

THE MOTIVES BEHIND LEADERSHIP



WHITE PAPER

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Executive Summary

Everyone who's dealt with people long enough knows that motives are a key factor in the course of one's behavior. Other factors are involved, for sure. Psychological influences, upbringing, even physiological conditions all have their impacts. It can be debated that these are not really separable.

Recognizing that the mind is a vast and complex subject, we're going to leave the psychological and sociological aspects of this topic to the types of experts specifically engaged in them. Those theories cannot be expressed in short order.

In this paper we will center our focus simply on motives (not that they are simple), without diving into the science of where they come from, or when in life they come.

Motives.

These define what a person wants from life, what one hopes to gain, accomplish, become. In the business community, the social community, or in private. As has been simply stated, *these are what drive a person.*

Since no sector of culture has more impact on its direction than leaders, in this paper we want to focus our attention on the motivations of people who want to lead. We will examine how motives impact organizational life. And life in general.

Understanding these motives will offer greater insights into some of the major factors of organizational success or duress. These are things that affect everyone.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line comes at the beginning? In this case yes. Because it sets the stage for why it's so important to evaluate the motives of leaders. Perhaps you are a leader. Maybe you report to one (or even live with one). The bottom line impacts us all.

The adage, *“As goes the leader, so goes the organization”*, brings us to the bottom line right at the outset.

Why?

Because as it is well established, the effectiveness, the success or the viability of organizations relies heavily on the behavior of their leaders. And as we've already noted, their behavior is greatly influenced by their motives.

What kind of organizations? Any kind: businesses, governments, schools, communities, churches, ... and even families.

So the bottom line is this: the motives of a leader are a driving force (in many cases THE driving force) of an organization's ability to do what it needs to do well. And there are two outcomes:

- The organization does what it does well.
- The organization does not do what it does well.

Pretty simple.

And when an organization does not do what it does well... no need to spell this out... everyone suffers. Yes, even the leader.

Is there a lot of organizational suffering going on in today's world? We all know there is. There's also organizational greatness out there.

Absolutely. So here's why the bottom line is such a key issue: to understand the level of organizational health in today's culture, we need to look to one of the root causes. We need to examine the motives of leaders.

Side bar: Under the heading of "organizational suffering" we will place these descriptions:

unprofitable, stressful, high turnover, employee dissatisfaction, employee disengagement, low morale, resentment, lack of trust, inefficiency, lack of vision, loss of market share, customer disloyalty. You can add more of your own.

It's safe to say that everyone reading this falls into one of three categories:

- you *have* experienced one or more of these issues in the past
- you *are* experiencing one or more of them right now
- you *will* at some point experience one or more of them

Hey, it's human nature we're talking about here. No avoiding it.

Obviously the heading of "organizational greatness" covers the opposite effects named above. True, but most of us don't hear a lot about these. The predominant trend is unfavorable. Under certain motives, this can be predicted.

So now we've come to the **full, complete bottom line:**

All of us are affected by the health of some kind of organization (likely more than one), and thus our wellbeing is highly dependent on a leader's motives.

“

The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.

”

Ray Kroc

This is why leadership motives are a prime organizational factor, and why an understanding of this will benefit us all, leaders and those who follow leaders, just the same.

Motives: The Key Ingredient

Motives, as we have stated, are the essence of what we want, and they undergird the methods and the outcomes of our behavior.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships (in broad terms) of motives, behavior and outcomes. But let's address, for the last time, the principle that motives themselves are caused by something even more primary. Again, we aren't going into the science of the mind, but this brief glimpse will lead us to another insight.

Let's call this more primary thing a "**Worldview**". As it pertains to leadership, a worldview is the perspective on what leadership is. What does it mean to lead? What exactly is the role, its purpose? How should leading be done? Which values are important? What prerogatives should leaders have? What type of power, influence, control should leaders possess? These are ingredients of a worldview.

Suffice it to say that numerous things influence a person's leadership worldview. From parents (or lack of) while growing up, from schooling, from organizational experiences, from media and entertainment, and much more. Again, we won't explore those paths, but will agree that there is some things back there in time that caused a dominant impression and mindset of what leading is, how it works and what it can offer.

As *Figure 1* shows, the worldview directly influences what a leader hopes to gain or obtain from leading, or in other words, the **Motives** for leading. And the motives translate directly into the behavior or “**Style**” of leadership. Some call this the “methods” employed in leading. A leader’s style is the way the motives are acted out. And styles vary all over the map.

The motives also translate directly into the **Results** obtained, since the leader generally fashions decisions and events to obtain the desired goals. And the desired goals are based on motives.

The simple diagram portrays a complex model. Notice also in the diagram that a leader’s worldview not only fashions motives, but style and results as well. The basic impressions of what leadership actually is formulate the mentality on how to go about it (style). And these same basic impressions also generate the goals, or what kinds of things should be achieved (results).

