

Leadership: Beliefs Are the Initial Gap

Any gap in an organization's or even an individual's performance is detrimental to success. The most consistent **leadership** gap that I have discovered in my many years of business and working with clients is that being implementation – How do I get from where I am now to where I desire to go?



Many companies have a fairly clear vision of where they wish to go and have specific results as to how to measure that forward progress. However, the challenge of leadership in implementing their vision in many cases creates a significant gap between their desire and their results.

Business and performance improvement experts have recognized this gap and have addressed this challenge through numerous books including *The Balance Scorecard* and *Good to Great*. Yet, the gap persists and in some cases appears to worsen. Possibly, the answer to closing this leadership gap begins with understanding why the directed actions fail to bridge this gap.

Most solutions focus on the behaviors of those involved. However, behaviors really are the manifestation of our attitudes, which are formed from our beliefs within our complex belief systems.

Beliefs are those foundational, internal thought processes that determine what I do. In the belief model, this concept is caught in the term "attitudes." Attitudes are habits of thoughts that have evolved from the sum total of what I know to be true and what I perceive to be true. Therefore, attitudes are observable behaviors. **HINT: Many training programs offered through human resource departments or public workshops ignore this key factor in improving performance and therefore these programs do not demonstrate a positive return on investment nor sustainability.**

So in practical terms, how does this work for an organization? For example, if the plan is that the company will grow by 10% and some, if not all, of the sales staff within the department has a belief that this is a ridiculous expectation due to their experiences within the market arena, this belief will drive the attitudes demonstrated through specific behaviors. These behaviors may range from negative and highly sensitive to any directions to poor work ethic. The outcome of these behaviors might be the failure to meet sales' goals which then creates a gap between the vision and the results.

What further happens is that since beliefs are in many cases subconscious, individuals now lose control over the outcomes of their behaviors. They believe that they are doing everything necessary to meet the sales goals, but in actuality, they are as the old expression goes "shooting themselves in their feet." These beliefs must be clearly identified and acknowledged before the gap can begin to close. In many cases, this may not happen because of other factors such as fear or an unacknowledged poor self-image.

Several years ago when working with a group of new supervisors, I saw how [individual](#) beliefs can dramatically affect the leadership's implementation of any organization's strategic plan. These new supervisors were asked to quickly identify the strengths that they brought to the table in their new capacity. The pens for the most part did not move and only one person (the owner of the company) listed more than one strength. When they were asked to list their weaknesses as potential supervisors, the pens literally flew off the page. In today's world, people have a very strong belief in their weaknesses and an even stronger belief not to "brag" about their strengths. Yet, winning teams win because of the strengths of all team members. Until these new supervisors believed in their strengths, implementation of the strategic plan would indeed be a challenge for all concerned.

Beliefs are the true beginning in overcoming any leadership gap. This may take time and may be somewhat a challenge in today's politically correct workplace, but until the Beliefs are identified and acknowledged the gap between vision and results will not be bridged.

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