

# 12 Key Strategies for 'Bringing Out the Best in People'

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

Alan Loy McGinnis wrote a book back in the last century about bringing out the best in people. It was well-received and gained exposure and acceptance among progressive leaders at that time.

Over the years, I've had the chance to reflect on what Alan outlined. In fact, I still have his 12 rules sitting on my wall above my desk as a visual reminder of how important they are in leading and coaching the people I work with across North America.

If you are committed to being an effective leader or manager, perhaps they should be sitting somewhere close, so they are not far from your mind's eye. They provide the foundation for effective management, leadership success and leveraged teamwork. Apply them well to equip and motivate your team to succeed.

I include them, along with my own reflective thoughts, for your inspiration and illumination.

- **Expect the best from the people you lead.**

See them performing at their best. Often people will rise or fall to the level of our expectations. See them as they could be, not as they are! Don't limit them by expecting less than their best.

- **Make a thorough study of the other person's needs.**

Each person on your team is an individual with specific skills, talents, strengths, weaknesses, needs and dreams. Taking time to know them makes it easier to lead and direct them for mutual success. It allows you as manager or leader to help them succeed in their respective role.

- **Establish high standards for excellence.**

Leaders fail when they accept mediocre results or fail to set challenging standards. People will amaze you when you set the bar higher and lead by example. Don't be afraid to challenge your team to live up to and surpass achievable goals and standards.

- **Create an environment where failure is not fatal.**

Mistakes are a natural part of life and taking risks means occasionally you fall short. If your team feels supported and encouraged, they will take risks and move past their comfort zone into the winners' zone. Help them learn from the lessons of any mistakes or miss-steps and move ahead with energy to face the next challenge.

- **If they are going anywhere near where you want to go, climb on other people's bandwagons.**

Sometimes you need to be honest and realize that people are not always going the same direction or share the same values that you live. In that case, let them go and stay your own course. However, if they are going where you want the team to be, let them lead and be supportive. Be courageous enough to realize that you can follow your own path. Others who share your values will follow.

- **Employ models to encourage success.**

This goes to the heart of leadership by example. Make sure this is modeled in your own management life and in the lives of those you promote, train, and delegate to succeed.

- **Recognize and applaud achievement.**

People do not work simply for money. Each has his or her own needs. One of those needs, deep inside each of us, is the need to feel appreciated, informed, and important to the team. As a leader or manager, the most effective thing we can do is to recognize achievement and effort from those we lead and to share and publicly applaud their achievements.

- **Employ a mixture of positive and negative reinforcement.**

We understand it is a good thing to provide praise and positive reinforcement in our team members' efforts. This affirms their actions and encourages them to move ahead. It is also necessary at times to apply the opposite tack when one of them is doing something detrimental in the fulfillment or follow through of their role.

Letting them know what is 'not' acceptable is also part of a leader's role. We can do it nicely and in kindness, but do it we must if they are to grow and maximize their potential. Amazingly enough, people appreciate knowing their boundaries.

- **Appeal sparingly to the competitive urge.**

Each of us has a natural competitive edge. If used wisely, competition can be a great tool to higher achievement. It has its 'dark' side in allowing divisive actions and attitudes to creep into a team environment. Focus on the team accomplishment and mutual win. Encourage each to compete for higher standards and *personal* skill development.

- **Place a premium on collaboration.**

This is where team – 'works,' and where effective managers and leaders learn to pull people from diverse backgrounds, agendas and experiences into an effective unit.

Brainstorming is one way of effective collaboration allowing each to build and draw on the brainpower of another. **It is a great way to energize your team and draw from their creativity to drive innovation and growth.**

- **Build into the group an allowance for storms.**

It is not always smooth sailing as a leader or in managing team efforts. Storms, difficulties, challenges, detours and disasters can strike when you least expect them. As a leader you need to build in allowances for these *speed bumps* in your team's progress and have some plans in place to cover each potential challenge. Sometimes you need to step in, give clear directions, and help them weather the storm.

- **Take steps to keep your own motivation high.**

You are 'on' as a leader all the time. This means people will be looking at you and taking their cue from you. It also means you need to keep your personal motivation high and maintain a positive outward attitude. This means you may need to find a trusted advisor or fellow manager who can discuss your challenges in private. Letting your negative feelings show can be devastating to your team. They look to you as being confident, clear in focus, and consistent in action and follow through. Don't disappoint them.

Learn to apply these management rules of the leadership road to smooth out your path, and make it easier for those who follow you to walk in it.

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