And then we see another level of complexity, in that the style also influences the results. It’s not hard to envision the style of leadership (or methods) causing certain outcomes to happen, determining whether the actual goals are met or not.

Things happen through people, and the leader’s style dictates how people are treated. People respond to treatment (well or not-so-well) in ways that directly affect the results of the organization’s efforts. Many ways.

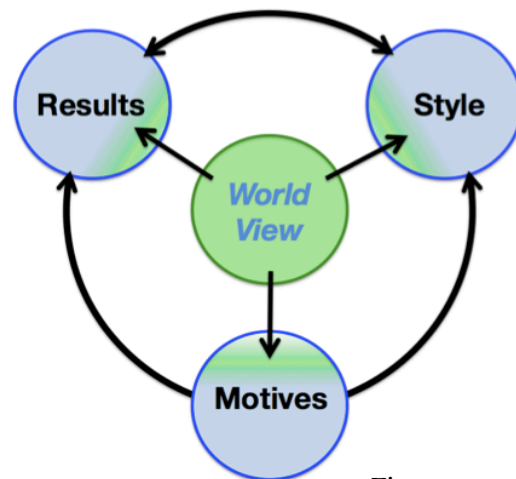


Figure 1

To add yet one more step of complexity, the results often affect the leader's style, in so much as a reactionary response to an undesired result. A potential response to a missed goal because of being too soft on timeliness would be to tighten the screws. Maybe even get mean. Or back off the control if goals were missed due to a disgruntled or overworked staff because of too much meanness. All leaders, to some degree, learn as they go. (A number of you will challenge that statement. Okay, it's true: not *all* learn. We hope for them to.)

It's not a straightforward model, but our aim is to plainly see in a visual form that *a leader's motives are a huge factor in organizational health*. The motives can affect everything, for better or for worse.

Two Major Buckets of Worldviews

There are many types of leadership styles, and there are countless writings, seminars and curricula about these. But the motives behind these are driven by worldviews that can be classified into two primary buckets:

- **“One For All”**
- **“All For Me”**

You probably know what these mean. And you've seen both. There's not a lot of grey area in the middle.

One For All describes the view that is organization-centered or others-centered. The needs and goals of the entity or the people (all) are paramount, not those of the leader. This worldview is based on the idea that the leader should serve all.

All For Me describes the view that is self-centered. The needs of the leader (me) are emphasized as paramount, and other needs are secondary, including, ironically as it sounds, those of the organization. This worldview is based on the idea that the leader should be served by all.

It's been debated that leaders who serve themselves are not real leaders, in the true spirit of the term. Leaders are people of noble standards. No argument. But we are not using the term *leader* here by referring to sensibilities or capabilities, but rather responsibilities. A *leader*, in the context of this theme, is someone who has the responsibility to lead, regardless of how well they do it. Thus we are referring to people who can do their jobs well or poorly, just like in any other field or role.

“

The supreme quality of leadership is integrity.

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Dwight Eisenhower

Three Major Categories of Motives

We could identify many varieties of motives, but for simplicity they can be very effectively classified into three major categories. Motives seek a personal fulfillment of some kind. The three basic means of fulfillment are:

- **Accomplishment**
- **Influence**
- **Affirmation**

These don't just apply to leaders, but to everyone. But since we're evaluating leadership, let's see how these three categories of motivations can be constructed under the two major worldviews.

Putting The Pieces Together

With our brackets of worldviews and motives we can construct all the primary attributes of leadership, and the impact they have on the health of organizations. With this we can better grasp why organizations behave the way they do, and why success or failure are the outcomes we experience.

1) **Worldview: One For All**

a. Motive: Accomplishment

For a leader aiming to serve the organization, fulfillment through accomplishment is mainly realized by:

- filling a calling
- attempting the impossible/difficult
- proving themselves in adversity
- creating a vision and drawing others to it
- personal growth

b. Motive: Influence

For a leader aiming to serve the organization, fulfillment through influence is mainly realized by:

- growing their followers (mentoring/coaching)
- empowering people to be their best
- contributing good ideas
- adding value to the organization
- training future leaders

c. Motive: Affirmation

For a leader aiming to serve the organization, fulfillment through affirmation is mainly realized by being a contributor of:

- relationships
- unity / teamwork
- mutual respect
- conflict resolution
- rising up through mistakes
- giving credit

d. Style

A leader with a One For All worldview may exhibit one or more of the following leadership styles/methods:

- democratic
- respectful
- understanding
- value-focused
- inspiring trust
- putting people first
- encouraging
- humility

e. Results

A leader with a One For All worldview will have the following types of goals and results:

- team success and recognition
- grow/enhance the organization
- break new ground
- complete a vision
- enhance organizational opportunities
- produce experts

Figure 2 illustrates the kind of energy and effectiveness a One For All leader can bring to an organization over time. A continuous increase in viability and success are what we see from this approach.

