





## CREATING AN INSPIRED WORKPLACE

Inspire. Its original meaning was to “breathe or blow upon or into.” The “life” given was a form of hope. Hope is the outcome of inspiration. Hope is not something you wish for; it must be earned through example and courage. It emerges from a unity of spirit and purpose.

BY **JOHN BALDONI**

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## A REASON TO BELIEVE

All good leaders today know that nothing is possible without the support of others. Employees today need attention to their psychological needs. They need and want to believe in their leaders. And it is up to leaders to give them a reason to believe. Talk to anyone who was ever involved in a successful startup venture and you will see their eyes light up as they recall the excitement of developing and bringing a new product or service to market. Excitement is not reserved for entrepreneurs. Managers in large companies can take equal pride in a new product development, process improvement, or customer service enhancement. Likewise those involved in social services can take pride in helping others get back to health, or back into the mainstream of society. All work should have a purpose.

Here are some things you can do to create inspiration in the workplace.

## SET BOLD GOALS

Challenges are motivators. It is up to the leader to inspire others to follow by setting forth a goal that everyone can aspire to achieve. People look to leaders for inspiration in good times and in bad. Inspiration is built upon self-motivation, but nurtured by the example of the leader and others in the organization all trying to excel.

## DEVELOP NARRATIVE BUSINESS PLANS

The act of transforming facts and figures into stories makes them more understandable. When people can experience through a story what might occur if they follow the business plan, they have a tendency to become excited about what they can do, and will do.

## TELL STORIES OF GREAT PEOPLE

Just as business plans work as narratives, so too do stories. Since time immemorial we have listened to stories of our elders. Indigenous peoples everywhere use stories of their ancestors to provide explanations of the present as a means of giving guidance to the future. Today we still enjoy stories. Today's most popular management and motivational speakers use stories to convey their points. Why? Stories are a way to give direction and insight without platitudes and prescriptions.

## CREATE DISCOVERY SESSIONS

One of the best ways for people to find inspiration is to get outside of themselves. A way to create the sensation of travel, without leaving the city, is to arrange for an off-site meeting for a team or department. The session will focus on creativity or innovation and will be an opportunity for people to experience new things in order to stimulate their own creative thinking. Exercises can include vision maps where people talk about where they want their organization to go and translate those ideas into images.

## THINK OUTSIDE YOUR FIELD

Another way to stimulate creativity, and contribute to inspiration, is to encourage people to look at other businesses. The health care industry has invested much in learning about good customer service from hotels and theme parks. Hospitals have invested millions in delivering a customer-friendly experience for patients and their families.

## ENCOURAGE OPTIMISM

Inspiration comes to those with an open spirit. "Optimism is an essential ingredient for innovation," wrote Robert Noyce, co-founder of Intel. "How else can the individual welcome change over security, adventure over staying in his safe places?" Noyce, a gifted engineer and research scientist, was also a keen leader of others. "People come here [to Intel] because of their abilities. My job [is] to remove all impediments to progress and give them as much freedom as possible."<sup>1</sup>

## GIVING HOPE

What inspiration really comes down to is this: giving hope. Motivation thrives on hope; it is the spirit that makes belief in tomorrow possible. With hope, individuals can see over the edge of adversity; they can look beyond where they stand now. All great leaders are those who give hope throughout their lives. They are able to impart hope by setting the right example, communicating effectively, empowering their followers, coaching regularly, recognizing frequently, and making sacrifices for the organization. The hope they share with their people fuels the spirit of motivation. But while leaders impart hope, ultimately it is the follower who must adopt hope, and make it their own. Without hope, nothing is possible. With hope, all is possible.

## Source

1. Curtis Schleier, "Intel Co-founder Robert Noyce: He Invented His Way to the Top," *Investor's Business Daily* 11/5/01 [*Business Leaders & Success*, New York: McGraw-Hill 2004 pp. 223-224]

## About the author

John Baldoni is a leadership communications consultant, speaker, and author; his newest book is *Great Motivation Secrets of Great Leaders* [McGraw-Hill 2005], from which this article was adapted. Find out more at [www.johnbaldoni.com](http://www.johnbaldoni.com).

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