

January 2012 - Leadership Letter (64)



ENERGIZING YOUR LEADERS

Dear Clients, Colleagues and Friends ...

In these challenging “new normal” times (since Fall of 2008) ... we’ve had only a few for-profit clients that have avoided challenges to revenue, profitability and staff retention. Not-for-profits have also struggled.

The several who have avoided major challenges and prospered, have had some hard-won advantages, such as work in the health care, energy, water/wastewater, or federal sectors.

And for others, their strengths have included uniquely effective business development, long-standing client loyalty, load shifting/staff flexibility, and remarkable internal teamwork.

Over the three-year time frame, five of our clients have asked for ideas on how to help their leadership group deal with their weariness, and how to energize all their leaders.

This Leadership Letter shares what I’ve suggested. It has been very effective in helping to energize people and re-build esprit de corps ...

With best wishes for 2012,

Mel

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Don't forget that all past **Leadership Letters** can be found on our website at
www.henseyassociates.com.

REMINDER: If you need to reach me quickly, please do not email. Please call or text me on my cell at **513/919-7672**. I have my phone with me while consulting, traveling, planting trees, biking or canoeing!

ENERGIZING YOUR LEADERS

1. It would probably be no surprise to hear me suggest that it must begin at the top. Regardless of how he or she feels, the senior executive needs to set the example and model “we can do this” behaviors.
2. It’s **not** about denying the challenging realities. It **is** about believing we can deal with them ... whatever it takes. And let’s figure out what it takes. And then, let’s **do** what it takes, even if it requires ...

- learning new skills
- bringing in needed new skills
- improving our practices/processes
- pursuing new markets/clients/sectors
- assuring the loyalty of our best clients by what we do
- changing the leadership seats and leaders on our bus

Actually, one could argue we ought to be doing this on a regular basis, even during “good” times. And our most successful clients seem **driven** to do that. However, most firms are happy doing “regular” work in good times.

3. That leads me to the next: the strongest firms know their world and their businesses are constantly changing, like it or not. So, they’ve developed a culture where it’s an expectation that everyone must learn and **improve** every year. Their performance review and improvement process really works (most do not) ... and people learn, grow, develop fast.
4. Several clients asked me if I could help them identify a wise and energizing speaker/teacher to come and give a talk, a workshop or a program to crank up and motivate their people.

Actually, there are a few out there, but it takes a long-term change effort to really get much value from their work ... beyond a short morale bump.

5. But then that prompted me to help them realize that **their leadership group** is usually the best and only credible resource to energize the firm’s leaders. So, what we did instead of using outsiders, was to facilitate sharing the wisdom of **their leader group**.

We did that by crafting a 1-2 day management meeting, where both **small** groups and the **total** group (of 20 to 40 leaders) worked on questions like these ...

Leadership:

- What motivates/excites me?
- What do good leaders do to inspire and energize people?
- How can **I** inspire and motivate my own team?
- **What** should we be communicating about?
- What are the **most effective** ways to communicate?

Staff and Staffing:

- Are we moving work where we have people or vice versa?
- If not, how can we do that well? (It is **not** easy!)
- What new/emerging niches are of interest to us?
- Even if we seem to have too many people, are there skill sets we need and lack?

Developing More Business:

- What will it take to pursue new niches/opportunities effectively?
- What are the best, most effective **business development** practices and skills in our firm?
- What are the best, most effective business development practices in competing firms? Other business?
- Do we have our best business developers focused on that?

The reality is that **some** of your leaders will know the answers to **all** these questions. The answers need to be skillfully drawn out in the small groups and shared in the large group ... where everyone can plan their next moves!

Survivors of the "Hanoi Hilton" prison camp offer this advice for **thriving** in tough environments:

- Tell yourselves the truth about reality ("new normal," etc.).
- Build a deeply committed team ("one for **all**").
- Model success attitudes and behaviors ("we **can** do this").
- Build one another up; support others ("all for **one**").



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