



## *The Journey Ahead*

### *Practices that Regenerate Momentum*

It's not uncommon today to hear startup executive leaders complain of employee disillusionment and loss of momentum as to when the employees first joined the company. In our work with a promising IT provider, we heard this comment repeatedly from the team leaders, "We started off great but quickly lost our momentum in a matter of months. And, now we can't seem to regain that excitement and motivation to fulfill the company's mission."

This is a widespread occurrence for startup companies, grassroots organizations, community outreach units; and, many non-profit groups. The founders and senior level staff of these groups has a tremendous mission and calling. They hire a workforce of eager talented people, but can be unclear about *how* they intend to achieve the mission; and, what the challenges will be to get there.

Whether you are pursuing a humanities effort or a company's regional objectives, momentum is frequently lost when the mission is not clear; and, only a select group of people know why you are there. Often this select group are the founders or past colleagues of the senior staff. Then the wonderful talent they have hired become 'them', not the respected workforce that will take the mission to realization. Consequently, resentment sets in and the staff feels like serfs working on a piece of the fiefdom. The mission then becomes separate from being participative or shared. It becomes the mission of the higher-ups, *their* mission.

How do you regain momentum? It is critical that all the leaders deliver their vision and mission in multiple formats, all hands meetings, interviews on today's talk shows or public Webcasts. Passionate leaders don't hold back their emotional connectedness to the company vision, or the social venture. People become energized by the vital force they present and what they will risk to realize final success. Both Susan B. Anthony and Cesar Chavez relied on their emotional intensity to fuel campaigns for women's suffrage and Chicano rights, respectively.

Momentum can be sustained, but specific procedures need to be in place. Review the following practices to reignite the passion and enthusiasm for the staff:

- Executive staff and team leaders need to frequently explain what they are really doing to fulfill the original vision. Fulfilling a vision and mission statement is more than completing tasks. All of the workforce must understand why they are there, what part they contribute to the final outcome; and, the estimated time period it will take to achieve final success. For those ventures that require years, this will be important element for the previous routines of 90 day goal achievement, as practiced in many sales organizations.
- No matter the level of leader, they are flexible in their plans of achieving the final outcome. They explain that long term accomplishments can require different talent and major shifts in direction if their vision requires a social change of many years. They do not create unnecessary resistance as the original vision may have to account for political or financial happenstance. These leaders determine how long their staff should stay the course before making adjustments.
- As with senior staff, all employees should suspend old beliefs or traditions that are not serving their success now. When momentum wanes, they think of what could be developed with new perspectives, recognizing that there is more than one road to success. They review the hard data, market competition, and financial roadblocks to revise programs for renewed success.



- Revisit the distinction of your products, causes, or social movements. Reconsider what makes this venture unique, competitive, or life changing. Ask who is the recipient of these inventions or human advancements? Reevaluate the accomplishments so far and what has been delivered that you should celebrate publicly. Recognition for a job well done to this date has tremendous impact on employee motivation. Re-enforce the pride of achievement.
- Remove the fear component by requesting that the participants, for today, become interested in walking into unknown territory. Recognize that as an courageous group, the staff may experience other emotions such as, elation, nuisance, or confusion as they become aligned to the customer's innovate requirements. Often, the workforce teams begin to think it can't be done and resignation sets in. Think of the unknown genius of Eli Whitney, the American inventor of the cotton gin. He proposed that he could develop a 'machine' that could take the hand labor out of combing cotton to remove the seeds. In 1794, he was considered quite radical and the milling machine's capability impossible. Nevertheless he revolutionized the cotton industry forever and made much of the southern domestic states rich.

When you need to regenerate momentum, *ask yourself*:

- What cause or vision are you asking others to commit to? How articulate can you be so that others feel the same passion and same commitment you have?
- How will the pursuit of this cause or vision enrich the lives of those who enlist to help you?
- In pursuit of this cause, how are you able to reframe what is happening today with what will be different when the cause is accomplished? What will be the benefits for the recipients of the actual cause? Will there be more food supplies for the global population, less consumer waste, more clean water, or safer neighborhoods?
- What sacrifices will the employees have to make for this vision or mission to come about? How much time will it take? Will they see it realized in their lifetime?
- Remember that technology is not always the answer. What systems should you revise to ensure that your efforts are not destroying long revered traditions of communities?
- How can you create joint responsibilities for the company, and the staff, to talk with one another on quality work in an environment valuing both business success and personal fulfillment?
- If you can't see the potential in the situation today, have you or your colleagues fallen into resentment or resignation? How can you recapture the boldness you had when you first started at that company or that position?
- Has the day arrived that more hours does not mean success? Have all the 'champions' burned out or left the company? How can you help to overturn the opinion that 'no one can succeed here'?

*"The world is wide, and I will not waste my life in friction when it could be turned into momentum."  
Frances E. Willard*

If this resonates with your current situation, we invite you to realize your success with us.