds, the organization benefits directly; and when the team reaches its goals, the leader shares in the rewards.

Leadership effectiveness plays a vital role in your ability to achieve your personal goals. Whatever you do to improve your leadership success adds directly to your personal success. Whether you pursue a course that leads to mediocrity or set out on a journey to outstanding success is a matter of your own free choice.

**When you choose to break out of a conditioned existence and begin your journey to unbelievable success, consider these three areas:**

- ❖ Self-knowledge. Personal growth requires self-knowledge. Examine your values, your habits, and the things you believe. Take a look at the desires that motivate you and the purpose you have for your life. Become aware of strengths you have upon which to build and the areas in which additional growth is needed.
- ❖ Goal setting. When you know who you are, recognize your strengths and weaknesses, and understand what is important to you in life, you are in a position to set challenging goals that will organize and direct your activity and make the best possible use of your potential.
- ❖ Attitudes and habits. Just as you developed your present habits through the repetition of actions or thoughts, you can change attitudes and habits that are not working well for you. Identify the new habit or attitude you believe will be important to your success. Plan specific actions you can take and schedule them into your daily activity. Use whatever reminders are necessary to see that you take these actions until they become automatic from repetition.

Strive to develop new habits and attitudes that will condition you for success and mold you into the leader you want to be.



## Let Stress Guide You

Leadership can be stressful. But effective leaders use stress as a constructive force rather than allowing it to become a destructive one. Stress occurs when conditions produce awareness that some action is required to satisfy a need, to solve a problem, or to prevent some undesirable result. Without constructive stress, motivation would be at an extremely low level, and very little would ever be accomplished. Adopt the attitude that stress is a challenge to your creativity – a welcome opportunity to perform well.

Minimizing destructive stress requires planning ahead and setting priorities. A system for handling every part of the work cuts down on the number of decisions that must be made day by day, transforms many problems into automatic procedures, and makes sure there is an appropriate team member to handle most situations that arise.

### Managing by Goals

Clearly-defined goals and a written plan of action for both your work and personal life offer you these stress-reducing benefits:

- You always know where you are going and, therefore, feel little fear of the unknown.
- Obstacles are not perceived as threats because you have anticipated them and planned how you will handle them.
- Making choices is simplified because your goals serve as criteria.
- A written plan of action for achieving goals provides ready-made decisions regarding specific actions to take.

Overall organizational goals and plans simplify the leadership of people. The plan of action for achieving the goals of the organization provides standards and procedures for measuring individual and organizational productivity. You and your team members know automatically whether productivity is adequate.

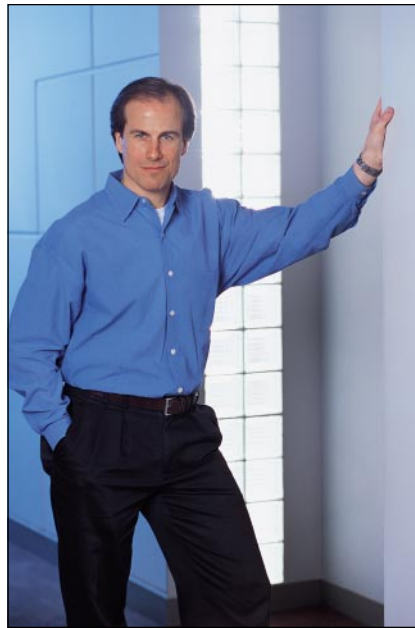
When productivity falls short, a goals tracking procedure shows exactly where the problem area is and points to corrections that can be made before it is too late to reach the goal. Stress-producing vagueness about what is wrong is eliminated. Instead, you and your team members know where you are going and how you intend to get there.

### Identifying Priorities

Determining priorities is a constant challenge. To minimize destructive stress, a working goals program outlines criteria for identifying priorities. The action steps for achieving the goals of the organization define which portion of the work is yours and what will be left to other people. One of

the most effective ways to choose which activities you will perform is to evaluate their cost. Determine the value of one hour of your time based on your annual income. When you know how much your time is worth, you have a better standard for choosing items of work you will perform personally and those you will delegate. Just as you would not be willing to pay \$100 for a cup of coffee, you should not spend \$100 worth of time accomplishing a five-dollar task. Compare the cost of your time to the worth of the activity.

