



Is Command & Control The Product Of Great Leadership?

“Leadership: the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because they want to do it.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

“buy-in”

Many Managers we have worked with identify with this statement. Unfortunately achieving this level of “buy-in” eludes most professionals without some outside help and a shift in the way they lead their teams.

Secret Sauce

“Buy-in” is the **secret sauce** of organisational effectiveness. Academics and researchers have identified this phenomenon as EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT. Research shows that improving employee engagement pays actual dividends from improved profitability.



Research Shows

Return-on-investment

Companies with higher levels of employee engagement outperform their competitors in terms of profitability, according to recent research from management consultants Towers Perrin.

The December 2004 findings are built on its European Engagement Study, which was published in June 2004. The latter surveyed 15,000 employees across six European countries.

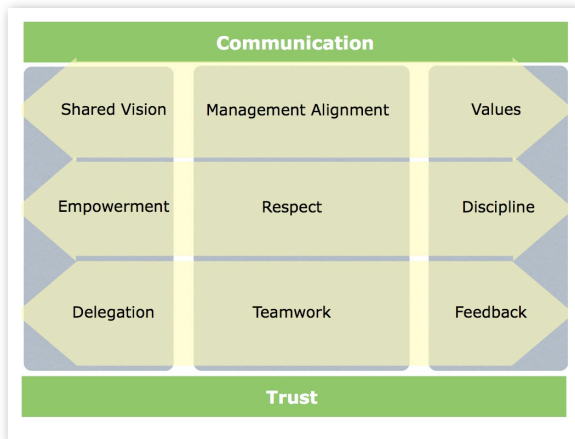
The research found that companies with engagement levels above their industry sector's average outperform their peer group by 17 percent in terms of operating margin. While the report doesn't assert direct causality between engagement and profitability, it says the evidence of a significant relationship between them is undeniable.

17% more
Margin

How do managers improve engagement?

The list contains no surprises

- Communication / feedback
- Shared Vision
- Empowerment
- Respect
- Trust
- Team-work
- Delegation
- Management alignment
- Values



[Amazon.com: Patrick M. Lencioni: Books](https://www.amazon.com/Patrick-M-Lencioni/e/B000APCZ4C)

What Dwight D. Eisenhower seemed to understand intuitively is that the foundation for engagement and building high-performance teams is Trust. Trust, according to Patrick M. Lencioni, is not simply attached to the task you expect someone to deliver it is in fact about vulnerability. When you form a team you have to set the foundation where each member's weaknesses are known and accepted by the team. Each member supports the right to membership for everyone on the team. As Eisenhower recognized success in battle involved removing the notion that the cavalry was always available to ride over hill and save the day. He promoted the ideal that soldiers should be trained to totally trust in members of their squads and rely on their units to get the job done.

Trust is the foundation

Once trust exists all team members must feel connected to the vision and direction of the organisation. This begins and ends with communication. Great leaders know the value of appealing to common themes that unify the majority of people. Additionally they know that to communicate a shared vision down into the organisation firstly requires management alignment horizontally. The pivotal element that makes management alignment possible is absolute agreement on living the values that support the vision.



Vision

Not the common view

Even though the common view of the army is command and control, top down dictatorship where soldiers do what they are told without exception, the reality is quite different. Once the plan has been agreed the execution is delivered without dissension.

To accomplish this level of engagement each team member needs a total understanding of the part they play in the execution and what elements are mission critical. This only occurs when people are taken through a thought process where they are given the opportunity to examine each element of the execution plan. Issues are talked through and the team not the manager resolves problems.

Experience tells us

Having coached over 1000 senior middle managers, utilising the team is where the process of gaining "buy-in" fails. Managers seem to hold onto the idea that it is the manager's responsibility to provide the solutions. Their ego is bound to this notion sometimes to the extent that change seems impossible to contemplate. Many professional managers operate from a command and control concept without understanding that the demonstrable elements of this notion result from a long process of engagement. They assume that task delivery is more important than the long-term mission and that their direct reports will do what they are told.

They do not comprehend the importance of thoroughly understanding the pressures and needs of those above them in the organisation, what the vision means in terms of success, the rules of engagement and consequently cannot give clear direction. This myopia leads to managers issuing commands assuming that a "tell" strategy will corral the neigh-sayers and herd the team to an intellectual "buy-in".

Blame

Time is often blamed. Time is thought to be a major constraining factor. Managers feel they do not have enough time to invest in the lengthy process of explaining missions, allowing the team to ask all the questions needed to produce absolute clarity of purpose. Yet they seem to have an endless supply of time to fix mistakes and fire-fight through poor execution and misaligned efforts.

Mission Control

On the other hand the Royal Marines have a successful strategy, it is called "mission control" focused on empowerment and control.

Leaders are told what they must achieve within the context of the overall vision. The **how** is theirs to development and is limited by the an agreed set of Values known as **Code of Conduct or Rules of Engagement**.

Being a successful military leader is not about barking commands nor it is hinged on having an inspiring personality. The truly important leverage points are communication and clarity. This demands that each leader down through the organisation genuinely understands the overall mission, their section and what success means to their direct superior. This clarity makes it possible to explain the mission to their team and challenge the members to work out how to achieve the mission.

Utilizing the Talent

Developing the solution gives the team responsibility and a tangible sense of ownership. It is clearly important when their life depends on the answer they choose. The role of the leader is to ensure the solution is aligned within the mission and that the rules of engagement are intact. They are also responsible for choosing between alternatives when the team hits a roadblock. Ultimately the leader is responsible for the success of the mission not the solutions themselves. This is the secret to gaining a very high level of ownership and a much higher connection to the mission and therefore true "Buy-in".

In business managers could look to the military for lessons in leadership and achieve Eisenhower's definition of leadership.

Michael Eakin and Tim Taylor