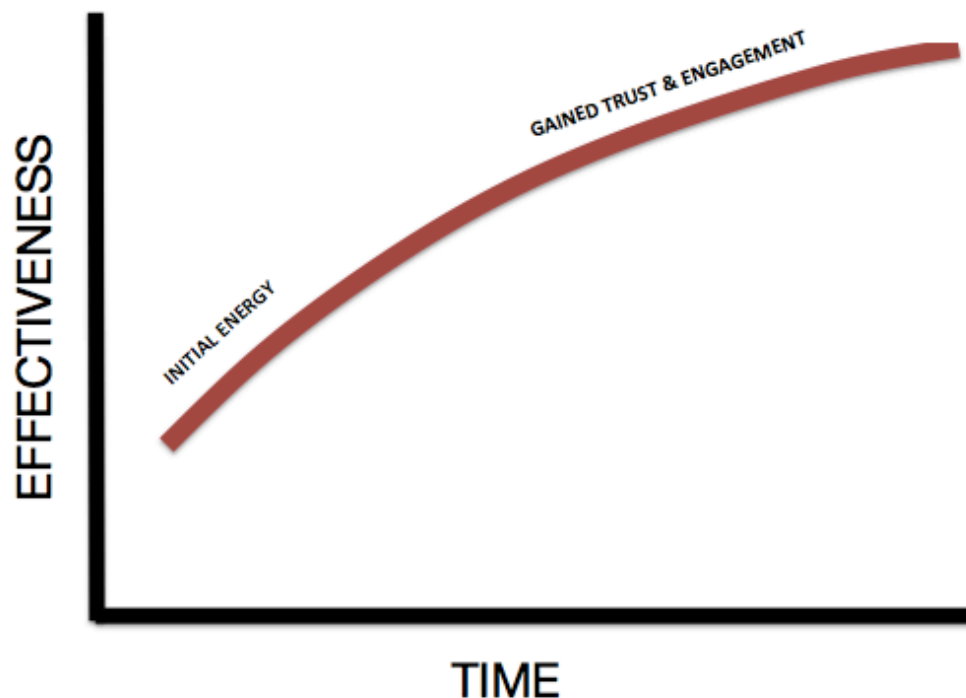


Figure 2

2) Worldview: All For Me

a. Motive: Accomplishment

For a leader expecting the organization to serve them, fulfillment through accomplishment is mainly realized by:

- reaching a certain level or position

- acquiring a certain lifestyle
- attaining a reputation of greatness
- having higher authority or control
- getting credit
- self value in the marketplace

b. Motive: Influence

For a leader expecting the organization to serve them, fulfillment through influence is mainly realized by:

- having orders followed
- passing down blame
- enforcing preferences
- suppressing threats for control
- enforcing alignment with their views/ideas

c. Motive: Affirmation

For a leader expecting the organization to serve them, fulfillment through affirmation is mainly realized by being:

- the object of respect or admiration
- part of the inner circle
- perceived as valuable
- able to run by different rules
- always right
- the agent of success
- rewarded

d. Style

A leader with an All For Me worldview may exhibit one or more of the following leadership styles/methods:

- autocratic

- non-relational
- demanding
- process-focused
- requiring loyalty
- putting bosses first
- intimidating
- prideful

e. Results

A leader with an All For Me worldview will have the following types of goals and results:

- personal success and recognition
- grow their influence
- produce impressive gains
- establish a personal legacy
- enhance personal opportunities
- beat the numerical targets
- do more with less

Figure 3 illustrates what happens to the energy and effectiveness of an organization over time through an All For Me leader. An initial increase in viability and success wears out when motives are recognized. The organization experiences bouts of struggle as worker morale and engagement continue to suffer. It's predictable. Attempts to reverse this may take hold, but only for a short while.