Another approach to establishing priorities is to evaluate the contribution each activity will make to the achievement of organizational and personal goals. Focus on activities that make major contributions to moving you and your team members closer to your goals. If time is left, it may be invested in activities of lower priority.



### Keeping in Touch

One of the most stressful feelings an effective leader can experience is the fear of being out of touch with what is going on. It is the surprises that are devastating to organizational and personal productivity – not the anticipated obstacles. Eliminate stress by setting up an organized system for keeping in touch with your organization:

- ◆ Clearly defined procedures. All routine functions of the organization should operate according to clearly defined procedures. Clearly defined procedures reduce time needed for instructions, eliminate the necessity for repetitive decision making, and prevent overlooking important activities.
- ◆ Regular reports. Design reports that provide pertinent information about the status and operation of the organization. Link reports directly to the goals program to help with tracking progress toward goals. Design reports so that a quick summary is available along with whatever detailed back-up is necessary.
- ◆ Availability and accessibility. As the leader of your team, you supply the inspiration, direction, and support each person needs. No one else can assume this role for you. Your accessibility provides team members with the confidence to move ahead.
- ◆ Observation. Become an excellent listener and a keen observer. Learn to relate what you see and hear to your overall goals. You will quickly become expert in picking up hints of possible trouble spots before they actually materialize. Then you can take positive action to eliminate them before they create serious stress.

## How Do You Define Your Leadership?

Consider this definition of personal leadership: Personal leadership is the self-confident ability to crystallize your thinking and establish an exact direction for your own life, to commit yourself to moving in that direction, and then to take determined action to acquire, accomplish, or become whatever you identify as the ultimate goal for your life.

Personal leadership involves the development of a positive self-image that gives you the courage and self-confidence necessary to make a conscious choice of a specific course of action that will satisfy your needs, to follow that path, and to accept responsibility for the outcome. Personal leadership demands conscious assumption of control over your own destiny through the establishment of personal goals that give depth and meaning to every action. When you possess personal leadership, you can write your own ticket to success; you can name your own price for fame. Anything you can visualize is yours – money, power, prestige, acclaim – when you meet challenges with confidence and demonstrate true personal leadership.

While everyone practices personal leadership to some extent, few of us have developed our personal leadership abilities to their fullest potential. As a result, the personal leadership we exhibit is often inconsistent because we have not been adequately trained in its art. Besides of the lack of instruction, another principal reason for not using personal leadership is the lack of experience. Inexperience makes us reluctant to act for fear of making mistakes. As a result, we fail to gain the fundamental experience in personal leadership that would assure success.

You have the potential for personal leadership. To at least some degree, you have already developed your ability; and what you have learned in part, you can master and perfect. Personal leadership is not created by situations but by your response to them. Nothing restricts your personal leadership potential except the artificial limitations you place on your own mind.

### Your Untapped Potential

Along with the desire to achieve goals and to find purpose and meaning in life, you were given the means for reaching your goals. You are equipped with a vital reserve – an untapped potential – equal to your needs. Recognizing your

untapped potential is the first step to preparation for personal leadership. The scientists who study human behavior agree that few people ever use more than a small portion of their potential. We all have infinitely more talents and abilities than we ever use.

Because your potential is virtually unlimited, success must be defined in terms that allow for stretching your limits to reach new heights. Here is a definition of success that is broad enough to include all of your dreams yet specific enough to produce belief: Success is the progressive realization of worthwhile predetermined personal goals.

Because you are a goal seeker and are almost continuously unsatisfied, you find success only in progressive realization of goals. It is not enough to set goals; you must realize them by working toward them. They must be your

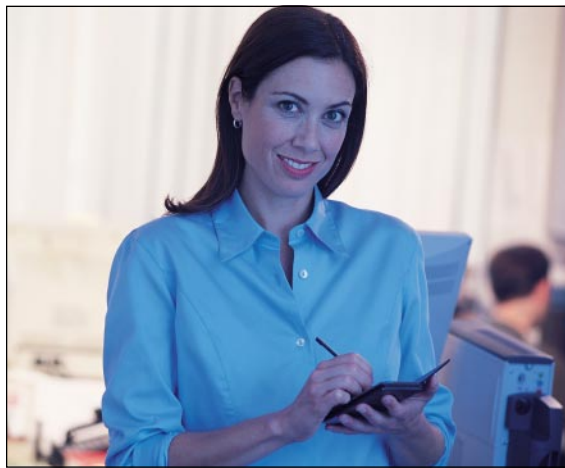
own goals, compatible with your inner sense of values. If your goals are to hold your attention and attract you to them, they must be predetermined, and finally, they must be worthwhile – worthy of your best efforts. They must, in some measure, call upon your reserve strengths, your untapped potential.

