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IGNITING THE SPARK & FANNING THE FLAMES – Inspiring & Motivating Others

Article # 5, *Synchronistically Speaking™* series, July 2009

This article corresponds with Webinar #5 of the Integrated Leader Program

When was the last time you were really inspired? Can you recall what you were doing? What you were thinking about? How you felt? What was it that inspired you? And what did you end up doing as a result?

Wouldn't it be great if you could replicate the feeling of inspiration and translate it into measurable results any time you wanted to? As a leader, your chief mission is to bring out the best in others and focus their unique talent, style, energy and passion into the creation and achievement of something that serves a greater good. The ability to inspire and motivate is critical. But what is it exactly that makes a leader inspiring - and more importantly how can leaders facilitate others to take inspired action?

STEP 1: Before you can be inspiring, you must be inspired.

Chances are the last time you became inspired, you were not feeling stress, anxiety, worry or overwhelm. And it probably didn't happen because someone told you to do it. The greatest creations and most significant accomplishments of our time started with a single thought that most likely originated when the minds that conceived them were relatively quiet. It is not uncommon to hear inventors, artists, writers, entrepreneurs, leaders and others say that ideas such as these seemed to originate from a source greater than themselves – and that the most inspiring of these thoughts was in service to a greater good.

The voice of inspiration often starts as a small still whisper that competes for our attention among all the other things we think we need to be doing. How will you quiet yourself for a few moments today and elevate your attention from problems to possibilities so you can hear what it is telling you?

STEP 2: Before you can truly bring out the best in others, you must start with yourself.

Every one of us has faults and weaknesses. But we also have unique combinations of talent, energy, style and passion that mingle together to form vast pools of possibility. You are capable of far more than you ever dreamed or realized is possible and so is everyone around you. These core qualities lie deep within us waiting to be tapped and harnessed.

True strength is not boastful or proud but rather quietly confident and unassuming. It is also incredibly engaging and uplifting. When you shift your focus from your doubts and fears to your strengths and abilities, you will see the way to rise. And in doing so, you will allow others to do the same. As you focus on people's true potential and treat them as though they are capable of achieving it, they will prove you right – often surprising and delighting themselves in the process. The ability to do this is one of the marks of a true leader.

STEP 3: Remember to block and tackle.

Getting people to focus on possibilities and believe in themselves is a huge part of exercising inspired leadership, but it won't get you all the way there. To leverage people's strengths and make the most of emerging opportunities, inspiration must at some point turn into ACTION. The trouble is, somewhere along the way our egos have a tendency to try to steal the show. Being fear based, the ego would have us occupy ourselves with doubt, skepticism and anxiety over the potential for failure and any corresponding loss of power, prestige or approval.

This is where MOTIVATION comes in. Motivation is about getting people to move. And sometimes you have to remove barriers that are in front of people before they can do that. Obstacles could be physical, organizational or mental. Good leaders are instrumental in detecting and removing them, whether they are in the form of skill deficiency, inadequate equipment or resources, or a lack of confidence. You can soothe the clamors of the ego by mitigating risk, increasing the odds of success, and helping others to recognize what they have to gain as a result of exerting the effort necessary to succeed. With the parking brake removed, action and results can begin to accelerate.

In every organization, in every person, and in every moment there lies possibility and untapped potential. What will you do to recognize it and apply it toward something remarkable?