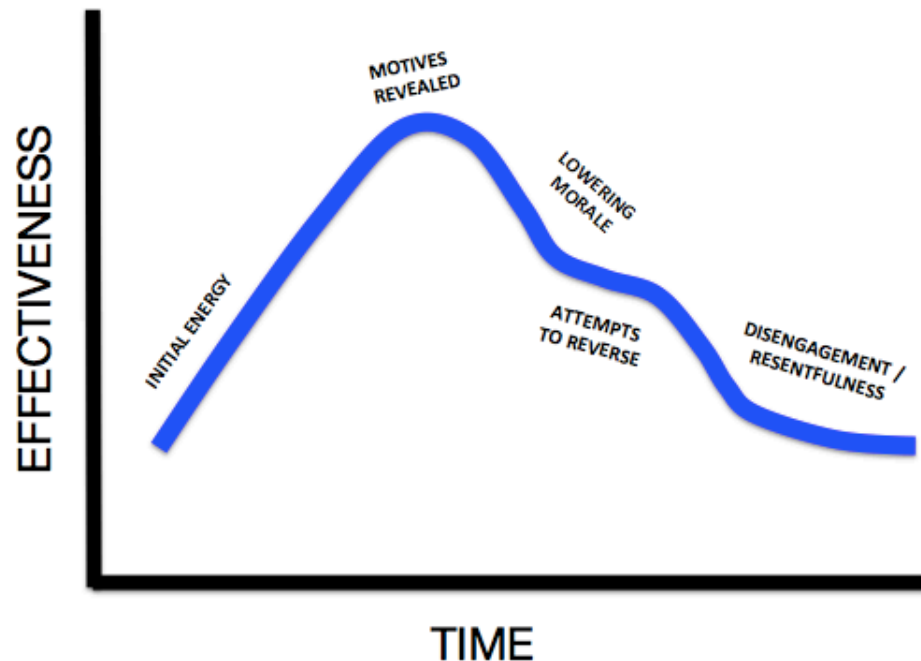


Figure 3

Conclusion

There is a significant relationship between a leader's motives (driven by a world view) and the health of an organization. There are of course other factors, but perhaps none so profound.

Why is this so important?

- 1) Because this pertains to any organization, not just those we consider heavily business-oriented. Non-profits, churches, schools, social clubs, even the local Boy Scout troop, all have leaders. All are subject to their motives. And that means we are impacted in more ways than we know.
- 2) It obviously pertains to our workplace, our source of income and fiscal security. Our lives are in the hands of leaders, who have motives that can make things delightful or dreadful.
- 3) Organizations should be mindful of the motive-effect, when recruiting, positioning and growing leaders. The long-term health of the organization depends on healthy motives of the leaders. Their worldviews need to be evaluated and enhanced.
- 4) Those who are under leaders can better recognize signs of motives, either positive or negative, and grasp what may be happening around them. You can't tackle an issue if you don't know what it's all about. How to tackle these? That's another in-depth subject, which we will leave for another paper.
- 5) Leaders can grasp how influential their motives are in determining the course of life for everyone under their roof. Including their own. It's amazing how an underlying perspective can determine which path an organization will take.

Does any specific leader fall completely into one bucket: One For All, or All For Me? No. People are complex. But each has primary distinctions that flavor their overall impact one way or the other.

Motives matter. And everyone eventually sees them. Even if the leader doesn't think they show. Especially then. True intentions never remain concealed.

Organizations function much more effectively, profitably and with greater health under the One For All set of leadership motives.

Under the All For Me set of motives, short-term gains may be attainable, but will lead to debilitations with long-term pain and failure.

What kind of debilitations?

Turnover, disengagement, inefficiency, low morale, sinking profits, missed goals, angry customers to name a few.

Attempts to address the debilitations may gain some ground, but if the motives remain the same, the ground is lost again. These kinds of cycles can repeat, but the trend will be downhill. People won't put up with this for long.

“

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

”

Proverbs 29:18

The Challenge

The challenge for us is twofold:

Leaders have the responsibility to lead well. Assess yourself. Take a look in the mirror and imagine yourself in an x-ray image.

What's in your heart? What are your purposes, your views on leading? Take a look at the attributes of the All For Me model, and try to identify any of these in you. Call on a trusted colleague to help you and speak truth into you. Get a coach. Listen to those on your staff. Admit what needs admitting, and decide to set it right.

Then make all attempts to weed out these attributes. Make a determination to replace each of these with one from the One For All model. You and your organization will benefit much more than you can realize. Just the respect and following you will earn will stun you. Take the challenge.

Those who follow leaders have the responsibility to suggest organizational improvements and ideas that will benefit everyone. Especially ideas that can reverse a point of pain. Yes, it can be risky to go to the leader and speak about improvements, if the leader is what needs improving. But do it in all sincerity and with their best interests in mind. Show them how you all can benefit if the One For All model is followed. Figure out how best to do this and take the challenge.

Everyone: bear this in mind:

In an organization, the greatest desire of people is to be led well. It is also their greatest need.

The Next Step

One Vision Consulting has the expertise, insight and discernment to solve your organization's internal challenges. Whether you are facing disunity, turnover, inefficiencies, lack of vision, low morale, or loss of profitability, we have a proprietary process to quickly identify and prioritize the issues that need to be addressed...

And we formulate an effective plan to mitigate each issue. One Vision will walk with you through this plan to implement it completely. Other organizational-health services are also available.

For more information go to:

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Glenn is interested in hearing your stories and gathering more and more information about leadership experiences. The more we can glean from our lives, the more we can share and learn, to everyone's betterment.