The principal reason many people do not find success is that they look for it by comparing themselves to others. If you evalu-

ate success through comparison of yourself to others, then the more people you know, the less likely you are to feel successful. Life will be one big disappointment after another. On the other hand, you may be more successful than a neighbor, a brother or sister, or your parents and still be a dismal failure if you fall far short of your capacity for success. The only valid comparison you can make is to compare what you are to what you have the potential to become. You will be successful only when you resolve to develop your untapped potential and measure your success in the progressive realization of worthwhile predetermined personal goals.

Three tools are available for use in developing more of your potential:

- ▲ Believe in your potential. Once your potential is put into action, it grows and gains momentum. Like an avalanche crashing down a mountainside, it sweeps every obstacle from its path.
- ▲ Exercise self-reliance. You are the only one who can discover and use your potential. Trust your ability.
- ▲ Act with initiative. Be decisive. Refuse to wait for someone to tell you what to do.



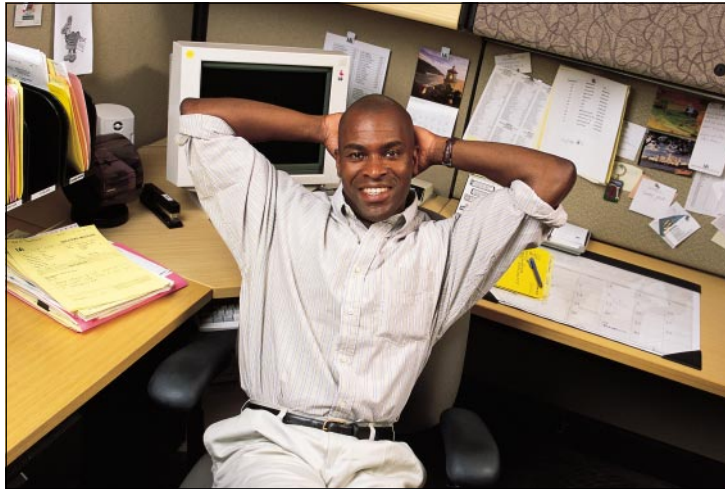
# Controlling Your Emotions Promotes Success

Since your responsibilities involve making decisions, maintaining productivity, and interpreting organizational policy, you may occasionally experience a wave of unpopularity. If you view these occasional disagreements as part of your position rather than as personal attacks, you maintain professional, positive relationships with team members and enjoy personal satisfaction from doing your job well.

Controlling your emotions is easier when you remind yourself that you personally are not usually the cause of a team member's anger. An angry employee is usually upset with an organizational decision, policy, or rule you are required to carry out. You are simply doing your job. Remember that because of your position it is your function to protect the interests of the organization – not to protect yourself from personal dislike. Adopting this rational attitude helps you to think and act in a calm, professional manner without adding the fuel of your own emotions to an already explosive situation. Reacting emotionally to complaints may intensify and prolong the negative situation.

In discussing a complaint with a team member, even if emotions like anger or frustration come to the surface, limit your discussion to the issues and behaviors causing the problem. To keep from becoming defensive when presenting your point of view, use “I” messages. “You” messages often come across as accusing and judgmental. For example, instead of saying, “You need to answer memos more promptly,” it is more effective to state, “I cannot make necessary decisions when you do not respond to memos promptly.” Or instead of, “You are not providing effective leadership for your team,” you might say, “I often see your team members idle when they do not know what you want.”

These “I” messages, as opposed to “you” messages, allow you to point out how an issue affects you, or they explain why the issue is important without attacking the person. When communicating about problems, also avoid judgmental words like should, could, ought, if only, and but. The word but negates whatever the other person is saying, and it conveys to the other person that you are not listening with an open mind.



Addressing problems promptly, rather than procrastinating, is also crucial. One large, nationally-known firm reduced the number of written grievances by 95 percent by implementing a concentrated effort to solve problems where they occurred, at the time they occurred. Promptness in solving problems lowers the production cost of goods and services, improves an organization's competitive position, and enhances customer satisfaction.

