

# Leadership that Inspires

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The essential qualities that motivate others to embrace your goals.



A popular urban legend recounts a visit President John Kennedy made to NASA in the early days of the space program. The president had set a goal for the United States of landing on the moon by the end of the 1960s. While visiting the space center the president encountered a janitor carrying a mop. As the story goes, the president asked him what he was working on and he replied “I’m helping put a man on the moon”

Whether this specific event occurred is open to debate but it illustrates the attitude that Kennedy inspired for every NASA employee from astronaut to engineer to janitor when he set landing on the moon as the goal. According to research on this era by Andrew Carton, of the Wharton School, President Kennedy’s vision helped employees see a connection between their daily work and NASA’s long-term objectives. Kennedy and NASA leadership ultimately ‘enhanced the meaningfulness of work by changing the meaning of work’. Every NASA employee understood the value of their individual contribution to the success of the ultimate goal: putting a man on the moon.



Inspirational leadership is a rarity and yet its value is profound for the success of every organization. Leaders that inspire convey a hopeful attitude and passionately pursue what ought to be by painting an optimistic picture of the vision of what is next while positively inspiring those around them. The importance of inspiring hope cannot be overstated. Hopeful leaders instill confidence in others that a better future is not just possible but attainable.

According to Bain & Company inspired employees are twice as productive as satisfied employees, yet multiple surveys show few employees find their bosses to be inspiring.

So, what are the characteristics of an inspirational leader? Here are 5 essentials.

**1) Optimistic in the face of challenges.** Even when circumstances are difficult a leader who inspires believes tomorrow holds great opportunities for personal and organizational success. Leadership consultant Brad Lomenick says hope filled leaders are forward thinking, enthusiastic and positive.



**2) Optimistic about people, choosing to see the best in people,** not the worst. Past mistakes are in the past, to be learned from but not to cause stagnation. The focus is on each employee's strengths and contributions.

**3) Principled, demonstrating the qualities they hope to develop in others.** Whether it is dependability, diligence, or humility, consistently walking the walk you talk will inspire your employees to do likewise. I think of my father-in-law who as the CEO of a small tech company in the 90's needed everyone's help in stuffing mailers. He did not think himself above such a menial task but lead the team in getting the job done and out the door.

**4) Courageous.** It has been said that failure is not fatal. But fear of failure, if not fatal, can be paralyzing. An inspiring leader learns from failure and goes forward despite fear, to move to the next level.

**5) Invested.** An invested leader is committed to their vision and people. The vision they have for the organization equally drives them and moves them forward. Author Steven Covey says that sharing something as personal as your purpose with your employees and encouraging them to find what motivates them, strengthens the connection people feel with you. And when you learn their purpose, you can take steps to help them achieve it.

Being the leader that inspires employees to view their work as meaningful ultimately requires a commitment to people. Helping them recognize their inherent value to the success of the organization is key. As Steven Covey says “When people feel connected to a group that is doing meaningful work, everything they do for that group can seem meaningful”

Just like Kennedy helped the janitor see his part in putting a man on the moon.

Let us help you find leaders that inspire.

**Schedule a discovery call today.**

