

Asserting For Your Interests – Activity

Words engage the heart and the imagination. The words the leader uses to communicate his or her mission/vision can transform the message from one that is boring and mundane to one that is meaningful and worthy. Consider the following examples:

UNINSPIRING

To give presentations

To produce comfortable chairs

To design stores

INSPIRING

To give moving presentations to business executives in a beautiful, comfortable nature and park-like setting where great learning is inspired.

To produce chairs that transform tired and achy bodies into refreshed souls that feel capable of conquering the world.

To design stores that irresistibly draw attention, pique curiosity, create the illusion of mystery, and feel luxurious to the eyes.

You may wish to have examples of the spoken word that have inspired followers to act. Of course, words must be backed by action. So, as the coach, be careful not to overplay the importance of words over one's actions. Both are important to inspire followers to action. You should communicate that leaders must have both consistent actions and words in order to be truly inspiring.

Explain to the individual or group that each leader must be able to articulate his or her vision in a way that engages the follower. Words are the vehicle for articulating vision, and therefore, the leader should select words carefully and craft the words for the desired emotional connection to the vision. Give the examples listed in the coaching tips notes to distinguish between uninspiring and inspiring words. Explain that words are as important as actions to fully engage the follower. Explain that words are often the first encounter with the leader's vision, therefore, words are incredibly important. Ask the group to consider that words impacted the hearts of followers in the following cases: Martin Luther King's inspiring "I have a dream..." words; John F. Kennedy's call to action, "Ask not what your country can do for you..."; and Abraham Lincoln's reflective "Four score and seven years ago... ." Use these examples as support that words are significant.

NOTE: Do not attempt to make the point that words are the most significant aspect of leadership, but instead explain that they play a very supportive role in driving our vision.

Distribute Handout and Give the Following Directions:

- A. Instruct each participant to complete the worksheet by reflecting on the words and phrases he or she selected on the worksheet. These words and phrases captured their vision related to people, products, customers, equipment, technology, etc.
- B. For each of the words or phrases selected, have participants rewrite the words to capture a more emotional involvement with the vision. For example, an automotive leader wrote that he wanted his people to be team players; he rewrote the phrase team players as "Super Bowl contenders who dress to win each day."
- C. Encourage participants to get creative with language and to write using "word pictures."
- D. Debrief and explore

Exercise Handout:

Imagine your department or area in the next few years. Ideally, what do you want to see?

Consider people, product, customers, equipment, machinery, technology... Imagine each of these elements. Create a vision of the future for your area. List words or phrases that come to mind.

People

Product

Customers

Equipment/Machinery

Systems/Technology