Team leaders who adopt a pattern of consistent, positive attitudes and behaviors reduce the confusion and frustration that often give rise to complaints among team members.

**Here are a few practical guidelines:**

- ◆ Treat all employees fairly – that is, make sure all team members receive the positive or negative consequences their performance merits. Being fair with employees does not mean always treating people equally. People who make an outstanding contribution deserve extra rewards and recognition. Enforcing rules is the only area in which every employee must be treated equally.
- ◆ Learn to say exactly what you mean. Don't expect team members to guess or to read your mind. Demonstrating what you want or giving verbal examples can be essential in training and communicating effectively.
- ◆ Deal with specific behavior – not just attitudes. Identify the specific behavior you want team members to develop, train for that behavior, and reinforce it with positive feedback.
- ◆ When you receive two different stories about a situation, get the two people together and ask them to tell you about it.
- ◆ Coach for improvement. Describe behavior you want, not what you do not want.
- ◆ When you give instructions, expect team members to follow them.

Prevention is the most productive strategy to handle problems with people; but no matter how successful you are in establishing good relationships with your team members, you will occasionally face differences of opinion and other unavoidable interpersonal issues.

# Enhance Your “Fire Fighting” Skills

The most productive individuals are those who master the art of taking care of emergency situations, unexpected and unplanned, that require immediate attention to prevent serious consequences. “Fire fighting” is the usual term for handling a crisis. “Fire fighting” ranges from such relatively simple problems as soothing an unhappy customer to solving a major emergency production or personnel problem.

Obviously, true emergencies must be handled immediately. This often means pushing aside planned activities and rearranging schedules to take care of the emergency.

## Prevention Is Key

The ideal, of course, is to prevent emergencies. If you suspect you are spending too much time “fire fighting,” keep notes over a period of a week or a month describing the various situations that require emergency action. Identify the location of the fire and what is lost. Who is the arsonist? Who is usually the fire fighter? Is some kind of psychological reward being sought by either arsonist or fire fighter – or both? List the causes, the actions taken, and the results for each crisis handled. Then compare the circumstances to find any pattern that exists. Decide how you can best prevent future crises. Consider instituting necessary training, giving appropriate feedback, setting up proper controls, or delegating appropriate responsibility. Design new procedures, perform necessary maintenance, or install new equipment – whatever your analysis indicates is needed.

## Handling Emergencies

Even the best planning and training fail to prevent an occasional unanticipated situation that must be handled on the spot. When vital machinery breaks down, key people are sick or hurt, or outside circumstances affect your work, adjustments must be made. When a crisis occurs, minimize lost time by following these suggestions:

- ❖ Stay calm. The existence of a crisis implies that something is out of normal control. If, in addition, you lose control of your emotions, it becomes difficult to make rational decisions that meet the needs of the moment.

Tell yourself, “I’ve solved harder problems under pressure. I can solve this one, too.” Your calm, matter-of-fact acceptance of the situation and the assumption that it can be handled keep both you and other people calm and able to bring the situation back under control.

- ❖ Isolate the major consideration. When a crisis arises, something will probably be lost as a result of the situation – either time, money, or materials. Decide what loss can be tolerated and what loss must be avoided. Isolate the root problem so you can immediately respond to the real

issue. Your objective is to solve the problem and regain control without a critical loss. For example, perhaps a breakdown occurs that will cause a delay in the production of a component needed to fill an important order. You realize that a time delay would represent a substantial loss for this important client. Failure to meet your obligations to this customer is a loss you cannot afford. You would be well advised, therefore, to authorize overtime for repairs and production, or to shift the critical component to another production line and delay work on a less critical job.

- ❖ Return conditions to normal as soon as possible. The objective in crisis management is to take personal charge of the situation for only as long as you are needed. Make the suggestion, take the action, give the instruction, and then

step out; let the person who is normally in charge complete the job. Offer only the necessary help and trust your people to carry through.

- ❖ Learn something from each crisis. The handling of each crisis situation should make a direct contribution to future crisis prevention. After the excitement is over and the situation has returned to normal, hold a debriefing session to discuss the crisis with those involved to determine how a similar emergency can be avoided in the future. Make this a training opportunity and a planning experience. The more all team members learn about crisis management, the more capable they will be to handle future emergencies and the less you will be required to become involved yourself.



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