



*Leveraging Leadership to*

# BUILD THE BEST TEAM

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THE LANDSCAPE OF BUSINESS AS WE KNOW IT IS RAPIDLY CHANGING WITH THE RISE OF ENTREPRENEURISM. WHAT WORKS ONE YEAR WILL NOT BE AS EFFECTIVE AS THE NEXT AND CERTAINLY NOT FIVE TO TEN YEARS DOWN THE ROAD. HAVING THE BEST TEAM TO ACCOMPLISH THE FAST PACED DEMANDS OF MARKETING, PRODUCTIVITY, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUIRES LEADERS THAT ATTRACT AND EMBODY MORE THAN JUST THE TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONS MINDSET. THE ELEMENTS OF IMPROVISATION GIVE YOUR LEADERSHIP LEVERAGING POWER, AMPLIFYING YOUR REACH TO ATTRACT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TALENT.

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# Shift the Focus and Harness the Power of Vision

When the focus is emphasizing task accomplishment to get through the day, that is all you will accomplish: tasks. Your team members will get the job done, but are they following you for long? What separates the best team from a good team is inspiration and motivation. It takes a bold leader to shift the focus in a creative direction and energize the team to see beyond the tasks to the bigger company goals and purpose.

## Cultivate a Group Mindset

Have you ever watched an improvisation skit? It may take a couple lines before the group mindset forms, but when it does the skit becomes energetic and fun and productive. The same concept is at work behind interpersonal communications on the job. A group mindset is achieved through inspiration (think improv skills) by introducing new concepts into the scene. Think differently and bring in an outside perspective. A group mindset can only be adapted by parking individual agendas and changing the conversation by putting into practice the following improv skills:

- **Support**
- **Trust**
- **Respect**
- **Focus**
- **Listen**
- **Adaptability**

Everyone has seen the movie Braveheart with its famous scene in which Mel Gibson's character, William Wallace, is about to lead the rag tag army of different clans that don't always get along into battle. He delivers one of the most inspiring speeches in all of movie history in the face of a flooded field of opposition ready to wipe them out.

While you may not show up with blue face paint and a kilt next week to leverage your leadership, you can shift the focus, like William Wallace did, from the task of swinging an axe or spreadsheet to creating the group mindset needed to achieve the vision. He did so using the elements of improvisation. He listened to what they were saying and was able to hear through their words to focus the conversation on what they were valuing, their lives. He respected their willingness to be there and trusted their ability to wield their 'technical skills'.

He adapted to the situation by using the Yes, and concept. One fighter pointed out that going forward, they could just turn and run and live. Rather than say no, we don't do that here, Wallace acknowledged his idea as valid and then continued the conversation by pointing out that they would live, but only for a while.

He renewed the vision of Scotland's freedom and everyone was motivated to fight and fight passionately.

If you don't have a vision that is clear to everyone on the team, you need one quickly. You may not be fighting for your lives, but you are fighting for your place in a cut-throat market.

## Approaching Your Team

You could always wear a kilt to shake things up; however, you want to get more from your team than laughs. A strong leader will not be afraid to consult with those around him to expand conversations. And if it is a bit intimidating, practice the elements of improvisation through other ways, such as regular brainstorming sessions, office surveys, and soft skill training for all members that incorporate fun team building games.

While personality tests are a great resource it can't replace getting to know who your team members are and getting them to know one another. You don't have to necessarily like everyone in the office, but you do need a base level of respect and trust in others to set aside personality differences to promote the best team possible.

## Managing Conflict

It is already getting to be that time when finance professionals are looking to have a smoother tax season and business leaders are always approaching fiscal reports. Stress increases the opportunity for conflict to derail the best of teams. Otis D. Gibson, a specialist in creative conflicts had this to say in a recent article, "The crucial part of dealing with conflict is learning to deal with your emotions. Screaming something at someone doesn't make it more true." How true is that?

The best teams come from leveraging leadership in a way that creatively confronts conflict and uses improvisation techniques to unlock the gems in every idea. Technical skills and managing the operations of the business is not enough in a competitive market flooded with Millennials who are searching for a more inspiring experience. The greater you develop your leadership, the greater your team will become.