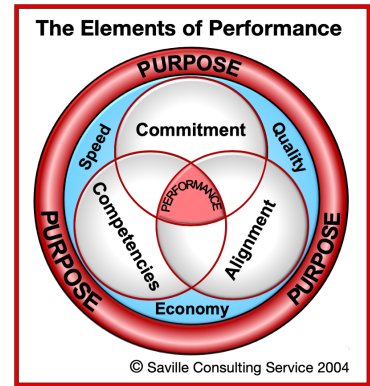


**Purpose of this series of articles:**

The articles in this series are all related to *PERFORMANCE*. We will address one or more of the elements of performance and stake out a position in the space of each article.

**Topic: Commitment**

**Commitment** (one of the effectiveness factors): Commitment is what some people call “self-motivation.” As opposed to mere motivation, the impact of commitment is longer term. Commitment comes from within each individual rather than from some external source. It differs from motivation in that there is no way I can make you committed. Commitment is not something I can do for you. It is something that happens internally. You, and you alone, commit to something. You may do something that I want you to do. But are you really committed? Only you know for certain.



Understand why commitment is necessary: Commitment – not merely motivation – is what is needed today for continuing success. It is commitment that is required in order to achieve the high levels of customer focus and service quality that you need to survive and thrive in the increasingly competitive marketplace. It is commitment that is required in order to actually realize the benefits of Total Quality Management. With commitment the benefits derived from TQM far exceed those attained from just fulfilling the process and procedural aspects of TQM and “continuing quality improvement” measures because someone else insists on it.

It is much more difficult to build commitment in people than it is to “motivate” them. The factors that lead to commitment are more numerous and complex than in the case of motivation. Nevertheless, there are a number of things that can be done to build commitment.

Prerequisites for Commitment: Before we get to specific actions that you can take to build commitment in others, there are a couple of prerequisites. It is essential that you and your organization clearly identify that to which you want people to become committed. How can we expect others to commit to the goals of the organization if there is no clarity about what those goals are? The first prerequisites for commitment are clarity our strategic goals and having a strategic and lofty vision.

Clear goals: If you want to achieve them, you can't keep your goals a secret. How can we expect others to commit to something we don't identify or explain. The process of commitment within each individual involves a comparison of the goals of the organization with their own personal goals, aspirations and sense of responsibility. In order for this comparison to occur, the goals of the organization must be well understood by every individual. This requires an exceptional level of clarity in the definition, articulation and communication of the goals of the organization. With clarity in the goals of the organization, people know where they stand in relationship to the purpose or mission of the company, and know how their jobs contribute to the accomplishment of the goals of the organization.

Strategic and lofty vision: There is an element of vision that should be discernible in the goals and strategies of an organization. “Vision” is a little hard to define, but, if I had to define it succinctly, I might define it as:

A highly desirable future state for your organization that you think might never happen but is exciting and just barely possible – close enough to being attainable that you would actually work toward its realization.

This vision must be both strategic and lofty.

Having a strategic vision involves staying focused on the needs of your clients and/or customers, and basing your strategy on strengths that the organization already has or can readily acquire. In other words, your vision has to be based on reality. Having goals that make sense in terms of probable success and responsiveness to the existing marketplace is essential.

People within any organization have a fair amount of knowledge about the market(s) in which their organization is active. If people do not believe the organization's goals and strategies are achievable in the current marketplace – they will not “buy in.” Would you commit to something you believe to be impossible?

The vision needs to be lofty in order to capture the imagination and engage the spirit. A lofty vision leads to inspired performance, and that is what we want and need to have. A lofty vision is one that provides challenge and requires people to stretch and grow. When challenges are presented, especially significant challenges, it is important to provide equal measure of support to enable people to accomplish new goals and realize the lofty vision. When properly supported in pursuit of lofty goals (that are also strategic), people feel that the challenge is important and worth achieving. And, they feel important and will derive a sense of accomplishment from their efforts because they believe that their work is important.

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